

Alternatives to Suspension or Expulsion

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Tell us about yourselves!

- What states are you from?
- What is your role in the school?
 - Do you deal with students sent to the office?
- Have you experimented with discipline alternatives? If so how?

Session Goals

- Provide case examples of the problems of traditional discipline strategies
- Provide rationale for the need for alternative discipline frameworks and strategies
- Provide several alternative strategies for disciplinary consequences which might supplant use of suspension.

Police: 7th-grader calls Muslim schoolmate 'son of ISIS,' threatens to shoot and kill him

- December 7, 2015 – An Ohio middle-school student accused of threatening to shoot and kill a Muslim schoolmate, calling him a “terrorist” and a “towel head,” police said.
- The seventh-grader faces a 10-day suspension and possible expulsion, according to the school district. Police said he also faces charges of aggravated menacing and ethnic intimidation.
- The seventh-grader was arrested and transported to a juvenile detention center.
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/12/14/police-7th-grader-calls-muslim-schoolmate-son-of-isis-threatens-to-shoot-and-kill-him/>

10-year-old suspended for making fingers into shape of gun

- March 4, 2014 – Ten-year-old Nathan Entingh was "making his fingers look like a gun, having the thumb up and the pointed finger sticking out."
- As a result, he was suspended from school for three days.
- <http://www.cnn.com/2014/03/04/us/ohio-boy-suspended-finger-gun/>



School Spirit or Gang Signs? 'Zero Tolerance' Comes Under Fire

- March 9, 2014 – A 15 Year old student in Olive Branch, Mississippi made this gesture in a photo taken by his Biology teacher.
- School officials determined that the sign is commonly affiliated with the Vice Lords (a gang with a strong presence in Memphis, TN), and the student was subjected to an "indefinite suspension with a recommendation for expulsion."
- <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/education/school-spirit-or-gang-signs-zero-tolerance-comes-under-fire-n41431>

Mechanical Restraint – September 8, 2016 – Kansas City, MO.

- 7 year old, 2nd grade boy; 4 feet tall; less than 50 pounds
- Crying and screaming in class because he was being bullied. School resource officer wanted to remove him from class for being disruptive.
- When the student refused to follow him, and continued screaming and crying, the school resource officer handcuffed him and physically removed the student from the classroom. Student threatened no one and didn't pose any real danger.
- Student: "He just grabbed my hands and twisted them like this and put the handcuffs like that" "I was kind of scared" "I just didn't really like how it felt".
- Mother is suing district for violating his constitutional rights with excessive force (4th and 14th amendments)



<http://fox4kc.com/2016/09/08/aclu-files-suit-claiming-young-boys-rights-were-violated-when-he-was-handcuffed-at-kc-elementary-school/>

Recent Letters from the U.S. Department of Education on Discipline

Need for Alternative Strategies

- Call for a reform of exclusionary discipline strategies:
- Resource officers; Early Childhood; and, K12 Discipline:
 - [Dear Colleague Letter for School Resource Officers](#) (September, 2016)
 - [Dear Colleague Letter for PBIS under IDEA](#) (August, 2016)
 - [Advancing School Discipline Reform](#) (August, 2015)
 - [Dear Colleague Letter for Early Education](#) (December, 2014)
 - [Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood](#) (n.d.)
 - [Joint US DOJ and DOE Dear Colleague Letter](#) (January, 2014)
 - [School Discipline Consensus Report](#) (2014)
 - [Justice Center, Council of State Gov. – Beyond Zero Tolerance](#) (February, 2014)

Additional resources can be found at:

<http://k12engagement.unl.edu/resources-reducing-exclusionary-discipline>

The Issue of Police Officers in Schools

- Question of whether schools are safer with SROs/Police present (Bosworth, Ford, & Hernandez, 2011; Brown, 2005)
- Lead to more criminalization of student behavior (school-to-prison pipeline)
 - Fewer arrests for drugs and weapons but more arrests for disorderly conduct charges (Theriot, 2009)
 - More SROs in schools with higher percentages of minority students (Davidson & Hall-Sanchez, 2013)

Safe, School-based Enforcement through Collaboration, Understanding, and Respect (SECURE)

1. Draft agreements regarding roles and responsibilities that **limit SRO involvement in discipline**
2. Ensure that local, state, and federal laws are addressed within SRO agreements
3. Hire effective SROs and train them appropriately
4. Train teachers and staff to handle minor misbehaviors w/o SRO aid
5. Develop a process for evaluating SROs

See checklist for Implementation: http://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/sro/SRO_Local_Implementation.pdf

What are the purposes of school discipline?

