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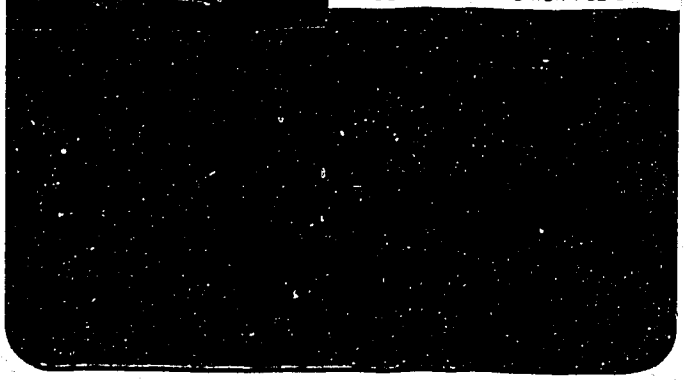
ABSTRACT

The 12 sources cited here deal with several approaches to student suspension, including inhouse suspensions, the legal aspects of suspensions, and the prevention of the discipline problems that cause students to be suspended. (IRT)



Number 27 April 1977

The Best of ERIC presents annotations of ERIC literature on important topics in educational management.

The selections are intended to give the practicing educator easy access to the most significant and useful information available from ERIC. Because of space limitations, the items listed should be viewed as representative, rather than exhaustive, of literature meeting those criteria.

Materials were selected for inclusion from the ERIC catalogs *Resources in Education (RIE)* and *Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE).*

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Alternatives to Suspension

The American Friends Service Committee. "Alternatives to Suspension: Alternative Programs." Columbia, South Carolina: South Carolina Community Relations Program. *Your Schools,* 6, 6 (May 1975), pp. 5-11. ED number not yet assigned.

Part of a larger document on reducing the number of suspensions, this section consists of several articles describing alternative programs outside the regular school. Two of the articles deal with a program in Houston (Texas) sponsored jointly by the schools and the county's juvenile probation department. The centers established under the program use both educational and public service personnel to provide students with group and individual counseling in addition to their regular class assignments. The authors note that 75 percent of these students, some of whom are self-referred, have major learning disabilities that simply do not get adequate handling in the regular school situation.

The Houston program is proving highly successful. Before the program, the school districts' secondary schools suspended 396 students in 1972-73. In the first year of the program less than 20 were suspended, while 539 were referred to the centers. The number of repeaters was as low as 15 percent in another district. In addition to keeping children in school and out of trouble with the police and juvenile authorities, the centers also allow public service workers earlier contact with children facing problems. Difficulties can thus be overcome before they get out of hand.

This section also discusses a program requiring joint counseling with parents and the referring educators that has cut suspensions to one-half and expulsions to one-sixth their former rates; an isolation booth program; and an ungraded walk-in school and another alternative school, both serving a South Carolina district.

Document not available separately. Complete document, 32 pages, ED number not yet assigned, not available from EDRS. Order copies of *Your Schools,* May 1975, from South Carolina Community Relations Program, American Friends Service Committee, 401 Columbia Building, Columbia, South Carolina 29201. $1.00.

The American Friends Service Committee. "Alternatives to Suspension: Techniques, Methods, and Strategies." Columbia, South Carolina: South Carolina Community Relations Program. *Your Schools,* 6, 6 (May 1975), pp. 11-15. ED number not yet assigned.

Ideally, discipline problems should be handled before they require the use of suspensions or special programs that remove the student from the regular school setting. One good tool for modifying behavior is the behavioral contract. Recognizing the kinds of rewards each student needs and the capacities of each student for achieving set goals enables the teacher to help the student develop a contract he or she can meet. Reasonable expectations, challenges, and successes build the self-esteem necessary for a student to feel secure. In addition, contracts require little time for monitoring and place responsibility on the student. In-class misbehavior, truancy, and academic failure can all be improved through the use of suitably designed contracts.

