

**INSTEAD OF  
SUSPENSION:**

**Alternative Strategies  
for Effective  
School Discipline**



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# Instead of Suspension: Alternative Strategies for Effective School Discipline

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# Foreword

Across North Carolina and the country, school boards and superintendents, school administrators and teachers, parents and community leaders have acknowledged that suspending children from school for violations of school rules should be a last resort. Many districts are reconsidering their approaches to student discipline.

The reasons for this are many. Among them is compelling evidence that a zero tolerance approach - and suspension generally - is not only less effective than had been hoped, but potentially harmful not only to the students receiving the suspension but to the broader school community. A wide array of education leaders is looking carefully at the research on suspension, which confirms the correlations between suspension and poor outcomes for students. Indeed, since 2011, North Carolina has prohibited mandatory long-term suspensions and expulsions except when required by state or federal law.

Many school districts are striving to implement and embrace alternatives to suspension. They are particularly focused on alternatives that will respond appropriately and effectively when students misbehave, while keeping the students in school and moving forward educationally and behaviorally.

This report includes a compendium of alternatives to suspension and brief profiles of examples of where those

alternatives are in place. It is a unique and valuable resource for school boards, school administrators, teachers, and others who are rethinking their approaches to school discipline without compromising the learning opportunities or safety of the school community as a whole. The report will acquaint school districts with a range of approaches to school discipline. Some are proven, others are promising. All have the potential to foster better school climates and better student outcomes.

We invite a wide readership in North Carolina and hope our counterparts in other states will join us in sharing this resource with school districts throughout their states. It is not only educational and informative, but also can serve as a starting point for action or as a source of guidance for policy change. Whether you are in a district that is considering making changes to school discipline, in one that already has committed to or implemented changes, or perhaps a state policymaker considering the important issue of school discipline and suspension, we recommend this resource to you and look forward to the improved outcomes that it will help support.

Edwin E. Dunlap, Jr.  
Executive Director  
North Carolina School Boards Association

# Executive Summary

During the 2013-14 school year, North Carolina students missed more than 650,000 school days due to suspension.<sup>1</sup> Nationally, more than 3.8 million students, about nine percent of the school-age population, are suspended annually.<sup>2</sup> Although suspension is one of the most widely used school discipline techniques, school officials and education experts increasingly criticize suspension and its negative effects on both suspended students and schools as a whole. Fortunately, alternatives exist that can improve student behavior, maintain school safety, and enhance academic achievement. This report describes 11 effective approaches to student misconduct that minimize exclusion of children from school. Many of these approaches are already used in North Carolina schools; others are used in communities around the country. Many have been rigorously studied and shown to have positive results.

Given the strong system of local control of education in North Carolina, individual school boards and administrators have tremendous power to facilitate changes in the approach to school discipline in their districts. With leadership from the top, school discipline can change from a system of punishment to a system of student development. Well-chosen alternatives to suspension can simultaneously diminish the negative outcomes of harmful discipline policies, boost student achievement, reduce student misconduct, and maintain safe and orderly schools.

The approaches described in this report fall into three categories. First are programs that seek to improve the culture within an entire school. They rely on professional development to allow all staff to work together to implement positive behavioral interventions and instructional strategies to replace more punitive measures. The best-known and most thoroughly researched of these programs are Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) and Safe and Responsive Schools (SRS).

Second are programs that teach individual professionals better skills in behavior management and student discipline. These include research-based programs, such as My Teaching Partner, that target teachers, training them in adolescent development and effective student-teacher interactions. Other programs focus on School Resource Officers, likewise training them in adolescent development and conflict resolution. Yet another program, Objective Threat Assessment, teaches school administrators to better assess purported threats in order to avoid suspending students who do not pose real safety risks.

Third are approaches that change the response of schools to misbehavior by individual students. These approaches either replace school suspension with another type of response to misconduct or offer alternative activities to students during times of suspension. Most aim to help students avoid future misconduct, and some rely on community partners. Examples are Restorative Justice, Substance Abuse Treatment, Community Service, Community-School Partnerships, and Alternative Schools.

The final strategy highlighted in this report, Policies Reducing the Use of Suspension as a Discipline Tool, can complement any of the above approaches. With leadership from the local board of education, often in collaboration with community groups, school districts can rethink the appropriateness of school suspension as the default response to misconduct. Approaches taken by several large metropolitan school districts are described herein.

In selecting programs and strategies to highlight, we considered both costs and whether the program is supported by evidence. While we recognize that funding is always limited, districts may be able to secure support through private philanthropy or find free community support for some programs. Moreover, and particularly important in the context of this report, decision-makers should realize that replacing suspension with other strategies can ultimately yield cost savings while also accomplishing the goal of reducing the reliance on suspensions as a disciplinary practice. Using more effective approaches to problem behaviors can reduce the likelihood of unemployment, court involvement and other negative outcomes with high societal price tags.

Policymakers, practitioners, and funders alike are increasingly asking for “evidence of what works.” In compiling this report, we have noted instances where evidence exists about a particular program or approach. As district leaders and others consider which strategies to pursue, we encourage them to consider the evidence of effectiveness as well as the experience of other school districts and the resources needed to implement a particular strategy. Asking the three following questions may be useful:

1. Do the stakeholders of the school and/or school district fully support the strategy or strategies under consideration?
2. Do the experiences of other similar schools and school districts suggest that the strategies will be effective in this school or district?
3. Does the school/district have (or can it secure) adequate resources to support effective and consistent implementation of the strategy or strategies?

This report introduces school board members, school and school district administrators, and other education stakeholders to a range of options for addressing discipline challenges. Identifying alternatives to suspension is a critical step in preventing and reducing suspensions, but it is only a first step. We hope the information and guidance included here will motivate practitioners and policymakers from across the political spectrum to pursue strategies that keep schools and communities safe while also providing all students with the support they need.

- **Jane Wettach, Jenni Owen, and Katie Claire Hoffman**

# Introduction

Though suspension is a widely used disciplinary technique in both general and special education, research has raised serious questions about its effects.<sup>3</sup> Frequent use of suspension has many undesirable and unintended outcomes, including a less healthy school environment, lower academic achievement, higher levels of disruptive or antisocial behavior, and higher school dropout rates.<sup>4</sup>

Particularly troubling is the disproportionate imposition of school suspension on African-American students and students with disabilities. National and state data reveal that African-American students are three to four times more likely to be suspended for school misconduct than are white students.<sup>5</sup> Students with disabilities are suspended at nearly twice their proportion in the overall population. Despite laws that prohibit discrimination against racial minorities and people with disabilities, these patterns have existed for many years.<sup>6</sup> Also of urgent concern is the criminalization of students; in North Carolina nearly half of all referrals to the juvenile system come from schools.<sup>7</sup>

The problem of an overuse of school suspension has garnered the attention of state and national leaders. In 2011, the North Carolina General Assembly passed a new school discipline law stating that

...removal of students from school, while sometimes necessary, can exacerbate behavioral problems, diminish academic achievement, and hasten school dropout.<sup>8</sup>

The law also encourages school officials

... to use a full range of responses to violations of disciplinary rules, such as conferences, counseling, peer, mediation, behavior contracts, instruction in conflict resolution and anger management, detention, academic interventions, community service and other similar tools that do not remove a student from the classroom or school building.<sup>9</sup>

In early 2014, the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education issued policy guidance to assist public schools in meeting their obligations to administer student discipline without discriminating on the basis of race. In the guidance, the departments praised schools that “incorporate a wide range of strategies to reduce misbehavior and maintain a safe learning environment, including conflict resolution, restorative practices, counseling, and structured systems of positive interventions.”<sup>10</sup> A 2014 Council of State Governments report likewise strongly supports the use of alternatives to suspension.<sup>11</sup>

This report presents 11 alternatives to suspension. The following chart summarizes each alternative. The report then provides details of each program, and when possible, contact information for individuals who have implemented the approach. Finally, we have included two appendices, one outlining national research on the negative effects of aggressively using suspension as a disciplinary tool, and a second reporting the statistical data on suspensions in North Carolina.

One important cautionary note: When schools and school systems implement suspension alternatives, implementation may be weak and fidelity to the program model may be low.<sup>12</sup> Rigorous, faithful program implementation is critical to successful outcomes. Therefore, whenever possible, this report spotlights schools and districts that have adhered closely to program models by paying careful attention to implementation.

Overuse of suspension is a problem individual schools and districts can address by replacing suspension with alternatives backed by research.<sup>13</sup> When implemented with fidelity to the program model, these alternatives can simultaneously diminish the negative outcomes of harmful discipline policies, boost student achievement, and improve school discipline.<sup>14</sup> When schools and school districts pursue alternatives to suspension with seriousness and rigor, the results can be dramatically positive, both for individual students and for the school community. For schools and districts interested in investigating alternatives, we hope this report serves as a useful starting point.



<b>School-wide Programs That Seek to Improve the Overall Culture Within a School</b>			
<b>Program/Approach</b>	<b>Overall Objectives</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Resources Needed</b>
<p><b>Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS)</b></p> <p><b>More information starts on page 13.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create school-wide, positive behavior change</li> <li>• Foster improved school climate</li> <li>• Reduce student misconduct</li> </ul>	<p>PBIS is a set of strategies and techniques based in behavioral psychology and implemented by all staff throughout a school. A positive approach is taken to create specific behavioral expectations for all students, and desired behaviors are explicitly taught. More intensive strategies are used for the children who need the most support. Data are kept and monitored to allow for more effective and targeted implementation.</p>	<p>Initially, a team of educators, parents, and community members develop a school's plan. All school staff must be trained and continuously encouraged to employ the chosen strategies. A school-based PBIS team is responsible for day-to-day implementation and data collection.</p> <p>In North Carolina, DPI provides training and support to interested schools.</p>
<p><b>Safe and Responsive Schools (SRS)</b></p> <p><b>More information starts on page 16.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve student behavior</li> <li>• Reduce school violence</li> <li>• Improve overall school climate</li> </ul>	<p>SRS relies on an instructional rather than a punitive approach to addressing discipline issues. A structured needs assessment helps schools select among various programmatic elements. Students learn problem-solving skills, such as conflict resolution. Students at particular risk receive more intensive support. Schools use alternatives to office referrals, such as behavior support classrooms.</p>	<p>An interested school establishes a school-based team comprised of educators, parents, community members and students. The team is responsible for a data-driven assessment and planning process. All staff and community members must be trained. Day-to-day implementation requires participation from all school staff.</p>

