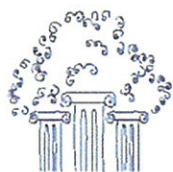


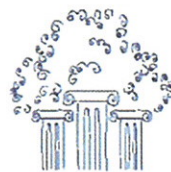
# Keep Kids in School



## Improving School Discipline



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# Keep Kids in School: Improving School Discipline

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## **KEEP KIDS IN SCHOOL: IMPROVING SCHOOL DISCIPLINE FINAL REPORT**

### **I. INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Connecticut Appleseed is a statewide, non-partisan 501(c)3 organization that works to help make systemic changes in the delivery of services to enhance social and economic justice in our state. We mobilize the skills and resources of pro bono lawyers and other professionals to improve access to education, health care, financial and other services for broad segments of the population.

Consistent with that purpose, this report reviews successful “best practice” disciplinary interventions and cost-effective in-school suspension techniques, revealed by our interviews with school districts, that could be brought to scale across Connecticut’s school districts. It includes 2009-2010 data on school discipline from the Connecticut State Department of Education (“SDE”) which confirms the encouraging trend away from out-of-school suspension and toward in-school suspension. The SDE data coincides with our findings from our interviews, the vast majority of which were conducted in the same time frame.

#### **A. The In-School Suspension Act**

In May 2007, the Connecticut General Assembly enacted Public Act 07-66, An Act Concerning In-School Suspensions (the “Act”). By doing so, the Legislature was acknowledging that some school discipline can be counterproductive -- a fact widely and well-documented.<sup>1</sup> In particular, the Act reflected the concern that certain disciplinary policy violations (e.g, insubordination) and truancy should not typically warrant out-of-school suspension, that out-of-school suspension may motivate further misbehavior, thereby aggravating classroom disciplinary challenges, and that disciplinary sanctions were all too often responsible for detours to the juvenile justice system. This last point bears emphasis and was a critical motivating factor behind the Act: the more students are repeatedly disciplined out of school, the more likely they are to stay out of school and wind up eventually in prison. Shifting focus away from out-of-school suspension/expulsion and toward in-school suspension for the majority of disciplinary infractions seems to be a logical strategy, therefore, to reduce this “school to prison pipeline.”

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see the report issued by Connecticut Voices for Children on June 3, 2010, “Teaching Discipline: A Toolkit for Educators on Positive Alternatives to Out-of-School Suspensions” (“Voices Report”).

The Act, as originally proposed, therefore required districts to conduct suspension for most types of conduct “in-school” in dedicated classrooms, rather than keeping the student out of school during the suspension period.<sup>2</sup> The Superintendents and administrators we interviewed generally agreed that this was a laudable goal. The problem, from their perspective and that of many local boards of education, was that the Legislature did not provide school districts with funding for the design and operation of in-school suspension programs. Simply put, keeping a majority of suspended students “in-school” in dedicated classrooms requires additional space, planning time and, of course, teachers and/or behavioral specialists to supervise the suspended students.

Lobbying from both sides -- those who wanted the Act implemented as is and those who wanted it modified or fully funded -- resulted in the implementation of the Act being delayed. It finally became effective on July 1, 2010. The Act as passed requires districts to impose only in-school suspensions, unless the administration determines that the student poses a danger to others or property or the student’s presence would cause such a disruption of the educational process that the student should be excluded from school entirely during the suspension.<sup>3</sup> The law also gives districts the option of conducting the in-school suspension in any school building under the district’s control.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the delay in implementing the Act, we found that a number of pioneering school districts were well ahead of the curve by experimenting with creative and cost-effective in-school suspension in advance of the Act’s July 1, 2010 implementation date. This report focuses on those efforts.

## **B. Executive Summary**

Connecticut Appleseed recruited, trained and managed a team of volunteer attorneys to conduct interviews in nine diverse school districts to find and publicize imaginative ideas to transition

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<sup>2</sup> An “in-school suspension” is the exclusion from regular classroom activity for no more than ten days; “expulsion” is the exclusion from such activities for more than ten days. *See* Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-233a.

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that the Act also does not amend or alter other state law that *requires* districts to *expel* students that commit certain offences, such as possession of a weapon or drugs.

