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# **Teaching Discipline: A Toolkit for Educators on Positive Alternatives to Out-of-School Suspensions**

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## **Dedication**

*This report is dedicated to  
**State Senator Thomas Gaffey and State Representative Andy Fleischmann**  
for their extraordinary leadership and commitment to  
providing educational opportunity for all of Connecticut's children.*

- AD, AH, CC, TK

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# Teaching Discipline: A Toolkit for Educators on Positive Alternatives to Out-of-School Suspensions

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## I. Executive Summary

Good discipline is essential to academic success. Good discipline is also critical for creating a safe, respectful learning environment, where all members of a school community can focus on learning and teaching. Perhaps most importantly, good discipline is essential to the emotional, social, and moral development of children.

But as any parent of a young child will attest, good discipline is not something that “just happens,” or that children are born with. Discipline – like mathematics, or reading, or speaking a foreign language – must be *taught*. Some children in Connecticut come to school with the social skills necessary to be successful in school; others do not. Just as a school would not exclude a child for not knowing how to read, it is rarely appropriate to deny schooling to a child – particularly a young child – who has not yet learned how to behave well.

Yet Connecticut children are excluded from school for disciplinary infractions with surprising frequency. In 2006-2007 and again in 2007-2008, schoolchildren in Connecticut missed over 250,000 school days due to out-of-school suspensions; in 2005-2006, kindergarteners alone lost approximately 2,000 days. In 2006-2007, over 60 percent of out-of-school suspensions were for school policy violations, including truancy and disrespect.<sup>1</sup>

Extensive research shows that excluding children from school for disciplinary problems is often ineffective, even counterproductive. Children learn best when they are in school. Overreliance on out-of-school suspensions contributes to poor academic achievement, high dropout rates, and the staggering achievement gap between low-income minority children in Connecticut and their higher-income peers. Students often perceive out-of-school suspensions as a “vacation” from school, and exclusion from school rarely prevents – or addresses the underlying causes of – the misbehavior.

The good news, however, is that many schools in Connecticut have demonstrated that it is possible to maintain discipline and a positive learning environment without excluding children except in the narrowest of circumstances. These schools have adopted a wide range of creative, common sense, age-appropriate, and often low-cost alternatives to out-of-school suspensions. As a result of these alternative disciplinary strategies, out-of-school suspension rates in Connecticut have begun to drop. As school discipline improves, academic performance improves, as educators and students have more time to devote to teaching and learning.

This report highlights the disciplinary alternatives to out-of-school suspensions that schools in Connecticut are implementing with tangible – and sometimes astonishing – results. Although many of the interventions described here are supported by academic research, the heart of this report is the practical and experiential knowledge of educators in Connecticut. The goal of this report is to share these ideas and best practices. We do not suggest a “one-size fits all” approach; rather, we hope to provide a “menu” or “toolkit” of potential options that educators can consider, adopt, or modify based on the unique culture, resources, and needs of

their school communities. We hope that schools will use this report as an introduction to an array of possible disciplinary options (rather than as a definitive treatise, or an endorsement of any particular intervention), and will benefit from the experience and wisdom of other schools in Connecticut. We also hope that this report will provide guidance to schools seeking to implement Connecticut's 2007 suspension law (effective July 1, 2010), by demonstrating that while in-school suspensions may serve as one viable alternative to out-of-school suspensions, administrators remain free under the law to adopt a wide range of other alternatives. This report seeks to demonstrate the breadth of the range of effective alternatives, and in so doing, encourage educators to experiment with what works best in their schools.

Issues of school discipline in Connecticut remain very challenging. Yet the educators we interviewed expressed – and inspired – a tremendous amount of confidence that the problem of school discipline can be tackled and solved like any other problem. These educators have proven that good discipline *can* indeed be taught. The results of their efforts are quite striking.

## II. Introduction

We begin this report with good news: out-of-school suspension rates in Connecticut are dropping. The percentage of students out-of-school suspended in Connecticut decreased from 7.1 percent in 2006-2007 to 6.0 percent in 2007-2008 to 5.4 percent in 2008-2009.<sup>2</sup> 121 of 166 school districts (73 percent) in Connecticut reported decreases in out-of-school suspension rates between 2006-2007 and 2008-2009; only 16 of 166 districts (10 percent) reported increases.<sup>3</sup> In addition, some districts, such as Bridgeport, demonstrated very substantial reductions during this time period. A full listing of changes in out-of-school suspension rates by district is included in Appendix A.

Connecticut schools' reduction in out-of-school suspension rates is a promising development for several reasons. First, the educational and social costs of excluding children from school are significant, as discussed in detail in our August 2008 report, *Missing Out: Suspending Students from Connecticut Schools*. Out-of-school suspensions contribute to poor academic achievement, as excluded children miss valuable class time, fall behind, and have difficulty catching up. In 2006-2007 and again in 2007-2008, schoolchildren in Connecticut missed over 250,000 school days due to out-of-school suspensions; in 2005-2006, kindergarteners alone lost approximately 2,000 days.<sup>4</sup> Over 60 percent of out-of-school suspensions were for school policy violations, including truancy and disrespect.<sup>5</sup> Data show that the children most likely to be excluded from school for disciplinary reasons are also those at greatest risk of educational failure.<sup>6</sup> Connecticut has one of the largest achievement gaps between poor and non-poor students in the nation. While some schools in Connecticut have been able to close this gap, it is only with extraordinarily hard work. Children in these schools simply cannot afford to miss school.

Out-of-school suspensions are also believed to increase the risk of juvenile delinquency, both by leaving children unattended at home or on the streets and by leading to a reliance on more severe consequences for infractions that were previously handled in school.<sup>7</sup> In 2007, Connecticut's Court Support Services Division reported that 89 percent of 16 and 17-year olds involved in the juvenile justice system had been suspended or expelled from school.<sup>8</sup> While the link between school discipline problems and delinquency is attributable to many factors,<sup>9</sup> police have expressed concern about delinquency when students are unsupervised during school hours.<sup>10</sup> Increased referrals to the juvenile justice system for school-based infractions once handled by school administrators also increase youth involvement in the juvenile justice system.<sup>11</sup> As Governor Rell noted in 2007, "Keeping children out of school is a direct line to delinquent behavior . . . It's a recipe for failure."<sup>12</sup>

Exclusionary punishments contribute to disengagement and eventual dropout,<sup>13</sup> as students whose bonds with their schools are already weak may take exclusions from school as a sign that they are unwanted, or that they do not "belong" in school. A school's overreliance on exclusionary punishments can fray the relationship between children and educators and undermine children's confidence in the value of education.<sup>14</sup> School alienation and weak school bonding are some of the strongest variables predicting juvenile delinquency.<sup>15</sup>

Good discipline is essential to academic success. Disciplinary problems distract from valuable learning time and hurt both the disciplined student and his peers.<sup>16</sup> These challenges are often cited as one of the leading factors in teacher stress, turnover, and burnout.<sup>17</sup> Strong social skills reinforce strong academic achievement and are critical to creating a safe and positive learning environment. Perhaps most importantly, good self-discipline and strong social skills are essential to the intellectual, emotional, and moral development of children.

There is little evidence that excluding children who misbehave from school is an effective method of promoting discipline or creating a positive learning environment.<sup>18</sup> Although out-of-school suspensions are necessary and effective in some circumstances, in many situations in which they are commonly used they are either ineffective or even counterproductive.<sup>19</sup> Many children perceive out-of-school suspensions as vacations from school; indeed, educators report that some children act out *in order* to secure a break from school.<sup>20</sup> Exclusionary punishments like out-of-school suspension also often fail to address the root causes of student misbehavior, and are therefore largely unsuccessful in preventing it. Finally, particularly relevant in the cases of young children, exclusionary punishments fail to *teach* children the necessary social skills to be successful in school and in life.<sup>21</sup> Some children come to school with the social skills necessary to interact positively with others; others do not.<sup>22</sup> Just as a school would not send a child home for not knowing how to read, it is rarely appropriate to deny schooling to a child – particularly a young child – who has not yet learned how to behave appropriately.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, good discipline is so fundamental to a school’s ability to fulfill its other missions that it is worth devoting significant attention to getting it right.<sup>24</sup>

Recognizing the link between exclusionary punishment and negative outcomes for students, the Connecticut legislature passed a law in 2007 limiting out-of-school suspensions to situations when they are necessary – i.e., when the school administration determines that 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.”<sup>25</sup> While the law states that all *suspensions* for conduct below this threshold must be “in-school” rather than “out-of-school,” administrators remain free under the law to use a wide range of other alternatives to out-of-school suspensions as well. Implementation of this important law was delayed twice, pushing back the effective date of the law to July 1, 2010.<sup>26</sup> However, during this period, many schools and districts began to explore alternative to out-of-school suspensions, at least in part due to the conversation the law generated about educational and social costs of excluding children from school. During the most recent (2010) legislative session, revised language was passed, and it was agreed that the law would retain its effective date of July 1, 2010. The new language continues to limit out-of-school suspensions to cases when they are truly necessary, but also states that an administrator may decide that an out-of-school suspension is appropriate for a student based on evidence of “previous disciplinary problems that have led to suspensions or expulsion of such pupil,” combined with “efforts by the administration to address such disciplinary problems through means other than out-of-school suspension or expulsion, including positive behavioral support strategies.”<sup>27</sup> This paper discusses many of the most promising positive behavioral support strategies and alternatives to out-of-school suspensions.

The good news is that many schools in Connecticut have demonstrated that it is possible to maintain discipline and a positive learning environment without excluding children except in the narrowest of circumstances. These schools have adopted a wide range of creative, common sense, age-appropriate and often low-cost alternatives to out-of-school suspensions. Some of these schools have consistently achieved low out-of-school suspension rates; others have made improvements in their disciplinary approaches and reduced their out-of-school suspension rates in recent years. Most of these schools are already in compliance with Connecticut’s suspension law.

So, how did these schools do it? How can schools struggling with high out-of-school suspension rates promote good discipline and a positive learning environment while keeping children in school? How can the successes of these schools provide guidance to schools seeking to implement Connecticut’s new suspension law, effective July 1, 2010?

To answer these questions, we interviewed school teachers, principals, social workers, guidance counselors and psychologists, as well as district-level administrators; parents’ representatives; children’s advocates; legal

services attorneys; community service providers and education experts;<sup>28</sup> analyzed State Department of Education data on suspensions; reviewed codes of conduct in various schools and districts; conducted a comprehensive review of Connecticut media coverage on suspensions; reviewed in detail all relevant laws and regulations; reviewed testimony submitted to various committees of the General Assembly regarding suspension policies; reviewed State Department of Education focus monitoring reports and independent evaluations of certain school districts; listened to educators speak about disciplinary issues at various conferences; and analyzed the secondary education, social science, and legal literature on school discipline both in Connecticut and nation-wide, including research in the academic literature, as well as research from public policy and professional organizations. We also incorporated the comments of educators who attended a presentation on best practice alternatives to suspension at an April 2010 conference hosted by the Governor's Prevention Partnership on positive school climate and student success. A list of the people we spoke with in preparing this report is included in Appendix B. We are extremely grateful for their insights, perspective, ideas, and time.

This report highlights a range of disciplinary alternatives to both in-school and out-of-school suspensions that schools around the country and in Connecticut have already used with success. This report does not suggest a "one size fits all" approach to school discipline, as school culture, student needs, and school resources vary significantly across the 166 school districts in our richly diverse state – and indeed, often among schools within the same district that serve substantially similar students in terms of aggregate demographic variables. Rather, this report seeks to provide a "menu" of *potential* interventions that educators might consider using or adapting to their particular environments, depending on the particular strengths and challenges of a particular school and the particular needs of its students. It is our hope that schools will benefit from the experience and wisdom of other schools in Connecticut. We also hope that this report will provide guidance to schools seeking to implement Connecticut's 2007 suspension law (effective July 1, 2010), by demonstrating that while in-school suspensions may serve as one viable alternative to out-of-school suspensions, administrators remain free under the law to adopt a wide range of other alternatives, many of which are detailed in this report. This report seeks to demonstrate the breadth of the range of viable alternatives and in so doing, encourage educators to take the opportunity presented by the new law to experiment with what works best in their schools.

It is important to note that we were not able to canvass every school district. As a result, there are quite likely many promising alternatives to suspensions in use that we have not mentioned in this report, as well as many *examples* of alternatives in place that we have not highlighted.

In addition, almost all of the schools and districts we spoke with used a variety of strategies and interventions to reduce out-of-school suspensions – a "continuum" of services – depending on the behavior at issue and the needs of the student. Indeed, one of the most important principles of effective discipline is that while expectations for behavior must be clear and explicit, the response, or range of responses, should often be tailored to meeting the needs of the individual student, based on an understanding of why the particular student misbehaved.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, although for organizational purposes, the interventions are discussed one at a time, in practice, they are usually just one part of a continuum of services and an overall discipline strategy. We were not able to assign a specific financial cost to particular interventions cited, as implementation costs vary significantly based on programming details and existing resources. However, whenever possible, we included educators' comments about the advantages and disadvantages of particular strategies.

Finally, it is important to note the limited scope of this report. This report does not address alternatives to expulsion or strategies for dealing with disciplinary problems of the level that would ordinarily lead to



expulsion.<sup>30</sup> While some of the interventions discussed below might help prevent expellable offenses, disciplinary offenses at that level raise some unique issues beyond the scope of this report. This report also does not address full-on the specific issues involved in disciplining children with special education needs. Discipline of students with educational disabilities in Connecticut is a critical issue, given that students with special education needs are suspended more than twice as often as their general education peers.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, lawyers and children’s advocates we spoke with expressed substantial concern that the rights afforded students with special education needs in federal law are often unenforced and that disciplinary problems often mask undiagnosed or unmet special education needs. These important concerns raise some unique and complex issues beyond the scope of this report. Nonetheless, we expect that many of the interventions discussed below will help reduce out-of-school suspension rates for students with special education needs.

### **A. Alternatives to Out-of-School Suspensions: a Continuum of Interventions**

Alternatives to out-of-school suspensions can be broken down into two categories: measures designed to improve school climate and prevent disciplinary infractions, and responses to disciplinary offenses once they have occurred. Some interventions fall into both categories, and the categories themselves overlap. Indeed, as discussed more fully in the sections below, educators we interviewed consistently stressed two points. First, they emphasized the importance of focusing on preventative approaches, as investments in improving school climate and promoting positive behavior yield tremendous results in reducing disciplinary infractions and improving academic outcomes. Specifically, they noted that investments in preventative approaches save a significant amount of time for teaching and learning, reap huge rewards in terms of school climate and culture, and free up limited resources to focus on the children who need additional help. Second, they noted that even interventions that take place after the disciplinary infraction has occurred must integrate supports designed to prevent the behavior from reoccurring and to strengthen – or at least preserve – the student’s bond to the school community. So, in essence, all “responses” to disciplinary offenses that have already occurred should themselves be preventative. Ideally, students who have committed disciplinary infractions should be given the opportunity to reflect on their wrongdoing (e.g. through reflective essays, responsible thinking classrooms, etc.), make amends (e.g. through restitution, apologies, community service), and develop strategies for improving behavior in the future (e.g. through behavioral contracts, counseling, etc.). Likewise, students who miss class because they are suspended in- or out-of-school should be given the supports necessary to rejoin their classmates after the period of suspension with minimum disruption to their academic and social development.

Nonetheless, for ease of organization, we have listed interventions in the category with which they are most closely associated. Many specific interventions could be seen as simply subsets of larger frameworks, such as School-wide Positive Behavioral Supports (SWPBS). Indeed, in terms of a concerted approach or overall philosophy, SWPBS is one of the most encompassing and also one of the most effective frameworks in terms of concrete, measurable improvements in both behavior and academic outcomes. Given the success of many Connecticut schools in reducing their out-of-school suspension rates through SWPBS, it is discussed in some detail below. However, many schools in Connecticut have also been successful in reducing their out-of-school suspension rates through programming and interventions that borrow from the philosophy of SWPBS, or that draw on other frameworks altogether, or that mix and match approaches based on the culture, needs, resources, and history of the school. Accordingly, the alternatives described are often more fluid in practice than the categorization below suggests. For purposes of this report, the precise taxonomy and definitional contours of the various interventions are less important than simply setting forth potential options.

### III. Preventative Measures

#### A. Look at the data

The first step in reducing out-of-school suspension rates is to look at school-level data to determine where the problems are. Specifically, schools leaders look at the data to determine:

- What types of behavior are responsible for the majority of out-of-school suspensions?
- At what time of day do disciplinary infractions that lead to out-of-school suspensions tend to occur?
- At what time in the school year do disciplinary infractions that lead to out-of-school suspensions tend to occur?
- Where do disciplinary infractions that lead to out-of-school suspensions tend to occur (e.g. in class, in the lunch room, at school-sponsored after school activities)?
- In what grades are students most likely to commit disciplinary infractions that result in out-of-school suspensions?
- Do teachers vary significantly in their disciplinary referral rates, particularly with respect to conduct that results in out-of-school suspensions?
- Are there disproportionality trends in the out-of-school suspension data (e.g. special education status, race, gender) that cause concern?
- For any particular child, does the data elucidate any patterns (e.g. problems primarily with a particular teacher, in a particular class, at a particular time of day, with a particular behavior)?
- For any particular child, does the data suggest any unmet or undiagnosed special education needs?

