

Saturday School

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Saturday school was introduced to public schools in the 1980s (or earlier), and introduced to the big screen in 1985 with the film *The Breakfast Club* (Hughes, 1985). Saturday school, also known as Saturday detention, may reduce or eliminate exclusionary discipline measures and benefit the school environment in a number of ways (Stenerson & Stouffer, 1994).

What is Saturday School?

Saturday school is an alternative to exclusionary discipline measures (Adams, 1986; Durr, 1993; Winborn, 1992) that requires students to give up a portion of their weekend to make up for their misbehavior at school (Stenerson & Stouffer, 1994). This schedule doesn't interfere with the student's learning time during the school week (Stenerson & Stouffer, 1994), but allows students to remain in the learning environment during that time and receive instruction and assignments (Adams, 1986). Giving up time on the weekends to be in school is usually not enjoyable for students (Mickler & Martin, 1989; Stenerson & Stouffer, 1994). Saturday school is not viewed as a "vacation away from the classroom" (Stenerson & Stouffer, 1994), but an extended weekend detention in the classroom.

Saturday school is usually held for 3-4 hours on Saturdays (Cooley & Thompson, 1988; Pratt, 2011; Winborn, 1992), although it can be held any time during the week (Cooley & Thompson, 1988). One variation is held on Friday evenings, a time when Middle and Schools hold many activities and sporting events. Students serving this Friday evening detention would miss these activities, and for some students that might be a disincentive for inappropriate behavior which might result in this type of consequence. Saturday school is assigned by an administrator (Adams, 1986; Mickler & Martin, 1989; Winborn, 1992), monitored by school staff (Adams, 1986; Crawford, 1984) and located in cafeterias (Pratt, 2011), study halls, or other rooms in the school that aren't being used (Crawford, 1984).

According to Adams (1986), students who have misbehaved severely enough to be suspended are eligible to participate in Saturday school, depending on the student's current behavior, history of behavior, and the student's attitude. Behaviors that merit Saturday school may include truancy (Durr, 1993), multiple tardies (Conley & Enomoto, 2009), inappropriate behavior, or repeated violations of school rules (Pratt, 2011). Although not as common, some schools have offered Saturday school as a credit recovery program for students who have failed

a class or as a study hall for students who have needed extra help with academics (Johnston, 1990; Pratt, 2011).

During Saturday school hours, students are required to follow the rules. In many Saturday schools, students are expected to be on time, bring all materials (Cooley & Thompson, 1988), refrain from talking, and stay in their seat (Crawford, 1984). Food, drinks, and gum are often not allowed (Mickler & Martin, 1989) and students usually cannot access lockers or computers (Pratt, 2011). At the time it was described in reports, if students break the rules or don't show up to Saturday school, they may have to serve an after-school detention, two Saturday school sentences (Conley & Enomoto, 2009), or out-of-school suspension for one to five days (Durr, 1993; Mickler & Martin, 1989; Pratt, 2011).

Saturday school activities vary, but may include academic activities, physical labor, or counseling (Winborn, 1992). Students may be required to bring in homework (Durr, 1993) and in some settings, extra assignments are given (Winborn, 1992). Not every Saturday school, requires students to complete schoolwork (Crawford, 1984). According to Adams (1986), physical tasks such as trash pick-up, yard work, and cleaning were assigned to students. Some Saturday schools require behavior improvement activities, such as writing assignments, "worksheets, discussions, role-playing, or videos" (Winborn, 1992). Counseling, self-help information, and skill worksheets may also be available for students (Stessman, 1985).

What do we know about Saturday School?

Much of the research on Saturday School is older, with most of those being descriptive studies that would not permit conclusive judgments about effectiveness. Some studies report decreases in suspension rates after the implementation of Saturday school (Winborn, 1992). According to one school's

data, the year Saturday school was introduced, the suspension rate decreased from 308 to 137 suspensions (Durr, 1993). Another school started Saturday school and within three years the out-of-school suspension rate had dropped from 7.7% to 2.3% (Stenerson & Stouffer, 1994). According to Thorbahn (1995), suspension rates in one school decreased from 62 to 17 students when Saturday school was implemented.