<sup>4</sup> We understand that this option, which was not included in the law as originally drafted, is an important cost-saving measure for districts as it allows them to educate the suspended students in buildings with more free space and flexible staff time.

from expulsions/out-of-school suspension to in-school suspension. While professional titles and school levels varied by district, our volunteers typically interviewed four to six administrators, principals and teachers in each district. This report showcases and shares some of these experiments and, also, presents SDE data from the same time period which confirms the transition. By publicizing best practices and accelerating the delayed transition in school discipline, this report also seeks to minimize the percentage of students who become entangled in the juvenile justice system.

In summary, we found that many school districts used the Act's delayed implementation period remarkably well to explore disciplinary alternatives to out-of-school suspension. As a result, we can confidently forecast that prompt implementation of in-school suspension should drive down the State's out-of-school suspension statistics further in 2010-2011. We found, however, an over-representation of students of color and minorities in disciplinary data -- a trend that is also well documented and that our data confirmed.

We particularly expanded our focus to explore the impact of school discipline on family units. We spoke directly with both parents and disciplined students and conducted a middle school focus group. We partnered with Connecticut Parent Power ([www.ctparentpower.org](http://www.ctparentpower.org)) and the Connecticut Association of Human Services ([www.cahs.org](http://www.cahs.org)) to investigate parents' perspective on how school discipline affects their families. Our relationship with these organizations led to an August 12, 2010 webinar on school discipline involving parents from all across the state. The online survey which accompanied the webinar found that schools do a good job in communicating their disciplinary rules and in notifying parents when their child has violated an aspect of their code of conduct.

This report is also differentiated from, and adds value to, the Voices Report by examining "alternative schools" operated by some school districts to address the needs of repeatedly disciplined students and of special education students whose classroom behavior may be too disruptive.

## **II. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

In no small part, this report relies on relationships established by Claire Howard, Connecticut Appleseed's Education Policy Associate from April, 2006 until March, 2010. Ms. Howard secured commitments from nine school districts to share their proactive efforts to implement successful discipline policies being required to do so by state law. As discussed below, these districts have implemented aggressive policies that enforce discipline but reduce the incidents requiring discipline, without relying on out-of-school suspension and expulsion. Ms. Howard also authored CT Appleseed's February 25, 2010 interim report entitled "Keep Kids in School:

Improving School Discipline,” which is posted at [www.ctappleseed.org](http://www.ctappleseed.org). Connecticut Appleseed’s Board of Directors appreciates Ms. Howard’s leadership on this issue.

This report gratefully acknowledges the nine superintendents who agreed to open their districts as “laboratories in discipline” by allowing extensive interviews of themselves and their staff. These districts are appropriately proud of their foresight and fortitude in tackling these school discipline issues, without having been provided any direct funding to do so by the state.

We are also immensely grateful for generous support from our lead pro bono partner, Bingham McCutchen LLP, which provided a deep bench of attorneys and staff to conduct and summarize the district interviews. We appreciate also the pro bono assistance from additional attorneys at Day Pitney LLP and the generous gift of pro bono help from attorney Beth FitzPatrick. Additionally, we note that Bingham McCutchen counsel Michael D’Agostino, chair of the Hamden Board of Education (and a member of Connecticut Appleseed’s Board of Directors), will be sharing the findings with his fellow chairs across the state. Mr. D’Agostino will also distribute copies of this report to the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education and the Connecticut Board of Education, which oversees the Connecticut Department of Education.

Finally, this report simply would not have been made possible but for the support and backing of the Connecticut Health Foundation, the Travelers Foundation, the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the Greater New Haven Community Foundation and the Perrin Family Foundation.

### **III. OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUE**

Out-of-school suspensions and expulsions have not proved effective at preventing or addressing many of the underlying causes of student misbehavior. Worse yet, out-of-school suspension itself may be an incentive to misbehave, providing an academically-challenged student with a temporary escape hatch to avoid possible classroom embarrassment. This possibility was cited by more than a few of our interviewees.

Out-of-school suspensions are often the first step in a child’s pathway to the juvenile justice system. While the link between school discipline problems and juvenile delinquency is attributable to many factors, leaving children unsupervised at home or on the streets during school hours is certainly a key contributor. As cited by the Voices Report, Connecticut’s Court Support Services Division reported in 2007 that 89% of 16- and 17-year olds involved in the juvenile justice system had been suspended or expelled from school.

