Education Policy Briefs

"Discipline is Always Teaching":
Effective Alternatives to Zero Tolerance in Indiana's Schools

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How can we keep schools safe and promote a school climate that is conducive to student learning? In the previous two papers, we examined methods that have not demonstrated success in maintaining safe and productive school climates. The first briefing paper demonstrated that zero tolerance has not met its goal of maintaining safety, has been inconsistently applied, increased racial disparities, and been associated with increased school dropout. The second briefing paper showed that although Indiana's rate of expulsion appears to be declining, the risks associated with the use of school suspension and expulsion appear to apply in Indiana as well. Minority students are over-represented in the use of both suspension and expulsion, and schools with higher rates of out-of-school suspensions tend to have lower passing rates on ISTEP.

Are there alternatives? Evidence-based research and panels say yes, and both have identified programs that are clearly effective in reducing the threat of violence. Just as importantly, however, are the effective programs and strategies currently being implemented in Indiana's schools. In this paper, we will describe interviews with principals who are using comprehensive and preventive approaches for promoting a safe and productive school climate without reducing their students' opportunity to learn.

What Do We Know About the Alternatives?

Evidence-based approaches. As noted in the first paper, there is a misconception held by some educators and policymakers that there are virtually no alternatives to school removal for maintaining safe schools. The fact is that such strategies exist, they have been widely researched, and they have been shown in rigorous experimental tests to both reduce the likelihood of disruption and to improve outcomes. Rigorous evidence-based research and government panels have been highly consistent in identifying a number of programs as either effective or promising in reducing the threat of violence. The types of programs identified as effective will be highlighted in three boxes entitled "What Works in School Discipline."

The status of prevention in Indiana. The presence of a promising approach in research does not guarantee that it will be effective or even used at the local level, however. A program may have been tested under conditions very different from those faced by Indiana students and educators, or found to be effective only with resources unavailable to local schools. Thus, it is extremely important to explore the options that currently exist in Indiana's schools. In order to accomplish that, we solicited principals through the Indiana Association of School Principals who volunteered to share information about programs in their schools that they feel are effective in maintaining a safe and productive learning climate. Interviews were conducted with a number of Indiana principals from rural, suburban, and urban elementary and secondary schools, and the results of those interviews will be presented below.

> *It is a misconception that there are virtually no alternatives to school removal for maintaining safe schools.*

A Model of School Violence Prevention

As we talked with principals about the work they do to maintain a school climate conducive to learning, it was clear they had a number of things in common.

- First, these principals made it clear that they do not simply sit back and wait to react to disruptions. Instead, these instructional leaders are strongly proactive, supporting practices and programs that reduce the likelihood of aggression or violence, and making discipline a shared responsibility of students, parents, teachers and administrators.

- Second, these principals emphasize connectedness—building and strengthening connections with at-risk students and their parents.

- Finally, these schools are by no means immune from serious infractions, but they work to develop a variety of creative options for dealing with even the most extreme behavior.

The Children Left Behind briefing papers and supplementary information may also be downloaded from the project web site:

http://ceep.indiana.edu/ChildrenLeftBehind/

CEEP
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These responses mirror a similar awareness on the part of leaders in the field of violence prevention. Figure 1 (page 4) represents a three-tiered model of violence prevention that is achieving wide consensus as a valuable guide for organizing school discipline and school climate efforts.

- At the first level, all students benefit from interventions that improve school climate and teach social or problem-solving skills.

- The second nested circle shows that there are some students who are at greater risk for disruption and violence, and who can benefit from a more specialized focus, including procedures for early identification and intervention.

- Finally, a small but significant number of students will require a more intensive level of intervention, grounded in proven effective strategies for responding to disruption and violence.

Based on this understanding of the field of violence prevention, the remainder of this paper will be organized around a three-tiered prevention model. The approach, grounded in the belief that there is no single approach to creating a safe and productive school, can be summarized as:

I. Creating a Safe and Responsive School Climate
II. Early Identification and Intervention, and
III. Effective Responses to Disruption and Crisis.

Below, we describe the results of interviews with Indiana principals, while inset boxes present a summary of national findings on effective methods of violence prevention.

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I. CREATING A SAFE AND RESPONSIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

As one principal of an elementary school in an urban area put it, "Discipline is always teaching." The principals who were interviewed described philosophies and strategies that helped them better teach students what is expected of them in school. As the old adage "A rising tide lifts all boats" suggests, such efforts can be beneficial for both the general student population and for those students who are more at-risk for violent behavior.

School-Wide Programs

All of the principals highlighted the importance of a welcoming climate and teaching students appropriate social skills. Said one, "If you can create a culture where kids feel respected and safe and secure then we can get to the nuts and bolts of teaching these kids." Two principals mentioned participation in Indiana's CLASS program (see p. 11). One of them described the Lifeskills approach used in that program:

> There are seventeen or so character values. Respect, cooperation, honesty, perseverance, caring, courage … our staff members have embraced them and you see them everywhere. The teachers take time to talk about those life skills… and begin to embed them into their curriculum … What you end up having are kids who are very respectful to one another, and who are willing to work cooperatively.

