Moving Away from Disproportionate Exclusionary Discipline: Developing and Utilizing a

Continuum of Preventative and Instructional Supports

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Abstract

Ample scientific research has documented that exclusionary discipline practices are both ineffective for reducing unwanted behaviors and harmful to the long-term social and academic outcomes of students. Further, exclusionary discipline practices are especially harmful given their disproportionate use with students of color, students with disabilities, students living in poverty, and students who are struggling academically. To address these issues, the authors describe a process that uses instructional strategies as alternatives to exclusion. These instructional strategies hold promise for reducing the use of disproportionate discipline, improving student behavior and social skills, and strengthening student–teacher relationships.

Keywords: equity, exclusionary discipline, pbis, prevention, student support

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Approaches to school discipline have evolved over time. Examples from generations ago conjure images of "dunce caps" and the writing of sentences on the chalkboard as means of punishing students for engaging in unwanted behaviors. Although such forms of punishment seem antiquated, humiliating, and may be used less frequently today, many schools continue to use other ineffective and damaging strategies when faced with unwanted behaviors in the classroom (Gershoff & Font, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Harmful discipline practices such as the exclusion of students from the learning environment have maintained a stronghold in schools regardless of their ineffectiveness at improving student behavior (Davis & Jordan, 1994; Raffaele Mendez; 2003; Skiba, Chung, Trachok, Baker, Sheya, & Hughes, 2014; Suh & Suh, 2007; Tobin, Sugai, & Colvin, 1996). The history of exclusionary discipline practices as well as research on the detrimental impact of such practices on student outcomes are further detailed, followed by a discussion of instructional strategies as alternatives to exclusion.

Background on Exclusion

The term exclusionary discipline in schools refers to disciplinary measures that remove students from instruction, such as sitting outside of class, in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions. It is difficult to trace the origin of exclusionary discipline practices in education, but the reports of its ineffectiveness and inequity are broad and consistent (Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2015; Fabelo, Thompson, Plotkin, Carmichael, Marchbanks III, & Booth, 2011; Losen & Gillespie, 2012). In 1975, the US Supreme Court ruled that a public school must conduct a hearing before suspending a student, or it violates the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment in the US Constitution (Ellis, 1976). The majority opinion penned by

Justice White argued that a suspension "could seriously damage the students' standing with their fellow pupils and their teachers as well as interfere with later opportunities for higher education and employment," an argument that was based partly on the fact that some colleges in the state asked high schools whether an applying student had ever been suspended (*Goss v Lopez*, 1975, p. 575).

In 1978, The Safe School Study was mandated by Congress to assess crime in schools, its associated material cost for repair, the means being used to prevent crimes in schools, and potential means for more effective crime prevention (National Institute of Education, 1978). The study was based on a mail survey of over 4,000 schools, an onsite survey of 642 schools, and case studies of 10 schools. The study reported that expulsions occurred less frequently than in the past, partly because of laws requiring school systems to provide education to all youth. Suspensions, however, were the most widely used disciplinary procedure, and most prevalent in large cities. The study reported that schools attempt to "handle problems of violence and disruption by removing troublesome youngsters either to special classes or to other schools," (p. 147) largely because of the "inability of the schools to find viable alternatives for dealing with them" (p. 147). Despite the wide-spread use of suspensions, few schools reported that suspensions were effective either as deterrents or as treatments.

In the face of these findings, Congress introduced the Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA) in 1994, as part of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESSA). The GFSA required states to have a law mandating one-year expulsion for weapon possession, and a referral of violating students to the criminal or juvenile justice system. This law has been criticized for being entirely punitive and not at all preventive, and research has overwhelmingly reported that these policies are theoretically flawed, detrimental to students and

schools, and have no evidence to support a reduction in school violence (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Losen, 2013; Mongan & Walker, 2012; Skiba & Knesting, 2001). Specifically, marginalized groups of children are the most likely to suffer the negative consequences of zero tolerance policies, as students of color and students with disabilities disproportionally receive exclusionary discipline practices for low-level, subjective behaviors unrelated to weapons or drugs (Curran, 2019; Skiba & Knesting, 2001).