<b>Professional Development Programs</b>			
<b>Program/Approach</b>	<b>Overall Objectives</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Resources Needed</b>
<b>Professional Development and Support for Teachers</b>  <b>More information starts on page 19.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve capacity of teachers to manage behavior and discipline within their classrooms and on the school campus</li> <li>• Enhance teachers' cultural understanding</li> <li>• Reduce student misbehavior and improve classroom and school climate</li> </ul>	<p>Many national professional development programs offer teachers training and support in behavior management. The My Teaching Partner program pairs a teacher with a coach for an entire school year. The teacher is videotaped, and the coach and teacher jointly reflect on the teacher's classroom interactions. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System can be used to keep data and foster improvement.</p>	<p>Trained coaches and instructional materials are needed to implement the MTP program. Teachers need time and institutional support to participate in the program. Financial resources are needed to implement teacher development programs.</p>
<b>Limiting the Role of School Resource Officers (SROs)</b>  <b>More information starts on page 21.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve capacity of SROs to differentiate school misconduct from criminal conduct</li> <li>• Improve SRO knowledge about adolescent behavior</li> <li>• Reduce referrals from school to juvenile and criminal court</li> </ul>	<p>A variety of national programs and curricula offer SRO training. The Denver Public Schools implemented a program to reduce court referrals by SROs. Strategies for Youth, a nonprofit organization that focuses on interaction between youth and law enforcement, offers information on this approach.</p>	<p>School boards, school staff, SROs, and juvenile court practitioners must jointly develop a plan for training and implementation of this strategy.</p>
<b>Objective Threat Assessment</b>  <b>More information starts on page 25.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differentiate serious threats from threats that are unlikely to be carried out</li> <li>• Limit school exclusion to students who pose a serious threat</li> <li>• Allow school administrators a flexible approach to deal with threats, rather than a zero-tolerance approach</li> </ul>	<p>Within a school or district, a team is identified and trained to engage in threat assessment. Upon report of a threat, staff undertake a multi-step process to make a well-informed assessment of the likelihood that a threat will be carried out. Students whose threats are not likely to be carried out are not excluded.</p>	<p>Threat assessment team members, typically a school counselor, school psychologist, and School Resource Officer, need training. Team members also need time and support on an ongoing basis to carry out the threat assessment process.</p>

<b>Programs Targeting Individual Students Engaged in Misbehavior</b>			
<b>Program/Approach</b>	<b>Overall Objectives</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Resources Needed</b>
<b>Restorative Justice</b>  <b>More information starts on page 27.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold offenders accountable for their actions</li> <li>• Offer an alternative to suspension that provides the offender an opportunity to learn from the misconduct and make reparations to the victim</li> <li>• Provide community involvement in responding to individual misconduct</li> <li>• Foster the mending of relationships</li> </ul>	Restorative justice refers to a group of practices that aim to hold an offender accountable for his or her actions, often by requiring the offender to face the victim and engage in restoration of what was lost. Some programs utilize trained “restorative justice practitioners.” Others involve peer juries or student restorative circles. The Juvenile Justice Project at Campbell Law School, serving seven schools in Wake County, incorporates restorative justice principles.	If an outside organization runs the project, restorative justice can be free to schools and require only a minimal time and space commitment by school administrators. Programs that are run by school staff can require staff training and support for implementation.
<b>Community Service Programs</b>  <b>More information starts on page 29.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit out of school time for school offenders</li> <li>• Offer a more meaningful consequence for misconduct</li> <li>• Provide supervision and support during suspension</li> </ul>	Community service programs allow students to engage in meaningful community activities, either in lieu of suspension from school or during periods of suspension. Programs often offer students a chance to develop skills.	Frequently, local non-profits work with schools to provide service opportunities. Philanthropies and government grants may fund community service programs.
<b>Community-school Partnerships</b>  <b>More information starts on page 31.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide at-risk students and their families with support to improve school-family engagement, student learning, student behavior, and overall student outcomes</li> </ul>	Partnerships between schools and communities deliver educational, medical, and social support services in an integrated way to high-needs students and their families. A “community school” is both a location and a set of partnerships with local organizations. The partnerships can include programs to deliver mental health care, behavioral, social, and academic support to students.	These partnerships typically involve school personnel, community organizations, and volunteers. Grants are sometimes available to support the partnerships. In N.C., Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils and other community partners provide funding. Community-school partnerships require time and effort from all partners.

<p><b>Substance Abuse Interventions</b></p> <p><b>More information starts on page 34.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit school suspension as a consequence of drug use</li> <li>• Intervene before substance use becomes a serious problem</li> <li>• Treat substance abuse to reduce future student use of illegal and harmful substances</li> </ul>	<p>Programs provide substance abuse counseling and treatment for students whose misconduct includes use of illegal drugs or alcohol. Often, outside contractors agree to work with students either in lieu of a student suspension or during a student suspension. Some programs reduce the length of suspension upon successful completion of the program or remove the suspension from the student's record.</p>	<p>Programs are typically offered by contracted vendors, not school district personnel. Students/families are usually responsible for payment of services, although Medicaid may cover the costs. Students/families must typically provide their own transportation, although transportation may be provided by the district.</p>
<p><b>Alternative Schools</b></p> <p><b>More information starts on page 36.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide supportive and structured school programming for students who are suspended from their regular schools</li> <li>• Offer behavioral instruction to chronic rule breakers to help them develop better behavioral skills</li> </ul>	<p>Alternative schools usually enroll students who are suspended from their regular school, are at risk of suspension, or have been suspended in the past. They offer additional services, such as counseling and behavior support. Students return to traditional schools either at the end of the suspension or when staff determines their skills warrant re-enrollment.</p>	<p>Class sizes in alternative schools are typically smaller than in traditional schools. These schools therefore require physical settings that can accommodate smaller classes. Resources are necessary for teachers, counselors, and administrative staff.</p>

<b>School Board Policy Changes</b>			
<b>Program/Approach</b>	<b>Overall Objectives</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Resources Needed</b>
<p><b>School District Policies Reducing the Use of Suspension as a Discipline Tool</b></p> <p><b>More information starts on page 39.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a new culture in which exclusion from school is no longer the default response to most student misbehavior</li> </ul>	<p>School board policy changes may provide alternative responses to suspension or may limit the use of suspension for certain misbehaviors.</p>	<p>Political will is needed to make a significant change. Collaboration with school administrators, teachers, parents, and students is important. Funding for teacher training and additional staff may be needed.</p>

# 1. Positive Behavior Intervention and Support

## Description

Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS), used in North Carolina and in many other states, is a program based on proven behavioral change strategies.<sup>15</sup> Rooted in behavioral psychology, a positive behavior support approach was first used in special education classes and has since expanded into general education classrooms. At its core, PBIS is a behavior management system that recognizes the function of misbehavior and develops interventions to discourage such misbehavior and encourage desired behavior.<sup>16</sup>

A school-wide PBIS program puts the teaching of appropriate student behaviors on par with the teaching of academic subjects. A plan typically is created and implemented by a team comprised of educators, community members, and family members who review the school's discipline policies and data to identify areas of concern.<sup>17</sup> The team then develops positive and support-focused interventions. Schools generally focus on a small number of behavioral expectations, such as "respect yourself, respect others, and respect property," "be safe, be responsible, be respectful," and "respect relationships and respect responsibilities."

After settling on the desired focus behaviors, team members ensure that staff buys into the expectations. Consistency across classrooms is important for effective implementation of PBIS. The PBIS team also creates a matrix that enables tracking of the effects of behavioral expectations on school-wide discipline by documenting decreases in the rate of office referrals, suspensions, expulsions, as well as improvements in school climate and a decrease of administrative time spent on discipline.<sup>18</sup>

The PBIS initiative in North Carolina has grown substantially since its inception in 2005. At the end of the 2011-12 school year, 1,154 schools statewide were trained in or implementing PBIS, representing 46% of the state's 2,512 schools.<sup>19</sup> Most have shown good fidelity to the program model.<sup>20</sup>

In North Carolina, schools implementing PBIS have lower out-of-school suspension rates than other schools.<sup>21</sup> At PBIS "Exemplar" schools – those that have completed all the training modules and met other criteria – the suspension rate is less than half of what it is at other schools.<sup>22</sup> The largest difference is found in middle schools.<sup>23</sup>

PBIS schools also have higher academic performance than non-PBIS schools. Schools with Exemplar status have exceeded the state average on statewide tests for three years in a row. Graduation rates from PBIS schools also exceeded the state average in

2010-11.<sup>24</sup> Schools that implement PBIS with higher fidelity demonstrate more positive behavior and academic outcomes.<sup>25</sup>

One example of a school that experienced dramatic results using PBIS is Bald Creek Elementary School in Yancey County. After implementing PBIS in 2003, Bald Creek saw office referrals decrease by 60% in the next two years, from 161 in 2003-04, to 147 in 2004-05, to 64 in 2005-06. In-school suspensions at Bald Creek also fell by 72%.<sup>26</sup>

The longer students are exposed to PBIS, the more their behavior is positively affected. For example, at Bald Creek students who had been in a PBIS environment the longest had the fewest office referrals for misbehavior. In addition, the school's overall academic performance improved after implementing PBIS.<sup>27</sup>

## **Where implemented**

PBIS is a national program. North Carolina uses PBIS widely, with 1,154 schools participating at some level in the 2011-12 school year. About 80 of those schools earned Exemplar status by completing all the training modules, scoring well on implementation assessments, and providing data on behavior, attendance, and academics for at least two consecutive years. Most (63) of the schools in the Exemplar category are elementary schools; 16 are middle schools and one (Northern Nash) is a high school.

## **Types of organizations involved**

A school-wide PBIS plan is typically created and implemented by a team comprised of educators and family members who review the school's discipline policy and data to identify areas of concern.<sup>28</sup> The team then develops positive and support-focused interventions. After settling on the desired focus behaviors, team members take them to school staff to ensure that they support the expectations.<sup>29</sup>

North Carolina offers training to school systems interested in implementing PBIS programs through the N.C. State Improvement Project, which is funded with federal special education grants.

## **Types of students involved**

PBIS is a school-wide program that affects the entire student body.

## **Resources needed**

PBIS implementation requires an upfront investment of time and effort from the school team and staff. However, costs for PBIS training are generally low. A few hundred dollars are required to post new school rules and to provide substitutes for teachers attending training sessions.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, many schools form partnerships with local businesses, receive grant funding, or collaborate with their PTAs to develop financial support.<sup>31</sup>

## **Evidence-based?**

Yes. A number of studies have found that PBIS programs reduce discipline problems including vandalism, substance abuse, and disruptive behaviors.<sup>32</sup>

## **Responsible parties**

Individual schools and the state of North Carolina. North Carolina provides training to schools interested in PBIS. The program is widely used in North Carolina schools, with 46 percent of the state's 2,512 schools participating in some fashion in 2011-12.