At the elementary level, one principal described participation in another state program, Project PEACE, teaching students conflict resolution and peer mediation skills:

> Students learn to mediate difficulties within the school…We've taken it to the point that there are peace spots in every room and there's a poster in my office. They click right into it. They won't appeal to me every time. They know to look at one another. It's amazing what the training does.

As Indiana considers statewide guidelines and support for bullying prevention, some schools have already begun to implement such programs. One rural elementary principal describes the bullying prevention program in her school:

> Our elementary school began the No Bullying Program in 2000. Often, people are surprised at what bullying is, they don't recognize a lot of behavior as bullying. The program has given us a common language where everyone knows what bullying is. Our office referral forms were developed to match the No Bullying chart that every teacher and every student sees all over the school, and we send it home to parents, too. I will take this program with me wherever I go because it works.

At the high school level, one administrator described a student organization called the Stand Up Committee, trying to address the drug and alcohol issues that plague many high schools:

> STAND UP is Students Taking A Non-Destructive Upward Pathway ... to try and impress upon their peers that there are a lot of things that you can do on the weekends other than the destructive behaviors that happen. It culminated during the half time of a basketball game and we asked all the students that would like to make a commitment ... And I know a lot of them came forward that probably aren't going to hold to that commitment, but it's at least planting the seed.

School Discipline as Instruction and Organization

Principals stressed the importance of promoting a common understanding among staff, students, parents, and administrators of how discipline works at their schools. These principals work closely with their teachers to define what are the most appropriate referrals to the office, and which are better handled at the classroom level.

> We went through some scenarios. For example, a child taking a pencil away from another child—that should never come to the office. A child who intentionally is trying to hurt another child—that directly comes to the office ... My philosophy has always been you settle it at the lowest level.

Principals suggested that this approach actually gives teachers more authority in their classrooms:

> Once you send a child to the office, as a classroom teacher you give up a part of your control over that child...So I think as a school we've come to realize that it's a lot better to handle

the discipline within the team [of teachers] if we can because that sends a message to the student that the team has control.

Such an approach also frees up administrator time, noted the principals, from having to deal with an endless stream of referrals to more time for counseling students or meeting for planning with teacher teams.

These schools also reported involving parents throughout the disciplinary process. At a number of schools, teachers contact parents before any referral to the office is made. In one school, parents are actively encouraged to support the school's disciplinary code early in the year:

At the beginning of the year I had the child sign [the code of conduct card] and I had the parents sign it… at our back-to-school meeting, I shared with the parents that I was asking for their support.

As a result of such communication, parents tend to be more supportive of school disciplinary actions, as this urban elementary school principal notes:

I have very few parents who get upset with me because a lot of times we've done a lot of interventions … There are no surprises. And I have to think the parents appreciate that because they've been part of it through the entire process.

These principals work closely with their teachers to define what are the most appropriate referrals to the office, and which are better handled at the classroom level.

WHAT WORKS IN SCHOOL DISCIPLINE: CREATING A POSITIVE LEARNING CLIMATE

Bullying Prevention

The fact that over 30% of children have reported some involvement with bullying and that over two-thirds of school shooters viewed their act as revenge for bullying combine to emphasize the seriousness of peer harassment. Effective bullying prevention programs are comprehensive in scope, addressing harassment at all levels: school-wide, classroom, and individual. Well-designed bullying prevention programs have reported significant reductions in bullying, fighting, vandalism and truancy, along with increases in general student satisfaction with school.

Websites and Resources:
Bullying Prevention Program:
http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/model/programs/BPP.html
National Bullying Prevention Campaign: Take a Stand. Lend a Hand. Stop Bullying Now.
http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov

Conflict Resolution

Fighting is among the most common of disciplinary infractions. Thus many schools have begun to implement curricula that teach students the attitudes and skills they need to avoid violence. Approaches to conflict resolution are typically integrated into a broader program, often including components such as peer mediation, schoolwide behavior management, or Life Skills. Whole school efforts, like the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program and Second Steps, have shown a number of positive outcomes, including teacher reports of decreases in physical violence and increased student cooperation, and lowered suspension and dropout rates.

Websites and Resources:
Second Step Violence Prevention Program:
http://www.cfchildren.org/
Resolving Conflict Creatively
http://www.esrnational.org/about-rccp.html

Improved Classroom Behavior Management:

Effective classroom management can de-escalate minor misbehavior before it escalates into serious disruption. Package programs are available that provide teachers with multiple options that help them avoid getting caught up in power struggles with students. Training teachers in more effective methods of classroom management has been a component in many of the most effective violence prevention programs, and has been shown to decrease suspension, expulsion, and dropout, reduce teacher burnout, and improve student on-task behavior and academic achievement.