This report explores not only how in-school suspension succeeds better at deterring misbehavior but, also, those additional disciplinary sanctions, supports and interventions that successfully

motivate socially constructive behavior among school children. Components of a framework approach aimed at reducing referrals for discipline in the first place includes more effective teachers, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (“PBIS”) and any number of the other supportive techniques discussed below.

A significant number of those interviewed identified an “effective teacher” the biggest single key to effective school discipline. Administrators and teachers roundly agree that effective classroom management means less disciplinary action. One principal commented that removal posits an ‘easy way out’ for a teacher and that its too-frequent use simply furthers student misbehavior.

No administrator offered a specific formula or expressed confidence that every staff member could be transformed into an “effective teacher” by any particular training. While the requisite skill remains somewhat elusive and intangible, books like “Tools for Teaching” were found to be helpful and administrators can devote professional development days to training teachers to respond more flexibly to misbehavior.

Stratford Middle School’s “Make Your Day” program attempts to approximate and distill the benefits of an effective teacher.” Two of its tenets are the initial handling of disciplinary infractions in the classroom and the consistent application of disciplinary standards across classrooms. Before implementing “Make Your Day,” teachers are trained in the different and distinct disciplinary steps that should be taken in response to each particular type of infraction and its recurrence.

At the end of class, Stratford students have an opportunity to comment on the student/teacher interaction and engage in a respectful exchange about its appropriateness. Students grade their own behavior, share their grades with their class and get feedback. Teachers and students can disagree and negotiate revised grades. While a student ultimately needs to achieve a certain minimum score to ‘make his day’, each day is guaranteed to be a fresh start.

July 1, 2010 constituted a similar fresh start for school discipline in Connecticut schools. Examples of the creativity, resourcefulness and resolve prompted in part by the Act follow below. Hopefully, the likelihood that increasingly serious disciplinary problems will ultimately be reflected in expulsions or dropout statistics will also gradually decline in Connecticut.

#### **IV. METHODOLOGY**

This report looks broadly at the rapidly-changing disciplinary framework and, more closely, at some of the more successful disciplinary experiments in a self-selected sample of Connecticut’s public school systems. Even in advance of the Act’s implementation date and despite



considerable financial constraints, many districts were and are proactively tackling their disciplinary challenges.

The report also highlights data showing the extremely uneven application of disciplinary policies in a larger sample of nineteen diverse districts. By combining on-the-ground perspectives from school administrators with district-specific disciplinary data from SDE, the report assembles and analyzes what our project team learned about the school discipline picture in Connecticut.

The school suspension data in this report is from the SDE's ED166 Disciplinary Offense Data Collection for the 2009-2010 school year. The data subset to which this report refers includes the following districts and schools within them:

	Hamden*	Regional School District 13	Tolland
Branford*	Hartford*	Regional School District 16	Waterbury
Bridgeport*	Milford	Shelton*	West Hartford
East Hartford	New Haven*	Stamford*	Windsor Locks
Fairfield*	Norwalk	Stratford*	Wolcott

The asterisk marks those districts where we conducted interviews. Our statistical findings include data from all nineteen districts and our other findings rely on our interviews.

## V. FINDINGS

### A. The Transition To In-School Suspension Is Well Underway (See Appendix 1).

Out-of-school (OSS) suspensions declined significantly across the state from the 2006-2007 to the 2009-2010 school year from a rate of 7.1 to a rate of 4.9.

Within our 19-district sample, the range of decrease in this OSS rate was from 0.2 to 7.9, with a median decrease of 1.3 and a mean decrease of 2.1. Among our sample districts, the out-of-school suspension rate failed to decline in only one district (Waterbury).

Over the same time 3-year period, the rate of in-school suspensions (ISS) increased across the state from a rate of 1.8 to a rate of 5.9.

Within our 19-district sample, the range of decrease in this ISS rate was from 0.2 to 13.6, with a median increase of 3.5 and a mean increase of 5.4.



**B. Rigorous, Demanding In-School Suspension Is An Effective Deterrent – More So, Perhaps, Than Had Been Foreseen By The Legislature.**

Conversation with a middle school focus group was eye-opening -- disciplined students dread close monitoring. Their descriptions of in-school suspension: “They’re so on you;” “It’s like jail;” “You can’t even move.” With teachers or counselors rotating through every period, the disciplined students have no idle time. Students don’t have the option of skipping in-school suspension, in contrast to community service. Likewise, a student can fake remorse for inappropriate behavior in a required reflective essay without much effort.

