



Studies in the Postmodern Theory of Education

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Performances of Research

*Critical Issues
in K-12 Education*

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Chapter 5

Doing Time in ISS: A Performance of School Discipline

Katherine Evans

Introduction

Issues with student behavior have plagued schools, administrators, and classroom teachers for a long while. Historically, approaches to school discipline have alternated between highly punitive and more democratic (Evans & Lester, 2010). With the emergence of zero-tolerance policies in the mid-1980s, school discipline practices took on more punitive characteristics, with mandatory suspensions or expulsions for certain offenses (Rivkin, 2009). Current research on school discipline suggests that suspensions and expulsions not only are ineffective, but also negatively impact students academically, socially, and emotionally (American Psychological Association, 2008; Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006). Ferguson (2000) argued that classroom management often is simply about controlling students' behavior through the use of rules and subsequent consequences for breaking those rules. According to Ferguson, such discipline serves primarily to sort, evaluate, rank, and compare students based on their behavior, with the goal being "the production of people who are docile workers, self-regulated and self-disciplined" (p. 52) who conform to institutional norms. Discipline, then, serves as a tool for reinforcing social norms and rendering student bodies submissive, and punishment serves as the mechanism for addressing the violation of those norms (Foucault, 1977). Students who do not comply with normative or socially constructed rules about appropriate behavior often are excluded from schools or classrooms so that teachers can focus more effectively on those students who appear to be more motivated to learn (Noguera, 2003; Vavrus & Cole, 2002).

In the immediate aftermath of the Gun Free Schools Act (GFSA) of 1994 and the ensuing implementation of zero-tolerance policies, there was a sharp increase in school suspensions, followed by a wave of educational research that illustrated the negative impact, academically and socially, on students who were being suspended (see, for example, Casella, 2001; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997). In light of the evidence against removing the student from the school environment, schools began looking for alternatives to out-

of-school suspension (OSS) for less serious behaviors; this prompted an increase in the use of in-school suspension (ISS). ISS generally involves the removal of students from their regular classrooms for a specific amount of time, during which they are "isolated from the general student body" and "expected to sit or study quietly for the duration of the punishment" (Theriot & Dupper, 2010, p. 209).

Although ISS was designed as an alternative to OSS, it was still perceived as punitive and, in many cases, continues to be exclusionary in that it excludes students from interacting with their peers and participating in learning opportunities. In one of the few studies that specifically examine the implementation of ISS, Troyan (2003) found that the educational services provided to students in ISS are vastly different from those in the regular classroom. Theriot and Dupper (2010) also argued that ISS is often configured in ways that produce consequences similar to OSS, such as lack of academic progress and increased social isolation (see also Christle, Nelson, & Jolivette, 2004; Hyman & Snook, 2000; Kupechik, 2010).

Very little research has specifically examined ISS as a form of school discipline; even less research has considered ISS from the perspectives of students. Thus, the purpose of this research was to understand ISS from the perspective of 13 middle school students in a school system in the southeast section of the U.S. The original study (Evans, 2011) included unstructured interviews focused on making sense of students' experiences in ISS. Desiring to move beyond mere descriptions of students' experiences, I chose to use performative writing as a way to engage with the reader/audience in ways that enact and embody those experiences of being in ISS (Madison, 2012). In this performance, then, the specific school disciplinary practice of ISS was examined from the perspective of those who have been at the receiving end of such practices, namely students. In drawing on the use of performative writing, I aimed to provide a space to "teach, incite, inspire, or provoke" (Bochner & Ellis, 2003, p. 507) a deeper understanding of those students' experiences with ISS.

Positionality

As a teacher-educator, I seek to promote classroom climates that facilitate the learning and well-being of every student. As a former middle and high school special educator, I have taught students who have been constructed by those in authority, sometimes by me, as "problem students,"

"discipline problems," or "delinquents." I have observed the impact of exclusionary discipline on their academic, emotional, and social lives. I believe not only that these students have opinions about their own experiences with school discipline, but also that they may have suggestions for improving related educational dilemmas. Further, as a researcher, it is my intention to provide opportunities for students to represent and define themselves, rather than to be defined by others. In a special edition of the journal *Theory into Practice* that focused on student perspectives, Lincoln (1995) called for more research that includes student perspectives, stating that they are "both the inheritors and the inheritance of the future" (p. 88) and should be considered "the primary stakeholders in their own learning processes" (p. 89). Since then, there has been a slight increase in such research (see for example, Brown, 2007; Cook-Sather, 2009; Fine & Weis, 2003). Unfortunately, however, student voices often remain excluded from educational research because of "intellectual paradigms that typically subtract, discredit, and disempower students' voices and experiences" (Rodriguez, 2008, p. 438). It was those student perspectives about ISS that I sought in this research; it is those perspectives that I seek to highlight in this performance.

Theoretical Framework

Situating this study within a framework of social constructionism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), I oriented to rules and expectations as socially constructed and interpreted contextually by both the teacher and the students (Vavrus & Cole, 2002). When such interpretations vary between student and teacher, the students' interpretations are often disallowed, resulting in what teachers then construct as misbehavior (Thornberg, 2008). Further, as students' behaviors are constructed by teachers as deviant, inappropriate, and so on, the identities of students become reified into social categories (e.g., "the good kids and the bad kids," "the delinquents," or "tough cases"). Viewing school discipline and student behavior through a social constructionist framework opens the door for multiple perspectives and allows us to complicate notions of school discipline by including underrepresented voices. Choosing to engage in performative writing opens the door to consider the ways in which we view school discipline as mediated by our representations of school discipline, for if we are to "change the world, we must change how we write and perform it" (Denzin, 2003, p. 78).