Websites and Resources:
Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports
http://www.pbis.org/
Discipline with Dignity
http://www.disciplineassociates.com/dwd.htm

II. EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

The school shootings of the 1990's taught us as a nation that a student's lack of connection with schools may place some students at-risk for violence. These Indiana principals identified a number of ways they tried to re-connect at-risk students and their parents.

The Importance of Communication and Caring

For those students whose behavior suggests a higher risk for disruption, these principals suggested that they worked hard to establish communication with both students and parents. One high school administrator noted,

> We're very hands-on administrators. I think that the students feel like they can come to us at any time and work with us. We go to a lot of student activities, a lot more than I know most administrators do, just trying to be present and let the students know that we really do care and we try to work with them. That's not a program, that's just kind of a philosophy that we have.

At one elementary school, the principal emphasized that the level of communication extends to parents as well:

> Communication is really stressed: We're increasing email, they do newsletters, chatting, we have input forms [from parents]. I think it's part of the culture of the building.

As a result, these administrators state, students appear more willing to communicate potential problems to staff and administrators in the building. An assistant principal in a suburban high school described the school's attempts to keep channels of communication open:

> Every time he [the principal] has the student body together he reminds them that if there is anything out there that's lingering and dangerous to make sure that you bring it forward. He is just continually impressing upon the kids how important communication is.

Trust of administrators proved critical in this building: when a student approached the administration to report a student with a cache of weapons, administrators and local police were able to take preventive action that headed off a potentially deadly situation.

Some schools have created schools within a school or blocks in an attempt to better connect with students. At one middle school, common planning times allow the school to re-organize itself into teams that function as a school within a school—students only see teachers within their team, allowing students and teachers to establish a closer bond. Each team has its own goals, vision, and mission statement, and the effects on discipline are apparent to the principal:

> So yes they meet every day. The kids know they do. I mean it's no longer, [that] they can snow one teacher and another one wouldn't be aware of it.

Programs for Connection: Early Identification, Mentoring, and Academic Issues

Some of Indiana's schools have also implemented programs to help identify those children most at risk for violence and disruption, and to provide assistance to those students to re-connect them with school. One principal at an elementary school with an economically disadvantaged population described how her school uses an early screening process and bi-weekly staffing meetings to identify and provide assistance for those children who are most at risk for disruption and school failure.

> We look to intervene early if we see some things that are developing. We worked really hard helping teachers identify internalizers as well as externalizers…We do staffings around those kids. This isn't a way of identifying a student. It's more like trying to predict the problem and prevent it.

Figure 1

Disruptive Students: Effective Responses to Disruption

At-Risk Students: Early Identification & Intervention

All Students: Creating a Positive Climate
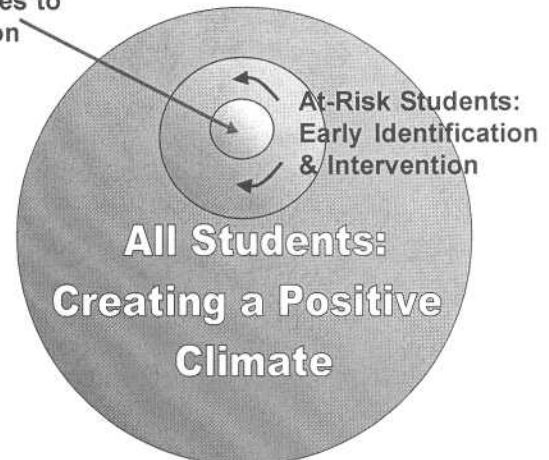
A three-tiered model of school discipline and violence prevention. At the first level, all students benefit from primary prevention efforts to create a positive climate and teach appropriate conflict resolution and problem solving skills. Within the larger student body is a subset of students at risk for disruption who will likely benefit from early identification and efforts to re-engage them in school. Finally, although the third group of the most challenging students is smallest, it is important to have effective plans to minimize the impact of school disruption.[1]

> *"We're very hands-on administrators ... I think that the students feel like they can come to us at any time and work with us. ... That's not a program, that's just kind of a philosophy that we have."*

Mentoring programs such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters have been identified as among the most effective programs for reducing the risk of violence. At one elementary school, every adult from administrators to teachers to custodial staff was asked to mentor one child who had been identified as someone "who we considered to be disconnected from school."

> And all we asked was that the adults would meet with these kids once a week ... I would have lunch with this child and we would play chess and we would talk ... We saw that we were making progress with these kids because really a lot of these kids didn't have anyone who really took an interest in them.

Many of the principals remarked on the relationship for many students between risk for academic failure and risk for acting-out behavior. One administrator in a suburban high school described the relationship between academic problems and behavioral problems this way:

Some behavioral problems are due to [a student's] feeling inadequate in the classroom or feeling as if they can't perform academically—"I'd rather be bad than dumb." That [understanding] has really helped us a lot…we have alleviated that problem by trying to keep kids from feeling that way in whatever setting they are in.

