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**An evaluation of the Assertive Discipline Program at Charles D.  
Owen High School**

McCallum, Larry Clinton, Ed.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1989

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AN EVALUATION OF THE ASSERTIVE DISCIPLINE PROGRAM  
AT CHARLES D. OWEN HIGH SCHOOL

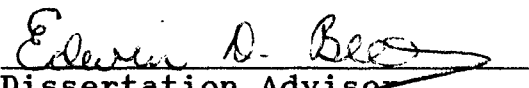
by

Larry Clinton McCallum

A Dissertation Submitted to  
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Approved by

  
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APPROVAL PAGE

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The purpose of this study was to determine the worth and merit of the Assertive Discipline Program at Charles D. Owen High School for the 1985-1986 and 1986-1987 school years. The study identified the efforts of the staff and administration at Charles D. Owen High School to provide an opportunity for students and teachers to function in an improved environment for teaching and learning.

Information for the study was provided by triangulation procedures which collected data from 722 students in grades nine through twelve, 62 teachers, and 233 parents by the use of a survey. Interviews of assistant principals and teacher-opinion leaders provided further supportive information in response to the research questions. School records supplied information about student behavior and academic accomplishments during the two-year study of the Assertive Discipline Program.

The study contained five research questions which addressed the perceptions of students, teachers, parents, and administrators concerning the Assertive Discipline Program. Other questions examined student interpersonal relationships, student-teacher interpersonal relationships, the status of suspensions and disciplinary referrals to the principal's office, and the social and educational climate at Charles D. Owen High School.



Based on the review of literature and the findings of the study, the following conclusions were developed:

1. The Assertive Discipline Program has had a positive impact on some segments of the school community (teachers, parents, and administrators).

2. Teacher orientation is needed to emphasize rule enforcement in all areas of the school.

3. An effective Assertive Discipline Program should involve students in the development of rules and regulations.

4. Mutual respect is a major factor in eliminating student disrespect to teachers.

5. A suitable environment for teaching and learning is only one of several factors which must be present to improve student test scores.

6. Discussion and a restructuring of procedures is necessary to provide a positive social and educational climate for students as well as teachers.

7. The sharing of responsibility for school discipline with parents should be a high priority for schools that want an effective discipline program.

8. For any academic or disciplinary program to succeed, all parties must share a common vision.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

The children now love luxury; they have bad manners, contempt for authority, they show disrespect for their elders and love chatter in place of exercise. They no longer rise when their elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up dainties at the table, cross their legs, and tyrannize their teachers.

(Socrates, circa 400 B.C.)

Secondary students are more difficult to deal with today than ever before. Canter (1985) states, "They act out and defy authority in ways that students as recently as the '50's and '60's would never have dared" (p. 1). In many cases, educators cannot even turn to parents for help. Many parents are either unable or unwilling to cooperate with the schools in disciplining their teenage children. This leaves an educator in a difficult position.

In a decade in which discipline is consistently identified by the public as education's number one problem (Gallup, 1984), administrators, teacher educators, and consultants increasingly have felt comfortable suggesting to teachers that an assertive voice, posture, and pattern of behavior will help them reduce discipline problems.

Student misbehavior is one of the most serious problems facing our schools today. Civil behavior in the classroom is a prerequisite for learning. Even a few disorderly students can disrupt the education of the majority of students who are in school to study and learn. More than a few disorderly students make education virtually impossible (Bauer, 1985). To prevent this situation, the schools need to do more than merely maintain civil behavior. They must require students to take the responsibility for attending school, learning, and for not interfering with the learning of others.

The administration and staff at Charles D. Owen High School implemented an Assertive Discipline Program to create an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. The principle of Assertive Discipline, made popular by Lee Canter (1976), calls for higher-profile but non-hostile interventions that effectively communicate a teacher's wants and needs for better discipline. Actually, assertive discipline is a common sense combination of behavioral psychology (praise) and traditional authoritarianism (limit setting).

All teachers proceed from the position that no child has the right to prevent classmates from learning or teachers from teaching. The staff and the administration believe that students are able to behave appropriately.

An assertive posture by teachers and the administration communicates these expectations to students through clearly stated and carefully explained rules. When the rules are broken, there is consistent follow-through with predictable consequences.

The classroom teachers set verbal limits through hints, requests, and demands. They also use nonverbal communication (eye contact, proximity, touch, gestures) to communicate exactly what is required of whom. Finally, the teachers engage in "broken record" confrontation--repeating requests for compliance until students recognize that the teacher cannot be diverted or ignored. These techniques, coupled with positive consequences for following rules and heeding requests, convince students that teachers and administrators know what their wants and needs are in relationship to student behavior. Students come to realize that their responses will generate positive or negative consequences for them (McDaniel, 1986).

Promoting effective discipline in the school requires a comprehensive program supported by everyone in the entire school organization. A well-disciplined school promotes the ideal of each student working toward self-management and controlling his or her own actions. At the same time, the school recognizes that adult intervention is both desirable and necessary.



Reaching the goal of a well-disciplined school requires an honest, committed, and systematic effort to uncover new and better methods. Educators can easily be victims of their tendency toward habit and routine (Lordon, 1983).

Parents, teachers, students, and administrators have a stake in the benefits derived from promoting well-disciplined schools. Local schools and communities must cooperate to define the role each will play in pledging consistent support for effective discipline policies, practices, and programs. Reform must be initiated by local boards of education, administrators, and teachers, because no one is in a better position to improve discipline (Grossnickle & Sesko, 1985).

Educators have come a long way since some of America's schools could be characterized as blackboard jungles. What has helped stimulate the progress is the recognition that, within the nation's schools, climate is everything. Order, civility, and discipline are the offspring of an effectively managed and intellectually vital atmosphere. This setting promotes learning, cooperation, and safety (Futrell, 1985).

Among the many important factors that contribute to a positive school climate are community involvement and interagency cooperation. Individually, students, parents, educators, law enforcement officials, and community leaders cannot repair breakdowns in discipline or campus violence. It requires a collective effort. The challenge to provide

positive, orderly, and crime-free schools requires strong administrative support and the active involvement of the school and its surrounding community.

Clearly, we cannot achieve excellence in education without orderly schools. It is my belief, however, that to focus on safety alone is to miss the point. We should focus our attention more broadly: if we create more effective schools, we will also create safer schools (Nicholson, Stephens, Elder, & Leavitt, 1985, pp. 491-492).

With these words, Nathan Quinones, Chancellor of the New York City Public Schools, summed up the connection between school safety and excellence in education. To be effective, schools must be safe; to be safe, schools must be effective. School safety requires more than a broad-based approach--one that simultaneously emphasizes safety and effectiveness (Nicholson et al., 1985).

In implementing the Assertive Discipline program at Charles D. Owen High School, the administration and staff realized that there was no one best approach, no single panacea to eliminate discipline problems, and that some of the most innovative solutions to the disruption of schooling come only when the parties involved can talk, listen, and approach the problems with an eye for each other's perspective.

The teachers and administrators at Charles D. Owen High School have made a commitment to provide students with the kind of learning environment and instruction that will help them to achieve their educational goals. Teachers and

administrators are committed to establishing a standard of behavior which will allow this to happen. The staff believes the following: (1) No students should be allowed to interfere with a teacher's right to teach. (2) No students should be allowed to interfere with another student's right to learn. (3) No students should be allowed to cause harm to themselves, others, or public property (Canter, 1976).

The Assertive Discipline Program allows and encourages the administrative staff and teachers to establish their expectations of students. It permits the students to know what to expect from the staff. This concept helps the development of a consistent and effective communication channel between the groups. It sets the limits and provides support to students.

#### Problem Statement

Students have the right to an education, and that precious right must be protected from the misbehavior of other students. Teachers have the responsibility to educate their students and to have a safe working environment. Parents have the right to expect their children to be educated and to return home safely at the end of the day (Bauer, 1985).

### Purpose of the Study

The basic purpose of this study was to determine the worth and merit of the Assertive Discipline Program at Charles D. Owen High School for the 1985-1986 and 1986-1987 school years.

### Research Questions

There were five research questions in this study:

1. What is the perception among students, teachers, and parents of the Assertive Discipline Program?
2. What is the perception of students, teachers, and parents of the interpersonal relationships among students?
3. What is the perception among students, teachers, and parents of the interpersonal relationships between students and teachers?
4. Has the incidence of suspensions and disciplinary referrals to the principal's office declined since the 1985-85 school year?
5. How do students, teachers, and parents perceive the social and educational climate at Charles D. Owen High School during the Assertive Discipline Program?

### Definition of Terms

1. Assertive Discipline is a comprehensive program formulated to reverse behavior problems in the classroom using assertion training.
2. Assertion Training is a systematic approach designed to help individuals learn more effectively to

express their needs and feelings, and a means for increasing their ability to get their needs met in both personal and professional relations.

#### Assumptions and Delimitations

There were five major assumptions underlying this study:

1. Students will be open and candid in their responses.
2. Teachers will be reserved in their responses because they are involved in the success or failure of the program. Their tendency will be to encourage positive findings.
3. Parents will respond based on information from their children, and they will know about the Assertive Discipline concept.
4. All parties involved with the study will be very interested in viewing the results.
5. The superintendent and school board will weigh the results of the study for future actions.

The delimitations of the study include:

1. Prior research studies of Assertive Discipline in high schools are limited.
2. Permission to release school-related data will require administrative approval.
3. Student responses may be biased against Assertive Discipline because of the freedom they have lost.

4. The results cannot be generalized to other institutions without further study.

#### Significance of the Study

This study provided significant information on the effectiveness of the Assertive Discipline Program, and it supplied evaluative data to the school system. It will aid the administrators and staff members in improving the learning atmosphere.

The results will be shared with all the participants. Thus, the students, parents and teachers will be given an opportunity to review all responses by the different groups involved in improving the school environment. The Board of Education will determine if the Assertive Discipline Program should be recommended to other schools, and if future workshops should be funded by the system.

#### Organization of the Study

The basic organizational plan for the rest of this study will be as follows:

Chapter Two. This chapter will consist of a review of literature, related student performance and organizational climate. All relevant materials on Assertive Discipline will be included in the study.

Chapter Three. This chapter addresses methods of gathering and analyzing data. The pertinent information will include the population, sample, instrumentation, pilot test, and study procedures.

Chapter Four. This chapter will contain a complete account of the results of data analysis from the study at Charles D. Owen High School. This information will be presented in narrative form, accompanied by necessary tables, figures, and discussion of the findings in light of the theoretical framework.

Chapter Five. This chapter will contain a summary of the study and its major findings. It will address the following specific areas:

1. Specific conclusions which can be made.
2. Implications of the results for practice.
3. Recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II  
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

General School Environment and Academic Performance

Behavior is a mirror in which everyone shows his image.

(Goethe)

The basic purpose of this study was to determine the worth and merit of the Assertive Discipline Program at Charles D. Owen High School for the 1985-1986 and 1986-1987 school years. School discipline is an important concern not only in the educational community, but also in the larger community (Shanker, 1985).

Alfred Alschuler argued that the organization of a school regulates the level of discipline problems in a school. It is the total school environment not an individual student character foible that determines the level of civility in the school and classroom. When the general school atmosphere is healthy--standards rigorous, curriculums sound, teacher-administrator relations cooperative, the local community supportive--then discipline problems become rare. Self discipline becomes the norm, and the school becomes a place where teachers can teach, and students can learn (Futrell, 1985).



