Traditionally, punitive responses to school misbehavior have included verbal reprimands, corporal punishment, detention, in-school suspension (ISS), out-of-school suspension (OSS), and fines (Allman & Slate, 2011). Schools began searching for alternatives to OSS following backlash in the 1970s and 1980s when the Children's Defense Fund found that public schools were unjustly suspending students (Morris & Howard, 2003). The defense fund report recommended the use of "in-school centers" so suspended students could still access education (Morris & Howard, 2003). Historically, in-school suspension was created in order to "secure the safety of other students, while simultaneously disciplining and assisting the youth suspended in learning positive alternatives and continuing academic training" (Rogers, 2012, p. 1).
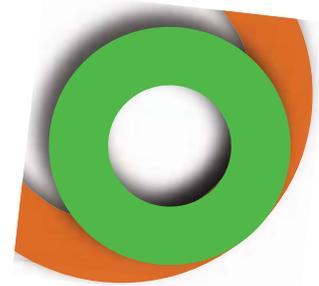
Tier 2 & 3 Intervention

What is In-School Suspension?

Use With Caution- Easily Misused

When a student violates a school's code of conduct, that student may be placed in a designated location (the in-school suspension room) and is removed from their normal school schedule and activities for a specified period of time. The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights defines (2011) "In-school suspension" as:

Instances in which a child is temporarily removed from his or her regular classroom(s) for at least half a day but remains under the direct supervision of school personnel. Direct supervision means school personnel are physically in the same location as students under their supervision. (pp. 6-7)

In-school suspensions are often utilized for students who have violated a school rule, but have not engaged in serious disruption or endangerment, and have minimal history of problematic behavior (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2010). Out-of-school suspension is often reserved for more serious offences or for repeat offences. ISS is often considered a mechanism for removing disruptive students from the traditional classroom while allowing them to stay in school where they can complete academic assignments (Dickinson & Miller, 2006).

Typical Goals for In-School Suspension

The goal of in-school suspension is to remediate behavioral concerns while also working to reconnect students to their traditional classroom (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2010). ISS may also function to ensure that students are present at school and help them

receive credit for any assignments they complete while in ISS (Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, 2010).

Out-of-school suspension can be viewed by students as a day off from school. Clearly that does not promote appropriate student behavior or prosocial skills, and produces little improvement in a student's problem behaviors (Allman & Slate, 2011; Dickinson & Miller, 2006; see the Strategy Brief on Suspension). On the other hand, in-school suspension has been designed so that students are held accountable for their behavior in a supervised environment, and do not receive a day off from school due to noncompliance (Allman & Slate, 2011; Rogers, 2012). ISS is not intended to be a long-term replacement for a student's regularly scheduled class (Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, 2004). Instead, ISS has been broadly defined as "a program to which a student is assigned because of disruptive behavior for a specific amount of time" (Morris & Howard, 2003, p. 156; Sheets, 1996, p. 87).

Models of In-School Suspension

Perspectives on ISS range from punitive (i.e., punishment will reduce misbehavior) to academic (i.e., students' academics and corresponding disruptive behaviors will improve with basic skill instruction) to therapeutic (i.e., students' behavior problems will be reduced through counseling, monitoring, and mentoring), with the punitive model being the most frequently employed today (Allman & Slate, 2011; Morris & Howard, 2003).

Punitive. Unfortunately, in some schools where staff have a primarily retributive or punitive attitude, suspension may be viewed simply as a kind of "jail" within the school, where students put in "time" for their misbehavior. Su-

Photo credit: In school suspension for teachers! 20 in-school suspension tips. August 23, 2013. Ihttp://issforteachers.edublogs.org/

pervision is intended to keep students quiet and not able to disrupt the other activities going on in school. The punitive model is characterized by a brief sentence (e.g., 2-10 days), strict rules, and lack of privileges (Morris & Howard, 2003). Such an approach has little likelihood of either changing the student behavior, or contributing to a positive school environment.

Academic. Within the academic model, "academic skills are measured and progress is monitored towards learning goals, individual instruction in basic skills is provided, and the ISS teacher is trained in diagnosing learning difficulties and basic skills instruction" (Morris & Howard, 2003, p. 157). The focus in this model is on remedial instruction to address learning gaps and problems, and to insure that the student does not fall behind classmates, and is prepared to be effective when the student returns to his or her regular classroom once ISS is completed.