But confinement and close supervision seem to motivate behavioral change. As a whole, the 8th grade students participating in the middle school focus group -- each of whom had served at least six out-of-school suspensions in the 2009-2010 school year --- had not been so disciplined a single time during the first five weeks of the 2010-2011 school year.

**C. Uneven Impact Of School Discipline: Disciplinary Incidents Disproportionately Involve African-American, Hispanic And Special Education Students.**

*Black/Hispanic Students*

We found highly disproportionate levels of disciplinary incidents among black and Hispanic students. This pattern, which is state-wide and exacerbated among male students, was also well documented in the Voices Report. Sadly, the tendency is that the more impoverished the school district, the more acute the overrepresentation of disciplined black and Hispanic students. One middle school student blasted his school with the accusation that “white kids don’t get in trouble . . . “they” believe white kids, not black”.

Based on 2008-2009 data from SDE for all Connecticut school districts:

- Black students were roughly four times more likely, and Hispanic students were about twice as likely, to be expelled or receive an out-of-school suspension than white students.
- Black students were more than twice as likely, and Hispanic students were roughly 50% more likely, to receive an in-school suspension than white students.

In district interviews, the issue of uneven representation of black/Hispanic students is a highly sensitive topic. A few districts broadly discussed the need for cultural diversity training of teachers because of the increasingly diverse cultural background of students and the teaching

staff's comparatively homogeneous demographics (*i.e.* young white female). Many of these districts were interested in confronting their race and class issues, but cited lack of funding as the main barrier to doing so.

However, Shelton High School has a Diversity Team by which several students and staff members work with district schools on diversity issues. Hamden School District has had several "Community Conversations" between parents, teachers, staff and others related to diversity in the public schools. Stratford devised a "Names Program" in which peer groups and mentors provide diversity training and guidance and teach awareness of the commonalities among students despite differences in appearance and ethnicity.

While racial and ethnic disparities in academic performance is not the focus of this report, one facet of school discipline is that bad behavior is often the result of boredom. Recognizing this, Stratford is encouraging and challenging more minority students to take higher level courses. And in a cooperative program involving students, parents and counselors, Stratford's guidance counselors meet with students who score below proficiency on CAPT/CMT tests to help them develop success plans for both academics and future career paths. Stratford engaged professional development consultants from UCONN for to help its guidance counselors intervene more successfully in the relationship between school discipline and academics.

### *Special Education Students*

Across our data sample, disciplinary incidents also disproportionately involved students diagnosed as requiring special education. This issue was not a focal point of our interviews. While disparities in discipline ratios for special education students clearly exist in these districts, the degree of those disparities is slightly less glaring than those on racial/ethnic lines.

For example, in Bridgeport in 2009-2010, special education students represented 20.4% of disciplinary incidents, but represented 12.5% of the district student population. In Hartford in 2009-2010, special education students represented 21.0% of disciplinary incidents, but represented 14.8% of the district student population. However, these fairly typical imbalances were dwarfed by the degree to which, on a statewide basis, black and Hispanic students were more disproportionately involved in disciplinary incidents than were white students.

Looking more broadly, the most disproportionate discipline of special education students occurred in one district (Region School District #13) where 49% of disciplinary incidents involved special needs students – although only 13% of the student population had been so identified.. At the lowest end of our sample, 17.4% of disciplinary actions in both New Haven

and in Windsor Locks involved special needs students – while 11.3% of New Haven school children and 10.2% of Windsor Locks school children were so identified.

#### **D. Alternative Schools**

Some districts have created full-day alternative schools (either on- or off-campus) that differ in some important respects from traditional public schools. Some alternative schools are designed specifically or primarily for special education students, some were established to manage the behavior of the most disruptive students who regularly violate disciplinary codes, and some are combinations of the two.

Stratford's Alpha program includes 55-60 students who have been removed from class for disruptive behavior. Located in its own wing at the high school and operating from 8:00 AM to 12 -Noon, Alpha is facilitated by one administrator and four to five teachers. The district's goal is that Alpha's curriculum remain in line with the rest of the high school, especially with respect to the CAPT program and testing.

Fairfield's alternative high school, where roughly half of the forty students are special education students, represents the hybrid model. Administered by a dean, the school has a full-time psychologist, a social worker, a director of special education and a teacher/student ratio of 5:1. Students in crisis can be boarded in a residential program. For those students with the potential to return to mainstream high school, a gradual re-integration process begins with one class and, if warranted, expands from there.

