Reducing the Need and Use of Suspension: Effective policies and practices

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Core features of Effective Policies & Procedures

- Clearly defined behavioral expectations
  - What are schools’ essential rules or expectations?
  - Understanding the difference between a rule and expectation
  - Aware of the “Dead Person Rule”

- Proactive teaching behavioral expectations

- Acknowledging students for engaging in appropriate behaviors

- Consistent & clear consequences for behavioral violations

- On-going data collection for decisions regarding students’ support needs

Clarifying Terms: Some Examples

- Primary Prevention (Does not mean elementary)
  - AKA Tier 1, “Universal”
  - Proactive whole school or whole class interventions

- Secondary Intervention (Does not mean high school)
  - AKA Tier 2, “Targeted”
  - Ready-to-use interventions that can quickly provide some extra support to students who need a bit more help.

- Tertiary Response
  - AKA Tier 3, “Intensive and Individualized”
  - Behavior Support Plan based on Functional Behavioral Assessment

5 SW-PBIS recommended strategies (Tobin & Vincent, 2011)

- 1. Acknowledge expected behaviors
- 2. Have orderly transitions
- 3. Frequently make data-based decisions
- 4. Seek on-going professional development
- 5. Use functional assessment — using operational definitions -- to build Behavior Support Plans

4 strategies from other studies (Howard, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2009; Lyman, 2007; Melton, 2007; Noguera, 2001; Valaskey, 2007; Vincent et al., in press; Ward, 2009)

- 6. Involve parents & provide resources for families
- 7. Develop good teacher-student relationships
- 8. Provide academic instruction that is relevant to the students’ lives and builds on their previous knowledge
- 9. Facilitate cooperative and friendly peer relationships

—6 more strategies— some expanding on previous strategies:

- 10. Learn from model schools
- 11. Visionary leadership
- 12. Intensive academic support [relates to “relevant instruction” but more about seriously working hard at lots of basic, excellent instruction]
- 13. Acknowledgement of race [relates to teacher-student relationships & peer relationships but more direct discussion of cultural issues and personal attitudes]
- 14. Parental and community engagement [relates to involving parents & providing resources but also involves getting agencies, business, politicians, & community members interested in helping the schools]
- 15. Teachers’ effective practices — Teacher collaboration
  (see below – another 5 even more specific strategies!)
Teachers’ effective practices →
Teacher collaboration

- 16. Meet regularly by grade or subject matter
- 17. Use data to plan [relates to data-based decisions but this time, about instruction more than about behavior]
- 18. Discuss examples of students’ work – to help each other!
- 19. Identify students in need of academic interventions
- 20. Help plan to re-teach & give examples

U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR),
Elementary and Secondary School Suspension Survey

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# Rounds to zero.


Use of triangle data for decision-making

- How do we need to allocate our resources?
  - How many students need more than universal support?
- A single triangle might not provide sufficiently detailed answers to serve all students equitably
- Disaggregations by race/ethnicity are important to make decisions regarding ALL students’ needs
Unplanned Outcomes: Suspensions & Expulsions in Indiana

- African American students were four times as likely to be suspended out of school and about two and a half times as likely to be expelled as white students. Hispanic students are also over-represented in suspension and expulsion.

- Regardless of demographic factors, schools with higher rates of out-of-school suspension have lower average passing rates on ISTEP.

Discipline is Always Teaching: Effective Alternatives

- What are Some general practices that can be implemented?
  - Clarify expectations regarding office referrals and train staff in classroom management strategies.
  - Actively teach appropriate behavior through school philosophy and preventive programs.
  - Seek to reconnect alienated students through mentoring and anger management.
  - Develop options in the school and community to keep students who are suspended and expelled engaged in learning.

Framework for a School-wide Approach to Discipline

- Development and utilization of teacher problem-solving skills in handling student problems
- Student involvement in the development of schoolwide expectations for behavior
- Recognition for good behavior
- Systematic approach to consistent use of consequences for not fulfilling expectations
- Community involvement
- School-wide focus on establishing good behavior
- Use of data on discipline for evaluation and planning

Behavioral Expectations

- Behavioral Expectations should be:
  - Observable,
  - Acknowledgable, and
  - Teachable.

