Supporting Students At Risk During Difficult Financial Times

Lessons Learned

Mary Margaret Kerr
mmkerr@pitt.edu
www.sbbh.pitt.edu
“A recent study at the University of California, Davis, found that children in families where the head of the household had lost a job were 15 percent more likely to repeat a grade.”

“A variety of studies have tied drops in family income to negative effects on children’s development.”
Maximize your resources and results.

Six suggestions
1. **Reevaluate your assumptions about student support.**

- It takes a village
- Focus on academic barrier removal
- Parents are primary.
- Outcomes oriented
- Student views are key.
- No one else’s experience compares to ours.
- “Deal with it as it comes.”

- Best left to specialists
- Fix the child; “whatever it takes.”
- *In loco parentis*
- Too complex to measure
- Adults know best.
- We can learn a lot from others.
- Focus on prevention.
- Developmental guidance
2. Adopt a comprehensive framework.

- Every school district needs universal, targeted, and intensive supports.
- How to access these supports should be very explicit for staff and parents.
- The process should be integrated so that
  - Students don’t get “lost in the cracks
  - Staff don’t replicate each other’s efforts
  - Outcomes are available for review
  - Costs are contained.
Primary prevention is universal.

- applied through the efforts of all school staff and across all students
- Often overlooked, these are real time- and money-savers.
Free or low-cost universal interventions

- Check the readability of all communications with parents.
- Survey staff about their behavioral expectations and interventions. Then meet and come to agreement on those before the year begins.
- Incorporate protective processes in your classroom “look fors.”
- Teach warning signs, risk factors and barriers to learning. www.sbbh.pitt.edu
Targeted interventions support those at risk.

- Typically delivered in small groups.
- A “booster” to strengthen universal interventions.
- Often delivered without consideration of outcomes.
Delivered by outside providers whose work is not well integrated with other school processes (e.g., PBIS, SAP, RtI).
- Providers have to locate students for groups
- Appropriateness of referrals is a problem

School staff may not know exactly “what they do in group,” so there is no transfer of learning.

May not be tied to any outcome measures (e.g., an anger management group with no review of discipline referrals)
Intensive interventions

- ameliorate the effects of a serious problem, so that students can learn.
- Designed for individual students
- Documented through a formal plan such as a 504 service agreement, IEP, or BIP.
- Require expertise to implement and monitor correctly.
Typical problems with intensive interventions

- They aren’t intensive!
- They are assigned without good diagnostics, so the wrong intervention is selected.
  - For example, aggression is not “one size fits all.”
- They are not implemented as intended.
- There is no attempt to work on generalization, so recidivism is common.
- The outcome measures are poorly conceived.
3. Consider an outside reviewer.

- Personal influences in a district may overshadow best practices.
- Accountability may not be as good as you think.
- Generic certification and limited experiences may result in little expertise in key areas.
- Student support services cross many specialized disciplines.
- An expert may save you money by being resourceful and finding costly mistakes.
4. Rely on excellent standards to guide you.

- National standards of practice/guidelines
- Supported by government and/or professional associations
- Increased accountability for the district.
National Guidelines on Health, Mental Health, and Safety, endorsed by

- American Academy of Family Physicians
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- American Association of School Administrators
- American Medical Association
- American Psychological Association
- American Public Health Association
- American School Health Association
- Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
- Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/Division of Adolescent and School Health
- Council of Chief State School Officers
- National Assembly on School-Based Health Care
- National Association of School Nurses, Inc
- National Association of Social Workers
- National Education Association
- National Parent-Teacher Association
- National School Boards Association
- Office of School Health, University of Colorado
- Society of State Directors of Health, Physical Education and Recreation

www.nationalguidelines.org/
5. Use the best planning tools.

American School Counseling Association National Standards for Students

www.PBIS.org Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports
CDC Examples

- Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (HECAT)
- Physical Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (PECAT)
- School Health Index
The eight SHI modules are:

1. School Health and Safety Policies and Environment Health Education
2. Physical Education and Other Physical Activity Programs
3. Nutrition Services
4. Health Services
5. Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services
6. Health Promotion for Staff
7. Family and Community Involvement
6. Use good data.

