



ALTERNATIVES TO SUSPENSION, EXPULSION, AND SCHOOL-BASED ARREST

Research into the use of zero tolerance policies has shown they are not an effective means for changing student behavior. Moreover, those policies are associated with lower academic achievement, lower graduation rates, and worse school climate.

However, there are many prevention and intervention strategies that have been proven highly effective in addressing school-based misconduct, promoting a positive school climate, and making schools safe. These alternatives to out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and school-based arrests range from the most simple classroom teaching techniques to comprehensive school-wide and community-based programs.

In fact, the vast majority of student misconduct is best addressed through non-punitive classroom and in-school strategies. Most require little to no time or school resources, and are far more effective than exclusionary measures in creating a sustainable positive climate within schools. Here are some common strategies that address student misbehavior without pushing students out of school:

CLASSROOM & IN-SCHOOL ALTERNATIVES

25 Classroom & In-School Alternatives to Suspensions, Expulsions, and Arrests

1. Reminder and/or re-direction
2. Re-teaching of expectations and skills
3. Student/teacher conference
4. Loss of privileges
5. Role-play
6. Written apology
7. Mini-course/training on topics such as conflict resolution, anger management, social skills, or appropriate behavior
8. Time-out/chill-out period
9. Reflective essay or other reflective activity
10. Independent study
11. Parental outreach
12. Student/teacher/parent conference
13. Detention
14. Referral to after-school program
15. Saturday School
16. Restorative practices, such as peace circles
17. Referral to support staff, such as guidance counselor, social worker, or nurse
18. Self-charting of behaviors
19. Daily report card on behavior, task completion, and achievement

20. Referral to an in-school suspension center or support center
21. Restitution
22. Community service
23. Mentoring
24. Modified/adjusted schedule, including changes to the student's overall schedule or course content
25. Referral to community-based services

SCHOOL-WIDE PROGRAMS

In some communities, schools have benefitted by adopting school-wide programs that address student misconduct. While many of these programs implement the strategies listed above, they are often more comprehensive in nature.

For example, here are examples of two approaches to school discipline that have had extremely positive results in some communities.

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS): PBIS starts with the premise that introducing, modeling, and reinforcing positive social behavior is an important step of a student's educational experience. It seeks to change punishment-oriented school culture to more positive climates where appropriate behavior is the norm. The program's emphasis is on teaching behavioral expectations and rewarding students for following them rather than waiting for misbehavior to occur before responding. It provides training to teachers and parents about effective classroom and non-classroom management of students' behavior. Schools that implemented PBIS have shown reduced office referral rates, fewer suspensions and expulsions, improved attendance and school engagement, improved academic achievement, reduced dropout rates, improved school atmosphere, and increased instructional time. School-wide PBIS has been implemented in over 30 states and the District of Columbia.

For more information, see www.pbis.org.

Restorative Justice (RJ): Restorative Justice is a philosophy and an approach to addressing misbehavior, conflict, and offenses while keeping students in school and making them accountable for their actions. RJ asks three questions: what was the harm caused to both the individual and the community; who is responsible for causing the harm and making things right; and how can the harm be repaired and relationships restored to the greatest extent possible. RJ often involves dialogue between two or more parties or group conferencing – meetings including the victim, the offender, and the affected community. The main goals are to: provide a safe space so that the victim and community have a say in how to fix the problem and help determine appropriate consequences; put a “face” on the problem so that the offender can understand the impact of their actions; and provide an opportunity for those responsible for the problem to fix it. This restores relationships and reduces the chances of future misbehavior.

Some examples of RJ models include:

- *Community Accountability Panels* are meant to hold the offender accountable for the crime by imposing mutually agreed upon consequences to address harm or damage caused. Community Accountability Panels usually deal with minor offences. Cases can be referred from the criminal justice system or are informally referred by community members. The key participants in this model are the community panel members, the offender, and sometimes the victim, where appropriate.

- *Family Group Conferencing/ Conferencing* brings together those involved in and affected by the offense to allow the offender to take responsibility, the victim to voice the impact of the offense, and the support and community members to assist in the resolution of the crime. Conferences have been used to deal with minor to moderately serious offenses, e.g. theft and assault. The facilitator acts as a guide for the dialogue between the victim and the offender to take place. It is not uncommon for a representative of the criminal justice system to be present, e.g. police officer, lawyer, or parole officer.
- *Victim-Offender Mediation* provides a forum for victims and offenders to meet in a safe and respectful environment with the assistance of a facilitator. The purpose of the meeting is to explore and discuss the effects of a crime, and the ways in which healing can take place. Victim-Offender mediation is often used for more serious crimes, e.g. assault and murder. A meeting can occur between the victim and offender pre-sentence, post-sentence, or independent of a formal response by the criminal justice system.
- *Sentencing Circles* are community meetings designed to address both family and community circumstances that are underlying causes of crime. They are meant to rebuild relationships, develop rehabilitative plans, and respond to victims' needs. Circles are used for minor to serious offenses depending on the community. They involve the offender(s), victim(s), the friends and families of each, community members, and spiritual advisors.