A report by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice stated that nearly 60% of students were suspended or expelled between Grades 7 and 12 (U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, 2014). These students were nearly three times as likely to be in contact with the juvenile justice system the following year, and Black students were 31% more likely to receive exclusionary discipline than White and Hispanic students (U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, 2014). As a result, the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice announced in 2011 the Supportive School Discipline Initiative to encourage the use of school discipline practices that foster safe, supportive, and productive learning environments that aim to keep students in school. As of 2015, more than 20 states have revised their laws to require or encourage schools to limit the use of exclusionary discipline practices and implement supportive discipline strategies that rely on behavioral interventions (Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017).

In sum, the conclusions of the 1978 Safe School Study about exclusionary discipline remain just as true today. The report states that there is "no evidence in this study that increasing the number of suspensions or expulsions will reduce the amount of crime in schools…however, there is considerable evidence that an active policy of firm, fair, and consistent discipline can reduce it" (p. 148).

Rationale for Moving Away from Exclusion

Decades of research have shown that exclusionary discipline practices are not only ineffective for addressing unwanted student behaviors, but the continued use of such practices are associated with negative social, behavioral, and academic outcomes for students (American Academy of Pediatrics Council on School Health, 2013) such as decreases in school engagement (Dishion & Snyder, 2016), negative impacts on academic progress (Lacoe & Steinberg, 2019), and contributions to inequitable outcomes for underrepresented students (Losen, Ee, Hodson, & Martinez, 2015). These deleterious outcomes are particularly salient regarding out-of-school suspensions and expulsion. However, all forms of exclusionary discipline, including in-school suspensions and referrals that remove students from the classroom, are both detrimental to student outcomes and are applied disproportionality based on student characteristics such race, ethnicity, or disability status (Krezmien, Leone, & Achilles, 2006; Losen, Hodson, Keith, Morrison, & Belway, 2015; McIntosh, Girvan, Horner, & Smolkowski, 2014; Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008).

Negative impact on academic progress. One of the biggest detriments of exclusionary discipline practices is that they remove students from the instructional environment, thus limiting students' access to academic instruction as well as opportunities for social development (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016; U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, 2014). One study showed that the use of a cross-class time-out intervention significantly reduced teacher ratings of unwanted behavior, but also reduced academic achievement amongst the students who were excluded from class (Benner, Nelson, Sanders, & Ralston, 2012). Another study examining academic outcomes for students in Philadelphia found that just one out-of-school suspension decreased math and reading achievement on state testing for suspended students, with students' chances of scoring proficient on the state math exam falling by about 2 percentage points if they

were suspended, and students' test scores fell even further the more days they were suspended (Lacoe & Steinberg, 2019). Similar findings were documented in a study examining test scores among California students (Hwang, 2018). The study also revealed the decline in academic progress that individual students experienced as the number of exclusionary disciplines they received increased, documenting that multiple suspensions were associated with lower math and English language arts achievement even after controlling for differences between students (Hwang, 2018).

As students fall further behind academically, academic tasks may become more difficult which in turn might lead to more unwanted behaviors from students seeking to escape challenging academic responsibilities (Arcia, 2006; Tobin et al., 1996). Over the course of a students' academic career and beyond, the use of exclusionary discipline has been shown to affect grade retention, school dropout rates, and increase the likelihood of adult incarceration (American Academy of Pediatrics Council on School Health, 2013; Fabelo et al., 2011; Noltemeyer, Ward, & Mcloughlin, 2015). Balfanz, Byrnes, and Fox (2015) found that a single out-of-school suspension in ninth grade was associated with a 50% increase in dropping out and a 19% decrease in enrollment in postsecondary education.

Disproportionate use with underrepresented students. Exclusionary discipline contributes to racial inequities in school discipline practice (e.g., Davis & Jordan, 1994; KewelRamani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provasnik, 2007; Skiba et al., 2014; Mattison & Aber, 2007; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Wallace et al., 2008). Students of color, particularly Black students, disproportionately receive more out-of-school suspensions than their White peers (McIntosh et al., 2014). Furthermore, a national study of secondary schools found that while 7% of White students were suspended at least one time, 11% of Hispanic/Latino students, 12% of

American Indian students, and 23% of Black students were suspended (Losen, Hodson, et al., 2015). And while 18% of students with disabilities were suspended, one in five districts in the United States suspended over 50% of its Black male secondary students with disabilities (Losen, Ee, et al., 2015).