Branford's administrators view their Horizons program as an extremely successful "alternative school" endeavor that has prevented many students from dropping out. Horizons is intended for students who have difficulty succeeding in large class settings or who are a bit slower to grasp ideas, but who may not qualify for special education. It provides an alternative to both the mainstream curriculum and to private special education schools. About 6% of Branford High School's student population participates in Horizons on a completely volunteer basis.

Horizons' smaller class settings with a much lower student to teacher ratio are enabled by teachers who also participate on a voluntary basis. Horizons' students are not isolated from their high school peers. They participate either in a morning session or an afternoon session, while joining mainstream classes for the balance of the day and maintaining the opportunity to participate in the school's clubs and sports programs. Since the Horizons program is in-house, it helps the Branford district to keep costs down.

One of Hamden's two alternative schools was designed specifically for students with special needs. It relies on behavior modification using a "point system" report card to provide immediate feedback. Points can be earned to gain external rewards like field trips, as well as lost. All of the school's teachers are certified for special education but not for an academic discipline.

Hamden's second alternative school, called "Team H," is composed mostly of students just entering high school who need more personal attention and a higher level of faculty intervention. Not all of Team H's students are selected because of their disciplinary violations; rather, some are selected in anticipation that they will need help with transiting from middle school. Administered by an assistant principal, the self-selected faculty includes one psychologist, one social work and two guidance counselors. The school uses the same curriculum and adheres to the same testing schedule as the mainstream high school. Two-thirds of the students enter the mainstream 10<sup>th</sup> grade on schedule and 1/6th move to 10<sup>th</sup> grade within the alternative school program. Of the remaining balance, some students retake 9<sup>th</sup> grade and some get GEDs at night school. Over the past two years, there have been no "complete" dropouts.

"Thicker-skinned" teachers who "want to be here" and like a team approach typically handle Team H students well because they connect with them. Despite the challenging student cohort, fewer suspensions and expulsions are recorded within the alternative school program than in the mainstream 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Team H operates like a close-knit family, offering the student more counseling and affirmation than the regular high school and even providing clothing if needed.

While many districts hire retired teachers for their alternative schools, there is no state regulation mandating the use of certified teachers for alternative education programs. Alternative schools focused on students with special needs may not need or use academically certified teachers. An interviewee at the Hamden special needs school cautioned against judging an alternative school on the basis of how many teachers are academically certified. However, the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) is piloting a Virtual Learning Academy (VLA) that allows access to certified teachers online. VLA also allows certified teachers to assess the quality of the teaching provided by the alternative school. Essentially, the VLA allows outsourcing academic content to certified teachers at CREC.

We found that a state-of-the-art alternative school does not necessarily aggravate the schools-to-prison pipeline with an elevated dropout rate any more than does a mainstream school. While some alternative schools attempt to gradually transition its students to a mainstream school, a long-stay in an alternative school does not necessarily represent failure. An alternative school may properly measure its success by its own graduation ratio. Some interviewees said that an alternative school setting has advantages for certain students. Consistent with that view,

educators interviewed stressed that his or her district is trying to design more alternative educational paths and diversify choice within its alternative school.

## **VI. INNOVATIVE PRACTICES IN IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION: A MARRIAGE OF PUNISHMENT AND PREVENTION**

Not all in-school suspension options are equally effective. There are vast differences between multi-day detentions lacking much academic instruction and ambitiously aggressive combinations of instruction, mentoring and counseling for the disciplined.

While there are many forms and types of in-school suspension, the salient characteristic of the most successful programs is a highly structured environment that is unpleasant for the student. Discomfort, whether created by unusually close supervision and continuous assigned tasks and/or by perceived-intrusive counseling and mentoring, is an effective deterrent. To the degree the student's time is unstructured and underutilized-- rather than devoted to academic content or behavioral help -- an in-school suspension program will represent less deterrence.

An idealized version of in-school suspension includes a small faculty/student ratio, sharper academic focus and no socializing. In the case of one middle school, suspended students are supervised throughout most of the day by rotating in certified teachers who oversee regular coursework and homework. Behavioral specialists or other staff skilled at connecting with disciplined youth oversee the balance of the day. Provided with continuous academic and/or behavioral content, the students are expected to maintain the "normal" academic pace.

