

ALTERNATIVES TO SUSPENSION OVERVIEW

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What are our underlying beliefs about students' behavior that allow us to suspend?

Students don't deserve to be here when they act "that way."

Maybe if they're not allowed to come to school they'll appreciate it.

This will teach them a lesson!

Ultimately, we must believe that suspension works.....

Not only is suspension **not helpful
in improving behavior,
(Arcia, 2006; Blomberg, 2004; Brown, 2007),
it can actually **be harmful**.**

Suspension is associated with an increased risk of...

- **Running away from home** (Tyler & Bersani, 2008)
- **Using drugs** (Brown, 2007)
- **Breaking the law** (Brown, 2007)
- **Engaging in sexual activity** (Brown, 2007)
- **Increase in absences** (Yearwood & Abdum-Muhaymin, 2007)
- **Dropping out of school** (Arcia, 2006; Boon, 2008;
Yearwood & Abdum-Muhaymin, 2007)

A light blue graphic of a hand holding a sun is centered in the background. The hand is open, with fingers spread, and the sun is a large, glowing circle behind it. The entire scene is set against a white background with dark blue decorative borders at the top and bottom.

Before we change our practice,
we need to change our **mindset**.

The most effective way to improve behavior is to
teach and reinforce positive behaviors.

Punishment only works if it results in a decrease in the
problem behavior.

And even then, there are many negative effects that
come along with punishment, so it can
potentially cause more problems than it solves.

A CLOSER LOOK AT SUSPENSION

I. Altering the Pathway to Suspension

- How can we first change the environment to better support students' behavioral choices that may alter the pathway leading to suspension altogether?

II. Alternatives to Suspension

- What are some effective alternatives to out-of-school suspension?

III. Suspending More Effectively

- When out-of-school suspension is inevitable, how can we suspend students in a way that might decrease the likelihood that they would be suspended again?