For more information, see www.safersanerschools.org; www.restorativejustice.org; and <http://www.iirp.org>.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS

Aside from the strategies mentioned above, there are many programs that have demonstrated success in addressing student misconduct. Many other programs, however, have placed unnecessary burdens on parents, students, and teachers and have done little to reduce the impact of harsh school disciplinary practices. To determine whether programs are appropriate for your local community and school, we recommend evaluating whether they: are child-centered; focus on addressing “root causes” of misconduct rather than punishment of that behavior; prioritize helping the student achieve academically; and demonstrate cultural competence.

To give an idea of the types of other potential programs that are available, we have listed below a selection divided into four sub-groups: general prevention and intervention programs; school violence and conflict-related programs; substance abuse prevention/intervention; and programs that divert students from the juvenile justice system.

Note that Advancement Project does not endorse any of the programs or strategies listed. This listing is pulled largely from Promising Practices Network and the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado at Boulder, and is intended solely as a resource for communities to use in identifying alternative practices. For more information on these programs, evaluations of them, and additional programs, please visit <http://www.promisingpractices.net/default.asp> and www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/.

General Prevention & Intervention Programs

Behavioral Monitoring and Reinforcement Program (BMRP): BMRP, formerly known as Preventive Intervention, is a two-year school-based intervention for middle school, high risk students (those students with low academic motivation, family problems, or frequent or

serious school discipline referrals) to prevent juvenile delinquency, substance use, and academic failure. The program targets students' cynicism and lack of self-efficacy to deal with problems. It focuses on monitoring student behavior and rewarding appropriate behavior, and increasing communication between teachers, students, and parents. Teachers submit weekly reports on punctuality, preparedness, and behavior in the classroom and regularly meet with students to discuss their behavior. Teachers also engage in role-play and teach the relationship between behavior and consequences. Students in the program demonstrated higher grades, better attendance rates, decreased drug abuse, and fewer school-based problems, including decreased suspension, tardiness, and academic failure.

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Check and Connect: Check and Connect is a dropout prevention program for high school students with learning, emotional, and/or behavioral disabilities. Students are assigned a "monitor," who is a graduate student, special education teacher, or community member with experience in human services, who serves as mentor, advisor, and service coordinator. Monitors meet with the students to discuss attendance, behavior, and academic performance and how these factors relate to life choices and success. They also help students develop problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills. Monitors help students obtain extracurricular activities and jobs, and get academic assistance. Monitors are in regular contact with students' parents/guardians. Check and Connect has demonstrated an increase in attendance and the numbers of students who complete high school, receive a GED, and/or remain enrolled in school.

For more information:

<http://ici.umn.edu/checkandconnect/>

Good Behavior Game: This classroom management strategy is designed to improve aggressive and/or disruptive behavior. The program is used mainly for early elementary students so that students will be provided with the skills they need for dealing with future life experiences and combating societal influences. It involves teachers and students in a behavior modification game. The game allows teachers to define tasks, rules, and disruptive behavior, and students, in teams, to earn rewards by following the rules. The game allows for individual and group responsibility. Initially the start of the game is revealed to all students but eventually, the entire class can engage in the game all day, every day. This allows students to constantly monitor their behavior and conform to expectations. The program has proven beneficial for reducing aggression and shyness.

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I Can Problem Solve (ICPS): Formerly known as Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving, this school-based intervention trains young children to think of a variety of solutions to interpersonal problems, consider the consequences of these solutions, and recognize thoughts, feelings, and motives that generate problem situations. The intervention uses pictures, role-playing, puppets, group interaction, and real-life examples. Students receive training for three months. Initially, lessons teach basic skills and general problem-solving. Later, understanding feelings and having sensitivity to others are emphasized. Lastly, it focuses on role-playing and dialogue to practice the skills learned. Students have exhibited better problem solving skills, more controlled classroom behavior, and healthier relationships with peers.

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Linking the Interests of Families and Teachers (LIFT): LIFT is a school-based intervention and prevention program that seeks to decrease antisocial behavior and increase pro-social behavior. The intervention is for first and fifth grade students living in areas with high rates of juvenile delinquency. In-classroom techniques include lecture and role play on a specific skill, group activities, free play with aspects of the Good Behavior Game, and daily awards. Fifth-grade classrooms also incorporate study skills. LIFT also includes meetings for parents hosted at the school to learn how to create a home environment most conducive to LIFT discipline. The meetings involve lecture, discussion, role-play, and exercises for home. LIFT has decreased physical aggression on the playground, increased positive classroom behavior, and reduced aversive behaviors among parents.

