MENTORING STRATEGIES FOR DECREASING SUSPENSIONS OF STUDENTS WITH BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS

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Abstract
In 2006, nearly 3.3 million students in the United States received out of school suspensions, demonstrating that exclusionary discipline is on the rise and a frequently used practice in schools across the country. Studies have shown that behaviors such as disobedience, inappropriate language, disrespect, defiance, disruption and excessive noise are the most frequent reasons for office referrals. There is a need for effective strategies to decrease disruptive behaviors. Mentoring relationships that incorporate Positive Behavior Support (PBS) strategies are effective for a student who display disruptive behaviors in the classroom setting and decreases the need for more intensive levels of behavioral support. One specific mentoring intervention that has been used to decrease students’ disruptive behavior is Check-in Check-out. Check-in Check-out (CICO) is a type of mentoring program used at both the elementary and secondary levels. This research-based intervention is a component of PBS and is a secondary level of support for the 5-15% of students who have not responded to instruction on school wide expectations and are at-risk of dropping out. This paper talks about the need for CICO, the positive effects of CICO, and the steps for implementation.

Keywords: mentoring, check-in check-out, daily report card, behavioral disorders, suspension

INTRODUCTION
Every public school in the United States is mandated by federal law to use a zero tolerance approach for firearms violations committed in schools (Gun Free Schools Act of 1994) and a similar approach is also applied to infractions such as bringing other weapons, illegal drugs, over-the-counter medications and other prohibited behaviors (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). The term “zero tolerance” is not defined in law or regulation; nor is there a single widely accepted practice definition. The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, defined zero tolerance as “a policy that mandates predetermined consequences or punishments for specified offenses” (NCES, 1998). The intent of zero-tolerance policies is to rid schools of violence. However, implementing zero-tolerance policies have resulted in several unintended negative side effects. School administrators continue to misuse and abuse the policy for incidents that were not meant to be covered under zero tolerance. Zero-tolerance has become the tool school administrators use to justify the overuse of suspension. Suspension has no benefits for students or schools

Advocates for zero tolerance believe this policy prevents school violence by removing dangerous students immediately after an infraction and sending a strong deterrent message to other students. Others believe that more of a preventative, positive approach would also deter many discipline and behavior problems. Positive Behavior Support (PBS) may be one approach used to decrease negative behaviors displayed by students; therefore decreasing the rate of out-of-school suspensions. The educational strategy presented in this paper is called Check-in/Check-out (CICO) and it relates to sustainable development. According to the Asia-Pacific Regional Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), socio-economic, environmental and cultural realities are not static; therefore, educational strategies should remain dynamic and grounded in best-practice research (Education for Sustainable Development, 2005). Further, educational strategies proven effective in other regions can be used to support students in the Asia-Pacific region. Conflict resolution is included as an example of the peace and equity core issue according to the ESD. While traditional values must be addressed throughout education in the Asia-Pacific region, youths in rural and indigenous communities can support education strategies, including strategies that improve academic behavior and resolve possible conflict between educator and student. CICO is an evidence-based mentoring strategy that teaches youths to resolve conflict, a skill that generalizes across urban and rural homes, schools, and communities. In the United States, the strategy has been used to increase retention rates of students who would otherwise be excluded from education due to behavior incompatible with academic success.

Although exclusion is the most common disciplinary response to problem behavior in the United State’s secondary schools (Losen & Skiba, 2010; Skiba & Knesting, 2001; Skiba & Peterson, 2000), there are several concerns about its effectiveness. First, many times students are repeatedly suspended for the same violation, demonstrating that suspensions are not proactive and do not prevent future offenses (Lewis, Butler, Bonner, & Joubert, 2010). Second, out-of-school suspensions cause students who are already academically challenged to have even less success. Third, as already noted, culturally and linguistically diverse students, especially male, minority, and academically and behaviorally challenged students, are suspended more often than their peers, which calls
into question the objectivity and fairness of out-of-school suspensions (Townsend, 2000). Educational exclusion as a disciplinary response is not limited to the United States. School systems globally need effective strategies that increase academic engagement and will ultimately address the ESD’s core issue of improving peace and equity for all community members.