Far too many students or young people lack the social, academic, and interpersonal skills necessary to become successful adults. Educators must provide effective and safe schools so that young people can receive the education they deserve (Deukmejian, 1985). Research indicates that schools with a safe positive climate have a favorable impact on student achievement and behavior (Purvis and Leonard, 1985). One of the keys to good school climate is a positive disciplinary process that teaches students how to act and to take responsibility for their behavior. Effective school climate and discipline programs involve partnerships within the school environment (NSSC, 1985).

Even the most skillfully crafted code of conduct will count for little if a school's curriculum is weak, texts dull, and teachers uninspired, or administrators negligent. A school must be seen as an organism--and the health of the organism depends on all the parts working together in harmony (Glasser, 1969).

One of the major achievements of education has been the identification of the characteristics of "Effective" schools--particularly schools that have been successful in teaching basic skills to all children, including those from low-income families. This is a major achievement because the effective schools concept can provide a basis for student achievement in all types of schools. An important characteristic of an effective school is an emphasis on

clarity, consistency, and fairness in disciplinary decisions to produce a safe and orderly environment. Effective discipline policies contribute to the academic atmosphere by emphasizing the importance of regular attendance, promptness, respect for teachers, academic work, and good conduct. Behavior and academic success go together (Dept of Ed., 1986). Schools that encourage academic achievement focus on the importance of scholastic success and on maintaining order and discipline.

The goal of school discipline is to teach students to behave properly without direct supervision. Student involvement is essential if students are to value the school and monitor their own behavior (Wayson & Lasley, 1984). In the book, Foundation's Edge, Isaac Asimov observes that it is often necessary to abandon power in order to retain the essence of it (Wayson and Lasley, 1984). Shared decision-making maintains a school climate in which everyone wants to achieve self-discipline.

Teaching without discipline is exhausting, frustrating, demoralizing, and impossible. Discipline stressing only teacher self-control and orderly conduct is static. Student energies should be used to control themselves and the teacher's energies should be used to teach (Wagner, 1983). Many educators view the element of discipline as a facet of traditional education and are unwilling to give it much thought, while others associate discipline with the "fear

approach". However, without some level of classroom discipline or control, the teacher is going to have a difficult time (Welker, 1976).

### Assertive Discipline--An Aid to Improving Environment and School Performance

When teachers know in advance how they are going to deal with misbehavior, and when students know what to expect when they misbehave, disruptive behavior is likely to decrease. Children in a typical classroom might spend less than half their time "on task". The school day is effectively cut in half. A teacher may devote a disproportionate share of time and attention to a disorderly minority, at the expense of other students. As part of a school's overall discipline plan, Assertive Discipline can be a set of preventive discipline techniques that forestall disruptive behavior in the classroom so as to maintain an effective learning atmosphere.

Assertive Discipline is an outgrowth of efforts to work with children with behavior problems and with classroom teachers on how to deal effectively with such children, and evolved from the theoretical and practical aspects of Assertion Training (Canter, 1976). Assertion Training skills enable individuals to stand up more effectively for their wants and feelings, while at the same time not abusing the rights of others. Some people say yes to requests when they do not want to give an affirmative response, because

they have never learned the art of saying no (Fensterham and Baer, 1975).

While other animal species have only two major coping behaviors--fight or flight, man has three major survival coping behaviors--fight, flight, and a verbal problem solving ability (Smith, 1975). Assertive behaviors can provide positive feelings about oneself and others. It increases self-esteem, leads to the development of mutual respect, and helps to achieve goals (Jakubowski & Lange, 1978).

Assertive Discipline provides the option of positive incentives to students on an individual or group basis. This provides opportunities for the recognition of students who are improving as well as the well-behaved students in the school. Teachers can "take charge" of their classrooms in a firm but positive manner with the final result producing a better educational environment for teaching and learning. When students learn to cope assertively with some of the doltish things they do, instead of denying that they did them, they typically make fewer mistakes, moreover, the mistakes that they do make are corrected quickly because time is not wasted in arguments (Smith, 1986).

## Assertive Discipline Studies and Their Impact on School Performance

### Elementary Schools

Assertive Discipline is a competency based approach to discipline. It is designed to provide educators with the competence and confidence necessary to assert their influence and deal effectively with the discipline problems in today's schools. The program advocates that teachers must utilize a systematic approach to discipline which enables them to set firm, consistent limits for the students while at the same time remaining cognizant of students' needs for warmth and positive support (Canter, 1976).

In September 1977, the faculty of Rice Elementary, along with all their co-workers in California's Santa Maria Elementary Schools, were trained in Assertive Discipline. In the days following the training, the teachers set up Assertive Discipline in each of their classrooms. Administrators and teachers of Rice Elementary reported an 80 percent reduction in discipline problems the first year the program was utilized (Canter, 1976).

Cheryle Ersavas (1980) conducted a study of Assertive Discipline in four elementary schools. The objective of the study was to give teachers, students, and administrators at four elementary schools an opportunity to learn and use the strategies of Canter's Assertive Discipline Training to improve student behavior management on a schoolwide basis

and in each teacher's classroom. The data was secured from a needs assessment from the fifth grade parents, and 57 pretest and post-test responses from the teachers, four administrators and 169 fifth grade students at the four elementary schools. The hypotheses were as follows: (1) that there will be no difference in the composite of the pre-survey mean responses of the survey for parents of the four schools prior to the teachers receiving instruction in Assertive Discipline techniques, and (2) that there will be a difference in the composite of the pre- and post teacher survey for the teacher from four schools who had acquired and implemented Assertive Discipline Techniques. Analysis of the data produced these findings: (1) As predicted, there was no significant difference of the parent responses to the needs assessment pre-survey at the four elementary schools, (2) In the student responses, three of the four schools had a mean post-survey composite rating significantly different from the mean pre-survey composite rating, (3) In the teacher responses, three of the four schools had a mean post-survey composite rating significantly different from the mean pre-survey composite rating, (4) In the three schools where more teachers expressed willingness to implement the Assertive Discipline program, the percentage of teachers who experienced noticeable growth was higher, (5) The school with the highest California Assessment Program Achievement results experienced the lowest growth

from the program, and (6) The school where the highest percentage of students perceived themselves as reading better than most students in their class experienced the least growth from the program.

Carl B. Henderson (1982) of Indiana University conducted a study titled "An Analysis of Assertive Discipline Training and Implementation on Inservice Elementary Teachers' Self-Concept, Locus of Control, Pupil Control Ideology, and Assertive Personality." The purpose of the study was to determine whether differences with respect to self-control, locus of control, pupil control ideology, and assertive teacher personality character traits exist among elementary classroom teachers in the same school system who were trained and implemented the "Assertive Discipline Program" over one academic year and those who were not trained and did not implement the "Assertive Discipline Program". The findings suggest that: (1) Elementary school classroom teachers trained and implementing the "Assertive Discipline Program" displayed significant differences with regard to locus of control, pupil control ideology, and higher mean scores with respect to self-concept and assertive personality characteristics. Other elementary teachers in the same system, and a group outside of this system scored lower on the same identified categories.

The 1983 Assertive Discipline Program of California's John Swett Elementary School established student behavior expectations and consequences. In addition to these two goals, the program offered varying degrees of positive acknowledgment for the students meeting the expectations. The program was initiated during the 1979-1980 school year. The program goals were to improve student behavior, increase time on task, and improve school climate by acknowledging students' positive behaviors. During the 1979-1980 school year, with a student population of 350, a total of 350 students were referred to the office for disciplinary reasons. During the 1982-1983 school year, 247 students visited the office out of a total school population of 365 students. This was a 30 percent reduction in student referrals. The nature of the referrals changed from interpersonal problems to those related to on-task behaviors. On-task behavior problems shifted from class disruptions to not being on task when expected (Martinez Unified School District, Calif., 1983).

Audrey Sharpe (1980) conducted a study on the effects of Assertive Discipline on Title I students in the areas of reading and mathematics achievement. Specifically, the study was designed to determine whether application of the systematic program components developed by Canter would result in statistically significant improvement in achievement in reading and mathematics. Sharpe reviewed



relevant literature and implemented a study to investigate the effectiveness of the Assertive Discipline model.

Fifth and sixth grade students enrolled in the seven Title I programs in the East Allen County Schools during the 1979-1980 school year comprised the population from which the sample was drawn. Teachers of Title I students at schools containing four of the Title I programs included Assertive Discipline as part of the Title I offerings for fifth and sixth grade students. Teachers of Title I students at schools containing the remaining three programs used an undifferentiated approach to behavior management with fifth and sixth grade students.

The 1971 Metropolitan Achievement Tests, Elementary Reading and Mathematics, Form H, were administered to the 83 subjects in April, 1979 and April, 1980, as a pretest and post-test in the study. The experimental group consisted of 49 subjects and the control group consisted of 34 subjects. One null hypothesis and two alternative hypotheses were tested to determine the degree to which Assertive Discipline affected achievement in reading and mathematics. The study found no significant difference in reading and math scores of students who were exposed to Assertive Discipline and those who were not.

### Secondary Schools

Stephen Terrell (1984) of Indiana University conducted a study of the "Effects of Assertive Discipline upon

Selected School Discipline Variables." The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of Assertive Discipline as a disciplinary alternative in public high schools in the state of Indiana. The problem considered was: "To what extent does Assertive Discipline have an effect on the incidence of student truancies, disciplinary referrals, detentions, in-school suspensions, and out-of-school suspensions when compared to other disciplinary procedures?" (Terrell, 1984, p. 345). Terrell conducted a survey to determine the number of schools that used Assertive Discipline on a schoolwide basis. Administrators at 12 assertive schools and 32 non-assertive schools received questionnaires. Eleven assertive and 26 non-assertive schools returned the questionnaire. The 11 schools which had used the program for one or two years were matched on five characteristics with 11 schools not using the program. A correlated t-test and a sine test were used for analysis of the data.

The major finding of this study was a significant difference for the mean change in the incidence of in-school suspension from the 1982-1983 school year to the 1983-1984 school year for public high schools using Assertive Discipline as compared to those schools not using the program. This finding may have resulted from the progressive step-by-step approach inherent in the Assertive Discipline program that would place in-school suspension as

the last punishment that dealt with the student in school. This study did support the use of Assertive Discipline as a disciplinary alternative under which in-school suspensions were reduced.

Raymond Bauer (1982) of Miami University conducted "A Quasi Experimental Study of the Effects of Assertive Discipline." The purpose of this study was to measure the effectiveness of Lee Canter's "Assertive Discipline" in changing student attitudes toward school. A quasi-experimental design, static-group comparison, was used as the research method for the study. The experimental group was drawn from a high school which implemented assertive discipline on a schoolwide basis while the comparison group was drawn from a high school where teachers used various methods of classroom discipline. From the sample, all students in the ninth grade class and all teachers under contract for at least one full year in the school district were included in the study. The data sources were ninth grade discipline logs, records reporting student withdrawals from school, and absence reports for both schools. For each school, two instruments were used to survey the instructional staff and one instrument was used to survey the ninth grade class. Three different tests of statistical significance were used to evaluate the data.

The following question was considered for

investigation: "When implemented on a schoolwide basis, does Canter's Assertive Discipline reduce behavior problems, increase teacher satisfaction, and develop positive student attitudes toward school?" (Bauer, 1982, p. 25). The data revealed that "Assertive Discipline" was effective in reducing certain types of classroom discipline problems. All of the discipline problems that were significantly different between the two schools were related to the development of social skills and all the problems related to learning activities were not statistically significant. In addition, male students generally created more discipline problems than females. In all categories of discipline problems, there was a greater percentage of males in every discipline category. Furthermore, teachers in the school using "Assertive Discipline" reported greater satisfaction with their roles in the classroom compared to teachers from the school using various models of classroom discipline. Finally, the school using "Assertive Discipline" did not show an increase in student morale or positive student attitudes toward school compared to the school using non-"assertive" discipline techniques.