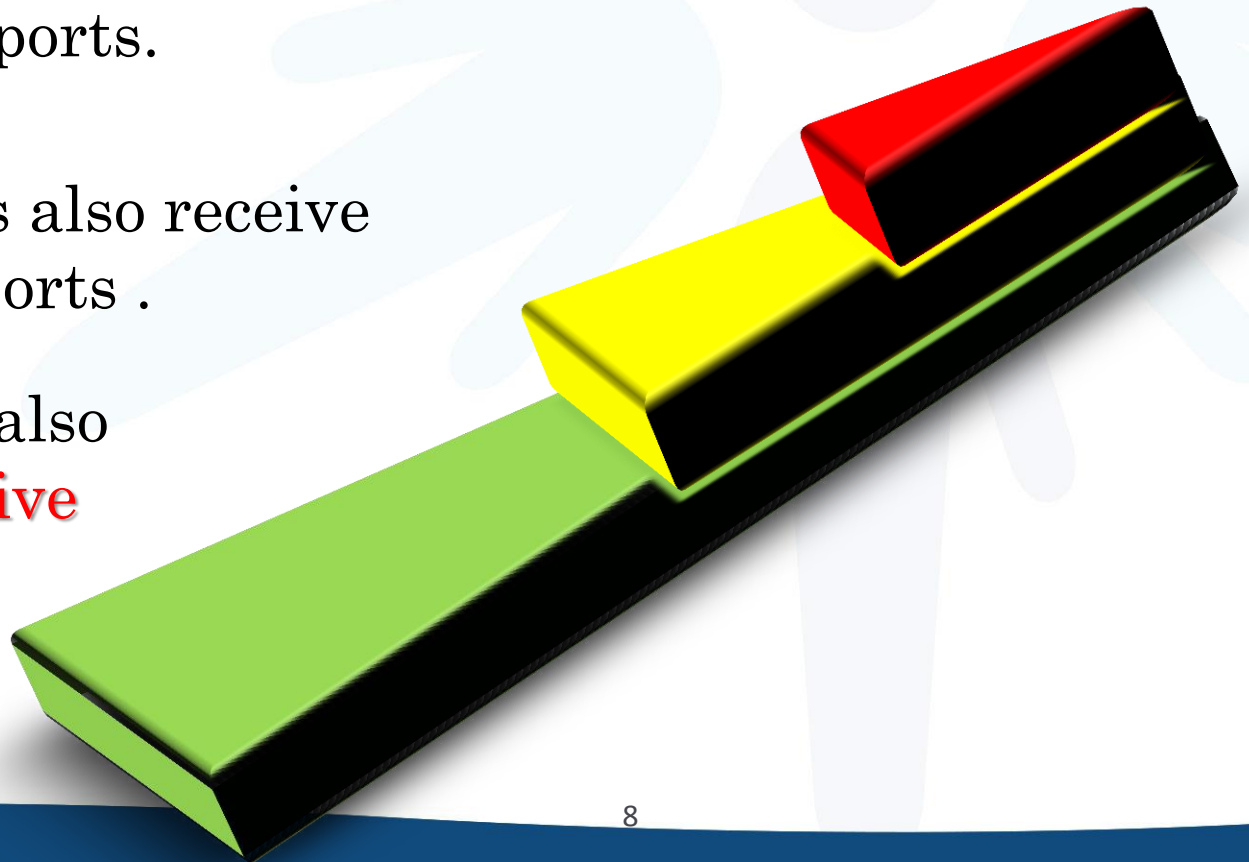
I. Strategies for Altering the Pathway

- Looking at Suspension Through the Lens of a MTSS
- The Power of the Interactive Pathway
- Understanding the Function of Behavior
- Classroom-Based Interventions
- Enhancing Disciplinary Conversations

Altering the Pathway: Multi-tiered System of Supports

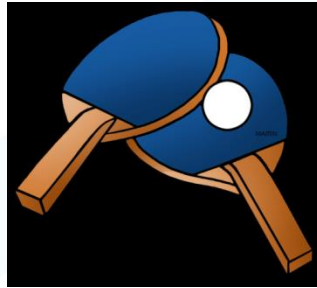
LAYERED CONTINUUM OF SUPPORTS

- Every student receives **Universal** supports.
- Some students also receive **Targeted** supports .
- Few students also receive **Intensive** supports.



Altering the Pathway: The Interactive Pathway

- In ALL challenging behavior situations, there is a series of interactions involving both teacher behaviors and student behaviors.



- For every student behavior that occurs, there is a teacher behavior that follows.

Teacher Response

Prompts student to start working.

Checks work, notes she has not finished, offers to help, tells her to get started.

Tells her she has 10 problems to do and she has only completed 2.

Tells her to take a deep breath and complete the work as not doing it is not an option.

Student Response

Sitting at desk, not working.

Says she has already finished.

Remains firm that she has finished.

Shouts that she has finished and will not do any more problems.



Teacher Response

Directs her to go to the office and nudges her elbow.

Student is sent to the office and then suspended.

Student Response

Pushes book to the floor and stands up.

Swings arm backward, accidentally hitting the teacher.



Within the interactive pathway, there is a series of “my turn, your turn” events.

Student behavior sets the stage for the next teacher behavior, and teacher behavior sets the stage for the next student behavior. BUT.....

What if the teacher didn't take a turn?

REMEMBER ...