  Define abstract expectations, like “Be respectful” or “Be responsible” in observable, teachable, and acknowledgeable terms.

Behavioral Expectations (cont. . .)

- Staff involvement in establishing behavioral expectations is necessary.
- Behavioral expectations should be consistent within a school system and reviewed at least annually.
- Consistent enforcement is necessary
- Explain school expectations at the beginning of the school year and reviewed throughout the school year as necessary.
- Teach and post the school-wide behavioral expectations.

Survey of Respectful Behavior

- Participants
  - 2850 middle & high school students
  - Chicago, IL, Hammond, IN, Houma, LA & Webster, MA
  - Approximately 76% of students across the schools surveyed receive free or reduced lunch

- Survey asked students, “What are some ways that teachers show you respect?”
Survey Process

• Administered to each student through their English class.
• Asked to provide 3 responses to the following question: “How does a teacher show you respect?”
• Instructions stated that “respect” should be defined in terms that are observable and acknowledgeable.

Top 12 Answers

• Of the over 3800 responses, the ones listed were written by 200 students or more.
• 1. Talk privately to students when a problem occurs (Does not embarrass me in front of my friends).
• 2. Use a calm tone of voice, even when they are upset. (No yell)
• 3. Respect personal space (Don’t touch, grab, eyeballing, crowd)

Top 12 Answers (continued)

• 4. Listen without interrupting.
• 5. Have a sense of humor.
• 6. Display student work around the classroom/school.
• 7. Makes learning fun/Prepares exciting lessons. (good instruction)
• 8. Let parents/guardian know student did a good job sometimes (see a balanced picture).

Top 12 Answers (continued)

• 9. Use student’s name when talking to them or address me as Ma’am or Sir
• 10. Be available during non-classroom times
• 11. Return work promptly/ Let’s me know how I’m doing (provides feedback)
• 12. Smiles or says hello when I come to class
• Worth noting: Acknowledge birthday received multiple mentions.

Possible Alternatives to Suspension and Expulsion

• The following 10 examples are:
  – Researched based that demonstrate positive behavioral-change outcomes for students; and
  – Provide an opportunity to maintain or re-engage students in school rather than pushing them out of school.
  – Recommended by the Committee to Deconstruct the School to Prison Pipeline
• These examples could be built into the school’s formal disciplinary code of conduct as part of an array of consequence/responses to inappropriate behavior.

1) Problem Solving / Contracting

• Negotiation and problem-solving approaches can be used to assist students in identifying alternative behavior choices.
• The next step should involve developing a contract the student develops. Try to engage student in a problem-solving process.
• Include acknowledgement for success and consequences for continuing problem behaviors.
2) Restitution

- In-kind restitution (rather than financial restitution, which often falls on the parents) permits the student to help to restore or improve the school environment.
  - Students may repair things they damaged (i.e., vandalism)
  - Students may be required to improve the school environment (i.e., picking up trash, washing lockers).
  - Can be part of contract developed by student.

3) Mini-Courses or Skill Modules

- Short courses or self-study modules can be assigned as a disciplinary consequence.
- These should be on topics related to the student’s inappropriate behavior, and should be designed to teach the student to have increased awareness or knowledge about the topic thus facilitating behavior change.
- These modules might include readings, videos, workbooks, tests, and oral reports on a range of topics such as alcohol/drug use or abuse, strategies for conflict resolution, anger control strategies, social skills (e.g., getting along with peers, making behavior appropriate for the setting), and appropriate communication skills (e.g., appropriate and inappropriate language, how to express disagreement).

4) Parent Involvement / Supervision

- Parents should be invited to brainstorm ways they can provide closer supervision or be more involved in their child’s schooling.
- Better communication and more frequent contacts between teachers and parents, as well as coordinated behavior-change approaches, are very useful and could be formalized into a disciplinary consequence.