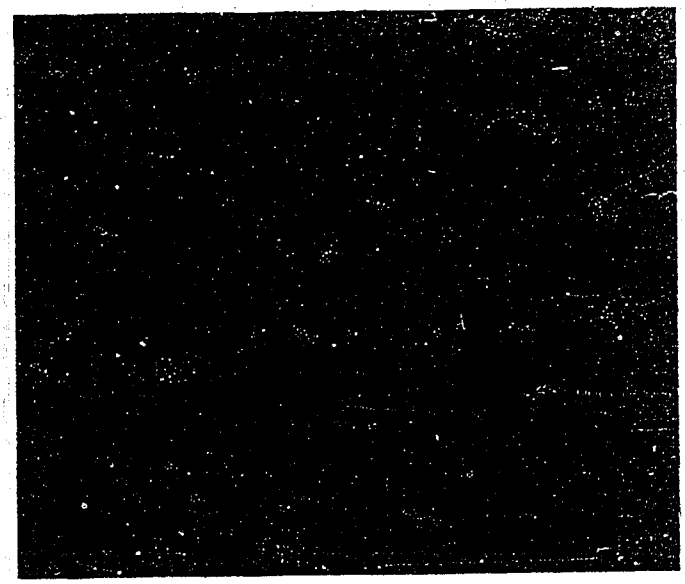
Assigning teachers and administrators as advocates or personal counselors for students, especially when the students can choose the educator they would feel most comfortable with, is another method for attacking discipline problems early. As long as each teacher's "case load" is small, a good personal relationship can be established with each student.

Using other students is yet another technique, helping both students involved. The problem student feels less threatened, and the student who is helping feels needed and useful. Some training is needed, of course, to make sure the student "counselor" does not simply further discourage his peer, a development that could also discourage the "counselor" himself.

Document not available separately. Complete document, 32 pages, ED number not yet assigned, not available from EDRS. Order copies of *Your Schools,* May 1975, from South Carolina Community Relations Program, American Friends Service Committee, 401 Columbia Building, Columbia, South Carolina 29201. $1.00.

Bettker, Dean F. "Suspensions: Get Rid of 'Em!" *Thrust for Education Leadership,* 5, 1 (October 1975), pp. 26-27. EJ 132 166.

California state laws limiting suspensions to 5 days for a single offense and 20 days total out of the year are forcing administrators to find alternatives. At Buena Vista's La Palma Junior High School, a work program handles discipline cases that do not involve threats to the welfare of other students, personnel, or the school. After-school jobs are assigned students, including "gardening, landscaping, custodial chores, clerical jobs, and assisting teachers," with an attempt made to relate the assignment to the offense. For example, aggressive behavior gets the student highly physical tasks, permitting a



positive, creative outlet for high energy.

In the first year the number of suspensions was reduced by 90 percent. Over 400 students participated, providing the school with 2,097 hours of service. While the program required hiring teachers at $8.75 per hour as monitors, the cost was more than made up for in state aid saved by keeping students in school. In fact, the program generated a net income of $3,344.49.

In addition, only 19 percent of the students participating repeated later, with a vast majority viewing their assignments as consequences of their own actions, rather than as administrative tyranny.

Cole, Michael T. "Expulsion and Long Term Suspension: Is It Legal?" *Journal of Law and Education*, 4, 2 (April 1975), pp. 325-335. EJ 122 511.

A thoughtful examination of the subtleties of Supreme Court decisions leads Cole to conclude that education may be a fundamental right, though equal access to the highest quality education may not. In any case, he argues that the burden is on the schools to show a rational basis for continuing suspensions or expulsions once a student no longer threatens to "materially and substantially interfere with the requirements of appropriate discipline," to quote the standard cited in *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District.*

Cole offers a readmission procedure to help eliminate the damaging effects of suspensions that have outlived their usefulness. A hearing should be held so the student can show evidence of his or her change of behavior, to be considered by the school board or a special hearing panel. Due process rights should be observed as they are at suspension or expulsion hearings. The student's past behavior should be discounted as much as possible, if he can show he no longer poses a threat. Requiring witnesses on the student's behalf can help corroborate his claim and reduce attempts to subvert the hearing's purpose.

Dinkmeyer, Don, and Dinkmeyer, Don, Jr. "Logical Consequences: A Key to the Reduction of Disciplinary Problems." *Phi Delta Kappan*, 57, 10 (June 1976), pp. 664-666. EJ 139 345.

If schools are to develop responsible, resourceful adults who are able to relate to others, they must teach the necessary skills as part of the educational process. "The student must be helped to see relationships between actions and their consequences." The use of punishment tends to have the opposite effect, teaching students to become angry and vengeful and to resist authority.

