

Alternatives to Suspension

This document contains suggested alternatives to suspension that align with Positive Behavior Support and Function Based Thinking. Before adopting or adapting any of these strategies, consider the following guidance:

- Implement Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support with fidelity, consistency and equity to *prevent* the need to suspend in the first place.
- In School Suspension (ISS), Out of School Suspension (OSS) and expulsion are **not** taken off the table! However, have clear decision rules for the type and severity of behaviors that trigger exclusionary discipline so that it is only used for the most serious infractions.
 - Examples:
 - Serious and credible threat to the safety of staff, students, or visitors
 - Comply with district policy
 - Comply with state and/or federal laws
 - Avoid exclusionary discipline for subjectively interpreted behaviors, such as defiance, disruption, and disrespect.
- Use a decision flow chart or a levels table describing consequence options available to administrators for different intensity levels or severity of behaviors to ensure consistency and equity of administration of consequences. Incorporate alternatives to suspension at the different intensity levels or severity, as appropriate, and share with all stakeholders to avoid confusion or feelings of resentment.
- We strongly encourage you to engage **all** stakeholders in developing the levels table and selecting the suspension alternatives that are included. Stakeholders should include teacher representatives and/or the bargaining unit, parents, and students (if developmentally appropriate).
 - Administrators can incorporate some wiggle room by designating consequences as options for specific behavior severity/intensity levels with the understanding that they must select from the available options.

Some Suggested Alternatives to Suspension

Problem Solving/Contracting

- Problem solving or contracting involves negotiating or coaching *with* the student to identify the unwanted behavior and possible replacement behaviors. Then, co-develop a contract that incorporates reminders to the student to use the replacement behavior, administers salient reinforcements when the student uses the replacement behavior and administers appropriate consequences when the student engages in the unwanted behavior. This can be a strategy for more intense minor classroom behaviors, but it is also a promising intervention for major/office managed behavior.
- **Furthermore, this strategy can be used to *reintegrate* students back into the classroom following ISS or OSS!**

Parent Engagement

- This is similar to problem solving/contracting with the student, only this time the administrator engages the parent, as well, to brainstorm a behavior improvement plan for the student that is coordinated between home and school. No one knows the student better than the parent. This is different from the typical parent conference where the administrator *tells* the parent what to do. Rather, it is a partnership where the parent, school and student work together to come up with a plan to support expectation following behavior
- It is also an opportunity to identify behaviors that spilled over into school, and enlist the parents help in not only providing more active supervision at home, but additional reinforcement for the student when the preferred behavior is used at home.

Mini-Modules

- Teachers create a library of mini lessons on common problem behaviors and appropriate replacements. These self-study modules are assigned to students, and can include videos, readings, oral or written reports, workbooks or worksheets, and/or tests.
- Mini-modules can include (but is not limited to) topics such as:
 - Alcohol or drug abuse
 - Dangers of smoking
 - Conflict resolution strategies
 - Anger management strategies
 - Social skills
 - Communication skills

Counselling

- In some cases, it is beneficial to involve the school counselor, school psychologist, or school social worker to provide the student with additional supports, or to work with the student to address concerns that are interfering with the student's learning. Understanding *why* the student behaves the way they do helps the school to address the problem, and is a better solution than punishing the student. Supports can include social skills lessons such as appropriate ways to initiate play, accepting correction, and anger management, or resources to support with childcare responsibilities, food insecurity, or other concerns specific to the individual student.

Targeted Mentoring

- Similarly, targeted mentoring is assigned to help students cope with challenges that are contributing to the behavior. An example, is to provide mentoring and support to a student who does not feel safe at school due to bullying.

- Targeted mentoring:
 - Identifies the cause of the problem
 - Assists students in coping
- THIS DOES NOT REPLACE THE NEED TO ADDRESS LEGITIMATE SAFETY/BULLYING CONCERNS!

Restorative Practices

- **Requires Training**
- Restorative practices can be considered both as a whole school preventative approach as well as a number of discrete practices that can be used to address unexpected behaviors. Examples of restorative practices include:
 - Restorative Conferencing
 - Mediation
 - Healing circles
 - Teen Courts
 - Restitution
 - Community Service
- Important considerations
 - Schools need training on restorative practices prior to implementing!
 - Restorative practices are NOT ALWAYS APPROPRIATE! **All** parties (victim, offender, staff, families, and affected community members) must agree to participate!
 - Always put the safety and rights of the victim, first!
 - Restorative practices require staff buy in and commitment!
 - Restorative practices should be available to all students.
 - There is evidence that where schools implement non-punitive practices, African American students tend to be excluded.
 - Build social capital/relationships prior to adopting restorative practices.

Community Service

- Students can be assigned to supervised community service opportunities outside of instructional time. Community service encourages individuals to think outside of themselves, as well as to begin to appreciate how they can use their energy to help others.
- Where possible, logically connect the community service assigned to the behavior.
- The school can partner with other schools or outside organizations (i.e., Boys' and Girls' Club) to provide supervised volunteer opportunities for students.
- Examples include:
 - soup kitchens
 - plant trees or flowers in community gardens
 - tutor other students

In Kind Restitution

- In-kind restitution is different from financial restitution, which most likely would fall on the parents. In-kind restitution means the student restores or improves the school environment, either by directly addressing the damage caused by the behavior, or by assigning a task that improves the school environment more broadly. In-kind restitution requires adequate supervision, and the student should not be pulled from instruction. The beauty of in-kind restitution is that it can often be logically connected to the behavior.
- Examples include the following:
 - Repair vandalism
 - Clean graffiti
 - Pick up trash
 - Clean lockers
 - Sweep floors
 - Wipe tables
 - Pick up trays