## **Contacts**

Heather Reynolds is the state PBIS consultant. She can be reached at the N.C. Department of Public Instruction, (919) 807-3313 and [heather.reynolds@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:heather.reynolds@dpi.nc.gov). Information is available at the following website: [www.dpi.state.nc.us/positivebehavior/](http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/positivebehavior/). An additional resource is [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org).



## 2. Safe and Responsive Schools

### Description

The Safe and Responsive Schools (SRS) Project assists schools in developing a comprehensive and preventive process for addressing school violence and improving student behavior.<sup>33</sup> The program, initially developed with funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Programs, rests upon the premise that an instructional approach to school discipline is more effective than a punitive approach. The SRS program focuses on students who require explicit instruction and structure to learn their school's expected behavioral practices. SRS also involves parents and community members and stresses comprehensive planning to design a program that is individualized for a particular school.

Comprehensive SRS plans include three components.<sup>34</sup> First, programmatic prevention efforts, such as conflict resolution, help to establish a violence-free environment by equipping students with alternative ways to resolve problems. Second, screening and assessment processes allow schools to identify at-risk students early and to provide them with support before their problems escalate into violence. Third, schools develop and implement specific responses to disruptive behaviors.<sup>35</sup>

To implement an SRS program, a school must engage in a strategic planning process. This typically takes an entire school year with the programming going into effect the following year. The strategic planning process begins with the formation of a team comprised of professionals, parents, and students. The team gathers data on the strengths and needs of the school, then develops the mission of the project. With an eye on evidence-based best practices in violence prevention and intervention, the team develops a plan that best addresses the safety needs of the school.<sup>36</sup>

Following are examples of the types of SRS programming used at participating schools.<sup>37</sup>

### Elementary schools

- Life skills: faculty generated list of 10 key life skills taught once a week during class; rewards provided for students who display life skills of the week.
- Mentoring program: high school students paired with elementary students who may benefit from a mentoring relationship; support and training provided to mentors.
- Bullying prevention: distributed bullying survey; bullying prevention and awareness week at each school.

## **Middle schools**

- Safe schools TV show: videotaped role-plays based on Second Step, a violence prevention curriculum; lessons broadcast over school's closed circuit TV system; topics include anger management, drugs, and conflict resolution.
- Parent newsletter: newsletter sent home once a month detailing activities and events, especially those relevant to school safety.
- Civility code: four principles to guide student behavior; students exhibiting code-following behavior receive school-wide recognition, including postcard sent home and writing their name on "Wall of Fame."
- Civility curriculum: curriculum taught to all students during home economics, developed to uphold principles of the code.

## **High schools**

- Classroom management training: workshop before the start of the school year for all faculty members featuring presentations on national school discipline strategies.
- Beatrice After School Education (BASE): behavior management program for students who chronically violate school rules.
- Out-of-classroom Intervention (OCI): cool-down time for students instead of office referral; students complete problem-solving form.

## **Where implemented**

The SRS project was developed as a model project in schools in Indiana and Nebraska. <http://www.indiana.edu/~safeschl/about.html>

## **Types of organizations involved**

The SRS program uses a team approach involving schools, community members, parents and students. The interventions are primarily school-wide, and are mediated by SRS teams.

## **Types of students involved**

SRS prioritizes using an instructional rather than a punitive approach to school discipline issues. Therefore, the SRS program focuses on students who require explicit instruction and structure to learn the school's expected behavioral norms.

## **Resources needed**

Costs and resources vary depending upon how the SRS components are implemented. Planning, implementing the program, collecting data, and meeting to develop the program require an upfront investment of time, effort and commitment from participating parties.

## **Evidence-based?**

Yes. The SRS project was a model demonstration and technical assistance project funded by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The project worked with 16 schools in two states to expand the array of options available to schools in preventing and addressing disruptive behaviors.<sup>38</sup> Among four schools studied, the number of suspensions declined by an average of 44% over a period of four years.<sup>39</sup> Among students with disabilities, the decrease in suspensions was even more striking; the average decline was 63%.<sup>40</sup>

## **Responsible parties**

A school-based team of professionals, parents, community members and students develop and implement the school plan.

## **Contacts**

Dr. Russell Skiba, Director, The Equity Project, Indiana University, (812) 855-4438, [equity@indiana.edu](mailto:equity@indiana.edu)

## 3. Professional Development and Support for Teachers

### Description

Professional development for teachers can help improve academic instruction and reduce suspension through behavioral interventions.<sup>41</sup> As students become adolescents and move from elementary school to middle school, suspension rates dramatically increase. A wealth of research links effective classroom management with improved outcomes, suggesting that providing support and training for teachers could help reduce suspension rates. Because many behaviors that violate school rules are rooted in adolescent development, teachers working with middle and high school students may need specialized training in this area. Large disparities in suspension rates for minorities and students with disabilities suggest that teacher training on multicultural sensitivity could positively affect the classroom environment and reduce misbehavior.<sup>42</sup>

Two professional development programs developed at the Curry School of Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning at the University of Virginia have been shown to improve teacher effectiveness and improved student outcomes. The My Teacher Partner Program (MTP) relies on a web-mediated coaching cycle in which teachers reflect on interactions with students and meet one-on-one with coaches to develop an action plan to build on strengths and address challenges.<sup>43</sup> As a sustained program – distinguished from one-time workshops – MTP applies a focused and rigorous approach to teacher improvement. The program also offers a video library of best practices and a college course.

Aligned with MTP is the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), an observational tool that defines and measures effective interactions in school classrooms. The tool both effectively measures teacher behaviors linked to student academic gains and offers teachers resources for strengthening the types of interactions that result in positive outcomes.<sup>44</sup>

### Where implemented

My Teaching Partner and CLASS have been implemented in schools and Head Start preschool programs across the country.<sup>45</sup>

### Types of organizations involved

My Teaching Partner works with schools to provide professional development. The Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning at the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education provides a video library of examples of best practices, offers a college course, and offers web-mediated coaching.

## Types of students involved

This alternative affects all students, but particularly those affected by exclusionary discipline practices. Research indicates that in classrooms in which MTP was not used, African-American students were twice as likely to be suspended or expelled than in classrooms where it was used.<sup>46</sup>

## Resources needed

The biggest cost associated with the MTP program is payment of mentors. In addition, MTP and CLASS employ manuals, guides, online programs, print resources, score sheets, toolkits and other resources. These resources range widely in cost, from \$19.95 to \$990.00. For more information, visit <http://store.teachstone.org/toolkits/>.

## Evidence-based?

Yes. Research of both programs showed positive results. A study of MTP involving 78 secondary school teachers with 2,237 teachers showed that improved teacher-student interactions associated with participation in MTP resulted in moving the average student from the 50<sup>th</sup> to the 59<sup>th</sup> percentile in achievement test scores.<sup>47</sup> A smaller study showed that teachers in the MTP program suspended students less often than teachers in the control group, and that the MTP teachers who did suspend students suspended African-American students and white students at the same rate.<sup>48</sup> The reduction of racial disparity in discipline was attributed to higher quality teacher-student interactions nurtured by the MTP program.

Research on the CLASS observational tool found that the tool was able to identify teacher characteristics that resulted in higher student achievement.<sup>49</sup> The study isolated a number of teacher characteristics that fostered higher test scores, including the teacher's ability to establish a positive emotional climate, to structure the classroom and meet the needs of adolescents to have a sense of autonomy and control, to allow for active learning, and to provide opportunities for peer interaction. While the study did not report on lower suspension rates, it identified effective methods of encouraging desirable behavior and preventing misbehavior.<sup>50</sup>

## Responsible parties

To participate in My Teaching Partner, teachers must agree to be observed, to reflect on interactions with students, and to meet with coaches for an entire school year.<sup>51</sup> In addition, principals must allow staff the necessary time to participate.

## Contacts

For more information, visit: <http://curry.virginia.edu/research/centers/castl/mtp> and <http://curry.virginia.edu/research/centers/castl/class>.

## 4. Limiting the Role of School Resource Officers

### Description

Some school districts have addressed suspensions and expulsions by working with School Resource Officers (SROs) to change interactions between students and law enforcement in schools. SROs, law enforcement personnel assigned to schools, are increasingly used by schools to respond to student misconduct. After experiencing dramatic increases in referrals to juvenile court for school-based offenses, some districts have rethought how SROs are used in the schools.

One such district is the Denver Public Schools. After the Columbine school shooting in 2000, Denver Public Schools (DPS) increased the presence of SROs in its schools. However, by 2004, the number of students referred to the court system by DPS had increased by over 70%. Forty-two percent of referrals were for minor offenses such as use of obscene language or disruptive appearance. Clayton County, Georgia, a school district of 50,000, had a similar experience. The district started an SRO program in 1995. By 2003, Clayton County courts had experienced a 1,248% increase in referrals from school. Ninety percent of these referrals, according to court officials, were for infractions traditionally handled by school administrators.<sup>52</sup>

Both school districts have since sought to curb the flow of students into the court system by changing their relationship with SROs. Denver Public Schools has placed limits on the role of School Resource Officers and implemented training to increase their effectiveness in these roles. After a campaign by [Padres y Jovenes Unidos](#), a local parent and student-led community organization, and the [Advancement Project](#), a national civil rights organization, DPS collaborated with stakeholders to revise its district-wide discipline code. This collaboration culminated in two intergovernmental agreements, an initial one in 2007 and a subsequent one in 2013, which focus on resolving discipline issues without criminal punishment and on using restorative justice strategies in lieu of harsh punishments.<sup>53</sup> These agreements allow School Resource Officers to intervene with an arrest or citation only when absolutely necessary. Instead, most disciplinary problems are resolved by educators, who can respond with consequences that do not involve suspension or expulsion. The role of SROs is to distinguish between disciplinary and criminal issues and to de-escalate school-based incidents whenever possible. If they do ticket or arrest students, SROs must notify parents and principals as soon as possible. Additionally, SROs are alerted to students' disabilities and are provided with copies of their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) so that they can make necessary accommodations.

