TEXAS DISCIPLINARY ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS: AN EMPIRICAL BASIS FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICES AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Dr. Bonnie Ann Powers-Prather – an exemplary wife, mother, daughter, friend, educator, and one of the strongest women I have ever known. You are dearly loved and remembered every day.

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ABSTRACT

The use of exclusionary discipline practices, which involves the removal of the student from the educational environment, continues to be a response used by schools for addressing student misconduct or delinquency. A major concern of stakeholders is that these types of discipline approaches may end up producing more negative outcomes for students (e.g., involvement in the criminal justice system or dropping out). Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEPs), a type of exclusionary discipline, are one of the more widely used tools used by schools. However, limited research has been conducted to understand how these programs operate and impact students. The purpose of this study was to understand the types of practices and support systems that are being implemented in DAEPs in Texas. Further, this study examined the relationship between program characteristics of a DAEP and its impact on recidivism to a DAEP. A mixed-methods approach was conducted. Specifically, an online survey was administered to DAEP principals to gather information on the types of practices implemented and an examination of the relationship with the rate of student recidivism. Next, follow-up interviews were conducted with DAEP principals from campuses that were found to have the highest and lowest student return rates to their DAEP.

I. INTRODUCTION

"In Texas, a single suspension or expulsion for a discretionary offense that did *not* include a weapon almost tripled a student's likelihood of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system the next school year."

–Arne Duncan, former U.S. Secretary of Education, 2014

Background

A national concern surrounding how to respond appropriately to crime and other forms of disruptive behavior in schools continues to be at the forefront of discourse among educators, legislators, criminal justice professionals, and parents. Of particular concern is the use of discipline strategies such as zero tolerance policies. Zero tolerance policies are in part analogous to broken windows theory, which postulates that an escalation to more serious crime is deterred by targeting minor offenses (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). Additionally, zero tolerance policies describe a system of preset punishments that are intended to be applied consistently and without discretion for all levels of offenses (e.g., serious or minor) (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). Aside from the "one-size-fits all" philosophy of zero tolerance policies, which are viewed by some as unconstitutional for their lack of due process for students (Black, 2014), they are also problematic as they often result in exclusionary discipline practices – the removal of students from the classroom (e.g., suspension or placement in a disciplinary alternative education program, or DAEP).

Discipline that removes the student from the traditional educational setting can have short- and long-term consequences. These consequences involve falling behind academically, dropping out of school, and subsequent involvement in the juvenile justice system (Fabelo, Thompson, Plotkin, Carmichael, Marchbanks, & Booth, 2011; Fowler,

2011; Monahan, VanDerhei, Bechtold, & Cauffman, 2014; Wolf, 2013). School discipline policies that introduce a student to the criminal justice system, either directly (e.g., arrest or ticketing) or indirectly (e.g., suspension or placement in a DAEP) represent what is known as the school-to-prison pipeline. The American Civil Liberties Union (2008, p.1) defines the school-to-prison pipeline as "the policies and practices that push school children, especially the most at-risk children, out of classrooms and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems." However, school systems that do nothing to address delinquent or other risky behavior committed by students will also contribute to similar negative outcomes, such as further involvement in delinquent behavior and contact with the criminal justice system (Teske, 2011). While educational systems must serve as protective environments for all students, they must also find a balance between providing systems of support and accountability for delinquent youth.

Problem Statement

Across the country, schools have responded to delinquency and other disruptive behavior through exclusionary discipline practices more often than through traditional measures (e.g., detention or counseling) (Wolf & Kupchik, 2016). Some of the more commonly known forms of exclusionary discipline include suspension or expulsion. However, of great concern is the use of DAEPs, which have resulted in the quarantine of the most at-risk youth (Reyes, 2001). The purpose of a DAEP is to serve as a temporary placement for students who have committed specific violations of the school code of conduct or criminal offenses, while simultaneously providing the same level of education and behavioral support systems that are delivered in a regular classroom setting (TEA, 2019). DAEPs across the country are generally subject to minimal legislative oversight.

Originally, Texas implemented DAEPs with minimal standards; however, over the years legislation has been passed to address criteria related to areas such student/teacher ratios, inclusion of core subjects, and academic performance measures. Still, very little is known about the actual practices that DAEPs in Texas are currently implementing. The only available data that provides insight into DAEP practices are descriptive studies conducted approximately a decade or more ago. (AIM, 2001; Dempsey, Martinez, & Toohey, 2007; McCreight, 2009). For example, DAEPs have been reported to incorporate methods such as militaristic "boot camp" type programs, point systems for rewarding positive behavior, community service, enforcing a strict dress code, conducting formal intake processes, and providing transition support back to the home campus (TEA, 2019; Dempsey et al., 2007). A more current assessment, however, is needed to identify the types of practices implemented by DAEPs in Texas – particularly with the ubiquitous practice of exclusionary discipline by schools.

The limited oversight of DAEPs can be problematic because certain programs or practices may potentially be more effective than others, particularly those that impact a student's successful transition back into the home classroom and decrease likelihood of re-offending in the future. Table 1, adapted from the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) most recently published biennial report on public schools (TEA, 2019), provides a summary of DAEP assignments for the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years. The total assignments indicate the number of repeated placements of students in a DAEP in the same school year. For example, during the 2016-17 school year, a total of 14,981 (17%) (87,330 minus 72,349) placements were for students assigned to a DAEP more than once in the same school year.

Table 1. DAEP Assignments for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years

DAEP Assignment	2015-16	2016-17
Individual Student Count	73,385	72,349
Total Assignments	89,935	87,330

Note: Adapted from TEA (2019), Table 4.1

The use of DAEPs, while providing a mechanism for removing the most disruptive students from home campuses, can have serious implications for students that are repeatedly being placed in these programs. Similar to other forms of exclusionary discipline, students in a DAEP setting are more at risk of falling behind academically, increasing the rate of dropping out and the risk of future contact with the criminal justice system (Fowler, Lightsey, Monger, Aseltine, 2010; Monahan et al., 2014). In a longitudinal study of a third grade cohort, Vanderharr (2010) found that over one-third of students placed in a DAEP through 12th grade was involved in subsequent juvenile detention during their school years. Although other factors besides the DAEP may have contributed to later placement in juvenile detention for these students, these outcomes have the potential to be further exacerbated with repeated placement in an alternative education setting (Fabelo et al., 2011).

As mentioned above, there exist only limited and outdated data about the structures, policies, and practices adopted in Texas DAEPs. Further, these structures, policies, and practices are commonly selected and implemented on the basis of "expert judgment" (individuals with extensive experience working in a DAEP setting) rather than empirical research that supports certain methods or approaches over others in terms of positive outcomes for students. Therefore, an examination of the relationship between certain DAEP practices and the successful transition back to the classroom can serve as the first step in identifying potential best practices to provide guidance for improving

these legislatively mandated programs. Because Texas accounts for the second largest public school system in the United States and educates over five million students, it is necessary to ensure its educational systems deliver support structures that can effectively remediate at-risk behavior among children and adolescents in schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is twofold. The first aim of this study is to address the need for updated and expanded knowledge base of practices or support systems that are provided to students in DAEPs. Second, this study aims to provide an evidence-based system of practices that lead to positive student outcomes by examining the relationship between program characteristics of a DAEP and its impact on recidivism or return rate to a DAEP. Specifically, the present study seeks to address the following research questions:

1) What are the types of practices or support systems implemented across DAEPs in Texas?
2) What is the relationship between the types of practices implemented in a DAEP (i.e., instructional, discipline management, transitional, parent/guardian involvement, and staff training) and the rate of student return to a DAEP?

Scope of the Study

This study uses a mixed-methods approach that will collect quantitative and qualitative data to address the research questions. Specifically, an online survey and follow-up semi-structured interviews were administered and conducted by the researcher. Quantitative data were collected from DAEP principals or their designated point of

contact to identify the types of practices or systems that are being implemented in Texas DAEPs and examine their relationship with the rate of student recidivism (return to a DAEP within the same or following school year). Subsequently, qualitative data were collected through follow-up interviews with campuses that were found to have the highest and lowest student return rates to their DAEP. The purpose of conducting follow-up interviews served two purposes: 1) to better describe how certain practices related to low student recidivism in a DAEP are implemented and the conditions that support their implementation and 2) to better understand other contextual factors outside the control of the DAEP (i.e., school discipline philosophy of the home campus) that may contribute to student outcomes. Interviews provided more context to these processes that are generally difficult to capture through quantitative measures.

Significance of the Study

The extant literature is limited in assessing the effectiveness of DAEPs in relation to actual student outcomes. However, the current study is the first investigation to examine the effectiveness of DAEPs as they relate to the rate of return to a DAEP. The purpose of a DAEP is to serve as a temporary placement for students who have committed specific school code violations or criminal offenses; however, they have been accused of becoming "dumping grounds" or "revolving doors" for at-risk students that serve as a trajectory to future involvement in the criminal justice system (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Vanderharr, 2010). Because exclusionary school discipline practices are associated with negative outcomes for students (e.g., dropping out and involvement with the criminal justice system), it is necessary to identify the most effective practices that

reduce recidivism of further delinquent or negative behavior and facilitate a successful transition back to the home campus.

In the sections that follow, Chapter 2 will discuss the history of school discipline practices and review the literature on the impact of exclusionary discipline in schools, and the use of disciplinary alternative education programs. Next, Chapter 3 will discuss the methods used to investigate the research questions, including the data collection procedures, target population, measurement of variables, and the data analysis plan. Chapter 4 presents the results of the quantitative analyses, and Chapter 5 presents the results of the qualitative analysis. Chapter 6 provides a discussion of the findings and study limitations. Finally, Chapter 7 provides a summary and conclusion of the study, including recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

History of School Discipline Practices

The philosophy underlying school discipline has been a topic of debate among educators, parents, policy-makers, and the juvenile justice system for the last sixty years. School discipline, which has traditionally fallen under the responsibility of school administrators, has evolved in its application. Prior to the 1960s, the use of corporal punishment in schools was common, along with out-of-school suspensions. During this time, corporal punishment was considered a reasonable response to address discipline, and teachers could not be held criminally responsible, provided that discipline was not excessive (Hanson, 2001). However, the social movements of civil rights and procedural due process in the 1960s brought about a reform in student discipline practices. As a result, schools turned away from the use of corporal punishment and expulsions and began to implement what was considered more humane discipline, such as in-school suspensions (Hanson, 2001). This alternative response allowed for students to remain in the educational environment while still receiving punishment, and prevented idle time on the streets to engage in delinquent behavior as a result of not being in school. Although this seemed to be a more positive alternative for delinquent youth, schools across the country would eventually adopt systems of zero-tolerance for all types of offenses that would ultimately counteract the intent of keeping students integrated in the traditional education setting and away from the criminal justice system.

The advent of zero-tolerance policies was first associated in the 1980s with both state and federal responses to drug trafficking (Mitchell, 2014; Skiba & Rausch, 2006; Teske, 2011). However, this concept was later adopted by schools in response to an

increase in juvenile arrests for violent crimes in the early 1990s, which peaked in 1994, but thereafter gradually declined (Kang-Brown, Trone, Fratello, & Daftary-Kapur, 2013). Despite a wane in juvenile crime rates nationwide, the adoption of zero-tolerance policies particularly in the educational system continued to be pursued. In 1994, during the Clinton administration, Congress passed the *Federal Gun-Free Schools Act,* which called for all states to enforce a mandatory minimum one-year expulsion of students found to be in possession of a weapon on school property (Mitchell, 2014). In 2001, Congress repealed the Gun-Free Schools law and replaced it with the *No Child Left Behind Act*. This act provided more specific provisions, in particular, calling for the expulsion of a student who brings to and possesses a firearm at school. In addition, this act clearly specified the use and possession of a *firearm*, not all weapons (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001).

The growing fear of youth as "super-predators" throughout the 1990s was further intensified following the tragic Columbine High School shooting, which resulted in the death of twelve students and one teacher (Dilulio, 1995; Kang-Brown et al., 2013). At its onset, the philosophy behind zero-tolerance in schools described a system of preset punishments that were applied consistently and without discretion, regardless of the level of offense committed or the totality of the circumstances involved (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). Subsequently, zero tolerance policies were adopted by the majority of schools across the country and began to accompany discipline practices that no longer targeted only serious violent behavior, as was originally intended. Zero-tolerance policies extended to misconduct such as fighting, drug use, dress-code violations, and use of profanity (Hanson, 2001; Lamont, 2013). In addition to targeting both serious and minor

offenses committed by students, schools have begun implementing the use of exclusionary discipline to support their zero-tolerance efforts. Although this evolution has been in part due to "get tough on crime" approaches implemented in the criminal justice system (Hanson, 2001), school's intentions have ultimately been to ensure safe and uninterrupted learning environments. The use of exclusionary discipline, however, has prompted considerable attention with regard to its negative impact on student outcomes.

Impact of Exclusionary Discipline in Schools

The concept of zero tolerance policies in schools is supported by a belief that punishment, especially for minor infractions, will deter students from committing more serious offenses (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Teske, 2011; Wilson & Kelling, 1982). However, this assumption, which on some level makes intuitive sense, has yet to be supported in the empirical literature. In contrast, Fowler et al. (2010) assert that exclusionary discipline practices, such as suspensions and DAEP placements, create a trajectory into the criminal justice system, also known as the "school-to-prison pipeline." Although the school-to-prison pipeline has not been directly assessed, the research suggests indirectly a connection between exclusionary discipline practices and subsequent involvement in the criminal justice system (Fabelo et al., 2011; Monahan et al., 2014). In a study of state prison inmates, Harlow (2003) found that 68% of prisoners in 1997 had dropped out of school. The nexus between school discipline that results in the removal of the student from the educational environment (e.g., suspension, arrest, placement in a DAEP) and low academic performance and increased likelihood of dropping out has not been examined directly, however.

Extant research suggests that dropping out of school is precipitated by exposure to exclusionary discipline (e.g., suspension or arrest). Although Stearns and Glennie (2006) found that students drop out for a variety of reasons (e.g., employment, pregnancy), students age sixteen and younger most commonly drop out of school for disciplinary reasons. In a study of school discipline in public high schools, high suspension rates were positively associated with high rates of dropping out (Lee, Cornell, Gregory, Fan, 2011). Using the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Sweeten (2006) found that a school discipline response of arrest that resulted in a first time court appearance increased a student's likelihood of dropping out of school. Additionally, in a study of elementary and secondary schools, campuses that adopted zero tolerance policies were more likely to be at a high risk for academic failure and dropout rates, compared to schools that adopted more positive and less punitive discipline policies (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005). Further, of those campuses that experienced low academic performance and high dropout rates, students had a higher degree of involvement in delinquent behavior compared to campuses that did not adopt zero tolerance policies.

Hanson (2001) suggests that students who are removed from the classroom lose exposure to traditional social norms that educational environments provide. Subsequently, students who lack a connection to school become detached from the educational setting and drop out (Mulvey & Cauffman, 2001). This detachment is further exacerbated when exclusionary discipline has resulted in a legal response (e.g., arrest) and a student is labeled a delinquent. Although the majority of research suggests an indirect positive relationship between exclusionary discipline and further delinquent behavior, Fabelo et al. (2011) found that discretionary out-of-school suspensions almost

tripled the likelihood of a student's encounter with the juvenile justice system the following academic school year, even if they had not dropped out of school. In contrast to previous research, this finding may suggest a possible direct relationship between exclusionary discipline practices and future involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Another assumption of exclusionary discipline is that removing students from the classroom will create a safer school climate (Raffaele-Mendez, 2003). Although removing a delinquent student from the educational setting may appear to foster safer schools, extant research indicates schools that remove students from the classroom also are more likely to report dissatisfaction with school climate (Raffaele-Mendez, 2003; Scott & Barrett, 2004; Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Perhaps this finding suggests that school policies which promote negative outcomes for youth (e.g., suspensions or placement in alternative education) may also adversely impact the perception of the overall school environment as excessively punitive (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). In other words, students who perceive their school as an environment that unfairly punishes students may create a climate of distrust and fear toward adults. However, the causal order of this finding is not fully examined. In other words, a negative school climate may be caused by the delinquent behaviors leading to exclusionary discipline.

The discretionary use of exclusionary discipline practices, particularly in DAEP placements, is also worth noting. Mandatory DAEP referrals, which involve more serious offenses such as criminal violations or violent behavior, are less utilized than discretionary referrals (Booker & Mitchell, 2011). Because discretionary referrals involve more subjectivity on behalf of school administrators, they are more likely to be used for all types of offenses, even minor infractions committed by a student on campus. Between

the 2007-2008 and 2016-2017 school years, DAEP referrals in Texas continue to be higher for discretionary placements compared to mandatory placements (TEA, 2019). Due to the subjectivity that is often used in DAEP discretionary referrals, the potential for bias in student placements presents another potential issue associated with exclusionary discipline.

The practice of exclusionary punishment in schools appears to have produced a discipline gap that has translated to an overrepresentation of certain student populations such as African American, special needs, and LGBT students being punished in schools (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Himmelstein & Bruckner, 2010; Skiba, Horner, Chung, Raush, May, & Tobin, 2011; U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). For instance, African American students in elementary and middle school are more likely than White students to be referred to the office or expelled for similar offenses (Skiba et al., 2011). Further, African American students are more likely to be disciplined for subjective violations (e.g., threats, loud noise, disrespect) compared to white students, who are found more likely to be disciplined for concrete offenses (e.g., smoking, vandalism, using obscene language) (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). In addition, students with disabilities that are served by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are twice as likely to be suspended from school (U.S. Department of Education for Civil Rights, 2014). Non-heterosexual students, particularly female students, are also more likely to receive exclusionary discipline, even after controlling for transgressive behaviors among non-heterosexual students (Himmelstein & Bruckner, 2010). This disproportion is worth noting given the discipline gap in DAEP referrals, which are mostly based on discretion. For example, in the 2016-2017 school

year, African American students in Texas at all grade levels were over-represented in DAEP placements, along with students that receive special education services (TEA, 2019).

Theoretical Explanation of Exclusionary Discipline's Impact

The impact associated with exclusionary discipline practices in schools is multi-faceted; however, the potential for such policies to lead to rather than prevent subsequent delinquent behavior warrants further discussion. As previously mentioned, thousands of students in Texas enter a DAEP more than once within the same school year. This "revolving door" is concerning and questions the effectiveness of practices or interventions that DAEPs provide to students (Booker & Mitchell, 2011). Deterrence/rational choice theory posits that because people rationally choose to engage in crime or other rule violations, they will be deterred if punishment is certain and severe (Beccaria, 1996; Pratt & Cullen, 2005). Analogous to incarceration, placement in a DAEP would serve as severe punishment. Further, this would be certain punishment in cases of mandatory placements. However, empirical support for a deterrent effect with delinquent populations is generally weak (Pratt & Cullen, 2005). In a study of secondary school students, Costenbader and Markson (1998) found that when asked if suspension would deter future delinquent behavior, the majority of suspended students responded "Not at all". Further, being suspended from school increases the likelihood of being arrested in the same month (Monahan, VanDerhei, Bechtold, & Cauffman, 2014). These findings may indicate that exclusionary discipline is ineffective at preventing future delinquent behavior. If deterrence via school discipline is ineffective, other micro-level explanations can be offered as to why it may not work.

Although the research is limited in assessing a direct link between school discipline and later contact with the criminal justice system, Lochner and Moretti (2004) find that an individual's participation in the educational setting helps decrease the likelihood that juveniles will engage in subsequent delinquent behavior. This finding is explained through several mechanisms that may serve as a causal link between education and a decrease in future delinquency. To begin, additional years in school potentially increase the availability of job opportunities and perceived cost of prison. Lochner and Moretti (2004) also suggest that educated individuals are more sensitive to the shame of being labeled a criminal. From a theoretical standpoint, Travis Hirschi's social control theory lends support for the impact that the educational environment may have on delinquent behavior.

Hirschi's social control theory posits that delinquency is more likely to occur when an individual's bond to either a person or social institution is weakened or broken (Hirschi, 1969). The social bond occurs through a sense of attachment to a person or social institution, commitment to conventional activities, involvement or participation in conventional activities, and a belief in accepted norms. For example, teachers and the school serve as conventional people or social institutions with which students form attachments and thus become committed to the norms and values supported by the educational setting (Sweeten, Bushway, & Paternoster, 2009). Further, youth participate in conventional activities associated with the school (e.g., sports, student council, tutoring, etc.) that may be jeopardized by misbehavior, and ultimately espouse a belief in the norms and values of the educational environment. However, social control theory suggests that when a student drops out of school, this bond is weakened or broken. When

conventional bonds are unstable, an individual is more likely to engage in delinquent behavior.

The link between school discipline and subsequent delinquent behavior can also be explained through labeling theory. Labeling theory suggests that an individual's self-conception is an internalization of external societal reactions (Becker, 1963). For instance, students who are subject to harsh discipline practices that take them out of the traditional educational setting (e.g. DAEP) will begin to see themselves as a problem student. This self-identity or internalized stigma could potentially lead to other problematic behaviors such as low academic performance, dropping out of school, or criminal activity. Sweeten (2006) suggests that a student who is constantly referred to the juvenile justice system is more likely to have a low self-concept, which leads to a separation from traditional norms and values that are generally fostered in an educational environment. The positive impact that participation in the educational environment has in reducing the risk of engaging in criminal activity and the potential for youth to adopt a low self-concept from experiencing exclusionary discipline is worth acknowledging given that many school discipline practices, particularly DAEP placements, involve removing a student from the traditional classroom.

If removing a student from the educational setting does not serve as deterrent, but instead potentially leads to a break in social bonds from the educational institution and labeling as a delinquent, settings such as DAEPs can only be effective if they implement support systems that help facilitate positive outcomes, such as decreased recidivism. Social support or altruism theory argues that crime is reduced as a factor of support systems that are delivered through mechanisms such as social programs, communities,

families, or the criminal justice system (Pratt & Cullen, 2005). In the case of DAEPs, practices that help to support students' successful transition back to the regular classroom after being placed in an alternative setting can mitigate the potential for re-offending and returning to a DAEP.

Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs

While the majority of alternative schools across the country are currently serving students with behavioral issues, alternative education programs have served many functions. Historically, alternative schools have been settings of choice that place high achieving students in programs that can keep up with their educational needs (e.g., magnet schools) or serve students identified as at-risk for academic failure or diagnosed with learning disabilities (Raywid, 1995). Another function of alternative schools, as previously mentioned, is to serve students who have engaged in disruptive behavior (e.g., criminal or student code of conduct violations) in the traditional educational environment (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Raywid, 1995). These programs, also known as disciplinary alternative education programs, are more punishment-based and focus on behavior modification to ensure the successful return of students back to their home campus (Aron, 2006; Raywid, 1995).

DAEPs, which are non-voluntary and generally involve short-term placements, also are intended to provide students the opportunity to continue their education without falling behind academically, a likely outcome of suspension or expulsion (Ricard, Lerma, Heard, 2013). Further, DAEPs are viewed as holding places to prevent dangerous students from being on the streets during the day and engaging in further delinquent behavior (Hanson, 2005). Thus the intent of an alternative educational setting is to

provide a supervised instructional environment for students rather than expelling them to the streets (Reyes, 2001). These alternative settings typically receive students that have exhibited impulsive, aggressive, or antisocial behaviors that have been disruptive to the traditional educational environment (Raywid, 1995; Tobin & Sprague, 2000).

Although the exact number of DAEPs that have been adopted in schools across the country is unknown, the Gun Free Schools Act of 1994 provided the option for schools all across the country to mandatorily place students in alternative education programs for violation of zero-tolerance policies rather than remove them from school entirely (e.g. suspension or expulsion) (Gun-Free Schools Act, 1994). Because the focus of this study is specific to exclusionary discipline pertaining to the use of DAEPs in Texas, the next section provides a more detailed examination of the development and structure of these alternative settings for students in that state.

Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs in Texas

The composition of alternative education programs in the United States, which were initially voluntary and targeted students at risk of dropping out of school, has evolved since their introduction in the 1960s. In 1993, the Texas Legislature formed the Joint Select Committee to Review the Central Education Agency, and made several recommendations to schools regarding zero tolerance policies and the removal of disruptive students (TEA, 2007). In 1994, however, the passage of the *Gun-Free Schools Act* called for a mandatory minimum one-year expulsion of students found to be in possession of a weapon on school property. The passage of the *Gun-Free Schools Act*, in conjunction with the adoption of zero tolerance policies in Texas, led to the recommendation of alternative education programs for students who violate local codes

of conduct or engage in criminal offenses (TEA, 2007). In 1995, the *Texas Safe Schools Act* was passed and mandated that each school district establish a DAEP (Levin, 2006; TEC, 37.008; TEA, 2007; TEA, 2019). The purpose of a DAEP is to provide a temporary continuing educational placement for students in need of behavior management. Subsequently, the goal is for students to make a successful return to their home classroom without reoffending or returning to a DAEP. Initial standards of Texas DAEPs were very minimal, however, Texas has implemented requirements with oversight by the TEA.

DAEPs can be housed either in a separate classroom on campus or a separate building off campus, and may be shared by several partnering districts in the immediate area (Freeman, Fowler, Lightsey, Vitris, Monger, 2012; Levin, 2006; TEC, 37.008). A student may also be placed in a DAEP more than once in the same school year. Before a student is officially removed from the home campus and placed in a DAEP, several procedures must take place. First, a recommendation of removal of a student from the home classroom must be followed by a conference hearing with the campus behavior coordinator or other appropriate campus administrator, teacher (if requesting removal), parent/guardian of student, and the student (TEC, 37.009). During this conference, the student must be provided either orally or in writing the reason for the removal to a DAEP. As part of the decision-making process before placing a student in a DAEP, the campus behavior coordinator is required to consider factors such as self-defense, intent or lack of intent at the time the student engaged in the conduct, student's disciplinary history, and the presence of a disability that substantially impairs the student's capacity to appreciate the wrongfulness of the student's conduct (TEC, 37.001). If a school district

policy allows for a student to appeal the decision of the school administrator, a final decision will be made by the school board of trustees.

The Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Chapter 103.1201, Health and Safety allows for a DAEP to be located on-campus or off-campus. Additionally, a school district may share a DAEP with surrounding school districts. Further, school districts are required to separate elementary grade students from secondary grade students assigned to a DAEP. There are also certain educational requirements to be followed and assessments of academic growth to be conducted by DAEPs. For example, each DAEP must ensure that a student performs at grade level and that both educational and behavior management needs are addressed. These programs are mandated to provide instruction in the core subject areas of math, English, history, and science, as well as self-discipline. In addition, all teachers employed by a DAEP must meet certification and training requirements (TEC, 37.008; TAC, 103.1201). The programmatic characteristics of DAEPs or student support systems, however, vary across each setting and are not standardized (TEA, 2019). Some DAEPs provide teacher-oriented classroom instruction, while others combine direct instruction with computer-assisted learning. Techniques that focus on behavior modification can range from military/boot camp type programs to a reward system for positive behavior. Most DAEPs, however, use metal detectors, require that students wear uniforms, and engage in high supervision of students (TEA, 2019).

Mandatory vs. Discretionary Placements

DAEP placements can be either mandatory or discretionary. Offenses for mandatory placement in a DAEP are outlined in the TEC and can include Penal Code Title 5 felonies occurring off campus, registered sex offenders under court supervision,

terrorist threats, abuse of a volatile chemical, assault of a teacher or volunteer, or the disclosure or promotion of intimate visual material (TEC, 37.006, 37.304). DAEPs, however, continue to experience a higher proportion of discretionary placements compared to mandatory placements (TEA, 2019). DAEP placements that are discretionary are based on violations identified in the school district's student code of conduct. These violations can vary from district to district, but generally include offenses such as possessing a fake weapon; possessing razors, box cutters, pocket knives, or other dangerous objects; fighting or scuffling; threats against other students, staff, or school property; possession of tobacco products or e-cigarettes; stealing; bullying; sexting; and using profanity (TASB, 2019). Table 2 describes some of the types of offenses that fall under mandatory and discretionary placements in a DAEP.

Table 2. Offenses for Mandatory vs. Discretionary Placement in a DAEP

Mandatory Placement Offenses	**Discretionary Placement Offenses**
Intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly going with or possessing a location-restricted knife on the premises of a school, any grounds or building where a school-sponsored activity is taking place, or a school passenger vehicle of the school Assault with bodily injury, on or within 300 feet of school property or at a school-related activity;	Possessing or using look-alike weapons
Title 5 felony or aggravated robbery off campus and not at a school-related activity if: student receives deferred prosecution; a court or jury finds that student engaged in delinquent conduct, or superintendent reasonably believes student engaged in conduct	Possessing or using air guns or BB guns

Table 2. Continued.

Conviction, deferred adjudication, or probation for continuous sexual abuse of child or children, sexual assault, or aggravated sexual assault against another student attending the same campus, upon request of victim's parents and if there is not another campus in the district to transfer the offending student	Possessing or using razors, box cutters, pocket knives, chains, knives with a blade of less than 5 ½ inches or other dangerous objects, including knuckles
Public lewdness or indecent exposure on or within 300 feet of school property or at a school-related activity	Fighting or scuffling
Registered sex offender under court supervision	Threats against students, staff, or school property
Selling, giving, delivering, possessing, using, being under the influence of any amount of marijuana, a controlled substance, or a dangerous drug, on or within 300 feet of school property or at a school-related activity, if not punishable by a felony	Registered sex offender not under court supervision
Invasive visual recording on or within 300 feet of campus or at a school-related activity	Inappropriate exposure of body parts
On or off campus retaliatory assault with bodily injury on a school employee or volunteer	Sexual or gender-based harassment
Terrorist threat or false alarm involving a public school	Possessing or using tobacco products or e-cigarettes (including any component , part, or accessory for the e-cigarette)
Any felony on or within 300 feet of school property or a school-related activity	Possessing, selling, or using look-alike drugs or items attempted to be passed off as drugs
Unlawful disclosure or promotion of intimate visual material on or within 300 feet of school property or a school-related activity	Bullying that occurs on school property or at a school-related activity on or off school property; or bullying that encourages a student to commit or attempt to commit suicide

Table 2. Continued.

Abusable volatile chemical offense, on or within 300 feet of school property or at a school-related activity	Releasing or threatening to release intimate visual material of a minor or of an adult student without the student's consent

Note: Adapted from Texas Association of School Boards (2019)

DAEP Practices

There continues to be a dearth of empirical research on DAEPs with regard to the effectiveness of practices or support systems that such programs provide in relation to student outcomes (e.g., recidivism). Instead, much of the literature describes components of a DAEP that are based on expert judgement and lack an evaluation of what actually works and what does not. Further, most practices have only been empirically tested in a traditional school setting, not a DAEP (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010; Quinn & Poirier, 2006; Tobin & Sprague, 2000). The following studies conducted by McCreight (1999), AIM (2001), and Dempsey et al. (2007) are primarily descriptive and collect data from or provide recommendations for DAEPs. The activities cited in these studies are all based on prior assessments of DAEP practices from a national perspective, as well as practitioner experience/expert judgment in disciplinary settings. These studies do not, however, provide an empirical basis for effective practices in a DAEP. Further, these studies are all specific to Texas and thus provide insight into the characteristics of DAEPs in Texas that this study also aims to identify in its current application.

The aim of McCreight's (1999) study, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, was to collect data on program practices for both on-campus and off-campus DAEPs in Texas. Each superintendent was distributed a survey and asked about the types of programs implemented in their DAEP. The data collection instrument items used for this study were based on practices identified as effective in prior literature (Barr &

Parrett, 1997; Black, 1997; Harrington-Lueker, 1994; Jacobs, 1995; Raywid, 1994). This study identified practices related to instructional strategies (e.g., individualized and needs assessment based, small student to teacher ratio), training of staff (e.g., conflict resolution and discipline management that support positive and address negative behavior), transitional programs (e.g., entrance and exit meeting with DAEP and home campus staff), vocational training for students, and encouragement of parental involvement in student education and home life. McCreight (1999) analyzed data from 101 on-campus and 291 off-campus DAEP sites in Texas. The majority of DAEPs in that study indicated that they implemented the following strategies: 1) one-on-one instruction, 2) established individual student goals for success, 3) customized academic programs matched to individual student's reading level, 4) conducted staff training in conflict resolution, 5) parent participation in entrance and exit conferences, 6) and established goals for success after returning to regular campus. However, none of these practices were linked empirically to positive or negative outcomes for students.

In 2001, TEA commissioned the Academic Information Management System (AIMS), to develop a statewide summary of what would be considered effective practices for Texas educators in regular school and DAEP settings to use in student discipline management. This study was conducted to provide initial background information for the first DAEP Annual Evaluation Report – mandated by the Texas Education Code. This mandate requires TEA to collect performance data (e.g., number of students assigned to a DAEP, gender, grade level, reason for assignment, student-teacher ratio, etc.) from each district's DAEP. To develop the summary, data were compiled from multiple sources such as on-site DAEP visits in Texas, state and national studies on effective methods, and

insight from TEA staff in the Division of Safe Schools (AIM, 2001). This study found that Texas DAEPs were implementing a variety of activities related to instruction (e.g., high academic expectations, small class size, individualized instructional plans, one-on-one instruction or self-paced), staff training (e.g., hiring of certified teachers, training in conflict resolution, counseling, behavior management techniques, etc.), discipline/behavior management practices (e.g., consistent application of discipline policies, system of reduced privileges and rewards, constant student supervision, police officer presence, community service), counseling services (e.g., counselor assessments for entering students, DAEP relationship with social service agencies, drug and alcohol abuse counseling, job preparation), transitional strategies (e.g., ongoing communication between DAEP and home campus, formal exit procedures from DAEP, transition counseling back to the home campus), and parental involvement in the DAEP. Again, these practices were never linked empirically to student outcomes.

To address shortcomings in the first two studies, Dempsey et al. (2007) collected data on practices being implemented in Texas DAEPs along with identified outcome measures used to determine their success. In the study, DAEP staff were asked to rate the effectiveness of their practices in areas related to reduction in negative behaviors, successful return to home campus, and academic improvement. Similar to McCreight (1999) and AIMS (2001), staff identified several implemented activities that were *perceived* to be most effective in all outcome measures identified. These practices related to 1) behavior modification (e.g., positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviors, limited punitive actions for misconduct, clearly communicated behavior expectations, enforced dress code, community service), 2) instruction (e.g., small student to teacher ratio,

individualized academic assessments, high expectation for academic performance), 3) transition processes (e.g., constant communication between DAEP and home campus staff, DAEP staff follow-up on home campus), and 4) staff training (e.g., de-escalation tactics, conflict resolution, positive behavior support systems).

Although the studies discussed above provide only a descriptive account of the types of practices that DAEPs in Texas have implemented, they do not connect these practices empirically with actual student outcomes. Quinn and Poirier (2007), however, attempt to examine this relationship empirically. Similar to the studies presented above, Quinn and Poirier (2007) collected "best practices" from a sample of DAEP programs in Texas and California serving students between 7th and 12th grade. The majority of DAEPs were found to implement practices related to the following: 1) individualized educational programs based on student need, 2) established high expectations for all students both academically and socially, 3) administrative support of the program's vision and mission, 4) low student-teacher ratio, 5) non-authoritarian interaction between teachers and students, and 6) encouraged parent involvement in program student support systems. To assess the effectiveness of these practices, Quinn and Poirier (2007) identified several outcome variables to measure. Their findings suggest the majority of programs that implemented the practices identified above had the following outcomes: 1) increased student attendance at the DAEP compared to the home campus, 2) improved academic performance compared to the home campus 3) increased positive student feedback on the program, and 4) increased parent satisfaction with the program and participation in student support systems.

Although Quinn and Poirier (2007) examine the effectiveness of DAEP programs as they relate to certain student outcomes, other measures of success have not been assessed. This is problematic given the frequent use of these programs and the rate of recidivism they often experience (Mitchell & Booker, 2011). Although Hosley (2003) found that 8% of students returned to a DAEP in the same academic year, almost 40% returned to a DAEP the following school year. Similarly, Vanderharr (2010) found that of 102 unique placements in a single DAEP, a total of 266 were documented for a single school year, which represented repeated placements of students. Further, the individual student count of DAEP placement in Texas for the 2016-2017 school year was 72,349, yet the total count of placements was 87,330 (TEA, 2019). The increase in the total counts indicates repeated placements of students in a DAEP in the same school year. If the intent of exclusionary discipline is to deter youth from criminal or disruptive behavior at school, DAEPs should adopt effective practices that can better support a student's successful transition back to the home campus, therefore mitigating the likelihood of re-offending.

It is necessary, however, to acknowledge and discuss the various factors that can impact the outcome of focus for this study – student recidivism or return to a DAEP – before moving forward. Failing to do so would be misleading and dismissive of the dynamics that exist within an educational environment that can impact school discipline outcomes for students. Figure 1 illustrates the various factors that could impact a student's return to a DAEP.

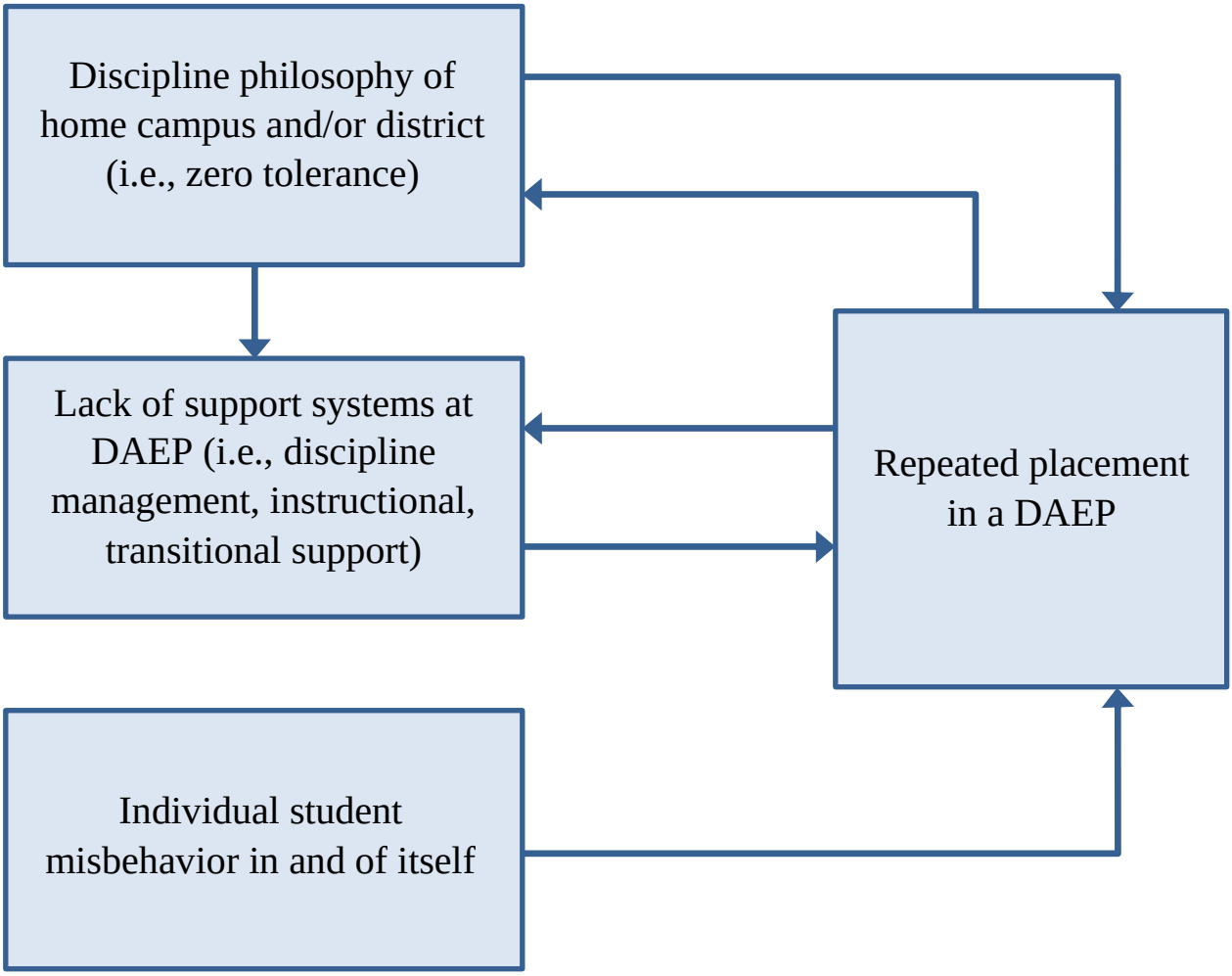

Figure 1. Causal Diagram for Variables Impacting Student Returns to a DAEP

The scope of this study focuses primarily on examining the impact that certain DAEP practices or systems have on a student's likelihood of returning to a DAEP. Essentially, this study hypothesizes that DAEPs which lack support systems for students such as instructional services, discipline management, or transitional support between placement to and from the DAEP can decrease a student's likelihood of successfully transitioning back to the home campus and potentially increase the likelihood they will return to the DAEP.

However, the discipline philosophy of the home campus and/or district (e.g., adoption of zero tolerance policies) can also have a major influence on student recidivism. As previously noted zero tolerance policies in schools are accompanied by an increased use of exclusionary discipline practices. This overreliance on the use of DAEP placements to begin with could lead to a student's repeated placement in a DAEP overtime. Consequently, a DAEP's effort to implement practices or systems to assist in positive student outcomes may be ineffective as a result of the home campus discipline philosophy. Further, the discipline philosophy of the home campus and/or district as strict or intolerant of student misbehavior could potentially impact the manner in which a DAEP operates or attempts to serve students. For example, if DAEP staff perceive that their programs are merely placeholders for delinquent and disruptive youth, this could minimize DAEP staff efforts to implement practices or systems to help at-risk students, therefore increasing a student's likelihood of returning to a DAEP.

However, the causal order of these premises is important to acknowledge to further understand how certain factors influence student returns to a DAEP. First, students that are repeatedly placed back in a DAEP after returning to the home campus may influence the discipline philosophy of the home campus and/or district. Essentially student returns to a DAEP may lead the home campus and/or district to develop a zero tolerance approach to discipline, leading to an overreliance on exclusionary discipline (i.e., DAEPs). Secondly, repeated placements may impact DAEP staff's perceptions of students who return to a DAEP. Specifically, DAEP staff may begin to label students that return as incorrigible or "bad kids" and therefore become less inclined to provide support systems for them – resulting in their likelihood of returning to a DAEP. Lastly, and most

likely unfavorable of these premises, is that the presence of zero tolerance policies at the home campus and/or district or absence of support systems at the DAEP do not cause repeated placements to a DAEP. Simply put, students who are repeatedly placed in a DAEP may be students with repeated behavior issues. While mandatory and discretionary placements indicate the types of offenses students are generally committing that result in their placement in a DAEP, several interventions may be taking place at the home campus level (e.g., detention, in-school suspension) prior to a placement in an alternative setting.

It can be challenging to account for all the possible factors that impact a student's return to a DAEP as some may be factors of the educational or home environment, and some may be more influential than others. However, DAEPs and the practices they implement to support students should be intentional in facilitating the increased likelihood of a student's permanent return to the home campus given the negative impact exclusionary discipline has on student outcomes (e.g., low academic performance, dropping out, future involvement with the criminal justice system).

Although it may be instructive to describe common practices in DAEPs and the evaluative judgments of staff members using those practices, it is ultimately more useful to identify the practices that help to distinguish between more and less successful DAEPs in terms of return rates. Moreover, the mere presence or absence of salient practices may offer insufficient insight into how these practices lend to the success of DAEPs. As a result, it is also necessary to delve deeper into the manner in which DAEP practices are implemented and the context within which they operate.

The Present Study

While certain standards have been implemented that address the operation of DAEPs in Texas, still very little is known about the types of practices or systems these programs implement on a daily basis. Further, there has been no systematic examination of the effectiveness of certain DAEP practices as measured through recidivism (i.e., return to a DAEP). This is important to consider given that thousands of students in Texas are entering DAEPs more than once in the same school year: 16,550 students in the 2015-16 school year and 14,981 students in the 2016-2017 school year, respectively (TEA, 2019). Specifically, the present study seeks to address the following questions:

1) What are the types of practices or support systems implemented across DAEPs in Texas?
2) What is the relationship between the types of practices implemented in a DAEP (i.e., instructional, discipline management, transitional, parent/guardian involvement, and staff training) and the rate of student return to a DAEP?

The next chapter describes the research methods used to investigate these questions.

III. METHODOLOGY

Chapter III begins with a brief discussion of the research design for this study, which combines both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques, as well as a discussion of the target population. The next section discusses the quantitative data portion of the study (i.e., questionnaire mode, questionnaire development, question sections and measures, and data collection procedures), followed by a discussion of the qualitative design (i.e., follow-up interviews and interview protocol). Finally the data analysis plan is presented.

Research Design

This study used a mixed-methods approach that collected both quantitative and qualitative data. Combining both types of methodologies provides a more comprehensive understanding or answer to a particular research question than either one can produce by itself (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Specifically, an online survey was administered, and then follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher. Quantitative data were collected to analyze the types of practices or support systems that are being implemented in Texas DAEPs. Next, these data were examined in relation to their impact on the rate of student return to a DAEP. Qualitative data were collected through follow-up semi-structured interviews, which allow the researcher to enhance or enrich the quantitative results (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The follow-up interviews helped to gather more in-depth information on other potential contextual factors that contribute to how a DAEP functions, provide a more comprehensive recommendation base for Texas DAEPs, and inform the quantitative results, as well as future quantitative instruments.

Target Population

A population study includes all of the units in a population or as close as possible to 100% of the total population, in this case, DAEPs in the state of Texas (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). A population study is most appropriate when the population size is relatively small – in this study the approximate population size was 658 DAEPs in Texas at the time the survey was administered. By including all units in the study, the researcher was able to maximize the amount of data and reduce sampling error. Further, a population study was more fitting for this setting, as DAEPs across Texas vary in operation.

The literature on survey response rate is pervasive, and acceptable thresholds appear to vary. Fulton (2016) suggests an acceptable response rate between sixty and eighty-three percent to ensure accurate estimates. However, the average response rate for academic published studies is 34 percent (Cycyota & Harrison, 2006). Electronic-based surveys – the mode of administration used for the current study - yield an 11% lower response rate compared to mail, in-person, or telephone surveys (Manfreda et al., 2008). Early research suggests that surveys with lower response rates of around 20%, however, can also provide accurate estimates of populations, similar to surveys with higher responses rates (e.g., 60 % or higher) (Visser, Krosnick, Marquette, & Curtin, 1996). In a comparison of two separate survey administrations – one with a 25% response rate and the other with a 50% response rate, Keeter et al. (2006) found few statistical differences in estimates. Therefore, the unit of analysis for this study was DAEPs and a response rate of at least 20% or more (i.e., 130 DAEPs) was considered acceptable for this study.

Due to the variation in how DAEPs operate in Texas, the researcher relied on the Texas School Safety Center's (TxSSC) contact database to identify the approximate size of the target population. According to TEA, the state education entity that oversees the development of statewide curriculum, data collection, and monitoring for compliance, districts utilize either an off-site DAEP facility to house students or an "in-house" DAEP. All "in-house" DAEPs report student information to TEA under their home campus numbers. Because some DAEPs are embedded within the regular campus structure, it was problematic to determine the exact population size from using TEA's campus directory. Therefore, the researcher solicited an open records request from the TxSSC for a more comprehensive list of current DAEP campuses and contact information. The TxSSC is a university-level research center at Texas State University that serves as a repository for school safety-related data as well as contact information for districts and campuses across the state. This list included designations for both off-site DAEP facilities and in-house DAEPs reported to the TxSSC, along with points of contact. In order to mitigate coverage error, which occurs when the sampling frame does not truly represent the entire population being studied, all DAEPs in Texas identified through the TXSSC directory were administered the online survey.

Quantitative Data

Questionnaire Mode

In order to address both research questions, a survey was distributed electronically to all DAEP principals or their designated points of contact. Survey administration, specifically online surveys, has both benefits and limitations in research design. These limitations, however, can be mitigated. The next section will discuss some of the

limitations (e.g., non-response and coverage error) associated with online survey administration and the steps implemented in this study to mitigate these shortcomings. In addition, this section discusses the benefits of online surveys.

The issue of non-response is most common in online survey administration (Dillman et al., 2014). This is further exacerbated when the population of interest is schools, as educational institutions are less likely to participate in activities that may interfere with daily instruction or appear to self-incriminate. The decision to participate in a study can be motivated by several factors related to social exchange, survey design, and multiple modes of communication. Social exchange is the idea that survey participants are motivated by the benefits they believe will occur as a result of their participation (Dillman et al., 2014; Groves, Cialdini, & Couper, 1992). Such benefits can be tangible rewards (e.g., money, gift cards, etc.), interest in the topic, or overall benefits of the research. Therefore, to increase response rate, the researcher explained how the survey data would be advantageous to the participant. The respondents were informed that their participation would help in developing standardized best practice guidance for DAEP staff toward improving student outcomes. Dillman et al. (2014) also suggest that respondents are likely to participate in a survey that they believe will benefit others or evokes altruistic feelings. Therefore, respondents were informed that their participation would also assist in identifying potential effective practices to help students successfully transition back to the home campus, which in turn leads to safe and productive learning environments for all students.

The design of the survey instrument, particularly regarding survey length, also plays a factor in nonresponse. Because educators are generally limited in the time they

designate to activity outside of routine school activities, a lengthy questionnaire is ill-suited to a school environment. Further, extensive questionnaires can result in respondent fatigue and lead to nonresponse for either some or most of the survey items. Therefore, reducing the length of the survey format to items that specifically answer the research question(s) and eliminating any ancillary items were implemented. Finally, the sponsorship of a survey can also have a positive impact on survey participation (Groves et al., 1992; Groves et al., 2012). Thus, another strategy to alleviate nonresponse was to emphasize the researcher's association with Texas State University.

Another limitation particularly associated with online survey administration involves the absence of an interviewer. For example, an interviewer can provide explanation of survey questions that the respondent may find confusing or not understand, as well as probe for complete or more in depth responses (Dillman et al., 2014). This can also lead to issues of nonresponse to certain items that may be confusing in the survey or to measurement error, which occurs when the respondent provides information based on an inaccurate interpretation of a particular item. To mitigate the limitations associated with the absence of an interviewer, a pilot study of the survey was conducted with a convenience sample (10 individuals) from the target population to identify any item ambiguity and improve the clarity of the questionnaire.

Although the absence of an interviewer can present limitations to a study, online surveys mitigate the risks related to the social nature of interview-administered surveys, such as social desirability. The phenomenon of social desirability occurs when a respondent provides answers that appear to be socially acceptable to the interviewer, such as lying about involvement in criminal activity or other negatively perceived behaviors

(e.g., drug use, sexual activity) (Dillman et al., 2014). Because the researcher asked questions about practices being used to improve student outcomes (i.e., rate of student return to DAEP), respondents may have been more likely to exaggerate the types of activities or methods they implement to give the impression their respective DAEP is effective. However, an online survey reduces a social desirability effect that can occur from the physical presence of an actual interviewer, so that respondents can truthfully provide the types of activities or methods that are being offered to students. Finally, online surveys provide an efficient way of collecting data in a short period of time from a sizable population, and they are also cost effective compared to mail surveys.

