Exploration of the Effectiveness of Anti-violence Programs as Perceived by School Administrators in Select Urban Public High Schools in the State of Illinois

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ABSTRACT

Exploration of the Effectiveness of Anti-violence Programs as Perceived by School Administrators in Select Urban Public High Schools in the State of Illinois

by

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Abstract

In the current educational environment schools are addressing violence prevention. School safety is a priority and they have a responsibility to develop programs and interventions that promote safety, high academic standards, and a school community of good health (Werle, 2006).

This qualitative in-depth phenomenological based interview explored the effectiveness of anti-violence programs from the school administrator’s perception of select urban public high schools. Qualitative research methods of data collection and analysis are used for conducting detailed research. The perceptions of ten practicing school administrators from urban public schools with anti-violence programs in use are used to gain knowledge of their experience, programs use, and the effectiveness of
From a school perspective, schools are considered a “safe haven” from violence. Schools have been heavily involved in violence and violence prevention efforts. Thus far, school-based violence prevention programs have been adequately evaluated (Coben, Weiss, Mulvey, and Dearwater, 1994). For the purpose of this study, the perceptions of ten practicing school administrators from urban public schools with anti-violence programs in use are used to gain knowledge of their experience, programs use and the effectiveness of the programs. Ten active school administrators were chosen as participants for this study. In-depth interviews were completed. The researcher collected and analyzed interviews to expound upon their experience and to gain a rich base of discussion and valuable insight of their anti-violence programs effectiveness.

Although all school administrators participants are adamant about curbing violence in school they maintain the focus of school safety. This study detailed the following emerging significant themes; Elements: Tools used to curb violence on a consistent and/or daily basis. Principal Causes: Current trends, behaviors, and community; Programs/Approaches: School resource, existing current programs, new approaches; Program Evaluation: evaluation tools; Assessment: data collected, who collects data? How is it used? Administrators Perception: What is the administrator’s role in delivering anti-violence programs?

This research data reflects the 21st century school administrators implemented anti-violence effective programs according to their standards. These programs foster a
The findings of this study show schools are effectively addressing school violence and exposing students to a variety of programs with a positive intent to curb violence in schools. This research fosters a continuing effort of school administrators to seek for the effective programs to promote school safety in schools. School administrators should seek to evaluate their programs with supportive documents of assessments and tools for evaluation.
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DEDICATION

To my parents, Irene Davis and John Hill, who has always wanted the best for me. You two are truly my biggest fans. Together we made it. To my one and only child, Damarez, and my nieces and nephews; life has been a struggle. I dedicate this to all of you and I want you to obtain the best education.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Youth violence in schools has been commonplace for many generations. While there are incidents of violence at various grade levels including lower elementary grades, the most frequent reports of violence seem to be at the high school level. Violence reports include minor incidents of one-on-one fights and, in the most extreme cases, of murder. Complicating matters, violence may be perceived differently by various observers depending on background and experiences.

Communities have accepted two realities about crime and violence. The first reality is that children are killing children. “Between 1984 and 1994, youth homicide skyrocketed nationally. The number of young people charged with killing a young person increased by 144 percent” (Dohrn, 1997, p.46). The second reality is, “Guns are the instrument or agent driving the youth homicide epidemic” (p.46). Since 1984, in the United States, homicides with a gun began to rise, then doubling the amount in the next decade. Gun violence is the second leading cause of death, while automobile accidents are the first leading cause of death for youth (Dohrn, 1997). These two realities have communities desperate for youth services that directly address the crime and violence experienced.
Increases in youth violence call for an immediate response from community youth violence programs. Youth violence usually originates in the community. The second place of high incidence of youth violence is the community school. Schools and the community need to work together for the common cause of decreasing youth violence.

This study explored violence in urban public high schools through interviews with urban school administrators. This study probed into the school administrator’s world of school violence. It probed for the existence of anti-violence programs and administrators’ views of anti-violence programs where they exist, as well as their views of effectiveness, operation, and implementation of the programs.

This study sought to explore youth violence in urban public high schools and determine the extent to which anti-violence programs were implemented and deemed successful. The researcher conducted interviews with ten public high school administrators. Each administrator participated in two one-hour interviews for approximately two hours. Furthermore, the study explored how school administrators in select urban public high schools in Illinois perceive the effectiveness of anti-violence programs.

School violence concerns have increased with violent student deaths occurring in the urban, suburban, and even rural areas. National media attention has shown that communities have a desperate need for safety and security at their schools (Strandberg, 1999). Schools have responded with security plans, zero tolerance for
extreme behaviors, anti-violence, and intervention programs. Over the years, schools have implemented many programs to address the major violence issues in schools.

**Statement of the Problem**

Since the 1994-1995 school years, incidents of violence in schools have been on the rise (Boulter, 2004). In addition to being associated with crime, violence has become a major health concern (Coben, Weiss, Mulvey, & Dearwater, 1994). Violence in schools begins at the primary grades in elementary school, but reaches its peak in junior high and high school (Price, Telljohann, Dake, Marsico, & Zyla, 2002).

The curtailing of violence in schools is often attributed to the effectiveness and implementation of anti-violence programs. This study (a) explored perceptions by school administrators of violence in select high schools in the Midwest, (b) explored needs, planning, implementation, evaluation, and success of anti-violence programs as perceived by school administrators in select high schools in the Midwest, and (c) explored of the role of school anti-violence programs in addressing issues of violence in high schools. The findings of this research can provide school administrators and staff with perspectives that may contribute to making better-informed decisions with reference to policy development and implementation of programs that curb violence.

**Research Questions**

1. What are the elements of each urban public high school’s program for curbing violence?
2. What do respondents view as principal causes of violence in their urban public high schools in the Midwest?

3. What anti-violence programs or approaches are perceived as successful?

4. How are anti-violence programs evaluated and what are the criteria for success?

5. How are student and neighborhood needs assessed? What planning processes are involved in implementation?

6. How do school administrators perceive their role in delivering anti-violence programs?

**Definition of Terms**

Bullying – Intentional harm to others through the use of verbal harassment, physical assault, or manipulation.

Community – A unified body in a common location with common social, economic, and political interests.

Effective – Producing a desired result through the use of a program or assignment.

High Schools – Secondary schools that typically house grades 9 - 12.

Incident – A specific act or offense involving one or more victims and one or more offenders that causes a disturbance of the educational process on school property.
Intervention – The involvement of oneself and/or group to alter action or development.

Liaison Officer – A police officer working in a school building at a staff level that provides security and guidance.

Principal – The chief administrator of a school site.

Pro-social – Beneficial outcome by problem solving or respectful behavior.

School Administrator – A school leader working primarily under the leadership of the school principal.

School Resource Officer (SRO) - A career law enforcement officer, with sworn authority, deployed in community-oriented policing.

School Violence – Violence within school property including but not limited to fighting, vandalism, theft, and arson.

Social Isolation – The fact of being alone or separated from others.

Sworn Authority – A career law enforcement officer who has authority to administer oath.

Urban Community – A town or city with an urban high population density.

Violence – An act carried out with the intention, or a perceived intention, of causing physical pain or injury to another person.

Youth – A male or female between the ages of twelve to eighteen.

Zero tolerance – A policy that punishes all offenses of a severe manner consistently without regard to prior record, age limitation, or consideration of extenuating circumstances.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Perspective

One of the highest profile acts of violence in a public school occurred on April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School in Columbine, an unincorporated area of Jefferson County, near Littleton, Colorado. Two male students killed twelve students and one teacher. They also wounded 24 other individuals. The pair then committed suicide. This massacre was the deadliest for an American high school, and sparked a major concern for parents and other concerned citizens about the safety of schools. Schools across America were faced with producing an immediate response to assure parents and other citizens that children were safe in schools (Lawrence & Birkland, 2004).

Tragedy struck again on March 21, 2005, on the Red Lake Reservation in Red Lake, Minnesota. The murders began when a Red Lake High School sophomore killed his grandfather and his grandfather’s girlfriend. He then drove to Red Lake High School where he shot and killed seven people on the school campus; five students, one teacher, and a security guard. He also wounded five others. The massacre ended when
the shooter committed suicide. Once again, this sparked a need for a response from educators regarding school safety (Borja, 2005).

The killing of 33 students at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University at Blacksburg, Virginia in 2007, including the suicide of the shooter, Seung Hui Cho, brought a great deal of awareness to the administration of colleges and universities to evaluate their safety plans to assure the nation that college campuses were safe for faculty and students. The Virginia Polytechnic incident brought a renewed focus on school safety issues to college and university campuses. Nevertheless, the media appeared to portray this tragic incident as if it was the first time a violent act that involved killing had occurred on a college campus (Davies, 2008). Violence on a college campus dates back to the early 1900’s (Vise, 2010).

Violence as a phenomenon is not new in education. Acts of violence have been occurring for decades, and there has been no age limitation. It begins as early as preschool. However, during the past twenty years (1990 – 2010) more emphasis has been placed on junior high and high school violence incidents. Also, during this period, violence has increased in school settings and created a sense of urgency for more protection in schools, especially schools in urban settings.

A study completed in 2000 by CBS News reported that 96% of the students reported feeling safe. On the other hand, 22% of the class of 2000 reported they knew of students who regularly carried weapons to school. This statistic is alarming because in the last decade (1990 – 2010) there has been an increase in the number of students in possession of weapons on school grounds (Kelly, 2007).
According to The National School Safety Center's Report on School Associated Violent Deaths, 270 violent deaths across the nation have occurred since the 1992-1993 school year (Kelly, 2007). In the 1999-2000 school years, the number of deaths recorded was only one quarter of the amount reported in 1992-1993. For the most part, school violence incidents do not result in death. The more serious violent incidents continue to occur in middle and high schools.

School safety in the twenty-first century is complex, but must be a high priority for the administrators of any given school district (Werle, 2006). Following the 1999 high-profile school violence incident at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, student’s, parent’s, and other citizens’ awareness of school violence increased. It appeared that a new trend began with a heightened sense of school safety at that point (Lawrence & Birkland, 2004).

One approach to curbing violence is the installation of security equipment. However, experts indicate that metal detectors and cameras do not effectively prevent school shootings or incidents of violence in schools. The Columbine shooting, for example, occurred on the same day that the school installed a million dollar security system (Fratt, 2006).

School violence, while often not publicized, has been perceived as a problem in education throughout the 21st century. An increase in violence has caused policymakers to focus on reducing violence in schools. Strategies put in place by school personnel to reduce violence include an increase in staff in the areas of
psychology and social work (Astor, 1995). Training and/or staff development has also been utilized in helping to curb violence.

**Liaison Officers**

School districts are addressing school violence by implementing on site security personnel, such as police liaisons. Due to the serious nature of school violence, police officers are becoming more common on campuses of junior high schools and high schools. The use of such personnel aims to maintain a safe environment for learning. It is also generally believed that a police liaison presence will deter or decrease incidents of violence. A study by Johnson (1999) reported that school administrators and students feel that School Resource Officer’s (SRO’s) provide a sense of security and reduced drugs, guns, and gang activities.

A growing trend as a preventative measure to violence is the implementation of a police liaison officer housed within the school as part of the school staff. The presence of law enforcement in schools can be a valuable tool for increased safety. This preventive measure gives some assurance to educators that discipline problems and violent behavior can be reduced. A School Resource Officer (SRO) is defined as, "a career law enforcement officer, with sworn authority, deployed in community-oriented policing,” according to the U.S. Department of Justice (1999, p.1). The responsibilities of an SRO include acting as a liaison between the school, community, and police, teaching law-related classes, counseling students, and performing law
enforcement duties. School Resource Officers serving as liaisons between the police and schools are widely used in all 50 states to assist in securing schools.

A survey by May, Fessell, and Means (2004) reported Kentucky school principals feel the services provided by the SRO have been a positive addition to their school’s safety. School Resource Officers were viewed as role models, great assistance with deterring activity of a criminal nature, and a great addition to the staff for principals. Therefore, it is vitally important for there to be a close relationship between the SRO and the staff to help insure the safety of schools (May, Fessell, & Means, 2004).

School Safety

Parents and advocates in the communities are asking that policies be implemented to ensure school safety. Heinen, Webb-Dempsey, Moore, McClellan, and Friebel (2006) found that 75% of schools have a procedure for lockdown in the event of a serious threat or incident. While on the other hand, more than half of U.S. schools are not prepared for terrorists or extreme casualty events. It is common that schools are prepared for the possibility of fire and bus evacuation by using routine drills. Such drills are normally practiced at least two to three times a year.

Tornado safety drills are generally practiced once a year. Terrorists or armed intruder lockdown safety drills are less common as a practice among schools. For instance, in Illinois the state mandates that during each academic school a school must conduct a minimum of three school evacuation drills to address and prepare students
and school personnel for fire incidents. Schools may conduct additional evacuation drills to account for other evacuation incidents, including but not limited to suspicious items or bomb threats (Illinois General Assembly, 1995).

**Violence in Schools**

“Violence is an act carried out with the intention, or a perceived intention, of causing physical pain or injury to another person,” according to Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980, p. 20). Laub and Lauritsen (1998) suggest violence is a reflection of students’ social context that is brought into the school setting by the student and by other intruders from the neighborhood surrounding the school. Within the neighborhood of the school, there are many factors which contribute to violence committed at school. The various social contexts of poverty, racial and ethnic composition, family composition, housing density, and population turnover contribute to community violence that is imported into the school by students (Laub & Lauritsen, 1998).

Violence is commonly perceived to be most closely related to an inner city environment, according to Devine (1996). Devine (1996) suggests that two opposing viewpoints on school violence are depicted by the media. The two views are characterized as chaotic and alienation. The chaotic viewpoint shows the violence as mob action, shooting, or similar situations. An alienation viewpoint often is prompted by social isolation. In either case, it is a form of violence. However, "most reports agree that the rate of violence is relatively significant in many suburban and urban
There is less mention of violence in rural areas, although rural areas are not exempt from school violence. Violence in rural areas is less often publicized than that which occurs in urban and suburban schools. Violence in the suburban and urban areas is highly publicized in the media while their rural counterparts are rarely mentioned (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1995).

In reporting violence, the media tends to report on a wide range of crimes from the most violent to the not so violent. The media reporting of school violence in the urban and suburban setting has a significant impact on the perception of school violence. The profiling of violence in the media has raised major concern by society in regard to education. Research suggests that the constant reporting of violence in the media often increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior. This is due, in part, to the high rate of engagement time of children and adolescents viewing television (Werle, 2006). It appears that the more violence in schools is reported on television, the higher the likelihood that violence will occur in schools.

**Violence in Communities**

Some communities across America are considered high violence communities. Inner city areas are often stereotyped as being infested with extremely high levels of crime, gangs, and theft. Large metropolitan areas such as Chicago, Los Angeles, New Orleans, and New York are considered high crime cities. The media reports Chicago as the city with the highest homicide rate of all major cities in 2012 (Kenniff, 2012).
Children in these communities and the surrounding areas have the perception their community is unsafe. Children living in these communities often experience violence at home, quarrels or fights in the streets, and a continuation of the same at their respective schools. A high frequency of violence is clearly a public health concern for any community. Violent encounters affect the physical, mental, and social well being of students (Usta & Farver, 2005).

Violence in the community shapes the environment. In turn, individuals in the community shape their assumptions of friendliness, safety, and rules of survival with activity of the neighborhood. This is evident in more than just the United States (Usta & Farver, 2005). Research revealed that in Lebanon, student drawings reflected experiences of exposure to violence in the home, school, and community. Evidence suggested that at a very young age, children’s perception of violence in the community is associated with difficulties in their social functioning in the neighborhood and school. Students do not typically experience the most violence at school. It is typically the home environment and the community surrounding their school where violence begins. The behavior patterns exhibited in the community will likely be the same behaviors carried to the local schools. Some factors that contribute to violence in the community are low socioeconomic status, crime, drugs, and high population turnover. The structure of the community is generally reflected by the school (Lorion, 1998).