SROs are not precluded from arresting students for severe misconduct, such as drug offenses and assaults. Nevertheless, the goal is to provide holistic support for students and prevent relatively minor or unthreatening student behavior from resulting in criminal sanctions.<sup>54</sup>

School Resource Officers are trained multiple times each year on when to intervene in school-based offenses. Officers are trained on topics such as cultural competence, teenage psychology, age-appropriate responses, restorative justice techniques, special accommodations for disabled students, and the creation of safe environments for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students.<sup>55</sup> DPS also requires SROs to meet with community members at least once a semester and to participate in meetings with school administrators when requested.<sup>56</sup>

After the first intergovernmental agreement was signed, law enforcement referrals dropped from 1,399 in the 2003-04 school year to 512 in 2011-12, despite a 12% increase in enrollment during the same time period.<sup>57</sup> Referrals for African-American students reached their second lowest rate in 10 years and the rate was half that seen in 2012-13, the peak year for referrals.<sup>58</sup> Among Latino students, referrals declined by nearly 75 percent. Referrals of white students also decreased. Since implementing the code revision, DPS reduced its suspension rate by 33% and its expulsion rate by 54%. Furthermore, DPS's four-year graduation rates improved district-wide, from 49% in 2007-08 to 59% in 2010-11.<sup>59</sup> The dropout rate also fell 50% over a six-year period.<sup>60</sup>

In Georgia, the Clayton County School District worked with School Resource Officers to decrease suspension and expulsion.<sup>61</sup> In collaboration with community members, law enforcement, juvenile court officials, and mental health providers, the Clayton County School District developed a "School Offense Protocol" (SOP) to reduce reliance upon law enforcement and court referrals for typical adolescent behaviors.<sup>62</sup> The SOP distinguished between disciplinary incidents that could be effectively handled by school officials and those meriting the involvement of law enforcement. After implementing the SOP in 2005, Clayton County experienced a 68% drop in court referrals from school, an 8% drop in middle school suspensions, and a 73% decrease in possession of serious weapons on campus. The graduation rate increased by 20%. Additionally, after implementing the SOP, Clayton County greatly reduced the number of referrals for African-American students, who previously were referred to court almost three times as frequently as white students.<sup>63</sup> By 2011, the risk of referral for African-American and white students was the same.<sup>64</sup>

The Waco Independent School District (ISD) (student enrollment 15,251)<sup>65</sup> drew upon the Clayton County model. During the 2011-12 school year, Waco ISD implemented a three-tiered system providing school-wide prevention programs, targeted interventions for students who did not respond to the school-wide programs, and more intensive interventions for students requiring additional supports.<sup>66</sup> As part of its program, Suspending Kids to School, Waco ISD also amended its policy to limit the use of ticketing by SROs unless the student posed a threat. Specifically, the policy requires alternatives in lieu of ticketing for disorderly conduct violations unless the student's behavior poses a threat or represents a willful violation after the student had been warned. Limitations on the SRO role are part of a larger program that incorporates a range of alternatives to school suspension.<sup>67</sup> Though this program has only been active for two years, early data analysis by the Texas A&M University Public Policy Research

Institute indicates that suspensions dropped by more than 25% and ticketing dropped by 77%.<sup>68</sup>

## Where implemented

Many school districts have recently reexamined the role of SROs, including districts in Denver, Colorado; Waco, Texas; Clayton County, Georgia; Birmingham, Alabama; Wichita, Kansas; Rapides Parish, Louisiana; Columbus, Ohio; Sioux City, Iowa; Broward County, Florida; Bibb County, Georgia; Middlesex County, Massachusetts; Los Angeles County, California; and several jurisdictions in Connecticut.<sup>69</sup> Similar efforts are underway in Charlotte, North Carolina, led by Judge Louis Trosch.

## Types of organizations involved

These programs can differ significantly. Typically the juvenile justice system, courts, school district authorities, community members, parents, and School Resource Officers are involved.

## Types of students involved

Students most strongly affected are those most disproportionately affected by suspensions and juvenile justice system involvement. However, reforming the SRO role also can affect the entire student population.

## Resources needed

Costs will vary. This approach requires an upfront investment of time and effort.

## Evidence-based?

Many school districts are collecting data on the impact of this alternative on discipline practices. As reported above, court referrals have declined significantly in school districts with these programs.

## Responsible parties

Responsible parties include school officials, law enforcement, community members, School Resource Officers, and court personnel.

## Contacts

- Strategies for Youth ([www.strategiesforyouth.org](http://www.strategiesforyouth.org)) is a national organization focused on improving interactions between police and youth. It can be hired to provide training workshops for SROs within a school district. Examples of police training courses include “Policing the Teen Brain in School” and “Policing Youth Chronically Exposed to Trauma and Violence.” Strategies for Youth recently provided training for law enforcement personnel in Charlotte, N.C.
- [The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative](http://www.aecf.org/work/juvenile-justice/jdai) (<http://www.aecf.org/work/juvenile-justice/jdai>) provides a “Help Desk” with support and materials for jurisdictions interested in pursuing approaches similar to the Clayton County, Ga., model.<sup>70</sup>



- [The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges' School Pathways Project](http://www.ncjfcj.org/ncjfcj-selects-16-court-sites-participate-its-school-pathways-juvenile-justice-system-project) (<http://www.ncjfcj.org/ncjfcj-selects-16-court-sites-participate-its-school-pathways-juvenile-justice-system-project>) is developing a “toolkit” on school offense protocols, and provides training to interested districts.<sup>71</sup>
- [The National Association of School Resource Officers](https://nasro.org/) (<https://nasro.org/>) provides training to SROs.<sup>72</sup>

## 5. Objective Threat Assessment

### Description

Objective threat assessment is a process that allows school administrators to distinguish between students who make threats and students who are likely to carry out their threats.<sup>73</sup> Threat assessment also includes efforts to prevent threats from being carried out. Thus, carefully assessing student threats ensures that the educational environment is safe and that exclusion is used only in cases where it is truly appropriate. In a study of 600 schools that used threat assessment protocols, 15 percent fewer students received short-term suspensions and 25 percent fewer students received long-term suspensions.<sup>74</sup>

[The Youth Violence Project](http://curry.virginia.edu/research/labs/youth-violence-project) (<http://curry.virginia.edu/research/labs/youth-violence-project>) at the University of Virginia developed and field-tested a comprehensive set of threat assessment guidelines. At each participating school, the principal or associate principal led a threat assessment team, which included a school counselor, a school psychologist, and a School Resource Officer.<sup>75</sup>

A trained threat assessment team follows a prescribed seven-step process whenever a threat is made. Initially, interviews of the accused, the person threatened, and any witnesses are conducted. From those, the principal categorizes the threat as either a “transient threat” or a “substantive threat.” Transient threats are those determined not to pose any continuing risk of danger. Students who have engaged in transient threats are required to apologize to those affected by the threat or take other actions to make amends. The student may also be disciplined if the threat was particularly disruptive. If a transient threat was sparked by an argument or conflict, the principal can involve other team members in helping to address or resolve the problem.<sup>76</sup>

If a threat is a serious substantive threat, the team takes actions to protect potential victims by notifying them of the threat. The student who made the threat is cautioned about the consequences of carrying out the threat and his or her parents are contacted.<sup>77</sup> In very serious situations, the team takes immediate action to ensure that the threat is not carried out. The student is suspended from school pending a complete assessment of the threat and determination of the most appropriate school placement. The team conducts a more comprehensive safety evaluation that includes both a mental health and law enforcement component. Ultimately, the principal decides whether the student can return to school or should be placed in an alternative setting. If the student is permitted to return to school, a plan is developed including conditions that must be met and procedures that must be in place to monitor the student upon his or her return.<sup>78</sup>

Threat assessment allows school authorities to respond to threats with flexibility. In the field test performed by the Virginia researchers, 70% of the threats were easily resolved as transient threats.<sup>79</sup> Under a zero tolerance policy, almost all of the students in the field test would have been suspended or expelled.

Objective threat assessment is a promising component of a comprehensive approach toward maintaining safe schools. Threat assessment strategies help identify students who may be in need of extra supports and services. They also help develop a school environment in which discipline is reliable and consistent and where students feel connected to the staff and teachers.<sup>80</sup>

## **Where implemented**

Threat assessment has been implemented in 2,700 schools in 14 states. In 2013, Virginia mandated the formation of threat assessment teams in all of the state's schools.<sup>81</sup>

## **Types of organizations involved**

Threat assessment is conducted by a school team. The team generally includes a school administrator, a school counselor, a school psychologist and a School Resource Officer.<sup>82</sup>

## **Types of students involved**

Any student who makes a threat receives a threat assessment from the team.

## **Resources needed**

To implement this alternative, a school district must provide training to team members and time and support for team meetings. The Virginia Youth Violence Project offers one-day training workshops on threat assessment. The cost is \$5,000 for the workshop, plus travel expenses for the trainer, and \$50 per participant for training materials.

## **Evidence-based?**

Yes. The Youth Violence Project at the University of Virginia developed, field-tested, and evaluated this program.<sup>83</sup>

## **Responsible parties**

The team, consisting of the principal, a school counselor, school psychologist and School Resource Officer, is responsible for assessing threats. Teachers and other school staff must refer students who make threats for an assessment by the team.

## **Contacts**

Dewey Cornell, Professor of Education, University of Virginia, Curry School of Education, (434) 924-0793, [dcornell@virginia.edu](mailto:dcornell@virginia.edu); The Virginia Model for Student Threat Assessment, <http://curry.virginia.edu/resource-library/the-virginia-model-for-student-threat-assessment>

For further information <http://www.indiana.edu/~atlantic/briefing-papers/>  
<http://curry.virginia.edu/research/projects/threat-assessment>

## 6. Restorative Justice

### Description

Restorative justice practices originate from a criminal justice technique in which people convicted of crimes are held accountable, in part, by facing the people who have been harmed by their actions. In schools, these programs aim to hold students accountable and to change their behavior. Research shows that when implemented on a larger, school-wide scale, use of restorative justice techniques can decrease misbehavior and suspension rates. Furthermore, restorative justice practices can be used in many different situations and can be tweaked to fit the students involved or the behavior targeted.

There are many restorative justice techniques. The peer jury is among the most common. In Davidson Middle School in San Rafael, California, school suspensions dropped from 300 in the 2009-10 school year to 27 in 2011-12 after implementation of a peer court and other restorative justice practices.<sup>84</sup> When Davidson students break the rules, they have a choice between suspension and being disciplined by their classmates. In peer court, students face a panel of five or six students who have been trained to listen and ask questions. Davidson Middle School also employs restorative circles, where students meet to repair their relationships after conflict. When a student returns to school after suspension, the school convenes a re-entry circle including the student and anyone else involved in the incident that led to suspension.

Restorative justice sometimes can be used as an alternative to suspension. In other cases, a child is referred to the restorative justice program upon his or her return to school after the suspension has already occurred. Because so many school-based offenses involve student conflict, hurt feelings and fear of retribution, restorative justice sessions often resolve many of the issues at hand. Victims of the offense may benefit as well, finding healing in the expression of remorse by the offender. This can limit further animosity among those involved, reducing the likelihood of additional offenses<sup>85</sup>.

### Where implemented

Restorative justice programs have been implemented in many schools around the nation, including schools in Baltimore, Chicago, and Oakland. There are several programs in North Carolina. The Juvenile Justice Project at Campbell Law School offers conflict resolution services that include restorative justice practices in seven Wake County middle and high schools. In some N.C. counties, Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils offer state-funded mediation and conflict resolution services. For example, the Dispute Settlement Center in Carrboro offers student conflict mediation services, as does the Elna B. Spaulding Conflict Resolution Center in Durham.