Researchers and educators stress the primacy of looking at the data to determine what types of interventions will be most productive. Using data is the foundation of School-wide Positive Behavioral Supports (discussed below) but can serve as the first step to any disciplinary approach. Indeed, trends in the data are sometimes so stark that the data point to common sense solutions that might otherwise be overlooked – solutions both at the individual student level and the structural level. For instance, the child who is repeatedly suspended for behavior that arises exclusively in a particular class – and not in any other setting – may need very different interventions than the child who repeatedly gets suspended for behavior consistently in all of his classes. Similarly, teachers with unusually high disciplinary referral rates for particular types of offenses – when compared to peers teaching the same students – might benefit from targeted professional development regarding certain classroom management skills, such as de-escalation. Disciplinary problems that arise outside of class – in the hallways, at recess, at lunch, etc. – might call for different interventions than in-class behavioral problems; indeed, punishing students who offend in non-classroom settings by removing them *from class* might be illogical. Repeated out-of-school suspensions of the same students for the same infractions might suggest that the out-of-school suspensions are not having the intended deterrent effect. Finally, if a certain type of infraction (such as attendance violations) or a certain category of students (such as ninth grade boys) drive a disproportionate percentage of the out-of-school suspensions, a relatively large reduction in time lost to out-of-school suspensions potentially could be achieved by prioritizing interventions targeted to address those students or infractions.

Many schools in Connecticut have reduced their out-of-school suspension rates by making structural and environmental changes based on the data. For instance, **Rogers Park Middle School** in **Danbury** has

reduced its out-of-school suspension rates (from 1039 school days of out-of-school suspensions in the 2006-2007 school year to only 396 school days of out-of-school suspensions in school year 2008-2009) by looking at data and thinking creatively about what changes in adult behavior could yield results in improved student discipline. Administrators found that “fine-tuning” the scheduling to reduce unstructured time – for example, by eliminating study hall, shortening lunch period, and reducing time students spent waiting between transitions – improved student behavior.<sup>32</sup> They also found that by looking at patterns of disciplinary infractions and monitoring data about individual students who were struggling, they could think about disciplinary challenges in a new way, and respond in a more creative, proactive manner.<sup>33</sup>

At **Norwich’s Teachers’ Memorial Middle School**, staff noticed from data that their Latino students were suspended disproportionately often. Staff hypothesized that this may have been caused by the fact that English Language Learner (ELL) students were isolated. Teachers’ Memorial, the bilingual center for middle schools in the district, had one bilingual classroom; students received most of their instruction with the same group of peers, and peer-to-peer conflicts would arise. To combat this problem, Teachers’ Memorial has begun restructuring their bilingual/ELL program. Beginning next year, the school will have two bilingual/ELL classrooms to reduce isolation among this student population and reduce class size.<sup>34</sup>

Administrators at **Middletown High School** reviewed their disciplinary data and found that the majority of suspensions were the result of missed detentions for tardiness or skipping class. Based on this information, they changed their school’s detention policy, which resulted in fewer out-of-school suspensions.<sup>35</sup> (See “Detentions” section.) Similarly, administrators at **Sprague School District’s Sayles School in Baltic** (PreK-8<sup>th</sup> grade), looked at the data and noticed that the most frequent disciplinary offense at the school was students’ failure to complete their work. This key point enabled them to design their interventions appropriately. Looking at the data also revealed that in the case of one young child, the child’s behavior became particularly difficult at certain times of the day, enabling them to tailor an appropriate response. Data statewide show that out-of-school suspension rates peak in the ninth grade, as students often have trouble adjusting to new environments.<sup>36</sup> Based on this data, many schools have responded with programs designed for freshmen, systems that track and provide services to at-risk students, and “freshmen academies.”<sup>37</sup>

Data analysis at the district level has also played an important role in reducing disciplinary incidents. In the **Montville School District**, a data program called School-wide Information System (SWIS), discussed in more detail below, has enabled schools in the district to determine trends such as which areas of schools and which times of the school day had the most disciplinary incidents. Once the schools had identified this information, they were able to prevent infractions by adding more supervision at the “right” times and places.<sup>38</sup>

**Hartford Public Schools’** Strategic Operating Plan calls on assistant superintendents to review attendance, office referrals, and suspension data monthly.<sup>39</sup>

Educators and researchers we spoke with overwhelmingly recommended School-wide Information System (SWIS), a data system that enables administrators to chart out individual and multiple student data trends in user-friendly graphs. Administrators can easily track and chart all of the relevant data noted above. SWIS, with the assistance of additional software, has the potential to allow administrators to compare data across schools. SWIS, produced by a nonprofit organization, costs \$250 per school per year.<sup>40</sup> Some educators note the time lost when required to enter data into several different systems – SWIS covers only disciplinary-related information – and mention that it does take time to enter all of the relevant data.

However, they also note that the system is very easy to use and that the effort is worth it. SWIS has allowed schools to be proactive, rather than reactive, in addressing potential disciplinary issues.<sup>41</sup>

## **B. School-wide Positive Behavioral Supports (SWPBS)<sup>42</sup>**

Many schools in Connecticut have achieved impressive reductions in disciplinary referrals and out-of-school suspensions – and significant improvements in school climate and academic achievement – by adopting School-wide Positive Behavioral Supports (SWPBS). SWPBS has also been referred to as Positive Behavioral Support Strategies (PBS) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). (In this section, we use the acronym utilized by the individual or group cited in order to accurately represent their work and programs.) SWPBS is a systems approach designed to improve school climate, discipline, and achievement; it is an analytical framework rather than a specific tool or intervention. The SWPBS framework includes many elements: steadfast attention to data; team-based decision-making; clear delineation of behavioral expectations; active teaching of behavioral expectations; positive reinforcement for all meeting these expectations; analysis of why students misbehave in certain situations; and a continuum of data-driven supports and services designed to *teach* and meet the needs of students who struggle to meet these expectations, including students with severe emotional and behavioral concerns. SWPBS teams, composed of school and district level educators, determine which services and structural supports to offer based on the needs (as determined by a review of disciplinary data) and resources of the particular school, and then consistently monitor the results of these changes in programming to see if they can be improved upon. Accordingly, while there are many specific interventions that are commonly used in SWPBS systems – such as behavioral contracting – the framework allows for a lot of flexibility (and therefore variation) in its application. Experts in SWPBS as well as educators new to the method both stressed that it is most effective when there is substantial buy-in from those asked to implement SWPBS on the ground, as its success is determined in large part by the extent to which it is executed with “fidelity” (which can be measured in a very concrete way through a School-wide Evaluation Tool). Experts in SWPBS also emphasized that the *process* of developing positive behavioral interventions and supports (looking at specific data indicators, choosing evidence-based practices, seeking buy-in from the community, monitoring implementation, refining systems in an iterative manner based on data) is more important than any *particular* intervention.

In discussing the benefits of SWPBS, educators kept returning to a simple, but crucial insight: discipline must be *taught*. They noted that while some students come to school with the self-discipline and social skills necessary to interact positively in the school environment, others do not. For these children, behavioral expectations must be taught, practiced, and reinforced – actively, consistently, and rigorously – just like any other skill set. Teaching these behaviors “levels the playing field” between students who received instruction at home about behavioral expectations and students who have not, and enables all students to work in a positive school environment that can focus on learning. Indeed, the interesting thing about schools that are serious about SWPBS is that in many ways they are *tougher* on discipline – that is, they have higher expectations and more consistent enforcement – than other schools that might from time to time let low-level infractions slide. By actively teaching, monitoring, and reinforcing positive behaviors with respect to seemingly small issues – how to walk in the hallway, what to do in the lunchroom, how to ask a teacher for help – they free up time ordinarily lost to dealing with low-level infractions and help prevent larger behavioral challenges.

There are a tremendous number of resources on SWPBS available to schools in Connecticut. SWPBS was developed and has evolved from the work by researchers and practitioners associated with the National Technical Assistance Center of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports ([www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)) funded by

the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. The PBIS Center is co-directed by Dr. Robert Horner at the University of Oregon and Dr. George Sugai at the University of Connecticut, and its website has one of the most complete material collections related to effective SWPBS practices and systems. Dr. Sugai also directs the Center for Behavioral Education and Research ([www.cber.org](http://www.cber.org)) in the Neag School of Education at UConn. Both Centers work in collaboration with the State Education Resource Center (SERC), which has been providing training, technical assistance, coaching and evaluation on SWPBS to school districts since 2000. Since then, SERC has trained over 27 districts and over 125 schools in SWPBS. Schools at all grade levels have participated, though approximately 75 percent of schools trained have been elementary schools.<sup>43</sup>

Rather than attempt to summarize the wealth of literature on SWPBS, this report refers the reader to the most significant resources for schools in Connecticut, offers some data highlights, and then focuses on a few case examples of how SWPBS has been implemented successfully in Connecticut. There are two leading studies of SWPBS implementation in Connecticut. In January 2009, Dr. Joy Kaufman at The Consultation Center at the Yale University School of Medicine wrote a study on the results of implementing PBIS<sup>44</sup> in the Bridgeport Public School System.<sup>45</sup> In March 2009, SERC issued a comprehensive data report and summary on Positive Behavior Support in SERC-trained schools in Connecticut.<sup>46</sup> In addition, the May Institute has published a presentation of its work with the Meriden School District in implementing SWPBS.<sup>47</sup>

SWPBS implementation has resulted in some rather stunning behavioral and academic improvements.<sup>48</sup> For instance, **Bridgeport Public Schools** have made remarkable progress in reducing out-of-school suspension rates. In 2006-2007, Bridgeport had the highest out-of-school suspension rate of any district in the state, at 22 percent.<sup>49</sup> Between 2006-2007 and 2008-2009, however, the total number of out-of-school suspension incidents decreased by 40 percent.<sup>50</sup> Suspensions dropped by 70 percent in the largest high school.<sup>51</sup> Bridgeport attributes this improvement to a number of interventions, the most significant of which is Positive Behavioral Supports.<sup>52</sup> Specifically, all Bridgeport schools that are implementing SWPBS experienced a 50 percent reduction in office referrals.<sup>53</sup> Schools implementing SWPBS in Bridgeport regained “hundreds of hours” of both instructional time and administrative time, allowing the schools to focus on academics. Students in schools implementing SWPBS reported an improvement in “overall school climate, student interpersonal relationships and order and discipline”; teachers reported an improvement in order and discipline.<sup>54</sup> Finally, according to the Yale Consultation Center, “it appears that this increase in time spent educating Bridgeport’s children has resulted in a significantly greater percentage of 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students at the schools implementing PBIS to fidelity being at or above proficiency on their math and reading CMTs after their school implemented PBIS than the students in the schools where PBIS has not been implemented. Trend level improvements in writing were also noted for the 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students.”<sup>55</sup>

According to the State Education Resource Center, several Connecticut schools that have implemented SWPBS have seen reductions in both in- and out-of-school suspension rates, as well as reductions in expulsion rates. Some schools have seen dramatic decreases in office disciplinary referrals. Yearly office discipline referrals at the **Middle School of Plainville**, for example, fell from more than 1700 in school year 2005-2006, before SWPBS was implemented, to under 1000 in school year 2006-2007, after SWPBS was implemented.<sup>56</sup> The improvement continued in the following school year with fewer than 800 office disciplinary referrals.<sup>57</sup> Out-of-school suspensions at the middle school also dropped dramatically: from nearly 120 in 2005-2006 to under 30 in 2007-2008.<sup>58</sup> Trends have also begun to emerge across the state of schools’ academic scores increasing after implementation of SWPBS. At **Colchester Elementary School**, for example, SWPBS training was provided in school year 2005-2006. Students’ reading fluency – as

measured by the DIBELS assessment of the school's early elementary students – improved substantially between school year 2006-2007 and school year 2008-2009.<sup>59</sup>

What follows is a description of how SWPBS has worked in a sampling of schools throughout the state. There are many examples of schools in Connecticut using SWPBS to great effect; the following examples are illustrative only.

*Columbus School (PreK-8), Bridgeport*

**Columbus School**, which serves approximately 700 students grades PreK-6 in **Bridgeport**, reduced its out-of-school suspension rates by 30 percent in one year, through SWPBS and other interventions.<sup>60</sup> Its website describes the elements of SWPBS and encapsulates the philosophy put into practice extensively by its staff: “[I]t is much more effective to be proactive, and establish a system of behavioral expectations and rewards, rather than reactive, and punish a student when his/her behavior has escalated to a crisis situation.”<sup>61</sup> The school incorporates all of the elements of SWPBS: clear expectations consistently communicated, data-informed decision making, active teaching of social skills, positive reinforcements for good behavior, and a number of supports and techniques to respond proactively – rather than reactively or punitively – to the needs of students who struggle academically and behaviorally.<sup>62</sup>

Indeed, the most striking aspect of speaking to their staff was the *comprehensive* nature of their interventions, their emphasis on teamwork, and their dedication to experimenting with a range of proactive practices to respond to the needs of their students. For example, teachers enter into social contracts with their students. When a child is disruptive in class and does not respond to a teacher's efforts to calm him down, the teacher can give the child a brief “time out” or cooling off period in another teacher's classroom. Staff “check and connect” with students with greater needs twice a day – a procedure that helps students and staff build positive relationships and discuss and work through any issues that arise. Support staff are available to help de-escalate difficult situations and support one another and students. Interdisciplinary student assistance teams meet regularly to review the cases and data of children who are struggling with more complex needs. These teams work together to coordinate services, either in-house or with outside providers. Staff engage parents whenever possible and also seek to engage students in school through a host of extracurricular activities. Staff make efforts to ensure that students, particularly those who often struggle, are rewarded for meeting or exceeding behavioral expectations. For example, a student who is always getting in trouble may be chosen to run messages for the principal as a special treat or as a special break. Staff who go above and beyond the call of duty are nominated by their peers for fun perks, like better parking. Staff also work hard to think creatively of ways for small interactions with one another and with students to be positive. Social skills are taught as part of the curriculum from the early grades. Children who need additional guidance in learning social skills participate in additional small groups on relevant topics.