Although racial disparities in exclusionary discipline practices have been attributed to variables such as poverty or racial differences in base rates of unwanted student behaviors, multiple empirical studies have shown that race remains a significant predictor of school exclusion, even when controlling for these variables (Anyon et al., 2014; Bradshaw, Mitchell, O'Brennan, & Leaf, 2010; Lee et al., 2011; Wallace et al., 2008). Contrary to the idea that exclusion policies and procedures are "race-neutral," emerging studies are showing that racial disparities in exclusionary discipline may be affected by the influence of implicit bias on disciplinary decision making, particularly related to subjective behaviors such as disrespect and defiance (Skiba et al., 2002; Smolkowski, Girvan, McIntosh, Nese, & Horner, 2016). Other research has reported as much as two-fifths of the variance in the racial achievement gap is attributable to racial differences in suspension rates (Morris & Perry, 2016).

Given the prevalence of exclusionary practices in schools and the detrimental impacts of such practices on student outcomes, it is important that educators be provided with strategies for promoting prosocial skills as well as strategies for responding to unwanted behaviors. One approach to reduce the negative costs associated exclusionary practices is to enhance the use of proactive, instructional approaches across school settings (Lin et al., 2013; Sterling Turner & Watson, 1999). As such, it is valuable to examine instructional practices that facilitate the reduced need for and use of exclusionary discipline practices in schools.

Negative impact on student behavior and school climate. In theory, exclusionary discipline should reduce unwanted behaviors through the principle of punishment (i.e., removing a preferred activity or item from a student in order to decrease the unwanted behavior; Ryan, Sanders, Katsiyannis, & Yell, 2007). To be effective, the use of exclusion requires that the immediate environment be reinforcing for the student (Sterling Turner & Watson, 1999). When the student does not experience the activity or school context as reinforcing, then exclusion from school is less likely to reduce unwanted behaviors. For example, if the school context is perceived as more aversive than a student's home or neighborhood, then exclusion from school may serve to reinforce unwanted behaviors (Maag, 2001). In practice, if a student finds a class assignment aversive, the student may exhibit unwanted behaviors (e.g., disruption) to avoid or escape the activity. Under these circumstances, teacher use of exclusionary practices may be counterproductive and could escalate a student's unwanted behaviors. As such, school personnel need to build strategies to make the classroom and general school environment more positive and reinforcing for students (Ryan et al., 2007). Unfortunately, exclusion can be reinforcing for school staff as well which may in turn create a behavior pattern in which students and teachers are continually reinforced for avoiding each other as well as the classroom activities (Dishion & Snyder, 2016; McIntosh, Horner, Chard, Dickey, & Braun, 2008). Furthermore, the American Psychological Association found that the negative effects of exclusionary discipline impact even the students not being excluded, as schools with high rates of out-of-school suspension have lower school-wide achievement and lower perceptions of school safety by the student body as a whole (American Psychological Association, 2008). In addition, research has found that receipt of out-of-school suspensions is also a significant predictor of future antisocial behavior, even when controlling for individual risk factors (e.g., antisocial behavior, deviant peer group

membership; Hemphill, Toumbourou, Herrenkohl, McMorris, & Catalano, 2006; Lee, Cornell,

Gregory, & Fan, 2011).

What We Can Do: Alternatives to Exclusionary Discipline

The detrimental effects of exclusionary discipline on student outcomes have driven many

stakeholders to begin developing and using instructional and restorative alternatives with the

goals of helping students develop the skills they need to succeed in school while simultaneously

improving their relationships with their teachers and fellow students. This section outlines a few

strategies within a continuum of supports. Strategies include **preventative supports** such as

building relationships with students and using logical and functional responses to unwanted

behaviors in the classroom, as well as **reactive supports** such as implementing graduated

discipline systems where exclusion is reserved for the most concerning behaviors, and using

instructional and restorative alternatives when students are removed from the classroom. The

process by which intervention strategies are layered and intensified within a multi-tiered

framework that includes individualized supports for students with the greatest needs is also

discussed.