According Carl Hurdlik (2010), a Chicago Public Schools (CPS) central office administrator responsible for school safety, Chicago Public Schools report a high rate of violence in or near many of their schools. Currently, the CPS schools that are
located in high crime and gang infested areas are implementing a new initiative, A Culture of Calm. This initiative is designed to focus on high-risk students and their families. The schools work in collaboration with a youth advocacy agency to curtail violence. Chicago’s public schools have reported the number of students slain in the 2007/2008 and 2006/2007 school years at 27 and 31, respectively (Mattingly, 2009). Teenagers in Chicago are 10 times more likely to be the victims of gun violence than Illinois youngsters living outside of the city limits. Between 2002 and 2006, more than 650 teenagers were shot and killed. Baram (2008) reported an increase in the number of students killed by gun violence in the 2007 and 2008 school years.

**Factors of Youth Violence**

Several tragic incidents of violence by youth in schools have occurred over the past two decades (1990 – 2010), such as the 1998 shooting by two middle-school age males in Jonesboro, Arkansas; the 1999 Columbine High school shooting in Columbine, Colorado; and the 2006 Amish school shooting in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania. The history of violence can be associated with many factors. Some of the related factors of incidents of violence are abuse, neglect, bullying, harassment, or victimization. One of the most severe of the factors is bullying. Bullying seems to occur in many schools on a daily basis. “Violence is an act carried out with the intention, or a perceived intention, of causing physical pain or injury to another person,” say Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980, p. 20). Violence has been observed as a reaction to some form of frustration, manipulation, pain, or hurt from someone
else. The resultant violent behavior is harmful to the offender and the victim. Violent behavior is believed to be a learned behavior that can be changed.

Werle (2006) addresses a form of violence as bullying, "a form of behavior characterized by repeated aggressive acts against a weaker individual" (p. 10). Bullying comes in many forms such as social, verbal, physical, sexual, racial, and ethnic abuse. Students are bullied daily, often resulting in violent acts in schools. Bullying is one of the areas commonly addressed by schools to decrease acts of violence amongst youth (Werle, 2006). Olweus (1993) considers bullying in general to be a repeated exposure to negative actions that occur. While bullying is a significant form of violence, it is sometimes not recognized or noticed by school personnel. Some acts of bullying go unnoticed by staff because it is often misconstrued as playing.

Bullying comes in three forms, according to literature (Ross, 1996). Direct bullying is “open attacks on a victim” (Olweus, 1993, p. 10). Indirect bullying is a “form of social isolation and intentional exclusion from a group” (Olweus, 1993, p. 10). This is also referred to as manipulation by peers ignoring the victims. The third form of bullying is direct verbal aggression, such as name-calling, shouting, and accusing (Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukiainen, 1992). However, the victims and/or offenders of the high profile school violence acts referred to in this study encountered one or more forms of bullying throughout their schooling which is credited to driving bullies to engage in violent acts.
Zero Tolerance

Zero tolerance was formulated as a response to violence in school and to assure a measure of school safety for all. It is a public policy that is generally applicable in many school districts, even though the application varies from district to district. By definition, it is a “policy that mandates predetermined and severe consequences for specific offenses,” such as weapons possession regardless of age, circumstance, or history of discipline (Stader, 2004, p. 62). School districts have gone to an expanded version of zero tolerance and included violent behavior, gang related behavior, drug possession, solicitation, and other egregious acts (Henault, 2001). Students whose offenses constitute severe violations under zero tolerance are given what is considered severe consequences. The major consequence for such violations is expulsion from school.

Principals cite the most serious and moderate problems with students in their schools as tardiness (40%), absenteeism (25%) and fights (21%). For the most part, principals are not experiencing weapons, drugs, and physical assaults on staff as the major concern. The Gun Free School Act (GFSA) data supports the principals reporting by finding that while weapons in school do occur, they are very rare (Stader, 2004). Stader (2004) states of the forty-nine million students attending public schools in 1999-2002, 857 were accosted possessing a weapon on a school campus. The GFSA allows administrators to evaluate each case and modify disciplinary action for firearm cases (Stader, 2004).
As Kandakai, Price, Telljohann, and Wilson (1999) noted, “some states have enacted ’zero tolerance’ laws mandating expulsion of students caught bringing weapons to school” (p. 189). Illinois is a state that has enacted the zero tolerance policy. With regard to zero tolerance policies and findings, courts have generally supported school districts in their efforts to improve school safety. This is evident in the high profile case of 2001 Fuller v. Decatur where six students were fighting in the stands at a football game. On September 17, 1999, a violent fight broke out in the bleachers at a high school football game in Decatur, Illinois, leaving spectators scrambling to escape the melee. The students involved in the fight were members of rival street gangs. The school board responded with a two-year school expulsion for each student involved. There was a challenge to the decision by a group of citizens. The courts supported the school district as being in compliance with its policy for all allegations when they reported students received adequate due process, did not treat students disparately or on a racial basis, and had a district discipline policy related to gangs and their affiliates (Stader, 2004).

Zero tolerance is a response that is often viewed as the solution to the media reports of violent acts. Educators feel that zero tolerance policies are fair and necessary for the safety of American schools today. Others argue that zero tolerance policies disproportionately impact ethnic minority students and students who have low academic performance. It has also been observed that students with special needs and boys more often than girls are victims of such policies (Fries & DeMitchell, 2007).
Parents’ Perception

Parents often have adamant views about how to control violence in schools. Parents want their children to be safe in the community and in their neighborhood schools. Violence that parents often report occurs on school grounds. However, the reporting parent may expect that his or her reporting of an incident before it occurs will prevent his or her own child from receiving consequences by school officials.

In inner city Chicago, Illinois, students report being fearful as they travel to and from school. Parents are equally as fearful as the students when it comes to traveling to and from school. Parents want the community support in helping students travel safely to and from school. One parent from Chicago stated, “All these communities have got to come together,” referring to making the community safer for the students (www.suntimes.com/new/blogentries). Parents have the same fears as their children walking to and from public schools, especially in the inner city. Parents believe in community. Community parent advocates believe parents must work with the police departments to decrease violence and make their community safe, because the police cannot complete this task alone (www.suntimes.com/new/blogentries).

Kandakai, Price, Telljohann, and Wilson (1999) studied mothers’ perceptions of factors contributing to violence. They report that mothers are an important link to a better understanding of school violence. They also cite that mothers tend to believe their children are safe at school. They learned that mothers believe students are equally responsible as the parents for reducing violence in school. The study revealed that mothers believe that one primary factor in the high rate of violence is the lack of
moral teaching in the home by parents. Two-thirds of the parents studied believe teachers did not stop behaviors that led directly to violence. While urban and rural mothers where included in the study, 70% of urban mothers in comparison to 53% of rural mothers were very concerned with the parent/teacher communication. Mothers were particularly concerned with this area of communication in the urban areas because they felt that this is an avenue to explore violence reduction in urban school settings. Mothers in this study did not perceive bullying to be a major contributor to violence in schools.

Mothers and students have varying degrees of differences when it comes to school violence. Some mothers believe the most simplistic way of addressing school violence will decrease it in schools. They believe that working with school agencies in support of decreasing violence will help improve the situation. On the other hand, parents who support aggressive behavior will only aid in continuing school violence (Kandaki, Price, Telljohann, and Wilson, 1999). Furthermore, no research exists for father’s viewpoints on school violence. In the opinion of many parents, communication among home, school, and child, will be a strong contributing factor in eliminating school violence (Kandaki, Price, Telljohann, and Wilson, 1999).

**Students’ Perceptions of School Violence**

Violence dominates students’ experience in predominantly low-income community school districts where there is no adequate source of resources. Towns (1996) completed a two-year study in the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. that
questioned students about their most pressing concerns with their school experience and what would they like to see changed. The most common response was concern for school violence. The students in grades three through six reported violence in general as a main concern and expressed it in many forms. The different types of violence were neighborhood activities of hustlers and gangs, murder and/or imprisonment of family and friends, escaping community danger, and lastly violence in school. Children felt the violence surrounding them affected their school experience (Towns, 1996).

Students have concerns when it comes to safety in school. Price, Telljohann, Dake, Marsico, and Zyla (2007) reported in a survey of elementary students a low incidence of physical attacks in the gymnasium during physical education and also a low percentage of students worrying about being attacked on the school playground. Gang activity at school did cause students to feel unsafe at school. The study offered students’ viewpoints on solutions and interventions with violent situations.

Eighty-two percent (82%) of students felt that situations could be resolved without fighting. Seventy-four percent (74%) of students felt that they could walk away from a person that wanted to invite a fight. This report shows that many students do feel they are capable of solving conflict without violence, but it does not mean they feel safe or are in non-violent schools.

Violence often begins in the elementary schools with some violently aggressive elementary students. Bullying, for instance, is most prevalent in students
between the ages of seven and nine. During high school years, fewer students reported incidents of bullying (Frisen, Jonsson, & Persson, 2007).

Bullying is not a problem that only exists in the United States. Frisen, Jonsson, and Persson (2007) suggest that bullying is a problem in the Swedish student population. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of the participants studied reported being bullied by age nine. A small number of students reported being bullied during high school.

According to Frisen, Jonsson, & Persson, 2007, there are many reasons why students get bullied. The reasons listed would also apply to the victimized students of violence in the elementary and high school level in the United States. Several statements proved to be the cause of being bullied as defined by the Swedish students:

1. Victim appearance
2. Victim behavior
3. Characteristics of bullies
4. Social background of bullies
5. Other, for example, bad luck.

The reasons for being bullied as defined by students differ greatly from the view of adults. The view from adults for students being bullied is victim size, weight, not wearing designer clothes/shoes, and attitude.

Many students victimized by bullying as small children become bullies themselves as they become middle school and high school students. Nevertheless, bullying is a major factor of youth violence.
Violence Prevention

The nation’s perception is that our schools are becoming more violent and there is a need to address the issues of school violence (Strandberg, 1999). Communities have responded with a need for safety and security at the schools their students attend. Schools have responded with security plans, zero tolerance for extreme behaviors, anti-violence and intervention programs. Yet, violence still appears to be on the rise. A major issue is the question of whether or not the implemented programs for anti-violence actually address the issue. Students are in definite need of positive influences to alter negative behavior. Connections to positive values, relationships, and experiences could help youth make better decisions when coping with tough situations. The connection to making better decisions can be correlated to one’s positive involvement in outside sources such as religion, counseling, and social settings (Boulter, 2004). Glassner (2000) believes the skill of a school counselor can provide an effective violence prevention program. A highly trained counselor with no other responsibility other than the violence prevention program can be a great resource and form of intervention for a school with high violence (Glassner, 2000).

A consortium of nonprofit social service agencies in Florida developed a program in schools entitled “Peacemakers.” The program was designed to teach conflict avoidance, resolution, and respect for others in a holistic manner. This program services preschool, elementary, and middle schools. Allen (2009) believes violence prevention programs should target elementary children. The Peacemakers
program study states that preschool students benefit from violence prevention programs thus allowing violence to decline as students increase in age.

Flannery and Williams (1999) offered necessary components of an effective violence prevention program to prevent and eliminate violence in schools. Collaboration on the part of all stakeholders is needed to implement the program. Typical partners are parents, schools, students, media, law enforcement, local businesses, and community-based organizations. Within the program, the following components are needed:

1. viewing violence as a learned behavior
2. starting early (elementary school)
3. making interventions developmentally appropriate
4. making prevention systematic and long term
5. focusing on increasing social competence, problem solving, and pro-social behavior
6. altering the environment (change the setting and/or remove the student)
7. be comprehensive, intensive, and flexible
8. increasing children's attachment to school
9. taking into account the impact of victimization
10. evaluating your programs effectiveness
11. involving others (teachers, parents, school administrators, all stakeholders)
12. favoring school-based prevention programs
13. involving peers
Amendola and Scozzie (2004) highlight six models of evidence-based interventions that are currently being used by many schools today. Model one is Check and Connect, a K-12 intervention that focuses on relationship building, routine monitoring, individualized and timely intervention, long term commitment, problem solving, and affiliation with schools and learning. Second Step, model two, is a school-based curriculum for pre-school through eighth grade students that focuses on social skills and altering attitudes and behaviors that are precursors to violence. Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways (RIPP), model three, is a school-based violence prevention program for middle and junior high students that focus on conflict resolution skills and strategies. Family Function Therapy is model four, an intervention that helps families and children to develop skills for coping, improving self-esteem, reducing delinquency and violence with drug and alcohol abuse through goal setting.

Model five, Positive Adolescent Choices Training (PACT) is a program geared toward African American youth to give them the skills needed to identify and avoid conflict. Although the program was written to help African American youth, it can be applied to all youth, regardless of whether or not they belong to an ethnic group. Finally, model six, Aggression Replacement Training (ART) is a cognitive intervention treatment program that focuses on a three-part curriculum: social skills building/skill streaming, anger control training, and moral reasoning. All of these intervention programs are geared toward helping students who are violence prone to
alter their behaviors and making better-informed decisions (Amemdola & Scozzie, 2004).

Schools are addressing violence prevention and/or education programs through partnerships or collaborations with outside agencies. Not only does the child need services to alter inappropriate behavior, but the family of the student is often in need of services as well. There are many programs available to service students at different levels, from pre-kindergarten through high school, but it appears that no services are available for the families. Not only do students and families need services, but teachers need training to deal with students that have a variety of social issues. This is especially true in high poverty, low socioeconomic, and low academic performing schools.

From an Invitational Theory of Practice (ITOP) perspective, Stanley, Juhnke, and Purkey (2004) state, “Schools are not likely to be changed through the addition of isolated new programs, policies, or actions that ignore the essential nature of the whole school” (p. 302). Promoting school safety by reducing violence should be the target of every school administrator. Assessing a school’s needs will help to determine the program most suitable for the school. According to Leffler and Snow (2001), the program used must correspond consistently with the student behavior exhibited in the school. Leffler and Snow (2001) explain, "School-wide initiatives typically involve an on-going process of strategic planning and staff development to create building-wide structures and directives for responding consistently to student behavior" (p. 234). This approach offers students an opportunity to take ownership and be empowered to
change their lives in school and their communities. This includes teaching students pro-social behavior skills. Most importantly the process can incorporate family structure as well.

Leffler and Snow (2001) suggest these programs should involve an array of techniques, behavior management building-wide, accountability, outside agency partnerships, family involvement or partnership, and curricula for the classroom that has extensive behavior skills of a pro-social nature.

Astor, Meyer, Benbenishty, Marachi, and Rosemond (2005) define effective programs as “well implemented and evaluated according to rigorous standards of research, including experimental and control group or quasi-experimental designs” (p. 22). Nevertheless, while anti-violence programs exist, both short term and long term, there are very limited data regarding effective violence prevention programs. There is no data reported on evaluations of anti-violence programs.

Although, many schools have school-based violence prevention programs there is no sound research to show they have been evaluated (Coben, Weiss, Mulvey, & Dearwater, 1994). School violence is a puzzle and there is no one solution to prevention. Therefore, to offer any one program as a solution because it is deemed effective is not appropriate. Strandberg (1999) suggests, “Despite attempts to evaluate each program’s effectiveness, it may be impossible to tell which program had the most effect” (p. 16). However, the goal is consistent across programs, and that is to prevent school violence.
The evaluation process of an anti-violence intervention program is extremely critical to the success of the program. Meyer and Stein (2004) indicated, “Program evaluation should be continuous and comprehensive with an eye toward informing program changes on an ongoing basis,” (p. 203). Adjustments throughout the program are necessary to maintain the purpose of the program.

Violence intervention programs are in place to change the attitude of its participants and increase social skills for handling conflict which ultimately decreases violence. The programs in effect have “developed detailed curricula, offered sound rationales about their approaches, and documented their implementation efforts” (Coben, Weiss, Mulvey, & Dearwater, 1994, p. 311). However, violence prevention programs collect data for evaluation purposes as a means for determining effectiveness.