Staff noted that challenges remained and that there was often not enough time to do everything perfectly. However, they attributed their unusual success to strong openness of the administration and staff to try new things, to be open to outside programs and resources, and to work together as a team to support students and one another.<sup>63</sup>

*Housatonic Valley Regional High School (9-12), Falls Village*

**Housatonic Valley Regional High School** (HVRHS) is a model site for School-wide Positive Behavioral Supports. The school, the 9-12 public comprehensive high school for **Regional School District One** in northwestern Connecticut, began involvement with SWPBS three years ago. Seeking to improve school

climate and lower suspension rates particularly of students with special education needs, school staff attended a free training on SWPBS given by the State Education Resource Center (SERC).<sup>64</sup> In year one of implementation, HVRHS implemented SWPBS only in the school hallways and cafeteria. The SWPBS team recognized that it made most sense for the school to implement in only two locations to begin with and to use that experience as a jumping board for school-wide expansion. The school established its SWPBS expectations of Responsible, Respectful, and Safe behavior and created expectation matrices, lessons, and reward systems. In year two, HVRHS expanded SWPBS to classrooms, buses, and the library, with SWPBS continuing school-wide in year three. Students assisted with the creation of expectations, matrices, and ideas for rewards.<sup>65</sup>

As part of implementation, the school has completed several steps and instituted new procedures. One such procedure was to define which behaviors constitute office referrals and which should be managed in the classroom versus in the office. In the first week of the school year, students are taught what positive behavior looks like in various areas of the school. Re-teaching expected behavior patterns occurs throughout the year as needed.<sup>66</sup> Students receive recognition slips for exhibiting responsible, respectful, and safe behaviors. Each week, one slip per grade is drawn, and the winning students receive prizes such as gift cards to local businesses or school pride paraphernalia. An adult winner is selected each week as well, based on the referral source name on a student's drawn slip.<sup>67</sup>

In the cafeteria, where the change in student behavior has been described as “amazing,” student rewards are collective. If each lunch period meets the positive behavioral expectations in the “Cafeteria Rubric” in one day, the students as a whole earn an SWPBS sticker, and the school plays music in the cafeteria the next day. Students help to pick out the music for the day. Over time, students can earn other privileges such as eating lunch outside. The school has coached lunch supervisors, custodial staff, and kitchen staff on effectively monitoring the cafeteria and encouraging positive student behavior. For students who are not demonstrating respectful, responsible, or safe behavior, staff gives a “Food for Thought” slip; students receiving this slip complete a “Something to Chew On” re-teaching worksheet in the assistant principal's office during an upcoming lunch period. Coaching of adults, consistent tracking of behavior, re-teaching, and creatively developing rewards has been used to promote and motivate students to exhibit positive behavior on the buses and in other school settings as well.<sup>68</sup>

SWPBS at HVRHS has been very successful. The number of overall discipline referrals between September 1 and March 1 decreased 38 percent between the 08-09 school year and the 09-10 school year. Administrators have reported a significant improvement in school climate, substantial student buy-in, and continually increasing staff participation. Regional School District One plans to expand SWPBS to all its elementary schools in the coming years.<sup>69</sup>

#### *Sayles School (Pre-K-8), Baltic*

The **Sayles School** in **Baltic** in the **Sprague School District** has created a Positive Behavior Support Room, which is staffed by a paraprofessional and is part of a program that includes Student Assistance Team Meetings and Individualized Behavior Sheets. Parents or teachers can ask for a Student Assistance Team Meeting, which is used to address both disciplinary and academic issues with a student. The school psychologist and school social worker can also be asked to attend. Principal Jean Wierzbinski stated that she participates in these meetings 99 percent of the time and that there is usually at least one meeting occurring in the school per day. During the course of the meeting behavioral goals are established for the child, and the team determines what types of rewards would be effective. Students are then issued Individualized Behavior Sheets, on which their behavior is rated on a scale. The students then have to bring the sheets

home for parent signature and return them to the Positive Behavior Support Room in the morning. Students that comply are eligible to enter into a raffle for small prizes or are able to access special privileges.<sup>70</sup>

#### *Montville High School (9-12), Montville*

At **Montville High School**, disciplinary rates have been dramatically improving over the past year. The number of class cuts alone has dropped by over 50 percent. Tatiana Patten, Assistant Principal, attributes much of this decrease to the implementation of SWPBS in her school. As a result of this program, teachers have been better able to handle problems in their classroom and have been able to improve their instruction to better engage kids in class. Faculty members report about disciplinary problems at staff meetings in order to touch base and assess disciplinary problems.<sup>71</sup> Montville School District has expanded the SWPBS program to all schools and is currently training the last two elementary schools to implement the program.<sup>72</sup> The faculty and administration aim to problem solve student issues, rather than automatically discipline.<sup>73</sup>

#### *Other positive reinforcement programs*

**Middletown's Snow School** has a school-wide positive behavior program called REACH, an acronym that stands for Respect, Effort, A-plus attitude, Caring, and Honesty. When students exhibit REACH behaviors, they receive positive feedback from staff in the form of tickets. The names of REACH winners are published in the principal's newsletter. Once a month, the school has a recognition ceremony to reward positive behavior. Parents are invited to the ceremony, and students and their parents do fun activities together that are inexpensive or free, such as playing a game of kickball.<sup>74</sup> Middletown schools also have school climate committees, which look at disciplinary data and ways to improve school climate.

**Fox Elementary School in Hartford** has begun to utilize tickets when they "catch" kids who demonstrate good behavior. All staff members who interact with students, including custodial staff, teachers, administrators, and cafeteria employees, carry the tickets. Ticket recipients are eligible to purchase items from the school store such as small trinkets and school supplies. Individual teachers also have criteria for giving out the tickets, and there are separate classroom incentives.<sup>75</sup>

**Cromwell High School** has a positive behavior support system in which students can earn rewards for demonstrating certain target behaviors. Staff members give students Panther points for demonstrating positive behaviors such as accepting responsibility and caring about learning. The points can be used to buy items from the school store and juice bar.<sup>76</sup> Educators throughout the country have constructed creative idea lists of fun and low-cost positive reinforcements.<sup>77</sup>

#### *A note on positive reinforcements –*

Some educators express concern that positive reinforcements may inadvertently cause students to be motivated extrinsically rather than intrinsically – that is, that once one removes the incentives, the positive behavior disappears. This is indeed a risk of "token economies" or material rewards used in isolation and improperly.<sup>78</sup> However, when material rewards are used properly – that is, within the context of conversations between children and adults regarding the positive behaviors – experience suggests that children do internalize the underlying message. Moreover, many of the "rewards" used for positive reinforcements are not material but are experiential – and serve to build positive relationships among students and staff.<sup>79</sup>



A significant body of research has demonstrated that like any intervention, if positive reinforcement is used incorrectly, side effects could be experienced. However, when used, monitored, and adjusted properly, positive reinforcement (e.g. rewards) is clearly an effective means of increasing the likelihood that students will display desired or expected behavior, decrease their displays of inappropriate behavior, improve self-management skills, support academic achievement, and enhance teacher and student relations.<sup>80</sup>

### C. Active Teaching of Social Skills

Many schools in Connecticut have improved school climate and reduced out-of-school suspension rates by actively teaching social skills, self-discipline, and character education. What follows is a small sampling of many such programs throughout the state.

The **West Hartford School District**, for example, has seen suspension rates decline over the past few years in a number of district schools.<sup>81</sup> Timothy Dunn, Assistant Superintendent for Administration, attributes much of this decline to the district's proactive efforts to improve school climate and student behavior.<sup>82</sup> One method by which West Hartford administrators have attempted to improve behavior is through specially designed curricula. Classroom teachers at West Hartford elementary schools incorporate lessons on school climate and cooperation into the health component of their curriculum and follow-up with students who they feel might be especially impacted by these issues. Approximately fifteen to thirty of these lessons occur a year. Special programs teaching tolerance, cooperation, and empathy are available to further reinforce the lessons taught in each classroom.<sup>83</sup> This proactive instruction is continued through the middle school years. Health teachers at West Hartford's three middle schools engage students in lessons involving issues such as harassment, threatening, and bullying. Students are taught how to engage in conflict resolution and how they should react if they witness inappropriate behavior.<sup>84</sup>

At **Conard High School** in **West Hartford**, ninth grade students participate in the EMPOWER program, which continues their instruction in appropriate social behavior. School administrators meet with students two to three times per week for the first quarter of the school year to teach lessons relevant to behavioral issues affecting the school. Prior to these sessions, administrators identify the most relevant behavioral problems affecting their school by analyzing trends in disciplinary incidents from the summer and previous school year. Additionally, teachers review the school's disciplinary handbook with all students during morning homeroom at the beginning of the year, so that students will more fully understand behavioral expectations and consequences. The principal also meets with all students during the first week of school to further address expectations for the year ahead.<sup>85</sup>

At **High Horizons Magnet School (K-8)** in **Bridgeport**, students in the fourth grade participate in "community meetings" to build relationships, teach social skills, and prevent misunderstandings that could lead to disciplinary problems. The meetings are co-led by a teacher and social worker and are highly structured. Through these meetings, children learn to share their feelings, give and receive positive feedback, bond with one another, and think through and resolve social problems. These meetings reduce the need for out-of-school suspensions by teaching children that the problems they experience will be dealt with and that they do not need to take matters into their own hands or respond impulsively.<sup>86</sup>

Similarly, teachers and counselors in the **Montville School District** make an effort to proactively address student disciplinary problems before they start. Social workers in the elementary and middle schools in the Montville School District lead focus groups and meetings that discuss appropriate behavior; at the high school level, similar groups are led by school psychologists and a local social services organization.<sup>87</sup>

## D. Mentoring

Positive relationships are one of the most important protective factors for children at risk of disciplinary trouble, academic failure, and dropping out. Many schools in Connecticut have sought to reduce disciplinary problems and promote student success by actively encouraging the development of positive relationships through peer and adult mentoring programs. Mentors can be teachers or staff from within the school, members of the community, or more senior students. Past studies of adult-adolescent mentoring programs have shown that these mentoring programs can improve academic achievement and increase self-concept, decrease truancy rates and substance abuse, improve parent and teacher relationships, and lower recidivism rates among juvenile delinquents.<sup>88</sup> Mentors have the opportunity to provide students with emotional support and positive feedback, which results in a student's improved self-concept, which is related to school-related achievement and behavioral outcomes.<sup>89</sup>

For example, to promote student engagement and success, **Cromwell High School** staff members created a mentoring program in which all students meet in small groups for 22 minutes each week for mentoring sessions.<sup>90</sup>

At **Murphy Elementary School** in **Montville**, the "Save 1 Student" program allows teachers to identify students who are in need of role models, and then, with parental permission, connects these students with teacher mentors who meet with them once a week.<sup>91</sup>

Freshmen who are identified by middle school administrators as needing additional support with the high school transition at **Conard High School** in **West Hartford** are placed in the STARR structured study hall. Students in this program are identified as at-risk and assigned teachers who serve as mentors. According to Roszena Haskins, Assistant Principal, the goal of STARR is to maximize the potential for every student to be socially, behaviorally, and academically successful through this small group structured program.<sup>92</sup>

**Middletown High School** has instituted a mentoring program called Men and Women in Schools. The program, a proactive approach to reducing suspensions, serves students who have exhibited challenging behaviors. Positive adult men and women from the community serve as mentors to these students, meeting once every week. All of the community mentors are volunteers.<sup>93</sup> In addition, Middletown High School created PRIDE advisory group meetings to enhance Middletown students' relationships with teachers and other peers and to work proactively to reduce suspensions. During PRIDE meetings, groups of 13-15 students meet with a certified staff member to discuss pre-decided topics or for a time of open sharing. A group of students stays together with the same staff member for four years. PRIDE advisory meetings occur twice a month for 45 minutes each time. Time for the program is created by shortening each period for approximately 5 minutes on PRIDE days. Principal Bob Fontaine notes that PRIDE program buy-in on the part of the advisors is needed for the program to be successful.<sup>94</sup>

Out-of-school suspension rates tend to peak in the ninth grade.<sup>95</sup> Many attribute this increase to difficulties adolescents face in transitioning to a new school environment. **Cheshire High School** has responded to this challenge by instituting a student mentoring program for freshmen called Link Crew.<sup>96</sup> In this program, juniors and seniors apply to become mentors for incoming freshmen; approximately 60-70 students are hand selected as mentors from the many who apply. These students co-lead groups of approximately 14 freshmen. They attend mentorship and leadership training for three days in the summer and attend follow-up training throughout the year. They run the freshman orientation program in August, which is a fun, celebratory event designed to welcome freshmen to the school and teach them about school climate and expectations. They lead team-building exercises and are responsible for checking in with their assigned

freshmen throughout the year. Leadership at Cheshire High School credits this mentorship program with a dramatic decrease of disciplinary infractions and a corresponding drop in out-of-school suspension rates. According to school leadership, the program is all about building relationships and connections within the school.<sup>97</sup> Assistant Principal Maureen Reed notes that this program is also important in creating a cultural shift among upperclassmen, encouraging them to give more respect to the freshmen.<sup>98</sup> She notes that, although there was an upfront cost to the district of contracting with the national Link Crew program for training, it was a one-time cost and is not very expensive on a yearly basis, as once trained, the school leaders themselves train the student mentors each year. She concludes that the program was well worth the cost.

## E. Classroom Management Training

Research shows that effective classroom management is essential for both student discipline and student achievement.<sup>99</sup> Educators we interviewed noted a significant range in office disciplinary referral rates from teachers in their schools, even when the students in the different teachers' classrooms were the same. Even the most disruptive students rarely disrupt *all* of their classes: the frequency and degree of their disruptions depend on a variety of factors, including their relationship with their teacher. Educators noted that some teachers were unusually skilled at handling disciplinary problems in their classrooms: they knew how to de-escalate conflicts and potentially disruptive situations before they got out of hand. Others, in contrast, inadvertently escalated student misconduct, turning disruptive and disrespectful behavior into a power struggle from which the student could not back down. Escalation would inadvertently reward the student with what he sought: attention from peers, a feeling of power, or avoidance of the academic task at hand.

All Connecticut teacher education programs provide some instruction in classroom management. It is clear, however, that classroom management remains a big challenge.<sup>100</sup> Alumni survey results from the teacher education program at the University of Connecticut, for example, historically have shown classroom management to be an area in which program graduates feel least prepared.<sup>101</sup> State officials, a Connecticut teacher's union, beginning teachers and their principals have all reported the need for greater training in classroom management.<sup>102</sup> Recognizing this need, Connecticut has passed a new law, proposed new regulations, and revamped a beginning teacher support program all to increase training in classroom management.<sup>103</sup> There is no state requirement for professional development in the area of classroom management for veteran teachers.<sup>104</sup> For more detail on the state of classroom management training in Connecticut for new teachers, please see *Connecticut Takes Promising Steps Towards Enhancing Teacher Training in Classroom Management* (Connecticut Voices for Children, 2010).<sup>105</sup>

Individual schools and districts are responding to the challenge of classroom management training in a variety of ways. As part of the positive school climate goals of its strategic plan, **Hartford Public Schools** committed to "provide professional development for administrators and teachers focused on classroom management, effective disciplinary interventions, and the development of a continuum of services that meet the needs of disruptive students."<sup>106</sup> After **Middletown Public Schools** was identified as a district in need of improvement, staff of Middletown's high school and middle schools attended training on school climate sponsored by the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI). The district decided to focus district-wide professional development during the 2010-2011 school year on school culture and climate, as staff were eager to learn more detailed strategies on improving classroom management after the CALI training.<sup>107</sup> A number of educators at a recent conference on positive school climate noted that the leadership in their schools tracked disciplinary referral rates by teacher and provided opportunities for teachers struggling with classroom management and high referral rates to observe and be mentored by

colleagues with unusually strong classroom management skills. Educators stressed that classroom management skills can be learned and improved upon with focus, attention, and experience, just like any other skill.

## **F. Mediation**

Another preventative model recommended by educators we spoke with is mediation and other similar programs designed to teach youth how to resolve conflict peaceably. The model is simple: a corps of youth trained in the program and overseen by adults train their peers on effective strategies to resolve conflict and de-escalate potentially explosive situations.<sup>108</sup> The idea is that conflict and the potential for conflict will never go away and is particularly present in certain environments. Accordingly, students must learn concrete, proven methods of dealing with conflict productively, just like they would learn any other skill set, like math or baseball.<sup>109</sup> A benefit of this model is that by empowering students to participate in the process of regulating their own behavior, as well as the behavior of their peers, mediation allows their teachers and administrators to focus their attentions on instruction.<sup>110</sup>

Mediation has been important in Bridgeport Public Schools. For example, in one program at **Bridgeport's High Horizons Magnet School** (K-8), peer mediators are chosen in the sixth grade and receive training in the sixth and seventh grade. They work in teams of two to resolve conflicts among their peers; the mediation culminates in a written contract between the students detailing how each will behave to the other. The mediators are closely supervised and assisted by a guidance counselor or social worker, who provides them with feedback. Mediation is believed to reduce the need for out-of-school suspensions indirectly, by preventing conflicts from escalating to the level of misbehavior that could warrant an out-of-school suspension.<sup>111</sup>

**Middletown High School** has a mediation program designed to address conflicts that arise in the school before they escalate into more serious disciplinary matters. Each year, approximately 20 students are trained to be peer mediators, under the oversight of the assistant principal. A community organization provides training for the mediators for no fee or a nominal fee.<sup>112</sup> Similar programs exist in other schools in Connecticut, and there exists a wealth of community resources devoted to providing training to schools in mediation.<sup>113</sup>

The Dispute Settlement Center (DSC) in Wilton has assisted several western Connecticut schools in building mediation programs, first training staff and sometimes later expanding to include students. The DSC has noticed decreases in suspensions at these schools, reductions at least due in part to the schools' greater use of mediation. At times, students themselves seek out mediation, avoiding escalation of a situation to the level where a suspension may have been considered.<sup>114</sup>

## **G. Personalizing the School Experience**

As noted above, positive relationships with adults are thought to be one of the most important protective factors for children at risk of school failure<sup>115</sup> and the most important feature of a positive school climate. Research shows that a high student-to-teacher ratio creates a barrier to relationship development and is associated with higher levels of school violence.<sup>116</sup> Connecticut schools – particularly large schools – are adopting a number of measures to foster student engagement and a sense of community, making it harder for students to remain anonymous or fall through the cracks.

**Hartford Public High School** attributes its decline in out-of-school suspensions to several factors, including a huge school reform effort that included, among other things, restructuring previously large high schools into several smaller, more personal learning communities, organized around career themes, where students are more likely to have relationships with adults and feel engaged in their school communities and their studies.<sup>117</sup> Hartford Public High School also has a Freshman Academy, a smaller learning environment within the larger high school, designed to foster relationships between freshmen and faculty.<sup>118</sup> This makes sense given evidence that suspension rates peak in the ninth grade, as many students have difficulty making the transition into a new environment.

