

Advocacy for Alternatives to Suspension and Expulsion

**DPI Panel Participant
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Objectives

- **Learn to more effectively (& objectively) manage the emotionally charged issue of student suspension and expulsion**
- **Gain an understanding of, as well as a model of intervention for, including all community stakeholders in facilitating the change from zero tolerance to continuing student engagement**

Research – Evidence

Does the literature support the need for and effectiveness of zero tolerance suspensions and expulsions?

- **Higher rates of out of school suspensions are associated with a poorer school climate, higher drop-out rates, and lower achievement**
- **Despite claims that zero tolerance sends an important deterrent message to students, there is no credible evidence documenting such**
- **Regardless of demographic factors, schools with higher rates of out of school suspension have lower average passing rates in standardized achievement tests**
- **Violence and disruption are important concerns that must be addressed, but there is no evidence that violence in America's public schools is worsening**
- **Disproportionality issues are paramount: African Americans are four times more likely to be suspended and about two and one half times likely to be expelled when compared to Whites. Hispanics are about twice as likely to be suspended or expelled as Whites.**
- **A wide-range of alternatives to zero tolerance have emerged to promote productive learning environments and address disruptive behavior**

Are Public Schools Disciplinary Practices “Out of Touch”?

- **A Public Health Approach—American Academy of Pediatrics and American Psychological Association**
With the rise in the number of suspensions and expulsions, The American Academy of Pediatrics has issued a policy statement to all Pediatricians highlighting suspension and expulsion as jeopardizing children’s health and safety.
- **American Bar Association**
Challenging “one punishment fits all”, without consideration of specifics of each case --- and “Pipeline to Prison” Civil Rights Research Project

One State to Watch For: Connecticut

- In 2007, Connecticut passed a law requiring that suspensions be served in school –rather than out of school – unless the “pupil being suspended poses such a danger to persons or property or such a disruption of the educational process that the pupil shall be excluded from school during the period of suspension”. Goes into effect July of 2009. Per their research, the majority (61%) of suspensions are School Policy Violations, and only 39% “Serious Disciplinary Offenses”.
- Reactions from our own DPI audience Consultants....will WI ever go that far?

Stages and Steps to Guide Thinking about Systemic Change

- 1) Intention --Vision – Mobilizing Interest,
- 2) Policy Commitment – Board & Administrative Support,
- 3) Leadership Designation –Training stakeholders –Breaking Down Interdepartmental Walls,
- 4) Resources – Funds,
- 5) Implementation,
- 6) Accountability – Celebration of Results – Creative Renewal

And, finally, Required: “A Change of Attitude Toward Discipline”

Refer to LRP Publication *Reduction of School Violence, Alternatives to Suspension*, 2nd Chapter, 4th Edition 2007. A reflective piece, guiding teachers and administrators toward a view of discipline as a teaching opportunity. Getting back to the heart of it all, the word ‘discipline’ comes from the Greek ‘to guide and to teach’.....

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