The final study reported in this chapter centers around the results of a 1983 needs assessment completed by secondary education students enrolled in North Arizona University's College of Education and responses of students who had already graduated and entered the teaching

profession. Discipline topped the list of concerns. As a result, a concerted effort by the secondary staff to address this issue resulted in the adoption of the Canter Model of Assertive Discipline in the pre-service training. The main purpose of the research using the Canter Model was to determine the extent to which pre-service secondary education students modified their attitudes toward discipline in the classroom. Thirty-seven secondary education students comprising two sections (classes) of the "High School Teaching Methods" course at Northern Arizona University's College of Education participated during the spring semester. Although nine physical education and art students represented over a third of the subject, it was also true that every secondary major offered at the university was included.

The results of the study indicated that of the twelve indices reflecting the participants' attitudes relating to discipline in the classroom, six were significant at the 0.05 level using a two-tailed test. After the treatment (five weeks after the conclusion of the treatment), respondents indicated that they felt "good and confident" that they could handle the task of discipline. The respondents also expressed positive reactions to having a plan of action before problems arise. The development of a smooth, systematic, and objective approach to discipline created a higher level of classroom confidence for the

respondents. A teacher who is in charge and feels confident believes that a systematic approach to discipline should flow from instruction to disciplinary action and back to instruction with a modicum of disruption (Ryan, 1984).

#### Assertive Discipline at Charles D. Owen High School

The Assertive Discipline Program at Charles D. Owen High School established student behavior expectations and consequences. In addition to these outcomes, the program offered varying degrees of positive acknowledgement for students meeting or exceeding the expectations. The program goals included efforts to improve student behavior, increase student time on task, and improve school climate by acknowledging positive student behaviors.

The administration and staff at Charles D. Owen High School decided to create an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. The staff and administration also wanted to provide a process that emphasizes schoolwide consistency in the establishment of verbal limits by teachers and the administration, i.e., the communication of exacting requests, and repeating requests for compliance until students realize that the teacher cannot be diverted or ignored. Positive consequences for following the rules and heeding requests provided recognition for students who do follow rules and exhibit positive school and classroom behavior. The Assertive Discipline Program provided opportunities for the entire school organization to become

involved in supporting a program of student self-management leading to effective school discipline.

Assertive Discipline promotes parent, student, and staff involvement in determining what is required for each to function well in the school's teaching and learning environment. Parents become informed of the schoolwide and individual classroom rules to enhance their knowledge of expected behaviors. Staff members are involved in applying the procedures for their individual classroom rules to enhance their knowledge of expected behaviors. Staff members are involved in applying the procedures to their individual classroom and throughout the school. Students are involved in the development of individual classroom and schoolwide rules which strive to ensure a consistent and effective communication network among the groups.

The Assertive Discipline Program has a component that is based on positive incentives. However, it must be remembered that these incentives are not pay-offs. The use of rewards to enhance positive behavior will do much to improve discipline. The question of bribery is not appropriate, because a bribe is a gift or money given to have someone else do something that is illegal or immoral (Dodson, 1978). The ultimate goal is to enable a child to grow up to be an adult who is self-disciplined, who has learned to reward herself or himself for desirable behavior.

### Summary

The review of literature produced a limited number of studies which addressed the relationship between Assertive Discipline and perceptions of behavior among high school students, teachers and parents. The studies which were reviewed, examined data derived from school settings and the impact of Assertive Discipline on these schools. Data from secondary schools, along with studies conducted in elementary schools, provided the context for understanding the problem under investigation.

Many educational leaders indicated that discipline is a key factor which influences academic success. Statements were made to emphasize that orderly schools and classrooms are vital to the process of teaching and learning (Baker, 1985).

The consensus of studies in this chapter indicated that positive changes occurred in some schools where an Assertive Discipline Program was implemented. These changes were evidenced by a reduction in referrals to the principal's office, improved student behavior expectations, and increased teacher confidence. A few of the studies also mentioned schools where no significant changes occurred in student morale, attitudes toward school, and academic achievement. Studies indicated that the use of an Assertive Discipline Program can create positive changes to produce an environment for teaching and learning.



### CHAPTER III

#### METHOD OF STUDY

The basic purpose of this study was to determine the worth and merit of the Assertive Discipline Program at Charles D. Owen High School for the 1985-1986 and 1986-1987 school years. This chapter describes the general procedures used in this investigation. Information was provided by:

- (1) Survey questionnaires, (2) Interviews of assistant principals, (3) Interviews of teacher-opinion leaders, and
- (4) School statistical records.

Triangulation procedures were used to strengthen the validity of the data. Triangulation is the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon (Brewer and Collins, 1981). The researcher used multiple methods in this investigation (surveys, interviews, and school records) to overcome the weaknesses or biases of a single method taken by itself. Each research method used in this study has built-in weaknesses which range from an inability to enter realistically the subject's life-world in surveys or the excessive requirement of time and expense of interviews. However, the investigator realized that interpretations which are built upon triangulation are likely to be stronger than those which rest on the more constricted framework of a single

method. The first method involved the comparison of survey responses from students, teachers, and parents. The second method compared the interviews of assistant principals, teacher-opinion leaders, and school records. The third method involved the analysis of school records.

#### Population and Sample

The population for this study was Charles D. Owen High School students, teachers, parents, and assistant principals. The sampling procedure consisted of a census survey of students, teachers, and assistant principals at Charles D. Owen High School. A census sample is a research procedure which attempts to acquire data from every member of a population. There were 800 students in grades nine through twelve, and 722 students (90%) participated in the study. There were 65 teachers in the school population, and 62 (95%) participated in the study. All the parents had a child or children in school during the course of the study. The assistant principals had assigned duties which placed them in direct contact with students, teachers, and parents.

A stratified random sampling procedure was used to create a sample of 320 parents. This sample represented a proportional number of 80 parents at each grade level. A table of random numbers was matched with numbers assigned to students to determine the specific parents to be surveyed. The sample size for parents was determined by using 40 percent of the total student population and proportionally

dividing this number among the four grade levels. If two student members from the same family were selected, the random number of the second student was not used, and a selection was made using the next random number from the table.

### Instruments

The collection of data for this study involved the use of three survey questionnaires modified from survey instruments from the National Study of School Evaluation. The National Study of School Evaluation is an established organization which provides materials for evaluating schools. The National Study of School Evaluation design was used as a reference in the formulation and development of the 20 item instrument and the five open-ended questions. The survey instruments contained 25 items.

The first 20 items required a yes-no response from the respondents (parents, teachers, students). The next five items were open-ended statements. The student survey contained 20 yes-no questions related to the issues of Assertive Discipline and its relationship to classroom learning opportunities, student interpersonal relationships, voluntary adherence to discipline rules, and student perceptions of the school climate (see Appendix A). There were five open-ended questions which elicited written responses for suggested improvements in general school discipline as well as in the Assertive Discipline Program.

Additional statements addressed the identification of the most serious discipline problems at school, and the effects of the Assertive Discipline Program on the school environment.

The teacher-survey contained 20 yes-no questions (see Appendix B). Special emphasis was placed on Assertive Discipline and teacher perceptions of student interpersonal relationships, administrative support, school climate, the use of positive incentives, parental support, and increased learning opportunities. The five open-ended questions addressed the same issues as the student survey.

The parent survey questionnaire contained 20 yes-no responses which addressed perceptions of school climate, school-parent relationships, student interpersonal relationships, discipline problems, and the equality and fairness of school disciplinary rules (see Appendix C).

Logical validity is the degree to which the research design and instrument measures an intended content area (Gay, 1981; Smith & Glass, 1987). The researcher can ask a number of experts to examine the design and instruments to indicate whether or not they logically represent the research questions of the study. The logical validity of the questionnaires and design was determined by the members of the researcher's advisory committee. The advisory committee reviewed the questions and concluded that the

questions were designed to collect the desired information as stated in the purpose of the study.

### Interviews

The two assistant principals were asked to respond to five research questions (see Appendix D). These questions addressed their perceptions of the Assertive Discipline Program from the administrative level. They were also asked to indicate its effect on the students, teachers, parents, and the community. The interview responses were tape recorded, transcribed, and summarized to emphasize the key thoughts concerning the efficiency of the Assertive Discipline Program.

The next series of interviews involved teacher-opinion leaders at Charles D. Owen High School. These teachers were selected on the basis of their leadership roles as departmental chairpersons. Each teacher was asked to respond to the same five research questions. The teacher responses were tape recorded, transcribed, categorized, and assembled to present their generalized views of the Assertive Discipline Program's effectiveness.

### School Records

School records were examined to provide information concerning various testing results and disciplinary proceedings. The records were examined to provide a statistical view of student achievement and behavior.

The Scholastic Aptitude Test results for the years 1984-1987 were reviewed to indicate student achievement during these years. The time frame of the study was 1985-1987; however, the data from the year 1984 were added to provide baseline data. The test results were divided into mathematical and verbal categories.

The North Carolina Competency Test results for sophomores and juniors taking it the first time were examined to reveal scores for the years 1984-1987. The scores were broken into mathematical and reading sections. This state-mandated test requires a satisfactory passing score on both sections before a student receives a diploma.

The Buncombe County Schools end-of-year report was examined to indicate the number of suspensions and expulsions for the years 1985-1987. This information presented a general view of the disciplinary procedures which required administrative intervention. Special attention was focused on the increase or decrease in disciplinary referrals.

#### Pilot Study

A pilot study of the survey instruments was conducted by selecting from each high school grade level five students, two parents, and two teachers. The total sample size was 30 respondents.

The key questions addressed in the pilot study related to the clarity of the questions and directions for completing the questionnaire. After completion of each instrument,

the respondents were asked if they encountered problems with any survey item.

All three groups of respondents indicated that they encountered no problems in responding to the directions or the survey. The researcher selected a sample which was representative of the groups to be used in the main study. Data collected from the pilot study are listed in Appendix E.

### Procedures

This section describes the steps used to conduct the study. As a background for the study, the researcher reviewed several formats for gathering information. The use of a yes-no instrument provided a simple method for responses, and the open-ended items provide for more in-depth personal responses. The researcher promised confidentiality to all survey respondents.

The questionnaires were constructed to collect data related to the purposes of the study. Special emphasis was given to the actual and perceived results of the implementation of Assertive Discipline by the respondent groups. All parties involved in the study (students, teachers, administrators) were notified of the date and purposes of the study.

Before conducting a training session with the staff members, the researcher compiled an alphabetized computer listing of all students in each grade level. This listing

of students was to be used to formulate the amount of survey materials needed to conduct the study. The following materials were prepared for each teacher: the required number of survey questionnaires, machine-scored answer sheets (Scantron-899) with five superimposed open-ended statements, a listing of all students in the homeroom with a special notation (red dot) of those students who were randomly selected to take surveys home to their parents, and packets for parents (cover letter, questionnaire, answer sheet, number 2 pencil).

During a staff meeting, the teachers and administrators were given a training session covering the procedures to be used during the study. The homeroom teachers were informed that the survey instruments would be administered during the 20-minute period prior to the beginning of classes. Each teacher was given a packet with the instruments for students and parents. They were asked to complete a teacher's instrument and submit it to the administrative office. Teachers were also asked to verify that they had received a sufficient number of instruments for each student in their homerooms. Certain students were identified by a red dot next to their names. The teachers were informed that these students were chosen, using a table of randomly selected numbers, to take a survey instrument home for their parents to complete and return to the school.