In the case of one elementary school, students are typically assigned to in-school suspension for one or two days, with a maximum of ten. In-school suspension begins with an "entry plan," with students devoting their initial hour or so to reflection, setting goals and developing a strategy to avoid repeating the behavior that prompted discipline. That strategy also involves identifying people within the school to whom the student can turn for guidance before a similar incident threatens. The remainder of the day is devoted to academic work. Each teacher sends assignments to the staff person in the suspension room (currently a para-professional, but soon to be replaced by a certified behavioral specialist) who supervises their completion.

A similar in-school suspension program is now envisioned for a large city's K-8 magnet school. Academic work must be completed in a structured environment where individual attention is available. All suspended students analyze their behavior and next steps in a reflection essay, while some students will be asked to develop an accountability plan outlining needed behavioral changes. After completion of the suspension, guidance counselors and social workers will meet with the disciplined student to review their misconduct and commitment to improve. If the

insights immediately above are correct, the success of the magnet school's program will be enhanced by instilling intense supervision, rigorous academics and a dash of student discomfort.

## **VII. INCREASINGLY SOPHISTICATED SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS**

Connecticut school districts already employ a wide variety of programs that reinforce positive student behavior. These programs represent a spectrum of techniques and ideas that range from the simple and cost-free to the sophisticated and expensive.

At one extreme, a Chess Club is popular with disruptive students at a Shelton elementary school because it provides an outlet for competitive energy and supports student achievement. The principal finds chess and other similar games to be a good low-cost alternative in cases where schools do not have team sports. A similar "no frills" technique is for an administrator or principal to regularly eat lunch with groups of students to try to build an improved and positive relationship with some of the more difficult ones.

Interdisciplinary student support or child study "teams" are in place in many districts. Students struggling with academic and behavioral issues are referred to these teams which evaluate and seek the services these children need to be successful.

One moderate-cost variation on this theme is the "Response to Intervention" model employed in both Hartford and Hamden. As adopted in a pilot in some Hamden elementary schools, this program matches instruction and intervention to individual student needs and makes adjustments over time based on performance and learning rates. Certain Hartford elementary schools, having been given autonomy to adopt their own programs by the district, have also adopted the Response to Intervention Model. A team of a principal, teachers, guidance counselors and social workers in schools using this model creates a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) tailored to the particular student and identifying the specific intervention strategies that the student requires. Everyone in the schools who interacts with a student needing intervention then follows his/her individualized BIP.

Stamford has undertaken a broader-brush (and somewhat controversial) approach to support positive student behavior by reducing the number of "tracks"<sup>5</sup> for high school students from

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<sup>5</sup> Tracking is separating pupils into subgroups that pursue different curricula. While tracks are often distinguished based on the difficulty of their respective courses, the ways by which students are assigned to tracks and the amount of fluidity within the tracking systems vary by district.

three to five to just two. With fewer tracks, there is obviously a wider range of aptitude and academic performance within each track and classroom. The premise for the change is that kids learn best from each other - and particularly so by teaching each other. When students teach each other, the evidence shows that top students do no worse and bottom students do better. Since making this recent change, teachers have observed a decline in behavioral problems and attribute it to successfully mixing different types of students.

At the absolute other end of the cost spectrum, seven of the nineteen school districts in our sample employ PBIS in some fashion. PBIS successfully reduces disciplinary problems by relying on positive reinforcement and clear communication of behavioral expectations and involves a systemic continuum of support for all students. Overwhelmingly, in both formal and informal conversations, district officials spoke positively and optimistically about PBIS. Parents in our online survey also gave PBIS the most favorable possible ratings.

As applied in one Hartford elementary school, a standing leadership team, consisting of 8 staff members, attends 6 full days of training through CREC and then trains other members of the teaching staff. For most teachers, therefore, PBIS training is in-house. The principal believes that teacher-to-teacher training is the most effective as teachers are more receptive to ideas when coming from colleagues.

While New Haven applies PBIS in 6 schools, PBIS is often undertaken at the district level for grades K – 8 and requires significant funding to implement. Some PBIS concepts were also applied in modified or abbreviated forms where funding had not been provided and was not available (e.g. an alternative school in Hamden).