- To change inappropriate student behavior.
- Creating a climate conducive for learning- maintaining the "decorum of school".
- Ensuring the safety of students and teachers.
- Teaching students needed skills for school and community.
- **Retribution for misdeeds???** Is punishment a deterrent to future misbehavior?
 - "Punishment inflicted on someone as vengeance for a wrong or criminal act."

Is there agreement about these purposes?

Are the purposes of school discipline clear to parents, staff and students?

TRADITIONAL DISCIPLINARY CONSEQUENCES?

DO THEY SERVE THESE PURPOSES?

Traditional Strategies- How do they stack up?

Suspension

Expulsion

Involuntary Transfer

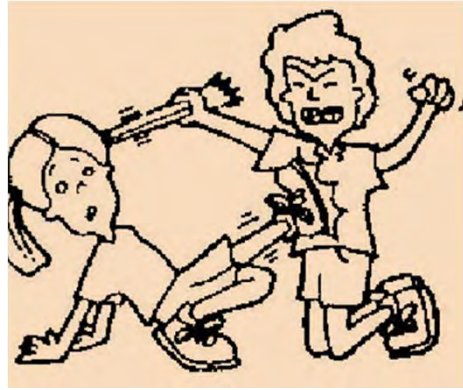
Grade Retention

Lowering Course Grades

And more...

Suspension

- The short-term removal of a student from regularly scheduled classroom activity
- Most frequently used discipline strategy
 - Accounts for 1/3 of all discipline referrals (Skiba & Rausch, 2006)
 - Out-of-School suspension used 3 times more than In-School Suspension (Burke & Nishioka, 2014)
- In-School Suspension is viewed as less-exclusionary than Out-of-School Suspension, both lead negative consequences for students



Expulsion

- Most severe disciplinary consequence
- Mandatory laws around guns and weapons
 - (Gun Free Schools Act, 1994)
 - These infractions account for less than 2% of offenses resulting in suspension or expulsion
- **Expelled students are 10 times more likely to drop out!**
- Schools with high rates of suspension and expulsion have lower overall achievement (Aracia, 2006; Skiba et al., 2006)
 - Do not result in safer schools (Harvard Civil Rights Project, 1999)

Involuntary Transfer

What is it?

- Removal of a student from current school to different school against the wishes of the student as a result of misbehavior

Viewed positively because:

- Removes disruptive or threatening student from school environment
- Provides education to student in an alternative school environment

Negative Impact:

- Stressful for students
- Linked to decreases in school performance and self-esteem
- Does not address underlying behavior problems



Grade Retention

- Having students repeat the current grade
 - Students with social/emotional problems often retained for academic reasons (linked to behavior; Jimerson et al., 1997)
- Stressful for students (Shepard & Smith, 1990)
 - Same as losing a parent, wetting themselves, or being caught stealing
- Powerful predictor for dropout (Jimerson et al., 1997)
 - One retention increases dropout risk to 78%
 - Two or more increases to 100%

Lowering Course Grades

- Some schools lower course grades as a result of poor student behavior (Rossow & Parkinson, 1999; Wolowelsky, 1989)
 - Could either be direct lowering of grade or refusing to allow make-up work during suspension or expulsion
- Grading on factors other than academic performance is unconstitutional (Hobbs, 199



Related Issue: Zero Tolerance

- A policy that has guided schools to the overuse of previous strategies
- Originally intended to be harsh and consistent punishment for guns, weapons, and other violent offenses through the use of suspension and expulsion. Is based on 1980's Drug Programs
- Has expanded to a variety of minor infractions (Skiba & Sprague, 2008):
 - Rule violations, Tardiness, Truancy, Disruptions, Noncompliance, Defiance

Has led to significant increases in removal of students from schools

Summary of Issues with Exclusionary Discipline & Traditional Discipline consequences.

- Do not lead to behavior change
- Loss of instruction time
- Student disengagement
- Increased dropout rates

IF THESE STRATEGIES DON'T ADDRESS
THE PURPOSES OF DISCIPLINE,
WHAT ARE SOME ALTERNATIVE
STRATEGIES?