**Hamden High School** uses a house system to create smaller environments within the high school, making it easier for students, administrators and adults to build relationships.<sup>119</sup> In addition, at-risk students entering the high school are given special programming and additional supports.<sup>120</sup>

Even at the middle-school level, administrators in **Danbury Public Schools** have found that structuring the schools into “clusters” or “mini-schools” improves discipline by increasing opportunities for smaller groups of students and teachers to know one another.<sup>121</sup>

Extracurricular activities also provide the opportunity for community building. Timothy Dunn, the Assistant Superintendent for Administration in the **West Hartford School District**, believes that student participation in sports and after school activities has helped to decrease disciplinary incidents, especially at the high school level, where over half of West Hartford’s high school students are involved in sports.<sup>122</sup>

## H. Academic Supports

Educators note that student behavioral issues often stem, in least in part, from academic difficulties.<sup>123</sup> When students do not understand the material presented in class or lack the skills they need to do well in school, they often feel frustrated or ashamed.<sup>124</sup> They act out in class out of frustration or to distract teachers and peers from their learning difficulties.<sup>125</sup> In addition, underlying academic difficulties and undiagnosed special education needs often contribute to truancy,<sup>126</sup> which in turn can lead to disciplinary consequences. Data show that the children most likely to be suspended from school are also those at greatest risk for academic failure.<sup>127</sup>

**Hartford Public Schools** attributes its recent drop in out-of-schools suspensions, at least in part, to increased academic supports from algebra lab to after-school programs, designed to provide students with the academic skills supports that they need.<sup>128</sup> By meeting students where they are and giving them necessary academic supports, schools improve students’ academic achievement and their engagement with the school, which improves behavior and school climate.

In recognition of the fact that students getting out-of-school suspensions are often those at risk of academic failure, administrators at **Cromwell High School** created a system of academic supports to help such students.<sup>129</sup> Students struggling academically may receive academic support in specialized reading and math classes, small group supports, assistance from peers after school, and assistance in completing missed assignments through academic academies. The academic academies – designed to further support students struggling academically – were started by in-school suspension staff members after disciplinary referrals decreased.<sup>130</sup> Cromwell High School also has a credit recovery program to help prevent students from losing credit because of missed assignments, becoming disenfranchised, and having disciplinary troubles.<sup>131</sup>

**Torrington Middle School** is the fifth largest middle school in Connecticut with approximately 1200 students. Administrators there, though, recognized that a small number of students constituted a large percentage of office disciplinary referrals and suspensions. In 2008, the school began a program called Upward Bound Academy. Upward Bound Academy, an alternative education program for regular education students, is located in the Torrington Middle School building and serves approximately 40 students who are most at-risk of dropping out, truancy, and suspension. The program has four teachers, reassigned from other positions in the school, as well as one school-home liaison. Students in the program are grouped together for all of their core classes and take other classes and lunch periods with the larger student body. Teachers have autonomy and control over the program and collaborate with each other often. The instructional model and schedule in the program are different than that of traditional classes. Upward Bound Academy uses a 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom model where learning is student-centered, and teachers act as facilitators of learning. Use of technology is emphasized. Since beginning the program, monthly office disciplinary referral rates have decreased by as much as 90 percent. Given the phenomenal success of the program's students, Torrington Middle School administrators have begun to expand the model into traditional classrooms in the building. In the traditional classrooms, the model of student-centered learning and emphasis on technology has been maintained; class sizes remain the same as in the school's traditional rooms. The office has received no disciplinary referrals from the group of 7<sup>th</sup> grade traditional teachers who have implemented the program this year. Torrington Middle School administrators are hoping to expand the model into more classrooms at the middle school and are looking into creating a version of the Upward Bound Academy at the high school level for students in need of that level of support at the high school level.<sup>132</sup>

## **I. Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Supports**

Schools in Connecticut are also reducing out-of-school suspension rates by working to provide struggling students with the social, emotional, and behavioral supports they need. Interdisciplinary student support or child study teams are in place in many districts, including **Danbury Public Schools**. Students who are struggling with academic and behavioral issues are referred to these teams, which evaluate and work together to secure the services these children need to be successful. Educators note that truancy and other behavioral problems are often the symptoms of larger problems and that early interventions designed to get at the root of the struggles and to engage the family in problem-solving are essential.<sup>133</sup>

For example, at **Montville School District's Tyl Middle School**, students with behavioral concerns can find help at the student support center. In the student support center, a teacher trained in special education works with students' general classroom teachers to determine appropriate and effective incentives to promote the students' engagement in their classes. This program was developed through the use of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds.<sup>134</sup>

**Conard High School** in **West Hartford** uses the Student Success Team (formerly the Student Assistance Team) model promoted by the Governor's Prevention Partnership to improve student behavior.<sup>135</sup> This program supports student success by encouraging students to refer themselves or peers to the Student Success Team when they are experiencing academic, social, emotional, or behavioral difficulties.<sup>136</sup>

Timothy Dunn, the Assistant Superintendent for Administration in the **West Hartford School District**, partially attributes the decreases in several of his schools' suspension rates to the accessibility of school counselors and support staff. Each of West Hartford's high schools maintains eight counselors and at least three assistant principals.<sup>137</sup> These staff members are available to address student disciplinary issues on a

case- by-case basis and help determine the appropriate course of action for disciplined students. At the middle school level, guidance staff provide specific lessons on behavior and meet with students individually or in small groups to further discuss relevant behavioral issues. Two school resource officers are also available to students. Besides providing basic support for school safety and security, they meet with students to discuss common issues involving youth and the law. Additionally, the district supports several unique initiatives to expand linkages between school staff, student homes, and the general community. Mr. Dunn states that these initiatives, combined with relatively small school size, have helped create true “neighborhood schools,” especially at the elementary level.<sup>138</sup>

#### **IV. Alternative Punishments for Disciplinary Offenses**

##### **A. Detentions: After-School, Before-School, Lunch and Saturday Detentions**

Many schools in Connecticut use before-school, after-hours, lunch, and Saturday detentions as alternatives to out-of-school suspensions. These alternatives have the advantage of not requiring students to miss class instruction. Moreover, compared with out-of-school (and sometimes in-school) suspensions, they may more effectively deter misbehavior because children are required to serve them on their own time and also cannot avoid the academic task at hand by misbehaving. In addition, detentions may provide students with the opportunity to catch up on their school work and receive the academic and behavioral guidance they need to improve both their academic achievement and their behavior. One disadvantage of detentions is that – unlike “cool down” rooms or in-school suspension – they often cannot be served during or immediately after an ongoing disciplinary problem. In addition, some educators have noted that it has been difficult to enforce the serving of detentions by some students. Nonetheless, many schools in Connecticut have realized the benefits of detentions while minimizing the drawbacks through creative and flexible programming. In doing so, they have created detentions as effective, positive alternatives to punishments that exclude children from school or from class.

Detentions are one component of **Montville High School’s** efforts to lower suspension rates.<sup>139</sup> Office detentions are offered for 45 minutes after school and are staffed by teachers on a rotating basis. Each teacher monitors an office detention approximately two or three times a year. Saturday detentions are also used as a type of disciplinary action. Students may be referred to Saturday detention for either 2 or 4 hours, from 8 am to 10 am, or 8 am to 12 pm, respectively. Teachers monitor these Saturday detentions. “Lunchbox” detentions are also used as an alternative punishment for students who have misbehaved. These detentions usually last for a minimum of five days and occur during the student’s 30 minute lunch period. During all of these detentions, students are expected to complete school work or read. According to Tatiana Patten, Assistant Principal at Montville High School, all detention options have been designed with the intent of keeping kids in school and disciplining students by reducing their social time, rather than their time in the classroom.<sup>140</sup>

The **Thompson School District** has been able to significantly reduce their out-of-school suspension numbers in recent school years by convening a district-wide discipline committee, made up of teachers and administrators, with an articulated goal of changing their outlook towards discipline from punitive to constructive. A product of the committee was the creation of the Saturday School program in 2008, which is run from 8:30 am to 12:00 pm on the Thompson School grounds. The program is structured to combine both academic work and recreational activities. Students have the opportunity to read newspaper and

magazine articles on current events, spend an hour and a half catching up on school assignments, as well as participate in an exercise activity. High school students can be referred to the program by a teacher as the result of a discipline issue; actions that could result in a referral include pushing a fellow student, disrespectfully speaking to a teacher, or failure to complete assignments. In the past these offenses could have resulted in a suspension. Middle school students can be referred to the program either by teachers, administrators, or by the behavior coach, who is employed by the school on a half-time basis to work with students. Although the program is run for both schools in the same building, the students are placed in different classrooms. Teachers who participate in the program receive special training and work with administrators to modify and improve the program.<sup>141</sup>

Similarly, if a student takes part in a non-violent infraction of school rules at **Conard High School in West Hartford**, the school will often use detention as a consequence, rather than suspension. Initially, only after school and Saturday detentions were available as disciplinary tools for administrators. After school detentions last for 90 minutes while Saturday detentions last from 8 am-12 pm. Teachers are alerted by school administration when students receive a Saturday detention and generally provide students with work to complete during detention. According to Roszena Haskins, Assistant Principal at Conard, teachers will often come to Saturday detentions and use the detention as an opportunity to work one-on-one with their students.<sup>142</sup> During the 2008-2009 school year, Conard was forced to end its Saturday detention program due to budget constraints. In its place, administrators began a new program: Wednesday detention. On Wednesdays, West Hartford Public Schools release its students early in order to facilitate staff development. However, students who have received a detention for this day are not released with their peers and, instead, must attend a psycho-educational group process session and complete 1.5 hours of school-based community service. The one hour group session, facilitated by HopeWorks, a local counseling and outreach organization, helps students reflect on their behavior and values. Facilitators also attempt to understand the issues causing students' behaviors. The Wednesday program worked so well that administrators decided to continue the program even after money once again became available for Saturday detentions. The 2009-2010 school year has been Conard's first year with both programs in place and administrators are highly appreciative of the flexibility that having two detention programs allows them.<sup>143</sup>

Staff at **Middletown High School** re-tooled their detention program upon realizing that skipped detentions were a primary cause of out-of-school suspensions. Rather than being limited to one type of detention, the school now can choose to use lunch detention, removal from study hall for detention, tutorial detention staffed by a teacher, and morning detention. These changes have resulted in fewer students skipping detention and, therefore, fewer students suspended for missing detention.<sup>144</sup>

## **B. Restorative Justice/Restitution**

Restorative justice interventions are designed to “repair” or make whole the harm caused by a wrongful act.<sup>145</sup> Their purpose is to teach students that they are part of a community and that their behaviors have real-life consequences for other people. They are designed to have the punishment “fit” – or bear a closer relationship to – the offense. Restorative punishments for some offenses– like making students who throw things on the floor in the cafeteria help the janitorial staff for a week – can be effective if they are properly conceived and enforced.<sup>146</sup> Restitution may be one potential outcome of adult- or peer-mediation.<sup>147</sup>

**Reed Intermediate School in Newtown** has implemented a restitution sheet which is used to resolve behavioral issues. The restitution is offered as an option for a student to choose when faced with punishment. Students develop a plan which has to be accepted by both the victim and the administration.



The plan is kept on file with the school and then the administration has the student contact their parents to let them know of the incident and the plan. There are times that this option is used as one part of a student's natural consequence.<sup>148</sup>

### C. Cool Down Options

Connecticut law allows administrators to remove children from class for disciplinary infractions for up to 90 minutes.<sup>149</sup> These short removals are not considered “suspensions.” Many schools in Connecticut use these brief removal periods effectively, enabling students to calm down and work through the disciplinary issue at hand, while minimizing the amount of educational time lost.<sup>150</sup>

Educators we spoke with frequently noted that some students come to school from extremely difficult family situations, or after having experienced serious, sometimes overwhelming, personal loss or dislocation. They also noted that a less troubled student can have a terrible day as well. They emphasized the need to allow students who are having a rough time to “cool down” or take a small break when they are completely overwhelmed, either by letting them put their head on their desks for a few minutes or letting them ask for a “chill pass.”<sup>151</sup> Educators noted that this path was more productive than allowing a situation with a student who is upset escalate into a confrontation.

For example, teachers and administrators at **Middletown’s Snow School** instituted “sensory breaks” for students particularly at-risk for behavioral difficulties. When a teacher recognizes that the student needs a short period of de-escalation, one option is for the student to cool down by taking a walk to the office and returning to class.<sup>152</sup> When a student at Middletown’s Snow School needs a period of de-escalation, teachers also have the option of calling the school principal. The principal may meet informally with the student and have a brief conversation to help the student cool down.<sup>153</sup>

### D. Reflective Essays, Apologies, and Responsible Thinking Classrooms

When students are referred to the office at **Snow School** in **Middletown**, Principal James Gaudreau has the student fill out a reflection form and talks with the student about the form and the student’s behavior. The form includes questions such as: “Why did you need to meet with the principal today to talk about your behavior? How could you have prevented this problem from happening? What did you learn from this problem today?” Completion and discussion of the form reflects Snow School staff’s belief that poor choices should be viewed as a learning opportunity.<sup>154</sup>

Dr. Anthony Salvatore, Assistant Principal at **Reed Intermediate School** in **Newtown**, implements the district's use of Choice Theory, developed by Dr. William Glasser, which has resulted in the reduction of repeat discipline issues within his school. One critical piece of the system involves students crafting a personal mission statement. When a student creates a disruption, or otherwise acts out, the teacher sits with the student and discusses how his behavior fits into his mission statement, and if it deviates from the plan the teacher will discuss with the student ways he can approach the situation differently the next time. Students typically evaluate and modify their mission statement once a marking period, but it can be revisited and updated at any point. Dr. Salvatore reports that there have been significantly fewer incidents of repeat discipline issues at his school when implemented with fidelity.<sup>155</sup>

**Fox Elementary School** in **Hartford** has implemented Responsible Thinking Classrooms in order to address the issue of classroom disruption and misbehavior. The philosophy of the program is to give children responsibility for their actions, and it aims to remove the power struggle that often occurs between teachers and their students. The program, which is in its fifth year, saw a 30 percent reduction in out-of-school suspensions after its first year. The school also utilizes a Responsible Thinking Center which is staffed by a paraprofessional who is trained in the Responsible Thinking model. Children are referred to the center after they have been spoken to by a teacher and continue to be disruptive. At the Center the students work with the paraprofessional on a behavior sheet that addresses the behavior and how the situation should be better addressed in the future. Older children use a sheet with more questions, while younger children, such as kindergarteners, have sheets that have drawing components. The time spent in the room is intended to be minimal, and the students are integrated back into the school day as soon as possible without being disruptive.<sup>156</sup>

### **E. Parent Meetings**

Educators we interviewed noted that working with parents was vital in addressing student behavioral concerns. The research literature supports the importance of parental engagement as well. Out-of-school suspensions for low-level disciplinary offenses are sometimes defended on the grounds that they are a good way of catching the parents' attention and making them focus on remedying their child's behavioral problems. However, in many cases, a positive working relationship with parents can be achieved through less exclusionary sanctions combined with parent meetings. Many schools in Connecticut employ this approach, and some are so proactive that they call parents in for behavioral concerns that would not in themselves lead to out-of-school suspension. For instance, at **Middletown High School**, office referrals now result in a conference between the student, an administrator, and possibly the parent(s), rather than automatically resulting in a detention or other sanction. Whether the student is given a detention or other sanction is decided on a case-by-case basis. This method helps to reduce detentions, the skipping of which used to be a main cause of suspensions at the school.<sup>157</sup> Parental buy-in is also essential to the success of other interventions, such as community service (discussed below). Educators also note the importance of securing parent voice in the development of codes of conduct.<sup>158</sup>

### **F. Community Service**

Service to the community or to the school is another useful alternative disciplinary sanction.<sup>159</sup> Administrators at **Middletown High School** added school service as a disciplinary option after noticing that students often skipped detention, resulting in out-of-school suspensions. Service included tasks such as picking up in the cafeteria.<sup>160</sup>

The **Thompson School District** has also begun to use community service as a disciplinary alternative. In one incident, students broke into the high school after hours and were in possession of alcohol. This behavior would typically result in an expulsion. The District asked the Board of Education to consider assigning the students sixty days of community service and mandatory drug and alcohol counseling as an alternative, and the Board agreed. The District has also initiated a relationship with the First Selectman to create service opportunities for students who break more minor school policies. Some examples of these projects that have been developed include moving inventory and stocking shelves at the town library, raking leaves at town hall, and working alongside the town's facilities director at the local ball fields. Students and their parents have to agree to participate in the program.<sup>161</sup>

At **Ansonia Middle School**, former Assistant Principal Joseph Dobbins<sup>162</sup> implemented a community service alternative to out-of-school suspensions for students who violated school policies. Mr. Dobbins would work with the student's teacher to structure an appropriate project for the student. Before a student could begin the community service, Mr. Dobbins would call or meet with the student's parents. He notes that parental buy-in was crucial to the success of the program. During his tenure at the middle school, the program brought a dramatic drop in the suspension numbers: from over 600 in his first year to less than ten in his final year.<sup>163</sup>

Dr. Mary Ann Buchanan reports that while she worked as the founder of **Explorations Charter School in Winsted**, she used community service as an alternative to out-of-school suspension. She noted that students often responded well to the experience.<sup>164</sup>

### **G. Behavioral Monitoring and Contracting**

As noted above, one intervention often used as part of SWPBS is behavioral monitoring and contracting. We include it here as a separate category as an option for schools that do not formally use SWPBS. Staff and students work together to develop behavioral management plans or "contracts." Often these agreements detail specific behaviors to work on in very specific contexts, based on the understanding that children often misbehave in certain contexts for a purpose (e.g. task avoidance) and that the best way to achieve improvements is to concentrate on specific skill-building and creating alternative, positive behaviors. Some students with greater behavioral needs receive daily monitoring, e.g. they "check in" with an adult when they first come to school, ask teachers to rate their behavior after each class, and then "check out" with the adult when they leave school to see how the day went.