It is important for schools to offer anti-violence programs in schools today, especially where there is an apparent need. While violence prevention programs are becoming more common, their effectiveness is often not shared. Meyer and Stein (2004) suggest, “Once a program has been determined to be effective (through high-quality evaluation), it is important that the results are published and distributed so that other schools and districts can replicate an effective program” (p. 203). Research encourages agencies/organizations to publicize their results.

Violence knows no limitations in its existence. Violence is not a new phenomenon. Violence prevention research topics exist. Past research has indicated violence is in existence and there are anti-violence programs in place to curb violence.
This research clearly states programs of existence that are effectively curbing violence in the nation.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Procedure

There have been no explanations according to established scientific theories that offer suggestions to the reduction or eradication of violence in school (Asbeh, 2010). The nation’s schools are embedded in communities. Schools generally reflect the community they are embedded in. The community and the community high schools are a learning environment as well as a social den for students. Schools are a main source shaping and molding attitudes and behaviors for our socially challenging world. Violence in the neighborhood contributes to violence in the neighborhood school. Therefore, social learning theory can applied.

Social learning theory is a proposed theory by Albert Bandura. Social learning theory states children learn the environment through observational learning or modeling. Children pay attention to the models such as influential models, friends, characters on TV, and friends within their peer group and encode their behaviors. This behavior can be reinforced negatively or positively (McLeod, 2011). Children are engaged in social environments while in the community and in the educational setting. During this time social learning is adapted as a behavior. The adapted behavior whether it positive or negative is the displayed behavior displayed in the school
environment. For the purpose of this study the focus was on the negatively adapted behavior displayed in the school community.

For the purpose of this study the qualitative program evaluation/case study method is used. This study explored the perception of school administrators. The administrators are the key individuals who work closely with the anti-violence programs within their perspective schools. The administrators are the “case” for this study. Case study methodology is defined by research experts Robert E. Stake, Helen Simons, and Robert K. Yin. According to Yin (2003), researchers can explore individuals or organization, through complex interventions, relationships, communities, or programs.

The perception of school administrators regarding school violence and the effectiveness of anti-violence programs was explored. The research design used for the purpose of this study was qualitative using case study. The qualitative research method is commonly used to explore programs and give voice to participants’ experiences (Vaterlaus & Higginbotham, 2011). Qualitative research was best suited for this study due to the exploration of who’s responsible for school violence and violence intervention programs, why the violence programs are inside of high schools, why the responsible parties feel connected to the programs they are responsible for, and what programs of violence are servicing students within the high schools. There is a phenomenological approach this study, “Exploring the experience of participants is known as a phenomenological approach” (McLeod, 2008).

Interviews were chosen as a method of data collection. Interviewing
individuals is a way of gaining knowledge and getting people to get involved and talk about their views. In order for the interview to be effective it is the responsibility of the researcher. Kvale (1996, p. 14) regarded interviews as a mutual interest topic where and interchange of views between two or more people take place and is discussed and sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situations of research data related to the topic of interest.

During the interview process the researcher allowed the participants to choose the time and location of the interview. This setting for the interview was chosen by the participants to give the participants comfort and the sense of being in their own environment. The questions of the interview were focused and followed the guide set by the researcher. All participants offered verbal responses for the research.

The interview process allowed the researcher to focus on school administrators’ perceptions regarding school violence and effective anti-violence programs. The study was conducted through interviewing, presenting an opportunity for in-depth exploration of the world in which the participant lives. In-depth information can enhance program quality (Vaterlaus & Higginbotham, 2011). The interview process produced learning about the participant’s perspective that was not available by any other method. Schools chosen for this study were high schools that were considered to have frequent discipline issues, unsafe, urban, and low performing, based on two criteria: (a) not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and (b) sixty percent (60%) or more students receiving free or reduced lunch.
Interviews allowed the human experience to be shared. Interviews also provided a descriptive perception of the participants lived experience. A detailed view of the school administrators’ world was explored. The researcher interviewed school administrators with probing, open-ended questions. The participants were asked structured open-ended questions regarding the research study. Follow up questions emerged through the interview process. The researcher probed the areas of each school administrator’s lived experience, world of school violence, professional role, school culture, and climate. Also, the researcher probed their role in the anti-violence program, view of anti-violence programs, and view of effectiveness. Operation and implementation of the programs and teamwork experience was also explored. The researcher followed up on the participants’ responses with probing questions based on the responses of the participants. As the interviews progressed the researcher’s listening skills were increased allowing the voices of the participants to follow and become fruitful. The descriptive experiences gave the researcher valuable responses that are not preconceived by the researcher.

The researcher is familiar with the topic; however, the researcher remained detached from the research study. The researcher maintained non-judgmental and objective throughout the research process. The researcher remained objective throughout this process to gain a clear view of the participants experience and perception of the research topic.
Based upon the researcher’s professional work experience in schools with 60% or more low income, there has been more violence within that student population profile.

The interview transcripts were carefully reviewed and coded to identify the emerging themes. Each of the two interviews was 60 to 90 minutes in length. Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed.

The researcher analyzed each school administrator’s interview. The researcher analyzed interviews to discover concepts and new ideas on the perception of school violence and anti-violence programs. The descriptions that were revealed allowed for an analysis of a perspective that was not available through any means other than dialogue.

**Sample and Sample Rationale**

The study consisted of school administrators from urban public high schools in the State of Illinois. The selected high schools are schools with anti-violence programs as part of their system as an intervention strategy. The schools that receive the services of anti-violence programs offer services that are perceived to be somewhat effective in their urban public high school. Furthermore, the selected schools were identified as urban, low performing by not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress, sixty percent (60%) or more low-income rate, and frequent discipline problems. The researcher contacted via telephone the school Principal of the selected high schools to ask if their schools have frequent discipline problems, as well as effective anti-violence programs.
implemented to curtail discipline issues. Permission was requested for a research study to be conducted in his/her school with school administrators. Participating principals were asked to provide the name, title of the appropriate school administrator, and contact information of the designated persons to participate in this research study. Additional telephone calls were placed to the designated school administrators to gain their permission to participate in this research study.

The researcher obtained permission to conduct research only from the principals and school administrators whose schools met the established criteria. The research sample involved a small number of participants for evaluation. The sample consisted of ten urban public high school administrators in the State of Illinois. The researcher conducted two one-hour interviews with each participating school administrator. The researcher explored each participant’s unique experience with school violence and the effectiveness of anti-violence programs. The participating school administrators were asked a series of probing questions relating to their life and job related experiences. School administrators who declined participation in the study were replaced by the researcher to keep the selection sample at the set base.

Each school administrator’s interview is strictly confidential. The names of administrators, schools, and school districts are not revealed in the data analysis. All participants are documented by pseudonyms. Recordings and transcripts are kept and secured by the researcher. Recordings and transcripts will be shared with participants only upon their request. All audio tapes and transcripts will be kept by the researcher
for a minimum of three years. After the three year period expires all audio and transcripts will be destroyed.

Ten schools were selected by reviewing the school report card and the interactive report card via the internet and school website. In addition, school superintendents were in agreement with the scope and focus of the study based upon telephone conversations. Other school administrators chosen for the study were selected by the principals. Superintendents chose the school within their district that met the criteria for the research study. Many high school districts house one or two schools only. This helped to keep the selection of schools within a school district simple.

Assumptions

1. The selected school has frequent discipline issues and 60% or more free and reduced lunch.
2. This study assumes that the Principals are honest about the violence in their respective high school.
3. The school administrators are honest in their reporting.

Limitations

1. Because the study involves urban high schools in Illinois, the results may not be applicable to non-urban or rural schools in Illinois or any other state.
Delimitations

1. The study involves ten urban high schools in the State of Illinois.

2. The study involves only ten high school administrators.

3. The study involves only high schools administrators that are involved with school violence and the anti-violence program.

4. The study involves ten urban high schools in the State of Illinois that have at least 60% free/reduced lunch.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher assured all participants’ organizations that information collected by the researcher will be used for the purpose stated. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the school district superintendent of the selected schools. Permission to participate in the study was obtained from the school principal and school administrators.

The researcher obtained informed consent forms from all participants upon agreement to participate in the study. All participants signed consent forms prior to conducting the study. The consent form explained all participants’ rights as willing participants in the study.

Participation in the study was voluntary. There was no compensation for participation in the study. There was no penalty for non-participation, nor was there a penalty for withdrawal from the study.
For the purpose of this study, the researcher did not select any participants with whom the researcher has a power relationship. The researcher did not select the school in which the researcher is employed. Participants selected for this study do not have a direct or personal relationship with the researcher.

Data for the study were collected only by the researcher. Any and all data collected for the study are kept in a secured locked compartment. Data collected will be retained for three years. Only the researcher will have access to all data collected. All data for this study can be viewed by the respective participants only. If participants request to view the documents of the study, permission will be granted. All participants may have access to only their data collected at the completion of the study as well as a copy of the completed study.

Approval to conduct the study by the researcher was sought through the Aurora University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The form of submission was through a committee-approved written proposal. Approval to conduct the study was granted by the IRB.

The tape recorded interviews were fully transcribed. Each participant discussed each stage of analysis. The transcripts were fully examined to identify themes.
Chapter IV

Results of the Study

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the perception of school administrators in select urban public high schools in the state of Illinois, as it relates to school violence and effectiveness of anti-violence programs and to add to the research base on school violence and anti-violence programs.

The following research questions were explored:

1. What are the elements of each urban public high school’s program for curbing violence?

2. What do respondents view as the principal causes of violence in their urban public high school in the Midwest?

3. What anti-violence programs or approaches are perceived as successful?

4. How are anti-violence programs evaluated and what are the criteria for success?

5. How are student and neighborhood needs assessed? What planning processes are involved in implementation?

6. How do school administrators perceive their role in delivering anti-
violence programs?

There are key findings for each research question. The research participants offered significant personal experiences to add a rich texture to the research.

Overall, participants were adamant that curbing violence is the ultimate key to school safety. Specific elements in the urban public high schools program for curbing violence included surveillance, metal detectors, locker searches, police presence, outsourced security staff, and collaboration of staff.

Another key finding involves the principal causes of violence. Principal causes of violence were reported by participants as being attributed to poorly taught lessons at home, such as poor morals and values, less effective social and emotional skills, and technology.

Next, participants discussed the anti-violence programs used by the urban public high schools and their approaches to curbing violence that were perceived as successful. The resources used by participants were stated as home visits, internal security staff, the mediation process with school staff (social workers and/or counselors), relationship building, Loss of Privilege, mentoring, and other independent group programs within each school building and outside agencies.

Although assisting students of violence and curbing violence in our schools are an important priority for school administrators, they must put resources in place to address the issue of violence. Once anti-violence programs are in place school administrators need to evaluate the programs for success or non success.
Assessment is another component along with planning. School administrators need to assess their schools needs and plan accordingly. The key finding here is no formal tool is used for assessment, the tracking of data, observations, team meetings, a positive rapport, Pupil Personnel Support, a police liaison, and the frequency of assessments.

Finally, school administrators must have a feeling of ownership and/or perception of their role in delivering anti-violence programs. The key finding here is school administrators feel important and valuable.

**Findings**

Chapter IV examines the findings of the study based on the collected data. The interviews for this study were conducted from June 2011 through January 2012. A professional biographical introduction of each research participant is provided. Each research participant’s detailed interviews were analyzed. This study addressed and discussed various themes which were connected to each research question. A final interpretation of the results of this study is offered at the end of the chapter.

**Participants**

Experienced school administrators were chosen for this study. There were ten participants. Participants have a minimum of ten years to a maximum of twenty years of experience in education. There are two participants that hold an associate’s degree.
Every school administrator holds a bachelor’s and master’s degree. One participant is a candidate for a doctorate degree.

The participants have held a variety of teaching positions before becoming an administrator, such as, social worker, biology teacher, special education cross categorical teacher, and guidance counselor. Among the ten participants, each one of them have at some point been responsible for discipline for a period of time significant enough to have an insightful perception. Eight of the participants have been an administrative dean at one point throughout their career.

**Participant 1**

Participant 1 became an administrator after seven years of teaching. The first and second administrative experience began as a dean of suburban high schools. Next, an assistant principal position was held at a middle school in a small town. Finally, she has held the deans at the current high school since 2001. The student body of this high school is approximately 1500.

Participant 1 began a second master’s program in counseling due to his belief that the program would be beneficial to being a dean. Participant 1 stated, “I thought that that might be appropriate for some of the teens and some of the poor choices they were making.” He feels a heightened sense of awareness and more knowledgeable as a resource.

The interview with Participant 1 was very strong with much dialogue. She appeared very knowledgeable, energetic, and high spirited when speaking of his
Participant 2

Participant 2 has been a dean of students at the current suburban public high school district for over seventeen years. He has the primary responsibility along with one other colleague to provide safety and maintain discipline of 1350 students.

Along with being a Dean of Students the participant is also a coach. Participant 2 has been a coach for 20 years. Prior to being a dean he was an instructional aide, special education teacher, summer school English teacher for two semesters, and an assistant dean. Being an assistant dean inspired the participant to become a Dean of Students.

Before moving into education, Participant 2 completed extensive work with mental health agencies and assisting with violence programs. He completed an internship with the same mental health agency. After completing work at the mental health agency he went on to work at a special education school. This all provided the groundwork for a great career as a teacher and administrative dean of students.

Participant 2 has found his niche in education. He loves working in this community and is making a difference in the lives of the students and the community. The relationship building has been phenomenal due to serving generations of families.

Participant 2 appeared very honest, sincere, and passionate during the interview process. As a disciplinarian he appeared proud, stern, and extremely knowledgeable about his role as dean of students and giving the school district and
school community the best service possible.

**Participant 3**

Participant 3 is in the ninth year as Dean of Students of a suburban public high school with a population of 1200 students. The high school serves four communities. Participant 3 works along with one other dean to provide the discipline at this comprehensive high school. Prior to being an administrator he taught business education classes.

Participant 3 appeared knowledgeable about the school district and loves the fact that the two deans can focus on servicing students by gender. This is feasible because there is one female dean and one male dean.

Participant 3 misses the positive interactions with students, but occasional success stories of students that were in the dean’s office frequently makes it all worthwhile. Being a dean is pleasant for Participant 3. He loves the responsibility and being the go to person when there’s a problem.

**Participant 4**

Participant 4 is currently an assistant principal in charge of the dean’s office and day to day operations in a comprehensive public high school of 3700 students for the past 4 years. He has the primary responsibility of safety and security for the school, supervising the dean’s office, supervising the security staff, supervising maintenance, enforcing the tardy policy and procedures, and expulsion hearings.
Prior to administration, Participant 4 was a language arts teacher in middle school, and then moved to the position of high school dean for five years. Thereafter, became Head Dean before the assistant principal ship.

Participant 4 appeared to have extensive knowledge about the school district. Participant 4 aspires to become principal soon and is trying wholeheartedly to gain all the knowledge possible before obtaining that position.

**Participant 5**

Participant 5 is an assistant principal of a suburban public high school that serves 1350 students. She has been an assistant principal of this high school for two years. Prior to the current position, Participant 5 was a Dean of Students for five years at a neighboring high school within the same school district. Before assuming an administrative position Participant 5 was a science teacher at the high school and a local college science professor.

Participant 5 worked for the city of Chicago Public School system for a number of years and at the private school sector at the middle school level before beginning to teach in the suburban high school district. While working she wanted to concentrate more of the work experiences at the high school level due to seeing a great need for mentors at that level. Participant 5 enjoys the challenge at the high school level and loves assisting teens with life skills.

While being a dean and currently during the assistant principal experience Participant 5 loves being involved in the program that services students at risk. She
was eager and excited to share about his experience, involvement, and challenges. She loves the challenges and seeing students grow and mature into adulthood. One thing that she missed about being a dean is the building of strong relationships with the students because that is hard to embrace while being an assistant principal.