## **IX. BEST PRACTICES IN SUCCESSFUL DETERRENCE I - INTERVENTIONS**

### **A. Peer Mediation**

Peer mediation is used fairly widely. Typically, students are trained on how to help resolve conflicts between each other and among students in general and then proceed to train their peers. It is valued for preventing conflicts from escalating into something more serious - such as an incident that would trigger an out-of-school suspension or expulsion. In use in Stratford for at least seven years, peer mediation is overseen by guidance counselors who provide feedback to the student mediators – who then help other students contract with each other to improve their

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behavior. Students thereby become responsible for both their own behavior and for raising the level of behavior throughout the entire school. New Haven presently uses peer mediation in three schools.

Bridgeport adopted a peer mediation program for which it had contracted with the Partnership of Children in New York City, aided by a grant from General Electric. Both students and adults are trained under this model. The schools seek a diverse group of student peer mediators; such mediators are not limited to 'successful' leaders, but includes students of all levels. Guidance counselors often facilitate the peer mediation sessions. This peer mediation program is available above 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in thirteen to fifteen of Bridgeport's thirty-nine schools. School administrators perceive the program as a success that helps them reach out to different types of students.

#### **B. Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI)**

CPI is a pilot program at Hartford High that focuses on prevention and de-escalation. Students are taught alternative behavior and problem solving skills, while staff is also trained in de-escalation techniques. Interestingly, many of the interviewees specifically mentioned that teachers should also receive de-escalation training. However, CPI requires trained "behavior technicians" qualified to train staff and to observe and analyze students with behavior problems and work with them to address those problems. The program is relatively expensive, but seems thus far to be promising.

#### **C. Juvenile Review Boards**

Several high school principals noted that juvenile review boards ("JRBs") are a helpful and desirable means of intervention. JRBs target first-time offenders under 15 years of age whose offenses are no more serious than misdemeanors. Police refer these young offenders to a JRB, where a panel of community volunteers hear the "case" and offer a balanced and restorative justice solution to compensate and/or heal the victim. Offenders are typically provided with counseling.

#### **D. Reintegration Via A Young Men's Council**

Stamford's Westhill High School formed a Young Men's Council to reach previously suspended students. Male students who have been suspended are invited to interact after school with school staff particularly skilled at connecting with, mentoring and guiding youth. The Council provides the youth with an opportunity to vent, get over the incident, and re-integrate themselves constructively.

### **E. Targeted Mental Health Resources For Bridgeport Students**

The Bridgeport Learning Center is a therapeutic day program for students with mental illnesses (psychosis, severe depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, etc) who often exhibit severe behavioral challenges. While its focus is on emotional/psychiatric issues, the Center employs different interventions based on differing student needs.

The Center employs both minimally restrictive and more restrictive intervention programs and techniques, depending on the circumstances. It adopted and adjusted the “Boys and Girls Town” model to deal with social skills and behavioral issues and also uses PBIS practiced district-wide in Bridgeport. The Center also has a “refocus room” to which a student is sent occasionally to regroup, which is its version of in-school suspension.

## **X. BEST PRACTICES IN SUCCESSFUL DETERRENCE II - ALTERNATIVE SANCTIONS**

### **A. Community Service And “Saturday School”**

Scofield Magnet School in Stamford established a Saturday School where students disciplined for certain infractions (e.g. fighting, repeated tardiness or insubordination) must attend three hours of school on Saturday to do school work. The principal reported the program to be highly successful and one that students rarely need to repeat. It is noteworthy that, lacking school district funding to sustain it, the Scofield PTO fundraises to keep the Saturday School operating.

Community service is commonly used at Stamford’s Westhill High School. It may occur on school grounds (e.g., cleaning graffiti) or off-campus by the school’s arrangement with community organizations. On-campus community service is supervised by security officers and managed by the Dean of Students, which does add a cost consideration. High school parents have generally been supportive of this sanction.

More broadly, community service drew the greatest “favorable” response in the online survey accompanying our school discipline webinar with Connecticut Parent Power/CAHS. Among the list of choices offered in that survey for “better ways to discipline than suspensions and expulsions,” the respondents ranked community service highest.

## **B. Withdrawal Of Privileges: A “Negative” Point System**

An inexpensive system is being implemented at Hamden Middle School by which students are given points for inappropriate behavior. Accumulation of certain numbers of points results in a student’s exclusion from events such as dances, class trips and graduation ceremonies.

While a negative (rather than positive) incentive, the principal said that the point system has been successful in reducing disciplinary problems by motivating students to “try to be good” He cites, for example, a dramatic improvement in student behavior in the spring largely motivated by the desire to attend the prom. During the past three years, the principal has seen a 30-40% decrease in the number of students missing events because of disciplinary problems.