Questionnaire Development

The instrument in this study was used to collect various data to answer the proposed research questions. To begin, the instrument collected current data on practices being used in Texas DAEPs, which serve as the main independent variables. The measurement items used in this instrument to collect practices were based largely on frameworks from three separate descriptive studies conducted on DAEPs in Texas (Academic Information Management System (AIMS), 2001; McCreight, 1999; Dempsey et al., 2007). The data collection instruments used and recommendations provided in these studies are all based on prior literature involving case studies and practitioner experience in disciplinary settings. However, none of these recommendations have been systematically tested for effectiveness with measurable outcome data. The following section will provide an overview of each study's instrument and discuss the analogous process of question development for this research.

McCreight (1999) collected data on program practices for both on-campus and off-campus DAEPs in Texas. Each superintendent was asked about the types of programs implemented in their DAEP. McCreight (1999) based the instrument items on practices identified as effective in prior literature (Barr & Parrett, 1997; Black, 1997; Boss, 1998; Harrington-Lueker, 1994; Jacobs, 1995; Morley, 1991; Quinn & Rutherford, 1998; Raywid, 1994; Smink, 1997). These studies identified practices related to instructional strategies (e.g., individualized and needs assessment based, small student to teacher ratio), training of staff (e.g., conflict resolution and discipline management that support positive and address negative behavior), transitional programs (e.g., entrance and exit meeting with DAEP and home campus staff), vocational training for students, and encouragement of parental involvement in student education and home life. Subsequently, McCreight (1999) developed items to measure areas in instructional delivery (e.g., one-on-one instruction with teacher, group instruction, computer-assisted instruction), student programs (e.g., individual student goals, overall district goals, academic program at grade level, employment training, conflict resolution training), teacher and staff selection processes (e.g., volunteers, hired staff, district assigned), staff training (e.g., diversity training, conflict resolution), parental involvement (e.g., attendance at entrance and exit conferences, parenting classes, parent volunteer program), and transitional programs (e.g., follow-up services once placed back in regular campus).

In 2001, the Academic Information Management System (AIMS), in collaboration with TEA, developed a statewide summary of what was deemed to be successful practices in Texas DAEPs to assist other disciplinary educational settings. To develop the summary, data were compiled from multiple sources such as on-site DAEP

visits in Texas, state and national studies on recommended methods, and insight from TEA staff in the Division of Safe Schools (AIM, 2001). Similar to McCreight (1999), these sources identified several areas of practice to recommend for DAEPs. These components included instructional strategies (e.g., high academic expectations, small class size, individualized instructional plans, one-on-one instruction or self-paced), staff training (e.g., hiring of certified teachers, training in conflict resolution, counseling, behavior management techniques, etc.), discipline/behavior management practices (e.g., consistent application of discipline policies, system of reduced privileges and rewards, constant student supervision, police officer presence, community service), counseling services (e.g., counselor assessments for entering students, DAEP relationship with social service agencies, drug and alcohol abuse counseling, job preparation), transitional strategies (e.g., ongoing communication between DAEP and home campus, formal exit procedures from DAEP, transition counseling back to the home campus), and parental involvement in the DAEP.

Further, Dempsey et al. (2007) collected data on practices being implemented in Texas DAEPs. Similar to McCreight (1999) and AIMS (2001), Dempsey et al. (2007) based their instrument items on recommendations identified in prior literature and thus categorized the survey into three areas: practices related to behavior modification (e.g., community service, token or point system, positive behavior supports), practices related to academic achievement (e.g., one-on-one instruction, small group instruction, computer-aided instruction), and practices related to student transition back to home campus. DAEP staff were then asked to rate the effectiveness of these practices in areas such as reduction in negative behaviors, successful return to home campus, and academic

improvement. Staff identified several practices that were *perceived* to be most effective in all outcome measures identified; however, their effectiveness was not based on actual outcome data. These practices were categorized into four areas: a) behavioral (e.g., positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviors, limited punitive actions for misconduct, clearly communicated behavior expectations, enforced dress code, community service); b) instructional (e.g., small student to teacher ratio, individualized academic assessments, high expectation for academic performance); c) transitional (e.g., constant communication between DAEP and home campus staff, DAEP staff follow-up on home campus), d) and staff training (e.g., de-escalation tactics, conflict resolution, positive behavior support systems).

Questionnaire Sections and Measures

The survey for the present study includes sixty-one questions and is divided into four sections: a) DAEP Practices; b) DAEP Discipline and Demographic Data – Elementary Level; c) DAEP Discipline and Demographic Data – Secondary Level; and d) Follow-Up Interviews (see Appendix A). The sections, specific items, and corresponding measures are discussed below.

DAEP Practices. The purpose of the first section was to collect data on the types of practices that DAEPs implemented during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school year. The beginning of this section provided instructions for filling out the survey items, which are divided into five domains: 1) Instructional, 2) Discipline Management, 3) Transitional, 4) Parent/Guardian Involvement, and 5) Staff Training. Each domain represents an area of practice and was accompanied by a set of items that were adapted from instruments used in the three aforementioned studies (Academic Information

Management System (AIMS), 2001; McCreight, 1999; Dempsey et al., 2007), and delineated in the Texas Health and Safety Code, §103.1201. However, items developed for discipline management techniques were also informed by a broader review of the literature on school-wide positive behavior support systems.

To assist the respondent in answering the items presented in the first section, each domain was defined. For example, discipline management practices are techniques or methods used by DAEP staff to promote positive behavior and to prevent or respond to negative student behavior. Further, transitional practices are techniques or methods used by DAEP staff and the home campus staff to help facilitate student transition between the alternative and regular campus.

Each of the domains is an ordinal measure presented in a 3-point Likert-scale format to gather the frequency of use certain practices are implemented in the DAEP. These Likert-scale categories differ slightly among the domains (i.e., *Never Used by Any Teacher, Used by Some Teachers, Used by Most or All Teachers; Never, Sometimes, Always; and 0-2 Training Sessions, 3-5 Training Sessions, More than 5 Sessions*). A Likert-scale response option is more sensitive at measuring differences, thus improving the measurement of each survey item in these sections.

DAEP Discipline Data. One of the purposes of the survey was to collect discipline data for students assigned to a DAEP. As mentioned previously, the Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 103.1201(h)(1) requires that elementary grade students assigned to a DAEP be separated from secondary grade students assigned to a DAEP. Therefore, respondents were asked to provide data at both the elementary and secondary grade level, which was combined in the final analysis. These data were collected

numerically to measure the rate of student return to a DAEP, which serves as the main outcome variable. Because initial enrollment varied across DAEPs, the rate needed to be standardized to compare across DAEPs, a technique similar to that used to calculate crime rates by geographic area. The rate was calculated by taking the total return and dividing by the total enrolled at the DAEP, followed by multiplying by 50. For example, if a DAEP had a total enrollment of 80 students and 10 returned at least once in the following 24 months, the rate of return was 6.25 per 50 students for that DAEP.

Specifically, respondents were asked to report the total number of students that started at the DAEP at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year and the total number of those students that *returned* back to the DAEP at least once in the following 24 months. Since the first day of school can vary from district to district, "the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year" is understood by school districts to be the first day of class for that school year. Specific to DAEPs, students may be entering and exiting throughout the school year. For example, a student may enter in December and leave in February as time placements vary from student to student. Asking the participants to provide the number of students enrolled at the DAEP at "the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year" was important for two reasons: 1) to provide a consistent reference point to begin tracking students who have returned "at least once" in the following 24 months and 2) to provide a meaningful amount of time to pass to account for any returns as students may return in the same school year or the following school year. Similar to crime rates, data are gathered at one point in time. This timeframe covers approximately two school years (i.e., 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years). To address causal order with regard to

DAEP practices' impact on student return to a DAEP, all practice data were collected contemporaneously with student recidivism data.

DAEP Characteristics. Certain data were collected to serve as control variables that may also impact the rate of student return to a DAEP. Specifically, respondents were asked to select the most appropriate community type in which the DAEP is located (i.e., Rural, Suburban, and Urban). Data were also collected regarding the DAEP's perception of the home campus discipline approach to dealing with student misbehavior (i.e., Zero Tolerance, PBIS, Restorative Discipline, and Other). Campus structure – whether the DAEP was located on campus or off campus – was also used as a control variable, but this data were gathered from the contact list of DAEPs.

Student Demographics: Additional data were gathered to better understand the makeup of students returning to the DAEP over the reporting period. Data pertaining to race/ethnicity (i.e., African American/Black, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, White, and Other) and sex (i.e., male or female) of returning students were collected. Also, whether students returned for a mandatory or discretionary reason were collected. A higher use of discretionary returns versus mandatory returns may suggest an over-reliance on DAEPs in the first place, independent of the types of practices that are employed.

Follow-Up Interviews. The last section of the questionnaire asked respondents if they would be willing to participate in follow-up interviews for the purpose of providing more in-depth information about how their DAEP operates. If the respondent indicated they were willing to participate in a potential follow-up interview, they were asked to provide their name, position, email address, and phone number. The last question offered the respondent the opportunity to share any additional information they would like about

their DAEP. For purposes of this study, all quantitative data were collected for the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years, the most current full years of data available at the time of data collection.

Pilot Testing of the Questionnaire

Prior to distributing the online survey, a pilot test of the instrument was conducted with a group of ten DAEP principals or their designees. The purpose of the pilot test was to assess consistency in interpretation of the survey items from respondents. Based on the pilot test feedback from respondents, appropriate modifications were made to improve the instrument before administration. The pilot test mirrored the actual process of online delivery through Qualtrics. In doing so, pilot participants were also able to provide feedback on the layout and design of the questionnaire. The feedback was collected via a Word document of notes provided through email from the pilot participants. The feedback received from the pilot participants was minimal and the majority felt the items and design of the survey were clear and appropriate measures for the scope of this study.

Data Collection Procedure

Following the pilot test, an advance email was sent to all DAEP principals describing the purpose of the study, the importance of the research and the benefits of participating, and the date they should expect to receive an online link to the survey through a follow-up email. A week after the advance email was sent to each DAEP contact, these same respondents received a personalized addressed email from the researcher that described the purpose of the study, the nature of the interview questions, the importance of the research and the benefits of participating, the option of being able to designate another staff member in the DAEP to fill out the survey, as well as directions

on how to complete the online survey. Because the principal serves as the main administrator of a campus, this position is most knowledgeable to answer questions about DAEP practices and other information regarding student disciplinary data. However, the principal had the option to designate another appropriate staff person at the DAEP to fill out the survey (e.g., counselor or behavior specialist). The option of assigning a designee was provided as another method to increase the response rate. In addition, the email provided a hyperlink and unique access code to enter the survey.

The online questionnaire was hosted in Qualtrics, an online survey software program that can export data into other statistical software packages, such as SPSS or STATA. In addition, Qualtrics allows for the storing of password protected data. Once respondents clicked on the hyperlink, they were prompted to enter the access code that was provided to them in the original email. This access code, which was randomly generated and unique to each respondent, allowed the researcher to track respondents who had either completed or not completed the survey. The purpose of tracking respondents was to send reminder emails to those that did not complete the survey at the time of reminders. These identifiers were known and accessible only to the researcher to ensure the confidentiality of the respondent.

After entering the access code, the respondent was presented with an informed consent webpage (see Appendix A). In order to gain access to the survey, each respondent was asked to read the consent page, which provided information about the purpose of the study, length of the survey, example questions, voluntary nature of participation, benefits and risks of participating, and contact information for the researcher and IRB Chair. Additionally, the respondent was notified that certain

information would be needed to answer the survey (e.g., student enrollment at the DAEP, number of students returned in the same school year, and demographic information). At the end of the consent page, the respondent was asked to check one of two boxes indicating their agreement to voluntarily participate in the study or not to participate in the study. The respondent was only able to access the survey by clicking on the box indicating their willingness to voluntarily participate. If they did not agree to voluntarily participate, they were automatically directed to a separate page thanking them for their time.

After completing the survey, each respondent was asked if they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview to gather more in-depth information on the implementation of their practices. If they agreed to participate in a follow-up interview, the respondent was directed to provide certain contact information (i.e., name, position, email address, and phone number). If the respondent indicated they were not willing to participate in a follow-up interview, they were directed to a final open-ended question asking if they had any other information they would like to share. Next, the respondent was sent to a submission page thanking them for participating in the survey.

DAEPs had approximately 6 months (May through October) to fill out the online survey and received a total of 8 reminder emails during this timeframe. Reminder emails were only sent to individuals that had not yet filled out the questionnaire. The reminder emails reiterated the purpose of the survey, the importance of the respondent's participation, and directions for filling out the questionnaire. The last email reminder was sent a week before the close of the survey to respondents.

Qualitative Data

Follow-Up Interviews

At the end of the survey, each respondent was asked if they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview. If the respondent agreed, they were asked to provide their contact information (i.e., name, position, email address, and phone number) to be contacted at a later time. Qualitative data were collected through follow-up interviews with campuses that were found to have the highest and lowest student return rates to their DAEP. One of the purposes of the follow-up interview was to understand the experiences between DAEPs that had high and low rates of student return. Secondly, the interviews attempted to explain any broader contextual circumstances outside the control of the DAEP (e.g., school discipline philosophy of the home campus, district administrative support of DAEP) that may impact student recidivism.

Interview Protocol

The interviews followed an open-ended and semi-structured format (see Appendix C). The questions were open-ended to allow for the discovery of new information from the participants about their DAEP settings as much as possible. Although the interviews allowed for open-ended responses, the interview protocol provided fixed questions to guide the conversation between the researcher and the participant. However, because two separate groups were interviewed (i.e., DAEPs with the highest return rate and DAEPs with the lowest return rate), the researcher modified certain questions of the interview protocol to each group. Each of the questions that were used in the interview protocol are discussed below.

1. **What is your position at the DAEP?**
2. **How many years have you been employed with the DAEP?**
3. **What primary functions does your job involve?**

The interview questions were arranged in order from those that are least difficult to answer to questions that require more substantial insight from the participant. Therefore, the first three questions asked the participant what their position is and how many years they have been employed with the DAEP. Following, the participants were asked to describe their primary functions associated with their job. The purpose of this structure was to ease the participant into the interview and gain a sense of comfort and trust with the interviewer.

4. **Describe the environment of the DAEP campus in which you work (asked of all the 14 DAEP campuses).**
    a. **How does this impact the practices or support systems you provide to students placed in a DAEP?**
5. **According to this study, your DAEP was found to have some of the lowest student return rates compared to other DAEPs that participated in this study. Why do you think you have lower rates of student returns to your DAEP? (Only asked of the 7 DAEPs who have low student return rates)**

Each interviewee was asked to describe the environment of the DAEP they work in and how this impacted the services they provide. This question sought to gather information about some of the contextual factors that impact the operation of the DAEP and provide a better sense of the DAEP climate. For those participants in the interview protocol that were representing DAEPs with low student return rates based on the findings from the quantitative data, only these respondents were asked why they think they have low student return rates. The purpose of this targeted question was to gather more insight about why these DAEPs feel they are more successful compared to other

DAEPs. By informing the respondent that their DAEPs are found to have some of the lowest student return rates, it was believed they would be more willing to share information about their DAEP environment. These responses also provided a more comprehensive understanding of how potential internal or external characteristics of their school climate (e.g., administrative or parental support) helped to facilitate the effectiveness of certain practices.

6. **What do you feel the purpose of a DAEP should be? (This and all subsequent questions will be asked of all 14 DAEPS).**
7. **What type of challenges do you experience at your DAEP?**
    a. **Describe a typical DAEP experience.**

The purpose of a DAEP can be viewed differently from staff working in these environments. This question sought to gather a sense of what were some of the more common perceptions of DAEPs and the purpose they have in the educational system. DAEPs can also vary from one another in many ways such as size, geographic location, and school culture (e.g., parent, staff, or administration support). These differences can present certain challenges that impact the effectiveness of a DAEP. Some of these challenges can be internal (e.g., lack of staff or parental support of DAEP practices) or external to the DAEP (e.g., lack of home campus administration or teacher support).

8. **How would you change or improve your DAEP?**
9. **Tell me about your DAEP staff. Describe their attitude toward working with students that are placed in a DAEP.**
    a. **How do your DAEP staff work with students who return to the DAEP?**
    b. **How do your DAEP staff work with students who return to the DAEP more than once?**

10. **What is the working relationship like between the DAEP staff and home campus staff? Between DAEP staff and parents of students?**

11. **How would you describe the level of support provided by the District to your DAEP?**

    a. **Describe how the DAEP is incorporated into the overall District's mission.**

12. **Describe the discipline practices or discipline philosophy of the home campus(s) in the school district(s) you serve?**

    a. **How do you feel this impacts student behavior in schools?**

13. **What are the most common discipline infractions students commit that lead to their placement in your DAEP?**

    a. **What types of discipline infractions do you feel should result in a student being place in a DAEP?**
    b. **Describe a removal in which you felt that a student placed in your DAEP was an inappropriate placement and/or consequence.**

The purpose of these questions was to understand the dynamics that exist between DAEP staff, home campus and district staff, parents, and students. These relationships could potentially impact the effectiveness of the DAEP practices in serving students. Although DAEP practices may potentially influence student recidivism, home campus discipline philosophies arguably play a major factor in a DAEP placement to begin with. Therefore, interviewees were asked about their perceptions regarding the home campuses' discipline philosophy toward DAEP placements. Additionally, interviewees were asked to describe the most common discipline infractions students commit that lead to their placement in the DAEP and their opinion on the use of these types of placements. These questions provided insight into the discipline philosophy of the home campus, which also have an impact on student recidivism and ineffectiveness of a DAEP.

14. How do the students seem to respond to the DAEP?

a. What type of feedback do you receive from the students at the DAEP?

15. Describe how your DAEP measures student success?

16. Ultimately, how would you describe the overall impact that the DAEP has on the students that participate?

Interviewees were asked how students seem to respond to the DAEP and what type of feedback do they generally receive from their students. This question gathered some insight, although third hand, about the student's perspective on their DAEP experience. Participants were also asked to describe how their DAEP measures student success. While this study measures student success by the rate of student return to a DAEP, it is possible that DAEP staff perceive or measure success in other ways. Perceptions of student success may impact the types of best practices that are implemented. For example, if student success is primarily measured by academic achievement, the use of instructional practices may be more prevalent compared to discipline management or transitional techniques. Lastly, interviewees were asked to describe the overall impact they feel the DAEP has on students. It is important to know if staff feel that DAEPs are effective in producing positive student outcomes.

Interview Procedure

The follow-up interviews were conducted after the online survey data collection was completed. The first step in this process was to identify fifteen campuses that reported the highest and fifteen campuses that reported the lowest rate of student return to a DAEP, for a total of potentially 30 interviews. To determine which DAEPs had the highest and lowest rates of student return, initial counts of student returns were collected from the schools and divided by the total reported DAEP enrollment at the beginning of

the 2014-2015 school year. The DAEPs were ordered from highest to lowest, with fifteen of the campuses receiving the highest and fifteen of the campuses receiving the lowest rate of student returns to a DAEP being selected for follow-up interviews. DAEPs with tie scores were randomly selected to be included in the interview protocol.

Subsequently, the researcher verified that these DAEPs agreed to participate in follow-up interviews, which is asked at the end of the online survey. If the participants did not agree to participate in a follow-up interview, the researcher selected the next DAEP that had either the highest or lowest student return rate from the list. In order to set up interview dates and times, each respondent that provided contact information was contacted through a phone call reminding them of their willingness to participate in a follow-up interview and were asked to schedule an interview at their convenience (see Appendix B). Allowing the participant to negotiate the interview schedule helped to ensure participation in the follow-up survey. Educators, particularly school administrators, often find it difficult to schedule time to participate in research, so it was critical that the researcher worked around the schedule of the respondent. Each of the interviews took place over the telephone rather than in person. Because some districts were located across the state, conducting telephone interviews was more cost effective and less intrusive for the DAEP. These interviews occurred between January and February 2018.

Before conducting the scheduled interviews, the researcher provided the interviewee information regarding her/his consent to voluntarily participate in the interview. This information outlined the purpose of the interviews, length of time, voluntary nature of participation and benefits and risks of participating. The follow-up

interview began after the interviewee agreed to voluntarily participate in the telephone interview. All interview responses were digitally recorded and later transcribed into a Word document to be stored into a non-numeric data software that was secured and only accessible to the researcher. Each interview lasted between approximately 40 and 60 minutes.

Data Analysis Plan

The next two chapters, Chapter IV (quantitative) and V (qualitative) provide an in-depth discussion of the analyses conducted for both the quantitative and qualitative data to answer the research questions and presents the findings of this study. For purposes of this study, frequencies and descriptive statistics for each of the variables, correlations between variables of interest, followed by multivariate analysis were conducted to analyze the quantitative data. However, before conducting the final analysis, several scales were assessed for validity and reliability. Specifically, a factor analysis was conducted to assess the composite measures of the main independent variables.

In addition to the quantitative analysis, a thematic analysis was conducted on the qualitative interview data. Each interview was transcribed into NVivo10, a software program that organizes and assists with the analysis of non-numeric data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). As part of the analysis, each interview was analyzed and coded into themes based on common phrases or concepts discussed by DAEP staff.

IV. QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Chapter IV begins by assessing the survey responses and the response rate. Next, the composite variables are examined in terms of their validity and reliability. Specifically, factor analysis was used to assess the DAEP practice variables and adjust the scales, where needed, that were created from the survey items. Next, these survey data are analyzed and the findings of these analyses are presented by research question, including frequencies and descriptive statistics for each of the variables, correlations between variables of interest, followed by multivariate analysis.

Survey Responses

In total, 140 respondents participated in the online quantitative survey. However, a total of 12 respondents submitted incomplete surveys, and were subsequently removed from the dataset. If more than 50% of the items were missing or had information missing on key variables, surveys were considered incomplete. In these 12 cases, a significant portion of the survey items were incomplete and, therefore, unusable for data analysis. Thus, there were a total of 128 usable responses. As mentioned prior, there were 658 potential DAEPs included in the initial sampling frame. However, there were a total of 82 undelivered emails, which left 576 DAEP campuses in the actual sampling frame. This translates to a response rate of 22% (i.e., 128 responses / 576 potential respondents). As mentioned prior, a response rate of 20% or more was considered appropriate for this study based on prior literature identifying few statistical differences in estimates between lower and higher survey response rates (Keeter et al., 2006; Visser et al., 1996).

Factor Analyses

In this study the main independent variables were: 1) Instructional, 2) Discipline Management, 3) Transitional, 4) Parent/Guardian Involvement, and 5) Staff Training. The main independent variables are composite measures, which include more than one item on a single measure that results in a single score. Each of these factors and the measured items are based on prior literature and research instruments (discussed in Chapter III) that have indicated measurement of these concepts. In order to assess the reliability of these scales, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using a one factor model. The initial set of items were based on prior literature and instruments measuring these constructs. A confirmatory factor analysis assesses each factor in terms of how well the items in each scale load or correlate with one another as measures of the factor and to verify that a set of items is measuring the factor. Those items that did not correlate on the factor were extracted from the scale before conducting the main analysis (see Table 3 for initial items in each factor and reason why certain items were dropped from the factor).

To conduct this analysis, five one-factor models were assessed. In doing so, a value of communality, which measures how much of each item is explained by the variable as well as to what degree each item is related to other items in the scale, was obtained. The communality values are equal to the squared loading value for that item, and can be interpreted as R^2 values. For example, in Table 4, 69.4% of the variation in "rules and behavioral expectations were applied consistently for all students" can be attributed to a discipline management practice and 73% of the variation in "DAEP staff received conflict resolution training to teach students how to resolve problems with

peers" can be attributed to a staff training practice in a DAEP. Whatever variance is left over is due to uniqueness of the items itself.

Table 3. Items and Inclusion Status for DAEP Practices Factors

Items	Included in Final Measure
Factor 1: Instructional	
Teachers used one-on-one instruction	No (cross loaded)
Teachers used small group instruction	No (low communality)
Computer-aided instruction was used	No (loading below .300)
Self-paced instruction was used	No (loading below .300)
Peer tutoring was used	No (loading below .300)
Teachers were certified for content areas they were assigned to teach	No (cross loaded)
Instruction was individualized to match student needs	Yes
Teachers conducted assessments of student learning needs and progress	No (cross loaded)
Curriculum was aligned with the home campus curriculum	Yes
Teachers had high expectations for student learning	Yes
Individualized long-term goals for students were established	Yes
Individualized short-term goals for students were established	Yes
Oral or written progress reports were provided to parents	No (low communality)
Oral or written progress reports were provided to teachers on home campus	No (low communality)
Factor 2: Discipline Management	
Behavioral expectations were clearly defined and communicated to students	Yes
Classroom routines and procedures were established and followed consistently	Yes
Staff modeled positive behaviors consistently	No (cross loaded)
Rules and behavioral expectations were applied consistently for all students	Yes
Consequences for rule violations were applied consistently for all students	Yes
Teachers used positive reinforcement to reward appropriate, rule-following behavior in their classes	No (loading below .300)
School-wide token/incentive reward system was used for all students	No (cross loaded)
Individualized behavior support plans were used for all students	No (cross loaded)
Student were supervised at all times	No (loading below .300)
Student academic and behavioral progress was evaluated regularly	Yes
Staff mentored students	No (cross loaded)
Individual counseling was provided to students	Yes
Students were involved in community service activities	No (loading below .300)
Dress code was consistently enforced for all students	Yes
Factor 3: Student Transition	
Written contract was used between students, parents/guardian, and DAEP to formalize expectations for student behavior upon return to home campus	No (loading below .300)
One or more teachers from the home campus visited the DAEP	Yes
Students were provided transition counseling after they returned to their home campus	Yes
DAEP staff visited the home campus after students returned to follow up on student's progress	Yes
DAEP staff had regular contact with the home campus staff during students' DAEP placement	Yes

Table 3. Continued.