Additional Learning Opportunities

- Additional learning opportunities make up for instructional time lost due to the behavior. *Appropriate* means they are *NOT* a holding pen where students are punished by boredom! Rather, tutoring should be available to assist students to make up for lost instruction. In addition, as described in the last slide, tutoring can target academic skill deficits that lead to escape motivated behavior. In addition, students should receive instruction in the expected replacement behaviors.
- Examples include:
 - Appropriate after school detention
 - Appropriate Saturday school

Tutoring

- Under specific circumstances, tutoring is assigned as an appropriate consequence, not a punishment. In situations where the student engages in unexpected behavior that is motivated by the need to escape from overly challenging (for the student) academic tasks or potentially embarrassing situations, skill or knowledge development opportunities may eliminate the need for the student to engage in the unexpected behavior. Tutoring can be combined with another consequence, such as appropriate in school suspension, appropriate Saturday school, or appropriate after school detention.

Appropriate In School Suspension

- **Appropriate** In School Suspension (ISS) provides academic tutoring and/or instruction in the behavioral expectation or skill and preserves the classroom learning environment for other students. ISS should not be a life sentence! There should be a clearly defined period and procedure for the student to be admitted back to class.
- The procedure for readmission to class should include a contract or student success plan rather than behaviors the student is required to demonstrate to be readmitted (i.e., requiring an apology might backfire if the teacher refuses to accept the “tone” in which it is given).
- Keep in mind that escape motivated students may be reinforced by ISS. If this is the case, teach the student an acceptable alternative behavior and be sure that the acceptable alternative is reinforced when demonstrated.
 - For example, a student can be taught a signal to indicate the need for a break, and given a limited number and amount of time for each break; giving the break signal is reinforced by giving the student the break.

Advanced Tiers Interventions

- **Requires Training**
- Like all alternatives to suspension, advanced tiers interventions are a consequence, *not* a punishment! For students that meet the school’s decision rule for an advanced tier intervention, consider providing them with Tier 2 or Tier 3 support:
 - Check-in/Check (CICO)
 - Check-in/Check-out for High School (CICO-HS)
 - Social Skills Intervention Groups (SSIG)
 - Simple Functional Behavior Assessment and Behavior Intervention Plan (FBA/BIP)

Alternative Programing

- Alternative programming temporarily removes students from the environment where the problem occurs, while continuing to provide instruction. Alternative programming could take the form of alternative lunch, alternative recess or alternative passing period. Or, it could take the form of a temporary assignment to a school within a school or an in-district alternative school. Keep in mind that Alternative Programming can be considered a change of placement for a student with an IEP, and such changes **must** be made by the IEP team.

Reverse Suspension

- For non-violent behavior that might otherwise have risen to the level of a suspension, parents can be given the *option* of spending the school day with the student. Be aware that neither suspension nor the reverse suspension alternative may be an option for some parents who are penalized for taking time off from work, so be ready with other options.

Treatment/Diversion

- Zero Tolerance Approaches to substance abuse in schools does little to solve the problem. Parents can be offered treatment or diversion as an alternative to suspension. Schools can partner with community based, evidence-based treatment programs. I have linked “The Missouri Department of Mental Health Directory of Adolescent Substance Use Treatment Programs” in the Handout. Be aware that some of these programs may not be inclusive, some do not accept Medicaid. Transportation may also be an issue for some families.

Inclusive Skill-Building Learning Approach (ISLA; 2016)

- **Requires Training**
- Developed by Rhonda Nese of the University of Oregon, this program takes a systems and practices approach to support student behavior. The process follows the following flow:
 - Student engages in unexpected behavior
 - Student is sent to the behavior support room
 - Student receives *immediate* behavior support in the form of a student guided simple FBA and targeted behavior skills coaching
 - Reconnection conversation is conducted to prepare the student to return to the classroom
 - Student is escorted back to class, and support is provided to restore the relationship with the classroom teacher

If a student is suspended...

- Develop systems to:
 - Reintegrate student into the school and classroom
 - Arrange for them to make up missed work
 - Reestablish relationships and connectedness
 - Teach replacement behaviors and plan for future use
 - Reinforce expectation following behavior
 - Administer appropriate consequences for unexpected behaviors
 - Plan to support teachers in supporting the student
 - i.e., provide professional learning so that the teacher has the capacity to implement the reintegration plan.

Example of a Levels Chart

Level	Operational Definition	Example	Available Consequence
Level 1	Behavior that disrupts the learning environment, but does not result in physical or psychological harm	Major Disruption Vandalism Truancy	Behavior Monitoring Restitution Community Service Additional Learning Opportunities Problem Solving/Contract
Level 2	Student engages in behavior that may result in long term harm to self, or engages in verbal abuse of another student that does not involve a protected class.	Use or possession of alcohol Use or possession of cigarettes Harassment or bullying	Mini-Lessons Counselling Parent Involvement/Supervision
Level 3	Student engages in verbal harassment that involves a protected class; Student engages in behavior that may cause physical harm to another student.	Sexual misconduct Sexual Harassment Racial Harassment Physical Aggression/fighting	Alternative Programming Appropriate In School Suspension Restorative Practice Restitution
Level 4	Student intentionally engages in behavior that can or does result in serious bodily harm to another student or adult	Physical assault with intent to cause serious bodily harm; Sexual Assault	FBA/BIP Restorative Practice OSS Referral to Law Enforcement

References and Additional Resources

National Center on PBIS <https://www.pbis.org/>

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