## **XI. LOOKING FORWARD**

With PA-0766’s implementation just underway, Connecticut school districts have literally only begun their search for ingenious and cost-effective prevention, intervention and punishments. Already impressive is the broad progress made in keeping more students disciplined on school grounds while maintaining a successful learning environment.

Connecticut Appleseed respectfully submits this report to help advance the exciting transition underway-- one which will promote better school discipline without placing so many students at risk of entering the juvenile justice system.

A widespread and understandable concern voiced by many interviewees is whether their districts can afford the cost of prevention and deterrence in general, and of in-school suspension in particular. One prospect is Congress’ forthcoming reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and redirection of the federal No Child Left Behind law. If a reauthorized ESEA could provide funding for disciplinary frameworks like PBIS, its feasibility for Connecticut’s school districts might measurably increase.

# Appendix 1

District Name	School Year 2006-2007			School Year 2009-2010 **				
	Students	ISS	OSS	Students	ISS	OSS	ISS Rate	OSS Rate
	Enrolled	Rate	Rate	Enrolled	Rate	Rate	Increase	Decrease
Branford	3620	4.6	3.2	3502	7.4	2.4	2.8	-0.8
Bridgeport	21381	6.3	21.6	20192	19.0	13.7	12.7	-7.9
East Hartford	7864	9.6	12.4	7242	22.0	12.2	12.4	-0.2
Fairfield	9510	0.7	1.9	10156	2.6	0.7	1.9	-1.2
Hamden	6304	9.1	9.8	6087	12.6	6.4	3.5	-3.4
Hartford	22573	12.9	19.2	21428	21.1	15.5	8.2	-3.7
Milford	7520	4.0	3.3	7272	5.0	2.2	1	-1.1
New Haven	20170	1.9	16.6	19875	13.7	12.0	11.8	-4.6
Norwalk	10811	4.6	7.4	10959	8.8	6.3	4.2	-1.1
Shelton	5710	5.4	3.0	5469	9.1	2.0	3.7	-1
Stamford	15097	0.7	3.2	15042	3.7	3.0	3	-0.2
Stratford	7429	3.1	7.2	7356	8.9	2.5	5.8	-4.7
Tolland	3155	3.4	2.7	3153	17.0	1.6	13.6	-1.1
Waterbury	18298	10.8	15.4	18212	22.9	16.7	12.1	1.3
West Hartford	10170	4.6	3.6	10569	5.7	1.9	1.1	-1.7
Windsor Locks	1920	8.6	4.3	1802	9.7	2.9	1.1	-1.4
Wolcott	2931	4.8	5.0	2751	5.0	1.6	0.2	-3.4
Durham, Middlefield	2177	0.7	2.5	2083	2.1	0.5	1.4	-2.0
Beacon Falls, Prospect	2688	4.9	3.7	2585	6.2	2.6	1.3	-1.1
<b>State Total</b>	<b>578612</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>567812</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>-2.2</b>

Data Source: Connecticut State Department of Education, ED166 Data Collection

\*\*2009-2010 data is preliminary

## Figures Below are for 19-District Sample Only:

Range of OSS Rate Decrease	Range of ISS Rate Increase
0.2 to 7.9	0.2 to 13.6
Median Decrease	Median Increase
1.3	3.5
Mean Decrease	Mean Increase
2.1	5.4

## Appendix 2

School Year 2009-2010		
District Name	% Students with Disabilities	% of Incidents Involving Students with Disabilities
Branford	13.00%	18.5
Bridgeport	12.50%	20.4
East Hartford	13.90%	20.0
Fairfield	9.80%	28.9
Hamden	12.70%	25.2
Hartford	14.80%	21.0
Milford	12.70%	37.0
New Haven	11.30%	17.4
Norwalk	10.30%	25.9
Shelton	9.60%	18.3
Stamford	9.20%	18.0
Stratford	9.20%	20.3
Tolland	10.70%	19.2
Waterbury	16.90%	23.6
West Hartford	11.10%	27.3
Windsor Locks	10.20%	17.4
Wolcott	8.90%	33.2
Durham, Middlefield	13.00%	49.1
Beacon Falls, Prospect	9.90%	18.3

*Data Source: Connecticut State Department of Education, ED166 Data Collection*