For information on a municipality, click on it on this map or the alphabetical list below.

The name of the municipality will appear on the map if you wait a few seconds before clicking on it.
What happens when you don’t?

Everyone else sets priorities for you!

- poverty
- MRSA
- obesity
- asthma
- homelessness
- suicide
- bullying
- school violence
- drug and alcohol
- H1NI
- anger management
- student supports
- H1NI
- drug and alcohol
- bullying
- school violence
- suicide
- homelessness
- asthma
- obesity
- MRSA
- poverty
- student supports
Data sources

- Census data
- CDC
- US DOE
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- Consumer Products Safety Council
- School crime data
- YRBSS
- County Health Department
- PAYS
- SAP
- Discipline data
  - Suspensions
  - Expulsions
  - Office referrals
  - Repeat offenses
- School health data
- Attendance data
- Special ed referral data
The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) monitors priority health-risk behaviors and the prevalence of obesity and asthma among youth and young adults.
How Do I Develop My YRBS Questionnaire?

- Download free high school and middle school YRBS questionnaires from the YRBS website.
- May modify the questionnaire depending on community needs and interests.
- The standard YRBS questionnaire takes about 35 minutes to complete.
A typical analysis by District code of student conduct

School Referrals by Incident

- Disruption of School
- Misuse, Damage, Destruction, or Theft of School Property
- Misuse, Damage, Destruction, or Theft of Private Property
- Assault on a School Employee
- Assault on a Student or Non-School Employee
- Weapons and Dangerous Instruments
- Possession of Drugs
- Repeated School Violations
- Unauthorized Presence During School Hours
- Tobacco Use
- Possession of Pagers, Laser Pointers, Radios, CDs, etc.
- Sexual Harassment
- Misuse of Computer/Computer Network
- Undesirable Group Activity
- Fighting
**Office Discipline Referral Form**

Name ___________________ Grade _______ Date _______ Referring staff ________________

Time student left classroom _______ Time student returned _______ Period _______

**Location:**  
- Classroom  
- Hallway  
- Bathroom  
- Cafeteria  
- Gym  
- Playground  
- Library  
- Auditorium  
- Special event

**Problem Behavior (check most intrusive):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abusive language</th>
<th>Undesirable group activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racial/Ethnic harassment intimidiation</td>
<td>Weapons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threats</td>
<td>Severe disrespect or defiance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual harassment</td>
<td>Repeatedly non-compliant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic dishonesty</td>
<td>Harassment/Bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession/Use of alcohol or drugs</td>
<td>Staff assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School or private property violation</td>
<td>Student assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>Other: ____________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description of Incident:**

---

**Triggers**  
- Adult request of student  
- Redirection  
- Unstructured setting  
- Transition  
- Peer provoked  
- Frustration with difficult task  
- No direct adult attention  
- Communication difficulty  
- Prior agitation  
- Unknown  
- Other: ____________________

**Possible Motivation**  
- Attention from peer  
- Attention from adult  
- Avoid peer(s)  
- Avoid adult(s)  
- Avoid task or class work  
- Obtain items or activity  
- Unknown  
- Other: ____________________

**Prior Action Taken**  
- Severe – Immediate referral to administration  
- Verbal reprimand  
- Spoke to student privately  
- Change students work setting  
- Re-teach expectations  
- Removal of privileges  
- Time-out  
- Behavior contract  
- Parent notified  
- Other: ____________________

---

**Action Taken By Administrator:**  
- Administrator conference  
- Loss of privileges _______  
- ISS  
- Parent conference with administrator  
- Suspension _______ day(s)  
- Other: ____________________
School Referrals by Description