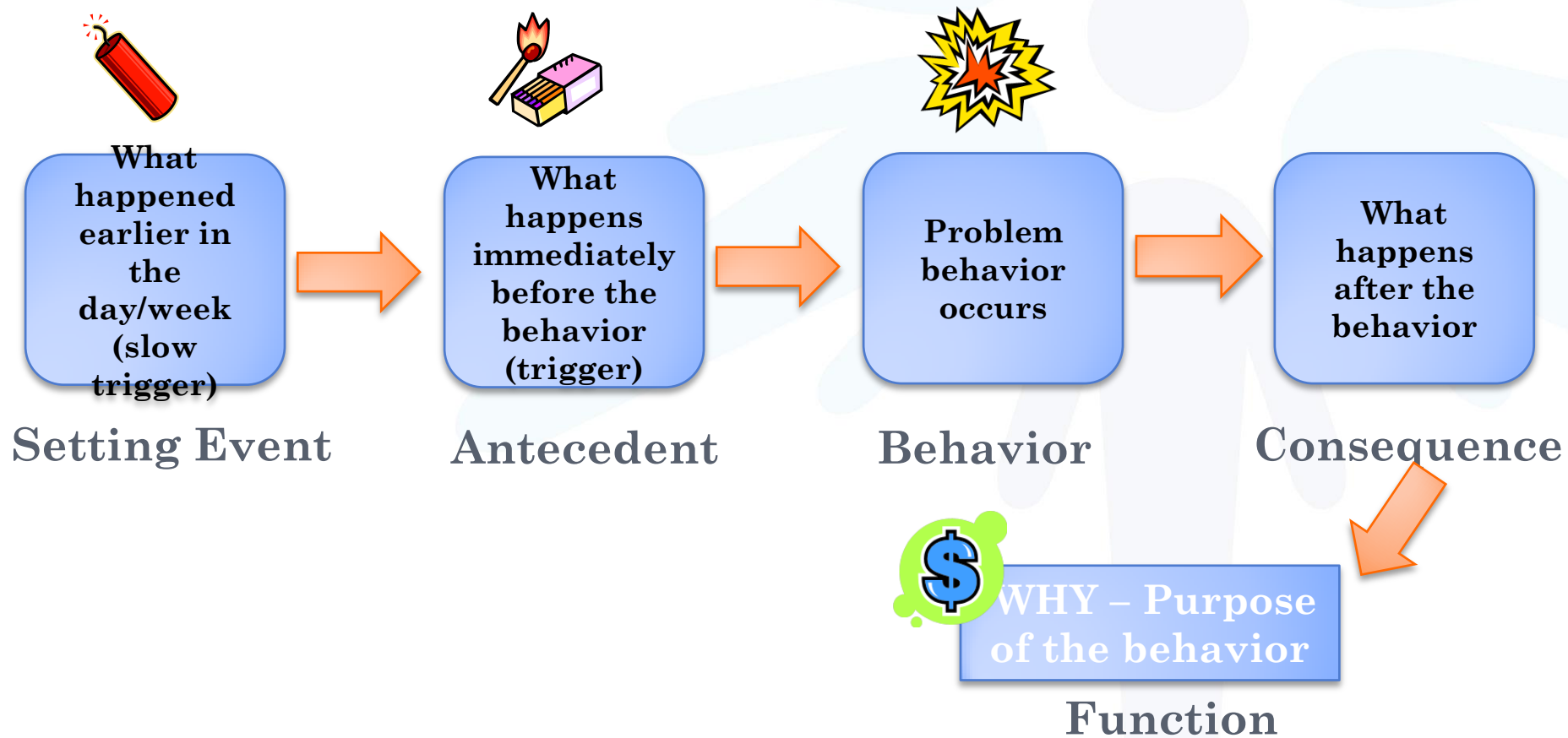
- **Situations can be escalated or defused depending on the kind of response the teacher makes.**
- **If the teacher's initial response to the student's first behavior in the chain is changed, then the interaction pathway may not even begin!**

Altering the Pathway: Understanding Function of Behavior

We cannot consider consequences unless we consider function of behavior!

Get/Obtain Something	Escape/Avoid Something
Social	Social
Tangible/Activity	Tangible/Activity
Stimulation/Sensory	Stimulation/Sensory

THINKING ALONG THE BEHAVIOR CHAIN



Function: The Missing Piece

Why?



Why?

If a student repeatedly engages in some behavior, there is a payoff; it serves a function. In order to solve the puzzle, we must identify the function as well as the consequences maintaining it.

Altering the Pathway: Classroom-Based Interventions

COLLABORATIVE AND PROACTIVE SOLUTIONS

- Provides an understanding of kids' behavioral challenges through a **non-adversarial** approach for reducing challenging behavior.
- Challenging behavior is best understood as the result of lagging cognitive skills.
- Adult and child brainstorm solutions to arrive at a plan of action that they both agree on.



Altering the Pathway: Enhancing Disciplinary Conversations

Instead of ...

- What'd you do?
- Why'd you do that?
- Why did you get sent down here?
- What could you have done differently?

**It's all in how
you ask the
question.**

Try ...

- Tell me what happened.
- What were you thinking at the time?
- What do you think about it now?
- Who did this affect?
- What do you need to do about it?
- How can we make sure this doesn't happen again?
- What can I do to help you?