Therapeutic. Lastly, goals of the therapeutic model can include enhancement of student social skills, problem-solving skills, and behavioral skills (Morris & Howard, 2003). Skill targets may also include brainstorming alternatives to problem behaviors (Morrison, Anthony, Sto-

rino, & Dillon, 2001). Further, some researchers advocate for a cognitive-behavioral approach to ISS, which involves working with students to restructure maladaptive thoughts in order to increase prosocial behaviors (Rogers, 2012). Rogers (2012) also argues that the objectives of ISS should include an opportunity for students to complete or make up academic assignments, discuss behavioral health concerns, increase conflict resolution skills, and increase student engagement or affiliation with the school. Gootman (1998) also suggests that teachers should develop mentoring relationships with students while they are in ISS that can transfer to supportive relationships once students leave the ISS setting and are integrated back into the classroom.

Sheets (1996) put forth an individualized ISS framework that suggests behavior problems may be the result of a variety of factors, and a combined ISS model that most appropriately fits a particular student's needs should be considered. In order to best determine the most appropriate ISS model for individual students, Sheets (1996) recommends an evaluation of student needs, behavior, and motivations of past misbehavior.

Concerns Related to In-School Suspension

Frequent criticisms of ISS include that students miss out on instructional time, that they do not receive remedial instruction, and that it negatively affects student self-esteem. ISS is associated with school dropout (Allman & Slate, 2011). There has also been concern from scholars that students who receive punitive consequences through zero-tolerance practices (which is most often focused on expulsion or out-of-school suspension, but could include ISS) are more likely to be subsequently involved in the court system. This has been described as the "School to Prison Pipeline" (Kim, Losen, & Hewitt, 2010).

Dickinson and Miller (2006) state that designing an ISS program that is psychologically appropriate, as well as cognizant of the legal protections required for students with disabilities, is a difficult endeavor. However, ISS programs that aim to be non-punitive and more than a temporary holding room for students must incorporate these psychological, legal, and academic considerations. Above all, ISS should not be used as a way for students to avoid attending their regular classes (Peterson, 2005).

Although keeping students at school for minor infractions is safer and more productive than leaving them at home unsupervised (Rogers, 2012), ISS is not likely to be successful if it only includes its minimum components. Those minimum components are placement of students in a separate classroom away from peers and the regular education environment, supervision by a certified teacher or educational assistant, the ISS classroom, and lunch in isolation (Allman & Slate, 2011). Instead, it is recommended that ISS be structurally implemented as a learning environment for students who are being held accountable for misbehavior in the classroom.

Photo credit: In school suspension for teachers! 20 in-school suspension tips. August 23, 2013. http://issforteachers.edublogs.org/

What Do We Know About In-School Suspension?

Although ISS was designed in order to facilitate academic and behavioral improvements over out of school suspension, much of the research on ISS is conflated with the punitive model of out of school suspension (Haley & Watson, 2000). Empirical research shows that school suspension generally has been linked with school dropout (Hemphill et al., 2012), crime and delinquency (Costenbader & Markson, 1998), substance use (Hemphill et al., 2012), and alienation and isolation (Haley & Watson, 2000). Even more saliently, suspension from school has been associated with higher rates of antisocial behavior and subsequent suspensions (Hemphill et al., 2012). While most of the data on suspension is for out-of-school suspension and often does not provide data specifically for in-school suspension, a presumption is that the in-school suspension outcomes are related to, if not the same as, those for out-of-school suspension. More research may be needed to verify or refute this expectation.

Disproportionality. Disproportionality is also present in suspension practices. Students with disabilities, male students, and students who are racial or ethnic minorities, particularly African American, have been known for some time to be suspended or expelled from school at significantly higher rates than their peers (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2010; Costenbader & Markson, 1998; Mayhew, 2011; Skiba & Rausch, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Low-income students, youth in foster care, and English language learners may also be disproportion-

ally affected by exclusionary discipline practices. Many students fall into more than one of these groups, highlighting the cumulative effect of these institutional policies (Kim et al., 2010). In the past, detailed data were not often gathered about either in-school or out-of-school suspension by gender, race, or disability; these data are now being gathered by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (2014).

Research specific to in-school suspension. Most suspensions, particularly ISS, are issued for low-level offenses, such as disrespect, insubordination, and disruptions rather than for the use of dangerous substances or violence (Mayhew, 2011). Some research has suggested that at least half (52%) of students receiving ISS have had previous office discipline referral issues, and that about a quarter (27%) have been previously suspended, calling into question the effectiveness of the intervention in reducing student behavior problems (Morrison et al., 2001).