The teachers were advised that a pilot study would occur before the main survey. Selected students from the homerooms were to complete the survey, and others were asked to take a copy home for their parents. Parents and students were to indicate problems they encountered in responding to the survey. The staff members were notified to complete the survey and inform the researcher of problems incurred during the process. The departmental chairpersons and the assistant principals were informed that they would be interviewed and asked to give their opinions and suggestions concerning the Assertive Discipline Program at Charles D. Owen High School.

Pilot Study results were collected, processed, and tabulated with special attention to the wording and directions for completing the instrument. The senior students were given the survey instrument ahead of the other students because the researcher needed their responses before graduation. This provided an intact group of students 9-12 who had been exposed to Assertive Discipline at Charles D. Owen High School. The other students were surveyed during the following school semester.

The survey instruments were administered to the various class levels on different days during their homeroom periods. The directions for administering the study instruments were included in each of the packets. The students were given a number two pencil, a survey form, and

an answer sheet. When the study instrument had been distributed, the students were asked to read the directions silently while the teacher read them aloud. After reading the directions, the teacher asked if there were any questions. The students were reminded that answers should be consistent with the printed directions. The students were also notified that the survey was not timed; however, they were to work quickly.

Before collecting the surveys and the answer sheets, the teachers asked the students to check their answer sheets to make sure that they had responded to every item and that no stray marks appeared on the answer sheet. The teachers collected the answer sheets and the questionnaires. Students who were randomly selected were given a packet in a 9 x 12 clasp folder to take home for their parents to complete and return. The researcher asked the teachers to keep their printed list of these students so that it could be determined who had not returned their answer sheets. As an extra incentive for returning these forms, the researcher asked the teacher to place the student's identification number on the outside of each returned folder so that the student's name could be entered in drawings for gifts. The researcher made follow-up contacts by telephone to encourage the return of the surveys.

The research procedure was different for the parents of the students who had graduated. Using the previous year's

listing of seniors and a random table of numbers, a list of parents to be surveyed was determined. These parents were mailed a packet in a 10 x 13 clasp folder which contained a cover letter, questionnaire, answer sheet, and a self-addressed 9 x 12 clasp folder. The researcher made follow-up contacts with these parents to encourage the return of the surveys.

All interested parties, from the superintendent of schools to the students, were informed that they would have access to the data from the study. The school records used for this study included the Scholastic Aptitude Test, the North Carolina Competency Test, and the Buncombe County Schools End-of-Year Report. The information from these sources was to be placed on an informational table for year-to-year comparisons, with special attention given to the improvement or decline in performance. The End-of-Year Report indicated the increase or the decrease in serious disciplinary referrals for the years included in the study.

#### Design and Data

This section of the study describes the statistical design associated with the research and the procedures used for data analysis. The research design used questionnaires, school statistical records, and interviews to provide data related to research questions. The research design used survey questionnaires to respond to research questions numbered one, two, three, and five. Open-ended survey

responses addressed research questions numbered one and five. School statistical records addressed data related to research question number four. Interviews of teacher-opinion leaders and assistant principals addressed all five research questions. At the conclusion of the study, data collected from the questionnaires, interviews, and school records were compiled and examined to determine their relationship to the research questions.

The data from the questionnaires was assembled with frequency counts for each item in the student, parent, and teacher surveys. The responses from the three groups were compared to indicate similarities or differences in their responses.

The information collected from the interviews was summarized in narrative form, emphasizing specific quotes which indicated a particular perception of the Assertive Discipline Program. The data presented by the school records were summarized in tables and statements, with attention given to overall progress of the Assertive Discipline Program.

### Summary

This chapter described the general procedures used to conduct this study. A census sample of students and teachers at Charles D. Owen High School, and a stratified random sample of parents, were selected as respondents who made up the population of the study.

Data were collected by questionnaires, interviews, and school records. The questionnaires gathered information about the respondents' perceptions of Assertive Discipline and its relationship to learning, prevalent discipline problems, and school climate. A pilot study of the instrument preceded the main research project to identify problems with the content or directions for completing the instruments. The interviews of the teacher-opinion leaders and the assistant principals emphasized their major thoughts concerning the positive or negative direction of the Assertive Discipline Program and its effectiveness. The school records provided an unobtrusive view of student achievement and behavior.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### Introduction

The basic purpose of this study was to determine the worth and merit of the Assertive Discipline Program at Charles D. Owen High School for the 1985-1986 and 1986-1987 school years. Data for this study were provided by triangulation procedures which applied several research methodologies (surveys, interviews, school records) to address the research questions.

The first procedure involved the comparison of survey responses from students, teachers and parents. The second procedure compared the interviews of assistant principals, teacher-opinion leaders, and school records. The third procedure involved the analysis of school records.

Data from 722 students, 60 teachers, and 241 parents were collected by a survey. Interviews of two assistant principals and six teacher-opinion leaders provided further supportive information in response to research questions. The school records supplied pertinent facts with reference to student behavior and accomplishments during the initial period of the Assertive Discipline Program.

Survey items were placed into categories related to each of the research questions. Data were then placed into

a table format for easy comprehension. The responses of three groups (students, teachers, parents) provided data for the tables.

### Research Question One

The first research question was: What is the perception among students, teachers, and parents of the Assertive Discipline Program? This question was addressed by survey and interview data.

#### Students

Student responses to the closed-ended survey questions that addressed their perceptions of the Assertive Discipline Program are summarized in Table 1. The respondents registered a 41% rate of satisfaction with the discipline in their school. A fairly large number of respondents (72%) felt that their teachers enforced discipline rules. A high percentage of respondents (79%) indicated that their teachers explained the Assertive Discipline rules to them. A similar number (79%) felt that students should have input in establishing discipline rules and regulations. Respondents indicated that 57% of their teachers listed contact with parents as a part of the Assertive Discipline Program. Forty-two percent of the respondents indicated that teachers enforced assertive discipline outside their classrooms. Only 35% of the respondents wanted the Assertive Discipline Program to continue. A small minority of the respondents (22%) felt that there were enough

Table 1

Student Perceptions of Assertive Discipline Program

<u>Survey Questions</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>% Yes</u>
Are you satisfied with discipline in your school?	699	41
Do most of your teachers enforce their Assertive Discipline rules?	702	72
Have your teachers explained the Assertive Discipline rules to you?	700	79
Should students have input in establishing Assertive Discipline rules and regulations?	696	79
Do most of your teachers list contact with your parent(s) or guardian(s) as a part of their Assertive Discipline Program?	699	57
Do teachers enforce discipline procedures outside of their classroom?	688	42
Would you recommend continuing the Assertive Discipline Program?	674	35
Does the Assertive Discipline Program offer enough positive rewards?	690	22
Have students in your school become more respectful to each other?	699	17



Table 1 (Continued)

Student Perceptions of Assertive Discipline Program

<u>Survey Questions</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>% Yes</u>
Do you feel that the Assertive Discipline rules and regulations fairly match the penalties or consequences?	698	48

positive incentives. Only 17% of the respondents felt student respect for each other had increased. Nearly half (48%) of the respondents felt that the Assertive Discipline rules and regulations matched the consequences. The student responses to the closed-ended survey questions were generally negative, but almost half of the respondents felt that the Assertive Discipline rules were fair.

Student responses to the open-ended questions produced many reactions. A content analysis of these responses identified five themes. The first theme related to improving the Assertive Discipline Program. It was implied that reducing the severity of the consequences or penalties for rule violations would be a major improvement. The second theme addressed the provision of additional positive incentives as a strong need of the Assertive Discipline Program. A third area of concern indicated that disrespect to teachers was the most serious discipline problem. Additional responses indicated that the discipline rules needed more stringent enforcement. The final theme pointed to the need for better mutual respect between students and teachers. The open-ended responses tended to be negative. However, it was pointed out that there was better schoolwide and classroom behavior.

### Teachers

Teacher responses to the closed-ended survey questions that addressed their perception of the Assertive Discipline

Program are summarized in Table 2. A high percentage (83%) of respondents recommended continuing the Assertive Discipline Program. Seventy-five percent of the respondents indicated satisfaction with the administrative support of the Assertive Discipline Program. When a discipline problem occurred, 77% of the respondents felt that help was available from the school administration. A significant number of respondents (77%) included parent contact as a part of their discipline procedures, and 73% indicated that parent contact should be sought and welcomed. Seventy-two percent felt that negative consequences can stop inappropriate behavior. Respondents (70%) perceived that other teachers enforced discipline outside of their classrooms. More than half of the respondents (63%) felt that parents were knowledgeable about the Assertive Discipline Program. However, only 42% felt that the positive incentives within the Assertive Discipline Program were adequate. The teacher responses to the closed-ended survey questions were generally positive.

Teacher responses to the open-ended survey questions contained five themes. Consistent enforcement of rules was identified as a major factor in improving the Assertive Discipline Program. Positive incentives for students were placed high on the list of needs. Disrespect for adult authority was identified as the most serious school discipline problem. The failure to allow for individual

Table 2

Teacher Perceptions of Assertive Discipline Program

<u>Survey Questions</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>% Yes</u>
Would you recommend continuing the Assertive Discipline Program next year?	60	83
Are you satisfied with the Administrative support of the Assertive Discipline Program?	60	75
When you have a disciplinary problem, can you expect help from the administration?	50	77
Have you included parent contact as a procedure in your Assertive Discipline Program?	50	77
Would you agree that in any discipline plan that parent contact should be sought and welcomed?	50	73
If negative consequences stopped inappropriate behavior, will positive consequences change behavior?	60	72
Do other teachers enforce discipline outside of their classrooms?	60	70
Do you feel that parents possess knowledge about the school and its Assertive Discipline Program?	60	63

Are you satisfied with the number of  
positive incentives resulting from  
the Assertive Discipline Program?

60

42

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student differences was an unpopular element of the Assertive Discipline Program. However, the Assertive Discipline Program was perceived to have created an improvement in the learning environment. The overall teacher responses to the open-ended survey questions were positive.

The interviews of teacher-opinion leaders indicated a more positive orientation to their classroom under the Assertive Discipline Program. For example:

I feel more in control of the situation. Kids know what to expect out of me, I know what to expect out of them. Things are much easier in my classroom.

Without discipline you have chaos, and it has helped the students, because they know what the consequences are--they know what is coming.

A second theme which emerged was the important role of teachers in the disciplinary process:

I think the Assertive Discipline Program was an eye-opener for the students, and sent a message that teachers are united here. The impression was made that the faculty members are going to have some expectations.

The major responsibility for success or failure of any discipline program lies on the shoulders of the teachers. We can be our own worst enemy.

The teachers were not the only respondents with a positive attitude to the Assertive Discipline Program.

### Parents

Parent responses to the closed-end survey questions that addressed their perception of the Assertive Discipline

Program are summarized in Table 3. A high percentage (78%) of respondents felt that any discipline program should include contact with them. Student behavior was perceived to be better by 84% of the respondents when the rules and consequences are known in advance. A large number of respondents (82%) felt that teachers should contact them quickly if a discipline problem occurs. A considerable percentage (75%) of respondents felt that there should be consequences for misbehaving students and rewards for students who follow the rules. A large majority (71%) of respondents felt that the school rules were reasonable. Seventy-one percent of the respondents believed that the school was concerned about their children's opportunity to get the best education. However, only 30% indicated that students were provided an opportunity to reach their full potential at school. Sixty-five percent of respondents were unaware of the Assertive Discipline Program. More than half (64%) of the respondents indicated that their children looked forward to attending school. A significant number of respondents (67%) recommended continuing the Assertive Discipline Program. The parent responses to the closed-ended survey questions were generally positive. However, the respondents did not feel that the school helped young people reach their full potential.