Factor 4: Parent/Guardian Involvement	
Parents/guardians of students entering the DAEP were expected to attend DAEP orientation	No (loading below .300)
Parents/guardians regularly attended DAEP orientation meeting	No (loading below .300)
Parents/guardians of students exiting DAEP were expected to attend a DAEP exit conference	Yes
Parents/guardians regularly attended DAEP exit conference	Yes
Parenting/guardian workshops were provided	Yes
Parents/guardians were encouraged to volunteer at the DAEP	No (loading below .300)
Parents/guardians were encouraged to be involved in their child's education, and specific opportunities for parent/guardian involvement were offered	No (loading below .300)
Factor 5: Staff Training	
DAEP staff received training in curricula or instructional strategies to meet the needs of individual students	Yes
DAEP staff received training in classroom or individual student behavior management techniques	Yes
DAEP staff received training to better understand the needs and legal requirements related to students with disabilities who receive special education services	Yes
DAEP staff received diversity training to better understand the diverse populations they serve	Yes
DAEP staff received social skills training to better understand how to develop students' prosocial behavior	Yes
DAEP staff received anger management training	Yes
DAEP staff received conflict resolution training to teach students how to resolve problems with peers	Yes
DAEP staff received training in classroom or informal counseling techniques for students	Yes

Note: Response set for Factor 1 was Never Used by Any Teacher (1), Used by Some Teachers (2), and Used by Most or All Teachers (3). Response set for Factors 2-4 were Never (1), Sometimes (2), and Always (3). Response set for Factor 5 was 0-2 Training Sessions (1), 3-5 Training Sessions (2), and More than 5 Training Sessions (3).

Next, eigenvalues, which are the sums of the squared loadings, were calculated to determine the number of factors to extract from the list of items for each variable. Specifically, the correlation matrix of the items was separated into different parts, and each eigenvalue represented the amount of explained variation. Each part of the correlation matrix was created to maximize the relationship among the items (i.e., their communality). Ultimately, each part of the matrix represented an item that can be used to predict the factor. To obtain these values, several correlation matrices were involved: 1) the observed matrix is the matrix of correlations between all of the items, 2) the

reproduced matrix is the set of correlations produced by the factor model, and 3) the residual matrix is the difference between the previous two matrices. As a rule of thumb, factors with eigenvalues greater than one were retained (Girden, 2001; Thompson, 2004).

In these models, it was expected that only one factor would be identified in each model (i.e., an eigenvalue greater than one). However, in four of the models (Instructional, Discipline Management, Student Transition, and Parent/Guardian Involvement), more than one factor was identified. In these cases, the factor loadings and communality values were examined to identify items for deletion in order to achieve a one-factor solution. In other words, the factor scores and subsequent factor loadings (which are a measure of the relationship between each item and the construct and can be interpreted as standardized slopes) and communality values (which are measures of how much of each item is explained by the factor as well as to what degree each item is related to other items on the scale) were examined in an effort to assess the reliability of each item as it relates to the factor.

Table 4. Factor Analysis for DAEP Practices

Items	Communalities	Loadings
Model 1 (Instructional)[1]		
Instruction was individualized to match student needs	.243	.493
Curriculum was aligned with the home campus curriculum	.144	.380
Teachers had high expectations for student learning	.157	.396
Individualized long-term goals for students were established	.646	.804
Individualized short-term goals for students were established	.739	.860
Eigenvalue	2.407	
Variance explained	48.15%	
Model 2 (Discipline Management)[2]		
Behavioral expectations were clearly defined and communicated to students	.416	.645
Classroom routines and procedures were established and followed consistently	.395	.628
Rules and behavioral expectations were applied consistently for all students	.694	.833
Consequences for rule violations were applied consistently for all students	.523	.723
Student academic and behavioral progress was evaluated regularly	.246	.496
Individual counseling was provided to students	.100	.316
Dress code was consistently enforced for all students	.321	.567
Eigenvalue	3.239	
Variance explained	46.27%	
Model 3 (Student Transition)		
One or more teachers from the home campus visited the DAEP	.539	.734
Students were provided transition counseling after they returned to their home campus	.243	.493
DAEP staff visited the home campus after students returned to follow up on students' progress	.349	.591
DAEP staff had regular contact with the home campus staff during the students' DAEP placement	.359	.599
Eigenvalue	2.196	
Variance explained	43.93	
Model 4 (Parent/Guardian Involvement) [3]		
Parents/guardians of students exiting DAEP were expected to attend a DAEP exit conference	.891	.944
Parents/guardians regularly attended DAEP exit conference	.929	.964
Parenting/guardian workshops were provided	.120	.347
Eigenvalue	2.108	
Variance explained	70.26%	
Model 5 (Staff Training)		
DAEP staff received training in curricula or instructional strategies to meet the needs of individual students	.560	.749
DAEP staff received training in classroom or individual student behavior management techniques	.552	.743
DAEP staff received training to better understand the needs and legal requirements related to students with disabilities who receive special education services	.624	.790
DAEP staff received diversity training to better understand the diverse populations they serve	.760	.872

Table 4. Continued.

DAEP staff received social skills training to better understand how to develop students' prosocial behavior	.791	.889
DAEP staff received anger management training	.611	.782
DAEP staff received conflict resolution training to teach students how to resolve problems with peers	.730	.854
DAEP staff received training in classroom or informal counseling techniques for students	.665	.815
Eigenvalue	5.622	
Variance explained	70.27%	

[1]Certain items were dropped from the model due to loadings <.300, a higher cross-loading on another factor, or a low communality value.
[2]Certain items were dropped from the model due to loadings <.300 or a higher loading on another factor.
[3]Certain items were dropped from the model due to loadings <.300
Note: Method of extraction in all models: Common factor

In the four models where more than one factor was extracted, items not consistent with other items in the scale were eliminated until only one factor was extracted[1]. Specifically, items were first removed from the model if they had a factor loading below .300, which is a standard cut off point established in prior work (Thompson, 2004). Generally, higher cut-off points are used in exploratory factor analysis in order to establish a stricter threshold for measurement. However, the initial pool of items in this study comprised hypothesized scales that corresponded to theoretical constructs identified in this area through prior research. Next, if more than one factor remained after removing these items, items that cross-loaded on other factors with higher loading were removed. A rule of thumb is to drop items that cross-load equally or higher on other factors as they are not consistent with other items in the scale (Thompson, 2004). Finally, if more than one factor was still extracted, items with the lowest communality values were removed until only one factor was extracted. Items with low communality values are often dropped since the goal of factor analysis is to explain the variance through a

[1] This was first done on a subset of the data and then confirmed on the entire dataset.

common factor (Thompson, 2004). An examination of the Cronbach's alpha for each factor demonstrated an increase when certain items were eliminated from the scale. For example, the alpha for Model 1 (Instructional) was .724 and increased to .728 after the items were eliminated. The alpha for Model 2 (Discipline Management) was .744 and increased to .760 after the items were eliminated.

The following items were removed from Model 1 (Instructional): one-on-one instruction (cross-loaded on factor 3 with a higher loading), small group instruction (low communality value [.115]), computer-aided instruction (factor loading below .300 [.115]), self-paced instruction (factor loading below .300 [.049]), peer tutoring (factor loading below .300 [.273]), teachers were certified for the content area they were assigned to teach (cross-loaded on factor 2 with a higher loading), teachers conducted assessments of student learning needs and progress (cross-loaded on factor 2 with a higher loading), oral/written progress reports provided to parents (low communality value [.093]), and oral/written progress reports provided to home campus teachers (low communality value [.140]). The following items were removed from Model 2 (Discipline Management): staff modeled positive behaviors (cross-loaded on factor 2 with a higher loading), teachers used positive reinforcement to reward appropriate behavior (factor loading below .300 [.079]), school-wide token/incentive reward system (cross-loaded on factor 2 with a higher loading), individualized behavior support plans (cross-loaded on factor 2 with a higher loading), students supervised at all times (factor loading below .300 [.162]), staff mentored students (cross-loaded on factor 2 with a higher loading), and student were involved in community service activities (factor loading below .300 [.051]).

Additionally, the following item was removed from Model 3 (Student Transition): written contract between students, parents/guardians, and DAEP to formalize student expectations (factor loading below .300 [.285]). Finally, the following items were removed from Model 4 (Parent/Guardian Involvement): parents/guardians of student entering DAEP attended DAEP orientation (factor loading below .300 [224]), parents/guardians regularly attended DAEP orientation (factor loading below .300 [.264]), parents/guardians were encouraged to volunteer at DAEP (factor loading below .300 [.267]), and parents/guardians were encouraged to be involved in child's education (factor loading below .300 [.175]).

After the items for the four models were adjusted, the final set of 5 models was run. The final eigenvalues and percent of variance explained for each model can be found in Table 4. All final scales aligned with a one factor model with an eigenvalue greater than one for the specific factor and/or an explained variation greater than 45%, with a large difference in explained variation between the first factor and subsequent factors. There was also minimal difference between the actual correlations and the model produced correlations. In other words, there was little difference between the actual correlation coefficients obtained for these items and the correlation coefficients that were reproduced based on the extracted factors. This indicates that the values in the residual matrix are low, and that a majority of the variation in the actual correlation coefficients were explained by the extracted factors. The final factor loadings can also be found in Table 4.

The items that were retained in each factor model were then used to adjust the range of scores for the given factor. As mentioned prior, each item was presented in a 3-

point Likert-scale format to gather the frequency of implementation of certain practices in the DAEP. These Likert-scale categories differed slightly among the factors (i.e., *Never Used by Any Teacher, Used by Some Teachers, Used by Most or All Teachers; Never, Sometimes, Always; and 0-2 Training Sessions, 3-5 Training Sessions, More than 5 Sessions*). Each Likert-scale response was given a numerical value ranging from 1 (Never Used by Any Teacher; Never; and 0-2 Training Sessions) to 3 (Used by Most or All Teachers; Always; and More than 5 Sessions). Because each factor has variation in its number of items, a respondent's total score will also vary by factor. For example, the first factor model (Instructional) has 5 items, which means a respondent's total score can range from 5 to 15. In the second factor model (Discipline Management), which has 7 items, a respondent's total score can range from 7 to 21. It was not necessary for each of the composite variables (factors) to have an identical number of items since they are not being compared to one another. The factors will be assessed in terms of their statistical significance in relation to the main dependent variable (i.e., student return rate to a DAEP) and other control variables in the OLS model. The next section will discuss the subsequent analytic procedures to address the proposed research questions.

Research Question 1: What are the types of practices or support systems implemented across DAEPs in Texas?

In order to understand the types of practices implemented in Texas DAEPs, which will serve as the main independent variables in this study, univariate statistics were calculated for the DAEP practice variables (Instructional, Discipline Management, Transitional, Parent/Guardian Involvement, and Staff Training). A univariate analysis deconstructs and summarizes a large amount of information on a single variable, which will provide a better understanding of the responses before conducting bivariate and

multivariate analyses. Specifically, frequencies and descriptive statistics were calculated for each of the item responses in the final factor, as well as the practice variables as a composite measure.

As shown in Table 5, Instructional Practices included a total of 5 items. For item *individualized instruction*, most respondents reported that individualized instruction was used to match student's needs by some teachers (60; 46.9%) or by most or all teachers (63; 49.2%) in the DAEP. As mentioned prior, the Likert-scale category for instructional items was given a numerical value ranging from 1 (Never Used by Any Teacher) to 3 (Used by Most or All Teachers). The mean score for this item was 2.45, with 96.1% of the scores within one standard deviation (.573) of the mean. For item *curriculum aligned to home campus*, the majority of respondents reported that the DAEP curriculum was aligned with the home campus curriculum (100; 78.1%). The mean score for this item was 2.74, with 96.1% of the scores within one standard deviation (.521) of the mean score. Similarly, for item *high expectations for student learning*, the majority of respondents reported that this practice is used by most or all teachers in their DAEP (93; 72.7%). Only one of the respondents reported that this practice was never used by any teacher in their DAEP (1; .8%). The mean score for this item was 2.72, with 99% of the scores within one standard deviation (.468) of the mean (see Table 5). For items *established individualized long-term goals* and *established individualized short-term goals*, most respondents reported that this activity was used by some teachers (57; 44.6%) and by most or all teachers (66; 51.6%). The mean score for these items was 2.24 and 2.43, with 84.4% and 91.4% of the scores within one standard deviation (.707) and (.648) of the mean scores for both items, respectively.

Table 5. Frequencies and Descriptives for Instructional Items

	Individualized Instruction		**Curriculum Aligned to Home Campus**		**High Expectations for Student Learning**		**Established Individualized Long-Term Goals**		**Established Individualized Short-Term Goals**	
Value	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*
(1) Never Used by Any Teacher	5	3.9%	5	3.9%	1	.8%	20	15.6%	11	8.6%
(2) Used by Some Teachers	60	46.9%	23	18%	34	26.6%	57	44.45%	51	39.8%
(3) Used by Most or All Teachers	63	49.2%	100	78.1%	93	72.7%	51	39.8%	66	51.6%
TOTAL	**128**	**100.0%**	**128**	**100.0%**	**128**	**100.0%**	**128**	**100.0%**	**128**	**100.0%**
	Mean: 2.45 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .328 **SD**: .573		**Mean**: 2.74 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .272 **SD**: .521		**Mean**: 2.72 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .219 **SD**: .468		**Mean**: 2.24 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .500 **SD**: .707		**Mean**: 2.43 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .420 **SD**: .648	

Discipline management practices included a total of 7 items (see Table 6). The Likert-scale category for discipline management items was provided a numerical value ranging from 1 (Never) to 3 (Always). Among all items, the majority of respondents reported always engaging in these activities. The most common implemented activity reported was for item *behavioral expectations defined and communicated*. The majority of respondents reported this practice is always used (120; 93.8%); whereas 0 respondents reported never using this practice. The mean score for this item was 2.94, with 93.8% of the scores within one standard deviation (.243) of the mean. The least common implemented activity reported was for item *individual counseling provided to students*. Only slightly more of the respondents reported always engaging in this activity (67; 52.3%). The mean score for this item was 2.46, with 93.8% of the scores within one standard deviation (.614) of the mean (see Table 6).

Table 6. Frequencies and Descriptives for Discipline Management Items

	Behavioral Expectations Defined and Communicated		**Classroom Routines/Procedures Established and Followed Consistently**		**Rules/Behavioral Expectations Applied Consistently**		**Consequences for Rule Violations Applied Consistently**		**Academic/Behavioral Progress Evaluated Regularly**	
Value	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*
(1) Never	0	0%	1	.8%	1	.8%	0	0%	1	.8%
(2) Sometimes	8	6.3%	24	18.8%	18	14.1%	23	18%	31	24.2%
(3) Always	120	93.8%	103	80.5%	109	85.2%	105	82%	96	75%
TOTAL	**128**	**100.0%**	**128**	**100.0%**	**128**	**100.0%**	**128**	**100.0%**	**128**	**100.0%**
	Mean: 2.94 **Range**: 1 **Variance**: .059 **SD**: .243		**Mean**: 2.80 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .179 **SD**: .423		**Mean**: 2.84 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .149 **SD**: .386		**Mean**: 2.82 **Range**: 1 **Variance**: .149 **SD**: .385		**Mean**: 2.74 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .209 **SD**: .457	

	Individual Counseling Provided to Students		**Dress Code Enforced**	
Value	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*
(1) Never	8	6.3%	4	3.1%
(2) Sometimes	53	41.4%	14	10.9%
(3) Always	67	52.3%	110	85.9%
TOTAL	**128**	**100.0%**	**128**	**100.0%**
	Mean: 2.46 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .376 **SD**: .614		**Mean**: 2.83 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .206 **SD**: .454	

Student Transition practices (see Table 7) included a total of 4 items and also used a numerical value ranging from 1 (Never) to 3 (Always). For the following items, most respondents reported engaging in these practices only "sometimes": *one or more teachers from home campus visit DAEP* (69; 53.9%), *students were provided transition counseling upon return to home campus* (66; 51.6%), and *DAEP staff visited home campus after students returned* (54; 42.2%). The mean scores for these items were 2.05, 1.95, and 1.89, with 100% of the scores for each of these items within one standard deviation (.679), (.697), and (.755) of the mean scores, respectively. The majority of respondents (80; 62.5%), however, reported always engaging in the practice for item *DAEP staff had regular contact with home campus staff during student's DAEP placement* (see Table 7). The mean score for this item was 2.53, with 90.6% of the scores within one standard deviation (.663) of the mean.

Table 7. Frequencies and Descriptives for Student Transition Items

	One or More Teachers from Home Campus Visit DAEP		**Students were Provided Transition Counseling Upon Return to Home Campus**		**DAEP Staff Visited Home Campus After Students Returned to Check on Progress**		**DAEP Staff had Regular Contact with Home Campus Staff During Student's DAEP Placement**	
Value	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*
(1) Never	26	20.3%	34	26.6%	44	34.4%	12	9.4%
(2) Sometimes	69	53.9%	66	51.6%	54	42.2%	36	28.1%
(3) Always	33	25.8%	28	21.9%	30	23.4%	80	62.5%
TOTAL	**128**	**100.0%**	**128**	**100.0%**	**128**	**100.0%**	**128**	**100.0%**
	Mean: 2.05 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .462 **SD**: .679		**Mean**: 1.95 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .486 **SD**: .697		**Mean**: 1.89 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .571 **SD**: .755		**Mean**: 2.53 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .440 **SD**: .663	

Next, Parent/Guardian practices, which included 3 items, were examined (see Table 8). These items were also given a numerical range from 1 (Never) to 3 (Always). In this case, most respondents reported "never" engaging in any of the practices: *parent/guardian expected to attend DAEP exit conference* (67, 52.3%), *parent/guardian regularly attend DAEP exit conference* (70, 54.7%), and *parent/guardian workshops were provided* (99, 77.3%). The mean scores for these items were 1.70, 1.63, and 1.29, with 100% of the scores for each item falling within one standard deviation (.809), (.763), and (.577) of the mean scores, respectively.

Table 8. Frequencies and Descriptives for Parent/Guardian Involvement Items

	Parent/Guardian Expected to Attend DAEP Exit Conference		**Parent/Guardian Regularly Attend DAEP Exit Conference**		**Parent/Guardian Workshops were Provided**	
Value	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*
(1) Never	67	52.3%	70	54.7%	99	77.3%
(2) Sometimes	33	25.8%	36	28.1%	21	16.4%
(3) Always	28	21.9%	22	17.2%	8	6.3%
TOTAL	**128**	**100.0%**	**128**	**100.0%**	**128**	**100.0%**
	Mean: 1.70 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .654 **SD**: .809		**Mean**: 1.63 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .583 **SD**: .763		**Mean**: 1.29 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .333 **SD**: .577	

Lastly, Staff Training practices, which were given a numerical range from 1 (0-2 Training Sessions) to 3 (More than 5 Training Sessions), included a total of 8 items (see Table 9). Overall, the majority of respondents reported a low level of engagement in staff training. For example, only slightly more respondents reported engaging in 3-5 training sessions over a 24-month time period related to *curriculum/instructional strategies to meet student needs* (52, 40.6%) and *classroom/individual student behavior management techniques* (54, 42.2%), followed closely by respondents reporting 0-2 training sessions in these areas. The mean scores for these items were 1.81 and 1.83, with 100% of the

scores for each item falling within one standard deviation (.750) and (.744) of the mean scores, respectively. For all other items (see Table 9), the majority of respondents reported only engaging in 0-2 training sessions related to: *legal requirements related to students with disabilities and who receive special education services* (66, 51.6%), *dealing with diverse student populations* (75, 58.6%), *social skills to help students develop prosocial behavior* (72, 56.3%), *anger management* (82, 64.1%), *conflict resolution* (73, 57.0%), and *classroom/informal counseling techniques* (86, 67.2%).

Next, Table 10 provides descriptive statistics calculated for the practices variables as composite measures that include measures of central tendency and measures of variability. As shown in Table 10, the *Instructional* scale, which included activities such as individualized instruction for students and curriculum alignment with the home campus, has a mean score of 12.59, with 83.6% of the scores within one standard deviation (2.04) of the mean. An overwhelming majority of respondents reported activities consistent with *Discipline Management* practices, which included activities such as having consequences for rule violations, clearly defining behavioral expectations, and having a dress code. Specifically, the mean score on the Discipline Management scale was 19.43 [out of a max of 21]. Examining the spread of the data around the mean, 90.6% of the scores were within one standard deviation (1.95) of the mean. For the *Student Transition* scale, which included activities such as transition counseling for students returning to their home campus or DAEP staff visiting the home campus the mean score was 8.43, with 76.6% of the scores within one standard deviation (2.02) of the mean score.

Table 9. Frequencies and Descriptives for Staff Training Items

	Training in Curriculum/Instructional Strategies to Meet Needs of Individual Students		**Training in Classroom/Individual Student Behavior Management Techniques**		**Training in Legal Requirements Related to Students with Disabilities who Received Special Education Services**		**Training in Dealing with Diverse Student Populations**		**Training in Social Skills to Help Students Develop Prosocial Behavior**	
Value	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*
(1) 0-2 Training Sessions	50	39.1%	48	37.5%	66	51.6 %	75	58.6%	72	56.3%
(2) 3-5 Training Sessions	52	40.6%	54	42.2%	40	31.3%	39	30.5%	43	33.6%
(3) More than 5 Training Sessions	26	20.3%	26	20.3%	22	17.2%	14	10.9%	13	10.2%
TOTAL	**128**	**100.0%**	**128**	**100.0%**	**128**	**100.0%**	**128**	**100.0%**	**128**	**100.0%**
	Mean: 1.81 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .563 **SD**: .750		**Mean**: 1.83 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .553 **SD**: .744		**Mean**: 1.66 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .574 **SD**: .758		**Mean**: 1.52 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .472 **SD**: .687		**Mean**: 1.54 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .455 **SD**: .675	

	Training in Anger Management		**Training in Conflict Resolution**		**Training in Classroom/Informal Counseling Techniques**	
Value	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*
(1) 0-2 Training Sessions	82	64.1%	73	57.0%	86	67.2%
(2) 3-5 Training Sessions	36	28.1%	44	34.4%	29	22.7%
(3) More than 5 Training Sessions	10	7.8%	11	8.6%	13	10.2%
TOTAL	**128**	**100.0%**	**128**	**100.0%**	**128**	**100.0%**
	Mean: 1.44 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .406 **SD**: .637		**Mean**: 1.52 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .425 **SD**: .652		**Mean**: 1.43 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .452 **SD**: .672	

As for the *Parent/Guardian Involvement* scale, which included activities such as regular attendance to a DAEP exit conference or providing parenting workshops, an overwhelming majority of the respondents scored low on this scale. The mean score for this scale was 4.61, with 78.9% of the scores within one standard deviation (1.81) of the mean. Finally, the majority of respondents scored low on the *Staff Training* scale (see Table 10), which included activities such as anger management training, social skills training, and behavior management training. Specifically, 41.4% of respondents scored 10 or less, followed by 27.3% of respondents scoring between 11 and 14 [max score of 24]. Examining the spread of the scores around the mean, 85.2% of the scores on this scale fall within one standard deviation (4.66) of the mean.

Table 10. Mean (Average Score) for DAEP Practice Variables

Variables	*Mean*	*SD*	*Min*	*Max*
Instructional	12.59	2.04	5	15
Discipline Management	19.43	1.95	7	21
Student Transition	8.43	2.02	4	12
Parent/Guardian Involvement	4.61	1.81	3	9
Staff Training	12.74	4.66	8	24

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between the types of practices implemented in a DAEP (i.e., Instructional, Discipline Management, Transitional, Parent/Guardian Involvement, and Staff Training) and the rate of student return to a DAEP?

Before conducting the analysis, the rate of student return to a DAEP was calculated. These data were gathered by asking respondents to report the total number of students that started at the DAEP at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year and the total number of those students that *returned* back to the DAEP at least once in the following 24 months. This timeframe covered approximately two school years (i.e., 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years). To determine the rate of return to a DAEP, the count of student returns to a DAEP in a 24-month time period was collected and divided by the total DAEP enrollment at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year.

Table 11 provides frequency and descriptive statistics of the return rates that were calculated. Although 128 DAEPs responded to the survey, these ranges of return rates only included DAEPs that reported student return totals (n=102) since some DAEPs reported not having any students enrolled in their DAEP at the time of the requested reporting period for this study. Most DAEPs had a student return rate between 1.00 and 20.00 (51%), followed by zero student return rates (14.7%). A total of 11 DAEPs (10.8%) reported having student return totals between 41.00 and 50.00.

Table 11. Frequencies and Descriptives for Return Rates

Ranges of Return Rates	*Frequency*	*Percent*
0	15	14.7
1-10	26	25.5
11-20	25	25.5
21-30	15	13.7
31-40	10	9.8
41-50	11	10.8
TOTAL	**102**	**100.0%**
Mean: 17.67 **Range**: 50.00 **Variance**: 212.434 **SD**: 14.575		
Note: Although 128 DAEPs responded to the survey, these groupings only include DAEPs that reported student return totals (n=102) since some DAEPs reported not having any students enrolled in their DAEP at the time of the requested reporting period for this study.		

Additional demographic data were collected on students returning to the DAEP including race/ethnicity, sex and whether the student returned for a mandatory or discretionary reason. Table 12 provides the frequencies for these variables. The majority of returning students were non-white (87.1%), male (81%), and returned to the DAEP for committing a discretionary offense (56.4%). These data are consistent with statewide student demographic reports in Texas DAEPs.