Although the data from this research have been represented previously in more traditional academic formats (Evans, 2011), in this chapter I sought to present the findings in an experimental form. The use of the arts, including performance, as a way of representing research findings, allows us to transcend conventions, and serves as a "method for understanding one's own life, producing multicultural knowledge, evoking self-understanding" (Bochner & Ellis, 2003, p. 506). Through the use of performance, research findings potentially move "beyond the transcribed interview text and field note observations" to a place where the audience can understand the characters as "acting, interacting, touching and feeling, seeing and hearing, making sense of and representing their lives" through the performance (Roberts, 2008, n.p.).

With traditional academic texts, it is easy to flatten experiences, to oversimplify and reduce those experiences to themes described and defined by words alone; in those places, the "complex, finely nuanced meaning that is embodied, tacit, intoned, gestured, improvised, coexperienced, covert" is often "squeezed out" (Conquergood, 2002, p. 146). By involving the *words* of the participants, but also including nonverbal and aesthetic dimensions to the performance, I sought to provide the reader and/or audience with a chance to "understand, feel, and grapple with the experiences being expressed" (Bochner & Ellis, 2003, p. 509). Thus, as performers take up the script, adding their own interpretive layer to the text itself, there is an opportunity to experience those nuanced, often unattended-to layers of communication—the tone of voice, the gestures, the eye contact, and so on—that enhance our understanding of experiences (Bochner & Ellis).

In teacher-education classrooms, the infusion of theory and practice is often a source of tension; a great deal of theoretical information is passed along to pre-service teachers, at times without adequate experiences to which to relate the information. The use of performance within teacher education potentially provides a space for creating new meaning beyond simple definitions and theories; it provides a glimpse into the possible applications of such theories and allows for new ways of interpreting and developing understanding. Thus, rather than simply the dominant academic genre of knowing about something through observation and analysis, what Conquergood (2002) calls a "knowing from above," performances allow for a "knowledge that is anchored in practice and circulated within a performance community"; it is a knowing "from ground level, in the thick of things" (p. 146). Thus, as pre-service teachers perform this retelling of ISS, the possibility exists for them

to experience the tensions of ISS by placing themselves, albeit to a limited degree, in the moments experienced by the student participants in this study.

Conquergood (2002) proposed that performance not only provides a "compelling alternative" to traditional research presentations, but also creates "an alternative space of struggle" (p. 152). Presenting the experiences of middle school students as a performance, I sought to convey "stories that create the effect of reality, showing characters embedded in the complexities of lived moments of struggle, resisting the intrusions of chaos, disconnection, fragmentation, marginalization, and incoherence" (Bochner & Ellis, 2003, p. 509). It is my intention to represent ISS as a complex space of struggle and resistance where the characters are attempting to make sense of what can be viewed as exclusion and marginalization. Within such places of struggle and opposition, however, there lies the potential for re-imagining the outcomes of such struggle—what Denzin (2003) calls "utopian alternatives" (p. 38).

As a teacher-educator, it is my conviction that we must not only prepare teachers for what exists in current educational climates and contexts, but also foster their ability to envision what might be, and how they might play a role in moving toward that utopian alternative. It is in these places of liminality (Denzin, 2003), the spaces between what is and what could be, that many of the tensions of schooling exist. Within teacher education, performances can be taken up as a way to "create oppositional utopian spaces, discourses, and experiences within our public institutions" (Denzin, p. 8). Thus, in this performance, my aim is not only to provide a space for students often labeled "behavior problems" to speak back to those identities, but also to suggest utopian alternatives for their behavior-related interactions with teachers and administrators within school settings. For example, one possible alternative to punitive disciplinary practices is to adopt more therapeutic approaches that assist students not only behaviorally, but academically and emotionally as well (Nevetsky, 1991). In the following script, I draw attention to the students' accounts of other school personnel who employed a different way of interacting with them, in a sense, speaking back to the unfair treatment that many of them discussed. This possibility of engaging in more therapeutic approaches is represented by the guidance counselor, Mrs. Nyce. Her presence in ISS, mentioned in several participants' interviews, represents a "utopian alternative" for the implementation of ISS, one in which students are listened to, respected, and helped to develop problem-solving skills related to their behavior, as well as their interactions with teachers.

Thus, as I created this text, I drew upon the words of the participants in order to construct what their experiences in ISS were like, but I also referenced their responses to a specific question about what they would like for their teachers to know about school discipline. Through their accounts of ISS—both what it was like to be in ISS and what it was like to get written up and sent to ISS—I constructed a performance of what is, and included, where appropriate, glimpses into what might be.

Data Sources

This study took place in a midsize school system in the southeast with students who met the following criteria: (a) participants were currently enrolled in a middle school in the county; thus, they ranged in age from 10 to 15; (b) each participant had been suspended through an in-school suspension (ISS) program at least twice during the 2009–2010 school year for a minimum of 5 days; and (c) participants had been in ISS during the previous month. After securing both parental consent and student assent, 13 participants, consisting of 6 black males, 1 black female, 5 white males, and 1 white female, were interviewed. These 13 participants had been suspended between four and 14 times, for terms of 8 to 37 days.

The total number of days of school missed due to time spent in ISS was 186, for an average of 14 days per participant. Consistent with extensive research on disproportionality in school discipline (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Mendez & Knoff, 2003), the black males in this study were suspended at a higher rate than their white counterparts; the 6 black males were suspended 57 times for a total of 114 days, compared to the 5 white males, who were suspended 28 times for a total of 52 days, a detail that I attempted to maintain in the construction of the script. I conducted open-ended interviews with each of the 13 students, either before school or during lunch; the interviews, lasting between 9 and 56 minutes, were digitally recorded, and were transcribed for analysis. Each participant selected a pseudonym that was used throughout the interview, ensuring that their identity remained anonymous to all but me. In addition to the interview transcripts, my own researcher notes, including observational data, were collected for analysis.