Two Issues in School Discipline

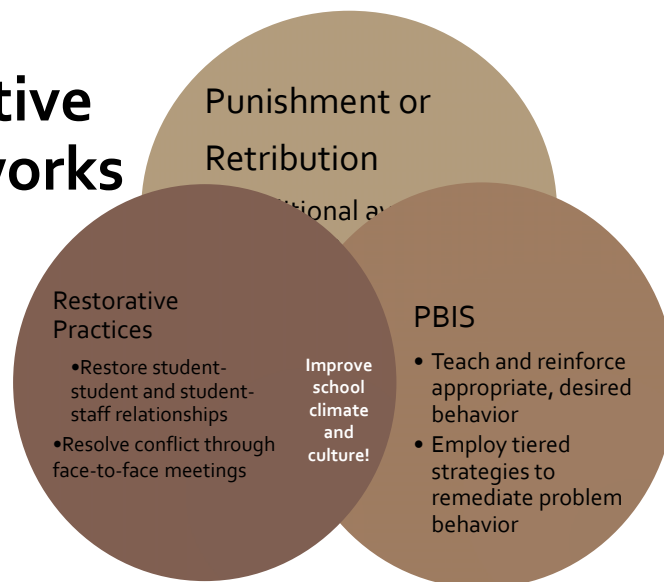
Overrepresentation

- Minorities and students with disabilities are disproportionately subjected to exclusionary disciplinary practices

Over Use of Exclusionary Strategies

- Ineffective and detrimental strategies are used too frequently in schools

Three Alternative Frameworks



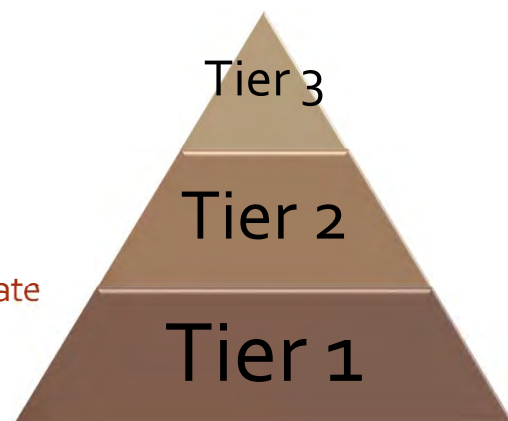
Punishment Framework

- “Retributive justice refers to the achievement of justice through a one-sided approach of imposing punishment” (Schram & Tibbetts, 2014, p. 277).
- Among most lay people, punishment is any unpleasant action against someone in retribution for a violation of the laws or norms of the community.
- In school rules govern behavior
 - Violations of rules are problematic
- Every misdeed must have a consequence
- The level of punishment should match the severity of the misdeed.



PBIS Framework

1. Administrative leadership
2. Team-based implementation
3. Defined behavioral expectations
4. Teaching of behavioral expectations
5. Acknowledging and rewarding appropriate behavior
6. Monitor and correct behavioral errors
7. Use data/information for decision making



Restorative Practices Framework

As a positive alternative to individual punishment, restorative practice focuses on healing (Chmelynski, 2005), education, and community restoration (Wearmouth, McKinney, & Glynn, 2007).

The challenge of restorative practice is to reintegrate the student who committed the wrong back into the school community while protecting the right of the victim to a safe and secure learning environment (Varnham, 2005).



Restorative Practices Framework

brings students, families, schools, and community members together to resolve conflict, promote healing, and restore...

Victim Offender Mediation (VOM)

- Designed to be a dialogue between the victim(s) and offender(s) for clarification and healing

Conferencing

- Similar to VOM but include "supporters" of the victim and offender (guardian, family members, friends)

The Circle

- Participants take turns speaking using a talking piece

The Board

- Typically composed of community members trained to mediate the circle and negotiate the restorative contract

Restorative Contract

- Written agreement created as a result of restorative process (VOM)

Suggested Alternatives to Suspension

- **Monitor Student Behavior**
 - Implement Program Check & Connect
- **Set up a Behavior Contract**
- **Increase Parent & Family Involvement**
 - Suspend Parents into School
- **Make an Individual Behavior Plan**
- **Provide Community Service**
 - Provide Service Learning Opportunities
- **Implement Appropriate In-school suspension**
- **Provide Counseling and Instruction**
 - Provide Social Skills Instruction
 - Provide Bullying Intervention (initial or intensive)
 - Provide Anger Management
 - Provide Other Mini Courses on Problem Behavior
 - Provide a Tutor or Other Academic supports
 - Create a Restitution Plan

Suggested Alternatives to Expulsion

- Identify Alternative Programming for the Student
- Provide Wraparound Service Coordination
- Engage in Family Group Conferencing
- Develop an Expelled Student Program
 - Discipline Recovery

