



## Research Brief

### In-School Suspension Alternatives

#### Question: What are some alternatives to in-school suspension?

#### Summary of Findings:

What is the purpose of in-school suspension? According to the literature, in-school suspension: keeps students in school so they are not rewarded with a day off for poor behavior; forces students to get course work done; gives the teacher and class an often needed respite from a student's poor behavior; and creates the desire of not committing another offense that will put the student in it again. However, does it meet the expected outcomes? Often, the same student offenders are regular attendees in in-school suspension and these are the students it is hoped, who will learn the lesson and not want to spend time in it.

It was believed that in the past, teachers had more power to confer penalties when students misbehaved. With the advent of court cases and the view that parents and students are customers, many teachers do not believe they have this power. Also, students who did not want to be in school dropped out, so there were not as many students exhibiting discipline problems. With the push to keep students in school, fewer students are dropping out, which means there are more students who generate undisciplined environments. These are the students who may break rules and do not do their work to create distractions. These actions may take away from the real reasons for their misbehavior such as: boredom in classes, difficult course work, lack of connection with teachers and/or other students, and/or problems in their personal lives.

Repeatedly the literature stated that schoolwide and classroom expectations should be in sync and congruent, where everyone consistently follows the rules. This system should be based on open communication and there should be early intervention. "If our minor rules were enforced constantly, fewer students would break the major ones, because more students would realize that there are consequences to their actions" (*Is zero tolerance a good idea for school discipline and safety?*). There is no one right strategy and each school needs to decide what is most appropriate for their students. It is also important to make certain that the consequence should be a contextual fit. According to one researcher, Walker (*Rethinking schoolwide discipline*), there are three levels of discipline:

- Primary, these are the school's survival rules (i.e. behavior in the halls, tardies, etc.) and this is where 80% of the population needs guidance and direction;
- Secondary, to assist 15% of the student body with school success (i.e. truants, low grades, etc.); and



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- Tertiary, to assist 5% of the students with intense problems (i.e. harsh living conditions, drug use, etc.)

Considerations for establishing a viable and workable plan include:

- involve all stakeholders, including parents and students
- review goals of the school and determine how the plan and consequences are meeting them
- brainstorm all concerns and ideas, then prioritize them, or provide, then analyze a survey regarding the current plan and how it is working
- determine which ideas are best for the school
- define behaviors
- examine the types of misbehaviors and ways they might be redirected
- ascertain the appropriate consequences for misbehaviors and make certain they are valuable to the students and not overused
- establish how, when and by whom the plan will be implemented
- educate students, parents and staff on the plan
- provide ongoing staff development for staff
- supply continuous and ongoing support to staff
- evaluate the plan yearly and adjust as necessary

Alternatives to in-school suspension

- implement a conflict resolution program
- provide an opportunity for the students to process through a written self-analysis how they believe they contributed to the problem, how they would like it resolved, the role of other people, and how they can stop it from happening again (a form is included in the book: *The educator's guide to preventing and solving discipline problems*, p. 63.)
- employ a lunch detention, where either a sack lunch is provided or students are walked to the cafeteria to get their lunches then to the room where they will serve detention
- make available an after school detention program, where students stay for 45 minutes to an hour
- conduct Friday School, where students stay after school on Fridays for two to three hours
- have a parent/guardian attend classes with a student who is having behavior problems
- run counseling groups for students with specific issues/needs
- participate in community service projects



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### Online Resources:

- Getting serious about school discipline-School report, part 2  
A brief overview of the perceived worsening discipline problems in schools is presented in this piece.  
[http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0377/is\\_n133/ai\\_21186007/print](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0377/is_n133/ai_21186007/print)
- Is zero tolerance a good idea for school discipline and safety?  
This article briefly presents two opposing sides by two high school teachers on the issue of zero tolerance for school discipline.  
[http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa3617/is\\_200202/ai\\_n9024904/print](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3617/is_200202/ai_n9024904/print)
- Rethinking schoolwide discipline  
This article includes a reference list on key pieces about school discipline and provides a synopsis of several articles on the topic.  
[http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa4002/is\\_200310/ai\\_n9334840/print](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa4002/is_200310/ai_n9334840/print)
- Sparing rods and spoiling children: The impossibility of school discipline  
This is an editorial about how often the school's hands are tied when it comes to enforcing discipline procedures.  
[http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1282/is\\_19\\_56/ai\\_n13675422/print](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1282/is_19_56/ai_n13675422/print)
- Suspensions and detentions in an urban, low-income school: Punishment or reward?  
A review of a year long study conducted to determine the effectiveness of suspensions and detentions is reported in this piece.  
[http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0902/is\\_4\\_30/ai\\_89146372/print](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0902/is_4_30/ai_89146372/print)
- The educator's guide to preventing and solving discipline problems  
This book is published by ASCD and "is about developing effective classroom and buildingwide discipline systems."  
<http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/template.book/menuitem.ccf6e1bf6046da7cdeb3ffd62108a0c/?bookMgmtId=5b5d401ef0777010VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD>



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- The parent trap: Mom and dad, behind you all the way ...in school?  
This is a very brief article on a proposal in Maryland to have parents attend school when their child misbehaves.  
[http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0EPF/is\\_4\\_103/ai\\_109130500/print](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0EPF/is_4_103/ai_109130500/print)
- The price is right? Should students be paid to turn in kids who break the rules?  
A description of the Crimestoppers program where students are paid for tips on rule infractions is provided in this article.  
[http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0EPF/is\\_1\\_105/ai\\_n15337801/print](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0EPF/is_1_105/ai_n15337801/print)
- The school discipline plan: Does it have all the right components?  
An overview of the components of effective discipline plans is provided in this piece.  
[http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa3696/is\\_199803/ai\\_n8787565/print](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3696/is_199803/ai_n8787565/print)

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