Building Relationships

As Delpit proclaimed in her book *Other People's Children* (1995), effective teaching

begins with the establishment of relationships between the teacher and students. Building

relationships with students (e.g., positive climate, teacher sensitivity, regard for student

perspectives) can have a significant and positive effect on decreasing the use of exclusionary and

disproportionate discipline practices. Understanding how to effectively build relationships across

age groups, cultural backgrounds, and student interests can be a daunting task for any educator,

novices in particular. A teacher's capacity to build relationships can be supported through

establishing a safe classroom environment in which students learn how to be respectful and kind to one another. Positive classroom culture is strongly grounded in respectful relationships and student engagement allowing each child an environment of care, calm, support, and respect where they will succeed (Duong et al., 2019; Patrick, Turner, Meyer, & Midgley, 2003).

The relationships teachers build with their students must be made explicit and highlighted at the beginning of the year, and every day after that. Students must clearly understand that their teacher is a real person, one who invests in such practices such as greeting them by name at the door every day or as a group at the start of class. This personal approach to teaching and behavior management is what allows students to trust and learn from their teacher. This approach is supported by Benard (2004) and Henderson and Milstein (1996) as they noted that caring relationships with adults and peers (e.g., teaching social skills, establishing unconditional positive regard, creating a culture of care and respect, consistently providing care and support) serves as a critical feature of positive school environments.

Teachers' ability to build relationships with students extends past their own personal approaches and hinges on the individual relationships students build with each other. This creation of a safe classroom environment must be facilitated and nurtured by the teacher (Duong et al., 2019). Students need opportunities to get to know one another, learn how to be respectful and kind, and practice interacting in a classroom full of diverse thoughts, backgrounds, and individuals. Positive classroom culture is strongly grounded in respectful relationships and student engagement allowing each child an environment of care, calm, support, and respect where he or she will succeed (Patrick, Turner, Meyer, & Midgley, 2003).

Creating a collectivist classroom is one way to empower students to support each other and emphasize the relational aspect of the classroom and school. Collectivism refers to a set of

values where students are taught to be helpful to each other, contribute to the success of the

class, and adhere to group values and norms (Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Trumbull, 1999).

There are many ways to create a classroom environment that embraces student gifts and

challenges; strategies include (a) involving students in group activities, (b) creating a sense of

camaraderie, and (c) using student leadership as a way to model classroom values (Kaur &

Noman, 2015). Figure 1 provides a few examples of how teachers can build relationships with

their students through simple strategies in the classroom.

      Understanding students' backgrounds and building caring classroom communities is the

foundation for reducing exclusionary and disparate behavior management practices. Bondy and

colleagues noted, "The caveat is that the expressed emotions and demonstrations of care must be

genuine, or the students will disregard the teacher's attempt to build a relationship" (2007, pg.

331).

Logical Responses to Student Behavior

      Function-based and logical responses to unwanted student behavior first ensure the safety

of everyone present in the classroom, and then incorporate the function of the behavior. The four

core functions of unwanted behavior identified consistently in the literature are: obtain

something (tangible), avoid something or someone (escape/avoid), obtain attention, and sensory

reinforcement (Carr, 1994; Sugai et al., 2000). Logical approaches to managing unwanted

behavior emphasize the antecedents and consequences of unwanted student behavior. When a

student engages in disruptive behavior, a teacher considers the context of the classroom

immediately prior to the disruption and what typically occurs following such disruption. Perhaps

a new task has been assigned and upon further reflection it is clear that the student engaging in

the disruptive behavior is not sufficiently fluent with the academic repertoire required for this

assignment. If the student has experienced a history of removal from the educational setting

following disruptive behavior, it is quite likely that the function of the behavior is to *avoid* the

assignment. If the teacher proceeds as usual (removing the student from instruction), the

disruptive behavior will be reinforced. If the teacher finds an alternative method of addressing

the behavior that is consistent with the hypothesized function (avoidance), the behavior will be

less likely to occur in the future. If a student engages in disruptive book dropping to avoid a

portion of their English lesson, the response should not include removal of the demands of the