Specific components of ineffective programs include academic assignments not coming with students to ISS, lack of emphasis on behavior correction, and minimal follow-up or monitoring that allows students to continue misbehavior (Hrbak & Settles, n.d.). In addition, the questionable efficacy of ISS has been shown in several research studies. In a sample of suspended students, 32% reported that suspension was "not at all helpful" and they would "probably be suspended again" (Costenbader & Markson, 1998, p. 59). Moreover, Tardieu (2010) reported that ISS had no significant effects on the academic grades, attendance, or behavior of students participating in suspension. In his book on school safety and discipline, Kupchik (2010) provides an equally negative perspective on ISS. He notes that some students are sent there for only one period after being removed from a class, while others stay there for a number of days. This lack of consistency leads to many students listening to music and surfing the Internet without working on academic or behavioral goals. Other schools take a more militant approach to ISS and staff it with security guards and require students to be silent throughout the period (Kupchik, 2010).

In contrast, Haley and Watson (2000) created an ISS program for 222 middle school students that demonstrated promising results and positive changes in behavior. This program emphasized providing writing support for suspended students, focusing on students' strengths, and encouraging the ISS instructor to be a cooperative facilitator rather than using an authoritarian style. This practice involved students completing writing prompts related to the events that preceded their involvement with ISS. Although these preliminary results are positive, an ISS program with a specific emphasis on writing may be difficult to generalize across schools without the materials and staff to provide the necessary support.

Another school district in Arizona has also reframed ISS by vowing to keep their most troubled students in class. The school district has eliminated suspensions except for those students who carry drugs or engage in violent fights (Creno, 2014). Further, rather than delivering OSS or ISS for more severe offenses, the district has created a 4-hour after school program for these students to attend. Although the program consists mostly of homework activities rather than skill instruction or problem-solving, the district has reduced suspensions by 50% while still providing academic instruction to troubled students. Progressive programming, such as programming used by these schools in Arizona, often develops slowly and stems from higher-order changes that aim to eliminate exclusionary discipline and implement an approach consistent with positive behavior interventions and supports (Creno, 2014; see the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports Strategy Brief).

In a large-scale report prepared for the Department of Education and conducted by the United States General Accounting Office, Shaul (2003) reported that services offered within ISS programs varied greatly between school districts. Within the three states that the office surveyed, some school districts offered counseling, tutoring, and six hours of instruction per day to suspended students; while other districts offered no instruction. Other districts provided "academic packets" composed of the work that students

in ISS were missing in their regular education courses. Similarly, only 1/3 of the school districts that responded to the survey provided reintegration services for students with disabilities to transition back into their classrooms. ISS instructor qualifications ranged from fully certified to uncertified. The Connecticut State Department of Education (2010) recommends that ISS instructors should not only build supportive relationships with students, but also serve as a liaison to school administration, communicate with parents, collect data on the use of ISS, and maintain these records accordingly. Additionally, it has been proposed that other school staff also lead ISS instruction, so that students are exposed to certified teachers in the core content areas, social services, and counseling services.

Given the large amount of variability in ISS programming, several researchers have suggested that the ISS experience needs to be more corrective than punitive and involve some form of direct counseling (Hrbak & Settles, n.d.; Morris & Howard, 2003). Hrbak & Settles (n.d.) particularly advocate for the use of problem-solving worksheets and interactive activities. These types of therapeutic interventions may be especially important given that students who are frequently in ISS tend to feel less concern for others, are less optimistic, and are more likely to have friends that do not value school (Morrison et al., 2001).

ISS and Students with Disabilities

Providing discipline for students with disabilities is quite challenging for teachers and administration, particularly keeping in mind the legal protections afforded to these students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA; Peterson, 2005). Students with disabilities (i.e., those in special education with an Individualized Education Plan [IEP]) cannot be suspended or removed from school for more than ten days during the school year. Removing a student from the educational environment for less than ten days does not require a manifestation meeting or a functional behavior assessment (FBA). If the student receives an OSS for longer than the 10-day duration, a mani-

festation meeting must be held to determine if the behavior infraction was caused or related to the student's disability (Dickinson & Miller, 2006). If the team determines that the behavior was related to the disability, then the student cannot be suspended for more than ten days. Yet, if it is decided that the misbehavior was not associated with the student's disability, then the student may be suspended in the same manner as a regular education student.