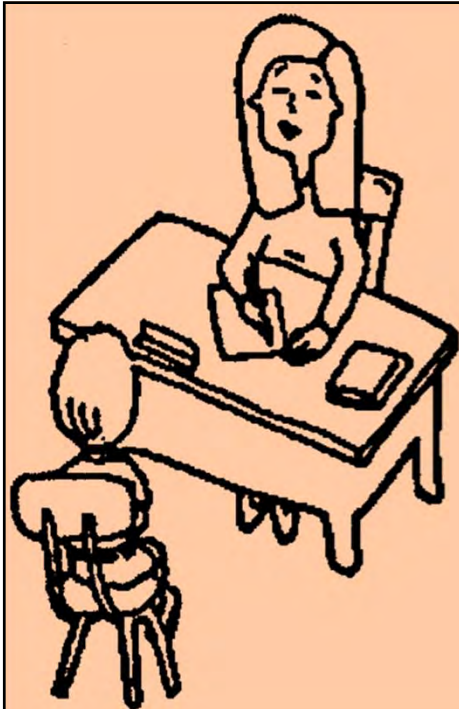


...AND MORE!

Monitor Student Behavior

- This is a strategy for monitoring student behavior and tracking academic progress. This might include:
 - Cards to check off and rate behavior during each time of day/class period (e.g., **Check-in/Check-out**)
 - Self-monitoring
 - Graphing data and sharing with the student
 - Providing feedback to student on behavior

| NAME: Bobby | | M | T | W | Th | F |
|-------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| RETHINK ATTITUDE | ☹️ | ☹️ | ☹️ | ☹️ | ☹️ | ☹️ |
| TAKING TURNS | | | ☹️ | | | |
| RAISING YOUR HAND | | ☹️ | | ☹️ | ☹️ | |
| SAYING THANK YOU | | ☹️ | | | | ☹️ |



Behavior Contracting

- This is a process of problem solving in which the student will engage to identify appropriate alternative behaviors
- A contract is then developed in which the student is held to those behavioral expectations
- Positive reinforcement plan specifying:
 - Who, what, when, and how well
- Lead to decreases in truancy (Enea & Dafinoiu, 2009), Interrupting behaviors (Gurrad et al., 2002), and disruptive behaviors (e.g., assaultive, destructive, out of seat; Hawkins et al., 2011)

Parent & Family Involvement/Supervision

- More than just a dyadic process between parents and teachers, this includes parents, children, teachers, administrators, and other key stakeholders for the student working together to improve the development of the child/adolescent



- Key characteristics include:
 - Communication
 - Home-based Components
 - School-based Components
- Family engagement/involvement in school is key protective factor in development and has been linked to positive student outcomes regardless of SES level or education
 - The earlier the intervention the better

Reverse Suspension

- At Huntington East Middle School, non-violent, non-verbally abusive behavior is handled by offering parents the option of a "reverse suspension."



In a reverse suspension, instead of sending a child home, the student's parent is invited to come to school and spend the entire day by his side.

Principal Barnett explained that the school decides how to address each behavior incident on a case by case basis.

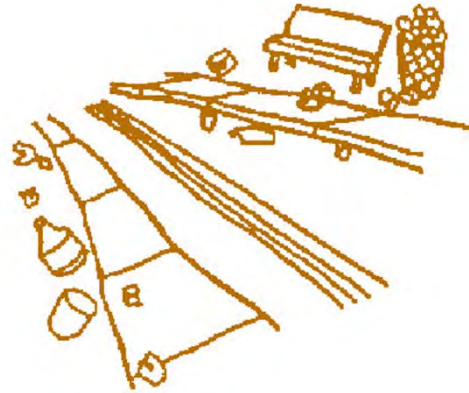
Link to video:

<http://www.tristateupdate.com/clip/12383148/reverse-suspensions-dont-send-students-home-but-bring-parents-to-school>

<http://www.theblaze.com/stories/2016/05/02/middle-school-reduces-bad-behavior-dramatically-with-reverse-suspensions-that-invite-parents-to-school-when-students-misbehave/>

Service Learning/Community Service

- Students are required to perform a required amount of time in community service either in the school system or in the community
- Examples:
 - Soup kitchen
 - School building
 - Park
 - Homeless Shelter
 - Women's shelter
 - YMCA



Counseling & Instruction

- Students could receive counseling to work through issues related to disciplinary infractions
 - This could include cognitive-behavioral therapy (anxiety, depression, anger management, etc.)
 - Social skills instruction
- Also could include behavior management techniques (self-monitoring, behavior plans at home and school, etc.)