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Ripple Effects: Ripple Effects develops technology-based learning tools to build social emotional competency and positively change social behavior. Using multimedia – photos, sounds, drawings, animation, videos, peer voices, and interactive games – it can be used on three different levels: universal prevention that develops students' core social emotional abilities; targeted prevention of certain issues, including injury, illness, and school failure; and individualized intervention for those students who have exhibited behavior problems or under-achievement. Ripple Effects, which has programs for students ages 7 to 17 (and educators), has been used in over 600 school districts and communities. Eleven studies, including eight randomized trials, have shown positive impact on school outcomes (increases in GPA and attendance rates, and fewer tardies and in- and out-of-school suspensions), observed behaviors (more respectful behavior and less anti-social/unkind behavior), and more positive attitudes, beliefs, and skills (strengthened resilience and more reports of

assertiveness rather than aggression). One of the founders of Ripple Effects was also one of the co-creators of Second Step, a well known violence prevention program.

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Social Decision Making/Problem Solving (SDM/PS): SDM/PS teaches students social and decision-making skills and develops their ability to effectively use those skills. It aims to develop self-esteem, self-control, and social awareness skills, including dealing with stress and emotions; increasing healthy lifestyle choices; avoiding engaging in substance abuse, violence, and school failure; improving group cooperation skills; and helping students develop positive peer relationships. The curriculum can be incorporated into classroom lessons, namely for students in kindergarten to eighth grade. It has three main sections: readiness, which deals with listening, following directions, resisting provocation, avoiding provoking others, monitoring stress and emotions, selecting friends, showing a caring attitude toward others; instructional, helping students think in problem situations; and application, helping students apply the skills they learned.

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School Violence & Conflict-Related Programs

Aggressors, Victims, and Bystanders: Thinking and Acting to Prevent Violence (AVB): AVB is 12 lessons for middle school students that aim to prevent or reduce violence by altering the way students think about violence. It makes students examine their roles as aggressors, victims, and bystanders and help them develop problem-solving skills and new ways of thinking about how they might respond to conflict in each of these roles.

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Conflict Resolution Training: Via role-playing, interviewing, group dialogue, and brainstorming, conflict resolution training teaches students the skills they need to handle conflict nonviolently, including perspective taking, cost-benefit analysis, decision-making, and negotiation. Administrators, teachers, and other school personnel can also participate in conflict resolution to help create a peaceful school, model appropriate behavior, and teach students conflict resolution techniques. Classroom instruction is provided for students in the areas of conflict resolution, anger management, and inter-group relations.

For more information:

Columbia University, Teachers College

The International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution

<http://www.tc.edu/icccr/index.html>

The Resolving Conflicts Creatively Program

<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/drugfree/sa2lk16.htm>

Educators for Social Responsibility, www.esrnational.org

Olweus Bullying Prevention Program: The goal of the program is to reduce victim-bully problems among students, have active parents and teachers, develop clear rules against bullying behavior, and provide support and protection for victims. Services are for all students on a school-wide and classroom basis. Initially, a questionnaire is distributed to all students to assess the nature and prevalence of bullying at school. With those results, a coordinated and integrated plan specific to the school's needs is developed. As part of the program, teachers host in-class meetings so students better understand the harm associated with bullying and learn how to fight against it. Role-playing, writing, and small group discussion are used. Additional interventions are provided for those students who are identified as bullies or victims, and their parents/guardians. Counselors and mental health professionals often assist. Evaluations of the program have shown a substantial reduction in reports of bullying; a significant reduction in reports of general problematic behavior like vandalism, fighting, theft, or truancy; and significant improvements in the social climate of the class, shown by improved order and discipline, more positive social relationships, and a more positive attitude toward schoolwork and school.

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PATHS, Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies: PATHS is a five-year prevention program that tries to promote emotional and social competencies, and reduce aggression and behavior problems in elementary school-aged children. The curriculum is taught three times per week for a minimum of 20-30 minutes per day. Teachers use lesson plans that help students with emotional literacy, self-control, social competence, positive peer relations, and interpersonal problem-solving skills. The curriculum is divided into three units: readiness and self-control; feelings and relationships; and interpersonal cognitive problem-solving. Students have homework that involves family interaction. Studies indicated that students exhibited improved self-control, improved understanding of emotions, increased ability to

tolerate frustration, more effective conflict-resolution strategies, improved thinking and planning skills, and decreased anxiety, depressive symptoms, and behavior problems.