Data Analysis

An initial layer of data analysis followed an interpretivist approach to phenomenology (van Manen, 1990) and yielded a thematic structure revolv-

ing around students' experiences with getting written up and spending time in in-school suspension. Further, I developed verbal portraits (Polkinghorne, 1989) of each student's experience with in-school suspension. In creating the following performance text, I primarily drew from students' descriptions of their time in the ISS room, as well as the verbal portraits of each participant. As I created the performance, I followed suggestions made by Saldaña (2003). I began by analyzing data from the students' verbal portraits, focusing on those interview excerpts that described ISS and the events that unfolded while they were there. Through this analysis, I developed six student characters that are composites of the original participants.

I added other characters based on students' descriptions. In that I did not interview classroom teachers, guidance counselors, or the ISS teacher, those characters are represented as they were presented by the student participants, creating an interesting tension for me as a researcher regarding representation (Madison, 2012). However, in that my intent was to provide a space for the student perspectives about school discipline, I chose to create characters based on students' retelling, drawing on Saldaña's (2003) suggestion that characters can be created by both what the characters say about themselves and what others say about them.

Next, using students' descriptions of their time in the ISS room, I constructed a list of the rules for ISS that they discussed, a physical description of the ISS room, and an account of the activities that they participated in while they were in ISS. Because much of the students' discussions of ISS oriented around time, I chose to construct the performance around time as well, using "chronological linearity" (Saldaña, 2003, p. 220) as a way of representing their experience. It is important to note that the use and control of time has been an historical mechanism for controlling behavior and promoting discipline (Foucault, 1977); thus, organizing the performance chronologically allowed me, and the reader/audience, to focus on how time was experienced as a part of that disciplinary mechanism. I began by constructing a timeline of a day in ISS, creating a template of a day with accounts of their interactions with one another, with the ISS teacher, and with other adults, as well as accounts of the activities they participated in while in ISS. This resulted in a chronological, albeit creative, reconstruction of their day.

Finally, with the chronological sequence in place, I developed interactions between the students and the ISS teacher, adding a visit from a classroom teacher and a guidance counselor, based on students' accounts of other

adults who sometimes come into the ISS room. This polyvocal performance, then, includes the voices of six students, the ISS teacher, the guidance counselor, and one classroom teacher. At various points throughout the performance, each of the characters engages the audience in a monologue, providing a more personal connection between the character and the audience (Saldaña, 2003). The interactions and the monologues were creatively constructed through participants' accounts of interactions they had with various teachers in the school, with each other in the ISS room, with the ISS teacher, and with me as the researcher.

As I analyzed the data, I chose to pay particular attention to the importance that the students assigned to their academic progress; it was a recurring theme for almost all of the participants in the study. For some students, ISS was beneficial, allowing them to get caught up on assignments and thus pull up their grades; for other students, ISS prevented them from being in the regular classroom and thus impeded their learning. This was true for the majority of students, who noted that the teachers did not always send assignments to the ISS room. By hinting at some of the possible alternative imaginings of ISS, I question some of the taken-for-granted notions of school discipline and explore some of the complexities of maintaining safe schools where learning opportunities are fostered, while the needs and voices of students who often are not afforded such learning opportunities are also honored.

Performance Suggestions

In the following performance, textual data and observational research notes were used to compose a chronological retelling of students' experiences in ISS. The following script is presented as one possible rendering of such a retelling. Acknowledging that there are other possible renderings, I propose that the script be performed as written, and also, in keeping with Boal's (1985) forum theater, that it might be beneficial to pre-service teachers to interrupt the script at places, allowing for reinterpreting, renegotiating, and reconstructing various moments of the text (Mlenczakowski, 1995). For example, stopping the action after James is assigned an extra 2 days of ISS could allow teachers to re-imagine how that scenario might have played out differently. Further, it might be interesting to see the script performed with a mixed group of teachers and students, allowing adequate time for discussion during and after the performance. Finally, the role of the narrator is crucial in

moderating the time. In that the notion of time is a key element of the script, allowing the audience and actors to experience the passage of time, while not allowing the action to wane, is a critical component of the performance.

Doing Time in ISS

Characters

James: an eighth-grade black male who has spent 37 days in ISS.

Jeffrey: a seventh-grade white male who has spent 10 days in ISS.

Jonathan: a sixth-grade black male who has spent 16 days in ISS.

Josh: a sixth-grade black male who has spent 25 days in ISS.

Matt: an eighth-grade white male who has spent 8 days in ISS.

Stewey: a seventh-grade white male who has spent 9 days in ISS.

Mrs. Wolfe: the ISS teacher, in her mid-60s. According to district policy, she is not required to be a certified teacher; she is only required to have a high school diploma.

Mrs. Nyce: the guidance counselor, in her mid-40s, who seeks to help the students in ISS make better decisions about their behavior.

Mr. Wise: the seventh-grade math teacher, who visits ISS to check on his student(s) and to ensure that they have their assignments.

Narrator: The narrator emphasizes and reads each of the listed times. The narrator also reads any parts that are not explicitly assigned to one of the above characters. The narrator is responsible for monitoring the performance to ensure as much silence as possible—without losing the audience—in order to illustrate the amount of silence experienced in the ISS room.

Performance Notes

Throughout the script, actor instructions and performance suggestions are placed in brackets. These should not be read aloud; they serve as guidelines to help the performers. The time stamps before narrator lines can be read aloud to demonstrate the passing of time.

Setting

The ISS room is a regular-sized classroom; there are no windows. One of the walls in the room is painted black. On the wall in the front of the room is a large clock with a large second hand that ticks loudly; in the silence in the room, it sounds even louder, marking time as the students endure their stay in the ISS room. In the room are 12 cubicles—desks with wooden walls on three sides such that each student is unable to see the other students in the room. In one corner, there is a computer workstation. On another wall is a poster with a list of rules; according to one student, there were 13 rules, according to another, 27. The 14 rules that students discussed explicitly in the interviews are listed in Appendix A. They could be displayed as part of the performance set. The following scene opens on a Thursday morning at the end of May.

