

# Strategies for Dropout Prevention and Discipline Reform in Schools

Natalie Hoff, Ana Damme, Allison Heifner, Elisabeth Kane, Shir Palmon, & Dr. Reece Peterson



## Session Overview

- Rationale for alternative interventions and strategies
  - Problems with traditional strategies
- Implementation within Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
  - Tier 1
  - Tier 2
  - Tier 3
- Individual and school-wide case examples



## Need for Alternative Strategies

- Call for a reform of exclusionary discipline and dropout prevention strategies:
  - [Dear Colleagues Letter for Early Education](#) (December, 2014)
  - [Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood](#) (n.d.)
  - [Joint US Dept. of Justice and Dept. of Education Dear Colleague Letter](#) (January, 2014)
  - [Advancing School Discipline Reform](#) (August, 2015)
  - [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>

## Need for Alternative Strategies

- Call attention to traditional discipline strategies:
  - Suspension
  - Expulsion
  - Zero Tolerance
  - And more...
- And their detrimental effects:
  - Do not lead to behavior change
  - Loss of instruction time
  - Student disengagement
  - Increased dropout rates



## The Problem

- Diverse needs of students identified for additional supports
  - Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
  - School-wide Screening
    - <http://k12engagement.unl.edu/school-wide-behavior-screening>
    - <http://k12engagement.unl.edu/dropout-screening-early-warning>



## Impact on School-Based Teams



- School-based teams are not always equipped to handle the workload:
  - Lack of time/resources
  - Inadequate repertoire of possible strategies to address diverse needs of students
  - Research-to-practice gap

### Impact on "School Improvement Planning"

- Historically focused on academic performance
- Responsible for:
  - Identifying impact areas
  - Identifying measurable goals
  - Selecting strategies to meet goals
  - Training and implementation of strategies



### Question

What are the problems with traditional strategies?



### Exclusionary Discipline

- Punitive disciplinary strategies in response to student misbehavior
  - Results in removal of educational access
- Common types include:
  - expulsion
  - out-of-school suspension
  - in-school-suspension
  - involuntary transfer

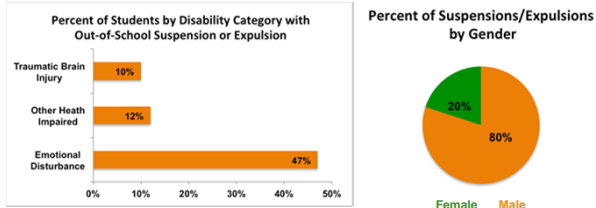


www.differencebetween.info

### Issues with Exclusionary Discipline

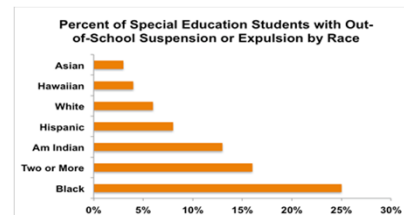
- May violate students' right to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE; IDEA, 2004)
- Overrepresentation of students who are minorities and have disabilities
  - Approximately 7% of students are suspended (Losen & Gillespie, 2012)
  - About 44% of students with emotional disturbance are suspended (Achilles, McLaughlin, & Croninger, 2007)

### Example of Overrepresentation



Note: Data come from the Nebraska Department of Education Special Education Discipline Data from the 2014 to 2015 school year.

### Example of Overrepresentation



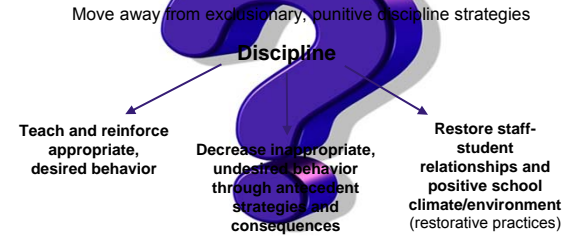
Note: Data come from the Nebraska Department of Education Special Education Discipline Data from the 2014 to 2015 school year.