In one rural middle school, the alternative school mixes a focus on academics for students who are struggling with a focus on teaching students appropriate social skills. Says the principal of this program:

> Right now we're piloting a program with IU East and their social sciences program where student counselors come in with that [alternative school] group and work with them in terms of conflict resolution, problem solving, getting along with others…that's been a very good experience this year and the counselors want to continue it next year.

WHAT WORKS IN SCHOOL DISCIPLINE: EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND INTERVENTION

Early Identification: Profiling vs. Threat Assessment?

In the most comprehensive analysis done of school shootings going back to 1974, the U.S. Secret Service concluded that profiling is not an effective option for addressing threats of violence. A more promising approach advocated by the Secret Service and other experts is *threat assessment,* in which a team completes a thorough analysis of the student, school, family, and community to determine whether a particular incident constitutes a low, medium or high level threat. Most importantly, the Secret Service report notes the critical importance of school climate in maintaining school safety, offering 11 guidelines for creating a safe and connected school climate.

> **Websites and Resources:**
> *National Threat Assessment Center, Secret Service Safe School Initiative Report, "Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates."*
> www.secretservice.gov/ntac_ssi.shtml
> *Virginia Youth Violence Project, Threat Assessment Training*
> www.youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu/threat-assessment/training-available.html

Reconnecting Alienated Students: Mentoring

Mentoring provides a way of re-connecting alienated students to school and community. The mentor and student typically meet one to two times a week, engaging in tutoring, discussion, field trips, or community service. As important as any activity, however, is the opportunity for the at-risk student to develop a trusting relationship with an adult. Evaluations of mentoring have shown that such programs can decrease students' violent attitudes, raise self-esteem and career aspirations, and improve social skills and academic achievement.

> **Websites and Resources:**
> *National Mentoring Partnership*
> www.mentoring.org
> *Big Brothers/Big Sisters*
> www.bbbsa.org

Anger Management

The purposes of anger management are to assist students in learning how to understand and manage feelings of anger, and provide them with tools to avoid escalating negative feelings to confrontations with others. Short- and long-term effects of effective programs include decreases in disruptive and aggressive behavior, increases in pro-social behavior, better social acceptance by peers, and increased on-task behavior.

> **Websites and Resources:**
> *Sera Learning*
> *www.sera.org*
> *Elementary and Middle Schools Technical Assistance Center*
> http://www.emstac.org/registered/topics/posbehavior/early/anger.htm

CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND:
SERIES SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Indiana's schools face a difficult challenge in meeting two equally important mandates. First, schools have a right and a responsibility to ensure the safety of students and teachers, and to preserve the integrity of the learning climate, so that students can learn and teachers can teach. Second, best practice suggests, and No Child Left Behind mandates, that all schools must maximize opportunity to learn for all children, regardless of their background. Thus, schools using suspension and expulsion are faced with what appears to be a difficult choice between safety and student learning. This series of briefing papers has been an attempt to explore that apparent contradiction, addressing three questions about out-of-school suspension and expulsion:

- *Does the literature support the need for and effectiveness of zero tolerance suspensions and expulsions?*
- *What is the status of out-of-school suspension and expulsion in Indiana?*
- *Are there alternatives that can maintain safe and productive school climates while preserving students' opportunity to learn?*

Briefing Paper 1. Zero Tolerance: Assumptions vs. Facts

The use of zero tolerance in schools is predicated upon a number of assumptions about school violence and the types of responses necessary to address it. In this paper, we examined available national data to assess how well these assumptions hold up. That review shows that:

- **Violence and disruption are extremely important concerns that must be addressed, but there is no evidence that violence in America's public schools is out of control, nor that school violence is worsening.**
- **Higher rates of out-of-school suspension are associated with poorer school climate, higher dropout rates, and lower achievement, making it difficult to argue that zero tolerance is an important tool for creating effective school climates.**
- **Despite claims that zero tolerance sends an important deterrent message to students, there is no credible evidence that out-of-school suspension or expulsion are effective methods for changing student behavior.**
- **Minority disproportionality in suspension and expulsion have been consistently documented, and seem to be increasing with the use of zero tolerance.**
- **A wide range of alternatives to zero tolerance has emerged and is available to promote a productive learning climate and address disruptive behavior.**

We must all be concerned about the safety of students, and the ability of teachers to teach them in a climate free of disruption. Schools have the right and responsibility to use effective tools that enable them to reach that goal. Yet No Child Left Behind mandates that we use only those educational interventions that provide evidence of effectiveness. The national data suggest serious questions about whether the philosophy of zero tolerance in general, or the use of school suspension and expulsion in particular, can be considered to be effective interventions for maintaining school safety.