**Participant 6**

Participant 6 is a dean of students at a comprehensive suburban public high school of 1800 students and has been a dean for three years. Prior to being a dean she was a licensed social worker for seven years and continues to keep the certification valid.

Participant 6 stated that the skill set for a social worker and deans are very similar with one slight difference. The social worker aspect is an advocate for students while the dean aspect is an advocate for the entire school.

During the interview process Participant 6 seemed to be very sincere and honest and displayed a great sense of humor. She loves the Dean of Students role because each day brings about new challenges.

**Participant 7**

Participant 7 is a dean in a suburban public high school that services 1500 students. He has five years of teaching experience at the high school level. Prior to teaching he was as a family educator through a teen living program.

Participant 7 came to teaching at the high school level through the football
program and is concurrently an attendance dean and truant officer. While coaching football participant 7 was a student in the masters in educational leadership program. A professor of one of the courses for Participant 7 informed him of an opening for a Dean of Students position. He applied for the dean’s position and were hired to work in that capacity.

Participant 7 appears to be sincere and honest in the interview process. He believes in going above and beyond the call of duty to assist the families of the school community. The prior work experience of being a family educator through Youth Outreach Services has offered Participant 7 the opportunity to build great family relationships.

**Participant 8**

Participant 8 is currently an assistant principal and has been for the past four years. He serves as an assistant principal in a suburban public high school of 2700 students. Previous positions held were physical education teacher, guidance counselor, and guidance counselor department chairperson.

Participant 8 works in a school district that services six neighboring communities. He is extremely familiar with the school and the school community and is the only school district the participant has served. He has 25 years plus years of service to this school district.

Participant 8 appeared very honest and sincere in responding. He speaks very highly of the school district and was very comfortable and eager to answer questions
regarding the high school. He is very dedicated and loyal to the school district and school community it services.

*Participant 9*

Participant 9 has been a principal at her current comprehensive high school of 1800 students for the past three years. Prior to his current assignment as principal, two years were spent as an assistant principal of pupil services, primarily responsible for the master schedule, supervision of all support staff including nurses, social worker, special assistance coordinator, drug prevention specialist, and registration. Prior to this position, Participant 9 was assistant principal for activities and discipline, which comprised of supervising the dean’s office, security, both in house and contractual officers, recruitment, monitoring, and assessment of club sponsors. Prior to the assistant principal role Participant 9 was a Division Coordinator for Special Education (building level) responsible for academic planning and management of records for all students identified as special education with 504 plans.

Participant 9 came into the field of education after serving as a school social worker for a number of years at the elementary and high school sectors. After being a social worker for eight years. Participant 9 moved to work as a social worker at the alternative high school for six years. The six years at the alternative school inspired the participant to move into administration. The years of experience at the alternative school was a great preparation for dealing with violence because a great deal of time was spent dealing with bullying prevention.
Participant 9 feels the most challenging administrative position was assistant principal in charge of discipline due to violence being a school wide issue. However, the challenge was huge, but workable due to the preparation from the alternative school.

Participant 9 appeared very sincere and passionate through the interview process and was open and honest with sharing stories and facts about issues of violence about her school.

**Participant 10**

Participant 10 is in the 4th year as principal of a suburban public high school with a student body of 1700 and is responsible for the entire school culture, climate, and the academic learning environment. Prior to being principal Participant 10 was the assistant principal for two years and at that time had the responsibility of maintaining the safety and security of the student body.

Prior to moving into administration, Participant 10 was a classroom teacher of English, theatre, and speech for 21 years. Within those 21 years the last few years were spent as department chairperson of fine arts and a house leader, which is a small learning community within the fine arts department.

Participant 10 accepted the assistant principal in charge of discipline with five deans to assist with this assignment. She accepted the challenge to help create a better school climate and wanting to help students learn coping skills to diffuse violence.
Research Question 1: What are the elements of each urban public high school’s program for curbing violence?

The elements of each urban public high school’s program for curbing violence is simply to alter the behavior of students and report a decline in data in school violence incidents. The school administrators in this study reported many security options to secure school safety. The current study participants were proud to report surveillance cameras as a first response to school safety. Participants stated that although there are security personnel present, the cameras are needed because the campuses are so large with many entrances and exits.

A surveillance camera is the leading choice of security by all school districts surveyed. Participant 6 stated that their school camera surveillance system encompasses the whole inside and outside of the building. Three of the interview participants offered the following related comments:

We have…you know…sixteen to twenty cameras located throughout the whole building…so that piece has reduced some of the violence because someone is always watching. (Participant 2)

We have video cameras. The kids know that the cameras and security…that there are eyes on them all the time. (Participant 4)

We got cameras all throughout and outside the building. There are some dead spots, however, and I promise the kids seem to know where the dead spots are but the cameras help us often times disseminating who did what, when, and where. However, myself and Dean [blank] I do have an app on my computer right now where I can pull the camera up and see any camera in the building. (Participant 7)

To complement the camera surveillance, school districts have been known to
use metal detectors. In interviewing the school administrators of this current study the participants offered mixed reviews on using metal detectors in their perspective school districts. Participant 1 stated in regard to metal detectors being used the following:

I’ll never know if there’s a need or not. I don’t know if its image or if its safety. I do believe that is going to be the question that’s going to be asked not out of need, but again just out of general code of conduct. So, we’re not going to do that. I can’t see us bringing in metal detectors anytime soon. We have hand held ones…never been used. We can access them if we need to…never had the need.

Participant 2 mirrors participant 1 in the fact that their school district does not use metal detectors. Participant 2 gave a strong stand regarding their use of metal detectors by stating, “We don’t have metal detectors or anything like that. We won’t go that bad. If we go that bad we better move. We don’t got to go that bad.”

Participant 5 stated the following:

We don’t have metal detectors as most schools because we’re in the suburbs…all because of the look. I’ve been in three schools; two in this district and one in another district and neither one of the schools have metal detectors. I think that it’s this perception in the suburbs that we’re in the suburbs we don’t need them and that if we have them we’ll scare the kids and all this other stuff. A lot of parents don’t want their kids in a school where they have that look and also feel that the parents feel like, ‘we don’t want…you know…our kids to feel like they’re going to prison or jail or like they’re in the city in school,’ but its not to that same degree.

Only one of school administrators report using metal detectors.

Participant 6 stated the following:

We have metal detectors that are not used properly because security allows kids to walk through them and they beep sometimes. They check sometimes they don’t get checked. That’s dangerous. Kids are supposed to be checked every single morning, so we have metal detectors.

In regard to metal detectors, the participants stressed the school districts are
responding to community feelings and image when deciding to use metal detectors as a part of school safety.

Locker searches are another option that school districts can use as a safety measure for school safety. Locker searchers can be completed at random. This measure is not meant to invade students’ privacy or to be invasive in any way. Students are normally not present when locker searches are implemented. However, under reasonable suspicion a student’s locker can be searched immediately. For the purpose of this research study school administrators report random locker searches are rarely done. Participant 2 only reported searching a student’s locker under reasonable suspicion has been completed while other participants reported lockers are not searched.

Fighting amongst the student population was reported as being the most frequent violent act in public high schools. Whether the fights that occur are one-on-one, two-on-one, or whatever the number one person or a group of students fighting, school district administrators are implementing student arrests to curtail this violent act. The parents of the students arrested are assessed a fine anywhere from the price range of $100 to $500. In addition, students that fight in school that are arrested are charged with disorderly conduct. School administrator Participants 1, 2, 7 and 10 stated the following regarding arresting students for fighting in school:

If there would be a fight the officer might assist in the discussion and interviewing of the students, but if we were going to have them processed or arrested an outside squad would be called in to come and take a student or squads would come in to take several students. (Participant 1)

If you do have a fight we do arrest and we do charge you with disorderly
conduct…so any fight that helps to deter…you know…young people from…you know…doing something opposite what they want to do.

(Participant 2)

Fighting off the bat no matter what you’re fighting for you will not be fighting in the building. We open the school year up freshmen orientation letting our parents and students hear that. We also have class meetings at the beginning of the year where we’re speaking to classes of seniors, juniors, sophomores, and freshmen letting them know what our clear expectations for them are in their building and letting them know what will happen if they get involved in serious scenarios. One of those would be fighting and we want them to know it’s not allowed here. If you fight you will be arrested, you will get a citation and have to go to court, and you will get an automatic ten day suspension.

(Participant 7)

When kids fight…we do…he [SRO] gives citations, take them to the police station and that parent has to pay $500. Two kids fight they both gone. They get $500 citations. (Participant 10)

This intervention is put into place to be a deterrent for kids. Data incidents of fighting will decline as a result of students not fighting due to arrest. School administrators are giving kids their expectations for behavior at the very beginning of the school year and repeatedly throughout the school year. Students that fight are being arrested and charged with disorderly conduct.

Police presence is evident in 100% of school administrators reporting. All schools have a School Resources Officers (SRO). The SRO’s are provided to the schools by the local police department. Three school administrators report having a Cook County Sheriff’s Deputy on staff. The Sheriff’s Deputy works collaboratively with school officials, SRO, and local police department. School administrators were proud to exploit their police officer presence on campus. Not only are districts employing police officers they are exploiting security presence as well.

In summary, presences of the placement of law enforcement officers in middle
school and high school have become the norm over the past decade. The trend has increased following the late 1990’s school shootings. Many schools have full-time officers and in-house school officers with police powers whether employed directly by the school district or by agreement/contract of the school district and the law enforcement agency. Many schools have security (paraprofessionals) along with SRO’s. Outside vendors are also employed by many school districts for security. Security is none armed. Participants 2, 3, 4, and 5 had the following to report about SRO’s and security in their school district:

We have a School Resource Officer. Basically, security, he just walks around…you know…does what he needs to do…kids…you know don’t have passes…check for passes. (Participant 2)

We have a police officer on duty daily and a few monitors to help assist with supervising students. (Participant 3)

When it comes to curbing violence the use of the School Resource Officers is beneficial. We have two in the building and the two that we have the times that I’ve been in there was probably five different officers that’s been in the building. They are by far one of the most powerful or they build relationship with kids that don’t feel the threat of a dean or an adult because they’re not affiliated with the school as much as they are kind of outside of that realm and they can talk to kids a little bit differently than a dean could or a teacher but what they were able to do is they were able to do id they were able to get a lot of information from the street police officers and bring it in and they would know what’s going on out on the streets we would know you know we would know the night before or the morning of hey this happened at the jubilee your going to be dealing with this and this ain’t going to end they would either call more police officers in or they would let us know so we could talk to the kid and try and work it out you know it. There and the other great thing about the police in the building was their interaction with the parents and the students as well was the parents came in and was able to talk to a police officer about what were their options if something did happen as far as a fight or a battery. They were able to support the school but also say hey if it doesn’t stop if the school can’t stop it come to me and we will stop it in our realm in the court system, so. They were another intervention that I think sometimes get overlooked in high schools and the ones we had all the ones we had weren’t just sitting in an
office waiting for something to happen then react. They were very (pause) I’m trying to think of the word, very (pause) what’s the word, proactive yes, very proactive yeah they were in the cafeterias, they would work own games, football games our basketball games. They were always seen in large areas and the kids again became part of the culture. The kids knew they could go to them if they couldn’t if they felt it was too serious to go to a dean or guidance counselor that they would be able to help them. They’re and they you know I don’t know if a lot of people know how they go through a lot of training to work in a school a be with teens that they just through their a day to day job being a street police officer and dealing with conflict and setting people down and giving people to hear both sides of the story and then they’re very powerful in the high schools. (Participant 4)

We have security. We have a school resource officer, a detective that’s on duty daily, however, if she’s not...if something happens in the community or she has to go to court or something like that then she has to attend to that, but she is assigned to our building though. We have a full security staff; of course they don’t have any weapons or anything. (Participant 5)

Participants 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 mirrored the other participants with reporting their school district employs a security staff to assist with monitoring students in various capacities during school hours or school sponsored events by reporting the following:

We have to rely on our community officer, officer from Cook County, and our head of security that I think tries to stay on what’s going on in the community. (Participant 6)

They all work to help maintain order in the hallway so at passing period you’ll see them posted at one of the post visible to the students. They help out in the lunchroom often times they help us survey the outside of the building as well. (Participant 7)

We do have a liaison from our local police department that is assigned to our school generally on a daily basis. We have paraprofessionals (security) and we have a police liaison. (Participant 8)

We have internal security personnel that the district employs. We generally try to bring in one or two additional officers during certain times of the year just based on previous experience just to kind of help out in that respect. We have a uniformed officer that mans the main entrance. (Participant 9)
We have security in every hallway. They go to the cafeteria. They walk the halls with the kids. They are not employed by us…that company the security company…you know is a vendor…you know outside vendor…so they come in and they watch. They basically keep order. (Participant 10)

The presence of the SRO whether it is a local police officer or a Cook County Sheriff’s Deputy is to have their presence promote a sense of safety and an additional deterrent for negative and/or violent behavior in public schools. In addition, the public schools have security staff members to assist with the monitoring of students. These staff members are strategically placed throughout the school building to curtail violence in the school.

Collaboration amongst school staff is very essential to curtailing violence. School administrators, deans, assistant principals, counselors, social workers, teachers, school resource officers, and parents remain in close contact with students of violence. Student altering of behavior is dependent on all entities to work together for the benefit of changing the behavior of a student of violence. Pupil Personnel Support (PPS) teams are prevalent as well as professional learning communities in 100% of the school administrators reporting. This would meet the RTI component associated with behavior; however, there is no indication that this specific for special education.

Participant 1 reported the following:

Once a week our PPS department PPS means Pupil Personnel Service would be our social worker, nurse, counselors, deans…sit down… substance abuse coordinator, special ed., psychologist we come together and we take a look at more of our individual students with needs and we then we start to put together programs.

Other school administrators are collaboratively supporting students in dealing
with verbal altercations, fights, and any other situation that may lead to an act of violence. The collaborative effort of schools working with students to curtail violence is evident by the following school administrators:

We are partnered. We are teamed up. So she knows everything I know. Everything I know everything she know. We are partnered up and we go through kids based on academic and disciplinary needs. We meet you know weekly. We’ll meet and bring those kids up in PPS or we won’t bring those kids up in PPS meetings based on what we did collectively together to get the kid back on track. They’re also using and we’re also using the RTI (Response to Intervention) process in terms of referring kids and we walk through that process to use with the counselor. (Participant 2)

Participant 3 reported collaboration as the following:

We have a good relationship with the police department. They normally give us the heads up when something may re-enter the school and sometime we may not get that heads up and if we don’t have that heads up then we’re unable to intervene in certain situations.

Participant 9 reported collaboration as the following:

Our social workers are very active with talking to our kids regarding bullying and violence prevention things like that. Our social workers are involved with conflict resolution. They work collaboratively with the deans. They pretty much adhere to the same alpha slice that the deans adhere to. When there is a big conflict it’s rare that the social worker is not directly involved because they bring that piece of…you know… what’s happening with the student. We have kids that frequently ask for the social worker. You actually have a lot of kids that go through our PPS…what was formally our PPS process now through RTI. They’re intimately involved in the RTI process.

Participant 7 reported collaboration as the following:

Now within that realm of nine administrators with your deans with any issues that you have here do utilize the counselors your social workers in assisting students with their issues. Often times its ironic you ask that. When I first got this position and interviewed with principal [blank] I responded to her the dean’s role…now…a dean’s kind of is a counselor slash social worker slash disciplinarian because the problem that we see at our office the problems that surface in this building all have a background I figure in seeing the problem. I have great relationship with my co-counselor who we share a alphabet slice
with [blank] and also a great relationship with our social worker [blank] and they are brought in often times to help student out that I see that may need that type of assistance.

Participant 4 and participant 9 reported documenting their collaborative efforts as part of their schools RTI process. The aspect of RTI reported was contact with students during Tier I and Tier II of the RTI process. Participants reported discussions of collaboration with the social worker and/or guidance counselor.