### Issues with Exclusionary Discipline (cont.)

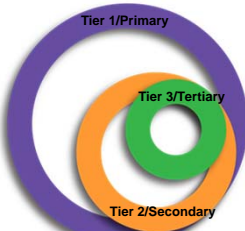
- **Ineffective strategy to reduce inappropriate student behavior**  
(Arcia, 2006; Brown, 2007)
- **Related to negative outcomes**  
(e.g., repeated exclusionary discipline, academic failure, school disengagement, dropout)



### So what do we do?



### Alternative Strategies to Exclusionary Discipline



Multi-tier system of support (e.g., PBIS)

- **Primary**
- **Secondary**
- **Tertiary**

Find free materials at: [k12engagement.unl.edu](http://k12engagement.unl.edu)

### Tier 1 Strategies



What are Tier 1 strategies?

- Primary level of prevention in schools
- Universal strategies

### Tier 1 Strategies

Before & After School Programs	Reinforcement for Positive Behavior
Bullying Prevention & Intervention	School Values & Expectations
Conflict De-escalation	Service Learning & Community Learning
Middle to HS Transition Planning	Social Skills Instruction
Parent & Family Involvement	School Climate
Postsecondary Transition Planning	And more....

\*Some are applicable at the tier two or three levels

### School Climate

- **"Attitude" or "Mood" of the school**
  - Different from school culture
- **Identified as a crucial step toward school improvement**
- **A positive school climate**
  - Improves academics
  - Decreases risky behavior & bullying
  - Decreases teacher burnout

(Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013)
- **Process of improvement**



### Conflict De-escalation

- Broad term to describe a variety of techniques that reduce tension between two individuals or two groups of people
- Conflict Cycle (Colvin, 2015)
  - Interrupt the conflict cycle
    - Validate student feelings
- Phases of Acting-Out Cycle
  - Keep students in calm phase
    - Provide positive reinforcement

## Tier 2 Strategies

### What are Tier 2 strategies?

- Secondary level of interventions in schools
- Data-based decision making for targeted interventions

### Tier 2 Strategies

Academic Supports & Tutoring	Restitution
Anger Management	Restorative Practices
Detention	Sleep and School
Individual Behavior Plans & FBA	Truancy Reduction
In-School Suspension	Wraparound
Mentoring	Youth Courts
Peer Mediation	And more...

\*Some are applicable at the tier one or three levels

### Program Check-In/Check-Out

- Monitor student progress
- Additional structure in day
- Positive daily contact
  - 1-10 minutes, twice a day
- Discuss: daily events, behavioral goals, & strategies
- Reinforces positive behaviors & academic responsibility
- Behavioral chart/checklist
- May reflect PBIS school expectations

### Individual Behavior Plans and FBA's

A → B → C  
(Antecedent) (Behavior) (Consequence)

- Modifies students' environment to decrease problem behavior and increase prosocial behavior of individual students
  - Individualized interventions tailored to student needs and behavioral data
  - Plans differ between students with similar behavior problems
  - Created by a problem-solving team, knowledgeable about the student and behavior-change practices

### In-School Suspension


#### What it does:

- Removes threat of student
- Disciplines student
- Continues to instruct
  - Academics
  - Positive behavior alternatives

Emphasize therapeutic and academic goals that relate to the function of student's behavior problems

**Caution: easily misused**

## Tier 3 Strategies



**What are Tier 3 strategies?**

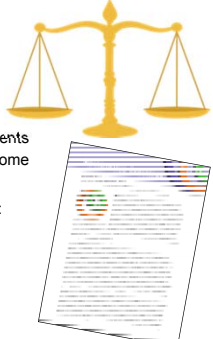
- Tertiary level of intervention in schools
- Specialized and individualized

### Tier 3 Strategies

Academic Supports & Tutoring	Parent & Family Involvement
Alternative Schooling	Restitution
Conflict De-Escalation	Restorative Practices
Discipline Recovery	Wraparound
Dropout Recovery	Youth Courts
Family Group Conferencing	Program Check & Connect
Individual Behavior Plans and FBA	And more...