The ISS Day Begins

8:23 a.m.

Narrator: Several students, along with Stewey and Matt, are gathered in the hallway outside the in-school suspension room, talking excitedly about the end of the school year. The audience is aware of their animated conversations, but is not able to hear what they are talking about.

8:26 a.m.

Narrator: The first bell rings, alerting students that they should be making their way to their first-period classes. Two students, Jonathan and Jeffrey, are already in their seats in the ISS room. Jonathan is organizing his belongings and getting his desk ready for a day's worth of work; Jeffrey is already on page 4 of a new book he is reading about U.S. military history.

8:29 a.m.

Narrator: Matt and Stewey make their way into the ISS room; they hang up their backpacks and grab some supplies to take to their desks. Josh rushes in and heads straight to his seat. Matt and Stewey are leaning back in their seats, talking to each other.

Matt: So what are you doing in here today?

Stewey: Man, there is no tolerance in the eighth grade right now. All I did was, we were playing around, horseplay, you know, and I hit someone in the face. We were just messing around.

Matt: You're lucky you didn't get sent home the rest of the year.

Stewey: Yeah, I probably woulda, but Principal Kendall knew it was just an accident.

8:30 a.m.

Narrator: The tardy bell rings and the door to the ISS room slams. The students stop talking immediately. Jeffrey, deep in concentration reading his book, is startled by the loud slam; Matt and Stewey sit up in their chairs quickly. The ISS teacher, having gotten the attention of the students in ISS, now calmly begins to instruct them about their day.

[*Mrs. Wolfe sits at her desk and instructs the students.*]

Mrs. Wolfe: Welcome to ISS. We will begin by making sure that you know what is expected of you today. You are to remain in your seats at all times and stay quiet. You will have one bathroom break in the morning and one in the afternoon. We go to lunch at 10:30. You eat in silence. While you are in here today, there is to be no idle time and no sleeping. You are to be working on your schoolwork. If you do not have work from your teachers, I will supply you with work to do.

8:31 a.m.

Narrator: There is a knock on the door. The ISS teacher notices a student standing outside the door peering in. She ignores the knocking and continues to give instructions.

[*Mrs. Wolfe looks at James with a frustrated look but ignores him, leaving him outside the door.*]

Mrs. Wolfe: The first thing you will do is copy the ISS rules. They are listed on the wall over here. [*Points to a list of rules written on the wall*] So get out

a sheet of paper and begin writing... [*Her voice trails off as attention is turned to the knocking on the door, which is getting louder.*]

Matt: Mrs. Wolfe, I don't have any paper.

Mrs. Wolfe: Well, you will have to borrow some. It is not my job to provide you with paper. And from now on, be sure to raise your hand before speaking.

Jeffrey: Here man, I got some. [*Hands Matt a stack of loose-leaf paper*]

8:32 a.m.

Narrator: The knocking on the door gets louder.

James: [*standing outside the door yelling*] Hey, let me in!

Mrs. Wolfe: [*gets up to open the door and speaks very sternly*] You are tardy; perhaps you should come back another day.

James: But I asked you if I could go to the restroom and you said I could.

Mrs. Wolfe: [*raising her voice*] I gave you no such permission.

James: [*raising his voice louder*] You were in the office talking to the secretary and I asked and you said, "Just go." So I went.

Mrs. Wolfe: James, you are tardy; that will get you 2 more days. [*moves aside so that James can enter the ISS room*] Now go sit down and get your work out before 2 days becomes 3.

James: [*mumbling under his breath*] This is so unfair. [*sits down with a loud sigh and throws his book bag loudly on the desk*]

8:35 a.m.

Narrator: Mrs. Wolfe continues to instruct the students about the rules.

Mrs. Wolfe: [*now standing next to the list of rules*] I was saying, the rules are written on the wall. You should copy those on your paper and then you should get to work on your classwork.

8:42 a.m.

[*Students should be writing at their desks. The Narrator should pause several seconds/minutes before reading in order to illustrate the time passing.*]

Narrator: Students are still copying the rules; one student, finished, raises his hand.

[*Josh raises his hand but does not wait to be called on.*]

Josh: Um, Mrs. Wolfe, none of my teachers sent me any work. Do you have a book I could read?

Mrs. Wolfe: [*rolls her eyes, takes a deep breath, and stands up*] I will get you some work together. [*She turns to a filing cabinet next to her desk and begins pulling out worksheets. As she gives Josh instructions, she piles a list of worksheets on his desk.*] Josh, here is a list of 25 vocabulary words. First, you need to look up each word in the dictionary and then write the words 20 times each. Then, here are a couple math worksheets to complete. Then, there are a couple of essays—this one on the history of the American flag, this one on how to properly drape a coffin—you can copy those. Then here is a page of sentences; the verb in each sentence is wrong. You need to write each sentence, replacing the verb with the correct form. That should get you started. [*turning to the rest of the class*] Does anyone else need any work to do?

[*The students all look down at their desks.*]

Josh: [*looks up from the pile of work at Mrs. Wolfe*] Um, Mrs. Wolfe, I'm missing a bunch of work in Mrs. Carpenter's class. Can I go find out what I'm missing in there and work on that instead?

Mrs. Wolfe: [*returns to her desk as she is talking*] No Josh, the rules are clear; no leaving the ISS room to go get work. If you didn't get the work yesterday, that's your fault.

Josh: But they didn't send my work.

Mrs. Wolfe: That's too bad. Now get to work before I add more sheets to that stack.

9:00 a.m.