Table 3

Parent Perceptions of Assertive Discipline Program

<u>Survey Questions</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>% Yes</u>
Would you agree that any discipline program should include a procedure for contact with parents?	233	78
Should student behavior improve when the rules and consequences are known in advance?	233	84
Do you feel that teachers should contact you quickly if there are problems in their class concerning your child?	233	82
Should discipline programs have consequences for students who do not follow the rules and rewards for those students who do follow the rules?	233	75
Are the school rules and regulations affecting students in the school reasonable?	233	71
Does the Assertive Discipline Program indicate that the school is concerned about your child's opportunity to get the best education?	233	71
Are students provided with an opportunity to reach their full potential at school?	233	30



Table 3 (Continued)

Parent Perceptions of Assertive Discipline Program

<u>Survey Questions</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>% Yes</u>
Have you been made aware of the Assertive Discipline Program at the school?	233	65
Does your child look forward to going to school?	233	64
Would you recommend that the Assertive Discipline Program be continued next year?	233	67

Parent responses to the open-ended survey questions prompted suggestions that better parent-school relationships would improve the Assertive Discipline Program. Parents who disliked the Assertive Discipline Program felt that rules were applied unfairly. Disrespect to school personnel was considered the most serious discipline problem in the school, while drugs ranked second. Another major response mentioned the need for more student input during the development of rules and regulations. The need for additional positive incentives stood out as a final area of concern. However, there was a positive perception that students knew where they stood at all times. The general acceptance of the Assertive Discipline Program was supported by the open-ended responses.

#### Assistant Principals

The interviews of the assistant principals provided a mixed series of responses, based on their reaction to the survey questions concerning perceptions of the Assertive Discipline Program. For example:

Consistency is always a problem when you have three people dealing with the same kinds of things. Without the Assertive Discipline Program, I should imagine that things would have been tough.

Kids did not know what was expected. People need to know what is expected.

There were teachers who said, "I feel more in control and if everyone did this across-the-board, discipline problems would be reduced."

Parent attitudes changed because they realized that the same discipline procedures used with their child were used with the others.

The perceptions of the assistant principals were initially mixed and slightly negative, but were more positive as their familiarity with the Assertive Discipline Program increased.

### Summary

The responses from the three groups (students, teachers, and parents) displayed some similarities. There were also contrasting perceptions of the Assertive Discipline Program.

The student responses to the closed-ended survey questions were generally negative, but almost half felt that the Assertive Discipline rules were fair. Responses to the open-ended questions identified five themes. The severity of rules, positive incentives, disrespect for teachers, more stringent rule enforcement, and mutual respect between student and teachers were issues which affected the improvement of the Assertive Discipline Program. However, it was noted that there was better schoolwide and classroom behavior.

Teacher responses to the closed-ended survey questions were generally positive. A high percentage of teachers recommended that the Assertive Discipline Program continue with additional positive incentives. Responses to the open-ended survey questions pointed out five themes. Consistent

rule enforcement, positive incentives, disrespect for adult authority, allowance for student differences, and the learning environment were areas of concern. The overall responses to the open-ended survey were positive.

The interviews indicated a more positive orientation to class control which made teaching easier. The role of teachers in the disciplinary process was identified as an important factor in the success or failure of any discipline program. Teacher attitudes toward the Assertive Discipline Program were positive.

Parent responses to the closed-ended survey questions were generally positive. However, many did not feel that the school helped young people reach their full potential. Advance knowledge of rules and consequences, rewards for appropriate behavior, reasonably developed rules, and immediate parent contact were identified as areas of concern and improvement.

The interviews of the assistant principals produced fairly positive responses. Their observations of the various groups (students, teachers, parents) coupled with their own personal views of Assertive Discipline, indicated that the program had the potential to improve the school environment.

#### Research Question Two

The second research question was: What is the perception of students, teachers, and parents of the

interpersonal relationships among students? This question was addressed by survey and interview data.

### Students

Student responses to the closed-ended survey questions that addressed their perceptions of student interpersonal relationships are summarized in Table 4. The respondents indicated that 45% were satisfied with the way students in their school treated each other. This data indicated that less than half the respondents were satisfied with student interpersonal relationships.

### Teachers

Teacher responses to the closed-ended survey questions that addressed their perceptions of interpersonal relationships among students are summarized in Table 5. A significant number of respondents (70%) were satisfied with the way students treated each other. Another 78% felt that the Assertive Discipline Program had improved the opportunity for learning in the school. Teacher perceptions of student interpersonal relationships were generally positive.

Interviews of teacher-opinion leaders concerning their perceptions of student interpersonal relationships among students produced the following quotes:

An improvement in student interpersonal relationships did occur because rules were designed to address this problem.

Table 4

Student Perceptions of Interpersonal Relationships Among  
Students

<u>Survey Question</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>% Yes</u>
Are you satisfied with the way students in the school treat each other?	697	45

Table 5

Teacher Perceptions of Interpersonal Relationships Among  
Students

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<u>Survey Question</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>% Yes</u>
Are you satisfied with the way students in the school treat each other?	60	70
Are you satisfied that the Assertive Discipline Program has improved the opportunity for learning in the school?	60	78

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I do not see any change, some students still get into fights as they always have.

The positive aspects of the discipline program are beginning to have a positive effect on many of the students, and they are relating to each other much better.

The interviews of teacher-opinion leaders were generally positive, with some opinions indicating no change in student relationships.

### Parents

Parent responses to the closed-ended survey questions that addressed their perceptions of interpersonal relationships among students are summarized in Table 6. A small number of respondents (32%) felt that students were respectful to each other. The parent responses to the research question were negative.

### Assistant Principals

Interviews of assistant principals concerning their perceptions of student interpersonal relationships produced mixed reactions. Some of their statements were:

Student interpersonal relationships did improve briefly because students saw the Assertive Discipline Program and those administering it as the common enemy.

I saw no evidence that indicated any improvement in student interpersonal relationships.

It did not improve student morale or their interpersonal relationships.

Students still feel that inconsistencies occur in classroom discipline and this has not improved student relationships.



Table 6

Parent Perceptions of Interpersonal Relationships Among  
Students

<u>Survey Question</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>% Yes</u>
Are the students in the school respectful to each other?	233	32

The interview responses of the assistant principals were generally negative in reference to student interpersonal relationships.

### Summary

The four respondent groups (students, teachers, parents, assistant principals) produced a wide range of views concerning student interpersonal relationships. The survey and interview process identified the perceptions of the respondents.

The survey data indicated that 45% of the students were satisfied with the way students in their school treated each other. This data indicated that less than half the students surveyed were satisfied with student interpersonal relationships.

Teacher responses indicated a perception that student interpersonal relationships were good. A high percentage (78%) felt that the Assertive Discipline Program had improved student opportunities to learn in school. The interviews of teacher-opinion leaders indicated mixed responses. The perceptions were more positive than negative concerning the idea that student interpersonal relationships had been changed by the Assertive Discipline Program.

A small number of parents indicated that student interpersonal relationships had improved as a result of the Assertive Discipline Program. Overall, the parent

responses were definitely negative in response to the research question.

The interviews of assistant principals produced mixed responses to the research question. The responses were more negative than positive, as one assistant principal saw no change and the other noted a brief positive change. The perceptions of the assistant principals were generally negative.

### Research Question Three

The third research question was: What is the perception among students, teachers, and parents of the interpersonal relationships between students and teachers? This question was addressed by survey and interview data.

#### Students

Student responses to the closed-ended survey questions that addressed their perception of the interpersonal relationships between students and teachers are summarized in Table 7. Almost half (45%) of the respondents felt that having knowledge of the rules and consequences in advance improved student and teacher relationships. A larger percentage (58%) felt that their teachers gave them encouragement in completing their schoolwork.

The response to the research question was slightly positive. Half of the respondents expressed positive

Table 7

Student Perceptions of Interpersonal Relationships Between  
Students and Teachers

<u>Survey Question</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>% Yes</u>
Does having knowledge of the rules and consequences in advance improve student and teacher relationships?	700	45
Do many of your teachers give you encouragement in completing your schoolwork?	695	58

perceptions concerning the interpersonal relationships between students and teachers.

### Teachers

Teacher responses to the closed-ended survey questions that addressed their perceptions of the interpersonal relationships between students and teachers are summarized in Table 8. A majority (68%) of the respondents agreed that a key step in developing an Assertive Discipline Program was determining how teachers and the administration will reinforce students who are well behaved. The responses from the survey data were positive.

The interviews of teacher-opinion leaders produced two themes. The themes centered around known expectations and teacher confidence in the Assertive Discipline Program. Several of the teacher-opinion leaders felt that the Assertive Discipline Program provided a new base for their expression of expectations to students. Some examples of their comments were:

I think eventually when the kids know where you are coming from, I have found that things have settled down and smoothed out.

Students are not as prone to try to manipulate when you know from which direction both of you are coming. Having regulations helps in the relationship between students and teachers.

I think students have appreciated knowing what they are expected to do and how they are expected to behave when they come into a class. I would say that student-teacher relationships have improved.

Table 8

Teacher Perceptions of Interpersonal Relationships Between  
Students and Teachers

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<u>Survey Question</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>% Yes</u>
Are you satisfied with the way students are treated by teachers?	60	83
Would you agree that a major step in developing an Assertive Discipline Program is determining how you will positively reinforce students who do behave?	50	68

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The second theme related to teacher self-control and its relationship to the Assertive Discipline Program. The following statements exemplified their comments:

I feel more comfortable using Assertive Discipline. If I am more comfortable, I feel like they [students] should be more comfortable.

I can discipline with a smile and say to them [students] . . . Look, here is a list of rules, you signed this list.

The responses of the teacher-opinion leaders were overwhelmingly positive in reference to their perception of the interpersonal relationships between students and teachers.

#### Parents

Parent reactions to the question of interpersonal relationships between students and teachers are summarized in Table 9. A significant percentage (68%) of the respondents felt that students and teachers at Charles D. Owen High School maintained good working relationships. This data indicated that responses to the research question were generally positive.

#### Assistant Principals

The interviews of the assistant principals indicated perceptions of student and teacher interpersonal relationships from an administrative view. The assistant principals' responses were based on personal opinions and contacts with students, teachers, and parents. The two themes produced from the interviews dealt with teacher

Table 9

Parent Perceptions of Interpersonal Relationships Between  
Students and Teachers

<u>Survey Question</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>% Yes</u>
Do teachers and students in the school maintain good working relationships?	233	68



expectations and parental adjustment to the Assertive Discipline Program. The issue of consistency was addressed by the assistant principals:

As time went on, students adjusted to the discipline program and that improved student-teacher relationships.

In the sense that teachers who used it, do not stand back and constantly judge kids. What you are doing is good--What you are doing is bad. Teachers simply say to students--This is what I expect.

Anytime you start something new that is different for students, they can have problems with it, and sometimes they [students] felt that teachers were being unfair in expectations.

The second theme of parental adjustment to the Assertive Discipline Program was indicated by the following quotes:

Assertive Discipline lets parents know that teachers are not reacting to students because they do not like them or that they are bad. They are reacting because the students have made a decision concerning their own behavior.

Some teenagers and some parents want to put the blame on teachers. You know, he is not wrong, the teacher is in the wrong.

Assertive Discipline gave parents indications that there was a discipline program, and the teachers were disciplining children fairly and equitably.

The responses of the assistant principals to the question of student interpersonal relationships were generally positive. However, one assistant principal perceived that student-teacher interpersonal relationships were unchanged.

### Summary

The surveys and interviews of the students, teachers, parents, and assistant principals addressed perceptions of student-teacher interpersonal relationships. These student-teacher relationships were examined in reference to the Assertive Discipline Program.

Student survey responses indicated that almost half the respondents felt that having knowledge of rules and consequences in advance improved teacher-student relationships. A slightly larger percentage of students felt that their teachers gave them encouragement in completing their schoolwork. The overall student responses concerning student-teacher relationships were positive.