**Check-In Check-Out as a Global Mentoring Strategy**

Research supports the implementation of mentoring programs as potentially successful approaches to meeting the individual needs of at-risk students (Johnson, 2006; Lampley, 2010). Students can achieved better grades, established obtainable goals, and enhanced self-esteem when partnered with caring, supportive adults (Smink, 2000). Further, Daloz (2004) also found that adult mentors can provide improve the academic achievement of students provide at-risk students who are at-risk for exclusion by providing with positive and influential mentoring interventions people in their lives and also positively impacted academic achievement.

One specific mentoring intervention that has been used to increase decrease students’ disruptive academic engagement is CICO Check-in Check-out (Todd, Campbell, Meyer, & Horner, 2008). Check-in Check-out (also referred to as the Behavior Education Program in the literature) is a type of mentoring program used at both the elementary and secondary levels. This research-based intervention is a component of positive behavior support and is a secondary level of support for the 5-15% of United States students who have not responded to instruction on school wide expectations and are at-risk of dropping out. One critical component of CICO is the use of daily report cards (DRC). This student- focused DRC includes varying schedules, behavioral objectives, and goals based on the student’s needs. CICO consists of students daily checking in with an adult at the start of school to retrieve a goal sheet and encouragement. Teachers provide feedback on the sheet throughout the day. Students check out at the end of the day with an adult, and the student takes the sheet home to be signed, returning it the following morning at check in. Educators should use CICO to improve student accountability, increase educational program structure; improve student behavior and academic performance when other interventions fail. Check in/check out provides feedback and adult support on a daily basis, improves and establishes daily home/school communication and collaboration, improves student organization and motivation. It helps students to self-monitor and correct, teaches students to internalize success and it leads to maintenance free responsible behaviors, habits, and effort. Educators should use CICO when a student has failed to respond to general class management techniques and interventions is not participating, demonstrates anxiety, frustration, poor attention, or impulsivity.

According to Crone, Horner, and Hawken (2004), the structural goals of the CICO are to: (a) increase antecedent prompts for appropriate behavior, (b) increase contingent adult feedback, (c) improve the daily structure for students throughout their school day, and (d) improve feedback to families about student behavior (p. 2). Students who participate in the CICO program check in or meet with a designated adult twice during the day for about 15 min each session. The morning check-in includes the mentor: (a) engaging the student in a brief chat (e.g., how was your evening, are you having any issues in you classes right now?), (b) checking to see if homework has been completed, (c) giving the DRC to the student, (d) checking for necessary supplies, (e) collecting the DRC that has been signed by the parent, and (f) positively affirming the student (e.g., have a good day). Using the DRC, classroom teachers rate the behavior of the students throughout the day. Teachers are also encouraged to remind student of alternatives to disruptive or inappropriate behavior. The afternoon check-out includes the mentor: (a) engaging the student to provide a review of their day, (b) inquiring about homework assignments and the materials needed to complete them, (c) discussing any behavior issues that may have occurred that day and the strategies used, and (d) finally totaling points earned by the student and giving appropriate rewards. Reinforcers are linked to points earned by using the DRC. The length of commitment to program is individualized and based on weekly review of data.