Narrator: [*waits as long as possible before beginning to read*] Jonathan raises his hand and clears his throat to get Mrs. Wolfe's attention.

Jonathan: Mrs. Wolfe, it's 9:00. It's time for me to get on Skype for Mrs. Thurber's class.

Mrs. Wolfe: Okay. Just make sure you put the headphones on.

[*Jonathan stands and goes to the computer workstation.*]

Narrator: In the corner of the ISS room, Jonathan logs onto Skype, where a student from Mrs. Thurber's Language Arts class accepts his request to join the class. He is unable to talk to the other students, but he can see what is going on in the classroom and he can hear her instruction about today's lesson on the use of metaphor in creative writing. A student from Mrs. Thurber's class knocks on the ISS room door and brings Jonathan an organizational chart that the students are using for the lesson.

[*The rest of the students are sitting at their desks. James, Josh, Matt, and Stewey are writing. Jeffrey is reading a book. Mrs. Wolfe stands and begins walking around the room, monitoring students to ensure they are working. She stops at each desk to see what they are doing. When she gets to Jeffrey's desk, she pauses.*]

Mrs. Wolfe: Jeffrey, what are you working on?

Jeffrey: I'm reading this book on military history.

Mrs. Wolfe: [*reaching down to close the books*] Put those books away. Let me get you a grammar worksheet. [*walks to the filing cabinet and opens a large binder with worksheets, pulling one out and taking it back to Jeffrey's desk.*] You need to be working in ISS, not reading for fun. [*Jeffrey, protesting a little, takes the worksheet and begins working. Mrs. Wolfe makes her way back to her desk and sits down.*]

[*Time should be allowed to pass.*]

Matt: [*praising his hand, but not waiting to be called on*] Mrs. Wolfe, I need some help with my math work.

Mrs. Wolfe: Come up here, please.

[*Matt stands and walks to Mrs. Wolfe's desk.*]

Narrator: Matt walks to the ISS teacher's desk and shows her the linear equation problems he is working on; she does not know how to help him with it.

Matt: Can I go see Mrs. Johnson and get her to explain it to me?

Mrs. Wolfe: No Matt, you cannot leave the room.

Matt: Can I write her a note and have you put it in her mailbox?

Mrs. Wolfe: I'll put it in her box on our way to lunch.

9:30 a.m.

Narrator: [*Time should be allowed to pass before the Narrator begins.*]
Mrs. Wolfe stands up and calls on Stewey.

Stewey: Yes ma'am?

Mrs. Wolfe: It's time for your morning bathroom break; you may go one at a time. Stewey, you may go first. [*Stewey stands and leaves the room; each of*

the students stands and takes their turn. When the students are finished, Narrator should pause before reading.]

9:45 a.m.

Narrator: The ISS teacher stands to take her bathroom break. As she leaves the room, the guidance counselor, Mrs. Nyce, comes in.

[*Mrs. Wolfe stands and leaves the room as Mrs. Nyce is entering the room. They smile at each other as they pass. When Mrs. Nyce is in the room, she sits on Mrs. Wolfe's desk and looks at each student before talking.*]

Mrs. Nyce: Hello gentlemen, how are you all doing this morning?

[*Several students murmur responses; the others keep their heads down. As the conversation progresses, students one by one turn and face Mrs. Nyce.*]

Jonathan: [*turning around in his chair to face Mrs. Nyce*] I'm doing alright, Mrs. Nyce. Just trying to get my work done.

Josh: [*looking at Jonathan and then at Mrs. Nyce*] At least your teachers sent you work!

Mrs. Nyce: Josh, you don't have any work? Your teachers didn't send stuff for you to do?

Josh: I've been in here so much this year and my teachers never send my work.

Mrs. Nyce: Did you go and ask them to send your assignments to ISS?

Josh: I asked Mrs. Lofton and she said she would send something and Mrs. Carpenter was out yesterday, so I didn't get to talk to her. Mr. Jeffers just told me to study for our test tomorrow.

Mrs. Nyce: [*picks up a notepad and scribbles a note to herself*] I'll see if I can talk to your teachers today and get them to send some assignments. Does everyone else have things to do?

Matt: I had some math, but I didn't get anything from my other classes.

Jeffrey: Me neither, Mrs. Nyce. [*gets out his military history books again and begins reading*]

Mrs. Nyce: [*scribbling some more notes*] Okay, I'll see what I can do about talking to teachers about getting your assignments sent down here. So, have you guys thought about what you're doing in here? What happened?

Jonathan: I got written up for talking; I like to talk and move and I got ADHD and all, and when I don't take my medicine, I usually get in trouble.

Matt: I didn't do nothin', Mrs. Nyce. I dropped my pencil and I asked the teacher if I could get it and he said no, so I asked him to get it for me and he wouldn't, so I sat there for a couple of minutes later, and then I got up and got my pencil. So he sent me to ISS.

Josh: [*turning to Matt*] Like what were you supposed to do? Sit there and not do your work?

Stewey: [*adjusting his chair so he can look at Mrs. Nyce*] I just wish teachers would try to be a little bit more, like, think about it a bit more before you write somebody up out of impulse, like instinctively out of anger, because sometimes they really won't do something or they really haven't done anything, but they end up getting punished for it.

James: [*rolling his eyes and shaking his head*] I'm tired of getting into trouble. It's just bull crap. It's little stuff you shouldn't write students up about, like a cell phone being out. Don't write a student up for a cell phone being out. Just tell them to put the cell phone up. You know? Now in a couple of days, if it happens again, then call the parents and if the parents don't do anything, then you should write them up, but it's just little petty stuff.

Mrs. Nyce: Do you think the teachers expect you to know what the rules are?

Josh: Yeah, but sometimes they write us up just cuz they in a bad mood; they already mad cuz the class was already being disrespectful. And then I get there late and talk one time and I'm the one get written up.