Briefing Paper 2. Unplanned Outcomes: Suspensions and Expulsions in Indiana.

National level data may be insufficient to describe the status of school discipline in Indiana. Thus, the second briefing paper specifically presented data on discipline, and perspectives on discipline, from Indiana schools and Indiana principals. A number of findings emerged:

- **Rates of expulsion appear to be decreasing, but out-of-school suspension is increasing in Indiana.**
- **Over 90% of out-of-school suspensions were accounted for by infractions in the categories Disruptive Behavior and Other.**
- **Schools in urban locales have significantly higher rates of out-of-school suspension. Secondary schools have higher rates of both out-of-school suspension and expulsion than elementary schools.**
- **Rates of out-of-school suspension are not distributed evenly across schools: The top 10% of schools in terms of rate of suspensions account for over 50% of Indiana's out-of-school suspensions.**
- **Rates of suspension and expulsion are not equally distributed by race. African American students as a group are four times as likely to be suspended from school and about two and a half times as likely to be expelled as white students. Hispanic students as a group are about twice as likely to be suspended or expelled as white students.**
- **In the most recent available national data, Indiana ranks first in the nation in its rate of school expulsion, and ninth in out-of-school suspensions. This finding cannot be accounted for by the length of expulsion allowed in Indiana.**
- **Indiana principals are sharply divided over the use of out-of-school suspension and expulsion. Attitudes about the willingness to use suspension and expulsion are related to attitudes towards parents and students with disabilities, and are also associated with school rates of suspension.**
- **Regardless of demographic factors, schools with higher rates of out-of-school suspension have lower average passing rates on ISTEP.**

In summary, the Indiana data on suspension and expulsion present a mixed picture. On the one hand, the negative outcomes associated with suspension and expulsion, such as minority disproportionality and a negative relationship with ISTEP scores, are of concern. Yet the fact that the extensive use of out-of-school suspension and expulsion may be limited to a relatively small percentage of Indiana's schools suggests that many of Indiana's schools are using proactive alternatives that maintain safety without removing students from the opportunity to learn.

Briefing Paper 3. Discipline is Always Teaching: Effective Alternatives

A number of programs and interventions have been identified as effective or promising for reducing the threat of youth violence and promoting safe school climates. But the presence of available research does not guarantee that those approaches can be used effectively at the local level. In the third briefing paper, we reported on our conversations with Indiana principals about innovative programs for maintaining both school discipline and maximizing educational opportunity. We found no hint of compromise in the approach used by these principals. They maintained high academic and behavioral expectations and were not afraid to remove a student if safety demanded it. But they also:

- **Clarify expectations regarding office referrals and train staff in classroom management strategies.**
- **Actively teach appropriate behavior through school philosophy and preventive programs.**
- **Communicate and collaborate with parents.**
- **Seek to reconnect alienated students through mentoring and anger management.**
- **Develop creative options in the school and community to keep even those students who are suspended and expelled engaged in learning.**

Such efforts are not free, but require significant commitments of time and resources. Recent efforts to pass a statewide bullying bill suggest, however, that Indiana is prepared to make a commitment to support the state's schools in finding approaches that are effective in promoting school climates that are safe and conducive to learning for all children.

Recommendations

Together these results show that it is possible to maintain a safe and productive school climate without removing a large number of students from the opportunity to learn. Innovative programs described by principals and Youth Service Bureaus suggest that schools can maintain orderly environments with high expectations, while at the same time making an active commitment to the continuing education of all children. These results suggest that zero tolerance, out-of-school suspension, and school expulsion can become a less central part of school discipline by actions in a number of areas:

1. Reserve zero tolerance disciplinary removals for only the most serious and severe of disruptive behaviors, and define those behaviors explicitly.

2. Replace one-size-fits-all disciplinary strategies with graduated systems of discipline, wherein consequences are geared to the seriousness of the infraction.

3. Improve data collection strategies on school discipline at the state level, and assist educators in using disciplinary data to better understand and address safety and disciplinary concerns at their schools.

4. Improve collaboration and communication among schools, parents, juvenile justice, and mental health to develop an array of alternatives for challenging youth.

5. Implement preventive measures that can improve school climate and reconnect alienated students.

6. Expand the array of options available to schools for dealing with disruptive or violent behavior. In particular, ensure that teachers receive training in classroom management strategies that provide them with the tools they need for handling misbehavior at the classroom level.

7. Evaluate all school discipline or school violence prevention strategies to ensure that all disciplinary interventions, programs, or strategies are truly impacting student behavior and school safety.

As our knowledge of available options for promoting a safe and effective school climate increases, it becomes apparent that there is no contradiction between the need to keep schools safe and the mandate to maximize educational opportunity for all children. The good news is that a variety of strategies have been validated at the national level that can help schools reach those goals. The better news is that courageous and innovative Indiana educators have begun to demonstrate success with those and other creative strategies. Our schools and our children deserve nothing less than full support for those efforts.