\*Some are applicable at the tier two or three levels



### Restorative Practices



- Problem-solving approach to help students learn how to manage their behavior
- Focus is not on punishment, but on helping students become better people by encouraging them to come up with a plan to right their wrongs
- Instead of paying back the victim, schools could:
- A student who curses at a teacher could problem solve and apologize to restore the relationship.



### Family Group Conferencing

(Example of restorative practice)

- Engages children and their family
- If applicable, includes the victim and offender
- Bring in a mediator to discuss how to repair the harm
- Discuss and teach appropriate behavior and consider appropriate consequences
- Use as an alternative to long-term suspension or expulsion
- Important to get the entire team involved
- One or two big meetings

### Program Check and Connect

- **Check-In/Check-Out for students at the Tier 3 level**
  - More intensive, direct, and individualized
  - Less frequent monitoring (about once per week)
- **Implementation of interventions, such as:**
  - problem solving (i.e., social skills)
  - academic support (i.e., tutoring)
  - recreational and community involvement
- **Monitor more broad outcomes**  
(i.e., attendance, academic progress, and behavior referrals)

### Student Case Example – 8th Grade Girl

She presents as angry and upset frequently at school and has been sent to the office several times for frequent inappropriate classroom behavior. She also has been suspended for three one-day suspensions for foul language, and a "verbal fight" with another student.

The 8<sup>th</sup> grade team is worried about deteriorating behavior, as well as poor academic outcomes for this student and wants to intervene before problems get worse.

**The team is brainstorming possible more intensive intervention strategies for her. What should they put in place, and in what sequence?**

### School Improvement Planning

Over the past two years, the number of student days of student suspension at this middle school are seemingly high. Additionally, office discipline referrals data suggest that the majority of suspensions resulted from chronic absenteeism, defiance, and inappropriate language used in school.

While school climate data from a recent survey suggest that most of the student and staff reports are positive, there appears to be about 20% who report being disengaged with school, and rate the overall climate as "poor."

**The Team is brainstorming strategies for a two year effort to address these issues and improve climate while reducing the number of days of suspension.**

Student Engagement Project Materials							
Available Strategy Briefs	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Available Strategy Briefs	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Academic Supports & Tutoring				Parent & Family Involvement			
Alternative Schooling				Peer Mediation			
Anger Management				Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports			
Before and After School Programs				Postsecondary Transition Planning			
Behavior Contracting				Punishment**			
Behavior Monitoring				Pyramid Model Early Childhood Education			
Bullying Intervention for Bullying Behavior				Reinforcement			
Bullying Prevention & Intervention				Restitution			
Character Education				Restorative Practices			
Classroom Management				Saturday School			
Conflict De-escalation				School Climate & Culture			
Corporal Punishment*				School Values & Expectations			
Counseling Intervention				School Wide Behavior/Discipline Programs			
Detention				School Community Collaboration			
Discipline Recovery				Service Learning & Community Service			
Dropout Recovery				Sleep and School			
Escape**				Social Skills Instruction			
Family Group Conferencing				Staff-Student Relationships			
Grade Retention & Demotion				Student Engagement			
Individual Behavior Plans & FBA				Suicide Prevention			
In-School Suspension**				Suspension**			
Involuntary Transfer*				Threat Assessment			
Lowering Course Grades*				Truancy Reduction			
Mentoring				Wraparound			
Middle to HS Transition Planning				Youth Courts			
Mini Courses on Discipline Topics				Zero Tolerance*			
Motivation							

\*not recommended \*\*use with caution

For more FREE materials from the Student Engagement Project, please visit <http://k12engagement.unl.edu>.



### Questions?

**For more information:**

- <http://k12engagement.unl.edu>
- **Facebook:** Student Engagement Project
- **Twitter:** @k12engagement