## **Types of organizations involved**

Generally, the parties involved are school officials and trained restorative justice practitioners.

## **Types of students involved**

Restorative justice can be used in a variety of discipline settings but it is likely most effective for students being disciplined for behavior arising from interpersonal conflicts.

## **Resources needed**

Those implementing restorative justice techniques must receive training, which multiple organizations around the country provide (for example, the International Institute for Restorative Practices in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania). Expertise in restorative justice is available in North Carolina as well through the Campbell Law School Juvenile Justice Project. The Campbell project provides a free restorative justice program, which includes trained facilitators who run the program on site at participating N.C. schools, at no charge. Participating schools need only provide a meeting room and permit students to miss class time, if necessary, to participate.

## **Evidence-based?**

Yes. Although restorative justice practices differ program to program, studies indicate that restorative justice is a useful method of keeping students in school while promoting positive relationships. Research on restorative justice techniques has analyzed individual schools, the types of practices used, and the effect on discipline rates over time. Both anecdotal and qualitative data suggest that restorative justice results in better outcomes for students. In Wake County, data show that students who attended a victim-offender face-to-face meeting were three times less likely to have future conflicts than students who did not have such meetings. For a summary of research on restorative justice practices in the U.S. and internationally, see “Dignity, Disparity and Desistance: Effective Restorative Justice Strategies to Plug the School-to-Prison Pipeline,” by Maria Schiff: <http://goo.gl/ieLlKU> and “Restorative Practices in Schools: Research Reveals Power of Restorative Approach, Part II,” International Institute for Restorative Practices, retrieved from [http://www.iirp.edu/article\\_detail.php?article\\_id=NTUz](http://www.iirp.edu/article_detail.php?article_id=NTUz)

## **Responsible parties**

Generally, schools establish partnerships with facilitators and take responsibility for alerting the facilitators when their services are needed to run sessions.

## **Contacts**

Jon Powell, Director, Juvenile Justice Project at Campbell Law School, (919) 865-4692, [JPowell@law.campbell.edu](mailto:JPowell@law.campbell.edu).

# 7. Community Service Programs

## Description

Community service programs offer a structured experience for students during long-term suspensions. The programs often incorporate community service experiences, skills training, counseling, mentoring, parental involvement, and reflection. Community service programs were expanded in 2002 when Congress appropriated funding for the [Community Service Program Initiative](#) to serve students suspended or expelled from school. With its federal money, the N.C. Department of Public Instruction offered grants to fund activities that used community volunteers to provide instruction, support, and deterrence from delinquency for suspended and expelled students. These programs also offered structure, safe environments, and non-academic learning opportunities for excluded students.<sup>86</sup>

## Where implemented

In North Carolina, the initial districts funded were: Beaufort, Carteret, Cumberland, Guilford, McDowell, Rutherford, Wake, and Winston-Salem/Forsyth. In those districts, students who were suspended or expelled partnered with nonprofit and government organizations such as mental health agencies and congregations. Due to eliminated funding, only one of the initial programs remains, The Phoenix Project in McDowell County (now called Phoenix Academy). This program initially provided long-term suspended and expelled students with meaningful activities enabling them to give back to the community and develop skills through volunteering. Now entirely funded by the McDowell County Schools, Phoenix Academy is an alternative school for long-term suspended students with a community service component, allowing students to volunteer at the food pantry and an animal shelter.

## Types of organizations involved

Community service programs require partnerships between schools and local organizations. These organizations are typically nonprofit but may also include government organizations.

## Types of students involved

Participating students are generally those who have been expelled or are on long-term suspension.

## Resources needed

Program costs vary widely depending on the types of services and supervision provided. In North Carolina, many community service projects were funded by a federal grant program, the Community Service Program initiative, administered by the Department of Public Instruction. Currently, DPI is unable to award grants, thus many of the programs initially funded are no longer in operation.

## **Evidence-based?**

There has not been a formal research study of N.C.'s community service programs. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's 2006 report, "Community Service Programs for Long-Term Suspended Students, Final Report on Best Practices," is available here: <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/communityservice/practices/>

## **Responsible parties**

Schools and community organizations typically share responsibility for these programs, with possible additional oversight from the Department of Public Instruction.

## **Contacts**

Becky Scott, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, [bescott@dpi.state.nc.us](mailto:bescott@dpi.state.nc.us), (919) 807-4011; Phoenix Academy in McDowell County, (828) 652-1040.

## 8. Community-school Partnerships

### Description

Community-school partnerships, such as community schools, and the organization [Communities in Schools](http://www.communitiesinschools.org/), <http://www.communitiesinschools.org/>, allow schools to provide a broad range of behavioral, health, and family support to help students' improve their success.<sup>87</sup> Schools and community partners work together to combine resources to support children in a holistic learning experience that helps ensure positive academic and non-academic outcomes.<sup>88</sup> The schools form the hub of the community, connecting students with needed resources and support. Schools that have pursued these partnerships have been successful in increasing family engagement and improving student learning, attendance, behavior and development.<sup>89</sup> Community schools work to create five conditions: (1) core instructional curriculum; (2) motivated, engaged youth; (3) services to address youth and families' physical, emotional and mental health needs; (4) respect and collaboration between school and families; and (5) community engagement that connects youth to the community.<sup>90</sup>

A prominent example of community-school partnerships is the Elev8 Initiative, a community school organization partnering with middle schools in Albuquerque, Baltimore, Chicago, and Oakland. Elev8 provides participating schools with resources for the integrated delivery of learning, health, and family support services, as well as resources for family and community engagement.<sup>91</sup> Elev8 is tapped the moment a situation arises that might result in a suspension or other disciplinary consequence. In a Chicago school partnering with Elev8, suspensions dropped 80% in the 2009-10 school year.<sup>92</sup> In Wilson Middle School in Albuquerque, New Mexico, 50 students were arrested on the school campus and in the neighboring community the year before Elev8 was implemented. The following year, just four students were arrested.<sup>93</sup>

Another highly regarded program is Communities in Schools (CIS), a national dropout prevention model with local affiliate programs. The goal of each CIS affiliate is to provide the "Five Basics" to students. The "Five Basics" are: a one-on-one relationship with a caring adult, a safe place to learn and grow, a healthy start and a healthy future, a marketable skill to use upon graduation, and a chance to give back to peers and community. CIS performs an annual needs assessment to determine what services students need most and how the organization can best deliver them.<sup>94</sup>

Local CIS affiliates provide "Level 1" resources to all students in a school, such as clothing, school supplies, field trips, and health screenings. More intensive "Level 2" services are tailored to specific students and require an assessment and plan developed by a school site coordinator and team. Level 2 services may include counseling, mentoring, free or low-cost health and dental care, finding the student a safe place to live, or ensuring the student has transportation to and from school. These services can last weeks, months or an entire school year.<sup>95</sup>



Part of the national CIS network, [Communities in Schools of North Carolina](http://www.cisnc.org/) (CISNC) (<http://www.cisnc.org/>) offers support to school districts interested in developing community-school partnerships.<sup>96</sup> Based in Raleigh, CISNC currently provides assistance to 37 local affiliates serving 44 counties. It serves students from kindergarten to twelfth grade and strives to reach the most vulnerable students in North Carolina's most dropout-prone school districts. In the 2011-12 school year, CISNC worked with 469 schools across the state, providing Level 1 services to more than 180,000 North Carolina students, and Level 2 individualized services to 21,000 students. In the districts participating, more than 10,000 parents, families and guardians participated in the programming and more than 12,000 volunteers served CISNC students. Of the students served, 99% stayed in school, 94% were promoted to the next grade, and of the seniors eligible to graduate, 95% graduated with a high school diploma.<sup>97</sup>

Individual school districts have also developed their own successful community partnerships. One example is a partnership between the Clinton City Schools and the local First Baptist Church. Known as Structured Day, the program allows students to serve out-of-school suspensions at the church.<sup>98</sup> Church staff provides one-on-one support for students and assist them with their school work. A parent involvement coordinator also meets with parents and students and discusses the student's behavior, makes home visits, and helps parents make connections with local agencies and social workers. Terrace Miller, director of student services at the Clinton City Schools, attributes many positive changes to the partnership. Statistics show that the Clinton City Schools had large decreases in crimes, suspensions, and dropouts in the 2011-12 school year, the year after the program was implemented.<sup>99</sup> All program costs are covered by First Baptist Church or by the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council. The program has been operating for about five years and serves students from the Sampson County School District as well. A similar program operates in Wayne County.

## **Where implemented**

Community-school partnerships are in place around the country (Chicago, Baltimore, New Mexico) and in counties throughout North Carolina. CISNC currently provides assistance to 37 local affiliates serving 44 North Carolina counties. In the 2011-12 school year, CISNC had a presence in 469 schools across the state.

## **Types of organizations involved**

Generally, school officials, parents, and community organizations form a community-school partnership. In North Carolina, CISNC offers assistance with forming the partnerships.

## **Types of students involved**

Community-school partnerships can affect the entire school community, suspended or expelled students, or targeted student groups.

## Resources needed

Partnerships for learning and community schools require collaborative strategies. Partners must have a shared vision of learning, shared leadership and governance, effective communication, regular and consistent sharing of information about youth progress, family engagement, and collaborative staffing models.<sup>100</sup> All partners must share ownership for the work and must commit to a cohesive and explicit set of common goals. For example, Elev8 Baltimore created a “set of values” at the outset of its partnership to ensure that all partners clearly understood the larger vision.<sup>101</sup>

Successful partnerships dedicate time and effort to communicating and identifying structures and strategies at the outset of their partnership. For instance, Chicago Elev8 schools hold monthly meetings to update partners and keep staff informed.<sup>102</sup>

Community-school partnerships also rely on data, both at the beginning of the process and later, to track progress. Elev8 New Mexico uses a data specialist.<sup>103</sup> Community schools, such as Oakland Elev8, promote family engagement by reaching out to parents and organizing parent events.<sup>104</sup>

## Evidence-based?

Research is forthcoming regarding the Elev8 initiative, which is undergoing evaluation at local sites and nationally.<sup>105</sup>

Regarding CISNC, a national five-year evaluation released in October 2010, which included randomized controlled trials and an economic impact study, found that CIS schools that implemented the model with high fidelity reduced dropout rates and increased graduation rates. There were also improvements in academic performance and attendance. For more information, visit:

<http://www.communitiesinschools.org/about/publications/>.

## Responsible parties

Generally, schools, community partners, and parents are necessary parties to a partnership. Organizations, such as CISNC can assist with forming and maintaining these partnerships. CIS becomes involved in a school only at the invitation of the school or school district.