III. EFFECTIVE RESPONSES TO SCHOOL DISRUPTION OR CRISIS

Unless the school carefully plans its response in advance, the extreme behavior of even a handful of students can seriously interfere with the learning climate. In their efforts to protect their schools from disorder while maximizing student opportunity to remain in school, these principals described a variety of creative alternatives to traditional out-of-school suspension and expulsion.

A New Perspective: From Zero Tolerance to Graduated Discipline

By no means were the principals we talked with inclined to in any way relax their expectations for appropriate behavior.

> We will not put up with misbehavior. …You are here to learn and we're going to do everything we can to provide the proper education. Your teachers are here to work with you. We're doing everything we can to support you but then again we will not deal with any misbehaviors. That's the bottom line. If you hit somebody, you're going to be suspended.

Yet they also rejected a one-size-fits all disciplinary approach:

> We don't have a zero tolerance policy … In the office we really seek to understand what's going on and have consequences that make sense. [We] try not to use out-of-school suspensions unless we're at our wits' end because we want them here.

Trying to achieve this balance seems to lead these principals to an approach wherein the punishment is more likely to fit the infraction:

> Just to have a standard, people say 'Well, okay, you lose a recess no matter what the infraction is.' But let's say they have written on a wall in the bathroom. I think they should put on gloves and clean it off. That makes sense.

Creative Modifications to Suspension and Expulsion

Perhaps most striking at this level were the creative ways in which these schools modified the traditional notions of out-of-school suspension and expulsion so as to send a strong disciplinary message to students without reducing (and even in some cases increasing) their time spent in school. In one high school, in place of an out-of-school suspension, students' parents are asked to come in to school and follow their son or daughter around for a day:

> We will offer them [parents] the opportunity to sit in class with them. They can go through the day with the student and basically keep them [in line] with their behavior and also do some observation. Sometimes it's been a real eye-opener for the parents… Kids don't like it you know.

A middle school principal in a rural area described her school's extended day program organized in conjunction with the local court system. When students are "suspended" into this program, they are not removed from school: Rather, they are brought to school by their parents at 6 a.m. and go to school until 6 p.m. that evening, and are monitored closely by two trained supervisors.

> One comes in from 6 to 2 and the other from 10 to 6 and then in that cross between it gives them some time also to meet with the student if necessary, or go to a class with the student [that he or she is] having particular trouble in ... These students also have two counseling components a week from local counseling providers that we have here in our community and this is done on their own. ... The program has been very successful. Our suspension rate the first year we implemented it dropped 50%.

Some schools have even found ways to modify expulsion so that it does not end a student's contact with school. One high school uses what they term "probationary expulsion" for non-dangerous offenses:

WHAT WORKS IN SCHOOL DISCIPLINE: EFFECTIVE RESPONSES TO SCHOOL DISRUPTION OR CRISIS

Alternatives to Suspension and Expulsion: Schools that are safe and responsive have plans and procedures in place to deal with violent and disruptive behaviors that do occur. These schools look beyond a program of stiffer consequences to an array of effective responses geared toward the seriousness of the offense. A number of such alternative responses might be made available including:

- *Restitution* policies in which consequences are geared to the nature of the offense such as a student who has vandalized the school is required to clean up the vandalism or participate in a project to improve the school's physical environment.
- *Individual behavior plans* which tend to be used with students having a disability, but may also be useful in addressing the underlying function of concerning behavior of non-disabled students.
    Functional Behavior Assessment
    http://www.air.org/cecp/fba/default.htm
- *Alternative disciplinary methods* such as teen court or restorative justice, which shift the burden of discipline from administrators to peers.
    National Teen Courts of America
    http://firms.findlaw.com/teencourt/index.htm
- *Alternative settings* that are well planned, coordinated, and used only for those students whose behavior is so severe that they cannot function in a general setting.
- *Community team approaches* such as Wraparound services or Wraparound teams which foster community inter-agency coordination to address the behaviors of a student in multiple settings.
    Wraparound
    http://www.air.org/cecp/wraparound/default.htm

We absolutely do not believe in zero tolerance policies… If we're going to expel a student, probably 90% of the time we will expel him or her technically but we allow the student to return to school on what's called a continuing education agreement… What we're trying to do is make a commitment to try to help kids, to allow them, even though they've made a pretty major mistake, for example possession of drugs or alcohol,… to return to school on a probationary basis. It is very proactive because for the student's benefit we require drug testing and counseling as a part of that.

The principals reported that this combination of high expectations and support for students can be effective even for the toughest kids:

We've had several really tough kids enter this school and after going through and being surrounded by kids who have embraced the class and the culture of the school they've turned it around. We're not seeing that aggressive behavior. Because they know this is a nurturing place. That the teachers care about them as individuals. Other classmates care about them…that has helped eliminate many of the problems.