English lesson, but rather supports to both assist the student with the work of the English lesson

and to communicate the need for a break appropriately when the student begins feeling

overwhelmed. Similarly, if a student engages in talk-outs to obtain attention from the teacher, the

response should omit or at least minimize teacher attention. A brief re-direction without eye

contact or a verbal/gestural prompt for the student to raise their hand would provide support and

acknowledgement while minimizing teacher attention. Furthermore, the student who wants

attention can access attention by doing the *right* thing. For example, if a student completes their

assignment quietly, the teacher can announce that the student earned 5 minutes of extra recess for

the whole class. Similarly, if a student engages in unwanted behavior immediately following

removal of a preferred item, and ceases the behavior when the item is made available again, it is

likely that the behavior serves a *tangible* function, which is to say the behavior occurs when the

student wants a particular item. Figure 2 provides a few more examples of logical responses to

unwanted behaviors.

   The essential mindset for adopting a functional or logical approach to managing student

behavior is the notion that behavior communicates students' needs. By interpreting student

behavior as an expression of a student's current unmet needs, we are able to design interventions

that meet these needs and reduce the likelihood of unwanted behavior in the future by teaching students the skills they need to proactively get their needs met in appropriate ways (Cook et al., 2018). When we teach students to communicate their needs in appropriate ways as an integral part of a function-based intervention, we are both ensuring the maximal effectiveness of our intervention efforts and honoring the dignity of the individual we are supporting (Carr & Durand, 1985).

There are a variety of alternatives to removal from the instructional environment in situations that involve escape- or avoidance-maintained behaviors. Teaching a student new skills to request help (in a discreet manner) may be critical for students who avoid types of work with which they have previously experienced failure. Prompting these students to engage in help-seeking behaviors when signs of emotional distress or frustration first begin to appear may be another critical aspect of supporting their success in the classroom.

Function-based Consequences on a Continuum

Disciplinary consequences must be predictable and equitable to be more effective in practice. Specifically, consequences should recognize that students have individual needs that are based on their backgrounds and experiences, thus equitable consequences address the specific needs of each student (Cook et al., 2018; Lashley & Tate, 2009). Further, these consequences should exist on a continuum that is engaged by the teacher based upon the intensity, duration, and frequency of the behavior of the student, and with the hypothesized function of the behavior taken into account. Initial consequences to student misbehavior include strategies like redirection, prompting, restating the expectations, removing distractions, and adjusting teacher proximity to the student. Next level consequences include practices like conferencing, re-teaching, writing an apology letter, loss of privilege, restitution (e.g., clean-up, apology),

removal to a partner classroom to complete work, phone call home, or an office discipline

referral. It is important to keep graduated discipline systems progressively aligned (more

intensive for more intense or chronic behavior), and logical (addressing both the function and the

outcome of the behavior; i.e., an apology for name-calling along with brief re-teaching of

expectations and appropriate ways to engage peers).

Instructional Supports during Classroom Removal

For students who do require a break from the classroom, it is vital that instructional

supports be implemented that target relationship building, behavioral coaching, and academic

remediation. The Inclusive Skill-building Learning Approach (ISLA; Nese, 2016) intervention is

an example of a strategy that specifically addresses the instructional supports necessary for

students to productively leave the classroom and return to class after receiving the necessary

supports. This alternative to exclusionary discipline practices is aimed at improving student

social and behavioral problem-solving, teacher and administrator practices, and student-teacher

relationships while reducing the amount of instructional time lost. In a recent study of the

preliminary pre- and post-impacts of ISLA, participating middle schools saw a 24% reduction in

office discipline referrals, a 92% reduction in the minutes of instruction lost to exclusionary

discipline, and strong effect sizes across all dependent variables including in-school and out-of-

school suspensions, demonstrating that ISLA has the potential to be an effective school-wide

intervention (Nese, Bastable, Gion, Massar, Nese, & McCroskey, in press). Staff members rated

the ISLA intervention favorably, with mean scores for each item on the Primary Intervention

Rating Scale (PIRS; Lane, Robertson, & Wehby, 2002) ranging from 4.89 to 5.70 on a six-point

Likert scale.