Misbehavior can be limited if proper methods are used, including avoiding reinforcing or provoking misbehavior; developing mutual respect through kindness and firmness rather than through hostility and threats; looking for assets in each student, which can be encouraged; and being flexible in attitudes taken, rather than simply expecting the worst and, as a result, getting it.

When a student misbehaves, the educator should help the student think through what he or she hopes to gain through the misbehavior. The educator can then present the student with alternative solutions to the problem, and require commitment to a positive course of action. When the alternatives offered are logical results of the misbehavior, the student must face the responsibility for his own actions.

Fagen, Stanley A., and Long, Nicholas J. "Before It Happens: Prevent Discipline Problems by Teaching Self-Control." *Instructor*, 85, 5 (January 1976), pp. 42-47, 95-96. EJ 138 880.

Programs to prevent learning and behavior problems before they develop can save time and effort for teachers and schools, as well as giving children a much better chance at success in life. Fagen and Long identify eight "skill-clusters" valuable in teaching self-control at the elementary level: selecting, storing, and sequencing and ordering of information; anticipating the consequences of acts; appreciating feelings; managing frustrations; learning restraint; and ability to relax. Children having these skills are confident of themselves and feel secure among their peers, while those deficient are likely to become "disruptive, irresponsible, and insensitive to the needs of others." Developing these skills should be a central part of any educational program.

The authors provide techniques for assessing individual children's needs and describe activities by which those needs can be met on a more than merely theoretical level. The methods described encourage objective, positive responses to children experiencing problems.

Maynard, William. "Working with 'Disruptive' Youth." *Educational Leadership*, 34, 6 (March 1977), pp. 417-421. EJ number not yet assigned.

An urban high school with a minority enrollment of over 70 percent, once noted for racial tension, riots, and high dropout, suspension, and absenteeism rates, has in five years nearly eliminated violence and vandalism, and has established the city's lowest dropout and absentee rates as well as one of the lowest suspension rates, thanks largely to a conscious effort to change the "climate" of the school.

Students and staff together reduced 26 school rules to a simple 6: attend classes; no drugs or alcohol; no weapons; no gambling; no smoking inside the building; and everyone must be treated "with respect for their dignity, welfare, and material goods." More rigid rules make it impossible to use disciplining situations to teach behavior, because decision-making and flexibility are eliminated in favor of meeting force with force. Maynard states also that each individual should be handled consistently, but this does not require that *all* be handled the same.

Culturally biased educational programs that alienate and humiliate racial and ethnic minorities, refusing to accept their behavior or value standards, can program students to fail. For these students the school makes itself a place of torment. Personalized and responsive teaching methods are the most important measures that can be taken to prevent disciplinary problems.

McClung, Merle. "Alternatives to Disciplinary Exclusion from School." *Inequality in Education*, 20 (July 1975), pp. 58-73. EJ 122 551.

"Alternatives which are developed without sensitivity to a student's individual needs may do more harm than the exclusionary practices they replace." For McClung these potentially harmful substitutes include isolation booths, behavior modifying drugs, and corporal punishment, all of which tend to treat symptoms while ignoring their causes.

McClung argues that to achieve a positive and effective response to behavior problems, "development of the least restrictive alternative should be a guiding principle." When selecting a technique for dealing with an individual situation, an educator must try to interfere as little as possible in the normal life of the student. The options range on a continuum from reasoning patiently with students and using accessible cooling-off rooms to providing professional attention without removing the child from the classroom, or even seeking educational opportunities ouside the regular school.

Alternative programs themselves must be judged in terms of whether they reduce the need for suspensions and promote academic progress and self-discipline in students. Behavior modification programs pose legal and moral questions as well and must be examined closely to rnake sure that their positive results stem from the students' real appreciation of the values of discipline.

In addition to considering problems caused by students, educators should also examine school policies and the attitudes of individual teachers to make sure the school situation itself is not the cause of more problems than it is solving. Expectations may be so high that they bear no relation to the actual range of normal childhood behavior.

The article cites numerous studies and also reports the recommendation of the NEA's Task Force on Corporal Punishment for alternative disciplinary techniques.

Meares, Henry Oneil, and Kittle, Helen Adele. "More Advantages: In-House Suspension." *NASSP Bulletin*, 60, 397 (February 1976), pp. 60-63. EJ 144 088.