Participant 4 reported the following:

We had the RTI process put in place and we had kids that showed anger. They had anger issues or violent issues. We had groups in place that the social worker or guidance counselors were in. The guidance counselor and social worker were...they were mostly in Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions. They do not get involved in the day to day stuff so much, but Tier 2. When I ran the behavioral side of our RTI...I met with...I had one social worker and two guidance counselors that were a part of the team and the dean.

Participant 10 reported the following:

There have been some kids with emotional issues and we’ve gone through the process of having them sit with the social worker and/or school psychologist, not necessarily in special programs, but we have had situations where students were tested and did have to test into special programs. We utilize our social worker a lot.

The collaboration of such teams as professional learning communities is to be a support service to the students of violence. The goal of the collaboration is to gainfully strategize how to best help the students of choice to effectively change or alter their behavior. This can be done by individual and or group sessions or recommendation to outside sources.

School administrators responded that supervision of students is a very important factor in a proactive anti-violence approach that is successful in curtailing
violence.

Participant 3 offered the following:

I typically do a walkthrough of the building make sure the hallways are secure. I’m back in the hallway you know to greet the kids as they come in the building. Passing periods I’m out in the hallway. I do drop in on classes later.

Students are supervised by school administrators, SRO’s, security, and teachers.

Supervision of students is constant in high schools as reported by school administrators. When it comes to supervision teachers are instrumental in that component as well.

Participant 9 reported the following:

We have a system that teachers are contractually required to give as so much time of hall supervision so we rotate throughout the building. We rotate. We assign our teachers to hall supervision so that we can saturate the building as best as possible and it’s not just arbitrarily done so we don’t have everybody doing hall supervision on the first floor at the same time you know so we try to assign the teachers to make sure that we get full coverage of hall supervision and ask all the teachers to come during passing periods just to kind of help us.

Deans assist with the supervision of students during arrival, passing periods in the hallway, cafeteria, assemblies, events, and dismissal times. School administrators believe the presence of authorities is crucial to curtailing violence. Staff should be given professional development on supervision. School administrators and SRO’s need to encourage, guide, and reinforce staff members in fostering a positive environment during supervision time. Staff must be given the notions of what to look for in negative behavior of students. Furthermore, the more people that supervise students at high peak travel times the more students are prone to not behave inappropriately or engage in violent behaviors. When students have a visual of
administrators or the SRO in their presence they are prone to not exhibit violent behavior.

School administrators are using key elements to curb violence in the urban public high schools. The elements revealed for this study as the elements of each urban public high schools program for curbing violence are surveillance cameras, metal detectors, locker searches, arrest of students for violent acts, School Resource Officers, internal security personnel, collaboration amongst staff, and supervision of students. The respondents appear confident these elements are key components to curbing high school violence in their high school. In addition, school administrators believe these key elements are a positive reflection to having parents and students feel safe when on school grounds. There is no mention of parental involvement in helping to curb violence; however, parents are very watchful of the processes that schools are using to keep school campuses safe and free from violence.

For the purpose of this study the theme revealed is surveillance. The highlight of the surveillance is the School Resource Officer (SRO). This is an effective component used according to all participants. Johnson (1999) reported school administrators and students feel SRO’s provide a sense of security. Although schools have a security equipment of cameras throughout the schools experts indicate metal detectors and cameras are not effective (Fratt, 2006). School administrators give all credit of surveillance to the SRO due to the officer being housed in the building and/or being on the staff in schools.
**Principal Causes**

Research Question 2: What do respondents view as the principal causes of violence in their urban public high school in the Midwest?

School administrators report poor and/or no lesson taught at home, poor choice of students’ social skills in using technology, and community culture/environment are leading causes to school violence. The majority of the respondents were in agreement that the above four causes contribute to school violence today.

The number one cause of violence in school is poor lessons learned at home. School administrators believe in the old saying, “The first lesson learned or that’s taught is from the home.” School administrators believe the first teacher is the parent. Moreover, parents are the first to defend and/or try to excuse their child’s poor behavior. The experience of many school administrators is parents of the students they are servicing are not teaching their children sound morals and values in the home. Administrators perceive parents today are not raising their children as parents were raising their children in the 1960’s and 1970’s. This is evident through the reporting of participant 8:

Well, because they’re interacting with others and if there’s and if the lesson at home hasn’t been learned then they only do as well as they are at this point trained or taught and so I think as an educational institution we have a very difficult job when we have to combat what’s being taught at home and it’s not the same or its not similar anymore every home does its own deal, for example, when I don’t when I’d say when but back when the families where more in tact what we would think of the two parent home the values of going to church of being respected and how your conversation is being respected and how you dress. Those things are so diverse now it causes a problem and then sometimes the exposure that’s happening in those homes are difficult for children to for an educator to say to a child that’s inappropriate because that exposure could be how they survive, getting food, and having shelter, and so on. So, what I’m
saying point blank is if you have, for example, a parent that is involved in selling drugs that child thinks that’s a good way to make money because that’s how they make money so that shelter’s provided, clothing, and food, and so on. So, the educator has to fight that because it’s a bottle between sheer survivals and not so I think there’s a difficult there.

Although, keep in mind all children are raised differently, however, the exposure and family experience correlates and/or contributes to their behavior.

Administrators perceive that parents that teach their children positive morals and values through the lived examples of what they are teaching, as well as countering that with a spiritual component will create a non-violent experience. Parents of this nature teach valuable lessons at home, as well as structure and monitor their child’s time. Students of calm non-violent homes are not normally the students that use violence as an outlet during conflict. On the other hand, students often times emulate the behaviors exhibited from their home environment.

One school administrator reports the home base of a one-parent house hold plays an important role to the cause of violence in schools. This has an extreme negative effect on female students more so than male students. Therefore, female violence stems from a male figure not being in the household. Male students on the other just respond aggressively.

Participant 2 suggested the following:

I think it’s a societal issue as it relates to needs not being met where you don’t have a father per se at home or a male figure. I think they’re struggling to identify what love looks like I really do and I think as a direct result because in 90% of the time there’s a boy in the middle of that issue that they don’t really truly grasp themselves in relationship to the proneness of their bodies and they give their bodies away freely because they’re looking for love and they want people to like them. They’re aggressive. Girls have become more aggressive. They’re aggressive. In boys it’s the same old reason. Boys tend to act out
aggressively.

Schools have difficulty changing behaviors developed at home. That behavior may appear as violence is appropriate. This is also a part of lessons students learn from the home environment.

Poor social and emotional skills are one of the leading causes of violence in school. School administrators report that many students do not respond well to social and emotional conflict. Students have poor social skills which lead to poor coping skills.

Participant 3 echoed by stating the following:

With the girls it’s so much more emotional. It’s throwing down the books, let’s scream and yell at each other in the hallway. It’s well two years ago you know sophomore year she said this about me to my friend. That was two years ago, let it go. It’s a different beast these girls you know, so emotional they just don’t let it go. They’re just mean to each other and they foster this and they just keep it going, and keep it going, and keeps it going.

Male and female students are experiencing poor social skills. The feeling of belonging to someone or a group is very prevalent amongst students of today. Three school administrators offered an experience of students exhibiting poor social skills. Participant 6 reported aggressive behavior with female students. Participant 6 reported no coping and mediation skills for students. Participant 6 reported:

Let’s start with the simple violence because verbal’s to me verbal altercations can be very violent, very aggressive, a big problem with girls, major, major problems with girls and I don’t think we’re alone in that. I think there are a lot of schools and I think these kids do not have the skill set to either walk away from what they think somebody said about them. They don’t have that skill set. I don’t think they have the skill set to mediate things on their own, so they end up in the dean’s office and it’s not that they don’t have the coping skills because I think kids at our school have very good coping skills. I think they cope with a lot.
Participant 7 reports poor communication skills. It is the researchers experience that students resort to violence as a means of coping with anger and conflicts due to poor communication amongst their peers. Participant 7 reports:

Kid’s kind of resort to violence when they don’t communicate…when they are unsure…when they have conflicts. Now days it doesn’t seem as though they are aware of how to resolve conflict without the use of violence.

Participant 10 reported the following:

It all has to do with self-esteem and how the girls feel about themselves. They are all fighting. Either they are fighting over a boy that’s the number one thing. There is nothing else. It’s fighting over somebody who thinks their cute. It’s some bullying going on you know subjecting the ones that are less able to take care of themselves. It’s a lot of bullying, so. No, it’s all about self-esteem and how the girls feel about themselves and they are having some identity issues…belonging…I think that the boys are trying to figure out where they fit in once again its identity. Identity in trying to figure out identity of the rappers, gang bangers, or I mean it’s so many when you go see in high school you see groups of kids.

As a result, students handle conflict in a negative manner. Verbal arguments or fighting seems to be at a very high rate in urban Illinois high schools. Student resolution to conflict is to argue or fight. School administrators believe students believe this is the appropriate measure to resolve conflict.

Technology seems to be the second leading cause of violence in urban public high schools in the Midwest. It has become a major cause to violence in public schools. Social networking through the technology device has been the communication source of feuds amongst students. The technology of choice is the computer and the cellular phone. Instead of technology having a positive impact on students when it comes to behavior it has a negative impact. The biggest issues
schools face today is the social networking sites MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter. Participant 8 stated, “All of those things that seem to sometimes heighten violence then we’re in a quandary where we’re torn between how do we deal with that when we have no control over that.” Therefore, technology is the backbone to where the problems originate, but the conflict of physical and/or verbal interaction festers in school.

Technology is a key component to educating students in the 21st century. School administrators are straddling the fence with the impact of technology and the conflict that arises in schools as a result of technology. Participant 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10 offered mixed views regarding technology.

Participant 1 reported the following:

> It’s taken out the communication part that we use to teach in schools where if you have if you’re having a problem you go to the source. That wasn’t even taught because that was the only way you could resolve a conflict. Now conflicts are not resolved by going to the source. A conflict is trying to be resolved with the World Wide Web giving input, so that’s where I you know what our feat is, our task at hand is.

Participant 4 reported the following:

> The use of social networking, Facebook and Twitter, and all that, but mostly Facebook…the power that kids have behind the computer where they’re able they say stuff more where they wouldn’t say it face to face which then falls back into the school which leads to fights and arguments and things that the school we had to deal with.

Participant 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10 offered mixed viewpoints of technology being used for negative use and positive use. Technology uses for students include instantaneous reporting and videoing negative and positive information amongst students. Participant’s report communications amongst students are extremely
involved with using cell phones in school to cause a disturbance. It is the researchers’
experience that administrators are battling a great deal with allowing students to use
their cell phones for educational purposes and during free time and punishing students
for violating rules such as bullying, videoing fights, etc.

Participant 5 reported the following:

I think it’s affected such that up to the minute type updates. Every kid has a
cell phone I mean just I will say maybe just five to seven years ago if you were
in high school and you didn’t have a cell phone it was just like, ok. Now, it’s
almost you can’t get by if you in high school and it’s like you don’t have a cell
phone so they have access to all that stuff. That’s the only thing that they know
is technology. I mean you can give a kid a cell phone without directions or
anything that’s dealing with technology they can do you know what I mean
they have no fear and I think they are so use to that instantaneously go back
and forth you don’t you can say whatever you want to say but you don’t have
that face to face I think with the technology being able to do that it’s more of
excuse my expression you took the bad [bleep] pill cause you don’t have to it’s
not like I have to look you in the face.

Participant 6 reported the following:

I think technology as far as phones I think there’s a lot effects of technology.
One there can be cyber bullying you can do it anonymously, facelessly or you
think that you can. At the same time I think that technology there’s I think I
think technology for kids it’s hurt them in the sense that they don’t know how
to communicate. You break up with a boyfriend you just e-mail him. You
don’t have to do it face to face. You don’t have to do it on the phone. You can
do it in a voicemail. So, as far as skill sets for kids I think it hurts their writing
skills. I think it hurts their language skills and I think that effects how they
function in general. I also think it’s allowed them the kids expose themselves
so much and they don’t understand the ramifications that everything they put
on line or they tweet or they put in FB is out there for everyone to see and
maybe they don’t want that out there to see either they think they want it today,
but they don’t want it tomorrow. Their minds change and once it’s out there as
I said my mother said to me “don’t ever put anything in writing you don’t want
in the Tribune.” You can always deny the spoken and that’s true today. So,
these kids will come in and they’ll say, “I didn’t do that.” Well, it’s right here.
So, and it’s made them like they see fights they see it as entertainment like
they somebody gets in a fight out comes the cell phone it’s on the you tube. I
wasn’t at the fight. We’ll that’s your body. I just saw you there. So, as much as I think technology can enhance life for kids and education I think at the same time that we don’t spend enough time explaining to them that maybe they shouldn’t be exposing themselves like that. This could affect them later in life. This can affect them when they go to get a job and I also think that it allows kids I think the biggest thing is it allows kids to have they don’t talk to each other anymore. They’re texting. They’re e-mail. I don’t even know if they e-mail anymore. They’re texting. They don’t run over somebody’s house anymore they’ll just text her did you say that about me. It’s different when somebody’s in front of you and I think as much as technology can enhance our lives. It’s exposed our kids for you know you’re with your boyfriend. In the olden days they’ll take a Polaroid and he could take a Polaroid around and show it. Now, he takes a picture of your private part he gets pissed at you and now every one of your friends has it. Your chest is all over the world to see because in lapse of one moment you made a stupid decision and I don’t think they understand that about technology and I think it’s hurt their communications skills. I think it’s killed their writing skills, ooh my lord and I think all this affects everything. It affects how their brain functions and it affects how they do in school.

Participant 7 reported one of the most frequent occurring events today with cell phone usage. This would be technology at its worst moment in the researchers’ professional experience. Videoing of violent incident is extremely by far the most common offense of students today in school. Participant 7 reported the following:

Videotaping the incidences you know, so a huge impact on what happens with violence and a lot of times with Facebook and the social media kind of thing. It has been a source of escalating a lot of inappropriate communicating and misunderstanding.

Participant 9 reported the following:

The majority of our problems that we have as far as a result of something that happen at a party…you know…in the community or at somebody’s house. Facebook is a big issue…you know…somebody said something about somebody of Facebook blah…blah…blah and so those kinds of things and yeah a lot of that stuff come into school.

Participant 10 reported the following:
Oh my god! Oh my God! That Facebook is a killer. Oh my God!...you know what…it can be helpful in one way and terrible in another way. Every fight every fight has got those phones up there looking taking pictures. They are filming fights putting them on You Tube. They are talking smack on their Facebook. I’m going to do this to you and some kind…that horrible language that they speak on Facebook which nobody understands over eighteen or something (laugh). What the heck are they talking about? So yeah technology is something else.

The urban community school districts generally service low to medium income communities. For the purpose of this study all school districts were servicing at least 60% of students on free or reduced lunch. There were schools within the districts surveyed that serviced middle income and low income students, but that did not change the culture of the community. School administrators whole heartedly feel the culture of the community does have a great impact on the culture of school. Although their expectations may not be evidently the same appropriate behavior is required in aspects, school and community.

The common themes expressed here are poor and/or no lesson learned at home, technology, poor social skills, and community culture. These themes are expressed as the most prevalent causes of violence in the urban public high schools for the purpose of this study. The participants of this study were adamant about the principle cause of violence stemming from the home and community environment. School administrators expressed the home and the communities are the first point of contact for students socially. This is where behaviors are formed and learned.

The overall common themes fall under the umbrella of the theme trends. Technology is the new focus but yet is the old focus. Media is portraying violence more than ever before. Research suggests that the constant reporting of violence in the
media often increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior. This is due, in part, to the high rate of engagement time of children and adolescents viewing television (Werle, 2006). The more violence is reported on television there is a likelihood that it will occur in school. Students are involved in recording violence incidents on their cellular device and posting it on Facebook media.