Table 12. Frequencies for Students Returning to DAEP

Race			**Sex**			**Reason for Placement**		
	Frequency	*Percent*		*Frequency*	*Percent*		*Frequency*	*Percent*
White	92	12.9%	Male	579	81%	Mandatory	312	43.6%
Non White	623	87.1%	Female	136	19%	Discretionary	403	56.4%
TOTAL	**715**	**100.0%**		**715**	**100.0%**		**715**	**100.0%**

Next, bivariate correlations were calculated to determine the linear relationship between each practice variable (Instructional, Discipline Management, Transitional, Parent/Guardian Involvement, and Staff Training), and the student return rate to a DAEP, as well as between the control variables and the student return rate to a DAEP. Again the data used for this analysis only included the sample data from the DAEPs that reported student return totals (n=102). As mentioned previously, certain characteristic data of the DAEP were collected to serve as control variables (Community Type, Campus Structure, and Discipline Approach). Table 13 displays the frequencies and descriptive statistics for the control variables that were subsequently included in the multivariate analysis. As shown in Table 13, the majority of DAEPs were rural (64, 62.7%), located on campus (79, 77.5%), and perceived the home campus to have a discipline approach that implements positive behavioral support systems (61; 60%).

Table 13. Frequencies and Descriptives of DAEP Characteristics for Sample Reporting Student Return Totals

Community Type			**Campus Structure**			**Discipline Approach**		
	Frequency	*Percent*		*Frequency*	*Percent*		*Frequency*	*Percent*
(1) Rural	64	62.7%	(1) On Campus	79	77.5%	(1) Zero Tolerance	23	22.5%
(2) Suburban	27	26.5%	(2) Off Campus	23	22.5%	(2) PBIS	61	60.0%
(3) Urban	11	10.8%				(3) Restorative Discipline	18	17.6%
TOTAL	**102**	**100.0%**		**102**	**100.0%**		**102**	**100.0%**
	Mean: 1.48 **Range**: 2 **Variance**: .470 **SD**: .685		**Mean**: 1.23 **Range**: 1 **Variance**: .176 **SD**: .420			**Mean**: 2.02 **Range**: 4 **Variance**: .574 **SD**: .758		

Note: The totals in the table only reflect the responses of DAEPs that reported student return totals (n=102) because some of the DAEPs did not have any students enrolled in their DAEP at the time of the requested reported period for this study.

Based on prior literature, it was thought that the implementation of DAEP practices would have a negative relationship with the rate of student return to a DAEP. For example, the more instructional practices a DAEP implements, the lower the expected student return rate to the DAEP. Correlation coefficients were obtained between the control variables and the rate of student return to the DAEP. The correlation matrix for the DAEP practices, control variables, and rate of student return are displayed in Table 14. The correlation coefficients of interest are identified in the table within the box. There was only one significant relationship identified between the sets of variables. Specifically, there was a weak negative relationship between the discipline management scale and the rate of student return to a DAEP ($r = -.167$, $n = 102$, $p = .047$). This relationship suggests that as discipline practices increase in a DAEP, the rate of student returns decreases. There was no significant relationship identified between the control variables and student return rate.

Although only one significant relationship was identified in the bivariate correlations between the sets of variables, multiple regression was used in order to further understand the relationship between the main independent variables (Instructional, Discipline Management, Transitional, Parent/Guardian Involvement, and Staff Training) and the dependent variable (rate of student return to a DAEP). Specifically, multiple regression was performed to identify the overall fit (variance explained) of the model and the relative contribution of each of the predictors to the total variance explained as they interact together, while controlling for outliers.

Table 14. Correlation Matrix of DAEP Practice Variables, Controls, and Return Rate

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
(1) Instructional Practices	1.00								
(2) Discipline Management Practices	.420** .000	1.00							
(3) Transitional Practices	.405** .000	.437** .000	1.00						
(4) Parent/Guardian Involvement Practices	.149 .068	.033 .370	.211* .017	1.00					
(5) Staff Training Practices	.333** .000	.297** .001	.277** .002	.036 .360	1.00				
(6) Community Type (Rural)	-.099 .162	.074 .229	.172* .042	-.130 .096	-.098 .164	1.00			
(7) Campus Structure (On-campus)	-.053 .297	-.102 .155	-.190* .028	-.078 .217	.063 .263	-.028 .392	1.00		
(8) Discipline Approach (PBIS)	.235* .009	.161 .053	.176* .039	-.033 .370	.179* .036	.025 .402	.146 .072	1.00	
(9) Return Rate	-.157 .057	-.167* .047	-.024 .404	.149 .067	.020 .420	-.029 .387	.010 .462	.009 .464	1.00

*p ≤ 0.05, **p ≤ 0.01, n=102

The general multiple regression equation is:

$$Y= a+b_1(X_1)+b_2(X_2)+b_3(X_3)\ldots..+b_6(X_6)$$

where *Y* represents the dependent variable or outcome variable, *a* represents the y-intercept or constant, which is the point at which the regression line crosses the y-axis and the value of Y when X is equal to zero. Further, *b* represents the slope or regression coefficient, which measures a change in Y when there is a one-unit change in X. Finally, *X* represents the independent or causal variable (Mendenhall & Sincich, 2012).

This study hypothesized that the use of practices or support systems in a DAEP (i.e., Instructional, Discipline Management, Parent/Guardian Involvement, Transitional, and Staff Training) would have a negative and statistically significant effect on student return rate to a DAEP, while controlling for the other independent variables in the model. Regression analysis acknowledges the possibility of other variables or causes that may lead to a change in the dependent variable. For that reason, several control variables were included: Community Type, Campus Structure, and Discipline Approach. To determine the student return rate to a DAEP, the total count of student returns to a DAEP in a 24-month time period was divided by the total DAEP enrollment at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year. Data were collected on the number of students enrolled at the DAEP at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year and how many of those students returned at least once in the following 24 months.

The results of the OLS model are presented in Table 15. The table describes the effect of DAEP practice variables on the rate of student return to the DAEP. The model-fit statistics describe how well the model describes the dependent variable. These statistics consist of the R^2, Root Mean Squared Error (MSE), and the F-statistic. The R^2

value, which concerns the difference between the regression line and the mean-only line, was .081 (see Table 15). The R^2 is the squared multiple correlation coefficient and provides the amount of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables. It can also explain the amount of reduced prediction error. This means that 8.1% of the variation in the dependent variable (student return rate) is explained by the independent variables in the model. In addition, by using the regression line over the mean-only line, the prediction error is reduce by 8.1%.

The Root MSE, however, indicates that some error in the model does exist. The Root MSE is the square root of residual variance or unexplained variance. The unexplained variance is the left over variation not explained by the model or the spread of residuals around the regression line. The Root MSE value in this model is 14.55784, which means the observations are an average of 14.55784 points away from the regression line. The F-statistic is a measure of the ratio of the mean squared explained variance to the mean squared unexplained variance in the model. The F-statistic value in this model is 1.030. There is 1.030 times as much explained variance as unexplained variance. The null hypothesis is that all slopes in this model are equal to zero in the population. The alternative hypothesis is that at least one of the slopes in this model significantly differs from zero in the population. An F-statistic of 1.030 lies outside of the critical region; therefore one fails to reject the null hypothesis and conclude at the 0.05 level of statistical significance that the model slopes are equal to zero.

Table 15. OLS Model: Student Return Rate Regressed on DAEP Practice and Control Variables

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standard Error	β	t	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	42.935	16.126	-	2.662*	-	-
Instructional	-6.487	4.210	-.184	-1.541	.691	1.448
Discipline Management	-8.114	6.232	-.153	-1.302	.713	1.402
Student Transition	1.126	3.099	.045	.363	.645	1.550
Parent/Guardian Involvement	4.124	2.555	.168	1.614	.910	1.098
Staff Training	2.393	2.709	.097	.883	.816	1.226
Community Type (Rural)[a]	-.408	3.153	-.014	-.129	.894	1.118
Campus Structure (On-Campus)	-.325	3.602	-.009	-.090	.917	1.091
Discipline Approach (PBIS)[a]	1.727	3.080	.059	.561	.893	1.120
Model-fit Statistics	n=102	Root MSE=14.55784		R^2=.081	F=1.030	

*p<.05, **p<.001

[a]A dummy-coded variable where zero indicates absence of variable (1=presence of variable, 0=absence of variable)

The unstandardized partial regression coefficient of the *Instructional* practices scale is -6.487 (see Table 15). This indicates that for every one unit increase in the Instructional practices scale, the student return rate decreases on average by 6.487 points, while controlling for all other independent variables in the model. The t-statistic for the Instructional practices scale (-1.541) lies outside the critical region, therefore one would fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude at the .05 level of statistical significance that the effect of the Instructional practices scale on student return rate is not significantly different from zero in the population, while controlling for the other independent variables in the model.

The unstandardized partial regression coefficient of the *Discipline Management* practices scale is -8.114. This indicates that for every one unit increase in the Discipline Management practices scale, the student return rate decreases on average by 8.114 points, while controlling for all other independent variables in the model. The t-statistic for the Discipline Management practices scale (-1.302) lies outside the critical region, therefore one would fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude at the .05 level of statistical significance that the effect of the Discipline Management practices scale on student return rate is not significantly different from zero in the population, while controlling for the other independent variables in the model.

The unstandardized partial regression coefficient of the *Student Transition* practices scale is 1.126. This indicates that for every one unit increase in the Student Transition practices scale, the student return rate increases on average by 1.126 points, while controlling for all other independent variables in the model. The t-statistic for the Student Transition practices scale (.363) lies outside the critical region, therefore one

would fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude at the .05 level of statistical significance that the effect of the Student Transition practices scale on student return rate is not significantly different from zero in the population, while controlling for the other independent variables in the model.

The unstandardized partial regression coefficient of the *Parent/Guardian Involvement* practices scale is 4.124. This indicates that for every one unit increase in the Parent/Guardian practices scale, the student return rate increases on average by 4.124 points, while controlling for all other independent variables in the model. The t-statistic for the Parent/Guardian practices scale (1.614) lies outside the critical region, therefore one would fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude at the .05 level of statistical significance that the effect of the Parent/Guardian practices scale on student return rate is not significantly different from zero in the population, while controlling for the other independent variables in the model.

The unstandardized partial regression coefficient of the *Staff Training* practices scale is 2.393. This indicates that for every one unit increase in the Staff Training practices scale, the student return rate increases on average by 2.393 points, while controlling for all other independent variables in the model. The t-statistic for the Staff Training practices scale (.883) lies outside the critical region, therefore one would fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude at the .05 level of statistical significance that the effect of the Staff Training practices scale on student return rate is not significantly different from zero in the population, while controlling for the other independent variables in the model.

The unstandardized partial regression coefficient of *Community Type (Rural)* is -.408. This indicates that DAEPs in rural settings on average are .408 points lower than DAEPs not located in rural settings (i.e., suburban and urban) on the student return rate, while controlling for all other independent variables in the model. The t-statistic for Community Type (Rural) (-.129) lies outside the critical region, therefore one would fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude at the .05 level of statistical significance that the difference between DAEPs in a rural setting and not located in a rural setting on student return rate is not significantly different from zero in the population, while controlling for the other independent variables in the model.

The unstandardized partial regression coefficient of *Campus Structure (On-Campus)* is -.325. This indicates that DAEPs located on-campus on average are .325 points lower than DAEPs located off-campus on the student return rate, while controlling for all other independent variables in the model. The t-statistic for Campus Structure (On-Campus) (-.090) lies outside the critical region, therefore one would fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude at the .05 level of statistical significance that the difference between DAEPs on-campus and off-campus on student return rate is not significantly different from zero in the population, while controlling for the other independent variables in the model.

The unstandardized partial regression coefficient of *Discipline Approach (PBIS)* is 1.727. This indicates that DAEPs who reported the home campus implemented PBIS as a discipline approach on average are 1.727 points higher than DAEPs who reported the home campus implemented a non-PBIS discipline approach (i.e., zero-tolerance and restorative discipline) on the student return rate, while controlling for all other

independent variables in the model. The t-statistic for Discipline Approach (PBIS) (.561) lies outside the critical region, therefore one would fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude at the .05 level of statistical significance that the difference between DAEPs who reported the home campus implemented PBIS and DAEPs that reported the home campus implemented a non-PBIS discipline approach on student return rate is not significantly different from zero in the population, while controlling for the other independent variables in the model.

Ultimately, the model-fit statistics and t-statistic values, do not suggest support for the hypothesis. Specifically, the model is not significant and suggests that DAEP practices do not have a significant relationship, either positive or negative, with student return rate. To further examine this relationship, several OLS models were run with the dependent variable: 1) OLS model without the control variables included, 2) OLS models with only one of the main independent variables and all controls variables included, 3) OLS models with all the main independent variables included and a control variable excluded each time, and 4) OLS models with all the main independent variables included and one control variable included each time. Similar to the main regression model, however, the model-fit statistics and t-statistic values calculated for the additional OLS models were not significant, further suggesting no significant relationship between DAEP practices and the rate of student return.

V. QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Chapter V begins by discussing the characteristics of the interview participants and procedure for and analysis of the interviews. Next, the themes that emerged from these interviews are presented and supported by direct quotes from interviews with the participants. The quantitative findings identified only a bivariate correlation between the discipline practices scale and rate of student returns to a DAEP; specifically as discipline practices increase in a DAEP, the rate of student return decreases. However, the findings did not suggest a relationship between DAEP practices and student return rate in the overall regression model. Therefore, the purpose of conducting the interviews was to better understand the conditions under which DAEPs operate by comparing those DAEPs that have high and low rates of student returns. Additionally, the interviews attempted to illustrate any broader contextual circumstances outside the control of the DAEP (e.g., school discipline philosophy of the home campus, district administrative support of DAEP) that may impact student recidivism.

Interview and Participant Characteristics

A total of 55 survey respondents (out of 128) agreed to participate in a follow-up interview. As discussed in Chapter III, up to 30 respondents were contacted for an interview (half with the lowest and half with the highest student return rate at the DAEP). After identifying the DAEPs that fell within these groups, respondents were contacted for a follow-up interview. Some of the respondents that initially agreed to participate in an interview did not respond when contacted (either through telephone or email) for a follow up interview. As a result, a total of 14 respondents (7 with the lowest and 7 with the

highest student return rate) were successfully reached for an interview. All 14 interviews were conducted over the phone.

Table 16 provides the DAEP characteristics broken down by group (7 DAEPs with the lowest and 7 DAEPs with the highest student return rate) on the main independent variable scales (i.e., Instructional, Discipline Management, Transitional, Parental/Guardian Involvement, and Staff Training) and control variables (i.e., Community Type, Campus Structure, and Discipline Approach).

Table 16. DAEP Characteristics Between Groups (Low vs. High Return Rates)

		Instructional	Discipline Management	Student Transition	Parental/Guardian Involvement	Staff Training
Low (N=7)	Mean	12.86	20.43	11.00	4.14	12.00
	SD	1.069	.787	2.769	1.574	4.359
	Min	5	7	4	3	8
	Max	15	21	12	9	24
High (N=7)	Mean	12.43	19.71	9.00	4.43	12.00
	SD	1.272	1.113	2.309	1.512	1.732
	Min	5	7	4	3	8
	Max	15	21	12	9	24

		Community Type (Rural)	Campus Structure (On-Campus)	Discipline Approach (PBIS)
Low (N=7)	Mean	.857	.857	.571
	SD	.378	.378	.535
	Min	0	0	0
	Max	1	1	1
High (N=7)	Mean	.429	.714	.429
	SD	.535	.488	.535
	Min	0	0	0
	Max	1	1	1
Total Number of Returns (Low vs. High Groups)		Low Group = 10; High Group = 67		

Next, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare differences between the groups (low vs. high return rate) on the variables of interest (see Table 17). Consistent with quantitative analysis of the full sample, there was not a significant difference between the DAEPs with a low return rate and DAEPs with a high return rate on the DAEP practice scales or the control variables.

Table 17. T-Test for Differences Between DAEP Groups (Low vs. High Return Rates)

Variable	t	Sig (2-tailed)
Instructional	.682	.508
Discipline Management	1.387	.191
Student Transition	1.468	.168
Parent/Guardian Involvement	-.346	.735
Staff Training	.000	1.000
Community Type (Rural)	1.732	.109
Campus Structure (On-Campus)	.612	.552
Discipline Approach (PBIS)	.000	1.000
Total Number of Returns by Group	Low Group = 10	High Group = 67

The interview participants were asked several preliminary questions at the beginning of the interview related to their position at the DAEP, number of years they worked at the DAEP, and common job duties. The majority of respondents (64%) reported they were the actual principal of the DAEP. Approximately 29% of the respondents indicated they did oversee the DAEP, but their titles were slightly different. For example, one of the respondents was the principal of the high school, and others were considered directors of their DAEP. Only one of the respondents was not a principal or director of a DAEP, but instead reported their position as a teacher/team leader in the DAEP. Regarding number of years worked at the DAEP, responses ranged from 5 to 15 years, with the majority of respondents (57%) reporting being at the DAEP for 5 years. Finally, respondents were asked about their primary job functions. Overall, the most

common job duties mentioned were overseeing instruction (e.g., making sure assignments were received by and returned to the home campus), supervising DAEP teachers/staff, and coordinating all discipline for the DAEP (e.g., handling discipline issues at the DAEP, coordinating intake/exit of DAEP students, and attending placement hearings). Finally, twelve of the respondents were male and two were female.

After the interviews were completed, all the information collected through audio-recordings and notes were transcribed and uploaded into NVivo, a software program that organizes and assists with the analysis of non-numeric data. As part of the analysis, all interview data were coded into themes based on common phrases or concepts that emerged from the interview responses related to the DAEP.

The next section presents the various themes that emerged from the interviews, some of which help to illuminate differences between DAEPs with high and low student return rates and other factors that may impact student recidivism not found in the quantitative analysis. The areas of analysis focus on the DAEP environment, purpose of the DAEP, known challenges, home campus discipline philosophy, impact of the DAEP on students, and factors attributed to low student return rates, from which several themes emerged.

DAEP Environment

Although respondents were specifically asked to describe the DAEP environment in which they work, additional questions were asked that further inform this construct. In particular, respondents were asked to describe a typical DAEP experience, characteristics of staff, the working relationship between the DAEP and home campus staff, communication with parents, district support, as well as the most common types of

discipline infractions that lead students to the DAEP. Based on the responses between both interview groups (i.e., low vs. high return rates) several common themes were shared across the majority of both groups that described the DAEP environment. Specifically, the DAEPs were described as *highly structured* and *supportive settings*. Further, DAEP staff were described as *compassionate* and *invested* in their work with students. There was also a *concerted effort by the DAEPs to work/collaborate with the home campus staff*, as well as a *concerted effort to communicate with parents*. Both groups also shared they had *diverse support from the district*, however, with more district support provided to DAEPs with low student return rates. Finally, the most common types of offenses identified across both groups that resulted in a student being placed in a DAEP were related to *drug and alcohol possession*.

Highly Structured

When describing the DAEP, the majority of respondents from both interview groups indicated their campus was a *highly structured* environment for students. However, DAEPs with low return rates more often described a highly structured environment (71%) compared to DAEPs with high return rates (57.1%). DAEPs were described as having a regimented schedule. Specifically, the students had set times to arrive for the day, eat breakfast and lunch, use the bathroom, participate in physical exercise, receive instruction, and work on school assignments. Students at the DAEP were also closely monitored at all times and never left unsupervised. Opportunities for social interaction between students were also limited by the DAEP. Further, students were engaged in set activities throughout the day and not allowed any idle time. Students were also wanded or patted down before entering the building for the day and prohibited

from bringing their own school supplies into the building. In some cases, respondents reported their DAEP operated similar to a boot camp and dress codes were implemented.

The following respondents from DAEPs with low student return rates described the highly structured environment in their DAEPs. One DAEP principal described in detail the schedule his students have from the moment they arrive to the moment they leave campus:

> *"In the morning they come in and we have a pad outside and they line up on their dots and socks and shoes come off. They untuck their shirts, belts off, everyone is patted down and wanded with a metal detector. Then they go into what is called at ease – we do a para military structure here. They have to walk with their hands behind their back everywhere they go and no talking without permission. They have breakfast. The pledge is done and they recite the daily creed, which is "we will not settle for full compliance, we will strive to make change". Then they go into their block schedules for instruction. They have lunch, but they don't sit down for lunch until they are told to and they get 10 minutes to eat. Then they go into remediation. Last they go back into their lines again and go through the same inspection as they did in morning and then they go home. On Mondays and Fridays we do PT with them, which is 45 minutes. Tuesdays, Wednesday, and Thursdays we do social skills classes with the students. The day is pretty full and goes by fairly quickly and there is no down time because if there is down time then there are problems. If they are engaged and constantly have something to do then the day is smoother."*
>
> -Respondent B (Low Return Rate)

Similar descriptions were provided by other interviewees regarding the structured routines implemented by the DAEP:

> *"We do have staff members that are drill instructors, and students will go outside with them to do calisthenics or PT for 30 minutes in morning and afternoon. The students call it boot camp, but we use military codes when we are transporting students from one classroom to the next."*
>
> -Respondent C (Low Return Rate)

> *"They arrive and we pat them down for weapons. We give them breakfast. They go straight to their classroom for instruction. We are always monitoring them to make sure there are no gang fights. We cannot necessarily combine students by grade level because of rival gangs, so we move them. We don't ever have anyone not monitored. We have to keep this under consideration with everything we do – lunch, class, PE. It's all strategic."*
>
> -Respondent G (Low Return Rate)

> *"They come in and go to work. We work our way through normal schedule and we have staff to provide instructional support. The kids have breakfast, then they go straight into their lessons. Then have lunch, back to work and then parents pick them up. It's the same routine every day - no surprises. Our personalities don't change, we are same people every day. Most students truly understand we care about them and their well-being and it's the same expectations for everyone."*
>
> -Respondent H (Low Return Rate)

The following responses were provided from DAEP principals with high student return rates to their DAEP. One principal described the regimented environment of his DAEP:

> *"They always walk in lines and are monitored by an adult- they are never not supervised. They have to ask for permission to do anything. Any minor issues, like speaking out or cussing I will make them run a lap."*
>
> -Respondent M (High Return Rate)

As part of a highly structured environment, two of the respondents from DAEPs with high return rates also described the technique of limited social interaction between peers while at the DAEP, and in one case used as an incentive for good behavior:

> *"We have a clean and well-designed layout that's private because students are not allowed to converse with each other and have interactions except at designated times, such as meal time or during athletic practice. Part of the structure is to try to keep it calm and quiet and kind of therapeutic in nature."*
>
> -Respondent A (High Return Rate)

> *"We have two classroom areas in a sectioned part of the district, so we are not with the general population. We have partitions at desks so students are separated at all times. We are pretty strict on socialization."*
>
> -Respondent L (High Return Rate)

> *"We incentivize students that behave with either prison lunch, where they eat by themselves and they can't talk, or community lunch, where they can eat with their friends in the DAEP. The most important thing for them is to be able to talk with their friends, so this helps with ensuring good behavior the most."*
>
> -Respondent M (High Return Rate)

Supportive Setting

While the DAEP was considered to be highly structured, the majority of respondents from both interview groups also described their DAEP as being a *supportive setting* for students. Specifically, the rigid routines implemented by the DAEP served as a support mechanism to help students succeed in their academics and learn appropriate decision making skills. As noted by most respondents across both DAEP groups, this type of environment tends to be advantageous for students that are placed in a DAEP, since many come from negative home situations that impact their academic and behavior problems at schools. Further, respondents from both DAEP groups agree that often the home campus is not willing or capable to provide the one-on-one attention that many of these students need to be academically and socially successful. Thus, the DAEP serves to provide a supportive structure for some of the most at-risk youth. A supportive setting was more often described by DAEPs with high return rates (85.7%) compared to DAEPs with low return rates (71.5%).

The following responses represent principals from DAEPs with low and high student return rates to their DAEP. These principals discuss the supportive nature of the DAEP and the gap it fills to meet the needs of their particular students:

> *"The students feel more comfortable here and are more likely to learn more because there is actually adults and staff that keep an eye on them and make sure they don't make a mistake. Also we give them the reassurance that they are talked to everyday and so they don't lose themselves with the big campuses or with the traditional campuses. Nothing against the traditional campus at all – we really don't want our students to come here in the first place or return for that matter – but some students just thrive more with this kind of setting. It's very supportive here and they feel this setting is for them."*
>
> -Respondent C (Low Return Rate)

> *"We will meet with kids before school, after school, during lunch, and on Saturdays and we help them one on one. For the most part, our students work at their own pace even though it is a direct teach class, we allow extra time and attention they need. We give*

them what they are not getting on main campus. Our main focus is to teach them how to be successful, how to be good citizens and build a good life for themselves. Our focus is NOT punishment."

-Respondent H (Low Return Rate)

"We have students that are behind academically or at risk, some kids that simply cannot function in a large school setting. Our approach here is that we are all in this together and the teachers are here to support you to be successful as you can be. This is intended to be an uplifting environment for the student."

-Respondent F (High Return Rate)

"Maybe collegial is not the perfect word, but we try to create a positive adult/student relationship because most of our kids don't have that at home, so we try to foster that here. I think it's a really great climate for the students to be in."

-Respondent K (High Return Rate)

"We try to create a sense of community here because that's what these kids really need – they don't have this in their home life or at the home campus."

-Respondent M (High Return Rate)

Two of the respondents from DAEPs with low and high student return rates discussed the importance of making sure the DAEP does not turn into a negative experience for the student, but rather becomes an opportunity for them to get their life on track:

"This has to be a supportive and positive environment, especially for these type of kids because they already have tough lives. They come from broken homes in most cases or have parents who don't care about them. A DAEP will not be effective if you don't build in opportunities for students to grow and progress in a positive way."

-Respondent J (Low Return Rate)

"We have a balance in terms of our climate and our intent. We want to ensure that we provide the necessary support systems to help students continue their education and learning when they get here, but we also want to instill proper decision making skills that will help them in their adult lives as well."