School-Community Collaboration for Suspended/Expelled Youth

Despite our best efforts, there will be some students whose behavior threatens their own or others' safety to an extent that demands removal for some period of time. Yet there are programs that have been successful in maintaining educational connections for even these most challenging students. Indiana's Youth Service Bureaus form a service network of service providers that seek to ensure the best possible services for troubled and troubling youth. Many of the YSB's have developed innovative programs in collaboration with local schools; space allows us to highlight only a few of those here.

- The Boys & Girls Clubs of Wayne County has long recognized that the lack of positive direction provided to suspended and expelled youth during their out-of-school time can create additional problems for the student and the community. To address this issue, the Boys & Girls Club has collaborated with five school corporations in Wayne County to develop the Positive Alternatives Program, with funding from the Indiana Department of Education and IYSA. Students suspended out of school complete assigned work from their respective schools that is faxed to the center daily, while expelled students attend the program and work on grade appropriate material. Students can also be referred by the county juvenile probation department. All students attending the program participate daily in a conflict resolution program that teaches students to identify reasons for their suspension or expulsion and provides alternative means of coping with their identified issues. Guest speakers come in to address the students on life skills throughout the year. Community service collaborations have been formed with the Mayors' Office, city parks and recreation, and the senior citizens' center.

- In 1994, the Hamilton Centers Youth Service Bureau developed the Hamilton County Out-of-School Suspension Program, in collaboration with five school corporations and the Hamilton County Circuit Court, Hamilton County Prosecutor's Office, the County Council on Alcohol and Other Drugs, and the Hamilton County Office of Family and Children. Students who are suspended attend the program and spend their entire day doing work assigned by the home school. Students receive credit for any work they complete while in the program, according to the rules of their participating school's handbook. During the 2003-2004 school year, 97% of the students participating in the program completed all school assignments while in the program, and many worked ahead in their subjects before the end of their suspension period.

- The Allen County Youth Service Bureau has developed two programs for students who are expelled or suspended out of school. Under the Status Offender Court Alternative Program (SOCAP), when schools file truancy charges, the case comes to the SOCAP program instead of going directly to court. Each family is assigned a case facilitator who seeks to help resolve the truancy issue through counseling, parenting education, assistance in finding housing, or other available services, while continuing to monitor the student's school attendance. In addition, the YMCA Youth Service Bureau's Students Out of School (SOS) opened its doors in October of 2003. Under that program, students suspended out of school in grades six through nine are required to perform community service. Thus far the program has served just under 200 students, and those students have performed over 5000 hours of service in the community.

In summary, these collaborative programs share a common understanding that unsupervised time suspended and expelled youth spend away from education only increases the risk for that student, and ultimately for the community. These proactive programs see education as a valuable commodity that can prevent the involvement of troubled youth in the juvenile justice system. Such programs require commitments of collaboration and resources, but ultimately these communities find that education is vastly more cost-effective than incarceration.

Conclusions

Every day, Indiana's principals are faced with the complex job of bringing hundreds of students from widely varying backgrounds together and ensuring that they can focus on their schoolwork, not disruptions. The principals described in this paper have sought and found methods that allow them to preserve the safety and integrity of the learning climate in their schools while maximizing student opportunity to learn.

We found no hint of compromise in the approach described by these principals. There was no question that they maintained high expectations for both student behavior and academic achievement, and they were not afraid to remove a student if school safety demanded it. But they also clarify expectations with staff to ensure that school removal is not overused. They actively seek to teach students alternatives to disruption and misbehavior through school philosophy and preventive programs. They communicate and collaborate with students and parents, and that effort seems to be rewarded by a higher level of cooperation with school disciplinary actions. They look for ways to re-connect those students who are in danger of becoming alienated from schooling. And they refuse to give up on even the most challenging of students, developing creative alternatives to traditional suspension and expulsion that make a strong statement to disruptive students without depriving those students of an opportunity to an education.

Occasionally, the severity of a student's behavior threatens the welfare of others in the school, necessitating school removal for some period of time. Yet even in these cases, some communities find ways to continue education for students who have been suspended or expelled. By placing these students in an environment that encourages or mandates the continued completion of schoolwork, such programs appear to be able to keep a significant number of suspended and expelled students on track. Some of these programs include a strong component of counseling and other mental health services for troubled youth, and highlight the need to expand mental health service availability in schools as well. While such programs demand a certain level of resources and collaboration, these communities have decided that the costs of keeping youth engaged in education are less than the costs of losing students to delinquency.

It should not be assumed that, because these schools and communities rely upon their own creativity to develop effective options, the development of effective disciplinary systems is resource-free. Many of the principals spoke of the need for additional resources to support programs that could be implemented only minimally or to begin new programs:

> We've done a lot of good on very, very few resources. However, it's taxing and we're spread too thin ... Really, we need money to bring in more quality educated people who can work with these kids to minimize ratios and maximize the impact of a good adult role model.