Mrs. Nyce: So are there some things you can learn, about your own behavior or about how to get along with some of your teachers, that might help you stay out of ISS in the future?

10:15 a.m.

Narrator: Before the students have a chance to respond, the ISS teacher returns from her break. As Mrs. Wolfe enters the room, Mrs. Nyce stands to leave. On her way out the door, she looks at the students and smiles.

Mrs. Nyce: Hang in there, guys. Get your work done, if you have it, and learn a lot. I'll see what I can do about getting your assignments to ISS. Let me know if you want to talk further about anything we talked about today. [*turning to Mrs. Wolfe, she smiles and nods*]

Mrs. Wolfe: [*begins walking around the room to monitor students. Noticing that Jeffrey has his military history books out again, she walks over and takes the books, stacking them on the cabinet behind her desk*] Jeffrey, you can stand by your desk for the next 15 minutes until time for lunch. When we return from lunch, you better find some work to do or I will find some for you. Do you understand?

Jeffrey: [*stands by his desk with his hands behind his back*] Yes ma'am. Can I work on some word searches that I brought from home?

Mrs. Wolfe: [*sitting down at her desk and opening a book to read*] That will be fine.

Jeffrey: [*turning to face the audience*] So basically, I'm supposed to sit in here, bored out of my mind. This is just pure torture to us kids cuz we're missing out on our learning time. It's just taking us out of our learning so the teachers don't have to put up with us. Then, I get yelled at for not doing work, but I can't do nothing because I have no work to do. I end up getting zeros on all the assignments, but it ain't my fault.

[*Jeffrey is still standing by his desk; the other students are all writing at their desks. Occasionally they look at the clock on the wall. The Narrator waits several minutes before reading, in order to illustrate the passing of time.*]

10:30 a.m.

Narrator: The students are all watching the clock carefully, knowing it is approaching time to go to lunch. At 10:30 on the dot, the ISS teacher commands them to stand up and get in a straight line.

Mrs. Wolfe: [*standing and walking to the door*] When you are all standing quietly with your hands behind your back, we will proceed to the cafeteria. [*waits while the students line up and lock their hands behind their back*] Remember that you are only allowed to get white milk, and no buying chips. When you get your tray, I will assign your seat. [*turns and walks out of the room with the students following her*].

Matt: [*whispering to Jeffrey as they walk down the hall*] Hey, you got any extras of those word searches to do? I did my math already and my other teachers didn't send any work and I ain't got nothing to do. I don't wanna have to copy words out of the dictionary again.

Jeffrey: [*whispering back*] Yeh man, I'll hook ya up when we get back to the room. Just keep it between us. This is my third day in here and I ain't got many left.

Mrs. Wolfe: [*pausing upon arriving in the cafeteria*] Remember, no talking while you eat. You have 20 minutes.

Narrator: Students go through the line and get their lunch and are told where to sit. They eat in silence.

[*The Narrator waits before reading again.*]

11:55 a.m.

Narrator: The ISS teacher, who has been standing talking to the lunch workers, announces that the students should put up their trays and line up.

[*Students move to put up their trays and get in line.*] As they begin walking back, Josh sneaks in a conversation with Jonathan.

Josh: Hey, you have Mr. Jeffers for science, right? Can I borrow your science notes when we get back in the room so I can study for that test tomorrow?

Jonathan: Sure. I'll try to pass them to you when she's not looking.

Josh: Thanks. I cannot stand to do another one of those stupid worksheets.

Mrs. Wolfe: Josh, are you talking in line? You'll stand beside your desk for 15 minutes when we return to the room.

Josh: [*turning to the audience, sounding exasperated*] So aggravating! I'm so tired of all this. Maybe if I was in here for a reason, I might learn something, but I don't even belong in here. These two girls was messing with me and I'm the one who gets in trouble. And now, I gotta sit in here for a small, small reason doing stupid work. I been in here 25 days this year and I bet I've written that American flag story 25 times. There's a big ole book of English worksheets; why she keep giving me the same one over and over? At least I get to stand up for a few minutes when we get back to the room.

11:57 a.m.

Narrator: Back in the ISS room, Mrs. Wolfe instructs the students, except Josh, to sit down and get back to work on whatever they were working on before lunch.

[*Josh is standing by his desk. The other students are all writing at their desks.*]

12:10 p.m.

Narrator: [*waiting before reading*] There is a quiet knock on the door; an adult opens the door and looks at Mrs. Wolfe, who is sitting at her desk reading.

[*Mr. Wise enters the room hesitantly and looks at Mrs. Wolfe.*]

Mr. Wise: Um, Mrs. Wolfe, I just came by during my lunch to check on Jeffrey. Is that okay?

Mrs. Wolfe: Sure, Mr. Wise.

Mr. Wise: *[pulling up a chair next to Jeffrey and whispering]* How's it going? I brought you some math work *[handing him a textbook and some worksheets]*. Turn to page 137; you need to do 1 to 42. Do you know how to do these?

Jeffrey: *[looking at the page and smiling]* Um... I know how to do *these*, but not the ones with the words.

Narrator: A conversation ensues between Mr. Wise and Jeffrey about the assignment. Mr. Wise asks some questions, helping Jeffrey connect the word problems to the work they had been doing in class. Jeffrey begins to work on the assignment and Mr. Wise stands to leave.

[Mr. Wise and Jeffrey converse pleasantly before Mr. Wise stands.]

Matt: *[turning to Mr. Wise]* Mr. Wise, can I ask you a quick algebra question?

[Mr. Wise stops and walks to Matt's desk and leans over to look at Matt's work. Matt opens up a folder and pulls out a worksheet.]