The inschool suspension program at the Fisher Campus of Urbana Junior High School remedies several weaknesses found in out-of-school suspensions. While in a special suspension room, students do not miss their usual assignments and continue to have professional supervision. They do not become a problem for the outside community. They can be suspended only for those classes in which they have difficulties, while continuing normally in others. Suspensions do not become a form of vacation.

Students are placed in contact with teachers specially prepared to be aware of their difficulties and perhaps better able to establish personal relationships, and they remain accessible to the counseling staff as well. Parents who are unwilling or unable to become involved with the schools no longer need play a major role in the process. Suspensions can be terminated when they have achieved their purpose, rather than at the end of an arbitrary period. Student records are not marred by official recognition of misconduct. Students do not suffer the humiliation of being excluded from school. And, of course, state ADA funds continue to come into the school.

The expenses involved in the Urbana program are made up for in state aid saved and in reduced law-enforcement and other costs in the outside community.

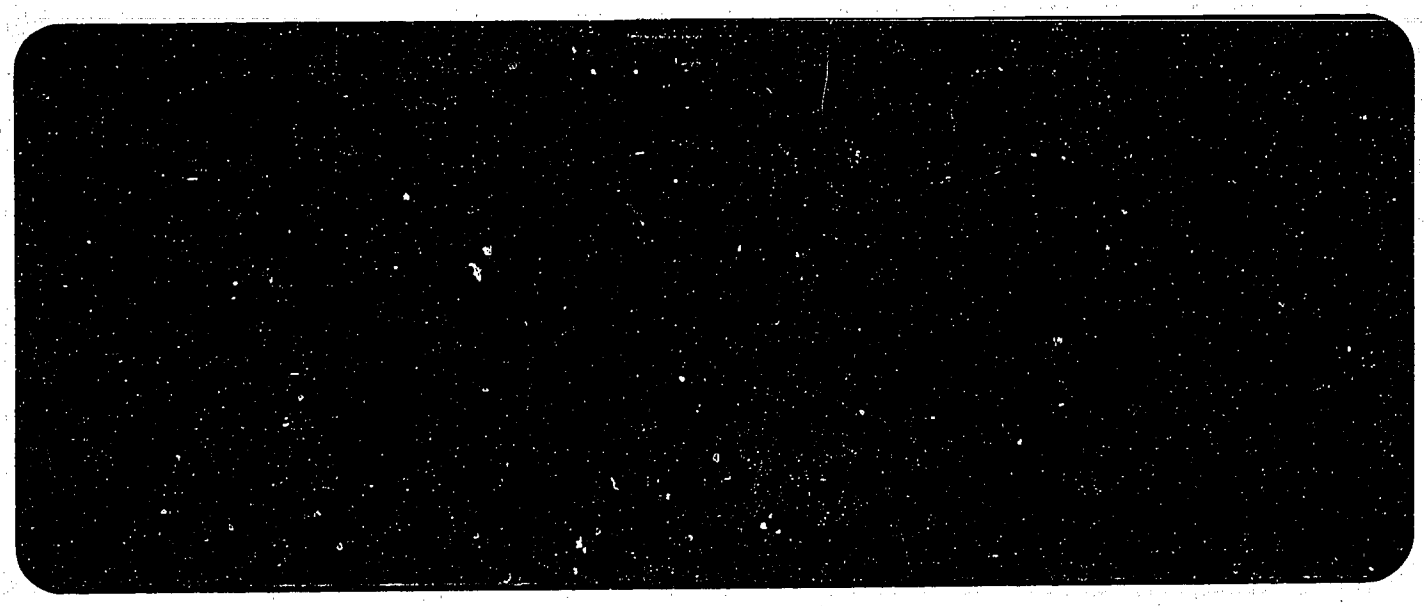
Neill, Shirley Boes. *Suspensions and Expulsions: Current Trends in School Policies and Programs.* Arlington, Virginia: National School Public Relations Association, 1976. 65 pages. ED 127 720.

In addition to providing a full explanation of the legal use of suspensions and expulsions, this report from NSPRA is perhaps the best available description of a variety of alternative disciplinary programs. The capsule descriptions are often accompanied by addresses to write for more information.