Anger Management

- Anger management is effective in helping students to:
 - Identify triggers for anger
 - Identify feelings associated with anger
 - Develop coping for stress reduction
 - Help reframe distorted thinking that contributes to anger
 - Develop problem-solving around anger-provoking situations
- Can reduce office referrals (Larson, 1992), Decrease risk of drug and alcohol use (Lochman, 1992)
- Example programs include:
 - Teen Anger Management Education (TAME), Aggression Replacement Training, and Think First



Bullying Intervention

- Bullying interventions generally conducted in small groups
 - Include role play, discussion, and example scenarios to work through
 - Beneficial for students at-risk for mental health issues
- Important for schools to train all staff to implement bullying interventions or curricula to improve buy-in and fidelity of teachers (Biggs et al., 2008)



Intensive Bullying Intervention

- Intensive and individualized supports to address specific variables linked to the bullying behavior
- Target Bullying Intervention Program (TBIP; Swearer & Given, 2006)
 - 3 hour individual cognitive-behavioral Intervention
 - Researchers have found decreases in office referrals (Barry & Swearer, 2013; Meints, 2007), as well as teacher and parent acceptability (Swearer et al., 2014) after Intervention
- Other interventions such as counseling and anger management are also effective to eliminate inappropriate behaviors and emotional responses.



Mini courses on many topics...

- Short courses or modules which students complete on topics related to their behavior as a disciplinary consequence
- Might include worksheets, tests, oral reports, etc.
- Topics:
 - Alcohol/drugs
 - Conflict resolution/problem solving
 - Anger management
 - Social skills

**The STOP Class
for example.**

Alternative Programming

- This strategy includes making changes to the student's schedule to accommodate behavioral difficulties the student may be having
- This could also be assignment to an alternative school or program
- Change schedule
- Change key classes to other teachers or subjects
- Independent study assignments
- Attend an alternative school or program
- Institute service learning within the community.
- Change lunch time

Wraparound

- Useful for students with emotional and behavioral challenges
- "System of Care"
 - Appropriate services provided based on data
 - Within community to reduce costly treatment facilities
- Often includes natural (e.g., child care, mentoring, transportation) and traditional (e.g., social skills, behavior management, counseling) supports



Family Group Conferencing

- All those effected by action are brought together to discuss the event and consequences
- Participants take turns discussing:
 - The incident
 - Who was harmed and how
 - Develop a plan to remediate problem
 - Identify supports for plan implementation
- Resulted in better parent and student engagement, increased communication with school, decreases in problem behavior, increased academic performance and perceived ability to succeed in school (McMorris et al., 2013)

Prevention Considerations/ Pre-requisites

- Appropriate data collection
- School Climate/Culture
- Explicit school values
- Increase positive reinforcement – 5/1 ration everywhere in school
- Increase parent communication and involvement
- Create opportunities to build adult/student relationships
- Be aware of signs of student misbehavior when they begin
- Implement a school-wide behavior and discipline system (e.g., PBIS)
- Be aware of cultural differences that lead to overrepresentation/ underrepresentation

Code of Conduct

- How do these fit in the code of conduct?
- What happens when administrators leave?
- How frequently are codes of conduct evaluated and revised?
- Are data used in these revisions?

Is it possible to try some of these alternatives?

"You know, Mr. Spotts, I could never get going, because you just kept suspending me," the young man told his former dean...Spotts often thinks about that student and others he wishes he could have helped more, could have kept in school and off the street."

Dominus, S. (2016, September 7). An effective but exhausting alternative to high-school suspensions. *New York Times*. Retrieved online from http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/11/magazine/an-effective-ut-exhausting-alternative-to-high-school-suspensions.html?_r=0

Summary

- Current strategies:
 - Not effective for their purposes
 - Disproportionality
- Two positive frameworks for discipline
- Several new strategies
 - Some lack data
 - Require time and energy for implementation
- Need to fit within the code of conduct
 - Administrator turnover
- Many resources available
 - <http://k12engagement.unl.edu/>

Contact Us!

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University of Nebraska Lincoln

- Student Engagement Project: <http://k12engagement.unl.edu/>
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Government Documents around Student Discipline

School Resource Officers

- [Dear Colleague Letter for School Resource Officers](#) (September, 2016)

Early Education

- [Dear Colleague Letter for Early Education](#) (December, 2014)
- [Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood](#) (n.d.)

K-12 Discipline

- [Dear Colleague Letter for PBIS under IDEA](#) (August, 2016)
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- [School Discipline Consensus Report](#) (2014)
- [Justice Center, Council of State Gov. – Beyond Zero Tolerance](#) (February, 2014)

Additional Resources:

Bully interventions vary in effectiveness for specific populations and should not be adopted as “one size fits all.” Below are some websites that house “evidence-based interventions” for Bullying:

- National Registry of Programs and Practices
- Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development
- Model Programs Guide

Student Engagement Project materials, including briefs on all the strategies discussed in the presentation and more, can be found at:

<http://k12engagement.unl.edu/>

A list of all strategy briefs can be found at:

<http://k12engagement.unl.edu/strategy-briefs>