- Threats
- Inappropriate Language
- Instigating Others
- Arguing with Staff or Student
- General Disruption of Class
- Inappropriate or Obscene Gestures
- Misuse, Damage, or Thefts of School Property
- Misuse, Damage, or Thefts of Private Property
- Assault on a School Employee
- Assault on a Student or or Non-School Employee
- Weapons and Dangerous Instruments
- Possession of Drugs
- Repeatedly Non-Compliant with School Rules
- Ignored or Refused Staff Directives
- Unexcused Absence/Tardiness
- Out of Seat/Classroom
- Skipping Class
- Tobacco Use
- Possession of Pagers, Laser Pointers, Radios, CDs, etc
- Academic Dishonesty
- Sexual Harassment
- Misuse of Computer/Computer Network
- Undesirable Group Activity
- Fighting
To solve the problem, pinpoint it.

- Student (race, sex, special education status)
- Referring adult
- Exact time/period
- School setting
- Description of behavior
- Day of week
- Comparison with previous day, week, month, year
One middle/high school reduced the number of discipline referrals by two-thirds; student academic engagement increased. Faculty, staff, and students said the school was a calmer place.

In another middle school, administrators found they saved the equivalent of 20 eight-hour days; teachers found they had more than 430 more hours for instruction. [Source: An Introduction to Effective Schoolwide Discipline in Virginia]
Avoid costly mistakes

Six suggestions to avoid wasting money, time, and good will.
1. Don’t overfunction.

- Other agencies and individuals will underfunction.
  - Courts
  - Human Services
  - Parents
2. Watch the “timesavers.”

- Inadequate assessment and planning
- Hasty communications, especially with parents and underperforming employees
- Misuse of e-mail
- Partial implementation of programs
- Multitasking on critical issues
- Postponing policy development
- “School law by PowerPoint”
Inadequate FBA

Poor Behavior Plan and IEP

Serious Incident

Lost time, legal costs, poor PR

Lawsuit/ hearing

Media coverage
3. Insist on boundaries.

- Allowing staff to use school resources for their personal use.
  - Time
  - Materials

- Doing for parents instead of coaching them how to take care of their children.

- “Rescue fantasy”
Nurse leads School Health Index planning and identifies new resource or funding.

Nurse takes care of employees whose health insurance is already funded by the district.

- Is there a cost-efficient alternative?
  - Government resources
  - Existing processes and infrastructures such as SAP
- Can you share resources?
  - School-based health partnerships
- Can you use a different approach?
  - Rather than hire a grant writer, use a contingency basis; good grant writers can pay for themselves.
“Abc’s of bullying”
Free professional development course
On-line format
Peer-reviewed
Resources for administrators, students, and parents

http://pathwayscourses.samhsa.gov/bully/bully_intro_pg1.htm
Table of Contents

- School Bullying: What It Is and Why It Hurts
- The Role of Bullies, Victims, and Witnesses
- Factors Contributing to Bullying and Violence
- Screening and Assessment
- Treatment For Children and Adolescents
- Prevention and Intervention
- Legal and Ethical Issues
- Supplements
  - Case Studies
  - Fact Sheets
- References
- Resources
5. Focus on crisis prevention not on crisis responding.

CHAOS:

Discipline referrals one year at SMS

40% of students have more failing grades

Just another day in crisis:

Five students expelled for fighting at Suner Middle
6. Pay attention to research on adult burnout and adult health promotion.

- Staff absenteeism is expensive.
- Warning signs for burnout are:
  - Ineffectiveness
  - Cynicism
  - Exhaustion

- Burnout often leads to other costs and problems, such as
  - Coercive classroom practices
  - Lack of innovation
  - Confrontations with parents and colleagues
1. Reevaluate your assumptions.
2. Adopt a comprehensive framework.
3. Consider an outside reviewer.
4. Rely on standards.
5. Use the best planning tools.
6. Use good data.
7. Don’t over function.
8. Watch the timesavers.
9. Insist on boundaries.
11. Focus on crisis prevention not on crisis responding.
12. Pay attention to research on adult burnout and adult health promotion.