Others emphasized the need for state support for both in-school prevention and for alternative programs for students who are removed from school.

Here in Indiana, one federally funded initiative, the Safe and Responsive Schools Project, provided a demonstration that increased options can maintain school safety even while reducing exclusionary discipline. Six schools in three urban, suburban, and rural districts developed school teams that identified their greatest safety needs. As part of a strategic planning process, those teams tailored school safety plans to meet those needs. The project director, in testimony before the U.S. House Education Reform Committee, presented evidence of dramatic reductions in suspension, expulsion, and even school dropout among participating schools.[2] Like the principals described herein, those schools demonstrated that with increased options for addressing school disruption and school climate, there can be another way in school discipline.

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In the most recent legislative session, a bill to provide training and resources to schools throughout Indiana for bullying prevention almost became law. Educators, administrators, researchers, and policymakers all testified to the importance of such proactive approaches in ensuring school safety. Indiana's principals have begun to demonstrate that there is no inherent conflict between the goals of promoting safety and order on the one hand, and preserving all students' right to learn on the other. As educators begin to seek support for new and more effective school discipline strategies, one can only hope that the State of Indiana will continue to demonstrate its support for approaches that have proven effective in maintaining safe and effective schools for all children.

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WHAT WORKS IN SCHOOL DISCIPLINE: GENERAL RESOURCES

There are a number of excellent resources that contain extensive information on research based practices, alternative programs and effective processes to creating safe and productive schools.

National Resources:

Blue Prints for Violence Prevention
http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/

Partnership Against Violence Network
www.pavnet.org

U. S. Surgeon General's Report on Youth Violence
http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/youthviolence/surgeongeneral/SG_Site/home.asp

Safe and Responsive Schools Project
http://www.unl.edu/srs/ or http://www.indiana.edu/~safeschl

Teaching Tolerance/Tolerance.org
http://www.tolerance.org/teach/index.jsp

Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE)
www.nationalsave.org

Indiana Resources:

CLASS- Connecting Learning Assures Successful Schools
www.indianaclass.com

Project Peace
http://www.doe.state.in.us/sservices/peace/welcome.html

Indiana School Safety Specialists' Academy
http://www.doe.state.in.us/isssa

Endnotes

[1] The three-level primary prevention model for addressing youth violence has been described extensively elsewhere and can be found in a number of sources, including: American Psychological Association (1993). *Violence and youth: Psychology's response*. Washington, DC: Author; Dwyer, K., Osher, D., & Warger, C. (1998). *Early warning, timely response: A guide to safe schools.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education; and Walker, H.M., Horner, R.H., Sugai, G., Bullis, M., Sprague, J.R., Bricker, D., & Kaufman, M.J. (1996). Integrated approaches to preventing antisocial behavior patterns among school-age children and youth.

Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 4(4), 194-209. A more complete description of the Safe and Responsive Schools model can be found on the Safe and Responsive Schools web site at www.unl.edu/srs/frame.html.

[2] The testimony of Dr. Russell Skiba, Project Co-Director of the Safe and Responsive Schools Project, before the House Education Reform Committee can be found at http://edworkforce.house.gov/hearings/107th/edr/idea5802/wl5802.htm.

About the Children Left Behind Project

The Children Left Behind Project is a joint initiative of the Indiana Youth Services Association and the Center for Evaluation & Education Policy, funded by the Lilly Endowment, sharing data on the use and effect of school suspension and expulsion in the state of Indiana. The goals of the Project are two-fold:

1. *To open a statewide dialogue concerning the best methods for promoting and maintaining a safe and productive learning climate in Indiana schools.*
2. *To initiate and maintain a forum for discussion between those in the juvenile justice system and Indiana's educational system to ensure that methods chosen for maintaining order in our schools do not jeopardize the human potential of young people or the overall safety of communities.*

A series of three briefing papers and an overall summary will be published in July 2004 for policymakers, educators, and community members and made available on the world-wide web:
- *Zero Tolerance: The Assumptions and The Facts*
- *Unplanned Outcomes: Suspensions and Expulsions in Indiana*
- *"Discipline is Always Teaching": Effective Alternatives to Zero Tolerance in Indiana's Schools*

All three papers, the summary and recommendations, and supplemental analyses and information can be found on the project web site: **ceep.indiana.edu/ChildrenLeftBehind/**

These efforts are based upon what we believe are two incontrovertible principles, principles that we hope will also guide the ensuing discussion:

1. *Indiana's schools have a right and a responsibility to apply methods that are effective in maintaining a climate that is as free as possible of disruptions to student learning.*
2. *Best practice suggests, and the No Child Left Behind Act mandates, that all educational practices employed in schools must maximize the opportunity to learn for all children, regardless of their background.*

"Discipline is Always Teaching":
Effective Alternatives to Zero Tolerance in Indiana's Schools

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