The community culture is an expressed component of the trend. Students do not typically experience the most violence at school. It is typically the home environment and the community surrounding their school where violence begins. The behavior patterns exhibited in the community will likely be the same behaviors carried to the local schools. Some factors that contribute to violence in the community are low socioeconomic status, crime, drugs, and high population turnover. The structure of the community is generally reflected by the school (Lorion, 1998).

Programs/Approaches

Research Question 3: What anti-violence programs or approaches are perceived as successful?

School administrators are actively implementing active approaches to curtailing violence. School administrators across the board are giving students before school detention, after school detention, in school suspension, out of school suspension, alternative school placement, and the ultimate, expulsion, when necessary. Participant 10 reported the following:
Instead of expelling a kid completely out of the system, unless they are over seventeen we make sure that they are going to alternative school which gives them a chance within a year and a half to work themselves back into the building because we stay...remain their home school...so we think that that’s helping...you know it’s hard when you have those big you know big groups like that.

However, there are other interventions put in place to meet the needs of students that exhibit acts of violence. School administrators are meeting with families, social workers are getting involved, counselors, out of school agencies are involved to assist with curtailing violence in school and meeting the needs of the students and families.

One school administrator has been making home visits to the students’ home. Normally truancy officers or social workers will make home visits, but in this particular school district the school administrator is accompanying the school resource officer and social worker, or other designated school personnel making the home visit.

Participant 1 reported the following:

I have the luxury of doing home visits its not uncommon once a week I’m going to maybe either an attendance student’s home, an ELL student home a student who you know has been having difficulties at school and hasn’t been coming. I’m lucky enough to travel if I needed to more than once a week but the need allows me. I’ll take an officer with me. The officer will be usually the one who knocks on the door. I’ll go myself and the social worker will go. I’ll go myself and a counselor will go. Myself and the ELL coordinator will go. The ELL coordinator, the officer, and the counselor will go, I’m not always in on all these home visits, but we really are fortunate enough to do home visits and are able to get a lot out of it.

Participant one stated this has been a success for their school.

Participant 8 reported on their buildings drug intervention program by stating the following:

Well, we just you go through a process. If its drug intervention program usually there’s a target number of days that seems to go about and then with
where we actually have one program that comes in that if given consent the students can actually be tested to see if they have remained clean since the initiation of the program. That’s one situation and that may last for a quarter or semester depends so the length of time it all depends on the situation. If a student is caught with a personal usage amount of drugs and they go to a number of sessions we deem that to be appropriate and have not violated the rule regarding drug paraphernalia, use, or whatever we’ll deem that complete. It just depends.

School administrators reported many approaches and programs of anti-violence as successful. One hundred percent of school administrators reported utilization of a surveillance system for security purposes. Secondly, one hundred percent of school administrators reported having at least a minimum of six and a maximum of ten security staff members on duty daily. Thirty percent of school administrators reported the hiring of security from a security company. Other school districts use security hiring through the regular hiring process with a requirement of a PERC card. A Permanent Employee Registration Card or PERC is a document to inform your future employers that you have passed a Criminal Background Check through fingerprint submission. The state of Illinois requires everyone working as a security guard to hold a state-certified Security Officer License and Illinois PERC Card during the duration of their employment.

Alternatively, along with security, all school districts use a School Resource Officer (SRO). The SRO’s are linked with the local police department in which the community the school sits in. School Resource Officers help with relationship building and the proactive approach of their presence help to prevent students from participating in an act of violence. Urban school administrators report recent incidents of mob activity in schools have resorted to groups of students fighting in schools and
as a result students are being arrested for disorderly conduct. School administrator’s report that students are arrested and parents are assessed a monetary penalty.

School administrators report mediation with the social workers and/or counselor as an effective approach. One school administrator reports their school currently uses peer mediation.

Participant 8 reported the following:

> We do have mediation opportunities sometimes supervised by the dean, counselor, or social worker so that the students can in essence come face to face with their difficulties and come up with a plan of action that shy of being violent with each other on how we can mutually get along and exist in this environment.

Participant 2 reported the following:

> We have a mentoring type program…where we have kids…in a multicultural setting where this is my piece really where we have the kids that are non-traditional leaders I call them the kids who are gang affiliated gang associated and lead anyway. We try to link them up with the National Honor Society kids and other kids and partner with those kids in terms of decision making and pull those kids in to have them be a part of the academic setting and have the school have some value for them and they’ll less likely act out if they know that they belong and they know they’re respected not only for their toughness from the street but they’re also respected for it in the building cause those are the kids we talk to like now they can stop stuff from happening.

School administrators report counselor or social worker mediations as well as social worker group sessions have been very effective. Administrators report having students report to a social worker or counselor gives the students another option to resolving conflict instead of going to the dean’s office. Participant 9 states, “Our social workers are very active with talking to our kids regarding bullying and violence prevention things like that.”

School administrators responded that relationship building is a key approach to
curtailing violence in urban public high schools. One of the school administrators believes that the number of years being employed as an administrator in the district has helped to build a community rapport due to servicing multiple siblings and/or family members. This same school administrator made reference to the approach of conducting peace circles and restorative justice. Restorative justice is an approach to justice that focuses on the needs of the victims and the offenders, as well as the involved community, instead of satisfying abstract legal principles or punishing the offender. Victims take an active role in the process, while offenders are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions, "to repair the harm they've done—by apologizing, returning stolen money, or community service. Restorative justice fosters dialogue between victim and offender shows the highest rates of victim satisfaction and offender accountability.

Participant 2 reported the following:

“Pro-activeness of the deans in term of relationship with the kids because most of us are participating in other activities other than just deaning. We’re coaching something or we’re involved in a club or organization and stuff like that so I think those are the best contributors to reducing violence. The people who are in charge of the discipline end are actively engaging the students not only in the discipline piece or the academic piece but also with participating in other phases of their lives. I think it’s critical to reducing violence and just creating relationships with kids. As a direct result of us communicating the school values, and cultural values, us being proactive in the hallways, and us talking to kids, and us having like me I’ve been here 20 years so I’ve seen families on families having relationship with the big brother and having relationship with June-June and June Bug and having some connection with some Latin Kings and all those people who says yeah if you have a fight go talk to school [blank] you don’t have to fight.

This school administrator has been servicing this district for many years; therefore, being in the same district for many years has afforded the administrator the
opportunity to become familiar with generations of families. This approach has been effective in curbing school violence in their school.

School administrators are now implementing Loss of Privilege (LOP) as an intervention for curtailing violence in public high schools. LOP is not a complex intervention, but can encourage students to exhibit positive behavior. What LOP does is it gives administrators the power to take away school sponsored social events from students. Students that are given LOP are not able to attend school dances, football games, basketball games, field trips, homecoming activities, such as the prom.

Participant 7 reported a decline in student suspension data with the LOP program implemented.

Participant 7 reported the following:

If they’re misbehaving we are giving them a loss of privileges as opposed to suspending them out of school. Now there are going to be some egregious behavior that you still gone have to get suspended for. Last year we suspended 624 students something like that averaged out to about 160 or 170 per quarter. This year for the first quarter we suspended 37, so we are seeing great gains with that.

A successful program reported by one school administrator was the Choices program. The Choices program focus is to help students make better choices in life and school.

Participant 5 reported the following:

The program is teaching them about making a better choice. It focuses on them making better life choices. The programs are generalized and they’re generalized for a few reasons. One because it’s open enrollment so kids are going in and out of the program at all times at least with the choices program. I don’t know what their focus is to remediate the behavior. I understand the focus. How they’re doing it? I think it’s through by cognitive behavioral therapy and developing these relationships with kids and helping make better
choices.

The Choices program is sponsored by Youth Outreach Services (YOS).

Participant 4 reported the same type of program in their school as Participant 7, Choices.

Participant 4 stated this regarding their Choices program:

At the high school is alternative to suspension we put a program in place that kids got into a fight or involved in some type of act of violence that wasn’t a severe act of violence there is a program we have in place in the village of [blank] that [blank] runs that she would instead of being suspended they would go back into the classroom the next day and if both people that were involved in the fight they would have the option to go into this program and the program had talked about. It was a ten day program they have to go for ten weeks one night a week for ten weeks and that was equivalent to their ten day suspension, but the program was about choices and…she brings in school officials, police officers, former students that were involved in stuff, you know former gang members…she just goes through he whole gamut of choices. The makes them follow when they come in she doesn’t mess around they have to be in she makes them wear uniform they have to have a belt on they can’t have pants sagging they can’t have hats they can’t have earrings. She runs a tight ship and the parents know she meets with the parent prior and they know. She’s one of those people that by the end the kids love her you know and they respect her cause she’s fair with everybody and she’s the same with everybody, but she outside of her program she still interacts with the kids and she’s a blushing sport (likeable person).

Another such reported program is titled Friends and Neighbors Support (FANS) program.

Participant 4 offered the following:

The violent acts that have happened there and some of the few students that have done some things that just put a black eye on the high school. That was part of the reason why we went to FANS bringing the parents into the building.

The FANS program brings parents into the building to volunteer. Parents also supervise in the neighborhood during bus pick up times in the morning and dismissal
return time. Supervision is provided by FANS during school sponsored events such as parades, band and choral concerts, assemblies, athletic contest, and other school sponsored activities or events. Also Mother’s United to Save Teens (MUST) is a mom initiated program the focuses more on discussion groups with teens about issues such as dating, violence, social networking, self-esteem, and guidance for job seeking.

Additional programs reported by school administrators were Regional Institute of Scholastic Excellence (RISE) which is a regional safe school for at-risk teens. Participant 7 stated their school uses RISE for their students who have behavioral issues, but they are limited in the number of students they recommend for placement. Schools utilize this program to keep students out of the regular population of the school to keep them safe and provide a final opportunity to finish in a high school setting or successful completion during a designated time frame can return you back to your home school.

Mentoring is another program used according to Participant 7. Also, specialty schools are used for the placement of special education students. Participant 7 reported the following:

One that we’ve been using often is called the Lincoln Option. It’s over in (blank). They got a great program kind of a mentoring program. They teach character education. For instance, if we have a regular education student that was suspended for 10 days Lincoln Option has offered to send transportation to pick that kid up pick up work from our building and have a mentor sit with them kind of work through the issues they have. They also have this packet up there called Keeping It All Together, its program and service for youth in Cook County. We’ve been directed at anybody that we think could benefit from any of the programs they have a lot of social work, a lot of drugs, rehabilitation center, a lot of domestic violence centers. So we do make recommendations to the rest of the surrounding areas as well.
We deal with Braun, we deal with Ombudsman which is specialty schools and then we have Tech and Trade. Ombudsman and Braun actually are special education centers for students. They are therapeutic day schools. Tech and Trade right over here off of (blank) they also deal with special education students but they do deal with regular education students that have real serious behavioral issues.

School administrators perceive that girl on girl violence has risen in recent years. With that being the perception of school administrators, they report that girls are lacking more in social skills than boys. As a result of the school administrators’ observations, they have allowed female teachers and/or other administrators to sponsor a female group. Participant 5 reported their school implemented a female group titled, Right Group, which was led by a female school administrator. Participant 5 reported the Right Group was student-centered and added the following:

It was truly about them. I mean I facilitated it, but I let them be instrumental in doing a lot of the stuff. A lot of the accomplished work was specifically for them. It seems that its meeting the needs of the particular people involved in the group you get buy-in. They come. They know that you genuinely care about them and that you know I made them feel like they are just the best thing since sliced bread when they’re in my presence and they know it. So I enjoy it and they know I enjoy it.

This program continued for years due to its success in reaching female students.

Participant 4 mirrored the Right Group as well by stating:

Right…it was a female led program by one of our deans and she talked about she had a successful business, females or police officers, business people, people that ran their own business people had graduated and gone on to nursing, doctors, lawyers she would bring in. She would bring in people to talk about choices and dating and just the things that teenage female women have to deal with and they met monthly.

In addition to the Right Group, Participant 4 reported this group has partnered with another group in the building titled Guide Right. This group is geared toward the
African-American students, but any student is free to join.

Participant 4 offered the following in response to Guide Right:

We had Guide Right which came in Fridays and it was an African-American based groups that they brought in the same thing they would bring in a successful African-American business people, you know doctors, lawyers but what they did was kind of cool. They brought in the successful students, African-American students into their program and they would meet with the kids who were not as successful and they would meet with the kids who were not as successful and they would bring them together so that they could hear the kids the kids that weren’t successful could hear what the other kids were doing and why they made the decisions and why they stay out of trouble or whatever. It was pretty powerful they did a lot of cool things they would take them to museums they just take them to what’s out there in the Chicago land area that some kids don’t get to see the time. So it’s pretty cool and that program been going on for 4 or 5 years and now its expanded outside of just the African-American students there its gone across the board and it’s right now the basketball girls basketball Coach, (Blank) is running it so and its in partnership with another group that comes in, so it’s pretty powerful and it’s a way for kids to just talk about issues that they don’t normally talk about.

Another school administrator reported a female group titled Positive Interpersonal Relationships Aiming Toward Enrichment (P.I.R.A.T.E.). In regard to the program Participant 4 reported:

The groups are to empower and educate female students and teens on issues they have to deal with as a female and the image that they had to portray at the high school or in front of their peers. I think the main goal and more about building self-esteem and things like that.

The female led groups are designed to focus on female problems and issues. Moreover, the groups are designed to empower and educate females about a variety of topics, especially self-esteem, character, and relationships.

Schools are not only catering to females with intervention groups they are servicing the males as well.

Participant 10 reported the following:
We do have a mentoring group we’re working on right now. It’s coming along. It’s not strong as I would like it. I really have even as AP (Assistant Principal) at these last six years has really worked to try to get a strong mentoring group together. So, we do have a boys group that’s their coming along and that’s one way of intervention.

Not all school administrators responded that there is some type of outside agencies that services students of violence within their school campus or at a local community agency.

Participant 8 reported the following:

we have a social service agency that comes out of our communities that comes in a couple days of the week and they’re trying to assist us with our students by putting them in group experiences to talk about their common concerns and issues so that they can be in essence given options or redirect so that they can come up with a better solution to the violent situation that they may have to or may think its necessary to utilize to solve a difficult a difference.

This gives the school an additional resource to use in assisting students of violence.

The agencies of choice are social service agencies to counter student’s behavior or substance abuse. The agencies of choice most often used by Illinois school districts are Youth Outreach Services (YOS) and Aunt Martha’s Youth Service. Participants 1, 2, and 9 offered the following agencies as assistance to their school.

The only agency we really employed from the outside is through Aunt Martha’s which is our area support for counseling, drugs, for lots of things. (Participant 1)

Participant 2 reported the following:

We basically if a kid we can do anger management if a kid comes in and is a first time offender and it’s an anger management issue uh we allow that kid to have his suspension reduced if we can show that it was based on you know anger and we gone premeditate it and all that then we can provide an opportunity for that kid to go to anger management and reduce the ten days and we work collectively with the uh human service agency out here (pause) it will come to me, anyway, like Aunt Martha’s.
Participant 9 reported the following:

We collaborate with community partners for registration for getting physicals for our kids so that that’s not a barrier for them not starting school on time. So we’ve done a great job recently partnering with Aunt Martha’s. We also got the mobile units out this last registration so that they were actually able to perform on site physicals for our kids. We also partner with Aunt Martha’s for our parenting teens and providing support for them. We have a couple of outside agencies that are doing mentoring. We have done One Bell to Fem which is an outside agency. It’s a girls to women mentoring formalized it is a national program also formalized mentoring program that that program has grown over the years. We have several of our young ladies involved with that. We have a group out of (blank) that we were able to get in I think this is the fourth year that provide mentoring for some of our students and they ask to provide a scholarship annual renewable scholarship for our students. We also partner with Jones we’re trying to get our kids involved with community service and giving back and that is a huge thing for us because the perception of our school is very poor in the community.

Participants are reporting making great strides with trying to incorporate resources to assist students with altering their behaviors to remain in school and be successful. The researcher has a knowledgeable experience with schools collaborating with staff and outside resources to assist students. School administrators must continue to collaborate and research their communities for additional resources for supportive services for students and their families.

