



ALTERNATIVES TO OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS

The key to reducing suspensions and expulsions is implementing a proactive, preventative schoolwide Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework and a robust set of strategies for other means of correction. This promotes the teaching, modeling, and acknowledgment of expected behaviors for all students to develop the social-emotional, mental, and academic success of the whole child, whole classroom, whole school, and whole community.

Trauma informed practices create safe spaces, establish predictability, build a sense of trust, offer choices and help students and adults stay regulated. District staff must work to acknowledge and address their unconscious biases about the decisions they make and recognize their own triggers. It is only when someone is calm or regulated, that they are able to form trusting relationships or relate, and access their ability to understand, think, and reflect or reason. Consider the use of the [Adult Self-Awareness](#) checklist.

Prior to responding to a behavior, ask:

- Am I okay?
- Am I making an emotional response or a rational response?
- How might my biases impact my decision making?

Additionally, consider the following trauma resilience informed questions when supporting students.

- Are students safe at home?
- Do they have access to their basic needs (food, shelter, comfort, clothing, etc.)?
- Needs must be met and addressed before learning can occur (i.e., Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs before Bloom's Taxonomy).
- What might be the function or reason for the behavior?

Effective alternatives to suspension, or other means of correction, must be implemented at all schools. The matrix below provides alternatives to suspension/other means of correction where students remain engaged in their school community, while reflecting and learning from their mistakes. These practices provide increased support by offering students interventions that can be modified based on the need and age of the student. This matrix is intended to provide guidance and is not inclusive of all possible alternatives or other means of correction. Other means of correction, when implemented with fidelity, can reduce suspensions and create a safe, healthy, welcoming, and affirming school community.



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Alternative to Suspension	Description	Suggested Strategies/Considerations	Participants
<p>Behavior Contracts</p>	<p>An agreement between the student, caregivers, and teacher. The contract outlines expectations for the student’s behavior. It also outlines the reinforcer(s) for meeting the expectations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve the student • Define the expected behavior(s) or goal(s) • Decide upon reinforcer(s). What will the student earn for performing the expected behavior? • Plan for corrective responses • Reteach, model and/or roleplay the expected behavior with the student • Monitor and revise the contract, if necessary • Be fair, be positive, be consistent, and be honest <p>Note: <i>Make sure that the function of the behavior is identified clearly so that the behavior contract addresses the targeted goal(s).</i></p>	<p>Desired: Student, teacher, caregiver, paraprofessional(s)</p> <p>Optional: Administrator or designee, other teacher(s), school support staff</p>



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Behavior Monitoring	Focus on increasing desirable behavior and replacing challenging behavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check-in/out system (beginning of the day, hour by hour, end of the day) • Use 4:1 connection over correction strategy • Adult mentor/monitor • School-to-home communication log • Create a structured coordinated behavior contract • Feedback sessions on progress • Reinforcement of targeted behavior • Tailor language and format to the skill level of the student (pictures vs words) • Implement a positive reward system 	<p>Desired: Student, teacher(s), paraprofessional(s), caregiver</p> <p>Optional: Administrator or designee, school support staff</p>
Cool Down/Calm Spaces/Reflection Area	<p>Cool down/calm spaces/reflection areas can be located inside the classroom and need to be trauma sensitive environments where students can reflect and recover.</p> <p>Students can use the area to de-escalate when they are having a difficult time regulating their emotions or processing an experience they have had.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensory items (e.g., fidget spinners, stress balls) • Art supplies and sketch pads available • Culturally linguistic and responsive reading materials and activities made available • Establish and agree on a supervised area in the classroom/school where students can reflect and recover. <p>Note: <i>Students may choose to remain at their desk to cool down. Duration must be clearly defined for the student.</i></p>	<p>Desired: Student, teacher(s), campus assistants, paraprofessional(s)</p> <p>Optional: Administrator or designee, school support staff</p>



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<p>Counseling (By Student Health and Human Services Staff or School Psychologist)</p>	<p>Consult with the school counselor or appropriate mental health staff when a student is exhibiting a <i>pattern</i> of challenging behavior. Collaborate with the counselor or appropriate mental health staff to teach student replacement skills, ability to recognize assets and strategies to decrease the unexpected behavior.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal treatment plan • Individual/small group counseling sessions 	<p>Desired: Student, teacher(s), caregiver, school support staff</p> <p>Optional: Administrator or designee</p>
<p>Educational Projects</p>	<p>The focus of educational projects is to bring self-awareness and self-management skills by integrating learning objectives to address challenging behaviors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project on a specific topic related to the incident (e.g., research the laws/rules associated with the incident) • Poster boards or PowerPoint presentations • Community organizations for information • Video or public service announcement • Partnership with student council, student leadership clubs, etc. 	<p>Desired: Student, teacher(s), caregiver</p> <p>Optional: School support staff, paraprofessional(s)</p>