Narrator: Matt pulls out his work from earlier and points to a problem that he didn't understand. Mr. Wise asks him a couple guiding questions, to which Matt replies:

Matt: Oh, yeah, I got it. Thanks! *[turns around and begins working on his math again]*

Narrator: Mr. Wise again turns to leave.

Josh: *[turning toward Mr. Wise]* Hey Mr. Wise, can you find Mrs. Lofton and ask her *please* to send some work for me down here! She didn't send anything today and I ain't got nothing to do.

Mr. Wise: *[making his way to the door and turning to answer Josh]* I'll see if I can find her, Josh.

12:30 p.m.

Narrator: *[waits before reading, to indicate the passing of time:]* Mrs. Wolfe stands to take her lunch break. *[Mrs. Wolfe stands and leaves the room.]* As she leaves, she instructs the office personnel to keep an eye on the ISS students. Occasionally, they will peak their heads in and check to make sure that the students are working, but for a few minutes, the students are left virtually unattended.

James: *[leaning back in his chair and throwing up his hands]* I hate that woman. She is so rude!

[Students sit up and turn in their chairs in order to have a conversation—all except for Jeffrey, who puts his head down on his desk.]

Jonathan: *[turning toward James]* She ain't that bad; you just shouldn't be late. She's strict and likes when you follow her rules and stuff.

Matt: There's too many of her rules! And she'll write you up and assign you more days for nothin'!

Stewey: I think she's funny; when no one's in here, she makes jokes and all. She's just in a bad mood today.

Jonathan: Yeh, she's kinda nice to me.

Josh: That's cuz she like you. She be nice to people she likes. If she don't like you, she yell at you all the time.

James: I know! She hollers at you like you is a dog. I just don't like that. You yell at me and I'm just going to yell back at you. I'm sure she's a nice lady; she's just got a snoozy attitude.

[*The students continue this conversation. Stewey stands up to stretch his legs, walks to the door and realizes that Mrs. Wolfe is in the office talking to the secretary; he rushes back to his desk.*]

Stewey: Quick, she's coming back. Get quiet everyone.

12:48 p.m.

Narrator: Mrs. Wolfe returns to find the students quietly sitting at their desks; most of them appear to be working. Mrs. Wolfe walks back into the room, stands at the door, and looks around the room suspiciously. She notes that the students appear to be working, but then she sees Jeffrey with his head down. She goes to her desk and picks up a large encyclopedia and then walks quietly to Jeffrey's desk. Raising the book and releasing it, it falls loudly to the floor, abruptly waking him up. Jeffrey sits up groggily.

Mrs. Wolfe: [*yelling loudly*] You do not sleep in ISS! It is rule number 6. Now I want you to stand up by your desk for 15 minutes. Maybe that will help you wake up. If you fall asleep again, you will get another day in here. Do you understand? [*Mrs. Wolfe walks back to her desk and sits down.*]

Jonathan: [*turning to the audience*] It's lots better when there's only a couple of us in here, or when you're like in here by yourself. Mrs. Wolfe, she'll let you get up and talk to her for a few minutes or stretch your legs or whatever. Some days, she's really nice and funny, but when there's a bunch of people in here, she's all in a bad mood and yells all the time. Sometimes, we leave with headaches cuz of how much she yells. Today's one of those days.

Jonathan: [*turning to Mrs. Wolfe and trying to cheer her up*] Did you go walking on the track again today, Mrs. Wolfe?

Mrs. Wolfe: [*looking up at Jonathan and nodding*] I sure did. It is such a beautiful day outside.

James: [*muttering almost to himself, but loud enough to be heard*] We should be able to go outside after lunch too and get some exercise. It ain't right that we have to be cramped in this room all day without any chance to move around.

Mrs. Wolfe: Well, it was your choice to get put in here, James. Maybe you'll think about that next time.

James: [*turning to the audience*] Does she even know why I'm in here? One of my teachers called me gay and I mouthed off at him. So, I get written up for being disrespectful; he gets nothing. I think teachers should get written up too. If I could, I would just change everything around at this school. I wouldn't have ISS; I wouldn't have it at all. No, I don't believe in it. I think it's the worst thing ever. If I were the superintendent, I would change a whole bunch of things such as freedom in the school. I don't feel we have freedom at all.

1:14 p.m.

Narrator: [*waits before reading to indicate the passage of time. Mrs. Wolfe is reading at her desk. The students are all writing, except for Jonathan, who is staring off into space, apparently daydreaming.*] Jonathan raises his hand and waits for Mrs. Wolfe to notice and call on him.

Mrs. Wolfe: Yes, Jonathan?

Jonathan: Mrs. Wolfe, I'm finished with all the work that my teachers sent. Do you have anything that I can work on?

Mrs. Wolfe: [*stands up and reaches into the filing cabinet*] I have a crossword puzzle; it's about Abraham Lincoln. Would you like to work that?

Jonathan: Sure. [*stands and walks to the front of the room to get the sheet of paper*] Thank you. [*returns to his desk and sits down and starts working on the puzzle*]

Stewey: Mrs. Wolfe, can I get on the computer? I'm finished with most of my work, but I need to type up this report that I wrote for social studies.

Mrs. Wolfe: Sure Stewey.

[*Stewey stands and walks to the computer station.*]

Stewey: [*Turning to the audience*] This is what I like about ISS; I'm failing like three classes right now, but with all the worksheets that I got made up today from all my classes, I bet I'll be able to pull my grades up to like Bs and a C, just from doing all this makeup work. Some kids are just, like, I hate ISS; it's boring. It is boring, but I get my work done and it brings my grades up, and so I'm good with that. [*Narrator waits a while before beginning to read again, to indicate the passing of time. During this time of waiting, Stewey is typing at the computer and the rest of the students are writing, all except for Josh, who is studying for his science test.*]

1:52 p.m.