The ISLA intervention focuses on systems to support implementation and instructional

supports to build student behavioral skills. ISLA begins with a systems-level perspective that

aims to provide a school-wide approach to prevention and improved school climate. Classroom

practices, such as relationship building, teaching class-wide expectations, and using logical

responses to unwanted behaviors are prioritized in an effort to reduce instances in which

exclusion might have previously been used. These preventative practices are followed by

targeted instructional supports for students in need of further support. These students receive

coaching and support when they exhibit unwanted behavior that requires removal from the

classroom environment. When a student receives a behavioral referral, a process is used to

quickly provide the student with supports and reintroduce them to the classroom. First, a support

staff member conducts a student-guided functional behavioral assessment, allowing for a better

understanding of the problem and the student's perspective on the situation. The staff member

then helps the student identify an appropriate replacement behavior, and more importantly,

practices the behavior with the student. The staff member and student then complete a guided

Reconnection Conversation Card and rehearse the conversation to prepare the student for reentry

back into the classroom. Last, the student is escorted back to class and supported through the

Reconnection Conversation with their teacher. This process was developed to provide immediate

supports to students, to be time efficient, and to provide effective social skills coaching that

targets the development and refinement of positive adaptive behaviors and reinforcement of

prosocial skill use (Botvin, 2000; Chamberlain, 2003; Gresham, 2002). Figure 3 demonstrates

what this model looks like in practice, from the preventative school-wide systems (i.e. building

relationships, graduated and logical responses) that reduce the likelihood that students will be

sent out of class to begin with, to the instructional strategies provided to students when they are in need of further support outside of the classroom.

Using Tiered Supports for Students in Need

The essential logic of multi-tiered systems of support (response to intervention and positive behavior supports) is that generally effective practices must be in place for everyone and that once these base layer supports are effectively implemented, the significant majority of students within a given setting will be successful (e.g., 80%; Sugai et al., 2000). Beyond this base level, additional supports can be layered to more effectively and efficiently support those with greater needs. For those whose behavior does not respond sufficiently to the base level of support, a secondary level is added with increased intensity, but significant attention to efficiency (e.g., group delivery; ~15%). For the small minority (~5%) of students who are still not successful with this level of support, intensive individualized supports are indicated.

Carr et al. (2002) outlined the core features of Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) to include a comprehensive lifestyle change, a lifespan perspective, ecological validity, stakeholder participation, social validity, systems change and multicomponent interventions, emphasis on prevention, flexibility in scientific practices, and multiple theoretical perspectives. The inclusion of these elements as core features is supported by several other papers on the topic of PBS, indicating a reasonable degree of consensus in the field pertaining to how it is defined (Sugai & Horner, 2002; Tincani, 2007). Research on the effectiveness on PBS in schools has been quite thorough, indicating positive outcomes across numerous relevant dependent measures.

School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) is one instance of systemic application of PBS that has garnered a great deal of attention in the research community. It incorporates the same values and key features, but with special emphasis placed

on the usage of a tiered system of support and application of behavioral principles to achieve

desired behavioral outcomes for all school children (Sugai et al., 2000). Applied systematically,

SWPBIS have demonstrated effectiveness reducing unwanted behavior and increasing

appropriate behavior (Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005; Sugai & Horner, 2002;

Warren et al., 2006). Specific improvements documented after just a single year include over

20% reduction in office disciplinary referrals and over 50% reduction in short-term suspensions

(Warren et al., 2006). Further, benefits for the holistic implementation of SWPBIS include

increased instructional time and improved student achievement (Luiselli, et al., 2005; Scott &

Barrett, 2004). Additional documented improvements include reduction of serious unwanted

behaviors (e.g., vandalism, violence), and increased student engagement during instruction

(McCurdy, Mannella, & Eldridge, 2003). Further, the mean number of students meeting "at-risk"

criteria has been shown to decrease following the systematic implementation of SWPBIS (Ervin,

Schaughency, Matthews, Goodman, & McGlinchey, 2007). Last, in an extensive review of the

literature, Sugai & Horner (2002) found that aversive-based systems of behavior management

which exist in many schools have at best short-lived positive outcomes associated with their use,

and do not result in the type of sustaining positive outcomes desired of such systems. By layering

supports across tiers from universal through intensive, educators can meet the varied needs of all

students.