5) Counseling

- Students may be required to receive additional supports or individual counseling from trained helping professionals (e.g., counselor, school psychologist) focused on: a) social skills, b) problem solving, and/or personal issues interfering with learning.
- Counselor can also provide study and/or organizational skill training. (e.g. Strong Kids, Skills for Success, Life Skill Training, Skill Streaming, Second Steps, etc…)

6) Community Services

- Programs that permit the student to perform a required amount of time in supervised community service outside of school hours (e.g., volunteer at another school or an organization) should be created.

7) Behavior Monitoring

- Closely monitoring behavior and academic progress (e.g., self-charting of behaviors, feedback sessions for the student) will permit rewards to be provided for successful performance.
- Check-in Check-Out with an adult in building (e.g. BEP, Check & Connect, etc..)
8) Coordinated Behavior Plans
• Creation of a structured, coordinated behavior support plan specific to the student and based on a hypothesis about the function of the target behavior to be reduced should be created. (See Horner & Crone book “Building Positive Behavior Support Systems in Schools: Functional Behavioral Assessment”)
• It should focus on increasing desirable behavior, and replacing inappropriate behaviors.

9) Alternative Programming
• Provide short-or long-term changes in the student schedule, classes or course content or offer the option of participating in an independent study or work-experience program.
• Programming should be tailored to student needs, and permit appropriate credit accrual and progress toward graduation.
• Change of placement or programming must be made by the IEP (Individualized Education Program) team for students with EBD or other disabilities.

10) Appropriate In-School Suspension
• In-school suspension should be provided and include academic tutoring, instruction on skill-building related to the student behavior problem (e.g., social skills), and a clearly defined procedure for returning to class contingent on student progress or behavior.
• The environment should be carefully managed to guard against using in-school suspension as a way to avoid attending classes.
• See TRIP Report on www.successfulschools.org website for strategies on how to set-up an effective ISS program.

How to make these alternatives work?
• Create a caring school community and climate.
• Make efforts to build adult-student relationships.
• Increase parent involvement through better home-school communication.
• Develop and teach consistent school expectations.
• Implement systems for early identification and intervention for students at-risk for school failure.

How to make these alternatives work? (cont. . .)
• Mediation Programs
• Bullying prevention and intervention
• Conflict de-escalation training
• School-wide discipline program
• Positive office referrals/recognition

References
Some Tier 2 Supports

- Social Skill Groups
- Academic Supports (Homework Club, Afterschool, Tutoring, Study Skills Lessons)
- Point Card & Daily Behavior Report Card

Focus is on a Tier 2 strategy called “CICO”

- Combined a paper and pencil classroom point card intervention with
- An online data collection and analysis program for data from the Check In Check Out (CICO) point cards and
- Office discipline referral data from the School Wide Information System (SWIS)
- Note: This type of intervention can be done without using the online system (Crone, Hawken, & Horner, 2010).

CICO a.k.a. BEP (Check-in/Check-out) (Behavior Education Program)

- A secondary (targeted) intervention that is continuously available to all students
- Key features:
  - Student checks in with an adult in the morning and receives Daily Report Card (DRC)
  - Student hands DRC to the teacher at the start of each class period
  - Teacher returns DRC to the student and provides feedback at the end of each class period
  - Student checks out with an adult at the end of the day, receives feedback, and takes copy of DRC home
  - Family member recognizes student’s success and signs the DRC

References and Resources


Additional References and Resources


Web Resources

- CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND: Fact Sheet
  [http://ceep.indiana.edu/ChildrenLeftBehind/pdf/FactSheet.pdf](http://ceep.indiana.edu/ChildrenLeftBehind/pdf/FactSheet.pdf)
- The Equity Project at Indiana University
  [http://www.iub.edu/~safeschl/Equity/resources.html](http://www.iub.edu/~safeschl/Equity/resources.html)
- Impact of Zero Tolerance School Discipline Policies
Web Resources

• Check & Connect
  • http://ici.umn.edu/checkandconnect/

• Tier II Positive Behavior Supports & Interventions
  • http://www.pbis.org/secondaryprevention.htm

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