### **H. Withdrawal of Privileges and "In Kind" Responses**

Another common-sense response to certain disciplinary infractions is withdrawal of privileges or "in-kind" responses. For example, rather than out-of-school suspending a student who violates the dress code,<sup>165</sup> a school could simply provide the student with alternate clothing – often sufficiently severe punishment to deter fashion-conscious adolescents. Similarly, for driving violations, parking privileges could be rescinded; for cell phones, I-Pod or other electronic device violations, these items could be confiscated until the end of the day. In addition, when appropriate, schools might consider brief suspensions from after-school activities, or loss of privileges to participate in field trips, etc.

### **I. In-school Suspensions**

The success of in-school suspension as a rehabilitative and preventative tool depends almost entirely on its implementation. At best, in-school suspension programs afford the opportunity of individualized adult attention to students who need extra academic or personal help.<sup>166</sup> They offer students the opportunity to reflect on their misbehavior and learn skills that will enable them to react more positively to challenges in the future. They strengthen the relationships between students and caring adults in the school and encourage the student's attachment to the school and interest in educational opportunity. As noted above, students act out for a variety of reasons – because of problems at home or at school, to get attention, to impress their friends, or because they do not know how to handle difficult situations constructively. Often, talking about these pressures and better strategies for handling them with an adult who cares can go a long

way in teaching children – some of whom may not have access to positive influences at home – how to maintain self-control and interact positively with others. Like other skills, self-discipline and positive social skills do not necessarily come naturally: they need to be taught. Several educators we interviewed noted the importance of choosing in-school suspension staff who were skilled at connecting with youth, particularly youth with disciplinary problems. **New Haven Public Schools**, for instance, have retrained the in-school suspension staff in conflict management and other positive youth development methods designed to help the students work through the issues that led to their misbehavior.<sup>167</sup>

A well-designed in-school suspension program also enables students to work on their academics in a structured environment with individualized attention. To the extent that classroom disruptions are the result of undiagnosed or underserved academic needs, this individualized attention may offer struggling students the additional help they need. Even when the misbehavior is due to other factors, the academic structure of in-school suspensions can prevent students from falling behind in their studies, thereby reducing their risk of giving up and dropping out. And as discussed above, the amount of time devoted to academic preparation is important, particularly for students at risk of academic failure, who are also those most likely to be suspended. Moreover, because in-school suspensions do not have to last the entire day, they can be more narrowly tailored to the problem at issue. If a student repeatedly disrupts a specific class, but is fine in other classes, he can be suspended from the class he disrupts for a few days while the underlying problem is sorted out and yet still attend and participate in his other classes. Finally, as compared with out-of-school suspensions, in-school suspensions are less likely to be perceived as a break, vacation or reward for misbehavior. According to educators we spoke with, some students view in-school suspensions as undesirable (compared with out-of-school suspensions) because they are required to do school work without socializing with their friends.<sup>168</sup>

Many schools in Connecticut have instituted effective in-school suspension programs. At **Conard High School** in **West Hartford**, in-school suspension begins at 7:30 am. Students spend most of their day in one classroom, overseen by a specially trained supervisor. This supervisor ensures that students receive all work missed and helps students reflect on their behavior. The in-school suspension room is located close to the library and administrative offices, so that students may easily and quickly access needed academic or behavioral supports. Occasionally, a student will be allowed to leave in-school suspension for a period in order to attend a class which is partaking in an activity that would be difficult to make up at home or in the in-school suspension classroom. As another component of in-school suspension, students leave the in-school suspension classroom at 3:30 pm to participate in community service until 5:00 pm. Group counseling is also available for those students who would benefit from it.<sup>169</sup>

**Sprague School District's Sayles School** in **Baltic** does not utilize out-of-school suspensions, and the use of in-school suspension is rare, in light of preventative measures in place.<sup>170</sup> In instances of in-school suspension, the time is used to catch up on missed work as well as for the child to complete a packet which asks them to identify the behavior that resulted in the suspension, analyze the issue, and take steps, such as issuing notes of apology, to remedy their behavior. The school utilizes a room that is staffed by a paraprofessional.<sup>171</sup>

A frequent cause of out-of-school suspensions at **Cromwell High School** used to be truancy or tardiness leading to Saturday detentions, which were skipped or not served in full, resulting in an out-of-school suspension. However, when these students returned from out-of-school suspensions, they had not completed make-up assignments and fell even further behind in school.<sup>172</sup> Recognizing the ineffectiveness of this approach, administrators at Cromwell High School created an in-school suspension program to serve the students above who would otherwise have received out-of-school suspensions. Nearly all in-school

suspensions in the program are one day in length.<sup>173</sup> The in-school suspension room, located directly across from the main office, is staffed by one paraprofessional three days per week and by a second paraprofessional on the other two days of the week.<sup>174</sup> Principal Mark Benigni stated that it is critical to find staff to work in the in-school suspension room who connect well with adolescents and can be positive figures in the school.<sup>175</sup> The purpose of the program is described as discipline, rather than punishment.<sup>176</sup> A main focus of the in-school suspension program is on work completion so that students return to class more caught up on their work.<sup>177</sup> While serving an in-school suspension, students are also involved in the creation of an accountability action plan and have to think and write about ways to better handle the causes of their in-school suspension.<sup>178</sup> Cromwell High School staff have reported feeling positively about the program.<sup>179</sup> Principal Mark Benigni stated that the high school did not have a lot of upfront money to invest in the program but that there are creative ways to implement an in-school suspension program such that it does not cost a lot of money.<sup>180</sup> Using the resources gained from reductions in Saturday or after-school detention programs and utilizing the paraprofessionals in other student assistance and support roles on days where there is no in-school suspension need are two examples of creatively financing the program.<sup>181</sup>

## **V. Conclusion**

Many schools in Connecticut have achieved impressive reductions in their out-of-school suspension rates in recent years, through a wide range of interventions and strategies. Despite the diversity of approaches, a few common themes emerge. In the interviews we conducted, educators who were successful in improving school climate and student discipline consistently returned to several key points:

- 1) Good discipline must be taught, just like any other skill;
- 2) Improving student discipline and school climate is a problem that can be solved;
- 3) In order for the behavior of students to change, often the behavior of the adults in a school must also change;
- 4) The data should drive the interventions;
- 5) There is room for creativity and experimentation; if data show that a particular tactic is not working, educators can make modifications or try something new – it is an iterative process;
- 6) Investments in preventative, school-wide approaches will end up saving time;
- 7) Investments in improving school climate and student behavior will pay off in terms of greater academic achievement.

Notably absent in these conversations was a discussion of whose “fault” it is that student behavior is often so disappointing and so challenging. Also absent was a discussion of which “punishments” are justified for which level of offenses. Indeed, these questions of “responsibility” for poor discipline seemed entirely beside the point. Instead, educators focused the conversation on “what works?” Educators we interviewed were impressively empirical and non-dogmatic in their approaches to student discipline; they frequently noted that if they tried a certain intervention, and it did not work correctly, they either retooled it, scrapped it, or tried something new. In other words, they used the data more as a source of feedback for continued improvement than as a definitive judgment on their success. In sum, educators we spoke to expressed and inspired a tremendous amount of confidence that, although issues of school discipline can be very challenging, Connecticut schools can continue to rise to meet this challenge. And when they do – as the schools in this report have done – data show that the rewards are quite striking.

**Appendix A**

Suspension data from school year 2008-2009 and comparison data from school year 2006-2007 received by Connecticut Voices for Children on a special data request filed by the Connecticut State Department of Education.<sup>182</sup>

District Name	School Year 2006-2007			School Year 2008-2009			Percentage Point Change in Out-of-School Suspension Rates from 2006-2007 to 2008-2009
	Student Enrollment	# of Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspensions	Out-of-School Suspension Rate	Student Enrollment	# of Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspensions	Out-of-School Suspension Rate	
Andover	341			334			
Ansonia	2745	263	9.6	2724	139	5.1	-4.5
Ashford	529	10	1.9	488	<6*	*	-
Avon	3518	23	0.7	3570	21	0.6	-0.1
Barkhamsted	364	<6*	*	361			
Berlin	3279	71	2.2	3223	34	1.1	-1.1
Bethany	558	<6*	*	551	6	1.1	+
Bethel	3243	75	2.3	3087	34	1.1	-1.2
Bloomfield	2265	370	16.3	2181	191	8.8	-7.5
Bolton	916	28	3.1	869	29	3.3	0.2
Bozrah	275	<6*	*	261	<6*	*	0.0
Branford	3620	115	3.2	3515	109	3.1	-0.1
Bridgeport	21381	4613	21.6	20604	2869	13.9	-7.7
Bristol	9092	530	5.8	8870	420	4.7	-1.1
Brookfield	3036	78	2.6	2953	52	1.8	-0.8
Brooklyn	1027	23	2.2	986	17	1.7	-0.5
Canaan	103			85			
Canterbury	553	22	4.0	605	14	2.3	-1.7
Canton	1734	36	2.1	1761	23	1.3	-0.8
Chaplin	211			178			
Cheshire	5179	94	1.8	5032	111	2.2	0.4
Chester	335	<6*	*	319	<6*	*	+
Clinton	2125	58	2.7	2090	42	2.0	-0.7
Colchester	3269	92	2.8	3195	65	2.0	-0.8
Colebrook	121	<6*	*	116			
Columbia	640	<6*	*	580	<6*	*	-
Cornwall	129			122			
Coventry	2054	48	2.3	1962	57	2.9	0.6
Cromwell	2012	129	6.4	2030	77	3.8	-2.6
Danbury	10031	507	5.1	10353	447	4.3	-0.8
Darien	4620	97	2.1	4725	42	0.9	-1.2
Deep River	378	<6*	*	355	<6*	*	-

District Name	School Year 2006-2007			School Year 2008-2009			Percentage Point Change in Out-of-School Suspension Rates from 2006-2007 to 2008-2009
	Student Enrollment	# of Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspensions	Out-of-School Suspension Rate	Student Enrollment	# of Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspensions	Out-of-School Suspension Rate	
Derby	1481	116	7.8	1489	157	10.5	2.7
Eastford	177	<6*	*	187	<6*	*	-
East Granby	936	39	4.2	900	38	4.2	0.0
East Haddam	1419	83	5.8	1437	68	4.7	-1.1
East Hampton	2114	68	3.2	2064	39	1.9	-1.3
East Hartford	7864	972	12.4	7265	971	13.4	1.0
East Haven	3765	316	8.4	3598	264	7.3	-1.1
East Lyme	3235	103	3.2	3169	31	1.0	-2.2
Easton	1150	8	0.7	1158	9	0.8	0.1
East Windsor	1538	149	9.7	1450	54	3.7	-6.0
Ellington	2543	66	2.6	2645	94	3.6	1.0
Enfield	6510	355	5.5	6314	181	2.9	-2.6
Essex	550			594			
Fairfield	9510	180	1.9	9976	126	1.3	-0.6
Farmington	4275	95	2.2	4206	74	1.8	-0.4
Franklin	240			227	<6*	*	
Glastonbury	6805	127	1.9	6883	120	1.7	-0.2
Granby	2296	19	0.8	2282	10	0.4	-0.4
Greenwich	9015	234	2.6	8897	90	1.0	-1.6
Griswold	2225	114	5.1	2123	82	3.9	-1.2
Groton	5274	347	6.6	5171	159	3.1	-3.5
Guilford	3797	121	3.2	3796	73	1.9	-1.3
Hamden	6304	620	9.8	6118	416	6.8	-3.0
Hampton	164	<6*	*	148			
Hartford	22573	4336	19.2	22015	3449	15.7	-3.5
Hartland	228			239			
Hebron	1206	10	0.8	1173			
Kent	270			284			
Killingly	2787	225	8.1	2724	109	4.0	-4.1
Lebanon	1548	60	3.9	1547	57	3.7	-0.2
Ledyard	2934	127	4.3	2761	57	2.1	-2.2
Lisbon	610	<6*	*	564	<6*	*	-
Litchfield	1265	46	3.6	1203	14	1.2	-2.4
Madison	3854	81	2.1	3740	23	0.6	-1.5
Manchester	7161	606	8.5	6943	474	6.8	-1.7
Mansfield	1337	13	1.0	1284	6	0.5	-0.5
Marlborough	653	<6*	*	676	<6*	*	-

District Name	School Year 2006-2007			School Year 2008-2009			Percentage Point Change in Out-of-School Suspension Rates from 2006-2007 to 2008-2009
	Student Enrollment	# of Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspensions	Out-of-School Suspension Rate	Student Enrollment	# of Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspensions	Out-of-School Suspension Rate	
Meriden	8947	1083	12.1	8718	828	9.5	-2.6
Middletown	5120	570	11.1	5188	411	7.9	-3.2
Milford	7520	251	3.3	7322	161	2.2	-1.1
Monroe	4370	92	2.1	4050	68	1.7	-0.4
Montville	2954	182	6.2	2783	97	3.5	-2.7
Naugatuck	5104	380	7.4	4830	259	5.4	-2.0
New Britain	11048	1899	17.2	10496	1189	11.3	-5.9
New Canaan	4153	38	0.9	4105	31	0.8	-0.1
New Fairfield	3069	54	1.8	3058	69	2.3	0.5
New Hartford	619	<6*	*	621			
New Haven	20170	3341	16.6	19847	2701	13.6	-3.0
Newington	4610	115	2.5	4533	47	1.0	-1.5
New London	2976	506	17.0	3100	435	14.0	-3.0
New Milford	5068	161	3.2	4922	76	1.5	-1.7
Newtown	5701	95	1.7	5613	43	0.8	-0.9
Norfolk	176			157			
North Branford	2455	97	4.0	2400	57	2.4	-1.6
North Canaan*	369	<6*	*	338	<6*	*	-
North Haven	3994	240	6.0	3836	146	3.8	-2.2
North Stonington	811	33	4.1	795	<6*	*	-
Norwalk	10811	801	7.4	10835	750	6.9	-0.5
Norwich	4028	361	9.0	4005	193	4.8	-4.2
Old Saybrook	1586	58	3.7	1627	34	2.1	-1.6
Orange	1399	<6*	*	1320	<6*	*	-
Oxford	1586	24	1.5	2027	38	1.9	0.4
Plainfield	2818	241	8.6	2720	117	4.3	-4.3
Plainville	2656	142	5.3	2537	66	2.6	-2.7
Plymouth	1934	85	4.4	1864	80	4.3	-0.1
Pomfret	544	9	1.7	545			
Portland	1458	41	2.8	1432	29	2.0	-0.8
Preston	505	26	5.1	494			
Putnam	1350	86	6.4	1256	70	5.6	-0.8
Redding	1290	<6*	*	1304	<6*	*	-
Ridgefield	5593	54	1.0	5553	58	1.0	0.0
Rocky Hill	2591	62	2.4	2625	36	1.4	-1.0
Salem	530	6	1.1	523	<6*	*	-