Tier 3 Individualized Supports

For students whose behaviors do not respond to the universal and targeted interventions

provided by the school, individualized plans of support must be developed to ensure that students

are receiving the behavioral programming necessary to move them toward the lower levels of

intervention and prevention. Tier 3 intervention should complement the existing interventions

and strategies that have been working for the student, while adding an additional layer of highly

personalized support.

This level of intervention can include function-based behavioral interventions, explicit

and systematic instruction for the student on the use of replacement behaviors instead of

unwanted behaviors, a change to the environment, or some combination of the above.

Individualized self-management instruction and practice is an example of a way to support

students' unwanted behaviors, while still providing positive reinforcement and academic

engagement opportunities. Teachers can implement this intervention, and classroom peers can

support students who exhibit unwanted behaviors through self-rating reflections and positive

praise. Christensen and colleagues (2004) found that teachers had more time to engage in

instruction when they utilized classroom peers as helpers in a self-management intervention, in

which the peers performed the matching and point-giving portions of the intervention with their

fellow students. This resulted in improved student behavior and decreased teacher involvement

in the intervention.

It is important to note that implementing evidence-based practices at this level requires

collaboration, buy-in, and professional development for school staff and administrators who are

primarily responsible for the delivery of the intervention (Algozzine et al., 2012). In addition, the

student's cultural context should be considered. Customs, routines, and experiences should be

clearly understood before individual programming is implemented. School and community

factors will also play a part when such intensive services are developed and delivered. Parent

involvement has been found to support students' educational and social success (Liew, Kwok,

Chang, Chang, & Yeh, 2014) and decrease the amount of unwanted behaviors observed at school

(El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010). Ensuring that families understand the plan and

intervention, learning family and community histories, and prioritizing language and ethnicity considerations will all help to facilitate a successful Tier 3 intervention.

Conclusion

Moving schools away from using harmful exclusionary discipline practices often takes time and a philosophical shift. Such practices have been deeply embedded in our education systems for generations and can be reinforcing for adults when used in situations where they feel all resources and alternatives have been exhausted. Simply put, change is often difficult. However, educational institutions present the greatest potential for equalizing opportunities and improving outcomes for all students, especially those who have historically received disproportionate exclusionary discipline (Green, Maynard, & Stegenga, 2018). Therefore, it makes sense for schools to prioritize the development and implementation of instructional alternatives to exclusionary practices, given that setting students up for success in school and beyond aligns directly with the goals and missions of almost every school and school district in the United States. The most effective alternatives to exclusion involve reconnecting, reteaching, reinforcing, and rebuilding relationships with students in an effort to increase student engagement, academic achievement, prosocial behaviors, and resiliency. These are skills that will serve our students for the rest of their lives. In order for students to benefit from these skills, they must first have the chance to access positive, predictable, and safe learning environments where they can engage in meaningful instruction and skill development with educational staff as well as peers that truly care about them and their future (Green et al., 2018).

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Modeling	*Teacher*: When I interact with you, I am going to do so in a respectful way, I am going to listen to you, and I am going to encourage you. I also expect you to treat me and your classmates in the same way. That way we can all learn together in a safe and positive classroom. I'm also human and I make mistakes, just like everyone else. And that's ok, we will all just practice owning our mistakes, making amends, and moving on.
Hypotheticals	If a friend said something rude to me, how could I respond? When someone bumps into you in the hall or lunchroom, what are some of the things you could do? If you get a bad grade on a quiz, how could you ask for clarification or help next time?
Choral responses	Repeat after me! I will treat others like I want to be treated!
Humor	If you need a break during class, all you have to do is raise your hand, make eye contact with me, and mouth "get me out of here."
Personal stories	*Teacher*: One thing you are going to notice when you're in my class is that I really like to sing and dance. So don't be alarmed if I hear some music and start hitting the dance floor.