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Mini-Courses	Teacher led units of self-study related to the student’s challenging behavior. These mini-courses should be designed to teach students about growth mindset, self-efficacy, self-management and self-awareness about the specific behavior exhibited and should be taught during the academic day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindfulness activities • Self-management strategies • Coping skills • Social-emotional lessons • Communication strategies • Conflict Resolution strategies and techniques • Text and videos to support the learning of new skills/strategies • District adopted SEL programs 	<p>Desired: Teacher(s), student</p> <p>Optional: Administrator or designee, school support staff</p>
Peer Mediations	Peer mediators are trained to assist their classmates in developing communication and interpersonal skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve older peers to help model and mentor • Establish a peer mediator or peer leadership program • Create a peer committee and/or a student restorative practices team to address incidents • Note: <i>Ensure that the student(s) is fully de-escalated before participating with peer support.</i> 	<p>Desired: Student, teacher(s), student leaders, Administrator or designee</p> <p>Optional: Caregiver, school support staff</p>



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Problem Solving Skills	Skills to help students learn how to think through and resolve everyday conflicts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social games and activities • Alternatives to resolve challenging behavior • Interpersonal cognitive and problem-solving skills • Small group discussions • Role play activities • Peer accountability activities 	<p>Desired: Student, teacher(s), paraprofessional(s)</p> <p>Optional: Caregiver, school support staff</p>
Reflective Tasks	Reflective tasks provide students the time and opportunity to reflect on their challenging behavior and how it impacts their environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journaling • Create a story (e.g., written, visual, drawings, video) about their learning • Create a comic strip story • Write a letter to yourself/colleague • Role play 	<p>Desired: Student, teacher(s), caregiver</p> <p>Optional: Administrator or designee, school support staff</p>
Repairing the Harm Circle	<p>Repairing the harm circles promote repairing relationships that have been hurt or harmed. The focus is on personal accountability and well-being for all affected.</p> <p>*All parties must agree to participate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use restorative questions • Conduct restorative conferences • Is it safe to bring everyone together? • Have all parties taken accountability? • Follow-up support plan for all involved • Regular check-in/check-out 	<p>Desired: Student, teacher(s), school support staff</p> <p>Optional: Administrator or designee, school support staff</p>



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<p><u>Restorative Questions Think Slip</u></p>	<p>A Restorative Questions Think Slip allows for self-reflection and promotes continued trust and connections. The goal is for students to acknowledge how their behavior affects themselves and others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes the exploration of motivation, perspectives, and solutions • Build on promoting and restoring relationships • Check-in with student/s • Adult self-awareness • Meet the students where they are mentally, physically, and emotionally 	<p>Desired: Student, teacher(s), school support staff</p> <p>Optional: Administrator or designee, school support staff</p>
<p>Scheduling Considerations</p>	<p>Involves re-arranging the student’s schedule to avoid challenging environments or situations. This would allow the student to continue to have access to the curriculum. The student’s behavior is continuously being monitored in a safe, supported enriching and positive environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-arrangement of schedule <p>Note: <i>Student’s daily scheduled instructional hours are not to be changed.</i></p>	<p>Desired: Student, teacher(s), caregiver, Administrator or designee</p> <p>Optional: school support staff</p>



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<p style="text-align: center;">School Community- Service/ Restitution</p>	<p>Students are assigned to school community service/restitution which can involve a variety of activities on the school campus to help build character, empathy, and altruism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize books in the library • Plant flowers/assist with gardening • Assist in the cafeteria • Help repair the school property the student damaged • Creating a caring environment (e.g., sending a note, making a handmade gift, offering to help another student, tutoring younger students) 	<p>Desired: Student, parent, teacher(s), Administrator or designee</p> <p>Optional: school custodial staff, school support staff</p>

Formal discipline follows District policies and procedures for student discipline. Consistent with Education Code section 48900.5, other means of correction will be utilized for students in a consistent and age-appropriate manner prior to any suspension, except those offenses under E.C. 48915. (c). (Category I offenses) or when a pupil's presence causes a danger to persons. For assistance in determining whether formal discipline is appropriate, please contact the Student Discipline and Expulsion Support at (213) 202-7555.