District Name	School Year 2006-2007			School Year 2008-2009			Percentage Point Change in Out-of-School Suspension Rates from 2006-2007 to 2008-2009
	Student Enrollment	# of Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspensions	Out-of-School Suspension Rate	Student Enrollment	# of Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspensions	Out-of-School Suspension Rate	
Salisbury	311	<6*	*	319			
Scotland	192	<6*	*	190	<6*	*	+
Seymour	2747	216	7.9	2581	105	4.1	-3.8
Sharon	230			196			
Shelton	5710	173	3.0	5570	145	2.6	-0.4
Sherman	484	<6*	*	460			
Simsbury	5010	39	0.8	4950	25	0.5	-0.3
Somers	1742	56	3.2	1729	37	2.1	-1.1
Southington	6981	250	3.6	6866	249	3.6	0.0
South Windsor	5072	140	2.8	4835	111	2.3	-0.5
Sprague	339			355			
Stafford	1963	136	6.9	1918	89	4.6	-2.3
Stamford	15097	482	3.2	14955	407	2.7	-0.5
Sterling	481	14	2.9	514	7	1.4	-1.5
Stonington	2581	62	2.4	2527	43	1.7	-0.7
Stratford	7429	532	7.2	7368	212	2.9	-4.3
Suffield	2601	37	1.4	2593	42	1.6	0.2
Thomaston	1283	46	3.6	1229	40	3.3	-0.3
Thompson	1525	142	9.3	1406	53	3.8	-5.5
Tolland	3155	84	2.7	3159	37	1.2	-1.5
Torrington	4948	443	9.0	4760	266	5.6	-3.4
Trumbull	6939	167	2.4	6919	131	1.9	-0.5
Union	70			79			
Vernon	3807	312	8.2	3608	307	8.5	0.3
Voluntown	321	<6*	*	309			
Wallingford	6973	346	5.0	6815	244	3.6	-1.4
Waterbury	18298	2816	15.4	18433	3454	18.7	3.3
Waterford	2986	168	5.6	2900	140	4.8	-0.8
Watertown	3509	173	4.9	3347	123	3.7	-1.2
Westbrook	996	20	2.0	970	<6*	*	-
West Hartford	10170	364	3.6	10133	214	2.1	-1.5
West Haven	6811	679	10.0	6317	410	6.5	-3.5
Weston	2634	37	1.4	2547	14	0.5	-0.9
Westport	5596	33	0.6	5789	34	0.6	0.0
Wethersfield	3860	169	4.4	3832	140	3.7	-0.7
Willington	594	18	3.0	568	<6*	*	-
Wilton	4392	84	1.9	4396	27	0.6	-1.3

District Name	School Year 2006-2007			School Year 2008-2009			Percentage Point Change in Out-of-School Suspension Rates from 2006-2007 to 2008-2009
	Student Enrollment	# of Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspensions	Out-of-School Suspension Rate	Student Enrollment	# of Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspensions	Out-of-School Suspension Rate	
Winchester	1083	75	6.9	1001	44	4.4	-2.5
Windham	3727	403	10.8	3524	361	10.2	-0.6
Windsor	4178	515	12.3	4005	292	7.3	-5.0
Windsor Locks	1920	83	4.3	1858	59	3.2	-1.1
Wolcott	2931	147	5.0	2864	82	2.9	-2.1
Woodbridge	795	<6*	*	756			
Woodstock	967	9	0.9	930	<6*	*	-
Regional School District 01 (Canaan, Cornwall, Kent, North Canaan, Salisbury, Sharon)	573	31	5.4	562	27	4.8	-0.6
Regional School District 04 (Chester, Deep River, Essex)	950	75	7.9	959	65	6.8	-1.1
Regional School District 05 (Bethany, Orange, Woodbridge)	2524	119	4.7	2504	36	1.4	-3.3
Regional School District 06 (Goshen, Morris, Warren)	1093	55	5.0	1084	21	1.9	-3.1
Regional School District 07 (Barkhamsted, Colebrook, New Hartford, Norfolk)	1170	51	4.4	1196	25	2.1	-2.3
Regional School District 08 (Andover, Hebron, Marlborough)	1654	54	3.3	1759	40	2.3	-1.0

District Name	School Year 2006-2007			School Year 2008-2009			Percentage Point Change in Out-of-School Suspension Rates from 2006-2007 to 2008-2009
	Student Enrollment	# of Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspensions	Out-of-School Suspension Rate	Student Enrollment	# of Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspensions	Out-of-School Suspension Rate	
Regional School District 09 (Easton, Redding)	972	44	4.5	967	26	2.7	-1.8
Regional School District 10 (Burlington, Harwinton)	2835	60	2.1	2863	37	1.3	-0.8
Regional School District 11 (Chaplin, Hampton, Scotland)	330	40	12.1	319	34	10.7	-1.4
Regional School District 12 (Bridgewater, Roxbury, Washington)	1085	15	1.4	1012	9	0.9	-0.5
Regional School District 13 (Durham, Middlefield)	2177	54	2.5	2143	34	1.6	-0.9
Regional School District 14 (Bethlehem, Woodbury)	2294	54	2.4	2142	30	1.4	-1.0
Regional School District 15 (Middlebury, Southbury)	4567	124	2.7	4560	143	3.1	0.4
Regional School District 16 (Beacon Falls, Prospect)	2688	99	3.7	2618	60	2.3	-1.4
Regional School District 17 (Haddam, Killingworth)	2514	33	1.3	2551	32	1.3	0.0

District Name	School Year 2006-2007			School Year 2008-2009			Percentage Point Change in Out-of-School Suspension Rates from 2006-2007 to 2008-2009
	Student Enrollment	# of Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspensions	Out-of-School Suspension Rate	Student Enrollment	# of Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspensions	Out-of-School Suspension Rate	
Regional School District 18 (Lyme, Old Lyme)	1528	37	2.4	1471	13	0.9	-1.5
Regional School District 19 (Ashford, Mansfield, Willington)	1209	110	9.1	1183	75	6.3	-2.8
<b>State</b>	<b>578612</b>	<b>41227</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>571031</b>	<b>30874</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>-1.7</b>

## Appendix B

Connecticut Voices for Children would like to thank the following people who agreed to be interviewed for this report, or who contributed substantially to this project through conversations.

Taby Ali, Former Albert J. Solnit Policy Fellow – Connecticut Voices for Children

Abby Anderson, Executive Director – Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance

Sincilina Beckett – AFCAMP

Kathy Bedula, Social Worker at Fox Elementary School – Hartford Public Schools

Alan Beitman, Superintendent – Regional District 10

Mark Benigni, Principal of Cromwell High School – Cromwell Public Schools

Hannah Benton, Equal Justice America Fellow – Center for Children’s Advocacy

Mary Ann Buchanan, Assistant Principal of Housatonic Valley Regional High School – Regional School District 1

Vance Cannon, Librarian/PBIS Team Coach of Housatonic Valley Regional High School – Regional School District 1

Christina Carver, Director of Special Services – New London Public Schools

Julia Case, Education Consultant – State Education Resource Center

Jeff Daniels – Jeffrey Daniels Consulting

Joseph DiBacco, Assistant Principal of Hamden High School – Hamden Public Schools

John DiDonato, Assistant Superintendent of Youth Development – Bridgeport Public Schools

Joseph Dobbins, Assistant Principal of Ansonia High School – Ansonia Public Schools

Timothy Dunn, Assistant Superintendent for Administration – West Hartford Public Schools

Barbara Edinberg, Assistant Director – Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition

Joseph Erardi – Superintendent, Southington Public Schools

Nancy Fogwell, Director of Development – Dispute Settlement Center

Robert Fontaine, Principal of Middletown High School – Middletown Public Schools

Kim Foster, Social Worker at Columbus School – Bridgeport Public Schools

James Gaudreau, Principal of Snow School – Middletown Public Schools

Matthew Harnett, Principal of Torrington Middle School – Torrington Public Schools

Roszena Haskins, Assistant Principal of Conard High School – West Hartford Public Schools

Gary Highsmith, Principal of Hamden High School – Hamden Public Schools

Catherine Holahan, Attorney – Connecticut Legal Services

Alice Henley, Assistant Director for Program Development and LEA Services – State Education Resource Center

Tina Hislop, Assistant Principal of Rogers Park Middle School – Danbury Public Schools

Michael Jolin, Superintendent of Schools – Thompson Public Schools

Kristina Jones, Educational Consultant – State Education Resource Center

Joy Kaufman, Associate Professor of Psychology in Psychiatry, Director of Program and Service System Evaluation, Director of Evaluation Research – The Consultation Center, Yale University School of Medicine

Marianne Kirner, Executive Director – State Education Resource Center

Michael Landry, Assistant Superintendent of Schools – Regional District 10

Charlie Manos, Coordinator of Pupil Services – Danbury Public Schools

Donna Marino, Parent Resource Coordinator – Middletown Public Schools

Joan Massey, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education – Hartford Public Schools

Donna Maynard, Director of Special Services – Montville Public Schools

Laura McCargar, Executive Director – Youth Rights Media

Anne McIntyre-Lahner, Program Director, Interdepartmental Programs – Connecticut Department of Children and Families

Clydette Messiah, Assistant Principal of Hamden High School – Hamden Public Schools

Tarold Miller, Education Consultant – State Education Resource Center

Amarildo Monsalve, Program Manager – Connecticut State Department of Education

Carla Moreira, Clinical Staff at Columbus School – Bridgeport Public Schools

Dana Mulligan, Assistant Principal of Hamden High School – Hamden Public Schools

Elizabeth Murphy, Mediator, Youth & Schools Coordinator – Dispute Settlement Center

Scott Newgass, Consultant – State Department of Education

Moira O’Neill, Assistant Child Advocate – State of Connecticut Office of the Child Advocate

Tatiana Patten, Assistant Principal of Montville High School – Montville Public Schools

Bill Peckham, Principal of Teachers Memorial Middle School – Norwich Public Schools

Maureen Reed, Assistant Principal of Cheshire High School – Cheshire Public Schools

Manuel Rocha, Principal of Columbus School – Bridgeport Public Schools

Anthony Salvatore, Assistant Principal of Reed Intermediate School – Newtown Public Schools

Harry Seltzer, Social Worker at Multicultural Magnet School – Bridgeport Public Schools

Erin Shaffer, Attorney – New Haven Legal Assistance Association

Jim Shannon, Former Director of Pupil Services – Bridgeport Public Schools

Josephine Smith, Former Principal of Betances Elementary School – Hartford Public Schools

Susan Smith, Director of Social Work – Bridgeport Public Schools

Dee Speese-Linehan, Supervisor – New Haven Public Schools

Patricia Staszko-Kozik, Consultant – Connecticut State Department of Education

George Sugai, Professor of Special Education, Director of the Center for Behavioral Education & Research, Co-Director of the Center of Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, Carole J. Neag Endowed Chair – Neag School of Education, University of Connecticut

Michelle Weaver, Educational Consultant – State Education Resource Center

Jean Wierzbinski, Principal of Sayles School – Sprague School District

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<sup>1</sup> See Alexandra Dufresne and Taby Ali, “Missing Out: Suspending Students from Connecticut Schools,” *Connecticut Voices for Children* (August 2008), 8. Available at: <http://ctkidslink.org/publications/edu08missingout.pdf>. See also “Improve Discipline and Academic Performance by Retaining Connecticut’s School Suspensions Law,” *Connecticut Voices for Children* (September 2009), 1. Available at: <http://ctkidslink.org/publications/edu09schoolsuspension.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> 2008-2009 is the most recent school year for which statewide data are available. Due to changes in recent years in regards to reporting requirements with respect to non-serious offenses the Connecticut State Department of Education does not have trend data on the number of students suspended since data before 2006-2007 are not comparable. See Dufresne and Ali, “Missing Out,” 5. See also “Improve Discipline and Academic Performance by Retaining Connecticut’s School Suspensions Law,” 1. See also this report, Appendix A.

<sup>3</sup> Suspension data comparisons for the 2006-2007 school year and the 2008-2009 school year were provided to Connecticut Voices for Children as special data request filled by Amarildo Monsalve of the Connecticut State Department of Education. Email exchanges between Alexandra Dufresne, Senior Policy Fellow, Connecticut Voices for Children, and Amarildo Monsalve, Connecticut State Department of Education, on 1/12/10 and 1/20/10.

<sup>4</sup> See Dufresne and Ali, “Missing Out,” 8. See also “Improve Discipline and Academic Performance by Retaining Connecticut’s School Suspensions Law,” 1.

<sup>5</sup> See “Improve Discipline and Academic Performance by Retaining Connecticut’s School Suspensions Law,” 1.

<sup>6</sup> See Dufresne and Ali, “Missing Out,” 6, 11-17 (highlighting data that shows students with special education needs, minority students, and students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds experience higher rates of suspension).

<sup>7</sup> See Russell Skiba, Cecil Reynolds, et. al., “Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools? An Evidentiary Review and Recommendations: A Report by the American Psychological Association Zero,” *APA Council of Representatives* (August 2006), 9 (stating that increased reliance on severe consequences as punishment for student disruptions has caused an increase in referrals to the juvenile justice system), 76-80 (describing connections between disciplinary policies and the juvenile justice system, including initial research that finds that states with higher rates of out-of-school suspension have higher rates of juvenile incarceration, and noting that students suspended or expelled from school is at greater risk for delinquency and resulting incarceration when placed unsupervised in the community). See Dee Lindenberger, “Connections Resource Guide: Enhanced Community Service and Strategies for Keeping Kids in School,” *Michigan Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education (SAPe) Association* (2004), 18 (citing research that suspension and expulsion increase the likelihood of continued, increased antisocial behaviors that ultimately result in involvement with the juvenile justice system). See Valerie Braithwaite, Eliza Ahmed, Brenda Morrison, and Monika Reinhart, “Researching Prospects for Restorative Justice Practice in Schools: The Life at School Survey 1996-1999,” *Australian National University* (September 2001), 2 (citing research demonstrating the negative consequences of allowing suspended and expelled students to be separated from friends and family for most of the day and suggesting that suspension and expulsion expose vulnerable children to groups operating outside of the law). Available at: <http://crj.anu.edu.au/menus/PDFs/pubs.vb.leuven.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> See Connecticut Court Support Services Division, “Juvenile Jurisdiction Planning and Implementation Committee: Proposed Court and Service System for 16 and 17 Year Olds,” January 4, 2007 Presentation.

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., Russell Skiba, “Zero Tolerance, Zero Evidence: An Analysis of School Disciplinary Practice,” *Indiana Education Policy Center* (August 2000), 14 (citing research that the strength of the school social bond is an important predictor of delinquency).

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Maria Garriga, “Police, Panel Staffers Will Visit Truant Students,” *New Haven Register* (February 15, 2007); American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, “Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools? An Evidentiary Review and Recommendations,” (August 9, 2006), 76-80 (citing data that incarcerated juveniles are likely to have been suspended from school and that states with higher rates of suspensions also have higher rates of juvenile incarceration, and citing models that “suggest that as at-risk youth become alienated from school over time, they will increasingly seek out other anti-social peers, accelerating the course toward juvenile offending,” but taking care to note that research to date is “primarily descriptive” and that there exists “no prospective longitudinal research that could conclusively demonstrate that increased use of suspension makes a contribution to increased rates of juvenile incarceration”).

<sup>11</sup> See Skiba, et al., “Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools?,” 9 (stating that increased reliance on severe consequences as punishment for student disruptions has caused an increase in referrals to the juvenile justice system), 76-80 (describing increasing numbers of referrals to the juvenile justice system for in-school infractions and the resulting “school-to-prison pipeline”).

<sup>12</sup> “Governor Rell Signs In-School Suspension Bill,” *State of Connecticut* (June 28, 2007). Available online: <http://www.ct.gov/governorrell/cwp/view.asp?A=2791&Q=385306>.