Teacher responses to the survey questions expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the way teachers treated students. A smaller percentage of teachers were challenged to provide measures which would reinforce students who exhibited positive behaviors. Reinforcement was identified as a key component of the Assertive Discipline Program. Interviews of teacher-opinion leaders produced themes which highlighted teacher expectations and teacher self-confidence. The responses of the teacher-opinion leaders to the research question under study were positive.

Parent reactions to the question of interpersonal student and teacher relationships indicated that students and teachers maintained a good working relationship. This

data pointed to a generally positive response to the research question.

The interviews of the assistant principals produced the themes of teacher expectations and parental adjustment as they related to the Assertive Discipline Program. The interviews presented several quotes which indicated positive responses. However, one assistant principal saw no change in student-teacher relationships.

#### Research Question Four

The fourth research question was: Has the incidence of suspensions and disciplinary referrals to the principal's office declined since the 1984-85 school year? This question was addressed by school records and interview data.

#### School Records

School records were examined to provide information concerning various testing results and disciplinary proceedings. The records were also examined to provide a statistical view of student achievement and behavior.

The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) results for the years 1984-1987 were reviewed to indicate student achievement during these years. The time frame of the study was 1985-1987; however, results from the year 1984 were added to provide baseline data. The test results were divided into mathematical and verbal categories. Data from the Scholastic Aptitude Testing are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10

## Charles D. Owen High School Senior

## Mean SAT Scores 1984-1987

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	1987		1986		1985		1984	
	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M
C. D. Owen	401	411	417	442	403	433	408	429
Buncombe	413	449	424	454	417	446	423	450
N. Carolina	400	438	399	436	398	435	395	432
National	430	476	431	475	431	475	426	471

---

V = Verbal

M = Math

This table presents a year-by-year analysis of mean test scores at the school, county, state, and national levels. The data indicated a gradual rise in math scores at the school level from 1984-1986 and a decrease in math scores during the 1986-1987 school years. The verbal scores decreased in the 1984-1985 school year, rose in 1985-1986, but decreased in 1986-1987. The school scores in the math and verbal categories were lower than the county scores in the years 1984-1987.

In comparison to the state level, the school verbal scores were higher in the years 1984, 1985, and 1987. The math scores were higher only in the year 1986. The overall scores indicated a general decline in verbal scores and an overall decline in math scores at the school level. The Assertive Discipline Program apparently had no overall positive effect on student performance on the Scholastic Aptitude Test.

The North Carolina Competency Test results, for sophomores and juniors taking it the first time, were examined for the years 1984-1987. The scores were broken into mathematical and reading sections. The test was originally taken for the first time during a student's junior year. The testing procedure was changed in 1986, with the test administered for the first time at the sophomore level with a writing component added. The results of the competency test data are summarized in Table 11.

Table 11

**Competency Testing Program**  
**Percent Passing: First-Juniors Through 1985**  
**First-Sophomores Beginning Spring of 1986**

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	*1984		*1985		1986		1987	
	R	M	R	M	R	M	R	M
C. D. Owen	98.4	96.4	98.5	97.4	97.3	97.7	97.4	94.1
Buncombe	97.1	95.9	97.2	92.5	97.0	94.7	95.0	89.3
N.Carolina	95.2	93.8	94.4	91.5	94.5	92.9	94.4	90.6

---

R = Reading

M = Math

\* = First-time juniors

The test results indicated an increase in reading and math scores during the first two years the test was administered to juniors. The test scores for reading increased and the math scores decreased when the test was first administered to sophomores. However, the scores were higher than the county and state levels during the years under study. The results indicated little improvement in the competency test scores during the years the Assertive Discipline Program was implemented.

The Buncombe County Schools end-of-year report was examined to indicate the number of suspensions and expulsions for the years 1985-1987. This information presented a general view of the disciplinary procedures which required administrative intervention. Special attention was focused on the increase or decrease in disciplinary referrals. Data from the end-of-year reports is summarized in Table 12.

The data for the 1984-1985 school year indicated that from a school membership of 856 students, 245 or 29% received out of school suspensions. No students were expelled from school during this time period. During the year 1985-1986 with a school membership of 831 students, 214 or 26% received out-of-school suspensions. This same time period produced a 26% or 216 student referrals to in-school suspension, and one expulsion for the remainder of the year. Data from the 1986-1987 school year indicated a school

Table 12

## Buncombe County Schools

## End of Year Reports

1984 - 1987

## Suspensions

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Year	Membership	Out	%	In	%	Expulsions
1984-1985	856	245	29	*	*	0
1985-1986	831	214	26	216	26	1
1986-1987	840	238	28	367	44	0

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Out = Out-of-school suspensions

In = In-school suspensions

\* = No data available--program not in force



membership of 840 students, and 238 students, or 28%, were suspended from school. Another 44%, or 316 students, received in-school suspension.

Data from the end-of-year reports suggested small year-to-year differences in the percentage of out-of-school suspensions. The change in the expulsion rate was minimal. However, there was a large increase in the percentage of in-school suspension placements from the 1985-1986 to the 1986-1987 school years. The overall percentage of disciplinary referrals during the Assertive Discipline Program was basically unchanged, with the exception of the number of in-school suspensions during the 1986-1987 school year.

The interviews of the teacher-opinion leaders provided data directly related to the research question that addressed their views of suspension referrals. The research question asked if the incidence of suspensions and disciplinary referrals to the principal's office declined. Comments from the teacher-opinion leaders indicated themes which expressed an identified plan of action and student awareness of limits. The theme which related consistency to the level of referrals evoked comments such as the following:

Yes, I think suspensions and referrals did decline. I have not had to use the severe clause, which sends a student to the office, very many times. I think before, we were accustomed to sending students to the office more often.

I would come to the conclusion that there has been less of a necessity to involve the administration in classroom discipline problems because of the Assertive Discipline Program.

Student awareness of limits was the second theme which surfaced from the comments of the teacher-opinion leaders.

Examples were:

I would say yes, that they have probably declined. I would also say that students are a little bit more careful when they have had two warnings, before they get the third one which sends them to the office.

I think most teachers do not have to go through that last step, which is sending a student to the office. I think teachers have felt more comfortable in knowing what progressive steps to take and then knowing that they can send a student to the office.

The general responses of the teacher-opinion leaders were positive and relayed a view that discipline referrals to the principal's office have declined. This data indicated a positive relationship between disciplinary referrals and the Assertive Discipline Program.

The interviews of the assistant principals produced information that responded to the research question concerning the changes in the incidence of disciplinary referrals to the principal's office. Responses to the research question by the assistant principals prompted the same points of view. Examples of comments were:

I imagine the first year and possibly the second, that suspensions and disciplinary referrals were up just because we were trying to be more consistent throughout the school.

The (referrals) declined for those specific teachers who did not previously have a plan and were having problems. Assertive Discipline resolved their discipline problem by 90%. Otherwise, I do not think that they declined.

The responses of the assistant principals indicated that disciplinary referrals were not expected to decline. They believed that the schoolwide concept would continue to identify violations of school and classroom rules. This would maintain the level of referrals to the administrative offices.

#### Summary

The school records and interviews provided meaningful data in reference to suspensions and referrals to the principal's office. The interview responses of the teacher-opinion leaders and assistant principals produced a varied range of views.

The school records included scores from the Scholastic Aptitude Test, North Carolina Competency Test, and Buncombe County Schools End-Of-Year Report. The Scholastic Aptitude (SAT) Test results indicated a general decline in verbal scores and an overall decline in math scores. Implementation of the Assertive Discipline Program appeared to have a positive effect upon these test data.

The North Carolina Competency Test results indicated no major improvement in competency test scores during the years the Assertive Discipline Program was implemented. However,

the scores were higher than the county and state levels during all years of the study.

The Buncombe County Schools End-Of-Year Report indicated that the percentage of disciplinary referrals during the Assertive Discipline Program was unchanged except in the number of in-school suspensions from the 1985-1986 to the 1986-1987 school years.

The interviews of teacher-opinion leaders produced themes, a plan-of-action and student awareness of limits. Comments concerning both themes were identified and presented. The responses of the teacher-opinion leaders were generally positive, and indicated that referrals to the principal's office had declined.

The interviews of the assistant principals indicated that the number of disciplinary referrals was not expected to decline. They felt that the schoolwide approach to school discipline would point out a number of rule violations because more teachers were actively involved.

#### Research Question Five

The fifth research question was: How do students, teachers, and parents perceive the social and educational climate at Charles D. Owen High School during the Assertive Discipline Program? This question was addressed by survey and interview data.

#### Students

Student response to the closed-ended survey questions that addressed their perceptions of the social and educational climate at Charles D. Owen High School are summarized in Table 13.

A small percentage (37%) of the respondents felt that Assertive Discipline improved their opportunity to learn in classes. Another 46% indicated that damage to school property had been reduced. Less than half the respondents (45%) felt that Assertive Discipline encouraged them to follow school rules. When asked if discipline was a serious problem at their school, forty percent of the respondents answered in the affirmative. Only 29% of the respondents felt that positive school spirit had been created by the Assertive Discipline Program. A majority of respondents (63%) felt that they belonged in the school. Only 33% of the students were satisfied with the way they were treated by administrators. The perception of the educational and social climate by students was distinctly negative.

#### Teachers

Teacher responses to the closed-ended survey questions that addressed their perception of the social and educational climate at Charles D. Owen High School during the Assertive Discipline Program are summarized in Table 14.

Less than half of the respondents (45%) felt that school spirit was created by the Assertive Discipline

Table 13

Student Perceptions of the Social and Educational Climate

Survey Questions	N	% Yes
Has the Assertive Discipline Program improved your opportunity to learn in classes?	700	37
Has the Assertive Discipline Program reduced damage to school property?	699	46
Does the Assertive Discipline Program encourage you to follow school rules?	697	45
Is discipline a serious problem in the school?	702	40
Has positive "school spirit" been created by the Assertive Discipline Program?	698	29
Do you feel that you "belong" in the school?	698	63
Are you satisfied with the way you are treated by the school administrators?	697	33

Table 14

Teacher Perceptions of the Social and Educational Climate

Survey Questions	N	% Yes
Has good "school spirit" been created in the Assertive Discipline Program?	60	45
Have students in the school become more respectful to each other?	60	50
Is discipline a serious problem in the school?	60	38
Are teachers in your school involved in the development of school policies which affect their work?	60	58
Are you satisfied with your school?	60	50
Are you satisfied with being a teacher?	60	87
Is vandalism a serious problem in the school?	60	20

Program. Half of the respondents (50%) perceived that students had become more respectful to each other. Only 38% of the respondents thought that discipline was a serious problem in their school. More than half (58%) of the respondents indicated their involvement in the development of school policies which affected their work. Half of the respondents (50%) expressed satisfaction with their school. Only 20% felt that vandalism was a serious school problem. An overwhelming percentage of respondents (87%) were satisfied with being a teacher. Teacher perceptions of the social and educational climate were positive.

The responses of the teacher-opinion leaders pointed to positive incentives, administrative consistency, and the advance knowledge of consequences as factors which influenced the perceptions of teacher-opinion leaders. The interview responses were positive. Examples of their comments were:

Yes, the educational and social climates have improved. You cannot have a class or school without organization. The consequences of violating rules and regulations should be known in advance.

I feel that the educational and social climate has been improved. Students look forward to the positive incentives of the Assertive Discipline Program.

Teachers feel more secure now about the consistency in administrative disciplinary procedures, and that has improved the educational and social climate.