II. Alternatives to Suspension

- In-School Disciplinary Alternatives

- Mini Courses
- Skills Groups
- Service Learning

Teaching

- Restitution
- Restorative Practices

Accountability

IN-SCHOOL DISCIPLINARY ALTERNATIVES

Classes Only

Hallway Restriction

Friday or Saturday school

3 additional hours manned by administrator

Detention Options

May reduce skipped detentions

In-school Suspension

Effectiveness dependent on how it's implemented



MINI COURSES

- **Develop short self-standing units or modules on topics related to various types of inappropriate behavior.**
- **Could include readings, videos, workbooks, tests and oral reports.**
- **Focus on topics from inappropriate language, sexual harassment, alcohol/drug use, conflict resolution, social skill development, etc.**



SKILLS GROUPS

"Kids want to do well, and are lacking the skills to get there."

- Casey O'Rourke

- Require students to attend group sessions with the school social worker or school counselor on topic related to skill deficit as consequence for non-violent offense (or in addition). The key here is to **progress monitor!**
- i.e. self-regulation, organization, conflict resolution, coping skills, social skills, responsible decision-making.

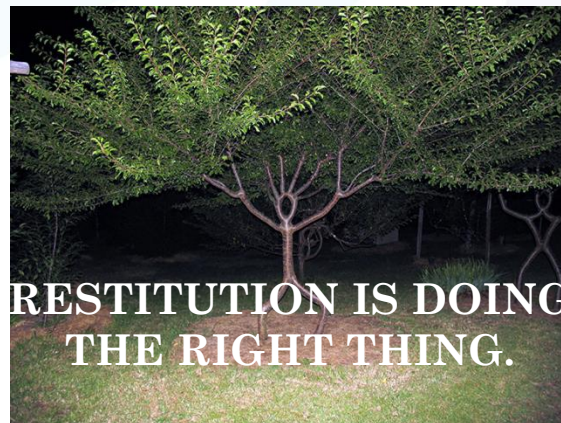
SERVICE LEARNING

- **Students are assigned service learning tasks with appropriate supervision outside of school hours in helping programs or agencies.**
- **This may assist in strengthening ties with the community, and developing positive relationships between students and other adults.**
- **Students link their service to one of the school's expectations and present on the outcomes.**



RESTITUTION

- Restitution involves “setting things right” and is typically geared to the nature of the offense.
 - Financial or “in-kind”
- Find a work task that is logical for the incident (e.g. shoveling snow for throwing snowballs or cleaning the walls for doing graffiti).



RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

- A framework for building community and for responding to challenging behavior through authentic dialogue, coming to understanding, and making things right.



- The Restorative Practices movement seeks to develop good relationships and restore a sense of community.

Traditional Approach	Restorative Approach
School rules are broken.	People and relationships are harmed.
Justice focuses on establishing guilt.	Justice identifies need and responsibility.
Accountability = punishment,	Accountability = understanding impact and repairing harm.
Justice directed at the offender; victim is ignored.	Offender, victim, and school all have direct roles in the justice process.
Rules and intent outweigh whether outcome is positive or negative.	Offender is responsible for harmful behavior, repairing harm and working toward positive outcomes.
Limited opportunity for expressing remorse or making amends.	Opportunity given to make amends and express remorse.

TYPES OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

- Informal Restorative Practices
 - Circle Process
 - Restorative Justice
- Formal Restorative Conferencing
- Family and Group Decision-Making



III. Suspending More Effectively

- Parent Supervision
- Academic Work/Support
- Counseling Option
- Pairing Suspension with Teaching and/or Restitution
- Creating Re-entry Plan

A large, light blue, stylized graphic of a sun with rays and a central figure, possibly representing a person or a community, is centered in the background. The sun's rays are represented by several curved lines radiating from a central circle. The central figure is a simple, rounded shape with two arms and two legs, suggesting a person or a community member. The entire graphic is rendered in a light blue color and is semi-transparent, allowing the text to be clearly visible over it.

For more detailed information on these and other alternatives to suspension, visit:

<http://k12engagement.unl.edu/>

The background features a stylized illustration of several hands in various shades of light blue, arranged in a circle to hold a large, glowing sun. The sun is composed of radiating lines and a central circle. The entire scene is set against a white background with dark blue horizontal bars at the top and bottom.

thank you!

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