One school district assumes that the school shares adjustment problems with the students; it provides full-time alternative schools, transfers to other conventional schools, and part-time education as some ways of easing mutual difficulties. Los Angeles places ten students in each of several special centers that continue to provide personalized support even after the student reenters the regular program. The establishment of "family groups" of eight to ten students who meet for one class period each day is a central element in a Minnesota program that seeks to nurture self-confidence. Low teacher-student ratios and increased personal attention seem to be the major factors in the success of these alternatives.

After-school detention is often used as a warning to those guilty of minor offenses. One district requires students to work on the school grounds, another provides a detention room for study and counseling after hours, and in still a third students discuss their behavior and its causes in group sessions.

Other inschool methods have proved effective as well. The accumulation of demerits by students in a Texas district leads first to the school's contacting the parents, and later to in-school and finally out-of-school suspension. Students remain aware of their exact status at all times. In other districts work programs after school or on Saturdays can replace or add to suspensions. Conference telephone calls allow parents, students, and educators to respond immediately to problems.



One district requires teachers to note on a checklist the steps they have taken to prevent having to refer students for disciplinary action, every time they do refer them. By alerting the teachers to the possible alternatives, the checklist itself helps guard against unnecessary referrals. And in New Jersey, a forcefully expanded athletic and activity program has eliminated racial incidents, built up student morale, and cut back discipline problems greatly.

Counseling techniques include group and individual sessions, peer group meetings that can include those who do not cause discipline problems, and special training sessions for educators and parents as well as for students.

Order copies from National School Public Relations Association, 1801 North Moore Street, Arlington, Virginia 22209. Stock No. 411-13327, $6.75. Payment must accompany orders of less than $8.00
Order MF from EDRS, $0.83.

O'Brien, Diane M. "In-School Suspension: Is It the New Way to Punish Productively?" *American School Board Journal*, 163, 3 (March 1976), pp. 35-37. EJ 132 549.

Rather than giving students a vacation as a reward for misbehavior, several suburban Minneapolis schools place major offenders in a special suspension room for two to five of their school days. There the students are required to do extra schoolwork, in addition to the work assigned in their regular classes, and are excluded from extracurricular activities, pep rallies, and similar functions. Strict rules forbid talking and even define the colors of ink students are to use for different pieces of work. Students write two 500-word essays analyzing themselves and the place they expect to make for themselves in the world, providing a start for later counseling.

The program is proving successful in the blue-collar communities where it is being tried, but may be too strict for children raised in less conservative areas, and too antagonizing to innercity students who desperately need the creative outlet offered by extracurricular activities. In any case, it seems more valuable than the use of at-home suspensions, which merely encourage the behavior they are meant to stop.

Washington Research Project. *School Suspensions: Are They Helping Children? A Report.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Children's Defense Fund, 1975. 270 pages. ED 113 797.

Using data gathered by DHEW's Office of Civil Rights, and supplemental information gathered by themselves, the Children's Defense Fund found that in the 1972-73 school year districts serving a little over half the student population of the United States suspended over one million children, resulting in a loss to the students of over four million school days, or over 22,000 school years. The vast majority of these suspensions were for minor offenses, and only 3 percent involved any form of criminal activity. Black students generally suffered from highly discriminatory treatment. Due process was seldom followed—in fact, parents and children were informed of their rights to a hearing in only 3.4 percent of the cases surveyed.

The report concludes that "the solution to school violence does not lie in more suspensions but less, for its causes are to be found more on the streets, where dropouts, pushouts, and suspended students pass the time among delinquent gangs in arms or drug trade; in the lack of work even when students are trained; and in the rates of illiteracy and its attendant frustration and anger." Using suspensions only when students "pose a direct and serious threat to people or property" is strongly advised, with alternative measures taken for lesser offenses.

The simplest measures can tend to ignore the causes of discipline problems, but if applied conscientiously may have an effect. These include staying after school, going to a school official's office, or transferring into a new class or program. Behavior contracts cost little except time and can impress students as well as permitting them a sense of responsibility. Student ombudsmen, peer group counseling, inschool centers, improved teacher training, work-study programs, and independent alternative schools have all helped reduce suspensions.

The book also contains interviews with educators who have succeeded in reducing or eliminating suspensions in their schools, and substantial background appendixes.

Order copies from Children's Defense Fund, 1746 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138. $4.00.
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