### Parents

Parent responses to the closed-ended survey questions that addressed their perceptions of the social and educational climate are summarized in Table 15. More than half (56%) of the respondents felt that the lack of proper discipline was the number one problem in schools today. A high number (89%) were in agreement that parents shared a responsibility for their child's discipline at school. In response to the question of discipline at Charles D. Owen High School, 50% expressed satisfaction with the current program. Many respondents (64%) were satisfied with the school's invitation to have them involved in school affairs. Almost half (49%) of the respondents felt that discipline was a serious problem at Charles D. Owen High School. Only 36% indicated that student morale was good. More than half (51%) believed that vandalism was a serious problem. A moderately high percentage of respondents (69%) stated that it was easy to make appointments to see teachers and administrators. The parent responses to the research question were generally positive.

The interviews of the assistant principals indicated observations of more controlled classroom settings which improved the opportunity for teaching and learning.

Table 15

Parent Perceptions of the Social and Educational Climate

Survey Questions	N	% Yes
Would you agree that the number one problem in schools today is the lack of proper discipline?	233	56
Would you agree that parents share a responsibility for their child's discipline at school?	233	89
Are you satisfied with the discipline at school?	233	50
Are you satisfied with the school's invitation to have you involved in school affairs?	233	64
Is discipline a serious problem in the school?	233	49
Is the morale of the students in the school good?	233	36
Is vandalism a serious problem in the school?	233	51
Is it easy to make an appointment to see the teachers and administration in the school?	233	69

Examples of their comments were:

I would think that it (Assertive Discipline) did not help student morale, but it did not hurt either. I think it might have helped the morale of teachers, because they saw that we were trying to do something constructive toward correcting discipline attitudes.

I think teachers are happier, teaching more, and have more control of student behavior. Many teachers said, I do not know why we did not do this before now.

Kids in the classroom are able to listen--they are able to hear the teacher. They are able to get things done. They do not feel that someone is going to be angry with them or fly off the handle.

In terms of the educational climate, I definitely feel that the Assertive Discipline Program improved it. The general climate was very good despite the Assertive Discipline Program since kids had such a negative reaction to it.

The responses of the assistant principals were distinctly positive. They expressed that the Assertive Discipline Program was a positive factor for teachers and provided a positive climate. However, their perceptions indicated that Assertive Discipline was not as popular with the students, but did not effect the general status of the school climate.

### Summary

Data derived from the various groups of respondents provided relevant information concerning the educational and general climate at Charles D. Owen High School. The data were analyzed to determine the influence of the Assertive Discipline Program.

Student reactions produced responses which were generally negative. However, there was a pronounced feeling that students were accepted as part of the school community. Positive school spirit and their treatment by the school administrators were perceived as the least positive factors of the school climate.

Teacher responses to the closed-ended questions were positive, with an overwhelming percentage of teachers expressing satisfaction about being a teacher. The interview responses of the teacher-opinion leaders were positive. Incentives, administrative disciplinary procedures, and prior knowledge of consequences were perceived as the most important factors which influenced the educational and social climate.

Parent responses to the survey questions indicated that a high percentage were in agreement that they shared a responsibility for their child's discipline at school. However, only a small percentage felt that student morale was good. The parent responses were generally positive.

The assistant principals indicated in their interviews that the Assertive Discipline Program created a more controlled classroom setting which improved the opportunity for teaching and learning. The Assertive Discipline Program was cited as a positive factor in the social and educational climate.

### Discussion

The basic purpose of this study was to determine the worth and merit of the Assertive Discipline Program at Charles D. Owen High School for the years 1985-1986 and 1986-1987. The findings of this study are related to other studies of Assertive Discipline concepts and programs. The related literature will be discussed with the data from two of the respondent groups (students, teachers).

The study by Sharpe (1980) found no significant difference in the reading and mathematics scores of students who were exposed to Assertive Discipline and those who were not. This finding is similar to the results of the Scholastic Aptitude and the Competency Tests at Charles D. Owen High School. The results of the mathematical and verbal categories indicated no major improvement in the scores resulting from the Assertive Discipline Program.

It is the author's opinion that while the test scores indicated no significant improvement, the Assertive Discipline Program was not the factor which caused the scores to decline. The Assertive Discipline Program can only provide an improved setting for teaching and learning. The efforts and motivation to improve student scores must come from all parties involved, the students, school staff, and parents.

The study by Bauer (1982) addressed the issue of changing student attitudes toward school. The results of

the Bauer study did not show an increase in student morale or positive attitudes toward school as a result of Assertive Discipline techniques. The similarities of this current study and those of Bauer are evident in the responses of students, where only a small percentage felt that positive school spirit had been created by the Assertive Discipline Program. Additional information indicated a moderately small percentage of parents felt that student morale was good. One of the assistant principals felt that Assertive Discipline did not improve morale, but that it did not hurt morale.

There was an imbalance between the use of positive and negative incentives. Not enough positive incentives were used. This imbalance was a major factor in causing student morale and school spirit to wane. The students were bombarded with rules and consequences, and there was no counterbalance of positive incentives. The students, teachers, and parents continually indicated that there were not enough positive incentives.

Terrell's (1984) study dealt with Assertive Discipline and its effect upon the incidence of disciplinary referrals and school suspensions. These suspensions were compared with other disciplinary procedures. This study found a significant difference in the occurrences of in-school suspension, and therefore supported the use of Assertive Discipline as an alternative disciplinary procedure.

The results of the study at Charles D. Owen High School indicated no year-to-year differences in the percentage of out-of-school suspensions. However, there was an increase in the number of in-school suspensions for one of the years in the study. These data do not fully support Assertive Discipline as a program to reduce disciplinary referrals.

The study of students enrolled in North Arizona University's College of Education and students who had already graduated and entered the teaching profession pointed to the teachers' positive feelings toward Assertive Discipline Programs. They expressed confidence that they could handle the task of discipline. Positive reactions were expressed toward the idea of having a plan-of-action before problems arose. The development of a smooth, systematic, and objective approach to discipline created a high level of confidence (Ryan, 1984).

Similar results occurred during the study at Charles D. Owen High School. Teachers and assistant principals felt that the factor of classroom control was very important. Teachers felt more in control of the classroom situation as a result of the Assertive Discipline Program. Teachers felt that when students know where teachers are coming from, things tend to settle down and smooth out.

The development of mutual respect was cited as a positive result of Assertive Discipline by Jakubowski and

Lange (1978). This issue was listed as a major theme by the students during their open-ended responses.

A healthy school climate has a positive impact on students and teachers. I believe that mutual respect is the key to positive relationships between people. Respect indicates a special concern for another person. This is a component which distinguishes assertive behavior from aggressive behavior. Effective schools involve partnerships within the school environment.

Asimov felt that it is often necessary to abandon power to maintain the essence of it (Wayson and Lasley, 1984). This statement relates to a question in the current study which asked teachers if they had involvement in the development of policies which affected their work. More than half of the teachers responded affirmatively to the question.

I agree that sharing decision-making responsibilities maintains a school climate where everyone wants to achieve self-discipline. Statements in the literature look to the "Effective" schools program because it emphasizes the importance of respect to teachers. This is not supported by the study at Charles D. Owen High School, because data indicated a lack of respect to teachers and school personnel as the most serious discipline problem identified by students, teachers, and parents. The researcher was surprised by these results. A similar response could come



from teachers and parents, but it was not expected from the students.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY

Students have the right to an education, and that precious right must be protected from the misbehavior of other students. Teachers have the responsibility to educate their students and to have a safe working environment. Parents have the right to expect their children to be educated and return home safely at the end of the day (Bauer, 1985).

The purpose of this dissertation was to determine the worth and merit of the Assertive Discipline Program at Charles D. Owen High School for the 1985-1986 and the 1986-1987 school years. The dissertation provided information concerning the effectiveness of the Assertive Discipline Program. Information from the study was compiled to assist the school administrators and school staff members in evaluating and understanding factors which affect the learning environment of the school.

An Assertive Discipline Program required the involvement of all segments of the extended school community. The students, teachers, and parents were provided an opportunity to provide their opinions concerning the effectiveness of the school's discipline program and its relationship to

other factors (morale, achievement, relationships) within the school environment.

The study identified the efforts of the staff and administration at Charles D. Owen High School to provide an opportunity for students and teachers to function in an improved environment for teaching and learning. The ultimate outcome was to increase expectations for students to achieve self-discipline.

Information for the study was provided by triangulation procedures which collected data from students, teachers, and parents by the use of a survey. Interviews of assistant principals and teacher-opinion leaders provided further supportive information in response to the research questions. School records supplied information about student behavior and academic accomplishments during the initial period of the Assertive Discipline Program.

The research questions for this study were:

1. What is the perception among students, teachers, and parents of the Assertive Discipline Program?
2. What is the perception of students, teachers, and parents of the interpersonal relationships among students?
3. What is the perception among students, teachers, and parents of the interpersonal relationships between students and teachers?

4. Has the incidence of suspensions and disciplinary referrals to the principal's office declined since the 1984-85 school year?

5. How do students, teachers, and parents perceive the social and educational climate at Charles D. Owen High School during the Assertive Discipline Program?

### Findings

The Assertive Discipline Program was in place for a period of two years, and the study produced the following findings:

1. Student perceptions of the Assertive Discipline Program were negative.
2. Teacher and parent perceptions of the Assertive Discipline Program were positive.
3. Less than half the students were satisfied with their interpersonal relationships.
4. Teachers felt that student interpersonal relationships were positive.
5. Parents felt that student interpersonal relationships were negative.
6. The assistant principals felt that student interpersonal relationships were slightly improved.
7. Less than half the students perceived that interpersonal relationships between students and teachers were improved.

8. Teachers indicated very positive perceptions concerning the interpersonal relationships between themselves and students.

9. Parents felt that student-teacher interpersonal relationships were positive.

10. The assistant principals felt that interpersonal relationships between students and teachers were positive.

11. The Assertive Discipline Program had no significant effect on student test scores.

12. The school records indicated no major difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions during the Assertive Discipline Program (1985-87) and the base year 1984-85.

13. A significant increase was noted in the number of in-school suspensions during the second year of the Assertive Discipline Program.

14. Teachers felt that disciplinary referrals had declined during the Assertive Discipline Program.

15. Assistant principals indicated that disciplinary referrals had not declined during the Assertive Discipline Program.

16. Students felt that the social and educational climate were not improved by the Assertive Discipline Program.

17. Teachers and parents perceived that the educational and social climates were positive.

18. The assistant principals felt that the social and educational climates were more positive for teachers and less positive for students.

### Conclusions

Based on the review of the literature and the findings of the study, the following conclusions were developed.

1. The Assertive Discipline Program at Charles D. Owen High School has had a positive impact on some segments of the school community (teachers, parents, and administrators). The program should be continued with some modifications.

2. Teacher orientation is needed to emphasize rule enforcement in all areas of the school.

3. An effective Assertive Discipline Program should involve students in the development of rules and regulations.

4. Mutual respect is a major factor in eliminating student disrespect to teachers.

5. A suitable school environment for teaching and learning is only one of several factors which must be present to improve student test scores.

6. Discussion and a restructuring of procedures is necessary to provide a positive social and educational climate for students as well as teachers.

7. The sharing of the responsibility for school discipline with parents should be a high priority for schools that want an effective discipline program.

8. For any academic or disciplinary program to succeed, all parties involved must work to share a common vision.

#### Recommendations (Programmatic, Research)

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

##### Programmatic

1. There is a need for programs and activities which promote better student interpersonal relationships.

2. There is a need for more positive incentives for students.

3. There is a need to evaluate the school rules and consequences to determine if they are too harsh or severe.

4. There is a need to follow up on the high number of negative student responses concerning their treatment by the school administration.