During this time, however, the school or district must still provide educational services to the student in special education so that he or she can make progress towards IEP goals (Dickinson & Miller, 2006). ISS is not considered be an equivalent to a day of OSS and thus count towards the ten day limit, as long as students continue to receive services consistent with their IEP goals, are able to progress in the curriculum, and have the opportunity to interact with non-disabled peers in the least restrictive environment (Shaul, 2003). Exclusion from the classroom for a few days interrupts children's educational learning and misbehavior may increase in an unstructured environment (Kim et al., 2010); therefore, consistent and structured service delivery in ISS is essential. Since it has been found that the quality of instruction in ISS varies by school, Shaul (2003) recommends that schools should review the disciplinary components of IDEA in order to maximize services received in ISS for students with disabilities, and to insure that it complies with legal responsibilities.

In-school suspension and out of school suspension placements may not always be appropriate for students with disabilities (Dickinson & Miller, 2006). Students who are already strug-

gling are not likely to benefit from classroom removal. When students in special education are placed in ISS programs, schools are required to provide adequate instruction that is comparable to traditional classrooms in order to be congruent with IDEA as well as the students' IEP and 504 plans (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2010). Ultimately, ISS should be used for more severe cases and data should be collected on these practices to ensure that ISS is not being delivered inconsistently or disproportionately to already at-risk students (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Implementing an Effective ISS Program

Given the concerns identified earlier, it is important that a detailed log of student participation in ISS be kept which indicates the dates and time of their attendance in the ISS environment. The records should indicate the nature of the offense that resulted in the in-school suspension, as well as the person who assigned the in-school suspension. Ideally, there should also be an indication of the activities the student engaged in during the ISS and any problem solving, remediation or therapeutic plans that were implemented for the student.

In order for an ISS program to be deemed effective, it must target students' academic and behavioral needs, particularly since students suspended in-school often struggle in both domains. Components of a successful ISS program include:
- A mission statement and include all staff members in the decision making process (Sheets, 1996).
- Methods for ensuring that ISS is appropriate (e.g., ISS is not likely to address or improve truancy problems or homework completion problems; Rogers, 2012).
- A reasonable time limit; students should not be suspended indefinitely.
- A suitable setting or location such as a classroom. If a standard classroom is not available, students may be sent to a similar ISS program in a neighboring school (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2010).

- Problem-solving, social skills training, and/or mediation (including peer mediation) between students and teachers should be offered during ISS. Ideally, these problem-solving sessions will result in written contracts that identify agreements and expectations for future behavior (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2010; Peterson, 2005).
- Individual sessions with the child that also include instruction on self-image and conflict resolution (Morris & Howard, 2003).
- If appropriate, a functional assessment by school personnel of the students inappropriate behavior and the development of an individualized behavior change plan.
- Professional, skilled teachers/monitors that may be able to assist with homework, assess for learning problems, refer students to community resources, enforce school rules and policies, and communicate with parents and teachers (Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, 2004). The ISS monitor should be a supportive resource for students (Dickinson & Miller, 2006; Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, 2004; Morris & Howard, 2003; Rogers, 2012; Sheets, 1996).
- Low staff-to-student ratios that allow for teachers to provide individualized assistance to students (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2010; Hrbak & Settles, n.d.).
- Monitoring of student academic progress in the form of tutoring (Peterson, 2005), and the ISS teacher being responsible for meeting with the classroom teacher and student (Morris & Howard, 2003).

Similarly, optional activities may include:
- Having students draft apology letters.
- School service activities (e.g., cleaning up the hallways or school yard).
- Utilizing an evidence-based conflict resolution or anger management program (Hrbak & Settles, n.d.).
- Referring students to individual counseling sessions (Morris & Howard, 2003).
- Guest speakers to address areas in which youth are struggling.
- Provide academic tutoring by teachers or other peers (Rogers, 2012).

- Grouping students by grade level or academic need (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2010).

Conclusion

According to Dickinson and Miller (2006), "no ISS program, or any other discipline program, will be longitudinally effective until educators help students get to the basis of their behavior problems" (p. 80). This notion is reflected in the delivery of ISS in a manner that emphasizes therapeutic and academic goals that relate to the function of students' behavior problems. The research outlined in this brief has suggested that depending on the mode of delivery, there is great variability in the practices and outcomes associated with ISS. In order to diminish the need for assignments to ISS (or other disciplinary options), the U.S. Department of Education recently authored a report urging for the adoption of interventions and tools that lead to a positive school climate, the use of clear, consistent behavioral expectations, and data collection and analysis to evaluate progress (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Additionally, these goals can be met through the use of several other evidence-based interventions, including parent engagement, restitution, behavior contracting, behavior monitoring, and conflict de-escalation in lieu of in-school or out-of-school suspension (Peterson, 2005).

Recommended Citation

See related Strategy Briefs: Suspension; Expulsion; Punishment; Zero Tolerance.

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