Figure 1. Strategies for Building Relationships

| Function	Instead of…	Try…	Teach…
Escape/Avoid	Sending student out of class	Offering additional help, time to calm down, a shorter assignment to start with until the student builds skill with the required task.	The student to ask for help, self-calming strategies, skills needed to complete assigned work
Teacher Attention	Reprimanding the student verbally	Quietly prompting the student to get your attention in a positive way, avoiding eye contact until appropriate behavior is displayed.	The student to raise their hand
Peer Attention	Reprimanding the student verbally	Prompt the student to repair the peer relationship through apology, re-teach expectations, build in additional partner work time earlier in the day	Initiate peer interactions appropriately, recognize when they are feeling lonely or in need of attention, seek attention appropriately, wait until appropriate times to engage peers
Tangible	Delivering the desired item/activity	Provide an easier segue activity (reading at desk) from a preferred activity (iPad) to the target activity (workbook)	Request desired items/activities appropriately, wait until appropriate times to engage preferred items, perform the target activity with greater fluency

Figure 2. Responding to Student Unwanted Behavior
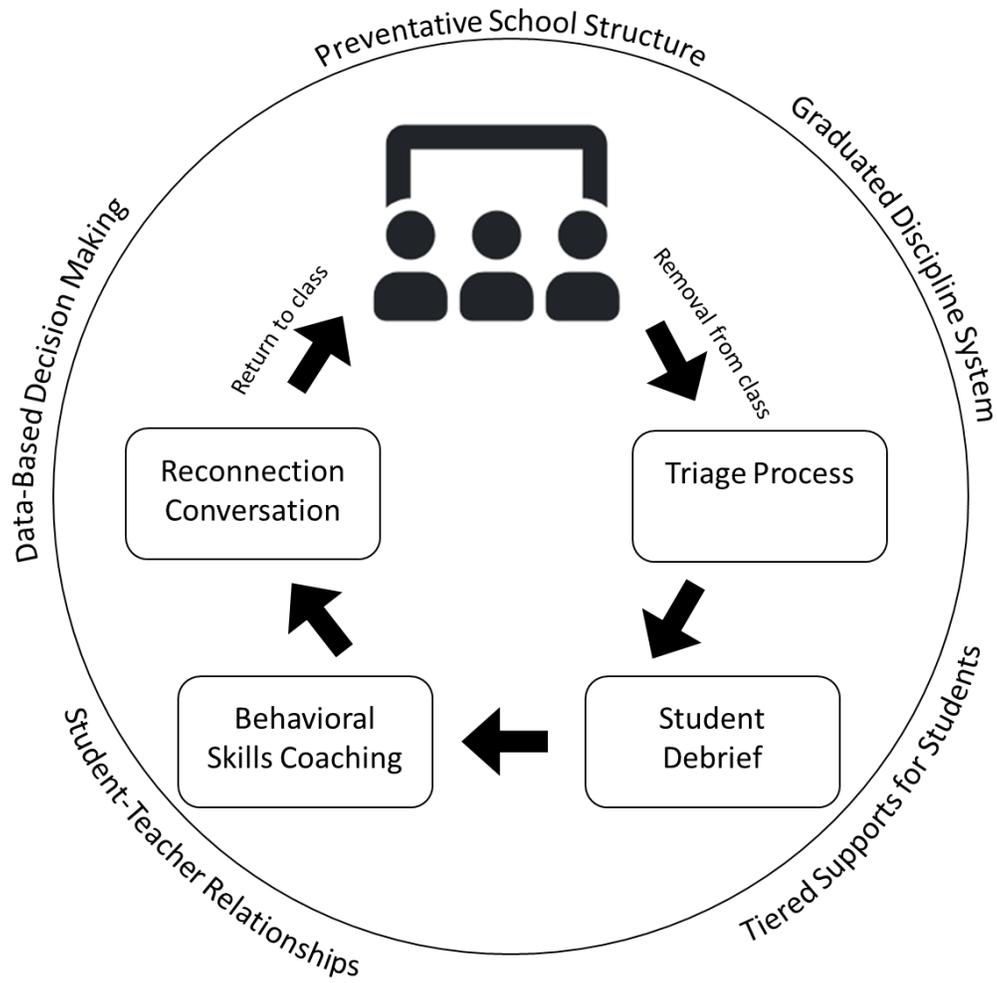
Figure 3. The ISLA Model of Support