

## A Review of Research Abstracts on In-School Suspension

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A quick review of research on ISS clearly shows that it is effective as a part of a whole school discipline program. The most effective models include some guidance, support, monitoring by professional staff, planning for change in behavior, and generally are built on a “rehabilitative model”.

“[...] 27. Make use of in-school suspension programs, which include guidance, support, planning for change, and skill building.”

“A Positive Approach to Discipline (PAD). PAD is based on Glasser's Reality Therapy and is grounded in teachers' respect for students and instilling in them a sense of responsibility. Program components include developing and sharing clear rules, providing daily opportunities for success, and in-school suspension for noncompliant students. Research (e.g., Allen, 1981) is generally supportive of the PAD program.”

“In-school suspension. In-school suspension programs which include guidance, support, planning for change, and opportunities to build new skills have been demonstrated to be effective in improving individual student behavior and thus increasing school order (Allen 1981; Cotton and Savard 1982; Doyle 1989; Miller 1986).”

*Cotton, Kathleen. “IClose-Up #9: Schoolwide and Classroom Discipline”. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. 13 Jan 2006. <http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/5/cu9.html>*

1) Detailed study of small school (enrollment = 364) with camera to monitor students. Principal & secretaries watched closed circuit. Study concludes limited success, mostly in perception. Teachers perceived it was successful in a survey, students had mixed reviews, but there was negligible overall effect on school discipline: no change in OSSs, no change in lost instructional days.

(Turpin and Hardin 1997)

2) Large study in Houston public schools (“Student Referral Centers” = separate buildings from regular school)

- Positive impact on teacher attitudes
- High percentages of non-repeat referrals (85% for one center, 55% for lowest center) “A high percentage of non-repeaters in an ISS program suggests that some action the program takes corrects the student misbehavior so that they do not have further serious behavior problems.”

(Opuni 1991)

3) Leapley studies effect on violent acts (considered important b/c examined modification of behavior rather than just drop in OSS rates). He concludes that intervention offered by a trained teacher in ISS helped reduce the number of violent acts when compared to control group. All experimental schools showed “significant change for the better”. Supports power of “rehabilitative model” of ISS.

Larry Lapley (1997)

4) “The review of programs and research seems to at least tentatively suggest that an ISS program is an important component of school discipline that schools need.” (He also notes that there is not research yet describing what, precisely, the “magic ingredients” are for successful ISS programs).

(Blomberg)

5) Reviews British, Australian, New Zealand, and American research on the use of in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and suspension to off-site centers. Finds these approaches ineffective and calls for organizational improvements in schools so that disruptive students might be retained.

(Slee 1986)

6) Reports the results of a study in which a therapeutic discipline program was compared with traditional, nontherapeutic discipline in terms of their effects on secondary students experiencing in-school suspension for truancy. Treatment students had better attendance and greater insight, but controls had better attitudes toward school attendance.

(Miller 1986)

An effective ISS program includes (1) the administration and ISSP director played a stronger leadership role; (2) the entire faculty increased their support of the ISSP and were more involved in the program's operation; and (3) communication between the ISSP

director and faculty improved regarding students' assignments, behavior, progress, and return to the classroom.

(Whitfield & Bulach, 1996)

This practicum report describes a 15-day in-room suspension strategy designed to reduce the increasing number of principal-initiated student suspensions resulting from inappropriate conduct. The program's distinguishing features entailed a central figure who predetermined the candidates by means of a pre-suspension interview, parental-student involvement and choice, and the student's motivation for avoiding an impending principal's suspension. A contingency contract delineated the conditions that necessitated pupil isolation, while promoting structure and a guidance curriculum that featured communication skills. It also introduced, through a point system, a behavioral modification strategy that conceivably reduced the duration of the in-room suspense from an unprecedented 15 school days to 10 days. The program was rehabilitative rather than punitive in design. Analysis of the program data revealed an impressive improvement among those in need of academic structure and a minimal effectiveness among reluctant participants. An accomplished teacher-in-charge, parental involvement, and continual intercommunication contributed to the program's success

(Novell, 1994)

An in-depth examination of in-school suspension programs (ISS) is presented, including problems with ISS programs, some effective models of ISS, and specific ideas for program improvement. ISS programs have great potential for success; however, given the way they are currently implemented, they need to be improved. If properly designed and administered, with an evaluation phase, professional intervention by the counselor and administrator, and assignment requirements, ISS programs can go beyond mere eviction to accomplish something positive on behalf of students. ISS programs accomplish everything that OSS programs do--they remove the troublemaker from the class, but do not reward the student for bad behavior with a vacation from school.

(Vanderslice, 1999)

*Of a fairly comprehensive review of abstracts of articles pertaining to ISS, I found only 3 that did not support its use. I believe a review of these will indicate that the particular failed implementation of ISS in those studies does not invalidate the practice in a general sense.*

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