

7 Ways to Make Time for the Right School Discipline

Discipline is one of the most commonly stated reasons for not having enough time for effective implementation of school or classroom programs. This is true; however, what is sometimes overlooked is that a reactive school discipline approach takes more time in the long run than a preventative one. Effective discipline should be designed to improve behavior, rather than simply dismiss it for a few days through suspension and hope the student returns to school 'fixed.' These are seven ways for creating time to implement the right discipline that works:

1) **Belief** – As educators, we approach instruction with the belief that every child can and will learn. With this belief, we exhaust every resource and support at our disposal to provide a child with the resources needed to support learning. However, when it comes to behavior, do we believe that every child can and will behave decently? Do we exhaust every resource at our disposal and provide every strategy to support a child in their behavior, or do we use suspension as our only means to 'teach' a child how to behave? As an administrator, you have to question your own belief system about discipline. If you believe what you are currently doing is working, there is no compelling reason to change. If you do not believe in preventative discipline, it will not be an expectation in your school or a priority. If implemented effectively, however, you will witness an increase in the amount of time for you to effectively respond to behavior incidents when they do occur.

2) **Invest in preventative Response to Intervention (RTI) systems for both academics and behavior** – Invest in building the capacity of your school staff on creating effective systems for responding to students school-wide, targeted/at risk groups, and individualized both in academics and behavior. Investing here will give you more time to focus on a preventative model rather than reactive. Initial best teaching and best classroom management will support approximately 80% of your students in both academics and behavior. This is why it is so critical to organize your school's preventative and intervention systems and monitor them purposefully on an ongoing basis. The [PBIS Champion Model](#) is one research based RTI model that can help you do this at your school.

3) **Visibility and Active Supervision** – As an administrator, it is critical to be out of your office and visible to students and staff to build effective relationships and make meaningful connections with kids. Active supervision requires an intentional focus on movement, scanning, and positive interactions during supervision; this is critical and needs to be modeled by the administrator. Taking the time to train your staff on visibility and active supervision will save you the time of responding to behavior incidents due to the impecuniousness of supervision from staff.

4) **Invest in Gaining Faculty Commitment** – Take time to educate your staff on alternative discipline approaches. Make it a priority to share school behavior data, gather input from the staff, and work with staff on discipline so they feel part of the process. Share effective discipline success stories with the staff. If you take the time to do this and make yourself available to have difficult ongoing conversations with staff on belief systems, you will see more ownership with staff on handling minor discipline and increased buy in with staff on major administrator handled discipline. Communication is also key for staff to understand the logic behind conducting behavior in this structure. In addition, this will help discipline become a team effort to supporting a student, rather than something only executed and monitored by an administrator.

5) **Create and nurture a behavior team** – It is critical that every school has a behavior team designed to set behavior goals, establish and monitor behavior interventions, and support with preventative systems work. An administrator who provides a team the opportunity to meet on a regular basis to discuss school-wide, targeted/small group, and individualized behavior data and trends will benefit

ultimately. This allows for data to be used to provide interventions for students by name by need, instead of after they've escalated to the next level of discipline. Make sure the social-emotional person(s) on campus, such as a school counselor or school psychologist, are an active part of the behavior team. Designate this time with your behavior team; use a monitoring tool to ensure data is being used to identify and monitor the progress of your focus students. The emphasis here is to get to the students before they get to you.

6) Create a toolkit of effective discipline – Organize the preventative discipline ideas in a toolkit for future reference. As you conduct discipline in this manner, you will begin to have a set of actions you tend to assign, therefore, if you have another case similar, you can reference your toolkit to help save time. For example, hands-off academy is an alternative implemented for two students in a fight referenced in our previous blog. Through this consequence, the administrator developed behavior lessons, a restorative contract, and progress-monitoring sheet to track hands-off academy goals for these students. In the event of another similar type incident at the school, the administrator can reference this consequence/intervention instead of recreating another similar discipline. Look for upcoming books written by John and Jessica Hannigan on different discipline options for common behavior incidents in schools.

7) Support a system for alternatives – Make sure the alternative discipline you assign is implemented with fidelity and appropriately communicated to all stakeholders. Understand, establishing this will require time and human capital to implement and monitor effectively. Although it may be challenging to allocate so many resources for one student, the ultimate goal is to help the student learn and change his/her behavior. Without a deliberate focus on alternatives, the student will continue taking the time of your staff throughout the school year with continuing behavior challenges, since the function of the student's behavior was never addressed. Teaching desired outcomes through alternatives to suspension will reduce the frequency of repeat offenses, thus creating less time dealing with discipline than using suspension alone.

After now having read the seven ways to make time for the right kind of school discipline, what can you commit to as an administrator?

In our next post, we provide five strategies to help guide difficult conversations about discipline.