Other schools have found that Saturday school may also help to increase attendance and decrease tardiness (Mickler & Martin, 1989). Stenerson & Stouffer (1994) claim that Saturday school contributed to an increase in attendance rates for staff members and students. In another school that employed Saturday school, tardiness was reduced by 75% (Conner & Krajewski, 1996).

Survey findings show that Saturday school is "one of the most effective reactive discipline methods" (Killion, 1998). In another school, Saturday school programs were evaluated and shown to be "effective disciplinary consequences" (Smith, 2005). Saturday school has shown to be a positive addition to many schools (Mickler & Martin, 1989).

In one school, Saturday school evolved from being just a disciplinary consequence into an opportunity for students to get additional help. One of the school's math teachers used this time to tutor in math. Saturday school became a place that students chose to come to get help in their classes. By the end of the third year, gifted students volunteered to tutor attendees in math during Saturday school. The guidance counselor started offering credit recovery to students who failed a class so they could still graduate. The school also offered service learning projects and it helped special education students with the extra math tutoring to score proficient or better on state math tests reducing the number of special education diplomas the school gave. The principal stated that Saturday school is one of the best supports for students that his school has in place (Pratt, 2011).

However, not all studies show optimistic evidence. According to Smith (2005), there isn't enough data to conclude that Saturday school is truly what is causing the positive changes. There may be other changes to disciplinary procedures that were implemented simultaneously which have contributed to positive outcomes as well (Smith, 2005). Other schools have tried implementing Saturday school and didn't see significant changes (Hegna, 1997).

Saturday school has been criticized for not addressing the behaviors that caused the discipline problem (Smith, 2005). Another criticism is that once capacity is reached, that disciplinary method can no longer be used (Conley & Enomoto, 2009).

Overall, the literature on the effectiveness of Saturday schools is inconclusive. Much of the information found on Saturday school is old, written in the 1980s and 1990s, and is almost exclusively anecdotal. There were only two longitudinal studies found on the topic, but they only followed one school each. Most of the literature on Saturday schools is written by school principals or superintendents and follow one school's program for one year. Saturday school and its variants have potential to prevent exclusionary discipline, and in spite of its lack of research evidence, should be considered a promising practice.

Making Saturday School Work: Implementation

Successful implementation of Saturday school involves considerable "planning, coordination, and cooperation" (Cooley & Thompson, 1988). Adams (1986), recommends one person to be in charge of Saturday School coordination to establish consistency and uniformity. Others recommend a group effort in implementing Saturday school. According to Crawford (1984), staff should "work together to establish a philosophy which reflects a desire to provide students with the best possible education at all times." Admin-

istrators and teachers must be committed to the program and be willing to give their time and effort to supervise and assist students during Saturday school (Stenerson & Stouffer, 1994). Clearly the cost of staff supervision on Saturday, or other normally off duty times for staff, is one consideration. Parental support is also an important factor in successful implementation (Stenerson & Stouffer, 1994).

Logistically, there are some considerations to keep in mind when implementing Saturday school. It is important to keep a low number of students in each session so that only one supervisor needs to be in attendance. It is equally important to be clear about what students should be doing while in Saturday school, and to be sure they are appropriately engaged. In addition, there must be an accurate record kept of which students attend Saturday school. If the same students are attending each session, the effectiveness of the program may need to be considered (Adams, 1986). There should also be a clear plan of action to be followed if rules are not followed during Saturday school, or if students do not attend. According to Adams (1986), if a student breaks a Saturday school rule, "he or she should be suspended, since he or she had done something worth suspension anyway." While such an approach is understandable, it does not avoid exclusionary discipline consequences- one goal of Saturday school. According to Adams (1986), there should always be a follow-up discussion with students who have participated in Saturday school regarding the reason for it being assigned.

Conclusion

While there is little research on Saturday School and as a result it is difficult to judge its effectiveness, some schools have reported success in decreasing suspension and absences after implementing Saturday school. Given the alternatives, Saturday school may be a promising strategy.



Recommended Reference:

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