CISNC uses a model of integrated student services. The organization positions a dedicated staff member to serve as a school-based site coordinator, working with school staff to identify students at risk of falling behind or not graduating, and assessing their individual needs. Site coordinators serve on the school’s management team, collaborate with staff to identify at-risk students, work to forge community partnerships, and connect students and families with community resources.

## Contacts

For further information: contact Arlene Wouters, CISNC Director of Developing Communities at [awouters@cisnc.org](mailto:awouters@cisnc.org).

## 9. Substance Abuse Interventions

### Description

Rather than using school suspension to address student substance abuse issues, some school districts offer substance abuse treatment. Without such an alternative, students typically face a “zero tolerance” response to possessing drugs at school or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol at school. “Zero tolerance” policies typically result in long periods of exclusion from school. However, there is little evidence that they are effective. The pediatric and psychological communities recommend that drug and alcohol offenders be offered treatment rather than school suspension or expulsion.<sup>106</sup> Treatment rather than suspension can result in thousands of days spent in the classroom rather than at home.

The Substance Abuse Intervention/Family Strengthening (SAIFS) is one successful model. A six-week program for high school and middle school adolescents, it provides an alternative to suspension for drug-related infractions. Groups are highly structured and psychoeducational in nature. They are designed to provide an early intervention level of care, with students needing more extensive treatment referred to community programs. The content of the groups encourages students to analyze how their substance use may cause problems for themselves, their family, health, and education.<sup>107</sup> The six-week duration allows facilitators to assign homework, lead discussions between the student and his or her parent, and allows the student time to process and apply the information learned.

Several North Carolina counties are using substance abuse classes as an alternative to suspension. In Wake County, for example, students caught in violation of school drug and alcohol policies may be referred to the Alternative Counseling Education (ACE) program. The ACE program is a school board-approved alternative to long-term suspension for first-time infractions that do not involve the distribution or sale of substances.<sup>108</sup> Under the ACE program, the student receives a five-day suspension, instead of a long-term (11 days or longer) suspension, and must attend a 12-hour program offered by a provider approved by the Office of Student Due Process along with a parent or guardian. Durham Public Schools and Chatham County Schools are among other North Carolina districts that offer substance abuse counseling as an alternative to suspension.

Several limitations should be noted in regard to substance abuse treatment. Some programs charge a fee, which can be prohibitive to low-income families. Transportation also can be a challenge. Furthermore, these programs can be both over- and under-inclusive. Some students who could benefit are not offered the option of participating, often for technical reasons; students who are not appropriate candidates may at times be required to participate in order to avoid long-term suspension, despite the lack of a drug abuse problem.

## Where implemented

In North Carolina, Chatham, Durham, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, and Wake County school districts are among those that provide the option of substance abuse treatment for students who violate the code of conduct. Many districts around the country offer this alternative.

## Types of organizations involved

Schools must identify and partner with substance abuse treatment providers. Many schools will also accept treatment from other providers, with advance permission and approval.

## Types of students involved

Students affected are those suspended or expelled for offenses involving substances. In many cases, students are not eligible for participation after their first offense.

## Resources needed

Most treatment providers require a fixed fee, paid by the student and/or parents in order for the student to participate. The cost may be covered by private insurance or Medicaid. Additionally, students usually must get transportation to and from the classes. Wake County offers a free option for first-time offenders who have not been charged with distribution; second-time offenders or those charged with sale or distribution must pay for the program.

## Evidence-based?

Yes. A recent study of students from a Colorado school district supports the effectiveness of the SAIFS program. Among students who participated in a district-provided alcohol and drug education class, 78% of students and 70% of parents reported that the students' substance use had decreased since beginning the groups. In addition, 65% of the parents reported that they had changed parenting strategies as a result of the program, mostly by improving their communication and increasing supervision. A majority of students reported that they improved their ability to consider consequences when considering using drugs.<sup>109</sup>

## Responsible parties

While the programs are typically offered by private vendors, school districts select approved programs to be offered to students. Substance abuse treatment requires a commitment by the students and the students' parents, who frequently must pay for the classes, provide transportation, and participate in some or all of the sessions.

## Contacts

Office of Student Due Process, Wake County Public School System, (919) 413-7303, [studentdueprocess@wcpss.net](mailto:studentdueprocess@wcpss.net).

# 10. Alternative Schools

## Description

Well-designed and well-implemented alternative schools and in-school suspension programs can be productive alternatives to out-of-school suspension. A careful approach with an eye toward meaningful behavioral reform can result in a significant reduction in recidivism. While assigning non-instructional personnel to oversee suspended students is unlikely to produce positive results, using certified teachers and trained behavior specialists to work with suspended students has been shown to be an effective tool.<sup>110</sup> Successful alternative schools are those with a full day of school, small student bodies, small classes, a student-centered atmosphere, alignment of curriculum and assessment, availability of special education services, training and support for teachers, and connections with multiple external agencies.<sup>111</sup>

Effective alternative schools exist in a number of school districts in North Carolina and across the country. For example, the Alternative Education Center (AEC) in McDowell County, N.C., is a successful alternative school with many of the characteristics identified by experts as important. Serving middle and high school students, most of whom have been suspended long-term from regular public school and are involved in the juvenile justice system, AEC limits classes to a maximum of 12 students. It offers a full day of school and all students have a Personal Education Plan that identifies academic needs. The school provides at-risk case management services, working to connect each student with community agencies. The teachers use positive behavior interventions and employ the Circle of Courage model from the Native American tradition in an attempt to break cycles of poverty and drug use. The school also embeds a strong community service component into the program, through which the students are placed either at the local animal shelter or food pantry. Of the 100 students assigned there in the 2012-13 school year, only two returned for similar offenses the following year.<sup>112</sup>

Edenton-Chowan Schools in N.C. also offer an alternative center for suspended students that includes small classes. Students may also take self-paced computerized classes to allow them to recover missing credits. Local officials attribute much of the district's success in decreasing school crime, suspension, and drop-out rates in the 2011-12 school year to the alternative center.<sup>113</sup>

Beyond North Carolina, examples of well-designed alternative schools include [Success Academy](http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/Domain/4891) in Baltimore (<http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/Domain/4891>). Success Academy is a school-based discipline option for the most serious student offenders - those who have assaulted classmates or staff members or are charged with possessing or distributing guns or wielding weapons. Class sizes are small, just five or six students per class. The cost is high - around \$1.2 million for a program that serves about 100 students a year - but the district staff believes it is far less costly in the long-term than the alternative of suspension.<sup>114</sup>

Students attend Success Academy voluntarily and are separated by gender and age. All students must take a behavior-management course as well as academic subjects ranging from remedial instruction to International Baccalaureate classes. Success Academy provides a full day of instruction, counseling, wraparound services, and a safe and structured environment for students who would otherwise be out of school and without school-provided supervision.<sup>115</sup> Before students leave Success Academy, they must present a self-reflective project to peers and school administrators and write a detailed report in which they identify the catalyst for their negative behavior.<sup>116</sup>

## **Where implemented**

Alternative schools and alternative classrooms have been used in lieu of suspension in districts throughout the state and nation. Baltimore and Los Angeles school districts have prominent programs, and many districts in North Carolina also have successful alternative school programs.

## **Types of organizations involved**

Organizations involved can vary. In Baltimore's Success Academy, the district office partners with teachers to provide an alternative setting. In North Carolina, some school districts work with their own teachers and staff members to provide alternative activities for excluded students.

## **Types of students involved**

Students who would otherwise be facing exclusion from school are the primary beneficiaries of these approaches.

## **Resources needed**

The resources needed vary greatly. Success Academy in Baltimore costs around \$1.2 million dollars a year, while Eagle Ridge Junior High School in Savage, Minnesota, operated a program for \$20,000 a year. North Carolina schools have operated programs by hiring additional staff members and by utilizing existing staff members.

## **Evidence-based?**

Studies of effective alternative programs include The American Institutes for Research "Study of Effective Alternative Education Programs: Final Grant Report" in June 2007.<sup>117</sup> The report identifies eight components of a successful alternative program, most of which involve the philosophical approach of the program administrators and staff. In addition, the report suggests that teachers in such programs need specialized training to work with students who do not succeed in traditional educational settings, and that a low adult-student ratio in the classroom is necessary. Other research on the effectiveness of alternative programs is limited, but growing.<sup>118</sup>

## **Responsible parties**

Development of alternative programs is generally authorized by the school board, to be implemented by district-level staff. Typically, program managers, teachers, and administrators are responsible for the success of these programs.

## **Contacts**

Tracey Widmann, Director, Alternative Education Center, McDowell County Schools,  
(828) 652-1040, [tracey.widmann@mcdowell.k12.nc.us](mailto:tracey.widmann@mcdowell.k12.nc.us).

# 11. School District Policies Reducing the Use of Suspension as a Discipline Tool

## Description

School district policies that limit the use of suspension as a discipline tool have taken hold across the nation. These policies forbid administrators from suspending students in particular situations, requiring alternative responses. Typically, the policies eliminate the use of suspension for less severe disciplinary issues that do not pose a serious threat to the safety of others. To be successful, the policies prohibiting suspension must dovetail with alternatives to suspension - and additional resources to fund them - so that teachers and principals are not left without tools to hold students accountable for misbehavior.