-Respondent D (High Return Rate)

A principal from a DAEP with high student return rates describes their DAEP's support effort to understand the root cause of a student's misbehavior and provide the appropriate intervention:

> *"We try to provide some level of counseling. There is always a root to why the behavior occurred - some type of antecedent and usually the behavior, not always, but usually the behavior is a result of factors that may not even seem related at first glance, so we try to get to root and have student recognize their actions and talk about why they chose to make that particular choice and what the detriment or benefit that is to them."*
>
> -Respondent A (High Return Rate)

Concerted Effort by DAEP to Communicate with Parents

In order to understand the DAEP environment, it is important to acknowledge the relationship DAEP staff have with parents. Given the circumstances that have led the child to the DAEP, parents may often feel angry about the placement of their child in the DAEP or indifferent. This could result in a strained relationship between school staff and parents, potentially impacting the DAEP environment and progress of the student. Respondents were asked to describe the relationship between DAEP staff and the parents of the students attending the DAEP. Based on the interviews, it was evident that across the majority of both interview groups, there was a *concerted effort by the DAEP to communicate with parents* on a regular basis. However, these communication efforts were more often described by DAEPs with high return rates (71.4%) compared to DAEPs with low return rates (51.1%). Some of the DAEP outreach efforts across both groups included requiring parents to attend an orientation meeting when the student enters the DAEP, requiring parents to sign-in and sign-out their child each school day, and calling parents regularly to provide updates on student progress.

Despite these efforts, DAEP staff from both groups also described most parents as not being engaged or supportive of helping their child improve their behavior. Below

respondents from DAEPs with low and high student return rates discussed their experience of regularly engaging parents and the challenges they have encountered in doing so:

> *"We strive to stay in communication with parents, but it's not always successful because they don't answer or return our calls. We do have teachers make good phone calls to parents. We try to focus on the good communication and not the bad unless it's necessary."*
>
> -Respondent C (Low Return Rate)

> *"Some parents are involved in schools and needs of students and are supportive and we have great relationships with them and communicate weekly. Most parents though are strained on support and not involved, either because of apathy and don't care. We try to make contact and communication to build a relationship, but it's not authentic on their part and some don't' reciprocate. In the end to me, it is about the teacher, the administrator and parent working together to get student back on campus to finish school career and graduate- that is our ultimate goal."*
>
> -Respondent J (Low Return Rate)

> *"Unfortunately a lot of times the parents of students in the DAEP are not involved very much. We require the parent attend DAEP on first day to enroll them in-person as by policy, and there are a few parents that are genuinely interested and their kid made a mistake and this is going to be a one-time deal, but more often than not the parent's attitude is more "well they get in trouble all the time, we knew this was coming and we don't know what is coming next". These parents are just not that supportive and aren't engaged in making sure their students are successful from this process."*
>
> -Respondent A (High Return Rate)

> *"Most parents are not responsive, we have some kids that are foster kids and their guardians are fairly involved and are responsive to communications, but 95% of parents will make appointments for meetings and not show up. There is a reason their child is here and often they are part of that reason. We make the effort, but we don't always get the response we need."*
>
> -Respondent F (High Return Rate)

> *"We hustle hard to establish a relationship with DAEP parents, but for most part they have a negative perception of administration. We schedule intake interviews with the parents and students when they enter DAE,P and I try to make that meeting as conciliatory and all about everyone being a team player to help get the child back to the home campus successfully as possible. Teachers and I are constantly communicating with parents about academics and behavior, but most don't return calls or don't reciprocate."*
>
> -Respondent K (High Return Rate)

> *"As far as parents go, before 9am we call parents of every kid that didn't show up, but a lot of kids we have here is because of poor parenting, so a lot of the parents don't even answer the phone – they know we are calling. We do have an intake meeting with the parents and students at the beginning and explain expectations."*
>
> -Respondent M (High Return Rate)

One respondent from a DAEP with low student return rates indicated that the DAEP teacher provided the parents with his cell number to try and foster an open line of communication:

> *"Our teacher gives the parents his cell number so they can reach him and he works toward having a good relationship and trying to know all of them and their circumstance. He tries to make sure they are on board with how he is trying to help their student."*
>
> -Respondent I (Low Return Rate)

Two DAEP principals – one with low and one with high student return rates - discuss specific practices they each engage in to ensure they communicate with parents daily:

> *"We have an adult parent who has to sign them in each day and sign them out. Having that daily contact with adult in child's life is biggest impact because so many parents say it is an inconvenience, but it's there to also hold parents accountable, whereas regular campus you don't see parents daily. We talk to them every day. They don't like that they have to pick up and drop kid off, but they know that's part of the program, they all comply. It's not adversarial."*
>
> -Respondent H (Low Return Rate)

> *"Every morning, either I or my teachers will go out to each individual car and welcome student in. We also do the same at the end of the day and go out with a report on the student so the parent knows how their day went and we require parents to sign it. Some parents get upset when they find out their child did bad and others say just give me the pen and let me sign it. We try to make sure we are communicating with parents, it's just not always received back on their end."*
>
> -Respondent L (High Return Rate)

Concerted Effort by DAEP to Work with Campus Staff

Participants were asked to describe their relationship with home campus staff. As part of the DAEP environment, it was critical to gather an understanding about the

relationship between DAEP staff and home campus staff. These relationship dynamics can also have an impact on the success of the student while in the DAEP. Ideally, both DAEP staff and home campus staff should work together to support a student's successful transition back to the home campus. Based on the interviews with both groups of participants, this was the only theme that elicited a unanimous response (100%) from both groups (low vs. high student return rates). Each group described *a concerted effort by the DAEP to work with home campus staff*, specifically principals and teachers. For example, DAEP staff from both groups described their efforts to keep home campus staff regularly informed of the student's behavioral and academic progress by sending weekly reports, as well as attempts to obtain assignments from home campus teachers for students so they do not fall behind academically. Although there was consistency among both groups of DAEPs in their reported efforts to work with and engage home campus staff, some felt their efforts were reciprocated by home campus staff (57.1% low return rates and 28.6% high return rates), while others felt it was ignored (28.6% low return rates and 57.1% high return rates). In comparing the two groups, DAEPs that had low rates of student returns described more often a positive relationship with the home campus compared to DAEPs with high student return rates. The following statements represent DAEPs with low student return rates and described their positive experiences working with home campus staff:

> *"We got four really good teachers here that communicate with schools daily to keep up with what is going on in home classrooms, so they keep up with work at home campus. We try to make sure the students don't miss too much while they are here. Also, every Friday, the principal and teachers will get a progress report on student. I'd say we have a pretty good relationship with the home campus staff as far as communicating about the student and both of us trying to make sure they succeed in our program so they can do well when they return to their home classroom."*
>
> -Respondent C (Low Return Rate)

> *"We have a good relationship with home campus staff. We encourage home staff to visit kids to continue relationships, and they are good about doing that. The principals will come over and visit once a week. We tell them you need to continue that rapport with these kids because they are coming back."*
>
> -Respondent H (Low Return Rate)

As previously mentioned, most DAEPs with high student return rates encountered challenges in getting the home campus to engage despite outreach efforts. The following respondents represent DAEPs with high student return rates and felt that most teachers send students to a DAEP because they need a break, and as a result have no interest in dealing with the student while at the DAEP:

> *"The relationship with home campus is a sticky issue. They want to send them over here and forget about them because the kids have been nothing but trouble over there, they get in fights, don't do their work, that kind of stuff. They just don't want to be interested with kids while they are here, so we have trouble getting records or assignments sometimes, so not much communication on their end."*
>
> -Respondent F (High Return Rate)

Two of the respondents from DAEPs with high return rates also indicated they have resorted to having the DAEP staff create the lesson plans for the students because they are not receiving them from the home campus teachers, despite repeated requests:

> *"We have tried so hard, but recently we have given up with high school on getting lesson from them, so teachers here are just having to create their own lessons based on instructional focus documents. They are all veterans here so they got material to work from. Central office has given up too and told us to just pull what you can. Every year we try to put systems in place to get stuff done and work with the home teachers, but there is no accountability and for some things… just no motivation from the home campus staff. These kids are out of sight and out of mind, so it's not a priority for those teachers. The relationship with the home campus is virtually non-existent. It's an out of sight out of mind mentality. They don't respond to our emails or calls. We have had kids here for 20-30 days and their teachers didn't even know they were here and that's because administration didn't communicate it to them, so it's bad."*
>
> -Respondent M (High Return Rate)

> *"Sometimes it is strained with the home campus staff because they just go on with the year and they don't hand over the student assignments. It's like pulling teeth and they don't respond to calls or emails, so then my teachers try to build assignments for the*

students. It's getting to a point where all we are going to be able to do is address core subjects and ignore electives. I think at times the home campus think it's easier here because they have better grades when they go back."

-Respondent N (High Return Rate)

Diverse Support from the District

DAEPs were asked to describe the level of support they felt was received from the district. Because the perception of district support could potentially impact the DAEP environment, particularly related to staff morale, obtainability of resources (e.g., staffing and educational supplies) and support of systems (e.g., instructional practices and behavioral practices) it was necessary to assess these insights. There existed variation between both groups regarding perceptions of district support. Specifically, all but one of the DAEPs in the group that had low student return rates, described their district as being very supportive (85.7%). However, most DAEPs in the group that had the higher student return rates, reported their district as not being very supportive at all (57.1%). The following respondents represent districts with low student return rates and most often expressed district support by not micromanaging the operations of the DAEP and being trusted to do their jobs effectively. In addition, district support was also described as providing the necessary resources for students (e.g., computers, text books, school supplies):

"We are fortunate enough to have a superintendent that used to be a principal at a DAEP so he knows to leave us alone because he understands we know how to do our jobs. He understands how we work and knows not to take away our resources because they help make us successful. He trusts in us and I feel like we are supported just like a traditional campus."

-Respondent C (Low Return Rate)

"We have whatever we need. For example, our computers were antiquated and so the district gave us funds to update. We also needed updated textbooks for the students so they could keep on track with their home campus assignments. The district supports us in

what we do and we don't ever have any issues with them. They leave us alone and let us do our job and if we ever need anything, they are there to support us."

-Respondent H (Low Return Rate)

"I give a report to the board once a year about our recidivism rate and what we are trying to do here and they always seem appreciative of what we are doing. The new superintendent this year has left us alone to let us do what we need to do so I feel much supported."

-Respondent I (Low Return Rate)

"I think because of my time here at the district, I have a high level of support for this program. The superintendent knows me very well and knows when I ask for something it's because I truly need it and not because of fluff. He knows that I know what I'm doing so he lets me do what I need to do to run this DAEP effectively. Again that is part of a relationship I have developed through the years. I even have support from the school board."

-Respondent J (Low Return Rate)

Most of the respondents from DAEPs with high student return rates expressed a lack of support from their respective districts. The lack of support by the district was explained as not being provided an adequate budget to support staffing or improvement of programs, as well as not being acknowledged as a valued program within the district. The following respondents represent DAEPs with high student return rates and detail their perceptions of inadequate district support:

"We don't feel like we are much supported. We don't have a social worker, we don't have a very big budget. For the last 8 years, our budget has been cut while everyone else's has increased, we just don't feel supported at all. Not much communication between district and DAEP. The district will host workshops that we "forgot" to get invited to. They will have instructional coaches that don't have time to come to our DAEP. We have heard other teachers makes comments like "I don't want to work at that school because they don't really teach, all they do is babysit." And of course, that is hurtful to us because we work very hard to help kids that everyone else feels are not helpable and we are very dedicated, so to have comments like that are hurtful."

-Respondent F (High Return Rate)

"Not good at all right now, maybe it's because they have bigger things to deal with right now, I don't know. The good thing is I know what I'm doing, I know this population and I

think they know that too. We have a new superintendent with new personnel, so it's really an inexperienced leadership who have not been in these high levels before. I think what we have are a lot of rookies and as long as there are no dead bodies coming out of here, they are happy to leave us alone."

-Respondent M (High Return Rate)

"Really poor. If we were the solar system we would be Pluto. At a district meeting, they had a graph on the overheard on grades and we were not even on it in terms of how to improve academic success for our students or distribution of resources. We are only a priority when it comes to wanting to remove a disruptive student from the regular classroom. So far I think they are happy with the job we are doing, the parents are happy, but there is not a whole lot of effort to improve anything we are doing here. Money is always an issue, so it's not a focus or priority, but it is a necessary program. Folks from central office say they visit all campuses twice a week, but I've only seen them twice this year."

-Respondent N (High Return Rate)

Drug and Alcohol Possession Offenses

DAEPs were asked to identify the most common type of discipline violations committed by students placed in their DAEP. Equally among both interview groups (85.7% low return rates and 85.7% high return rates), the most common type of offense committed by students was *drug and alcohol possession* on campus. The majority of drug possession involved marijuana. The second most common type of offense was persistent misbehavior, in which students were sent to a DAEP after repeated misconduct addressed with other discipline measures (e.g., detention, in-school suspension). Persistent misbehavior placements were more common in DAEPs with high return rates (85.7%) compared to DAEPs with low return rates (42.9%).The following respondents from DAEPs with low and high return rates described the reasons why students are mostly likely placed in a DAEP:

"Possession of drugs and alcohol, particularly marijuana, makes up the majority of why students are sent here. I'd say 75% of kids have had some sort of, whether it be alcohol

or drugs, those kinds of offenses. Next would be persistent misbehavior, such as constant disrespect, like talking in class."

-Respondent B (Low Return Rate)

"It depends on time of year. A lot of infractions are mandatory because it involves law enforcement, like drugs. Now that we are in spring, we will start to get kids that have ran the gamut of discipline options at campus, and the school is now tired of dealing with them, like being tardy or speaking out in class."

-Respondent H (Low Return Rate)

"The majority of what we have is possession of drugs and alcohol - marijuana like crazy now. Next I would say that we get kids that are just constantly acting up in class and it's usually the middle school kids. This involves cursing at a teacher, walking out of the room, refusing to do work, and disrupting class – that kind of thing and the school has already put that kid in ISS 5-6 times."

-Respondent D (High Return Rate)

The Purpose of a DAEP

DAEPs can often times be regarded as a punitive setting for problem-behavior students. In order to understand how participants view their DAEP's goal toward serving students, participants were asked to provide their perspective on the purpose of a DAEP. A couple themes emerged that were shared between both interview groups regarding the purpose of a DAEP: to *build relationships with students*, and to *rehabilitate students*. This construct was also informed by asking participants about the proper use of a DAEP concerning disciplinary referrals. Across both groups, respondents felt that placing a student in a DAEP should be for *mandatory placements* (e.g., drugs/alcohol use or possession and violence) and a *last resort of punishment for persistent misbehavior* after all other disciplinary efforts have been exhausted by the home campus.

Build Positive Relationships with Students

When asked to describe the purpose of a DAEP, respondents from both groups (85.7% low return rates and 85.7% high return rates) equally felt the importance of

building positive relationships with students as a critical function of a DAEP. This was viewed as more productive than treating students as criminals in a prison. Participants described that students in the DAEP often do not have close relationships with home campus staff or in their own home environment. Thus the DAEP serves as a place for students to learn how to build positive relationships with adults and peers in a safe and supportive environment. Respondents feel that building a sense of community at the DAEP is beneficial to the students and helps with improving behavior and academics while at the DAEP. The following respondents from DAEPs with low and high return rates discussed relationship building with students as a DAEP's primary purpose in producing positive outcomes for students:

> *"Our approach here is that we are all in this together and the teachers are here to support students to be as successful as they can be so they don't engage in criminal activity or violations of student code. This is intended to be an uplifting environment for the student. We give them what they are not getting on the main campus, which is a connection to a trusted adult mentor. As we build the community in our schools, they become part of that building process and they want school to be a safe place and they join in that effort to make it socially, physically, and emotionally safe."*
>
> -Respondent F (High Return Rate)

> *"Our superintendent, since he has been here, has strongly emphasized building relationships with kids. These relationships help to model good behavior for the students so that these kids can have a chance when they return to the home campus. It's not about treating them like outcasts or lost causes. This is a place they can get that one-on-one connection. I feel like our DAEP teacher is already there and he has been doing this for years. It would be hard for me to say how he could be more supportive of the kids."*
>
> -Respondent I (Low Return Rate)

> *"My intention is to have a structured rigid environment to maintain safety of staff and student, but at the same time provide resources and outlets for students to build relationships with staff, so they have a positive behavioral outcome when they return to campus."*
>
> -Respondent J (Low Return Rate)

The participants from each group also recognized the lack of connection these students have with home campus staff and within their own families. In many instances, the participants described these students as being neglected by many of the adults in their lives and act out negatively as a result. As part of building relationships with students, the following participants from DAEPs with low and high return rates shared their perspective on the role of the DAEP as helping to fill a gap in these students' lives by providing an environment that fosters support and care:

> *"One of the most important thing is to build relationships, but it's hard for educators to do especially with these kids who have really bad situations at home or come from violent or crime ridden backgrounds, whose family members are so ingrained into that lifestyle. We always talk about relationships and caring and I think that is the most important thing we can do. They need to see and feel that we care about them. We work on trying to connect with these students. I always tell my teachers, you make sure you develop a really good relationship with these kids, because they are going to come back. And if you know them, and they like you, it will be much easier. What happens is the majority of these young people, they feel they have been abandoned and this stems from childhood – father left or got killed. So by the time they are in middle or high school, they feel society is against them and most parents in this area do not have skills to manage these kids and these kids grow up to be very violent – they are walking time bombs. So they have no connection to positive men, most are drug dealers and criminals. So the adults in the home campus do this when they turn them away for acting out. Adults don't want to deal with them and neglect the emotional side of these human beings."*
>
> -Respondent G (Low Return Rate)

> *"Maybe collegial is not the perfect word, but we try to create a positive adult/student relationship because most of our kids don't have that at home, so we try to foster that here."*
>
> -Respondent K (High Return Rate)

> *"We also try to create a sense of community here because that's what these kids really need – they don't have this in their home life or at the home campus. We give them the reassurance that they are talked to everyday and so they don't lose themselves with the big campuses or with the traditional campuses."*
>
> -Respondent *M* (High Return Rate)

Relationship building was also acknowledged as maintaining an on-going rapport with a student after they leave the DAEP. The following respondents from DAEPs with low return rates discussed their efforts to maintain these connections:

> *"These last two years, we have incorporated an initiative where we have our educational liaison goes to home campus and visits with students that have returned. She goes once a month. She sees how they are doing and motivate them not to return. But if a student is struggling and does not know who to talk to, whether needing counseling, tutoring, or issues with participating in sports, then the liaison can be there to hear them out. We don't get involved in decision making, but there to listen."*
>
> -Respondent C (Low Return Rate)

> *"We treat all kids the same, no matter what you did and we work to get them back on campus. And even when they leave, we still consider them our students because we visit them on the home campus. We build lasting relationships with these kids beyond their stay here."*
>
> -Respondent H (Low Return Rate)

Rehabilitate Students

Another theme that emerged from both interview groups as the purpose of a DAEP was to *rehabilitate students*. Rehabilitation focused on providing students with skills to make appropriate decisions, positively interact with peers and adults, as well as cope with emotions before negatively acting out in school. The participants explained that these students often lack social skills, which if not addressed as youth can lead to participation in more serious offenses or criminal activity on or outside of campus. Although both groups described this theme, DAEPs with high return rates more often described rehabilitation as the purpose of a DAEP (85.7%) compared to DAEPs with low student return rates (71.4%). The following quotes represent responses from DAEPs with high and low student return rates. These responses describe the DAEP's effort toward

working with students to improve their negative behavior and prepare them to be productive citizens within their schools and communities:

> *"A lot of students in DAEPs have self-esteem issues or come from bad family lives or situations and so the function has to be to try to get the student back on a path that is positive, and in order to do that they have to acknowledge their role in it and the things that can be changed on their part and the right choices that can be made on their part versus things they can't control and just wrongfully reacting to things that they can't control. We try to help redirect that student by not treating them all in just a punitive manner. We try to build self-esteem, not tear them down so hopefully we send them back to their home campus with a better attitude and sense of how to appropriately conduct themselves better than how they came to us. I feel like we are successful in that most of the time, not all the time, but most of the time."*
>
> -Respondent A (High Return Rate)

> *"I lead group of kids who are "Wednesday Club" and we talk about issues about what is troubling them. It's a group designed to help them grow, but it's also designed to teach them social skills so they can take back to the home campus and deal with situation better. So we keep that in mind and we want to impress upon them that they have a purpose in life, they are valuable and they matter and their input in what they do to build their community, their lives, their children's lives and grandchildren's life is what is going to make a positive community, they build their community."*
>
> -Respondent F (High Return Rate)

> *"From our viewpoint we really try to demonstrate normal interaction between human beings because most of our kids just do not have the concept of how to interact with people – so yes, you are going to be upset with people from time to time, but no, that does not mean that you have to hit them or threaten them or do some sort of outlandish behavior to prove that you are right. We try to constantly let kids know this is how society works, this is how you interact with people, and this is what normal inclusive behavior is. We are trying to teach appropriate behavior.*
>
> -Respondent K (High Return Rate)

> *"We teach and model appropriate behaviors. We need to teach this so they don't return or engage in more serious offenses as a youth or adult. We have some kids that have made a mistake, they come in and they are great kids, they follow the rules and they don't come back. The other kids are the ones who persistently get in trouble, are persistently misbehaving and they come in here and they learn the behavior techniques, they learn structure, they learn someone else does care about them. It's a safe haven for students to have the opportunity to do well and thrive and ultimately go home to their home campus and be successful."*
>
> -Respondent B (Low Return Rate)

A couple of the participants from both groups mentioned the need for implementing restorative discipline practices at their DAEP as an effective tool for rehabilitating students:

> *"I look at it as a rehabilitative environment trying to help students to progress and understand the decisions they made that got them here were bad ones and how to make better decisions when they return to the home campus so they don't come back here. I've been through some training recently on restorative discipline and restorative circles and it was my intention this year to try and implement at the DAEP – similar to the way Fort Worth did it. I know there are several districts that have started with implementing this with their DAEP and it grows into the home campus. From what I've read, it has a very positive impact on discipline. I think that this could be something that DAEPs across the board look more into doing."*
>
> -Respondent J (Low Return Rate)

> *"It should certainly be more than just go and do your time. We have talked about incorporating restorative discipline practices by doing your time and making a wrong right. But I think it is about making a kid understand what they did was wrong and why they did it and how to make better decisions. The DAEP should look at what is behind the behavior – it's rehabilitative and working with students to deal with issues they are having."*
>
> -Respondent N (High Return Rate)

Mandatory Placement and Last Resort of Punishment for Persistent Misbehavior

In order to provide additional insight as to the purpose of a DAEP, participants were also asked about their opinion regarding the appropriate use of a DAEP when it comes to student placements. This insight was important to understanding the type of infraction that DAEPs feel justify a referral and ultimately their philosophy regarding the purpose of a DAEP. Across the majority of both interview groups (85.7% low return rates and 100% high return rates), respondents agreed that a DAEP should be used for *mandatory placements and last resort of punishment for persistent misbehavior*. However, all interviewees from DAEPs with high return rates reported support for mandatory and/or last resort placements (100%) compared to DAEPs with low student return rates (85.7%). The respondents below from each group expressed that DAEPs

should be used for students who commit serious offenses such as drug/alcohol use or violence toward others:

> *"Philosophically, anything that interferes with the safety of students and staff then there needs to be a removal of that student from the environment until there is assurance that when student returns that threat is no longer there. Drugs and felony charges that bring students to the DAEP - they all factor back into safety of the environment. Also, any physical assault to staff or students. If this creates an unsafe environment or disrupts learning, then they should be removed. Most of the mandatory placements take care of this"*
>
> -Respondent J (Low Return Rate)

> *"I think that drug and alcohol offenses, and any mandatory placements, should come to a DAEP. Also use of a weapon or anything violent, they need to be place in a DAEP setting. If the safety of students and staff are being compromised so much that it interferes with the educational environment, the student needs to come to the DAEP. Fortunately, mandatory placements address these types of offenses."*
>
> -Respondent M (High Return Rate)

The following responses represent DAEPs with high and low return rates and expressed a strong desire for the home campus to implement other courses of discipline before referring a student for removal to a DAEP:

> *"I look at things from a logical standpoint. I don't want to necessarily or purposely omit or leave anyone behind. But I don't want to sacrifice a class of 20 kids or 30 kids to try to save the 1. If the one is keeping 20 kids from learning on a consistent basis, and no punishment has yet worked, then that's going to be a consideration for me or would be. That means the one that wants to argue with the teacher or keeps disrupting the class and just not allowing the class to move forward, which falls under that repetitive misconduct thing."*
>
> -Respondent A (High Return Rate)

> *"I don't have a problem with persistent misbehavior as long as campus has done other things to try and address or deal with the behavior before they send them here. If a campus has not done anything and just sends them here then that is a problem because the school needs to put effort to address the behavior on their own first."*
>
> -Respondent D (High Return Rate)

> *Besides mandatory offenses, I also think persistent behavior to a certain point warrants a DAEP placement. In this case, the home campus has put things into place to at least give the student an opportunity for success before removing them from the campus. If this*

hasn't worked and the student continues to act out and disrupt the class, they need to be removed."

-Respondent B (Low Return Rate)

"I agree with the mandatory placements and I agree with discretion only if the campus has tried other options first and only if they are consistent with all students. They should not apply discretionary placement differently to certain students. They need to try and exhaust all efforts before placing a student in a DAEP."

-Respondent H (Low Return Rate)

DAEP Challenges

The participants were asked to share some of the challenges they experienced at the DAEP. This information was gathered to provide more context to the experience of the DAEP overall and among both interview groups. While several challenges were noted, the most resounding issue described by both interview groups centered on the theme of *serving students with mental health issues*. These cases were particularly challenging because the DAEP lacked the personnel to appropriately provide services to these students.