**Check In/Check Out Evidence Base**

Check in/check out is a highly effective highly effective research based intervention that can be changed and adapted to suit any school or situation (Crone, Hawken, and Horner, 2010). Todd, Campbell, Meyer, and Horner (2008) utilized a multiple baseline across four subjects design consisting of ten weeks, two weeks baseline and eight weeks of CICO intervention. The specific research question was, "Is there a functional relation between implementation of check in-check out and reduction in the frequency of problem behaviors?" The authors examined the effectiveness of the CICO program on problem behaviors defined as being in the wrong location, talking without the teacher's permission, not following directions, talking to peers, disturbing others, and engaging in negative and physical altercations with teachers and peers. Observations of the problem behavior were conducted three or four days per week using a 20-min partial interval recording system. Students displayed intolerable and inconsistent levels of problem behavior during baseline ranging from 30% to 100% of intervals with problem behavior. Results indicated that all participants demonstrated a decrease in problem behavior with an average reduction of 17.5%. During baseline the average number of office discipline referrals was 0.14% per day across participants. The average office discipline referrals per day across participants during intervention decreased to 0.04%.

Hawkin, MacLeod, and Rawkins (2007) also found the Behavior Education Program (BEP) to be effective. They examined the effectiveness of the BEP on office disciplinary referrals (ODR). The research question was, "will the implementation of the BEP decrease office disciplinary referrals?" Using a multiple baseline across four groups, which included three students in each group, a comparison between baseline and intervention of the
ODRs per month for each group, was conducted. Baseline data indicated that four out of five group’s averaged 3.6% total ODRs per month with one group having an average total of 7.5 ODRs per month. Nine of the 12 students showed a significant reduction in office referrals for the month. Results also indicated that the BEP was related to the reduction of the average total ODRs per month. Because of the implementation of the BEP, there was a decrease in the need for additional exhaustive behavior support services for most students.

In a case study, McCurdy, Kunch, and Reibstein (2007) implemented BEP with eight elementary students attending grades first through fifth. The primary dependent variable was the percentage of points earned each day on a daily behavior report with 80% being defined as successful. Results revealed that 50% of the students exhibited successful outcomes, 25% moderately successful outcomes, and 25% displayed undesirable unsuccessful outcomes. According to the authors, BEP represents a promising secondary prevention strategy for urban schools with large numbers of students displaying at-risk behaviors.

Implementing Check-in Check-out
Implementation of CICO must be done with fidelity and careful considerations for it to be most effective. Researchers have noted the steps that should be taken and factors that should be considered when implanting CICO in your schools. These steps and considerations are listed below.

Steps (Kerr & Nelson, 2010)
1. Establish a targeted intervention team who determine how the school will implement the CICO:
   a. Who will be the designated person to meet with students before and after school (e.g., guidance counselor)?
   b. Where will students meet with the designated person?
   c. How will students be monitored (e.g., daily point cards and office referrals)?
   d. How will the students receive recognition for improvement (i.e., what is the process for exchanging points for back up reinforcers)?
   e. What are the resources needed to implement this intervention (e.g., planning time, funds for reinforcers, data entry/analysis)?
2. Develop daily report card to include (see below for example):
   a. Schoolwide expectations/rules
   b. Monitoring intervals that include periods or class activities
   c. Rating scales for teachers to use to evaluate during each time period
   d. Place to record total daily points
   e. Place for teachers to write positive comments
3. Train school staff and identified students.
4. Meet weekly to review data and implementation. Decide next steps for targeted students (i.e., continue, modify, fade, stop).
5. Provide quarterly updates to entire school.

Student Steps. (Kerr & Nelson, 2010)
1. Check in and pick up daily behavior card.
2. At the end of class, ask teacher for feedback and to fill in the card.
3. Check out at the end of the day and receive reward if daily goal is met.
4. Take report card home to get parent feedback and get card signed.
5. Return signed card next morning when checking in.