This strategy has recently been employed in Los Angeles, Baltimore, Buffalo, and Denver. In May 2013, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) school board voted to ban suspensions of students for acts of “willful defiance,” directing officials to use alternative disciplinary practices instead.<sup>119</sup> The term “willful defiance” encompasses infractions such as talking back to teachers, using cell phones in class, public displays of affection or repeated tardiness.<sup>120</sup> Of the 700,000 suspensions that were doled out in California during the 2011-12 school year, half were for willful defiance.<sup>121</sup> The LAUSD school board was particularly concerned by the growing number of minority and disabled students who were receiving suspensions for “willful defiance,” and were thus on the fast-track to falling behind their classmates, dropping out of school or even ending up in jail.<sup>122</sup>

In the Baltimore, Buffalo, and Denver Public Schools, the school boards eliminated suspensions for less severe infractions.<sup>123</sup> Baltimore’s and Denver’s new codes, both implemented in 2008, minimize out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, especially for offenses such as disrespect, insubordination, and classroom disruption.<sup>124</sup> Denver’s new code limits out-of-school suspensions and expulsions to incidents that pose a “serious and credible threat to the safety of pupils and staff.”<sup>125</sup> Baltimore’s new code includes graduated consequences that increase with the age of the child, incidents of misbehavior and the nature of the offense.<sup>126</sup> In both districts, principals must take intermediate steps before resorting to out-of-school suspension as punishment.<sup>127</sup> In Buffalo, the school board adopted a new code of conduct in 2013 that eliminated suspension for minor misbehaviors such as truancy, cheating, cutting class, running in the halls, smoking, and dress code violations. The code requires schools to use intervention and prevention strategies that have proven successful, including restorative justice, conflict resolution, and referrals to support staff.<sup>128</sup>



The result of these reforms has been a dramatic reduction in total suspensions. In Baltimore schools, suspensions fell from 16,739 in 2006-07 to 8,620 in 2012-13.<sup>129</sup> Dropout rates for African-American boys decreased by 59%; graduation rates for that group increased by 16 %.<sup>130</sup> In Denver, the district reported a 38% drop in suspensions from 2010-11 to 2012-13.<sup>131</sup>

Examples of individual schools eliminating suspension exist as well. When Jose Huerta became the principal of Garfield High School in East Los Angeles in 2010, he told his team that there would be no more suspensions.<sup>132</sup> Accordingly, suspensions plummeted from 510 in 2008-09 to just two in 2010-12.<sup>133</sup> For Huerta, the key has been to avoid suspending students for behavior that could be better addressed by other means.<sup>134</sup> Teachers and administrators reinvigorated student governance, brought parents into the school as extra hands and eyes, and instituted after-school detention, drug counseling and conflict-resolution training.<sup>135</sup> Huerta also created teacher and staff buy-in at the beginning of the process by meeting with small groups of teachers, allowing them to vote on certain aspects of the new plan, and allotting new professional collaboration time.<sup>136</sup>

Policies to reduce suspensions must be designed and implemented with care to ensure positive impacts on the students and school communities involved and to ensure that the teachers, administrators, and other responsible parties have the training and support they need to be effective. In Denver, teachers have expressed concerns about the burdensome requirements in using a “tiered approach” to student infractions along with too much paperwork and uneven distribution of resources for teachers and students.<sup>137</sup> In many of the affected districts, the message to the board of education is that eliminating suspension alone is not a workable solution.<sup>138</sup> In Los Angeles, training is supported by outside funding. Nevertheless, teachers and administrators have raised questions about whether they have the resources, training, and time to use alternative practices.<sup>139</sup> At Augustus Hawkins High School in South L.A., where a practice of restorative justice has replaced many suspensions, Principal Tony Terry said each mediation takes 45 minutes or more, at a time of major cuts to support staff such as counselors and assistant principals.<sup>140</sup>

## **Where implemented**

In school districts and individual schools around the country.

## **Types of organizations involved**

School boards, local activists, parent groups, and school and district officials are involved in policy advocacy and reform. School and district officials as well as trained practitioners are involved in implementing alternatives to suspension.

## **Types of students involved**

Eliminating suspension can take place district- or school-wide, affecting the entire student body. This strategy especially affects students who commit non-violent behavior code infractions.

## **Resources needed**

Costs and resources vary depending on the approach taken and the alternatives implemented.

## **Evidence-based?**

Some alternatives to suspension that are used in coordination with anti-suspension policies are evidence-based and are described elsewhere in this report.

## **Responsible parties**

Typically, school boards, local activists, parent groups, and school and district officials are responsible for policy advocacy and formation.

## **Contacts**

Ending the Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Track, a program of the Advancement Project:  
<http://safequalityschools.org>.

# Appendix 1: Research on the Effects of Suspension

Despite the wide use of suspension as a disciplinary technique, research has raised serious questions about its effects. This section summarizes four key research findings about suspension as a tool for responding to student misconduct. First, suspensions make the learning environment less safe and less productive. Second, for the suspended student, out-of-school suspension significantly increases the likelihood of negative life outcomes. Third, suspension disproportionately affects male, African-American students and students with disabilities. Fourth, suspensions are not reserved solely for the most serious violations and offenses.

## **Suspensions make the learning environment less safe and less productive.**

Contrary to expectations, suspensions can make schools less safe. “Research has demonstrated ... that schools with higher rates of out-of-school suspension and expulsion are not safer for students or faculty,” notes the American Academy of Pediatrics, which has issued a policy statement calling for pediatricians to discourage out-of-school suspensions and expulsions. Punishing students by excluding them from school does not deter future misbehavior, and may in fact increase it, making the overall educational environment less safe. For example, students suspended in early middle school are more likely to be suspended again by the eighth grade, suggesting an increase in misbehavior. Overall, schools with higher suspension rates tend to have lower ratings in academic quality and school climate. Additionally, even when controlling for race and poverty, research has found that high-suspending districts have worse outcomes on standardized tests.

Suspensions do little for the broader community. They are not only an ineffective way of engaging students, but also ineffective at engaging parents. This is particularly true for low-income or single parents.

## **For the suspended student, out-of-school suspension significantly increases the likelihood of negative life outcomes.**

Suspensions diminish academic achievement in students. As would be expected, the more time the student is in school and engaged with learning, the higher that student’s academic achievement. The more time the student spends suspended from school, the less time the student will be engaged in the academic endeavor.

For many children, one suspension leads to the next. Thirty to 50% of suspended students are repeat offenders, indicating that suspension does little to discourage misbehavior and may in fact encourage it. Researchers have found strong connections between suspension and the likelihood of dropping out of school and future involvement with the juvenile or criminal justice systems. In fact, the disconnection with school that occurs when a student is suspended is one of the strongest predictors of delinquency. A recent Council of State Governments study, "Breaking School Rules," found that among students from similar demographic, achievement, and socioeconomic backgrounds those with one or more suspensions or expulsions were five times more likely to drop out of school and six times more likely to repeat a grade level than students with no suspensions or expulsions. Furthermore, even students with minimal disciplinary histories – those with just one disciplinary action for a relatively minor offense – were nearly three times more likely to have contact with the juvenile justice system within the year following a suspension.

During the suspension itself, students are often unsupervised. The lack of supervision increases the likelihood that the student will engage in further misbehavior during their exclusion from school. Among children whose parents can provide supervision, suspension can have harmful consequences for the whole family because parents must miss work to watch them.

## **Suspension disproportionately affects male, African-American students and students with disabilities.**

National as well as state-level data show that suspension disproportionately impacts African-American students and students with disabilities. According to the United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, African-American students are more than three times as likely as their white peers to be expelled or suspended. Although African-American students represent 15% of students in the public schools sampled, they make up 35% of students suspended once, 44% of those suspended more than once, and 36% of students expelled. Further, over 50% of students who were involved in school-related arrests or referred to law enforcement are Hispanic or African-American. Office of Civil Rights data also reveals that black male middle school students were suspended at three times the rate of white males, and black females are suspended more than four times as frequently as white females. Nationally, 36% of all black male students with disabilities enrolled in middle and high schools were suspended at least once in the 2009-10 school year. In the last forty years, K-12 suspension rates have more than doubled for all non-white students, while the gap between suspension rates of black and white students has more than tripled, rising from a difference of three percentage points in the 1970s to over 10 percentage points in 2006.

Disproportionality also can be attributed to socio-economic status. Students who receive free lunch are at a greater risk of suspension, as are students whose fathers do not have a full-time job.

Research shows that racial disparities in school discipline cannot be explained through higher rates of misbehavior among African-American students. In one study, white

students had a higher rate of misbehavior than black students, yet black students' misbehavior was more likely to be punished. Another study showed that black students often received disciplinary consequences for less serious infractions requiring more subjective judgment from teachers and administrators. Still another study demonstrated that black students are more likely to be sent to the office than white students. In North Carolina, a study of Wake County practices showed that black first-time offenders were far more likely than white first-time offenders to receive suspensions for minor offenses, including cell-phone use, disruption, disrespect, and public displays of affection.

## **Suspensions are used for many minor offenses.**

Rather than being reserved for the most dangerous behaviors, most suspensions result from less serious offenses, such as minor physical aggression, attendance issues, abusive language, disrespectful behavior, and general classroom disruption. In fact, only 5% of all out-of-school suspensions result from offenses typically considered serious or dangerous, such as possession of weapons or drugs. The remaining 95% of suspensions stem from disruptive behavior and other rule violations.<sup>141</sup>

Use of suspension is also extremely inconsistent from school to school, suggesting that student behavior is just one factor leading to high suspension rates. Other factors that contribute to a school's overall suspension rate include teacher attitudes, administrative centralization, school governance, perceptions of achievements, socioeconomic status and racial status. In short, school and non-behavioral student characteristics, particularly race, influence the use of suspension more than do student behavior and attitude.<sup>142</sup>

From one point of view, this conclusion can be seen as empowering. Principals' and administrators' attitudes toward the disciplinary process can influence rates of suspension. At schools where principals do not view suspension as a default consequence, rates of out-of-school suspension are lower and the use of preventive measures is more common.

# Appendix 2: Suspensions in North Carolina

In the 2013-14 school year, North Carolina reported a total of 198,254 short-term suspensions and 1,088 long-term suspensions. The suspension rate for high school students was 1.91 suspensions per 10 students. These figures represent a decline in the number and rate of suspensions compared with past years; the suspension rate for high school students was 3.48 in 2008-09. Nevertheless, suspension remains a very common discipline tool in North Carolina.

North Carolina was reported to have among the highest suspension rates for males in the country based on federal data from 2011-12. State figures from 2013-14 show North Carolina to be consistent with the nation in suspending African Americans and students with disabilities disproportionately to their percentage of the school population. Black students comprise 22.5% of the total school population of North Carolina, but received the majority of suspensions: 57% of all short-term suspensions and 55% of all long-term suspensions. Students with special needs represent only 13% of the state's school population, yet they received 22% of total short-term suspensions and 17% of the total long-term suspensions across the state.

## Short-term suspensions

The following charts reflect information regarding suspensions in North Carolina contained in the 2013-14 Consolidated Data Report published annually by the N.C. Department of Public Instruction. It is noteworthy that the figures reflect the number of suspensions, not the number of students suspended. Because some students are suspended multiple times, the number of students suspended is lower than the number of suspensions. Students who received short-term suspensions were suspended an average of 1.8 times. The average length of a short-term suspension was five and a half days.

High school students account for a large share of North Carolina's suspended students, representing almost half of all short-term suspensions in the state in 2013-14.