5. There is a need to pursue further contacts with parents to assess their view that Charles D. Owen High School does not allow students to reach their full potential.

6. There is a need to involve more students in the development of rules and regulations.

7. There is a need to provide additional orientation to all parents concerning the purpose and goals of the Assertive Discipline Program.

8. There is a need to improve teacher orientation on the consistent and balanced implementation of the Assertive Discipline Program.

### Research

1. This study should be replicated using subjects engaged in similar Assertive Discipline Programs in other area schools.

2. Since disrespect to teachers and school personnel was identified as the most serious discipline problem at Charles D. Owen High School, there is a need for a survey of teachers and administrators throughout the school district to determine if their perceptions are similar.

3. A study should be conducted concerning the effectiveness of standardized tests in measuring the improvement in the learning environment.

4. A study is needed to determine the effectiveness of Assertive Discipline Programs for all environments over an extended period of time.

5. There is further need for comparison of student perceptions by individual grade levels, to determine if the amount of time that students are exposed to the Assertive Discipline Program influences their perceptions.



6. Since the study revealed that the Assertive Discipline Program did not improve standardized test scores, there is a need for an in-depth study to investigate what other factors may be preventing improved academic achievement.

The worth and merit of any program is dependent upon its quality and usefulness. It is important to take an introspective view of efforts to bring about an improvement in actions designed to attain certain goals. A goal of this study was to verify perceptions of the learning environment.

This study provided a unique opportunity for extensive communication by all the respondent groups involved in the study. It is a rare occasion for large groups of subjects in this school setting to express their opinions with no fear of retribution. It is important to have perceptions openly expressed so that mixed messages can be resolved. There were noticeable differences of opinions on many of the research questions.

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APPENDIX A  
STUDENT-OPINION SURVEY

The purpose of this questionnaire is to assist your school in learning more about its Assertive Discipline Program. Your opinions and attitudes are of vital importance in helping your school learn more about itself. This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. The answers you give will be completely confidential. Do not sign your name or identify yourself in any way.

Please read each item carefully. Select the responses which most clearly represent your feelings by marking the appropriate space provided on your answer sheet for the response you selected. Mark the letter A for a yes answer, and mark the letter B for a no answer.

1. Has the Assertive Discipline Program improved your opportunity to learn in classes?

2. Has the Assertive Discipline Program reduced damage to school property?

3. Are you satisfied with discipline in your school?

4. Are you satisfied with the way students in your school treat each other?

5. Do most of your teachers enforce their Assertive Discipline rules?

6. Have your teachers explained the Assertive Discipline rules to you?
7. Does Assertive Discipline encourage you to follow school rules?
8. Do you feel that the Assertive Discipline rules and regulations fairly match the penalties or consequences?
9. Do most of your teachers list contact with your parent(s) or guardian as a part of their Assertive Discipline Program?
10. Have students in your school become more respectful to each other?
11. Is discipline a serious problem in your school?
12. Does having knowledge of the rules and consequences in advance improve student and teacher relationships?
13. Has positive "school spirit" been created by the Assertive Discipline Program?
14. Do you feel that you "belong" in your school?
15. Do many of your teachers give you encouragement in completing your schoolwork?
16. Do teachers enforce discipline procedures outside of their classrooms?
17. Are you satisfied with the way you are treated by the school administrators?
18. Does the Assertive Discipline Program offer enough positive rewards?

19. Should students have input in establishing Assertive Discipline rules and regulations?

20. Would you recommend continuing the Assertive Discipline Program next year?

Please complete the following questions. These questions require a brief written answer. Make your answers as legible as possible.

21. The Assertive Discipline Program can be improved by

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22. I do not like the Assertive Discipline Program because

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23. The Assertive Discipline Program has helped to \_\_\_\_\_

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24. School discipline can be improved by \_\_\_\_\_

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25. The most serious discipline problem at school is \_\_\_\_\_

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APPENDIX B  
TEACHER-OPINION SURVEY

The purpose of this questionnaire is to assist your school in learning more about its Assertive Discipline Program. Your opinions and attitudes are of vital importance in helping your school learn more about itself. This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. The answers you give will be completely confidential. Do not sign your name or identify yourself in any way.

Please read each item carefully. Select the response which most clearly represents your feelings by marking the appropriate space provided on your answer sheet for the response you selected. Mark the letter A for a yes answer, and mark the letter B for a no answer.

1. Are you satisfied with the way students in your school treat each other?
2. Do other teachers enforce discipline outside of their classroom?
3. Are you satisfied with the Administrative support of the Assertive Discipline Program?
4. Are you satisfied that the Assertive Discipline Program has improved the opportunity for learning in your school?



5. Are you satisfied with the number of positive incentives resulting from the Assertive Discipline Program?
6. Has good "school spirit" been created in the Assertive Discipline Program?
7. Have students in your school become more respectful to each other?
8. Is discipline a serious problem in your school?
9. Would you recommend continuing the Assertive Discipline Program for next year?
10. Have you included parent contact as a procedure in your Assertive Discipline Program?
11. Are you satisfied with the way students are treated by teachers?
12. Are teachers in your school involved in the development of school policies which affect your work?
13. When you have disciplinary problems, can you expect help from the Administration?
14. Are you satisfied with your school?
15. Are you satisfied with being a teacher?
16. Do you feel parents possess knowledge about the school and its Assertive Discipline Program?
17. Is vandalism a serious problem in your school?
18. If negative consequences stop inappropriate behavior, will positive consequences change behavior?

- 19. Would you agree that a key step in developing an Assertive Discipline Program is determining how you will positively reinforce students who do behave?
- 20. Would you agree that in any discipline program, parent contact should be sought and welcomed.

Please complete the following questions. These questions require a brief written answer. Make your answers as legible as possible.

- 21. The Assertive Discipline Program can be improved by

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- 22. I do not like the Assertive Discipline Program because

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- 23. The Assertive Discipline Program has helped to \_\_\_\_\_

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- 24. School discipline can be improved by \_\_\_\_\_

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- 25. The most serious discipline problem at school is \_\_\_\_\_

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APPENDIX C  
PARENT OPINION SURVEY

The purpose of this questionnaire is to assist the school in learning more about its Assertive Discipline Program. Your opinions and attitudes are of vital importance in helping the school learn more about itself. This is a survey. There are no right or wrong answers. The answers you give will be confidential. You do not need to sign your name.

Please read each item carefully. Select the response which most clearly represents your feelings by marking the appropriate space provided on your answer sheet for the response you selected. Mark the letter A for a yes answer, and mark the letter B for a no answer.

1. Would you agree that the number one problem in schools today is the lack of proper discipline?
2. Does the Assertive Discipline Program indicate that the school is concerned about your child's opportunity to get the best education?
3. Would you agree that parents share a responsibility for their child's discipline at school?
4. Have you been made aware of the Assertive Discipline Program at our school?

5. Are students provided with an opportunity to reach their full potential at school?
6. Do you feel teachers should contact you quickly if there are problems in their class concerning your child?
7. Are the school rules and regulations affecting students in our school reasonable?
8. Should discipline programs have consequences for students who do not follow the rules and rewards for those students who do follow the rules?
9. Are the students in our school respectful to each other?
10. Do teachers and students in our school maintain good working relationships?
11. Is the student behavior better when they know the rules and consequences in advance.?
12. Are you satisfied with the discipline in the school?
13. Are you satisfied with the school's invitation to have you involved in school affairs?
14. Is discipline a serious problem in the school?
15. Is the morale of the students in the school good?
16. Does your child look forward to going to school?
17. Is vandalism a serious problem in the school?
18. Would you agree that any discipline program should include a procedure for contact with the parents?

19. Is it easy to make appointments to see teachers and administrators in our school?
20. Would you recommend that the Assertive Discipline Program be continued next year?

Please complete the following questions. These questions require a brief written answer. Make your answers as legible as possible.

21. The Assertive Discipline Program can be improved by

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22. I do not like the Assertive Discipline Program because

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23. The Assertive Discipline Program has helped to \_\_\_\_\_

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24. School discipline can be improved by \_\_\_\_\_

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25. The most serious discipline problem at school is \_\_\_\_\_

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APPENDIX D  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS  
ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

1. Has implementation of the Assertive Discipline Program improved Administrative consistency in disciplinary procedures?
2. Have interpersonal relationships between students and teachers improved during the Assertive Discipline Program?
3. Has the incidence of suspensions and disciplinary referrals to your office declined since the Assertive Discipline Program was implemented?
4. Have parental perceptions of the discipline procedures improved during the last two years?
5. Do you feel that the educational and social climate has improved during the Assertive Discipline Program?

Please complete the following questions. These questions require a brief written answer. Make your answers as legible as possible.

21. The Assertive Discipline Program can be improved by

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22. I do not like the Assertive Discipline Program because

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23. The Assertive Discipline Program has helped to \_\_\_\_\_

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24. School discipline can be improved by \_\_\_\_\_

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25. The most serious discipline problem at school is \_\_\_\_\_

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APPENDIX E  
PILOT STUDY  
STUDENTS

Open-Ended Survey Responses (Top Two Responses)

Question 21:

- A. Drop Assertive Discipline Program.
- B. Need more positive incentives.

Question 22:

- A. The rules are too strict.
- B. Students are not treated fairly.

Question 23:

- A. Created problems.
- B. Improved school behavior.

Question 24:

- A. Reduce severity of the rules.
- B. Involve students in development of rules.

Question 25:

- A. Disrespect to teachers.
- B. Fighting.



APPENDIX E  
PILOT STUDY  
TEACHERS

Open-Ended Survey Responses (Top Two Responses)

Question 21:

- A. Consistency.
- B. More positive incentives.

Question 22:

- A. Improved consistency in enforcement.
- B. Do like the program.

Question 23:

- A. Improve student behavior.
- B. Increase teacher consistency.

Question 24:

- A. More teacher involvement in planning.
- B. Consistent enforcement with all students.

Question 25:

- A. Disrespect to teachers.
- B. Vandalism.

## PILOT STUDY

PARENTSOpen-Ended Survey Responses (Top Two Responses)

Question 21:

- A. Better parent-teacher relationships.
- B. Modify some of the consequences.

Question 22:

- A. Not effective.
- B. Rewards not really given for good behavior.

Question 23:

- A. Helped students improve behavior.
- B. Helped teachers control classrooms.

Question 24:

- A. More parent contact.
- B. Mutual respect between students and teachers.

Question 25:

- A. Disrespect to teachers and administrators.
- B. Drug abuse.

## PILOT STUDY

STUDENTSClosed-Ended Survey Responses N=20

<u>Item</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1	15	5
2	11	9
3	18	2
4	15	5
5	11	9
6	8	12
7	12	8
8	8	12
9	17	3
10	18	2
11	16	4
12	15	5
13	19	1
14	10	10
15	19	1
16	12	8
17	5	15
18	18	2
19	15	5
20	17	3

## PILOT STUDY

TEACHERSClosed-Ended Survey Responses N=2

<u>Item</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1	0	2
2	1	1
3	2	0
4	2	0
5	0	2
6	0	2
7	0	2
8	2	0
9	1	1
10	2	0
11	2	0
12	0	2
13	1	1
14	1	1
15	1	1
16	1	1
17	1	1
18	1	1
19	2	0
20	2	0

## PILOT STUDY

PARENTSClosed-Ended Survey Responses N=8

<u>Item</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1	3	5
2	4	4
3	8	0
4	6	2
5	3	5
6	8	0
7	4	4
8	8	0
9	1	7
10	4	4
11	5	3
12	1	7
13	6	2
14	6	2
15	2	6
16	5	3
17	3	5
18	8	0
19	6	2
20	3	5