The recurring themes expressed are progressive discipline, school resource officers in the building, mediation with social workers and/or counselors, mentoring, building relationship, and many programs to offer students and families as an additional resource. Schools are offering a lot of programs to students as a guide, for support, and/or needs. School administrators are trying every alternative to keep students in the academic environment if problems can be resolved without additional
conflict and/or violence. School administrators perceive these approaches and program servicing students are successful due to their number of incidents of violence decreasing yearly. School administrators have a strong belief in their violence prevention programs; however, there is evaluation tool for the existing programs to determine the program’s success.

The overall theme can be expressed as conflict resolution. This is established through the progressive discipline, mediation, mentorship, and outsources agencies. These programs help to build relationships where a student can be fostered to work on decision making and build a positive character. Boulter (2004) reported positive values, relationships, and experiences help youth become better decision makers when coping with tough situations.


Glassner (2000) believes the skill of a school counselor can provide an effective violence prevention program. A highly trained counselor with no other responsibility other than the violence prevention program can be a great resource and form of intervention for a school with high violence. Social workers are great
counselors for violence prevention.

*Program Evaluation*

Research Question 4: How are anti-violence programs evaluated and what are the criteria for success?

There is no concrete or actual evaluative tool used to evaluate the anti-violence programs used by the school administrators.

Participant 1 stated the following:

There’s probably no formal assessment though that question is being asked more and more now and we’re using data to try and look at things. We have a system finally in place where we can look at data, but what we do have in place here and I would sense most buildings use this once a week.

Ten percent of the school administrators reported using the Crisis Management Plan.

The number one criteria all school administrators reported for data is logging all incidents as their immediate evaluation tool for their anti-violence program. Overall, school administrators have no real measurement of the anti-violence programs servicing students of violence in the Midwest in Illinois.

The criteria for success are a simplistic process. One hundred percent of school administrators report the criteria for success is the tracking of data for individual students of violence.

Participant 2 reported the following:

The kids who have had more than five contacts with the dean’s office we have them on a watch list so to speak and we work with them throughout the year to make sure they’re doing what they need to do. They meet with us on a weekly basis. We check their classes, check their grades, parents come in and participate with us in terms of coming up with a plan so that those kids can be
successful the following year and reduce the number of contacts that they have with our dean’s office.

For example, Participant 7 uses the RISE program for students of violence. In order to evaluate the success of the students the following evaluation is performed. Participant 7 stated the following:

We review these files on a semester basis. RISE also has a community service component that they work with. Those students are involved in community service practices. They’ve got to be able to do that with no incidents. Be involved in three of those. They’ve got to maintain no grades lower than a “C.” Once a student has completed 97% attendance, completed their community service component, have no behavioral issues or no fights no suspensions. Once they’ve done that, RISE then will make a recommendation to us at an out take meeting.

This is considered an evaluation for the program as well as for the student. Participant 10 mirrored the same as participant 4 when it comes to evaluating their anti-violence program. Participant 4 offered the following:

I usually don’t send my freshmen or sophomores to this other school they came back and they are straight and narrow. Our deans go back and assistant principal went back for those periodic check-ups. We do that. Sometimes kids don’t adjust well to a culture that it’s that much going on all the time, so when they go away in a smaller controlled setting they come back to us much better.

School administrators use students returned to the regular population as instrumental for evaluation purposes. Therefore, students who earn their way back into the regular student population make the program a success for the school administrators.

Other school administrators, Participants 3 and 9 reported very briefly when it comes to the evaluation of anti-violence programs at their high schools.

Participant 3 briefly stated, “We normally put kids on social probation for a quarter. We re-evaluate it at the end of that quarter and see how that goes.” (Participant 3)
Participant 9 offered the following statement:

We try to be creative. We also have contracts that we do with our students, but we try to be creative in reducing the number of days of out of school suspension for those students that are willing and are consistent about participating in community service kinds of things as a way of balancing.

Again, administrators use a simplistic process to evaluate a program and consider it a success. Participant 5 views success of their female program as stated:

The approach of girl groups was a success because it was truly about them. I mean I facilitated it, but I let them be instrumental in doing a lot of the stuff, a lot of the accomplished work was specifically for them. They wanted something they would tell me and I would listen. We would have conversations, and then it would be like, ok, why we can’t do a workshop about that? So they felt like it was definitely catered to them and the needs that they have.

Participant 8 uses a variation of days when it comes to a drug intervention program to be considered a success. Success for this program is quoted as such by Participant 8:

The drug intervention program usually there’s a target number of days that seems to go about. We actually have one program that comes in that if given consent the students can actually be tested to see if they have remained clean since the initiation of the program. That’s one situation and that may last for a quarter or semester depends, so the length of time it all depends on the situation. We have something that is prescribed if a student is caught with a personal usage amount of drugs and they go to a number of sessions we deem that to be appropriate and they have not violated the rule regarding drug paraphernalia use or whatever we’ll deem that complete. It just depends.

Participant 7 referred to the Choices program when speaking of evaluating of an anti-violence program. Participant 7 reported evaluation of the Choices program is done by the following:

We haven’t talked about it. I take their referral form that I refer to and, for example, with the programs that I send these girls downstairs to she sends me her attendance every week and I mark down how many sessions they’ve gone to. Now, should a student miss a session I call them down and I make it clear to them should they miss a session again they will be given a suspension and
they will also need to finish the program.

It was also revealed that the school administration has not even talked about or looked into evaluating the success or failure of the program.

The perpetrating student of a violent act would have a decline in referrals and less contact with the dean’s office. One hundred percent of school administrators report using benchmarks for students in the areas of discipline, attendance, and grades.

Participant 4 reported the following:

Basically we collect the data and we have benchmarks and we used those benchmarks to see if we were going to pull a kid out of an intervention or keep him in or wane them off. It’s basically when we created our benchmarks and use them thought that they were pretty solid that they gave us a pretty good read on the kid, if the kid was turning it around and staying out of trouble and moving their grades in a positive direction and attendance. That’s kind of what we stuck with those benchmarks. That’s how we kind of monitor.

This would result in a decision of having a student discontinue with services in the anti-violence program if those areas have positive results or continuing services if results were negative in those specific areas.

For the purpose of this study there was no theme revealed for the program evaluation. The key words – non-existent was very prevalent from all participants when referring to evaluating the anti-violence programs. No such document exists except data collection on the number of participants and the participant’s enrollment in the program and continuing the program through completion. For this study success can be defined as a desired outcome. School administrators in this study perceived successful completion of an anti-violence program as simply a student starting the program and continuing in the program for the duration. This constitutes successful
School administrators report success is measured by completion of anti-violence programs. The success of the program was determined to mean effective. It is effective in the perception of the participants due to students negative behavior declining and or a student not exhibiting the same violent behavior again after completion of the anti-violence program.

Leffler and Snow (2001) suggest programs should be offered that involve behavior management building wide, a partnership with family involvement, classroom curricula, and an extensive behavior component for pro-social skills. The study showed schools are attacking aggressive behavior and being proactive to behaviors of anti-violence. The component missing to the schools implemented anti-violence programs is the evaluation tool for effectiveness. This was concurred by Cohen, Weiss, Mulvey, & Dearwater (1994) by reported schools have implemented school-based prevention programs but no sound research to they have been evaluated.

Literature supports schools efforts to implement programs in school to counter violence. Although, many schools have school-based violence prevention programs there is no sound research to show they have been evaluated (Coben, Weiss, Mulvey, & Dearwater, 1994). As stated earlier by Meyer and Stein (2004) the evaluation process of the program evaluation is extremely critical to the program.

**Assessment**

Research Question 5: How are student and neighborhood needs assessed? What planning processes are involved in implementation?
School administrators report there is no formative tool for assessing student needs. They also report they only use their data from the referrals that are input into the schools database by school administrators such as deans, assistant principals, or the principal. Therefore, referral and incident data is relied upon heavily for tracking students’ needs. School administrators state they participate in monthly meetings and debriefings amongst their immediate administrative staff to address issues and concerns. This is considered as a form of assessment.

One participant feels her school district currently is not doing a good job at assessing violence. Participant 8 stated the following:

The school assess…I’m not sure that I have…There’s nothing that I can pinpoint to say that we assess the role of violence. I know that we address it and we try to do all that we can to eliminate it and I guess I’ll say eliminate as well as curtail violence. So, to assess it I don’t think we do enough to say or maybe I kind of say I don’t think we assess it in a sense.

Meetings are very important to plan for success. Participant 1 indicated the following:

On Monday morning we game plan if need be, low level stuff maybe the dean and I bigger stuff stabbings you know. We are pulling in everybody who went in classes, where are they, are they here you know do sort of an assessment where is it, what’s the climate, how did the kids come in you know but knowing pretty much. We’ll have a plan in place what were going to do to start deescalating it and not having Saturday night come back in and be talked about all Monday morning, all Monday, and Tuesday.

Participant 5 stated security in the building meets monthly. Participant 5 also stated the following:

This meeting is held with the director of security and all are invited to attend. We have a security committee and a coordinator of security over the whole
district whose background used to be over security at the Willis Tower. He has a security committee with parents and teachers and anybody from the community can come meet with him once a month and he updates everybody on the security and of course the normal drills that we do to keep us in compliance, so if we do have an intruder or a fire drill so that the kids are aware of what to do and how to react.

While one district feels it’s important to meet weekly another districts meets every three weeks for assessment purposes of students’ need. Participant 10 reported the following:

We look at our data every three weeks. We have progress reports and when we decided to take that opportunity to not look at the academic but let’s also look at the tardies in those three weeks. Let’s look at the number of suspensions in those three weeks. Let’s look at how many fights happened in those three weeks. So we asses it on an every three week basis and then we go to quarters and then we set goals. I have a data wall in my conference room where I have my building leadership team and it’s posted. Everything is posted. I make my team look at this. We’re going to look at this and figure out what’s wrong and how we going to fix it, ok, for the next time. That’s how we assess.

Tracking is one assessment tool. Another assessment tool used is observations. Observations and tracking student referrals and incident data is used by school administrators. Tracking of incidents is the most commonly used method for data purposes. This information, according to school administrators is pertinent in recommending changes in policy to the school board regarding student discipline. However, these are the only forms of assessments for students reported by school administrators. Nevertheless, it is the most critical piece non-existent to the anti-violence programs.

None of the school administrators reported any form of neighborhood needs assessments. Although all school administrators interviewed believe violence exists in
the neighborhood, none of the respondents reported assessments exist of the neighborhoods. Relationship building in the community is spoken of very highly. School administrators feel they need to have a great relationship with their local police departments. Participants 2, 7, and 9 shared their light on this aspect by stating:

“We partnership with the community. When there’s a problem out in the community were talking to the police officers.” (Participant 2)

“We have a good relationship with police department they normally gives us the heads up when something may re-enter the school.” This is a part of a planning process to be proactive to violence.” (Participant 7)

Participant 9 reported the following:

In terms of dealing with the needs of the students, forwarding over extending services to the family and opening it up to the parents in terms of you know just prevention kinds of things, just concerns. At the time we’re starting to experience a lot of concerns with gang activity in the community of the elementary school that I worked with, so I work a lot with the local police organization in trying to take some preventative kinds of things that we experience.

One administrator made mention of being on high alert when something happens in the neighborhood overnight or on a weekend.

Participant 6 reported the following:

Anytime there’s a murder in the community or stabbing or a fight and it happens on a weekend as a school we need to be on high alert because there’s a huge chance that that’s going to be brought back to school.

This is part of building relationships with local police. The local police department will inform the school officials of the family affected by the violence if there are family members that attend the local high school or just for the purpose of knowing violence happened in the neighborhood, therefore, the local school can be highly visible and on alert for issues relating to the incident.
Another school administrator feels having a positive rapport with the communities your school district services is important. This school administrator reported high praise and great parental support was gained from the school administrators’ visits to the communities.

Participant 4 reported the following:

The superintendent brought all of us together when he first took over. He did a community open house at the high school. We had maybe a hundred parents show up out of the four thousand we had in the building, and he was like, ‘That’s not enough were going out to the neighborhoods,’ so we went out and did community talks. He went to the community like the community buildings. I think we did twelve a year for the first three years. It was an opportunity for parents to come and hear him speak and ask questions about the high school. He was open to anything. We went into the Hispanic neighborhoods and we brought interpreters to prepare so they can ask questions and he can answer whatever questions or issues they had and the whole premise of his talks and meetings was that our doors are open, come to us, come and work with us, we’re here for you and to help. We want your child to be successful. We want the community to be successful. You know his mantra was the community we serve is the community we serve in the building and the issues that are happening in the community are going to happen in the building and the only way we’re going to work with it and turn it around is as one community instead of being two separate school communities and public community. That really changed the whole climate of the building when we started doing that stuff it just made it less.

Another school administrator reported going to the students’ homes as a form of assessment. Participant 3 reported the following:

We go to the parent’s house to do a wellness or whatever. I always bring the police officer with me and occasionally I’m invited into the house try to get the kid to come to school, to see the living conditions of some of these kids. Teachers don’t understand sometimes the obstacles of what kids face. That’s one issue that teachers need to realize. I see, to a certain degree, the politics what really goes on behind the scenes of why we can’t always suspend a student, the politics behind decisions and I don’t think the teacher’s see both sides of the coin when dealing with students or policy.
The assessment data used for tracking is used to help school administrators recommend changes to the student code of conduct which fosters changes to the discipline. This will often counter violence. The trend of student violence changes quite frequently, therefore, some form of assessment has to be done whether it’s formal or informal to implement a change for a safer environment.

Pupil Personnel Support (PPS) teams are afforded the opportunity to discuss and make adjustments to individual students’ goals and needs to be successful in school. The PPS teams are also able to modify and alter the implementing of Response to Intervention (RTI) for upper level tier students for behavior modification and general interventions.

School administrators report assessments are done frequently in the dean’s office. School administrators participate in weekly and/or monthly meetings with the dean’s office and the local police department. This is done to exchange pertinent information for the purposes of keeping campus safe for all. School administrators are using consistent daily and weekly monitoring helps to curtail violence. All tips and leads of potential incidents are taking seriously by school administrators.

The tracking of data is used to monitor areas of incidences of student behavior such as high traffic incident areas, frequent infractions of discipline, class period with a high frequency of tardiness, class cuts, fights, etc. The data exuded from the tracking affords the school administration information to implement changes into the student code of conduct, supervision of students, and policy for the next day, week, month, quarter, year, or whatever is necessary.
One hundred percent of school administrators report having a police liaison is extremely helpful to the school system. School administrators feel the relationships between police liaisons, school officials, staff, students, and parents are great in the sense that it forms a collaborative effort in school safety. Parents are pleased with having uniformed officers in the school building during school hours and present at school sponsored events. The information from community incidents that officers bring to the school administrators is extremely helpful in curtailing events of violence. Immediate, proactive planning and the implementation of security for staff and students create a sense of urgency. For the safety of everyone it is vitally important that a proactive response to neighborhood incidents that have potential to become prevalent in schools be addressed. Evidence is exhibited in the importance of safety and security when school administrators implement immediate changes due to violence in the neighborhood before or after school.

School administrators report if the principal or assistant principal is out of the building or absent no one is aware of that. However, if security or a dean is out of the building or absent everyone is aware. Students are very cognizant when deans or security are absent. School administrators are aware their role is valuable, but culture and climate control of the school is at the hand of the Dean’s Office. Therefore, everyone’s input and presence is valuable in curtailing school violence.

Assessing the school’s and students’ needs is a complex task. Participant’s state school administrators are tracking the discipline of students as a form of assessment. When it comes to the community the school administrators are working
closely with the police liaison and the local police. Having a close relationship with the local police department is the key to community assessment. This is a key form of relationship building when the school and police department work collaboratively to keep the community safe.