Lack of Resources to Serve Students with Mental Health Issues

Based on the interviews, it was evident that the most significant challenge equally faced among both groups (71.4% low return rates and 71.4% high return rates) was the intake of students with mental health issues or a serious history of abuse or trauma, a likely factor associated with issues of misbehavior on campus. In most instances, the respondents felt these types of students should not be placed in a DAEP because of the lack of resources available for them, most of which are offered at the home campus. Below, respondents from both groups described their experiences dealing with students that are placed in DAEPs with mental health issues or other trauma and the need for

specialized staff in a DAEP, such as counselors and social workers, to provide more individualized attention and serve this population more effectively:

> *"There are some students that are so… I guess almost damaged to the point emotionally, that they are really hard to reach. Some of them don't trust adults, based upon experiences in their own lives. Some are very angry at just everything and of course it's at a time where they are teenagers too, so they are going through physical changes and changes within their families and negative experiences in their lives. So all of this – these are barriers. You know if a child doesn't know where they are going to sleep tonight, they can't worry about your Algebra. This is a huge challenge – You tell them "look for your own benefit you need to pass this subject" and in their mind it's like "this has nothing to do with my life right now". And that is the biggest challenge."*
>
> -Respondent A (High Return Rate)

> *"Some students have been so abandoned by the system, that they see us as the enemy, so it takes them a few months to see otherwise. Some students have emotional issues or are bi-polar so it takes us a while to get them balanced. None of us are psychiatrists that's for sure. We have a lot of kids who have been abused. And knowing how that kind of trauma impacts how they learn, we try and equip them with tools to cope with their personal problems and build a better life for themselves, but we are not experts."*
>
> -Respondent F (High Return Rate)

> *"Students that come to us have been abused in multiple ways – physically, sexually, socially, and emotionally. These students don't fit into a typical classroom – they require much more intensive one-on-one care if possible to function successfully. Just the social and emotional baggage that these kids come to school with almost makes it impossible for them to perform academically. I feel like having a counselor on a DAEP campus is the most important place to have a counselor and most DAEPs don't have this. I really think staff is important and training for DAEP staff should be more specialized- social or emotional rather than instructional."*
>
> -Respondent K (High Return Rate)

> *"We have students that come in with special services that they require, and quite simply we don't have the necessary resources to provide them that they get at the home campus."*
>
> -Respondent C (Low Return Rate)

The following participants from DAEPs with high and low student return rates further described the challenge of placing students in the DAEP that require special services as a practice that is often perpetuated by the home campus:

"You are dealing with behavioral improvement plans for some of these kids when we get them. We tell a lot of the home campuses to put these plans on hold because it is so highly structured here and we are not able to follow them. You know a kid is not going to come in here and have head phones for them to calm down – that's just not going to happen. They are going to have to conform to what we do here. We don't have the qualified staff to implement those plans and the home campus knows that and they still send them here because they don't want to deal with them anymore, and we can't do anything about it."

-Respondent B (Low Return Rate)

"The biggest challenge is the district not understanding what our DAEP does or has to deal with. They say things like you are only dealing with 40, 50, 60 kids. But almost all of our kids have some mental issues, are immigrants who don't speak English, are involved in gang activity and movement of drugs for cartels, so one of our kids equals 50 of theirs. We are short staffed and unprepared to handle all this on our own.

-Respondent G (Low Return Rate)

"One of the biggest is the lack of mental health opportunities in our county. I have kids that need treatment or need a psych evaluation. We are like the last safety net before some of these kids just fall off the end of the earth. We are lower SES population, broken families, less college graduates, and there are a lot of gaps in care here. We are just not equipped to deal with these kids – they need more specialized help that a DAEP does not and should not have to offer. The home campus sends these kids over here with emotional issues or intellectual issues that have BIPs or IEPs and we don't follow that here and no one on the home campus cares because they are tired of dealing with them and want a break."

-Respondent M (High Return Rate)

"I often describe a DAEP as a rehabilitative center for academics and other bad decision making. But there are kids that come here sometimes that have much deeper issues than academic problems or making bad decisions. We are just not equipped here to deal with that. There are so many times the home campus sends kids here that are emotionally disturbed, yet they have the actual programs to serve these students at the regular campus. They know we are not equipped to deal with a kid that is bipolar and not medicated. I just don't understand it."

-Respondent N (High Return Rate)

Home Campus Discipline Philosophy

Although quantitative analysis did not suggest a relationship between the implementation of DAEP practices and student return rates, other factors outside the control of the DAEP may impact student recidivism. One of those factors, most notably acknowledged, is the home campus discipline philosophy toward addressing student

misconduct. DAEPs do not have control over the frequency of or why students are placed in a DAEP, but rather this is a process dictated by the home campus. In other words, a district with zero tolerance policies may be more likely to repeatedly refer a student to a DAEP or other exclusionary punishments compared to a district that may seek alternative interventions (e.g., counseling, detention, or in-school suspension). In order to understand this approach, respondents were asked to describe the general discipline philosophy they perceived was adopted by the home campus. The responses between both groups varied. For most DAEPs with low student return rates, the general theme of the home campus discipline philosophy appeared to reflect *restorative discipline* practices (57.1%). However, the DAEPs interviewed with a high student return rate were more likely to describe their home campuses as adopting *zero tolerance* practices (71.4%).

Restorative Discipline

When asked to describe the home campus discipline approach, DAEPs with low student return rates most commonly expressed that the home campus engaged in *restorative discipline* practices. Restorative discipline is defined as a relational approach to building a positive school climate and addressing student behavior (Armour, 2016). Respondents described elements of restorative discipline incorporated by the home campus, which included efforts to understand the root cause of misbehavior and provide interventions to help students. Further, while accountability for misbehavior was acknowledged, punishment was considered in terms of what was in the best interest of the student. The respondents below with DAEPs with low return rates described their perceptions of the home campus discipline philosophy that support these efforts:

> *"The last two years has been more about a modified version of Restorative discipline practices. More about paying attention to why a student violated the code of conduct and less about the actual consequence. The administrators are taking more time to find out*

why a student violated conduct and more on the services needed to help the student. I will get calls from the home campus and asked about what are the options for a student who has committed an offense and if they have to come to DAEP. We discuss it, we don't want to make it unsafe at home campus, but we can determine the best approach and if other services are better than a DAEP placement or if they do in fact need to come here."

-Respondent C (Low Return Rate)

"The assistant principals do contact me and seek my guidance on whether a placement in the DAEP is needed before making a final decision, which is good. We try to make sure we stick with mandatory placements and really look hard at discretionary placements. We try to make sure that other efforts have been made by the home campus before placing the child in the DAEP and understanding the root cause of the behavior, but still holding the student accountable. All the assistant principals I work with are kid centered and they want to learn. As far as the letter of the law, the assistant principals are still learning, but the attitude from home campus is "what is best for the child".

-Respondent I (Low Return Rate)

The respondent below also discussed the home campus's approach to ensuring that each student is handled fairly, yet on a case-by-case basis to determine the best outcome for the student. He explained these efforts have improved the relationship that school staff have with parents and students in working together to address student misbehavior:

"There has always been that feel that every child is different and unique and so we take into account circumstances and evaluate a student on an individual basis to determine what is best for the student, but at the same time try to be fair and consistent with administering of consequences and look at mitigating factors. So we ask ourselves, are we assigning this student because that is what we always do, or do we need to evaluate other factors to see if we can address this in a better way? I have introduced to my campus principals the restorative practices – we have had zero tolerance in past, but not anymore. It is more case by case. Students know there is an expectation of behavior and know there is a procedure in place, but know that other factors that prompted the misbehavior will be taken into account. Parent and students are more open to communicating with district so we can understand what those mitigating factors are, but they also know that if the district feels that there are mitigating factors, there may still be consequences and it's fair and consistent. There is a feeling that the parent and student's input is valued here. "

-Respondent J (Low Return Rate)

Zero Tolerance

When asked to describe the home campus discipline approach, DAEPs with the highest student return rates most commonly expressed that the home campus engaged in

zero tolerance practices. As mentioned previously, zero tolerance policies describe a system of preset punishments that are intended to be applied consistently and without discretion for all levels of offenses (e.g., serious or minor), often resulting in exclusionary discipline practices (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). Respondents described the home campuses as unwilling to deal with student misbehavior and more likely to send students to the DAEP for minor offenses rather than finding alternatives to exclusionary discipline. The respondents below from DAEPs with high student return rates shared their thoughts on the home campus's lack of tolerance to address student misbehavior and attribute this lack of effort to competing priorities (e.g., classroom instruction, test scores, and the safety of other students at the home campus):

> *"I would say generally speaking there is quite a bit of lack of tolerance and lack of effort to understand the behaviors that are motivating the individual student. They respond to the surface level behavior and they don't – and I understand this because I have been a regular campus principal- but they don't have time or inclination to dig deeper to find out what the real issue is and it is easier to ship them off to the DAEP. I'm not blaming anybody for that and I completely understand that when you have hundreds or thousands of kids that you are trying to take care of and you have this group of 3-4 that are just disrupting every single class they are in, it can be easy just to remove them than it is to dig deeper because it is not a 5 minute conversation with these kids."*
>
> -Respondent K (High Return Rate)

> *"I would say zero tolerance is more across the board than anything. Schools are quick to send the students here without trying to get at the root cause of the problem with that student."*
>
> -Respondent L (High Return Rate)

> *"We get a lot of discretionary placements. I think that we have had an issue with the home campus or really the teacher not wanting to deal with a student. When we get a student for a discretionary issue, I look at their disciplinary history to look for trends. I can tell who the teachers do this the most and I try to talk with those teachers too. Some teachers are more worried about what they are teaching than who they are teaching – and I understand that is difficult to address because there is so much emphasis put on test scores."*
>
> -Respondent N (High Return Rate)

One of the respondents noted the presence of zero tolerance at the home campus, yet explained it is not applied consistently across all groups of students, which negatively impacts student's behavior in schools:

> *"The campus philosophy is zero tolerance, but from our kids' point of view the athletes get away with murder and everyone else gets in trouble, so it's not consistent and they are right from what I have observed. So if you are a member of a certain social group and you come to school with a marijuana pic on your shirt you get in trouble, but if you do the same thing and you are a member of the football team you just get a laugh and go change your shirt. It reinforces this idea that they already have that the world is lopsided and the world is not fair and they don't have a chance, so they are going to act out. So they already think "I'm a loser, so why not act like one." They see that the rules are not applied fairly anyways, so it does not matter how they act. I'm sure this causes frustration for them."*
>
> -Respondent F (High Return Rate)

DAEP Impact on Students

While the impact of exclusionary discipline, including the use of DAEPs, is suggested by research to lead to negative outcomes for students such as future involvement in the criminal justice system and dropping out of school (Fabelo et al., 2011; Monahan et al., 2014; Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005), respondents described the positive impact of a DAEP. Specifically, respondents were asked to share their thoughts on the overall impact of the DAEP as well as the type of feedback they receive from students. An emerging theme that developed equally from the majority of both interview groups (57.1% low return rates and 57.1% high return rates) was that DAEPs *provide positive relationships for students*, which respondents believed helped contribute to positive student outcomes while at the DAEP, such as doing well academically or engaging in positive behavior.

Provides Positive Relationships for Students

Among both interview groups, DAEPs were reported to facilitate an environment that *provided positive relationships for students*, which helped students thrive while at the DAEP. Specifically, respondents mentioned that most students performed better academically, displayed better coping mechanisms when they had bad days, and exhibited increased self-esteem while at the DAEP. The respondents spoke of students communicating that they did not want to leave because of the support and encouragement they received from DAEP staff, which students felt they do not receive while at the home campus. The following response, which represents a DAEP with high student return rates, described that students will often purposely get in trouble again in order to return to the DAEP because they know they are more supported in this environment by staff:

> ***"****I have had students that have left and returned back to their home campus and stated that they would like to come back to the DAEP because they get that individual attention, which the home campus is often times not able to provide. About 10% of the return students that come back, did just enough to get in trouble – but nothing violent- because they liked the structure and feel they are more successful here."*
>
> -Respondent A (High Return Rate)

The following respondents from both groups also described the importance these relationships have on students:

> *"Most dismissals are positive, and most students ask for us to please come visit them at their home campus. They build strong relationships with staff here and want to continue that because they know they won't have that at the home campus."*
>
> -Respondent B (Low Return Rate)

> *"The impact we make is helping students feel good and believe in themselves. Students have difficulty in their last few days here because they worry about going back because they don't think anyone is going to believe in them. They like being here because they are surrounded by people that encourage them and build their esteem. We are happy when we hear that our students do well when they return, but many tell us they know they are not going to succeed because they don't have the same kind of support at the traditional campus. Feedback is positive and we hear about students requesting certain staff members come back to home campus to visit them. Also, if we have any staff member who*

had a special connection or bonding with student that they are welcome to visit them as a big brother or mentor to ensure they are doing well, even if it is a para or the secretary. I also hear that they miss coming and they miss the structure. They miss that every day someone is talking to them and that lacks for them in a traditional school setting."

-Respondent C (Low Return Rate)

"I don't know if many of these would have made it without the relationships they made here because many don't have positive relationship with adults in their home life."

-Respondent K (High Return Rate)

"We have students that really never have a relationship with a teacher and don't know how to do that. What we have found is that we can show them that you can have a positive relationship with a teacher and a principal because we have time – we are right there with them. The kids realize that this old white man is just a regular guy and I'm not better than them or think I am better than them and they can just get to know me and trust that I am there to help them. I don't think this investment happens in the regular campus, especially the high school. These kids almost never know the name of their teachers, but here they know all of us. Students like that they are held accountable and that teachers pay attention to them and care about them."

-Respondent M (High Return Rate)

One of the respondents from a DAEP with high student return rates suggested the relationships students build with DAEP staff is based on trust, which empowers students to engage in activities that they otherwise would not be able to successfully accomplish at the home campus, such as completing a class assignment or public speaking in front of their peers, as well as demonstrating positive coping mechanisms to unsuccessful events:

"At first they are suspicious and as you would imagine, they have trust issues. But as they learn to trust, which happens over time, it gets better. For them it's taking a chance to step out and try to do well in class, like to give a speech or complete an art project and have it hung in the hallway – that is taking a risk for them, but they learn how to do and they learn how to deal with success as well as failure in a positive way."

-Respondent F (High Return Rate)

Factors Attributed to Low Student Return Rate

Finally, respondents that had lower rates of student returns to their DAEP were specifically asked to explain why they felt they had low returns. The respondents

provided a variety of reasons to explain this outcome. For example, one respondent felt his rural DAEP simply did not have significant problem students compared to a major urban DAEP. In other words, he explained most of his students committed low level offenses (e.g., skipping class or talking back to the teacher) that serve their punishment and do not generally come back. Another respondent explained the low student return rates of his DAEP are a factor of required parental involvement. For instance, parents are required to sign-in and sign-out their child each day at the DAEP, which the respondent described most parents view as a personal inconvenience, and therefore are more likely to ensure their child does not return.

However, the majority of respondents from this group (57%) suggested that low student returns were attributed to *relationship building* facilitated by the home campus as well as the DAEP. The respondents below described several efforts of relationship building such as DAEP staff visiting students at the home campus after returning to follow up on their progress, the home campus staff making efforts to understand the root causes of student misbehavior before sending a student to the DAEP, and DAEP staff assigning mentors at the home campus for returning students to ensure they have an adult to talk to about any issues they are having:

> *"The biggest reason for our success is because of the relationships we build here. I visit each student after they return to their home campus. I try to choose one time a week where I go to a different campus and I just follow up with my kids that have been here."*
>
> -Respondent B (Low Return Rate)

> *"There was a bigger effort from our central office and our home campuses to dive deeper into the violations that students are committing, not just get students gone from traditional campus because you are mandated to come over. By doing this we are establishing a rapport with the student and the parents starting at the home campus. And if a student is ultimately placed here at the DAEP because that may be the best decision, everyone is on the same page about the consequences – student, parent, and home campus, and it goes much smoother. We reinforce that relationship building here and so*

we are working hand in hand with the home campus to help these students be successful as they go through this discipline process.

-Respondent C (Low Return Rate)

"I think our success has to do with the attitude of the teacher we have at the DAEP. He has been there for several years and is a low key kind of person. He is good about getting to know each of the students and trying to understand them and their behavior. He develops very good relationships with the kids and is very supportive of them. He does a lot of social skills training with the students and treats them like they have more to offer this world, which builds up their self-esteem. Building these kids self-esteem goes a long way."

-Respondent I (Low Return Rate)

"I ensure they have an assigned mentor at the home campus upon their return, so if there is an issue with the student, the student knows they can go to a trusted adult to seek assistance to prevent the incident from escalating to negative or a punitive disciplinary matter. They have an outlet and it helps to build those relationships with adults so the student will have a positive rapport and respect for staff and others. So when they go back to home campus, they have trust and confidence to know that there are actually adults out there that do have that desire to want to develop relationships and support them. If we have students that do spend a lot of time in our program, we will contact home campus to try and secure a mentor there to help with transitioning that student back to the home campus successfully."

-Respondent J (Low Return Rate)

VI. DISCUSSION

Chapter VI provides a discussion of the quantitative and qualitative findings. As mentioned prior, DAEPs in Texas have been subject to relatively minimal accountability measures; therefore, very little is known about the types of practices or systems in place to serve some of the most at-risk students. To compound this issue, there has been no examination of the effectiveness of certain DAEP practices on recidivism in DAEPs (i.e., return to a DAEP). According to the TEA (2019), 17% of students placed in a DAEP in the 2016-2017 school year returned at least once within the same school year. Given the negative outcomes that are generally associated with exclusionary punishment in schools (e.g., low academic performance, dropping out, and involvement with the criminal justice system) (Fabelo et al., 2011; Monahan et al., 2014; Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005), DAEPs should implement practices that lead to a student's successful and permanent return to the home campus. This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1) What are the types of practices or support systems implemented across DAEPs in Texas?
3) What is the relationship between the types of practices implemented in a DAEP (i.e., instructional, discipline management, transitional, parent/guardian involvement, and staff training) and the rate of student return to a DAEP?

DAEP Practices in Texas

The main independent variables in this study (i.e., Instructional, Discipline Management, Transitional, Parent/Guardian Involvement, and Staff Training) are composite measures, which serve to measure the types of practices implemented in

DAEPs across Texas. As discussed in Chapter III, each of these factors and the measured items are based on prior literature and research instruments (AIM, 2001; Barr & Parrett, 1997; Black, 1997; Dempsey et al., 2007; Harrington-Lueker, 1994; Jacobs, 1995; McCreight, 1999; Quinn and Poirier, 2007; Raywid, 1994**)**. A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess the reliability of the items within these scales. Subsequent to the factor analysis, several items within the majority of the scales (i.e., Instructional, Discipline Management, Transitional, and Parent/Guardian Involvement) were eliminated, suggesting the items identified in prior literature may not measure what experts purport them to measure. It is also possible that other DAEP practices were not measured. For example, the qualitative findings illustrated on several occasions the theme of "positive relationship building" in the DAEP. This construct could potentially serve as a measure for a DAEP practice in helping to decrease student return rates.

Overall, the quantitative findings revealed that Discipline Management practices were the most commonly implemented among the respondents. These included items such as *behavioral expectations defined and communicated* and *consequences for rule violations applied consistently*. The least commonly reported practices that were implemented were Parent/Guardian practices (e.g., parent/guardian expected to attend DAEP exit conference and parent/guardian workshops were provided) and Staff Training practices (e.g., classroom/individual student behavior management techniques, social skills to help students develop prosocial behavior, and anger management).

Relationship between DAEP Practices in Texas and Student Return Rate

Beyond identifying the types of practices being implemented in DAEPs, this study also examined the relationship between the types of practices implemented and the rate of student return to a DAEP. It was predicted that DAEPs who implemented the practices in the study, particularly at higher scores of implementation, would have lower student return rates. However, bivariate correlations and multiple regression analyses did not identify any significant relationship between the practice variables and the rate of student return. These null findings could be due to a lack of suitable measures for DAEP practices used in this study, as evidenced by several items being eliminated in the factor analysis. It is also possible other DAEP practices exist that were not included when examining impact on student return rate. As mentioned prior, the qualitative analysis described "positive relationship building" as a critical purpose of a DAEP, along with being one of the most identified positive impacts on students in the DAEP. Future instruments should include this construct to better inform the analysis.

Further, the qualitative data may also provide more context for the quantitative findings. Recall the theme of *positive relationship building* that was identified in different contexts of the interviews (i.e., Purpose of DAEP and Impact of a DAEP on Students) with DAEPs. This concept was often described in the context of students feeling they had a trusting adult at the DAEP they could turn to for support and guidance. In particular, when asked about the impact DAEPs have on students, responses centered on the establishment of positive relationships between the students and their peers as well as the adults. Respondents also felt that as a result of the positive relationships cultivated, students thrived in other areas while at the DAEP. For example, respondents reported

students performed better academically, engaged in positive behavior (e.g., demonstrated better coping mechanisms when upset), and exhibited increased self-esteem. Further, respondents reported students often communicate that they do not want to leave the DAEP because they know they will not receive the same level of support at the home campus from staff. One of the respondents discussed that students will get in trouble at the home campus, just so they can return to the DAEP.

Based on the interviews, perhaps positive experiences in a DAEP felt by a student may actually increase, rather than decrease return rates. This may be an unintended outcome of DAEPs, rather than the home campus, serving the needs of students. This would also suggest that student return rates may not be the most appropriate measure of a DAEP's success. To further discuss the importance of relationship building, this theme was also described as being attributed to low return rates from DAEPs with low rates of recidivism. In this context, however, student connectivity with adults at the home campus was fostered while at the DAEP or emphasized after returning back to the home campus. In particular, DAEPs described instances of home campus staff (e.g., teacher or school counselor) visiting with students at the DAEP or mentors at the home campus staff being assigned to a student returning from a DAEP with the purpose of serving as a support network.

A notable finding is that some of the items in the transitional practice scale suggest components of relationship building that were commonly described in the interviews (i.e., teachers from the home campus visit the DAEP campus, students were provided transition counseling after returning to the home campus, DAEP staff visited home campus after student returned). In addition, the quantitative findings show these

items were either sometimes or never used by most of the DAEPs, with the exception of regular contact between DAEP and home campus staff during a student's DAEP placement. Overall, these findings suggest two potential outcomes: 1) positive relationships that are developed in a DAEP, but *not* fostered at the home campus, may increase return rates and 2) positive relationships that are developed at the DAEP *and* the home campus may decrease the likelihood of a student returning to a DAEP.

Another possible reason for no relationship found between DAEP practices and student return rate may be a factor of the home campus discipline philosophy, not DAEP practices. A common sentiment described by DAEPs through interviews was that DAEPs do not have any control or impact on whether a student returns to a DAEP. Many DAEPs identified the home campus's approach to student discipline as a factor in determining the return to a DAEP. This makes intuitive sense in that assignment to a DAEP is ultimately determined by the home campus. In fact, of the DAEPs interviewed with high student return rates, it was mostly reported that their home campuses took a zero-tolerance approach to school discipline. In these instances, the home campus was less likely to implement non-exclusionary punishment (e.g., detention, in-school suspension) or counseling services as a first intervention to student misconduct. For DAEPs interviewed with low student return rates, it was mostly reported that their home campus implemented restorative discipline practices. For example, DAEP interviews described a desire by the home campus to understand the root cause of a student's misbehavior or delinquency and address with appropriate interventions. Holding the student accountable for wrongdoing was acknowledged as a necessary component of the discipline process; however, punishment was determined from the perspective of what is in the best interest of the

student. It seems logical to attribute the home campus discipline philosophy as a major factor that would drive discipline outcomes for students, and an issue that deserves educational policy discussions around interventions that support positive (e.g., academic achievement, positive behavior) versus negative student outcomes (e.g., dropping out of school, repeated misbehavior or delinquency, involvement in the criminal justice system).

Limitations

Many benefits accompany this study, which include identifying the current state of practices used in Texas DAEPs, which are often not evaluated, and how these potentially relate to a student's transition back to the home classroom. This study also provides some contextual understanding to the quantitative findings through interviews conducted with DAEP principals. Further, this study provides some preliminary guidance for Texas DAEPs and home campuses in working collaboratively to improve student outcomes when addressing punishment in schools. However, limitations to this research do exist.

Most salient of these limitations is that this study does not comprehensively examine features of the home or district campus (e.g., discipline practices and philosophies) that undoubtedly have a major influence on the use of exclusionary discipline – in this case a DAEP placement. Rather, the scope of this study focuses more narrowly on providing an initial evidence based system of practices in DAEPs that lead to positive student outcomes as measured by recidivism. The researcher, however, acknowledges that home campus discipline practices - beyond DAEP practices – contribute to recidivism, and therefore attempts to discover these contextual factors qualitatively. Specifically, the interview protocol includes questions that ask interviewees

about their perceptions of the home campus discipline philosophy toward the use of DAEPs and discretionary placements. By asking interviewees these questions, the researcher can better understand the extent of the home campus discipline philosophy and how that contributes to student success.

Other limitations of this study were potentially informed through the quantitative findings. As mentioned, several of the items for the majority of the DAEP practices were eliminated in the factor analysis, suggesting these items may not be strong measures of these constructs. Further, no relationship was identified between any of the DAEP practices in this study and student return rates. This could be due, in part, to a measurement error in the DAEP practices scales, as well as the possibility of the home campus being the main influence on recidivism rates. In addition, it is possible other DAEP practices were not included in the quantitative analysis, such as the concept of "relationship building" that was discovered in the qualitative data.

Another shortcoming this study presents concerns the exclusive focus on Texas DAEPs, which presents issues of external validity, making it difficult to generalize the current findings outside of Texas. However, the geographic diversity of Texas and the transferable nature of practices offer the potential for this study to provide guidance that may translate to other state disciplinary educational settings. As mentioned previously, this study may include the potential for coverage error, which occurs when the sampling frame does not include the entire population being studied. In order to provide a comprehensive sampling frame that included all possible DAEPs in Texas, a list of reported off-site DAEP facilities and in-house DAEPs was used from the TxSSC. In

order to mitigate coverage error, all DAEPs in Texas identified through the TXSSC list were administered the online survey.

VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Texas educators and policymakers continue to improve discipline systems that ensure positive outcomes for students and the overall educational environment, while maintaining systems of accountability. Although at their inception in the mid-1990s Texas DAEPs were established with minimal oversight, legislation now charges TEA to establish several measures of accountability (e.g., student/teacher ratio standards, inclusion of core subjects, and pre-post academic assessments, required training for teachers, and inclusion in the overall district improvement plan). Legislation also requires schools to take into consideration mitigating factors before placement in a DAEP (e.g., self-defense, intent, and discipline history) (TAC, 103.1201; TEA, 2019; TEC, 37.001;). However, an inventory of the actual practices or programmatic structures implemented by DAEPs, such as instructional or behavioral management methods is unknown. Further, the impact these practices have on student recidivism has not been thoroughly examined. This study attempts to explore both these issues, particularly given the negative impact associated with exclusionary discipline practices and the thousands of students in Texas that enter a DAEP more than once in single school year.

Although the quantitative findings realized from this study did not suggest a relationship between DAEP practices and student return rates, the qualitative data provided insight into other impacts a DAEP might contribute. A concept often discussed by DAEP principals as a central approach for student success was relationship building and connectivity with students. This study did not include a construct for measuring relationship building; this does appear to necessitate more exploration to better understand its impact on student success *while* at the DAEP. Perhaps DAEPs are meeting

particular needs of students (e.g., mentorship and/or positive relationships), but these needs are not being met or sustained in the traditional campus, resulting in delinquency and/or misconduct and repeated misbehavior by a student over time. As some of the respondents in the interviews noted, many students want to come back to the DAEP because they feel more supported in this type of environment compared to the home campus. For example, the respondents explained that the students will get in trouble at the home campus after returning so they can be placed back in the DAEP. It is important to recognize that this does not suggest an intentional disregard for student needs at the traditional campus setting, rather a need to re-conceptualize how educational systems initially respond to student misconduct and support their transition back to the home campus.

While the findings from this study are not conclusive, there are some potential indications that DAEPs might produce positive outcomes for students when compounded with other measures. This logic parallels the notion that schools cannot do it all alone, and therefore, neither can DAEPs. As discussed, DAEPs that reported low student return rates attributed these outcomes to relationships that were developed with staff at the DAEP *and* at the home campus during and after a placement. The support systems continued at the home campus for a student were a common theme described by DAEP principals that had low student return rates. In a study of DAEPs that utilized a behavioral intervention program (i.e., Boys Town Education Model), Randle (2016) found an increase in re-offending, and a decrease in academic achievement and school attendance by students following a DAEP placement. Despite the suggestion that the program may have been ineffective, Randle (2016) also discovers that system supports provided by the

program at the DAEP (e.g., low teacher-student ratio, relationship building, and structured environment) were not fostered in the home campus, possibly leading to students re-offending. Perhaps DAEPs do provide a needed temporary placement for a student – with an emphasis on rehabilitation versus punishment. However, this transition is only as effective as the home campuses' ability to provide continuity of support systems for the student to help with a successful reintegration back to the home campus.

To further emphasize the need for a continuity in support systems, one of the main challenges DAEPs reported was not being resourced to serve students with mental health issues or serious history of trauma – factors likely associated with delinquency or other serious misconduct that in turn result in a DAEP placement (Mullen & Lambie, 2013). Further, students placed in a DAEP are also more likely to engage in substance abuse (Rushton, Forcier, & Schectman, 2002). Given the need for specialized services that DAEP students are more likely to require, outside of behavior modification strategies, it would seem most appropriate that these settings house full-time personnel with a background in mental health counseling (Moore, Ohrt, &Packer-Williams, 2020), such as a license professional counselor. Further, school districts should focus on – if they do not already - recruiting and preserving highly motivated educators to work in these more challenging educational environments.

Policy Recommendations

A panacea for addressing school discipline practices that promotes positive outcomes for youth requires a multi-faceted approach. Educators and policy makers, particularly in Texas, continue to implement improvements to the school discipline system, and several more approaches should be considered moving forward. While

discretionary and mandatory placements in a DAEP have continued to gradually decrease over the last eight years, discretionary placements are still utilized more. Discretion can be problematic if not applied consistently. Nevertheless, schools should have the flexibility to make discipline decisions that are in the best interest of the student, while ensuring a safe and conducive learning environment. Although discretion is needed, perhaps schools should be required to incorporate graduated sanctions for non-mandatory DAEP placements, which would facilitate the implementation of alternative discipline measures first and exclusionary discipline as a last resort.

Subsequently, if a DAEP placement is ultimately applied as a discipline measure, the well-being of the student while at the DAEP and following return to the home campus should be a focus of intervention. As discussed prior, the qualitative data from this study and prior research suggest that DAEP students are more likely to have mental health issues, suffer from trauma, or engage in substance abuse. Therefore the availability of consistent support systems is essential. DAEPs should be required to have a full-time mental health professional on staff to meet certain student needs. Further, school districts should be required to have a policy and procedure in place that specifically addresses the continuation of support services and/or interventions, if deemed necessary, after a student re-integrates back to a regular classroom setting. The student-specific plan should be developed collaboratively between the DAEP and home campus prior to a student returning to the home campus.

Additionally, the use of alternative discipline approaches should be considered by school districts. Of the DAEPs interviewed that had a low student return rate, the majority reported the home campus implemented restorative discipline practices as a

method of discipline. TEA promotes the use of restorative discipline practices in schools. In fact, TEA currently partners with the Institute for Restorative Justice and Restorative Dialogue at The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work on the statewide implementation of restorative practices in schools, which began in 2015 (Restorative Discipline, n.d.). Restorative discipline strikes the balance between holding a student accountable for wrongdoing, but also seeks an intervention that is intended to prevent future delinquency or misconduct. Requiring schools to implement a particular program may not be feasible for several reasons, in particular, availability of resources and assurance of rigorous evaluation of efficacy. However, encouraging the use of alternative discipline approaches, while making available free tools for schools to do so, is practical. TEA currently provides free training and fidelity of implementation tools for schools to self-assess. Training in restorative discipline is also provided by regional Education Service Centers across Texas and focuses on integrating restorative practices within Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, a framework for teaching pro-social behavior in schools (Restorative Discipline, n.d.). While these practices are not required in schools, alternative discipline approaches that yield positive results based on rigorous study should be highly encouraged by policy-makers and educators.

Before the start of the 87th Texas Legislative Session in 2021, the Senate Education Committee Interim charges are to review DAEPs. While the recommendations above do not appear to be items of consideration at this time, areas that will be evaluated, and are still important, are the length of placements, quality of instruction, and physical conditions of DAEP facilities (Senate Committee on Education, n.d.). While recommendations made by this committee will be focused on the support of academic

success of DAEPs and enhancing public schools ability to assist these students, tangential to the recommendations will hopefully be a discussion on continuity of support systems that focus on the mental health interventions to meet additional student needs when appropriate, along with previously noted policy considerations.

Future Research

Despite the limitations of this study and null findings produced from the quantitative analyses, the qualitative results inform alternative methods of future examination for a more robust research study. As discussed, several items within the majority of the scales in this study were eliminated following a confirmatory factor analysis. While it can be beneficial to glean a basis of measurement from previous literature, the exclusion of many of the items suggests a lack of suitable measures. Moving forward, these constructs should be re-examined in how they are measured within their corresponding items. For example, some of the items in the transitional practice scale could also be considered aspects of relationship/connectedness activities (i.e., teachers from the home campus visit the DAEP campus and DAEP staff visited home campus after student returned). Additionally, the construct of *relationships/connectedness* should be included as a scale with appropriate corresponding measures (e.g., frequency of positive conversations between DAEP teachers and students, mentoring activities, and home visits).

Based on finding from the current study, examining the impact of DAEP practices lends itself to a different methodological approach. Examining recidivism rates as the salient outcome variable for DAEPs does not appear to be the most appropriate measure. Realizing that recidivism is more a factor of the home campus discipline approach,

perhaps it would make sense to understand the impact of DAEPs on student outcomes *while* placed in a DAEP (e.g., academic improvement, attendance rates, and behavior referrals). Assessing student perceptions of connectedness, in addition to staff, while at the DAEP would also yield a more holistic analyses. Further, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of student discipline outcomes, particularly recidivism rates at a DAEP, it would be advantageous to examine the discipline practices of the home campus in more detail. Although this study does ask about home campus discipline philosophy, this information is gathered from the perspective of the DAEP, which could be biased. Examining campus discipline records and other strategies to curtail misconduct should be assessed from the home campus directly. Similar to surveying students about their experiences at the DAEP, these students should also be asked about their perceptions of school discipline and connectedness at the home campus. Ultimately, future studies should include a more comprehensive research design consisting of sampling, student and staff surveys, student and staff interviews, and analyses of campus data records.

The educational response surrounding school discipline over the last two decades, from increased use of policing in schools to zero-tolerance motivated exclusionary discipline practices, continues to be viewed by some as a detriment to student outcomes (i.e., low academic achievement, increased dropout rates, and involvement in the criminal justice system). However, schools have a responsibility to address student delinquency and other misconduct on campus and hold students accountable for those actions – a failure to do so could potentially lead to the negative outcomes we are ultimately trying to prevent.

APPENDIX SECTION

Appendix A. Online Questionnaire

Survey Recruitment Email

Dear [Insert Point of Contact],

A study is being conducted to examine the current practices or support systems being implemented in Texas disciplinary alternative education programs and how such practices may impact a student's successful transition back into the home classroom. While little is known about the current state of implementation of practices in DAEPs across Texas, some techniques in DAEPs have been known to incorporate methods such as militaristic "boot camp" type programs, point systems for rewarding positive behavior, community service, enforcing a strict dress code, conducting formal intake processes, and providing transition support back to the home campus.

You are being asked to participate in this study because of your expertise about and experience working in a DAEP. Your participation in this study may benefit your DAEP campus and other DAEPs across Texas. From the information you provide in this survey, we can learn more about effective practices that will help students in your campus successfully transition back to the home campus, which in turn leads to safe and productive learning environments for all students.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks, either physical or emotional, as a result of your participation in this survey. You will not be asked questions that are sensitive in nature. Please note that all your responses will be kept confidential. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Kathy Martinez-Prather, the Principal Investigator for this study, by email at km60@txstate.edu or by phone at 512-787-4369.

To access the survey, you will need to enter the unique access code provided below after clicking on the link:

[Unique Code]

Access Survey!

Sincerely,

Kathy Martinez-Prather

Survey Consent Page

IRB Approval Number: 2017650

Researcher: Kathy Martinez-Prather
Phone: 512-787-4369
Email: km60@txstate.edu

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Christine Sellers
Phone: 512-245-3341
Email: css100@txstate.edu

Please carefully read the following information regarding this study.

This study is being conducted by Kathy Martinez-Prather (km60@txstate.edu; 512-787-4369), a Texas State University researcher in the School of Criminal Justice. The purpose of this study is to examine the current practices being implemented in Texas disciplinary alternative education programs and how such practices impact a student's successful transition back into the home classroom.

You are being asked to participate in this study because of your knowledge about DAEP practices and information regarding certain discipline data on your campus. However, you can designate another DAEP staff person on campus to fill out the survey. The research will involve completing an electronic survey that will ask you to report the types of practices that are being used in your DAEP, as well as student discipline data. The survey will take approximately between 35 and 40 minutes to complete. To assist you in answering this survey, you will need aggregate information about the number of students and student *returns* to the DAEP for school years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 for both elementary and secondary placements, reason for placement (e.g., discretionary or mandatory), and demographic information (e.g., student race/ethnicity and gender, and DAEP geographic location).

Examples of questions that will be asked in this survey are as follows:

To the best of your knowledge, indicate the frequency of use for the following discipline management practices in your DAEP (i.e., mentorship, token or incentive reward system, positive reinforcement).

What was the total number of students that started at your DAEP at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year?

At the end of this survey, you will be asked if you are interested in potentially participating in a follow-up interview, which will serve to gather more in-depth information about your DAEP. If selected, the interview will be conducted by phone and will last between 40 and 45 minutes.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose to not answer a particular question. You are also free to choose not to participate or withdraw from this research at any point in time. There will be no consequences for any answers you provide. There are no foreseeable risks, either physical or emotional, as a result of your participation in this survey. You will not be asked questions that are sensitive in nature. The researcher will

ensure the confidentiality of your information by administering the survey on-line through a secure web service and storing the data on a secure and password protected computer, of which the researcher will only have access. The data collected from this survey will only be reported in summary and will not identify you or your campus in any way.

Your participation in this study may benefit your DAEP campus and other DAEPs across Texas. From the information you provide in this survey, we can learn more and disseminate knowledge about effective practices that will help students in our campuses successfully transition back to the home campus, which in turn leads to safe and productive learning environments for all students.

Pertinent questions about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the IRB chair, Dr. Jon Lasser (512-245-3414 – lasser@txstate.edu), or to Ms. Becky Northcut, Compliance Specialist (512-245-2101). This study has been approved by Texas State University Institutional Review Board; Approval Number: 2017650. Please print a copy of this information for your records.

Completion and submission of this survey will imply as your consent to participate in this research project.

Take Survey!

Section I. DAEP Practices

Instructions

The first section of the survey is divided into five domains: 1) Instructional, 2) Discipline Management, 3) Transitional, 4) Parent/Guardian Involvement, and 5) Staff Training. Each domain includes a set of items that represent a combination of practices identified in prior research as well as those outlined in Texas law. The purpose of this section is to collect data on the types of practices that you are implementing in your DAEP. All responses in this section should reflect practices that were being implemented during both the **2014-2015** and **2015-2016** school years. Do not select a frequency for a practice that was implemented in only one of the two school years.

1. **Instructional practices** are techniques or methods used by DAEP staff to promote student academic success and respond to individual student needs. Indicate the frequency in which the following instructional practices were implemented in your DAEP during **both the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years**.

	Never Used by Any Teachers	**Used by Some Teachers**	**Used by Most or All Teachers**
Teachers used one-on-one instruction			
Teachers used small group instruction			
Computer-aided instruction was used			
Self-paced instruction was used			
Peer tutoring was used			
Teachers were certified for the content area(s) they were assigned to teach			
Instruction was individualized to match student needs			
Teachers conducted assessments of student learning needs and progress			
Curriculum was aligned with the home campus curriculum			

Teachers had high expectations for student learning			
Individualized long-term goals for students were established			
Individualized short-term goals for students were established			
Oral or written progress reports were provided to parents			
Oral or written progress reports were provided to teachers on home campus			
Other (specify)			
Other (specify)			

2. **Discipline management practices** are techniques or methods used by DAEP staff to prevent or address negative student behavior. Indicate the frequency in which the following discipline management practices where implemented in your DAEP during **<u>both</u> the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years**.

	Never	**Sometimes**	**Always**
Behavioral expectations were clearly defined and communicated to students			
Classroom routines and procedures were established and followed consistently			
Teachers modeled positive behaviors consistently			
Rules and behavioral expectations were applied consistently for all students			

Consequences for rule violations were applied consistently for all students			
Teachers used positive reinforcement to reward appropriate, rule-following behavior in their classes			
A school wide token or incentive reward system was used for all students throughout the school			
Individualized behavior support plans were used for all students (e.g., not just students with disabilities)			
Students were supervised at all times			
Student academic and behavioral progress was evaluated regularly			
Staff mentored students			
Individual counseling was provided to students			
Students were involved in community service activities			
Dress code was consistently enforced for all students			
Other (specify)			
Other (specify)			

3. **Transitional practices** are techniques or methods used by DAEP staff and the home campus staff to help facilitate student transition between the alternative and regular campus. Indicate the frequency in which the following transitional practices were implemented in your DAEP during **both the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years**.

	Never	**Sometimes**	**Always**
Written contract was used between students, parent/guardian and DAEP to formalize expectations for the student's behavior upon return to the home campus.			
One or more teachers from the home campus visited the DAEP			
Students were provided transition counseling after they returned to their home campus			
DAEP staff visited the home campuses after students returned to follow up on student's progress			
DAEP staff had regular contact with the home campus staff during students' DAEP placement			
Other (specify)			
Other (specify)			

4. **Parent/guardian involvement** practices are techniques or methods used by DAEP staff to encourage participation and support of the student's educational plan and successful transition back to the regular campus. Indicate the frequency in which the following parental/guardian involvement practices were implemented in your DAEP during both the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years.

	Never	**Sometimes**	**Always**
Parents or guardians of students entering the DAEP were expected to attend a DAEP orientation			
Parents or guardians regularly attended the DAEP orientation meeting			
Parents or guardians of students exiting the DAEP were expected to attend a DAEP exit conference			
Parents or guardians regularly attended the DAEP exit conference			
Parenting or guardian workshops were provided			
Parents or guardians were encourage to volunteer at the DAEP			
Parent or guardians were encourage to be involved in their child's education, and specific opportunities for parent or guardian involvement were offered			
Other (specify)			
Other (specify)			

5. **Staff training practices** involve on-going professional development for DAEP staff in areas directly related to improving the delivery of academic instruction to and discipline management of students. Indicate the frequency in which DAEP staff received training in the following areas during **both the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years**.

	0-2 Training Sessions	**3-5 Training Sessions**	**More than 5 Training Sessions**
DAEP staff received training in curricular or instructional strategies to meet the needs of individual students			
DAEP staff received training in classroom or individual student behavior management techniques			
DAEP staff received training to better understand the needs and legal requirements related to students with disabilities who receive special education services			
DAEP staff received diversity training to better understand the diverse populations they serve			
DAEP staff received social skills training to better understand how to develop students' prosocial behavior			
DAEP staff received anger management training			
DAEP staff received conflict resolution training to teach students how to resolve problems with peers			

DAEP staff received training in classroom or informal counseling techniques for students			
Other (specify)			
Other (specify)			

Section II. Discipline and Demographic Data – Elementary Level

Instructions

In order to answer Section II and Section III, you will need to have aggregate data readily available for both elementary and secondary grade levels such as the number of student returns to the DAEP during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years, reason for placement (e.g., discretionary or mandatory), as well as student and DAEP demographic information (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, and geographic location).

According to Health and Safety Code, Chapter 103.1201(h)(1), elementary grade students assigned to a DAEP must be separated from secondary grade students assigned to a DAEP. The following section asks questions about discipline and demographic data for **elementary grade students** assigned to your DAEP during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years. To the best of your knowledge, please provide the most accurate numerical response (e.g., 0, 10, 500, etc.) to each of the following questions.

6. What was the total number of **elementary** grade students that started at your DAEP at the beginning of the **2014-2015** school year? ____ (If 0, skip to #12)

7. Of these **elementary** grade students, what was the total number that **returned** back to your DAEP at least once in the following 24 months? ____ (If 0, skip to #12)

8. Of these **elementary** grade students that **returned** to the DAEP at least once in the following 24 months, how many were for <u>mandatory</u> assignments? _____

9. Of these **elementary** grade students that **returned** to the DAEP at least once in the following 24 months, how many were for <u>discretionary</u> assignments? ____

10. What is the approximate racial/ethnic breakdown of your DAEP **elementary** grade student(s) that **returned** at least once to the DAEP in the following 24 months?

Race/Ethnicity	Numerical Count (e.g., 10)
African American or Black	
Asian	
Hispanic/Latino	
White	
Other	

11. What is the gender breakdown in your DAEP **elementary** grade student(s) that **returned** at least once to the DAEP in the following 24?

Gender	Numerical Count (e.g., 10)
Female	
Male	

Section III: Discipline and Demographic Data – Secondary Level

Instructions

The next section of this survey asks questions about discipline and demographic data for **secondary grade students** assigned to your DAEP during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years. To the best of your knowledge, please provide numerical responses (e.g., 0, 10, 500, etc.) to the following questions.

12. What was the total number of **secondary** grade students that started at your DAEP at the beginning of the **2014-2015** school year? ____ (If 0, skip to #18).

13. Of these **secondary** grade students, what was the total number that **returned** back to your DAEP at least once in the following 24 months? ____ (If 0, skip to #18)

14. Of these **secondary** grade students that **returned** to the DAEP at least once in the following 24 months, how many were for <u>mandatory</u> assignments? _____

15. Of these **secondary** grade students that **returned** to the DAEP at least once in the following 24 months, how many were for <u>discretionary</u> assignments? ____

16. What is the approximate racial/ethnic breakdown of your DAEP **secondary** grade students that **returned** at least once to the DAEP in the following 24?

Race/Ethnicity	**Numerical Count (e.g., 10)**
African American or Black	
Asian	
Hispanic/Latino	
White	
Other	

17. What is the gender breakdown in your DAEP **secondary** grade students that **returned** at least once to the DAEP in the following 24 months?

Gender	**Numerical Count (e.g., 10)**
Female	
Male	

18. Overall, which of the following best describes the discipline approach or philosophy of the home campus(es) in the school district(s) you serve?
    a. Zero tolerance
    b. Positive behavioral interventions and supports
    c. Restorative justice
    d. Other (specify): _____

19. Select the most appropriate community type in which your DAEP is located.
    a. Rural
    b. Suburban
    c. Urban

20. What is the position of the person filling out this survey?
    a. Principal
    b. Other (specify):_____

Section IV. Follow-Up Interviews

In order to gather more in-depth information about your DAEP, we may ask you to participate in a follow-up interview. If selected, the interview will be conducted by phone and will take between 40-45 minutes of your time. The following section will ask you to indicate if you are willing to participate in a follow up interview, along with contact information to schedule the interview at your convenience.

21. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview? (If no, then participant will be sent to question #22. If yes, participant will be directed to fill out contact information below.)
    a. Yes
    b. No

Name:

Position:

Email Address:

Phone:

22. Please provide any other information that you would like to share about your DAEP.

Submission Page

Thank you for your participation and taking the time to fill out this important questionnaire. Your participation will help assist DAEPs in Texas with implementing effective practices that lead to positive student outcomes. If you would like a copy of the results of this study or if you have questions or comments you want to share, contact Kathy Martinez-Prather at km60@txstate.edu or by phone at 512-787-4369.

Appendix B. Interview Recruitment Script

"Hello, my name is Kathy Martinez-Prather. I am a researcher at Texas State University. I am contacting you because you recently completed a survey about your DAEP practices. At the end of that survey, you indicated that you would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview. It should take approximately 40 to 45 minutes to complete the interview. The purpose of this study is to examine the current practices being implemented in Texas disciplinary alternative education programs and how such practices impact a student's successful transition back into the home classroom.

If you would still be interested in participating in this interview, we can set up a time now or you can let me know when a good time would be to schedule it."

If yes, then researcher will set up a time with the participant:

"I have you scheduled for an interview on _____. If you have any questions, I can be reached at 512-787-4369 or km60@txstate.edu.

Thank you for your help."

If not interested, researcher will end the call:

"Thank you for your time."

Appendix C. Interview Protocol

Study Title: Texas Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs: An Empirical Basis for Effective Practices and Support Systems

Researcher: Kathy Martinez-Prather

Introduction: Hello, my name is Kathy Martinez-Prather and I am contacting you because you agreed to participate in a follow-up interview to gather more in-depth information about how your DAEP operates. Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose to not answer a particular question. You are also free to choose not to participate or to withdraw from this interview at any point in time. There will be no consequences for any answers you provide. You will not be asked questions that are sensitive in nature. Please note that your responses will be kept confidential. The data from this survey will be reported in aggregate only.

There are no foreseeable risks, either physical or emotional, as a result of your participation in this research project. Your participation in this study may benefit your DAEP campus and other DAEPs across Texas. From the information you provide in this survey, we can learn more and disseminate knowledge about effective practices that will help students in your campus successfully transition back to the home campus, which in turn leads to safe and productive learning environments for all students.

The interview will take approximately 40 to 45 minutes. Do you agree to participate in the interview?

To facilitate note-taking, I would like to audio tape our conversation today to make sure that your information is recorded accurately. Do I have your consent to audiotape our conversation? [If respondent says "No", proceed with interview *without* recording the conversation].

Background information on interviewee:

1. What is your position at the DAEP?

2. How many years have you been employed with the DAEP?

3. What primary functions does your job involve?

Information about DAEP:

2) Describe the environment of the DAEP campus in which you work (asked of all 10 DAEP campuses).

    a. How does this impact the practices or support systems you provide to students placed in a DAEP?

3) According to this study, your DAEP was found to have some of the lower student return rates compared to other DAEPs that participated in this study. Tell me why you think you have lower rates of student returns to your DAEP? (Only asked of the 5 DAEPs who have low student return rates)

4) What do you feel the purpose of a DAEP should be? (This and all subsequent questions will be asked of all 10 DAEPs)

5) What type of challenges do you experience at your DAEP?

    a. Describe a typical DAEP experience.

6) How would you change or improve your DAEP?

7) Tell me about your DAEP staff. Describe their attitude toward working with students that are placed in a DAEP.

    a. How do your DAEP staff work with students who return to the DAEP?
    b. How do your DAEP staff work with students who return to the DAEP more than once?

8) What is the working relationship like between the DAEP staff and home campus staff? Between DAEP staff and parents of students?

9) How would you describe the level of support provided by the District to your DAEP?

    a. Describe how the DAEP is incorporated into the overall District's mission.

10) Describe the discipline practices or discipline philosophy of the home campus(s) in the school district(s) you serve?

    a. How do you feel this impacts student behavior in schools?

11) What are the most common discipline infractions student's commit that lead to their placement in your DAEP?

    a. What types of discipline infractions do you feel should result in a student being placed in a DAEP?

    b. Describe a removal in which you felt that a student placed in your DAEP was an inappropriate placement and/or consequence.

12) How do the students seem to respond to the DAEP?

    a. What type of feedback do you receive from the students in the DAEP?

13) Describe how your DAEP measures student success?

14) Ultimately, how would you describe the overall impact that the DAEP has on the students that participate?

That concludes our interview. Is there anything else you would like to share with me today about your DAEP that was not addressed? Again, thank you for agreeing to speak with me today.

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