Short-Term Suspensions by Gender <sup>143</sup>		
	Female	Male
2013-14	52,464	145,034
2012-13	66,172	181,623
2011-12	69,123	189,073
2010-11	71,852	194,636
2009-10	74,540	201,089
2008-09	80,784	211,841

Short-Term Suspensions by Race/ Ethnicity <sup>144</sup>							
	American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multi-Racial	White	Pacific
2013-14	5,330	716	113,853	18,562	7,616	51,267	154
2012-13	6,242	972	142,869	23,244	9,181	65,133	15
2011-12	6,383	1,043	146,639	23,569	9,510	70,925	18
2010-11	6,387	1,305	149,654	22,654	9,892	76,308	211
2009-10	6,433	1,293	156,411	20,679	9,979	80,635	
2008-09	7,503	1,346	166,844	20,698	9,096	85,897	

Short-Term Suspensions by Race/ Ethnicity (Number of Suspensions per 10 Enrolled) <sup>145</sup>							
	American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multi-Racial	White	Pacific
2013-14	2.59	.17	2.91	0.85	1.34	.67	.88
2012-13	3.03	.25	3.67	1.11	1.71	.84	.12
2011-12	3.07	.28	3.78	1.20	1.75	.91	.16
2010-11	2.94	.36	3.86	1.24	1.80	.98	1.93
2009-10	3.14	.35	3.97	1.30	1.70	1.02	
2008-09	3.61	.38	4.15	1.34	1.67	1.08	

Short-Term Suspensions by Special Education or Exceptional Children (EC) Status <sup>146</sup>					
	Serious Emotional Disability (SED)	Intellectual Disability-Mild (IDMI)	Specific Learning Disability (SLD)	Speech/ Language Impairment (SLI)	Other Health Impairment (OHI)
2013-14	6,972	3,745	15,920	1,157	11,574
2012-13	7,336	5,735	21,486	8,493	14,647
2011-12	8,601	6,559	22,426	7,326	14,918
2010-11	11,029	7,842	22,195	6,282	16,294
2009-10	11,769	8,438	22,069	5,066	15,442
2008-09	12,070	8,438	21,380	4,473	14,633

## Long-term suspensions

High school students are more likely than other students to be suspended long-term (longer than 10 days); they accounted for 66 percent of the state's long-term suspensions in 2013-14. The suspensions lasted an average of 63 school days.<sup>147</sup> Students receiving long-term suspension missed 68,055 days in the 2013-14 school year.<sup>148</sup>

	Female	Male
2013-14	176	869
2012-13	277	1,142
2011-12	311	1,298
2010-11	521	2,100
2009-10	765	2,562
2008-09	807	2,772

	Female	Male
2013-14	24	113
2012-13	38	150
2011-12	43	172
2010-11	73	281
2009-10	107	345
2008-09	112	371

	American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multi-Racial	White	Pacific
2013-14	19	5	595	102	51	271	1
2012-13	28	5	772	185	60	368	0
2011-12	29	9	871	206	64	430	0
2010-11	28	19	1397	279	80	809	7
2009-10	97	14	1869	327	103	914	
2008-09	76	22	2062	331	99	973	



Rates of Long-Term Suspension by Race/ Ethnicity (Number of Long-Term Suspensions per 100,000 Students) <sup>152</sup>							
	American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multi-Racial	White	Pacific
2013-14	92	12	152	47	90	35	57
2012-13	136	13	199	89	112	47	0
2011-12	139	24	225	105	118	55	0
2010-11	129	53	360	153	146	103	639
2009-10	473	38	475	206	175	116	
2008-09	366	61	513	215	182	122	

Rates calculated by dividing number of suspensions in race/ethnicity category by membership in that race/ethnicity category and multiplying by 100,000.

Male Rates of Long-Term Suspension by Race/ Ethnicity (Number of Long-Term Suspensions per 100,000 Students) <sup>153</sup>							
	American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multi-Racial	White	Pacific
2013-14	144	24	245	79	150	58	0
2012-13	230	15	303	153	167	76	0
2011-12	208	37	352	175	199	86	0
2010-11	182	106	567	246	224	162	923
2009-10	576	54	717	320	273	179	
2008-09	577	100	784	346	268	183	

Rates calculated by dividing number of suspensions in race/ethnicity category by membership in that race/ ethnicity/gender category and multiplying by 100,000.

Number of Long-Term Suspensions by Special Education or Exceptional Children (EC) Status <sup>154</sup>					
	Serious Emotional Disability (SED)	Intellectual Disability-Mild (IDMI)	Specific Learning Disability (SLD)	Speech/ Language Impairment (SLI)	Other Health Impairment (OHI)
2013-14	32	18	69	5	43
2012-13	34	23	86	32	54
2011-12	33	16	71	20	49
2010-11	83	35	123	24	102
2009-10	135	66	146	27	164
2008-09	133	65	122	25	151

# Endnotes

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- <sup>8</sup> N.C. Gen. Stat. § 115C-390.1.
- <sup>9</sup> N.C. Gen. Stat. § 115C-390.2(k).
- <sup>10</sup> U.S Department of Justice Civil Rights Division and U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights. *Dear Colleague Letter: Nondiscriminatory Administration of School Discipline*, January 8, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201401-title-vi.html>.
- <sup>11</sup> The Justice Center and The Council of State Governments. *School Discipline Consensus Report*. Retrieved from <http://csjusticecenter.org/youth/school-discipline-consensus-report/>.
- <sup>12</sup> Skiba, et al. *The Safe and Responsive Schools Project*, 632.
- <sup>13</sup> Losen, Daniel J. & Skiba, Russell. *Suspended Education, Urban Middle Schools in Crisis*. 10. Retrieved from <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/publications/suspended-education>.
- <sup>14</sup> As a reference point for this report, these purposes are: punishment and school exclusion, ensuring the safety of students and teachers, creating a climate conducive to learning, teaching students needed skills for successful interaction in school and society, and reducing the rates of future misbehavior. R. Skiba & M. Rausch, "Zero Tolerance, Suspension, and Expulsion: Questions of Equity and Effectiveness," in *Handbook of Classroom Management* (Everston & Weinstein, eds.) p. 1064; Children's Needs III: Development, Prevention, and Intervention, eds. Bear and Minke 87.
- <sup>15</sup> Safe and Civil Schools. *Positive Behavior Support (PBS)—A Discussion*. Retrieved from <http://www.safeandcivilschools.com/research/papers/pbs.php>.
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- <sup>17</sup> Office of Special Education Programs Technical Assistance Center. Retrieved from <https://www.pbis.org/school>
- <sup>18</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>19</sup> North Carolina Positive Behavior Intervention and Support 11-12 Evaluation Report. Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/positivebehavior/data/evaluation/2011-12/2012-eval-report.pdf>
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- <sup>21</sup> *Id.* 6.
- <sup>22</sup> *Id.*
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- <sup>27</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>28</sup> Skiba & Rausch, *Handbook of Classroom Management*, 1080-81.

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<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

<sup>30</sup> North Carolina State Board of Education and Department of Public Instruction. *Positive Behavior Interventions and Support, Frequently Asked Questions*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/positivebehavior/faq/>.

<sup>31</sup> *Id.*

<sup>32</sup> Luiselli, Putnam, and Sunderland, "Longitudinal Evaluation of Behavior Support Intervention in a Public Middle School," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, July 2002, Vol. 4 no.3, pp. 184-190; Hawken and Horner, "Evaluation of a Targeted Intervention Within a Schoolwide System of Behavior Support," *Journal of Behavioral Education*, Sept. 2003, Vol. 12, No. 3.

<sup>33</sup> Skiba, Ritter, & Simmons, *The Safe and Responsive Schools Project: A School Reform Model for Implementing Best Practices in Violence Prevention*. Retrieved from [http://www.indiana.edu/~equity/docs/A\\_School\\_Reform\\_Model.pdf](http://www.indiana.edu/~equity/docs/A_School_Reform_Model.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> *Id.* 631.

<sup>35</sup> *Id.* 633.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.* 635-39.

<sup>37</sup> *Id.* 636.

<sup>38</sup> *Id.* 633.

<sup>39</sup> *Id.* 643. The declines over the four years for the four schools were as follows: School A: -26%; School B: -77%; School D: -44%; School E: -28%.

<sup>40</sup> *Id.* For students with disabilities, the declines over the four years for the four schools were as follows: School A: -49%; School B: -100%; School D: -75%; School E: -29%.

<sup>41</sup> Losen, Daniel J. (2011), *Discipline Policies, Successful Schools and Racial Justice*.15. Retrieved from <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/discipline-policies>.

<sup>42</sup> *Id.*

<sup>43</sup> University of Virginia Curry School of Education. MyTeachingPartner Homepage. Retrieved from <http://curry.virginia.edu/research/centers/castl/mtp>.

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<https://www.childdevelopment.org/cs/cdtc/print/htdocs/caresplus/teachingpartner.htm>; and [http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/04/30/teach-the-teachers-well/?\\_php=true&\\_type=blogs&\\_php=true&\\_type=blogs&\\_php=true&\\_type=blogs&smid=fb-share&r=2&](http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/04/30/teach-the-teachers-well/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_php=true&_type=blogs&_php=true&_type=blogs&smid=fb-share&r=2&)

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<sup>48</sup> Gregory, et al. (2013).

<sup>49</sup> Allen, et al. *Predicting Adolescent Achievement with the CLASS-S Observational Tool*. Retrieved from <http://curry.virginia.edu/research/centers/castl/class>.

<sup>50</sup> *Id.*

<sup>51</sup> Gregory, et al. (2013).

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<sup>54</sup> Gurman, Sadie (2013, February 19). Agreement keeps Denver police out of most school discipline problems. *The Denver Post*. Retrieved from [http://www.denverpost.com/breakingnews/ci\\_22622094/agreement-keeps-police-out-most-school-discipline-problems](http://www.denverpost.com/breakingnews/ci_22622094/agreement-keeps-police-out-most-school-discipline-problems).

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<sup>56</sup> *Id.*

<sup>57</sup> “Less Discriminatory Alternatives” 5

<sup>58</sup> *Id.*

<sup>59</sup> *Id.* 6-7.

<sup>60</sup> *Id.*

<sup>61</sup> Teske, Huff & Graves, “Collaborative Role of Courts in Promoting Outcomes for Students: The Relationship between Arrests, Graduation Rates and School Safety,” Retrieved from <http://safequalityschools.org/pages/clayton-county-ga>; included in *Keeping Kids in School and out of Courts, A Collection of Reports to Inform the National Leadership Summit on School-Justice Partnerships*. Retrieved from <http://tinyurl.com/school-justice-partnerships>.

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<sup>63</sup> Teske, Steven. “A Study of Zero Tolerance Policies in Schools: A Multi-Integrated Systems Approach to Improve Outcomes for Adolescents” 24 *J. of Child & Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing* 88, 93 (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.ncjfcj.org/sites/default/files/Zero%20Tolerance%20Policies%20in%20Schools%20%282%29.pdf>.

This program was also described in court documents filed in an OCR Complaint filed with the U.S. Department of Education regarding alleged discriminatory ticketing practices in the Bryan Independent School District. “See Less Discriminatory Alternatives” p. 2.

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<sup>77</sup> *Id.*

<sup>78</sup> *Id.*

<sup>79</sup> *Id.* 8.

<sup>80</sup> *Id.* 10.

<sup>81</sup> Just Children and Cornell, Dewey, “Prevention v. Punishment: Threat Assessment, School Suspension, and Racial Disparities,” 4.

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