Narrator: The room is quiet except for the ticking of the clock. All the students are writing, except for Stewey, who is typing, and Josh, who is reading from a stack of papers.

Mrs. Wolfe: [*Looking up from the book she is reading*] Josh, you need to be working.

Josh: [*Turning around in his chair to look at Mrs. Wolfe*] I am working, Mrs. Wolfe. I'm studying for a test I have tomorrow in science.

Mrs. Wolfe: But you need to be working. I need to see your pencil on that paper.

Josh: But I don't need to write anything; I just need to study my notes.

Mrs. Wolfe: Don't argue with me; get to writing. There is no idling in here. See rule 4. Do you need something else to do?

Josh: [*Turning back around in his chair*] No ma'am, I'll just copy my notes.

Mrs. Wolfe: Good thinking, young man. [*Returns to reading her book*]

2:08 p.m.

Narrator: [*waits a while before reading*] The door bursts open and one of the assistant principals motions the ISS teacher to come to the door. [*Mrs. Wolfe stands up and walks to the door.*] They stand whispering just outside the ISS room. Their conversation seems very animated. In a few minutes, the principal ushers a young female student into the room. He is carrying her backpack, and points to a cubicle in the back of the room. The student sits down, immediately puts her head down on the desk, and goes to sleep.

[*Mrs. Wolfe seems visibly upset by the new student. Instead of returning to her desk, she walks around the room, keeping a wary eye on the girl. Jonathan, also looking uncomfortably at the new student, has finished his crossword puzzle. Noticing that Mrs. Wolfe is watching the new student, he begins to fold his crossword puzzle into an origami fish. The other students at least appear to be writing, occasionally staring off into space, looking visibly tired of sitting all day.*]

2:24 p.m.

Narrator: [*Narrator waits to begin reading, to indicate the passage of time.*] There is a knock on the door and a student comes in the room with a history textbook and some worksheets. He indicates that he has some work for Jeffrey.

Mrs. Wolfe: [*walks to the door to get the assignment for Jeffrey and then takes it to his desk, reading the instructions as she walks*] Well, Jeffrey, here's your work from Mrs. Kilgore. It says to read chapter 17 and answer the questions at the end of the chapter. Then do these worksheets.

Jeffrey: [*Looks at the worksheet and textbook and states sarcastically*] Well, that's just great. I won't get finished before it's time to go home.

Mrs. Wolfe: At least you got your work so you can do it tonight for homework and not get zeros on it. [*As she says this, she points to Jeffrey and then walks to the front of the room.*]

2:48 p.m.

Narrator: [*waits to begin reading*] Mrs. Wolfe begins to clean up the room.

[Mrs. Wolfe walks around the room, pushing in extra chairs and picking up some paper off the floor.] She instructs the students to finish up whatever they are working on.

Mrs. Wolfe: Be sure to turn in the work you have done for your classes. Make sure your name and your teacher's name is on each page. I will put that work in your teachers' mailboxes.

Matt: [not raising his hand] What about all of the worksheets that you gave us?

Mrs. Wolfe: You can stack them on the corner of your desk and throw them away on your way out—unless you think your teachers will give you any extra credit for them. It could be worth a try, you know? [turns her back to the class while she cleans up her own desk]

Matt: [turning to the audience] Aaggh. All that writing and stuff, you know, it makes your day longer. Just another day of busy work, while getting further and further behind. ISS makes me mad because, you know, I really like to be with my friends and I like to learn stuff and I pretty much like to be in the classroom and learn stuff and uh, extend my knowledge for my future and stuff, because I want to go to college, like really bad, and I was going to try really hard next year and try to get honors classes in high school. To be in ISS and not be able to learn stuff, you know, it really makes me mad. [Matt turns back around and runs his hands through his hair, frustrated.]

3:00 p.m.

Narrator: [waits to begin reading] The bell rings and the students get up quickly and run out of the ISS room. Jonathan, lingering behind the others, leaves an origami fish on Mrs. Wolfe's desk.

Questions for Discussion

1. From your own perspective, what is the purpose of ISS? What is the purpose of school discipline? Based on the characters in this performance, do you think that purpose is being fulfilled?
2. Did you ever spend time in in-school suspension when you were in school? If so, what was your own experience with ISS? What did you

notice in the performance that was similar or dissimilar to your own experience with ISS?

3. How do you think classroom teachers should approach school discipline? Should ISS be a part of a discipline plan? If so, how should it be implemented?
4. What questions did the performance evoke about your own ideas about school discipline? What emotions did the performance elicit?

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Appendix A

ISS Rules

1. No talking. If you need help, raise your hand and I will call on you to ask your question.
2. If you talk without permission, you will be required to stand next to your desk for 15 minutes.
3. You must stay in your seats throughout the day. If you get out of your seat, you will be assigned another day.
4. No idling. You must be working the entire time you are here. If you have failed to get your work from your classroom teachers, work will be provided for you to do.
5. You may not leave the room to go get work from your teachers or to get forgotten materials or supplies.
6. No sleeping. If you put your head on your desk, you will be required to stand by your desk. If you fall asleep, you will be assigned another day of ISS.
7. Do not ask to go to the bathroom. You will have one bathroom break in the morning and one in the afternoon.
8. Do not ask to get water. You may get water when you go to the bathroom.
9. No food or drink in the ISS room. If you are caught with food, another day of ISS will be added.
10. You may not chew gum in the ISS room. If you are caught with gum, you will be required to stand by your desk for 30 minutes.
11. No candy in ISS. If you get caught with candy, you get written up and have to do another day.
12. Lunch is at 10:30. You will spread out in the cafeteria during lunch. You will have 20 minutes to eat.
13. No talking during lunch. If you talk, another day will be added.
14. For lunch, you may not have chocolate or strawberry milk and you may not buy chips.