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- <sup>13</sup> See A. Nadine Haley and Dwight C. Watson, "In-School Literacy Extension: Beyond In-School Suspension," *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, vol. 43, no. 7, 654-661 (April 2000), 655 (citing research that shows students who have received out-of-school suspensions become isolated and fail to reflect on their actions and alter future behavior).
- <sup>14</sup> See Skiba, et al., "Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools?," 70-71 (citing research suggesting that zero tolerance policies can "undermine the development of close bonds with adults, feelings of belonging to one's school, and perceptions of system fairness), 80-81 (stating that the potential effects of alienation, rejection, and isolation connected with exclusionary school punishments are well documented).
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 34 (citing research that identify "school alienation or weak school bonding as being among the strongest variables predicting juvenile delinquency").
- <sup>16</sup> See Skiba, et al., "Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools," 45-46 (citing research that there exists a negative relationship between disciplinary exclusion and measures of achievement). See Lindenberger, "Connections Resource Guide," 14 (noting that students who are suspended or expelled lack positive emotional attachment to teachers and administrators as a consequence of years of "conflictive disciplinary relationships").
- <sup>17</sup> See Cari Carson, "Connecticut Takes Promising Steps Towards Enhancing Teacher Training in Classroom Management," *Connecticut Voices for Children* (April 2010), 2 (citing various studies on the connections between classroom disciplinary difficulties and teacher stress, burnout, and turnover).
- <sup>18</sup> See Skiba, et al., "Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools?," 4-5 (citing research showing that schools with higher rates of school suspension and expulsion seem to have less satisfactory ratings of school climate, less satisfactory school governance structures, and spend a disproportionate amount of time on disciplinary issues).
- <sup>19</sup> See Matthew R. Gladden, "Reducing School Violence: Strengthening Student Programs and Addressing the Role of School Organizations," *Review of Research in Education*, vol. 26, 263-299 (2002), 263-264 (citing extensive research on the ineffectiveness of suspensions for changing behavior and promoting achievement).
- <sup>20</sup> See Lindenberger, "Connections Resource Guide," 23 (stating that some students perceive suspension as a vacation from an adverse situation and recommending that administrators make sure that disciplinary practices do not unintentionally reinforce the problem behavior). See also David C. Anderson "Curriculum, Culture, and Community: The Challenge of School Violence," *Crime and Justice* (1998) 24, 343 (quoting a survey participant that stated "allowing a kid to sleep late, watch television, and spend a day unsupervised is hardly a punishment for most students.")
- <sup>21</sup> See Lindenberger, "Connections Resource Guide," 24 (noting that the use of consequences alone limits the effectiveness of discipline and recommending that changes in behavior be taught and supported and the use of out-of-school suspension be avoided).
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 (noting that children can learn antisocial patterns by a very early age and thus, be unprepared to be successful when they enter school).
- <sup>23</sup> See Skiba, et al., "Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools?," 20-21 (citing research that a majority of parents and teachers believe that students should be taught skills helping them to be ready to join society and stating that children require help developing interpersonal skills that promote success). See also Lindenberger, "Connections Resource Guide," 24 (noting that the use of consequences alone limits the effectiveness of discipline and recommending that changes in behavior be taught and supported and the use of out-of-school suspension be avoided).
- <sup>24</sup> See Skiba, et al., "Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools?," 85-95 (citing extensive literature on prevention of school violation that has empirically evaluated alternatives).
- <sup>25</sup> See Public Act 07-66, *Connecticut General Assembly* (May 30, 2007). Available at: <http://cga.ct.gov/2007/ACT/PA/2007PA-00066-R00HB-07350-PA.htm>.
- <sup>26</sup> Public Act 08-160 delayed implementation of the suspension law until July 1, 2009. SDE issued these guidelines on October 1, 2008. See, Public Act 08-160, *Connecticut General Assembly* (May 7, 2008). Available at: [http://cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Public+Act&bill\\_num=08-160&which\\_year=2008&SUBMIT1.x=0&SUBMIT1.y=0&SUBMIT1=Normal](http://cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Public+Act&bill_num=08-160&which_year=2008&SUBMIT1.x=0&SUBMIT1.y=0&SUBMIT1=Normal). A copy of the guidelines issued by SDE is available at: [http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/pressroom/In\\_School\\_Suspension\\_Guidance.pdf](http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/pressroom/In_School_Suspension_Guidance.pdf). See also, Public Act 09-6, *Connecticut General Assembly* (October 5, 2009). Available at: [http://cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/CGAbillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&bill\\_num=2053&which\\_year=2009](http://cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/CGAbillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&bill_num=2053&which_year=2009).
- <sup>27</sup> Public Act 10-111, *Connecticut General Assembly* (May 26, 2010). Available at: [http://cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&bill\\_num=438&which\\_year=2010&SUBMIT1.x=0&SUBMIT1.y=0&SUBMIT1=Normal](http://cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&bill_num=438&which_year=2010&SUBMIT1.x=0&SUBMIT1.y=0&SUBMIT1=Normal). The law states, "On and after July 1, 2010, suspensions pursuant to this section shall be in-school suspensions, unless during the hearing held pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, (1) the administration determines that 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, or (2) the administration determines that an out-of-school suspension is appropriate for such pupil based on evidence of (A) previous disciplinary problems that have

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led to suspensions or expulsion of such pupil, and (B) efforts by the administration to address such disciplinary problems through means other than out-of-school suspension or expulsion, including positive behavioral support strategies. An in-school suspension may be served in the school that the pupil attends, or in any school building under the jurisdiction of the local or regional board of education, as determined by such board.”

<sup>28</sup> Over the course of 2.5 years, we interviewed approximately sixty individuals and listened to the testimony, remarks, or presentations of dozens more. Where a theme or idea was expressed by many educators from different schools, we include it without specific attribution. Where our source of information about a particular program in a particular district comes from interviews with a specific educator, we cite the conversation only when the educator has given us express permission. We conducted several background and context-setting interviews in 2007-2008, in the early stages of this project, and we are particularly grateful to the educators we spoke to at that time who framed the need for positive, preventative, responsive interventions, particularly Jim Shannon, Direct of Pupil Services, Bridgeport Public Schools, January 3, 2008, and Charlie Manos, Coordinator of Pupil Services, Danbury Public Schools, December 7, 2007.

<sup>29</sup> See Gladden, “Reducing School Violence, 269 (citing research stating school discipline is more effective tailored to the situation and utilizes a spectrum of consequences).

<sup>30</sup> See Connecticut General Statutes §10-233d for the full definition of expulsion. Connecticut General Statute §10-233d, *Connecticut General Assembly*. Available at: <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2005/pub/chap170.htm#Sec10-233d.htm>. A local or regional Board of Education, or other similarly formed group charged with making decisions on expulsions, may expel, “any pupil whose conduct on school grounds or at a school-sponsored activity is violative of publicized policy of such board or is seriously disruptive of the educational process or endangers persons or property or whose conduct off of school grounds is violative of such policy and is seriously disruptive of the educational process...” Expulsion hearings are mandated, and a one-year expulsion is required, if a student is in possession of a firearm, deadly weapon, or dangerous instrument on school grounds or at a school-sponsored activity or if off school grounds a firearm or deadly weapon is used in the commission of a crime. A student is also required to receive a one-year expulsion if it is found that they have sold or distributed a controlled substance.

<sup>31</sup> See “Improve Discipline and Academic Performance by Retaining Connecticut’s School Suspensions Law,” 1.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Tina Hislop, Assistant Principal, Rogers Park Middle School, Danbury Public Schools, on December 2009.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>34</sup> This information is available in the model schools section of the “Positive Behavior Support” segment of the State Educational Resource Center (SERC) website. Available at: [http://ctserc.org/s/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&id=14:pbs&Itemid=110&layout=default](http://ctserc.org/s/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=14:pbs&Itemid=110&layout=default). For more information, contact Kristina Jones, Michelle Weaver, or Julia Case at SERC.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Robert Fontaine, Principal, Middletown High School, Middletown Public Schools, on April 1, 2010.

<sup>36</sup> Dufresne and Ali, “Missing Out,” 6, 17.

<sup>37</sup> Schools and districts highlighted within the report that utilize this method include Conard High School in West Hartford, Hamden High School, Torrington Middle School, Middletown’s Snow School, and Hartford Public Schools.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Tatiana Patten, Assistant Principal, Montville High School, Montville Public Schools, on April 1, 2010.

<sup>39</sup> Hartford Public Schools, 3-Year Strategic Operating Plan, 39 (citing Strategy Nine for Hartford’s Goal Seven (Positive School Climate); the strategy is listed as “Review attendance, office referrals and suspension data monthly to adjust the Comprehensive School Climate Plan. Accountable: Assistant Superintendents.”) Available at: <http://www.hartfordschools.org/learn-about-hps/documents/HartfordPlan021709FINAL.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with State Educational Resource Center (SERC) staff Julia Case, Education Consultant, Alice Henley, Assistant Director for Program Development and LEA Services, Kristina Jones, Educational Consultant, Marianne Kirner, Executive Director, Tarold Miller, Education Consultant, and Michelle Weaver, Educational Consultant on March 30, 2010; Interview with Donna Maynard, Director of Special Services, Montville School District, Montville Public Schools, on April 1, 2010.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Donna Maynard, Director of Special Services, Montville School District, Montville Public Schools, on April 1, 2010.

<sup>42</sup> School-wide Positive Behavioral Supports (SWPBS) has also been referred to as “Positive Behavioral Support Strategies (PBS)” and “Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).” This paper uses SWPBS at the request of Dr. George Sugai, the creator of the SWPBS framework. The information for this section came primarily from the following sources: Dr. George Sugai, Professor of Special Education, Director of the Center for Behavioral Education & Research, Co-Director of the Center of Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, Carole J. Neag Endowed Chair, Neag School of Education, University of Connecticut; Dr. Joy Kaufman, Associate Professor of Psychology in Psychiatry, Director of Program and Service System Evaluation, Director of Evaluation Research, The Consultation Center, Yale University School of Medicine; Susan Smith, Director of Social Work, Bridgeport Public Schools; Julia Case, Education Consultant, Alice Henley, Assistant Director for Program Development and LEA Services, Kristina Jones, Educational Consultant, Marianne Kirner, Executive

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Director, Tarold Miller, Education Consultant, and Michelle Weaver, Educational Consultant of the State Education Resource Center.

<sup>43</sup> As reported on SERC's website, the data can be viewed at:

[http://pbs.ctserc.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=42&Itemid=110](http://pbs.ctserc.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=42&Itemid=110).

<sup>44</sup> In the report, SWPBS is referred to as "Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)" which, as mentioned in footnote 37, is another name for SWPBS.

<sup>45</sup> See Joy Kaufman and Amy Griffin, "Implementing PBIS in the Bridgeport Public School System" (New Haven, CT: The Consultation Center, Yale University School of Medicine, 2009).

<sup>46</sup> See "Positive Behavior Support Data Report and Summary: A Look at Connecticut," *State Education Resource Center* (March 2009). The full report can be viewed at:

<http://pbs.ctserc.com/docs/2009%20SERC%20SWPBS%20Data%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>47</sup> See Christine McGrath, "PBIS in Urban Settings," *Association for Positive Behavior Supports* (March 27, 2009) (exploring the implementation of PBIS in 2005 in ten schools in the Meriden School District, eight elementary schools and two middle schools. The schools reported dramatic reduction in the number of referrals that administrators were faced with. The report also found that in the school year 298.5 hours were saved in instructional time.) The presentation can be viewed at:

[www.pbis.org/common/pbisresources/.../ASWPBS09\\_UrbanSchools\\_1.ppt](http://www.pbis.org/common/pbisresources/.../ASWPBS09_UrbanSchools_1.ppt).

<sup>48</sup> See R. H. Horner, G. Sugai, and C.M. Anderson (in press), "Examining the Evidence Base for School-wide Positive Behavior Support," *Focus on Exceptionality*.

<sup>49</sup> See Dufresne and Ali, "Missing Out," 32.

<sup>50</sup> See "Bridgeport Public Schools Announces Reduction in Suspension Rates," Press Release, November 30, 2009, 1. The release can be viewed at:

<http://www.bcacct.org/Websites/bcacct/Images/Press%20Release%20Suspension%20Report%2009%20Supt%20office.doc>.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>52</sup> See "Bridgeport Public Schools Announces Reduction in Suspension Rates," 1. See also Linda Brewster. "Lost Class Time:

The State of Suspensions in Bridgeport Schools," *Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition* (Fall 2009) (attributes significant drops in the suspension rate at Bridgeport Public Schools to the accelerated implementation of SWPBS). Interview with Susan Smith, Director of Social Work, Bridgeport Public Schools, on December 3, 2009.

<sup>53</sup> See Kaufman and Griffin, "Implementing PBIS in the Bridgeport Public School System."

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> "Positive Behavior Support: Data Report and Summary," 41.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-50.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Susan Smith, Director of Social Work, Bridgeport Public Schools, on December 3, 2009.

<sup>61</sup> See Columbus School, "STAR," Bridgeport Public Schools (2010). Available at:

<http://bridgeport.ct.schoolwebpages.com/education/components/sectionlist/default.php?sectiondetailid=45542&>. Interview with Manuel Rocha, Principal, Kim Foster, Social Worker, and Carla Moreira, Clinical Staff, Columbus School, Bridgeport Public High Schools, on December 18, 2009.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Manuel Rocha, Principal, Kim Foster, Social Worker, and Carla Moreira, Clinical Staff, Columbus School, Bridgeport Public High Schools, on December 18, 2009.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Presentation by Mary Ann Buchanan, EdD, Assistant Principal, and Vance Cannon, Librarian/PBIS Team Coach, Housatonic Valley Regional High School, Region One School District, 2010 Best Practices Conference, Governor's Prevention Partnership, Farmington, Connecticut, and Interview with Buchanan and Cannon, on April 6, 2010.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Jean Wierzbinski, Principal of The Sayles School, Sprague School District, on March 30, 2010.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Tatiana Patten, Assistant Principal, Montville High School, Montville Public Schools, on April 1, 2010.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Donna Maynard, Director of Special Services, Montville School District, Montville Public Schools, on April 1, 2010.

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- <sup>73</sup> Interview with Tatiana Patten, Assistant Principal, Montville High School, Montville Public Schools, on April 1, 2010.
- <sup>74</sup> Interview with James Gaudreau, Principal, Snow School, Middletown Public Schools, on April 5, 2010.
- <sup>75</sup> Interview with Kathy Bedula, M.D. Fox Elementary School, Hartford Public Schools, on April 15, 2010.
- <sup>76</sup> See Mark Benigni and Bruce Miller, "Weaving Together Student Supports," *Principal Leadership*, 52-57 (January 2010), 54.
- <sup>77</sup> SERC has several lists of low- and no-cost positive reinforcements available on the Resource page of their SWPBS website. The lists can be accessed here:  
[http://pbs.ctserc.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=156:resources&catid=52:general&Itemid=136](http://pbs.ctserc.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=156:resources&catid=52:general&Itemid=136).
- <sup>78</sup> Interview with Julia Case, Education Consultant, Alice Henley, Assistant Director for Program Development and LEA Services, Kristina Jones, Educational Consultant, Marianne Kirner, Executive Director, Tarold Miller, Education Consultant, and Michelle Weaver, Educational Consultant of the State Education Resource Center on March 30, 2010.
- <sup>79</sup> SERC has several lists of low- and no-cost positive reinforcements available on the Resource page of their SWPBS website. The lists can be accessed here:  
[http://pbs.ctserc.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=156:resources&catid=52:general&Itemid=136](http://pbs.ctserc.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=156:resources&catid=52:general&Itemid=136).  
Examples of experiential rewards for faculty include: postcards sent home to staff family telling them how much the staff is valued and appreciated, the ability to leave early or arrive late while a Principal (or other staff member) covers a classroom – allowing a teacher to complete a much needed task, a lunch-period where staff is excused from monitoring duty or is granted permission to leave campus, the highlighting of a staff member on bulletin board, website, in newsletter, board report, morning announcements, or winning support staff assistance for one hour to aid a teacher in making copies, check papers, file, etc. Examples of experiential rewards for students include: being recognized during morning announcements, eating lunch with a favorite teacher or administrator, receiving a call home for good behavior, being allowed to wear a hat during class, or being featured in the school newspaper in a special section.
- <sup>80</sup> See Angeleque Akin-little and Steven G. Little, "The True Effects of Extrinsic Reinforcement on "Intrinsic" Motivation," in Angeleque Akin-little, Steven G. Little, Melissa A. Bray, and Thomas J. Kehle (Eds), *Behavioral Interventions in Schools: Evidence-Based Positive Strategies*, 73-92 (Washington DC American Psychological Association, 2009).
- <sup>81</sup> Timothy Dunn, "Annual Discipline Report," *West Hartford Public Schools* (June 3, 2008). Available at: <http://www.whps.org/board/agenda-documents/20080603/discipline%20report%2007-08.pdf> (showing a 3% reduction in suspensions between school year 05-06 and 07-07 at Conard High School, a 1% reduction between those same years at Hall High School, and a 11% reduction between those same years at King Phillip.)
- <sup>82</sup> Interview with Timothy Dunn, Assistant Superintendent for Administration, West Hartford Public Schools, on March 30, 2010.
- <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>85</sup> Interview with Roszena Haskins, Conard High School, West Hartford Public Schools, on April 1, 2010.
- <sup>86</sup> Interview with Harry Seltzer, Social Worker, High Horizons Magnet School, Bridgeport Public Schools on December 22, 2009.
- <sup>87</sup> Interview with Donna Maynard, Director of Special Services, Montville School District, Montville Public Schools, on April 1, 2010.
- <sup>88</sup> See Jean Rhodes, Jean Grossman, and Nancy Resch, "Agents of Change: Pathways through Which Mentoring Relationships Influence Adolescents' Academic Adjustment," *Child Development*, vol. 71, no. 6, 1662-1671 (November/December 2000), 1662 (citing research from other studies that has indicated the effects of mentoring on adolescents).
- <sup>89</sup> See Rhodes, Grossman, and Resch, "Agents of Change," 1663 (citing research from other studies that has indicated the effects of mentoring programs on students' academic and behavioral outcomes).
- <sup>90</sup> See Benigni and Miller, "Weaving Together Student Supports," 54.
- <sup>91</sup> Interview with Donna Maynard, Director of Special Services, Montville School District, Montville Public Schools, on April 1, 2010.
- <sup>92</sup> Interview with Roszena Haskins, Conard High School, West Hartford Public Schools, on April 1, 2010.
- <sup>93</sup> Interview with Robert Fontaine, Principal, Middletown High School, Middle Public Schools, on April 1, 2010. Interview with Donna Marino, Parent Resource Coordinator, Middletown Public Schools, on March 31, 2010.
- <sup>94</sup> Interview with Robert Fontaine, Principal, Middletown High School, Middletown Public Schools, on April 1, 2010. Interview with Donna Marino, Parent Resource Coordinator, Middletown Public Schools, on 31 March 2010.
- <sup>95</sup> Dufresne and Ali, "Missing Out," 17, chart 6 (showing that in every grade, including pre-kindergarten, a proportion of students were suspended. However, the largest proportion of students suspended occurred in the 9th grade).