For the purpose of this study the theme is a threat assessment by community collaboration. The community is where students encounter violence first hand. Werle (2006) reported violence in the form of bullying takes place daily and often results in violent acts occurring in school. It is typically the home environment and the community surrounding their school where violence begins. The behavior patterns exhibited in the community will likely be the same behaviors carried to the local schools. Some factors that contribute to violence in the community are low socioeconomic status, crime, drugs, and high population turnover. The structure of the community is generally reflected by the school (Lorion, 1998). Violence in the community shapes the environment. In turn, individuals in the community shape their assumptions of friendliness, safety, and rules of survival with activity of the neighborhood. This is evident in more than just the United States (Usta & Farver, 2005).

Laub and Lauritsen (1998) suggest violence is a reflection of students’ social context that is brought into the school setting by the student and by other intruders from the neighborhood surrounding the school. This reflect the schools need to establish a close collaborative effort with the community and community law enforcement to gain tips and insight on what can potentially be a violence experience
in school. This can lead to a proactive response for school administrators for acts of violence. This is a concern for the health of our nation’s students. A high frequency of violence is clearly a public health concern for any community. Violent encounters affect the physical, mental, and social well being of students (Usta & Farver, 2005).

The shaping of the community is a reflection of the community school. This study reflects a great need for collaboration amongst the community and the school in the community. Whether the assessment is small or large the need is definitely present. The reduction of aggressive behavior in school is a community collaborative effort for the school and the community.

**Administrator Perception**

Research Question 6: How do school administrators perceive their role in delivering anti-violence programs?

School administrators perceive their role in delivering anti-violence programs as extremely important. In regard to one school administrator’s role it is reported as, “I think it’s paramount to a safe environment. I think it’s paramount to an institution that’s conducive to learning.” (Participant 6) School administrators report they are ultimately responsible for addressing the educational and social needs of their students. All school administrators reported they need to assist their social workers, counselors, and deans with bringing anti-violence programs to their schools.

Participant 6 also stated the following:

The role is to make sure the place is safe for everybody there, so I think that’s invaluable in learning to work with the police officers, the community, and the
security, and putting things in place to make things run smoothly.

School administrators feel they are highly valuable to their school district by offering these valuable responses from Participant 1, 2, 3, and 4:

Valuable, but I never want to be the one in charge. I just want to make sure they get the help they need you know and certainly I mean it’s across the board. I see teens always in crisis. (Participant 1)

It’s heavy. What I do is the hard part. I’m the community liaison person and I’m an ordained pastor as well, so my role is critical. I’m the one that’s talking to the kids who are most likely going to be the trouble kids and the problem kids. My relationship with the kids and the families is critical. (Participant 2)

Very, very valuable. (laugh) If the principal’s not here, nobody knows. If I’m not here everybody knows because no one’s out in the hallway monitoring the kids. There’s no one here to deal with referrals, no one to deal with an issue when a cell phone gets brought down. (Participant 3)

I think it’s very valuable. The position I had as the head of the deans unfortunately was the person that dealt with the suspensions and expulsions and telling parents their kid can’t come here anymore you know, so I think the role of number one the role was to make sure the place was safe for everybody there. I think that’s invaluable in learning to work with the police officers and the community and the security and putting things in place to make things run smoothly and handle things quickly out in the halls and get kids to class. I think just that whole end of it of the day today safety of the building is important. (Participant 4)

It is the researchers’ experience that regardless of success or failure school administrators feels valuable in their role in educating students and providing safety in their perspective school. School safety is an ultimate responsibility of all stakeholders; however, school administrators are responsible for acts of violence happening on the premises. Accountability is huge in perspective to school violence as well.

School administrators are obligated to implement safety and security as a
number one priority. Participant 8 feels flexibility is one of their greatest assets by the reported statement:

I feel that my role is very valuable. I offer a lot of flexibility. There isn’t anything that I wouldn’t do in an attempt to making a situation better for be it students, faculty, or anyone you know paraprofessional or maintenance person so I’m very flexible there. Roles don’t dictate what I do. I look for a happy medium that everybody is being serviced appropriately and everyone’s needs are being met so that they can ultimately educate students. (Participant 8)

School administrators feel they are valuable to their school districts. They feel their voice is a strong voice. Participants 7 and 5 feel their voice is a strong one.

Participant 7 reported the following:

As an African-American male I believe my role is invaluable. Any African-American male that can show not only our males, but these females, how to maintain themselves in a positive light, how to take education as the key to opening up doors in life, I think is an asset.

Participant 5 stated the following:

I view my role as very valuable as far as me being student services and just being a voice for our kids, being a voice for our kids dealing with discipline and violence and safety in school, being a voice as a woman, being a voice as a minority.

Participant 10 feels the administrator is an important one. Participant 10 stated the following:

I think my role is pretty important. I see myself as a strong instructional leader. I hold it down with my team. I hold them to a high standard so if I didn’t have a lot of drama going on around me I think it would feel even better but I’ve got some outside agitators trying to get in but I know my role is strong. I try to make myself very visible to my kids. I’m not taken out of the building a lot and I can be right in there going in the classrooms.

The recurring theme is significant. All school administrators feel they are valuable to their school. Each participant brings an expertise that is important to the
administrative team of their building. Every participant feels they play a vitally important role in keeping the students safe in school and addressing the social needs of the students through the intervention programs. School administrators are targeting a safe school environment as one of the key components to serving the school district and the community.

School violence is a complex issue. School safety is at the top of every administrator agenda. School administrators honestly acknowledge that violence does exist in their school; however, the degree of the violence experience is different. This study provided every school administrator the opportunity to share what effective programs are being used in their school district to service students of violence.

The perception of the school administrator is an important piece of school violence because the first step is acknowledging its existence and secondly, doing something about it. Schools administrators are getting involved in bring in programs into their school to service students of violence. These services range from safety measures of surveillance to mediation and social services within school and outside agency assistance. School administrators are trying to maintain control of their buildings and be proactive rather than reactive. As far as servicing students, school administrators are transitioning from punitive interventions to therapeutic interventions. School administrators are placing more in-school interventions in place, for example, and are using those types of interventions to modify behavior as opposed to out of school suspension. Punitive consequences are being reserved for serious code of conduct violations. School administrators realize the focal point of the school
violence problem is communication. Ultimately school administrators should adopt a broad based strategy, plan, and a baseline to a measuring tool to evaluate their school violence programs to further deal with violence in our schools because it is a great need. A school violence prevention curriculum is a need and a priority. Although expectations of student behaviors are clear in schools prevention is a priority as well.

Chapter V
Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the effectiveness of anti-violence programs as perceived by school administrators of urban public high schools in Illinois of the Midwest. A large database of literature exists on school violence; however, there is limited literature on the effectiveness of anti-violence programs. In
this study, the intent of the researcher was to explore effective anti-violence programs in their existence rather than why they are in effect. Face to face interviews were the primary method utilized to obtain the data. The interviews were conducted with ten qualified school administrators.

Proposed in this study were six major research questions:

1. What are the elements of each urban public high school’s program for curbing violence?

2. What do respondents view as the principal causes of violence in their urban public high school in the Midwest?

3. What anti-violence programs or approaches are perceived as successful?

4. How are anti-violence programs evaluated and what are the criteria for success?

5. How are student and neighborhood needs assessed? What planning processes are involved in implementation?

6. How do school administrators perceive their role in delivering anti-violence programs?

Descriptive detailed statements provided professional and personal insight of administrator’s perception of the effectiveness of anti-violence programs. Testimonials were provided as an insight of the administrators’ perception.

Effectiveness of anti-violence programs varied for this study. Administrators have no real true (valid) raw data to prove the effectiveness of their anti-violence
programs. Administrators perceived that if students were not repeat offenders of the same violent act after receiving anti-violence program services the anti-violence program is considered effective. Students who are entered in any program as a means of intervention is considered successful based upon completion of the number of days required for attendance.

Secondly, there is no evaluation tool used by administrators to determine effectiveness of the anti-violence programs. The logging of incidents of violence is the most frequent method of tracking data being used by administrators. School administrators were not able to report any evidence of documentation to support an evaluation process of their existing anti-violence programs.

Few administrators had ongoing anti-violence programs; however, there were numerous one-day and one-time programs presented to students regarding anti-violence prevention. The majority of services were provided on campus. Few were held off campus at the various outside agencies.

For the purpose of this study, all school administrators reported violence was a problem. Varying degrees of programs exist in schools such as mediation, social services, counseling (individual and group).

Mediation seems to be the program of choice for anti-violence. Counseling (individual and group) is the second most used anti-violence program. Seventy percent of school administrators reported using outside agencies to counter their school’s intervention of anti-violence. The commonly named agency of choice is Youth Outreach Services.
Anti-violence programs that target increasing students’ self-esteem and building character and motivation of youths, especially female students, are the programs on the rise as perceived by school administrators. Relationship building programs where administrators are used as leaders of the group or an athletic team are in effect. Also, the stability of administrators that have a history of servicing multiple siblings is considered an effective approach. Community based programs where volunteers are assisting school administrators with monitoring students are prevalent.

For the purpose of this study all school administrators reported violence was a minor or moderate problem. Varying degrees of programs exist in schools such as mediation, social services, counseling (individual and group).

Administrators reported the violence experienced in schools is fights and verbal altercations. Although weapons and guns exist of the violence experienced in school a few cases of weapons and guns are experienced in the high school setting. The cases that appear in school usually are the discovery of possession not the usage of a weapon.

Administrators identify similar elements that are successful in the high school program for curbing violence such as controlled access, surveillance, and security. Surveillance is the best implementation for prevention. Respondents perceive the principle cause to be similar as well. The leading principle causes amongst administrators were home, poor skills, technology, and community. Mediation, counseling, social services, and Youth Outreach Services, are the commonly used anti-violence programs provided to students of violence. Services are provided on site for
a minimum of one-day or one-time or by an outside agency.

Anti-violence programs have no evaluative measure of assessment to determine their true effectiveness. School community neighborhoods are not assessed nor are any formal planning done for implementing of services. School administrators are not implementing strategies of plan of actions for dealing with violence. All school administrators perceive they are addressing school violence effectively due to the violence experienced at their school is not being excessive or frequent.

School administrators are significant. School administrators feel valuable and great about how their perspective school is coping with violence. All school administrators perceive they are effectively implementing anti-violence programs and approaches. One hundred percent of school administrators perceive they are totally responsible for violence when it happens in their building. Safety and security are of the utmost importance to all school administrators; however, effective anti-violence programs are still in great need in high schools.

The findings in this study contribute to the understanding of school violence and the effective anti-violence programs in schools that exist to curtail violence. Urban school districts are providing safe schools and providing anti-violence programs to curtail violence.

**Conclusion**

Each of these key findings is important to school administrators: 1.) One of the key findings from this study is anti-violence programs exist in schools, but there is no evaluation tool to determine effectiveness. 2.) School administrators perceive the anti-
violence programs that are in existence in their schools are effective if students receive services and are not repeat offenders. 3.) Administrators report they are not experiencing large volumes of violent acts in school. Administrators are responding to violence in a pro-active measure which keeps the violent experience in school low although its existence still remains. 4.) All schools are addressing violence issues with multiple anti-violence programs.

School district offices need to annually assess the data and share the progress or non-progress with the district. Evaluation tools are essential to implementing and addressing violence. As valued and important to the school system as all school administrators believe they are they feel equally valued in their role of addressing and implementing anti-violence programs for their school.

All school districts under the study are treating violence as a number one priority. The need is evident. One hundred percent of school administrators report having control of their school. Student expectations are clearly defined, and corrective action is in place.

The purpose of this study was to add to the knowledge base of school violence and effective anti-violence programs of the high school education experience. The study explored the human perspective of school violence and effective anti-violence programs as perceived by school administrators. The results of this study demonstrated that violence exists, continues to be a problem, and definitely needs addressing. School administrators admit school violence is a priority and they are responsible for programs implemented in their schools to address the violence issues.
Recommendations

Recommendations can be made based on the findings of this research. Some recommendations may not be new, but worth researching by others.

1. The study should be conducted in other states.
2. A survey, by using a questionnaire, should be conducted targeting high school students’ perception.
3. An in-depth study should be conducted of one particular anti-violence program.
4. A study of elementary school administrator’s anti-violence programs.
5. A longitudinal study of a high school focusing on the decline or rise of school violence data and anti-violence programs.

This study affirms the need for research in this area. Research needs to be done of anti-violence programs beyond the school administrators’ perception. The evaluation component is very critical when services are being offered. Creating an evaluation tool to the anti-violence programs could be an additional component to a future study. This data is important and very critical to curtailing violence in urban public high schools. These data are useful and necessary; therefore, researchers must broaden their studies. Broader studies could improve anti-violence programs, approaches, and policies that affect school violence in high school.

This study identified the problem, there is violence in urban high schools and anti-violence programs are prevalent in urban public high schools; however, the existing
programs have no evaluation tool to suggest a solution or a decline in violence in urban public high schools. Additional research can be conducted to obtain more insight into curtailing school violence in high schools. This study found existing anti-violence programs in urban public high schools servicing students. School administrators are addressing the issue of violence. Violence in school is prevalent and a challenge educators face today.

A strategy and a plan to deal with violence are necessary in schools today. School safety is the number one priority of all school administrators across the country. Anti-violence programs and expectations are necessary in the curriculum along with reinforcement and services to counter the violence. Parents and students as well as citizens in our public schools deserve our best effort in implementing and conducting programs that curb violence.
REFERENCES


2231 Margaret Court  
Montgomery, IL 60538  
Spring 2011

(Name)  
Superintendent of Schools  
School District  
School District Address

Dear Superintendent of Schools,

I am currently enrolled in the Doctoral Ed. D. program at Aurora University. The title of my dissertation is "Exploration of the Effectiveness of Anti-Violence Programs as Perceived by School Administrators in Select Urban Public High Schools in the State of Illinois." I am requesting your permission to conduct research with a principal in your district. The time needed for participation from the principal will not interfere with the principal's duties.

All participating school districts’ and principals’ names and participation will be kept in the strictest confidence. No names of schools or principals will be used in the research study. You will receive a completed copy of my research upon completion of my dissertation.

Please feel free to contact me a (630) 674-1913 or e-mail at latonyacdavisdst3@msn.com if you have any questions.

Thanking you in advance for your anticipated permission.

Sincerely,

LaTonya Davis  
Aurora University Doctoral Candidate
Dear Principal,

As you may know, school violence has become one of the most discussed topics in education today. As a fellow educator, currently I am completing my dissertation at Aurora University on "Exploration of the Effectiveness of Anti-Violence Programs as Perceived by School Administrators in Select Urban Public High Schools in the State of Illinois."

As a high school principal in the state of Illinois you have been selected to participate in this study. Participation on your behalf is strictly voluntary. Choosing to participate in the study requires you to complete interviews with the researcher.

Please be assured that your participation will be kept in strict confidence. Neither your name nor your school will appear on the dissertation or any other reports of my research findings. You are entitled to receive the tapes from the interview and a completed copy of the dissertation upon your request.

Your professional insights on school violence and anti-violence programs are extremely important to all educators and to this research. Your immediate response to participate in this research is deeply appreciated. Feel free to call me at (630) 674-1913 or email at latonyacdavisdst3@msn.com if you have any questions or desire to not participate in this research.

Sincerely,

LaTonya Davis
Aurora University Doctoral Candidate
2231 Margaret Court
Montgomery, IL 60538
Spring 2011

School Administrator
School Name
School Address

Dear Administrator,

As you may know, school violence has become one of the most discussed topics in education today. As a fellow educator, currently I am completing my dissertation at Aurora University on "Exploration of the Effectiveness of Anti-Violence Programs as Perceived by School Administrators in Select Urban Public High Schools in the State of Illinois."

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Sincerely,

LaTonya Davis
Aurora University Doctoral Candidate
Research Participants Chart

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<th>Participants</th>
<th>College Level</th>
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