For more information: www.prevention.psu.edu/projects/PATHS.html

Peer Mediation: This program trains students on how to mediate peer issues such as rumors, name calling, minor harassment, and fights. Students are trained as conflict managers and apply problem-solving strategies to assist peers in settling disputes so that everyone is satisfied.

For more information:

National Resource Center for Youth Mediation
c/o New Mexico Center for Dispute Resolution
Ph.: 505.247.0571

Substance Abuse Prevention/Intervention

Life Skills Training (LST): This drug-use-prevention program serves junior high/middle school students. The program aims to teach youth personal self-management skills (e.g., decision making and self-control), social skills, and skills to resist drug use. This training is taught by classroom teachers in school. Teachers use instruction, demonstration, feedback, reinforcement, and practice. It is a three-year intervention, with the number of sessions decreasing over time. Outside health professional and peer leaders can help teach sessions. Studies indicate that LST dramatically reduced tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use by 50% to 75% in all communities.

For more information: www.lifeskillstraining.com

Midwestern Prevention Project (MPP): The Midwestern Prevention Project is a community-based program for adolescent drug abuse prevention. MPP combines school-based drug resistance skills training with broader change within the school, community, and local policy change aimed at limiting youth access to drugs. MPP programming is for middle school students and is a multi-year project.

MPP includes in-school programming, along with parent programming, mass media coverage, community organization engagement, and policy advocacy. While students are in school, teachers and student facilitators employ social learning techniques in the classroom, such as modeling, role playing, and discussion, to help students learn to resist pressure to use drugs. While the bulk of the program occurs in the first year, second-year classes are available and peer counseling and other supports are implemented later during high school. Homework is given to reinforce lessons and foster interaction and discussion with family.

MPP organizes a parent-principal committee that reviews school drug policy and trains parents on how to communicate with their children on drug abuse. It also advocates for mass media coverage on use of drugs, the development of a community organization to implement drug prevention services, and relevant local policy change. This ensures that the skills learned in school are reinforced outside of school. MPP youth have reduced daily smoking by up to 40% and decreased marijuana and alcohol use as well. Communication among parents and children on drug use and prevention activities in the community also increased.

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Project ALERT: Project ALERT is a classroom-based substance abuse prevention program for middle school students. It motivates students against drug use, provides skills and strategies for resisting use, and establishes non-use attitudes. The two-year curriculum is more intense during the first year. Through small group activities, role-playing, videos, and discussion, Project ALERT exposes students to the pressures to use drugs and reasons not to use drugs, and helps develop skills to resist those pressures and recognize the benefits of not using drugs. Project ALERT has decreased marijuana use, significantly lowered alcohol misuse, decreased smoking, and helped develop non-drug use attitudes.

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Project Towards No Drug Abuse: Project Towards No Drug Abuse (Project TND) targets high school-age youth, ages 14 to 19. There are twelve 40-minute interactive sessions taught over a four-week period by teachers or health educators. The sessions teach motivation to not use drugs, skills in self-control, communication skills, and decision-making strategies. The lessons also provide detailed information about the consequences of drug use and correct misperceptions. Active listening, effective communication skills, stress management, coping skills, tobacco cessation techniques, and self-control are emphasized. Research shows that students enrolled in Project TND were less likely to use hard drugs and alcohol.

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Programs that Divert Students from the Juvenile Justice System

Youth/Teen Courts: This program typically serves youth, ages 14 to 16, who are first-time offenders and have been charged with non-violent offenses (e.g., vandalism). Instead of going to juvenile court, these youth participate in a hearing where other teens serve as attorneys, jurors, and in some cases, judges. For example, in the Time Dollar Youth Court in Washington DC, offenders often receive sentences of participating in community service, giving apologies to victims, participating in some sort of training, or performing mandatory jury duty.

For more information: www.youthcourt.net

Peer Jury: Peer jury is a program that trains students to serve as jurors to analyze the facts of a fellow student's school discipline case, ask questions, and make decisions about the appropriate consequences. Peer jurors also help connect the students to community resources, address root causes of their behavior, and identify positive solutions.

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Strategies for Youth: If you want to change the way police treat youth in your community in support of a law enforcement approach that focuses on teaching youth right from wrong with arrest as a last resort, then you might consider what Strategies for Youth (SFY) offers. SFY works with police departments and communities to create an approach to policing that expands the tools officers use when working with youth to make arrest a last resort. SFY has worked with departments to reconfigure the deployment of their officers, create juvenile units, and connect police to youth serving community-based organizations. SFY conducts assessments of police/youth interactions and provides customized training for officers on the street and in schools on increasing compliance with the law while reducing conflicts with youth that often lead to arrests. SFY also works with youth using a game called Juvenile Justice Jeopardy to explain how the juvenile justice system works, how to behave during interactions with police, what conduct can lead to arrest, and the impacts of police and court involvement on their education options and their records.

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