Considerations (Myers, Briere, & Simonsen, 2010)
1. Maintain consistency
   a. As much as possible, have the same designated adult greet the student(s) each morning
   b. Use checklists of implementation steps to make sure the program is implemented consistently
2. Make sure that the CICO program is a school priority to ensure consistent implementation.
3. Decide how data will be collected and analyzed: Some schools use the SWIS program (www.swis.org)
4. Watch for students who are losing interest in the program
   a. Incorporate self-monitoring
   b. Schedule booster student training sessions
5. Implement strategies to prevent students from hoarding tokens
   a. Involve students in the selection of back up reinforcers
   b. Schedule “have to pay to participate” events (e.g., pizza parties)
   c. Incorporate expiration dates for tokens

CONCLUSION
According to IDEA ’97, PBS is the recommended form of intervention for dealing with challenging behavior in children with disabilities (Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2009, p. 58). “This approach has become a significant public school reform movement in the past eight years, and is being implemented in approximately 39 states and in more than 5,300 schools” (Frey, A.J., Lingo, A., & Nelson, C.M., 2008, p. 5). School-wide positive behavior support is being implemented in thousands of schools across the country and has been demonstrated to reduce discipline problems and increase time for instruction.

Mentoring programs can be used globally to increase academic retention and improve the peace and equity, which affects community members. There is evidence of a positive correlation between mentoring, positive behavior, and the academic outcomes of students who are at risk for academic exclusion (Crone et al., 2004; Lampley & Johnson, 2010; Todd et al., 2008). However, students need consistent and long term mentoring in order for a strategy like to be effective (Grossman & Tierney). It is imperative that local administration be involved and supportive in the mentoring activities for successful implementation. With support, studies show that students have demonstrated marked increases in GPA, long term goals, and decreases in self-destructive behavior (Anderson, 2007; Howard & Williams, 2003; Utsey, Howard, & Williams, 2003; Whiting & Mallory, 2007).
The research support for CICO is strong and comes largely from single-case research documenting functional relations between the implementation of CICO and a reduction in problem behavior (Campbell & Anderson, 2008; Crone et al., 2010; Hawken, 2006; Hawken & Horner, 2003; Hawken, MacLeod, & Rawlings, 2007; March & Horner, 2002; McCurdy, Kunsch, & Rubinstein, 2007; Todd, Kaufman, Meyer, & Horner, 2008).

Further, for the CICO strategy to be most effective it must be implemented with fidelity and careful considerations (Kerr & Nelson, 2010; Myers, Briere, & Simonsen, 2010). This paper has provided a basis for educators to implement CICO in diverse settings. Each school setting and student is different so the program should be tailored to fit your school’s community and meet the student’s needs.

REFERENCES


**APPENDIX**

**Daily Report Card (Sample)**

Student: ____________________ Date: ____________________

**Directions:** review each of the Daily Behavior Report Card items below. For each item rate the degree to which the student demonstrated the behavior or met the behavior goal. **TEACHERS YOU DO NOT HAVE TO TOTAL THE POINTS!!!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Period 1</th>
<th>Period 2</th>
<th>Period 3</th>
<th>Period 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Followed teacher directions</td>
<td>1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9 Never/Seldom</td>
<td>1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9 Never/Seldom</td>
<td>1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9 Never/Seldom</td>
<td>1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9 Never/Seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked consistently on class assignment/</td>
<td>1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9 Never/Seldom</td>
<td>1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9 Never/Seldom</td>
<td>1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9 Never/Seldom</td>
<td>1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9 Never/Seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>projects</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoke respectfully to adults and peers</td>
<td>1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9 Never/Seldom</td>
<td>1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9 Never/Seldom</td>
<td>1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9 Never/Seldom</td>
<td>1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9 Never/Seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refrained from conversations with peers</td>
<td>1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9 Never/Seldom</td>
<td>1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9 Never/Seldom</td>
<td>1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9 Never/Seldom</td>
<td>1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9 Never/Seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>during academic activities and</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
<td>Usually/Anyway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>independent seatwork</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refrained from repetitive motor</td>
<td>1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9 Never/Seldom</td>
<td>1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9 Never/Seldom</td>
<td>1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9 Never/Seldom</td>
<td>1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9 Never/Seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>behaviors (e.g., table-tapping),</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
<td>Usually/Anyway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vocalizations, and did not play with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>objects during academic or work time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Daily Points:** ________

Comments:  
_________________________________________________________________________

Student Signature: ____________________ Parent Signature: ___________________________________