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- <sup>96</sup> Interview with Maureen Reed, Assistant Principal of Cheshire High School, Cheshire Public Schools, on December 18, 2009; Luther Turmelle, "Mentoring Reduces Freshman Problems," *New Haven Register*, January 21, 2008. For more information about the Link Crew program nationally, see <http://www.boomerangproject.com/link>.
- <sup>97</sup> Turmelle, "Mentoring Reduces Freshman Problems."
- <sup>98</sup> Interview with Maureen Reed, Assistant Principal of Cheshire High School, Cheshire Public Schools, on December 18, 2009.
- <sup>99</sup> Carson, "Connecticut Takes Promising Steps," 1 (citing research stating that students perform better in a well managed classroom). See also Roy G. Mayer and Thomas W. Butterfield, "Evaluating a Preventative Approach to Reducing School Vandalism" (March 1981) (highlighting a California program that featured significant teacher training on classroom management and resulted in a significant decrease in both vandalism as well as student other student discipline issues over the three years of the study).
- <sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 (referencing researchers who have found that teacher concerns regarding classroom management outweigh other issues such as content and pedagogy).
- <sup>101</sup> Sedovic, Madeline, Qing Li, and Mary Yakimowski, "The Neag School of Education's Teacher Preparation Program: Alumni Survey Results for the Graduates of 2003-2007," *University of Connecticut* (September 2008), 17-19.
- <sup>102</sup> Carson, "Connecticut Takes Promising Steps," 3 (citing surveys and conversations with members of these groups indicating a need for more comprehensive classroom management training.)
- <sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 (summarizing recent changes in policy relating to teacher training in classroom management in Connecticut).
- <sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 (stating, based on correspondence with state officials, the lack of a classroom management professional development mandate in Connecticut).
- <sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>106</sup> See Hartford Public Schools, 3-Year Strategic Operating Plan, 39.
- <sup>107</sup> Interview with Donna Marino, Parent Resource Coordinator, Middletown Schools, Middletown Public Schools, on March 31, 2010.
- <sup>108</sup> See David Johnson and Roger Johnson, "Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation Programs in Elementary and Secondary Schools: A Review of the Research," *Review of Educational Research*, vol. 66, no. 4, 459-506 (Winter 1996), 479 (referencing studies that provide evidence that conflict resolution and peer mediation training result in students knowing and making use of negotiation and mediation procedures for resolving an argument).
- <sup>109</sup> See Johnson and Johnson, "Conflict Resolution," 465 (stating that conflict theories indicate that conflict is a "necessary and positive condition for growth and development of children" and as such, schools should be "conflict-positive" rather than "conflict-negative" environments) and 476 (indicating that it is important for students to learn "integrative negotiations in which joint benefit is considered over personal gain).
- <sup>110</sup> See Johnson, David W. and Roger T. Johnson, "Teaching All Students How to Manage Conflicts Constructively: The Peacemakers Program," *The Journal of Negro Education* 65, 323. See also Johnson and Johnson, "Conflict Resolution," 488 (stating that conflict resolution training results in a better school environment and more positive attitudes toward conflict resolution training) and 490-494 (referencing a variety of studies that indicate that conflict resolution and peer mediation programs decrease "discipline, violence, referrals, detentions, and suspensions).
- <sup>111</sup> Interview with Harry Seltzer, Social Worker, Bridgeport Public Schools, High Horizons Magnet School, on December 22, 2009.
- <sup>112</sup> Interview with Robert Fontaine, Principal, Middletown High School, Middletown Public Schools on April 1, 2010.
- <sup>113</sup> Email correspondence with Elizabeth Murphy, Mediator, Youth & Schools Coordinator, Dispute Settlement Center, May 2010.
- <sup>114</sup> The Dispute Settlement Center, Inc. is a non-profit western Connecticut mediation agency designed to offer conflict resolution services and training. Email correspondence with Elizabeth Murphy, Mediator, Youth & Schools Coordinator, Dispute Settlement Center, May 2010.
- <sup>115</sup> See Gladden, "Reducing School Violence," 286 (citing research that shows that one of the highest predictors of student success in the face of multiple stressors is a relationship with a strong adult figure).
- <sup>116</sup> See Gladden, "Reducing School Violence," 286 (citing multiple studies that indicate a relationship between high student-teacher ratios and higher levels of school violence).
- <sup>117</sup> Interview with Joan Massey, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education, Hartford Public Schools, on December 23, 2009.
- <sup>118</sup> For more information on the Hartford Public High School's Freshman Academy, see "Hartford Public High School Freshman Academy," *Hartford Public Schools*. Available at: <http://www.hartfordschools.org/schools/Hartford-Public-High-School-Freshman-Academy.php>

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<sup>119</sup> Interview with Gary Highsmith, Principal, Dr. Clydette Messiah, Assistant Principal, Joseph DiBacco, Assistant Principal, Dana Mulligan, Assistant Principal, at Hamden High School, August 2008.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Tina Hislop, Assistant Principal of Rogers Park Middle School, December 2009.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with Timothy Dunn, Assistant Superintendent for Administration, West Hartford Public Schools, on March 20, 2010.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Joan Massey, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education, Hartford Public Schools, December 23, 2009.; Interview with Dee Speese-Linehan, Supervisor, New Haven Public Schools; Interview with Gary Highsmith, Principal, Dr. Clydette Messiah, Assistant Principal, Joseph DiBacco, Assistant Principal, Dana Mulligan, Assistant Principal, at Hamden High School, August 2008. *See also* Andrea M. Spencer, and Emily Breon, "Truancy: A Closer Look. The Link between Unmet Educational Needs and Truancy," *Center for Children's Advocacy* (December 2006) (finding based on an analysis of 91 cases of truancy in Connecticut that students who are frequently truant displayed early warning signs of academic difficulties that were often left unaddressed).

<sup>124</sup> Interview with Joan Massey, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education, Hartford Public Schools, on December 23, 2009.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *See* Spencer and Breon, "Truancy: A Closer Look," (finding in an analysis of 91 cases of truancy in Connecticut that the majority of the students had at one point been either retained or promoted with exception, and that almost three out of four of the students had been described as having attentional or information processing problems.)

<sup>127</sup> Dufresne and Ali, "Missing Out," 16-17 (showing data that in every grade that sits for the Connecticut Mastery Test, suspended or expelled students scored below proficiency in reading and math at higher rates when compared to the entire grade).

<sup>128</sup> Interview with Joan Massey, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education, Hartford Public Schools, December 23, 2009.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with Mark Benigni, EdD, Principal, Cromwell High School on March 25, 2010; Benigni and Miller, "Weaving Together Student Supports," 54-55.

<sup>130</sup> *See* Benigni and Miller, "Weaving Together Student Supports," 55.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> Interview with Matthew Harnett, Principal, Torrington Middle School, on April 14, 2010.

<sup>133</sup> Interview with Charlie Manos, Coordinator of Pupil Services, Danbury Public Schools, on December 7, 2007.

<sup>134</sup> Interview with Donna Maynard, Director of Special Services, Montville School District, on April 1, 2010.

<sup>135</sup> Interview with Roszena Haskins, Conard High School, West Hartford Public Schools, on April 1, 2010. For more information, see "Student Assistance Team," *The Governor's Prevention Partnership* (2007). Available at: <http://www.preventionworksct.org/page1831.html>.

<sup>136</sup> Interview with Roszena Haskins, Conard High School, West Hartford Public Schools, on April 1, 2010. For more information, see "Student Assistance Team," *The Governor's Prevention Partnership* (2007). Available at: <http://www.preventionworksct.org/page1831.html>

<sup>137</sup> Interview with Timothy Dunn, Assistant Superintendent for Administration, West Hartford Public Schools, on March 30, 2010. *See also*, Hall High School, "Counselor Assignments," *West Hartford Public Schools* (2010). Available at: <http://www.whps.org/schools/hall/departments/guidance/guidance-staff.asp> (listing of all guidance staff members at Hall High School). *See also*, Conard High School, "School Counseling Department," *West Hartford Public Schools* (2010). Available at [http://www.whps.org/school/conard/guidance/index.asp#School\\_Counselor\\_Assignments](http://www.whps.org/school/conard/guidance/index.asp#School_Counselor_Assignments) (listing of all guidance staff members at Conard High School.)

<sup>138</sup> Interview with Timothy Dunn, Assistant Superintendent for Administration, West Hartford Public Schools, on March 30, 2010.

<sup>139</sup> Interview with Donna Maynard, Director of Special Services, Montville School District, on April 1, 2010; Interview with Tatiana Patten, Assistant Principal, Montville High School, on April 1, 2010.

<sup>140</sup> Interview with Tatiana Patten, Assistant Principal, Montville High School, on April 1, 2010.

<sup>141</sup> Interview with Dr. Michael Jolin, Thompson Superintendent of Schools, on April 7, 2010.

<sup>142</sup> Interview with Roszena Haskins, Conard High School, West Hartford Public Schools, on April 1, 2010.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with Roszena Haskins, Conard High School, West Hartford Public Schools, on April 1, 2010.

<sup>144</sup> Interview with Robert Fontaine, Principal, Middletown High School, on April 1, 2010.

<sup>145</sup> *See* Howard Zehr, "Restorative Justice? What's That?," *Eastern Mennonite University* (October 2009) (describing central tenets of the restorative justice process). Available at: [http://www.iirp.org/article\\_detail.php?article\\_id=NjMx](http://www.iirp.org/article_detail.php?article_id=NjMx). *See also*



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Braithwaite, et al., “Restorative Justice Practice,” 3-5 (describing issues crucial to forming effective restorative justice processes).

<sup>146</sup> See also Braithwaite, et al., “Restorative Justice Practice,” 2-3 (discussing components of the restorative justice system).

<sup>147</sup> Email correspondence with Elizabeth Murphy, Mediator, Youth & Schools Coordinator, Dispute Settlement Center, May 2010.

<sup>148</sup> Interview with Dr. Anthony Salvatore, Assistant Principal, Reed Intermediate School, Newtown Public Schools, on April 16, 2010.

<sup>149</sup> See Connecticut General Statutes §10-233a(b) for the full definition of classroom removal. Connecticut General Statute §10-233a(b), *Connecticut General Assembly*. The statute can be viewed at: <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2005/pub/chap170.htm#Sec10-233a.htm>. A removal is defined as “an exclusion from a classroom for all or part of a single class period, provided such an extension shall not extend beyond ninety minutes.”

<sup>150</sup> See Connecticut General Statutes §10-233b for full explanation of how a school can use classroom removals. Connecticut General Statute §10-233b, *Connecticut General Assembly*. The statute can be viewed at: <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2005/pub/chap170.htm#Sec10-233b.htm>. Under the statute, a school may not remove a student from class, “more than six times in a school year nor more than twice in one week unless such pupil is referred to the building principal or such principal’s designee and granted an informal hearing.”

<sup>151</sup> Comments and Interviews of educators at the *2010 Best Practices Conference: Positive School Climate & Student Success*, Farmington, CT, on April 6, 2010.

<sup>152</sup> Interview with James Gaudreau, Principal, Snow School, Middletown Public Schools, on April 5, 2010.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> Interview with James Gaudreau, Principal, Snow School, Middletown Public Schools, on April 5, 2010.; “REACH Reflections on Behavior” form obtained by email correspondence with James Gaudreau, Principal, Snow School, Middletown Public Schools, on April 5, 2010.

<sup>155</sup> Interview with Dr. Anthony Salvatore, Assistant Principal at Reed Intermediate School in Newtown, on April 16, 2010.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with Kathy Bedula of Fox Elementary School in Hartford, on April 15, 2010. For more information on the concept of Responsible Thinking Classrooms, see the program website at: <http://responsiblethinking.com/>

<sup>157</sup> Interview with Robert Fontaine, Principal, Middletown High School on April 1, 2010.

<sup>158</sup> Interview with Dee Speese-Linehan, Supervisor, New Haven Public Schools.

<sup>159</sup> See, e.g., Kris Bosworth, Lysbeth Ford, Kirsteen E. Anderson, David Paiz, “Community Service as an Alternative to Suspension: A Practical Program Toolkit,” *Smith Prevention Initiatives, University of Arizona – Tuscon* (2006), 7, 19-21 (citing a study of seven Arizona community service alternative to suspension programs, showing statistically significant decrees in attendance violations, disciplinary infractions, and disciplinary referrals among students who participated in the programs). Available at: <http://www.serviceoptions.org/Documents/manual.pdf>.

<sup>160</sup> Interview with Robert Fontaine, Principal, Middletown High School, on April 1, 2010.

<sup>161</sup> Interview with Dr. Michael Jolin, Thompson Superintendent of Schools, April 7, 2010.

<sup>162</sup> Currently Mr. Dobbins is serving as the Assistant Principal of Ansonia High School.

<sup>163</sup> Interview with Joseph Dobbins, Assistant Principal of Ansonia High School, on April 19, 2010.

<sup>164</sup> Interview with Dr. Mary Ann Buchanan and Vance Cannon, on April 6, 2010.

<sup>165</sup> See Dufresne and Ali, “Missing Out,” (finding that in the 2006-2007 school year 7% of out-of-school suspensions were for “other school policy violations, including dress code violations. Other types of violations that could be classified in this category include: general school policy violations; public display of affections; motor vehicle violations; bus infractions; accumulations of detentions, suspensions, or demerits; lying; selling food or candy; gambling; playing cards; eating in unauthorized areas; and failing to return school documents).

<sup>166</sup> See e.g., Interview with Alan Beitman, Superintendent of Regional District 10 (in-school suspension superior to out-of-school suspensions for many behaviors, as they provide an opportunity to assist students with academic work).

<sup>167</sup> Interview with Dee Speese-Linehan, Supervisor, New Haven Public Schools.

<sup>168</sup> See, e.g., Interview with Alan Beitman, Superintendent of Regional School District #10, January 6, 2010; Interview with Gary Highsmith, Principal, Dr. Clydette Messiah, Assistant Principal, Joseph DiBacco, Assistant Principal, Dana Mulligan, Assistant Principal, at Hamden High School, in August 2008.

<sup>169</sup> Interview with Roszena Haskins, Conard High School, West Hartford Public Schools, on April 1, 2010.

<sup>170</sup> See discussion of SWPBS, above.

<sup>171</sup> Interview with Jean Wierzbinski, Principal of The Sayles School, on March 30, 2010.

<sup>172</sup> Interview with Mark Benigni, EdD, Principal, Cromwell High School, on March 25, 2010; See Benigni and Miller, “Suspending School Suspensions,” *American School Board Journal* (May 2010), 34-35.

<sup>173</sup> Email correspondence with Mark Benigni, EdD, Principal, Cromwell High School, on March 26, 2010.

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<sup>174</sup> Interview with Mark Benigni, EdD, Principal, Cromwell High School, on March 25, 2010.

<sup>175</sup> See Benigni and Miller, “Suspending School Suspensions,” 34-35.

<sup>176</sup> See Benigni and Miller, “Weaving Together Student Supports,” 54; Interview with Mark Benigni, EdD, Principal, Cromwell High School, on March 25, 2010.

<sup>177</sup> Interview with Mark Benigni, EdD, Principal, Cromwell High School, on March 25, 2010.

<sup>178</sup> See Benigni and Miller, “Weaving Together Student Supports,” 54.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 54, 56 (reporting that of the staff surveyed 100% believed “students are being sent to in-school suspension for the right reasons, 97% believe that “the focus for in-school suspension should continue to be on discipline, not punishment,” and that 92% believed that “in-school suspension has been an effective intervention for student.”)

<sup>180</sup> Interview with Mark Benigni, EdD, Principal, Cromwell High School, on March 25, 2010.

<sup>181</sup> Interview with Mark Benigni, EdD, Principal, Cromwell High School, on March 25, 2010; See Benigni and Miller, “Weaving Together Student Supports,” 55 (describing the transition of the In-school suspension staff to other academic support programs). See also Benigni and Miller, “Suspending School Suspensions,” 34-35 (describing the transition of the In-school suspension staff to other academic support programs).

<sup>182</sup> The blank spaces in this chart do not include out-of-school suspension information because the data given to us by the State Department of Education did not include these numbers. We believe that these blanks represent either a) zero suspensions in that district in that year or b) unreported data. Cells with an asterisk do not include specific data, due to the fact that the district reported five or fewer students suspended, and thus, listing the exact number of students suspended and the suspension rate for that year raises privacy concerns. However, using the exact numbers given to us by the Connecticut State Department of Education, we have calculated the exact percentage point change in the out-of-school suspension rate, and have noted if the rates in these districts have increased (+), decreased (-), or remained the same (0.0).