

***Examining the Role of School
Suspension – are there any viable
alternatives?***

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Who Are We?

UnitingCare Children Young People
and Families (UCCYPF)

Social Justice Unit



Our Work...

- Understanding school responses to students' challenging behaviour: A review of literature.
(Improving School Journal, July edition 2011)
- A review of policies and programs that build student engagement and reduce use of suspension, in Australia and internationally (UK, US and NZ)

Evidence shows...

- Trend of increasing school suspension for
 - younger aged children
 - Aboriginal children and young people
 - In Aust and Internationally

Statistics

- Between 2005 and 2009, total long suspensions for NSW students across all grades (K to 12) have increased by 32.7%.
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students account for 22% of long suspensions issued.

What did we learn?

- Suspension should be used as a last resort
- There are differences between in-school suspension and out-of school suspension

Typology of School Responses


1. Punitive
2. Academic
3. Therapeutic
4. Tailored

Key Elements of Inclusive School Responses

- A. Multi-tiered approach
- B. Collaboration across domains
- C. Strong Relationships



Policy review – what did we learn?

- Many approaches not evaluated or evaluation results not publically available
 - Need to improve **monitoring and accountability**
 - Need **sustained, comprehensive** approach
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What did we learn?

- Early intervention needs to include **focus on better recognising early signs of disengagement or behaviour problems**
- Need **systemic changes** – changes to suspension policy and proactive support to schools with high rates of suspension
- **Professional development** to support teachers to implement positive behaviour management strategies

NZ Positive Behaviour for Learning

- Multi-level & collaborative
- Focus on building relationships with students & families
- Evidence-based
- Comprehensive – includes systemic changes
- Sustained – 5 year action plan

Universal level

PBL School-wide Program

Focus on teaching appropriate social behaviours

Restorative practices

Focus on the need to restore good relationships



Early identification & support

- Incredible Years parenting program – for parents of children 3 to 8 with early indicators of behaviour problems
- Specialist teachers work with teachers to develop behaviour & support plans, for children starting school identified as being at risk

Individualised Services

(for students with moderate to intensive needs)

Intensive Wrap-Around Service

for high school students with ongoing extreme behaviours, where students need multi-agency, intensive support

Behaviour Crisis Response Service


skilled specialists support schools to manage extreme behaviour incidents

Activities to support implementation

- Regional implementation teams train schools in PBL approach
- Behaviour management included in initial teacher training



Activities to support implementation

- **Systemic changes** – review of laws & practice re suspension
 - Strong focus on **monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement**
 - Outcome measures include reduction of suspensions/exclusions
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Victorian school suspension policy

- Principals must ensure suspension appropriate to student's age, disability, residential status & social circumstances
- Max period 5 days; no more than 15 days in school year
- Principal must seek support from regional office where there is a pattern of suspension

Victorian suspension policy

- Schools encouraged to consider in-school suspension, with academic work & increased support
- Policy supported by broader strategies to build student engagement



What next...?

1. Ethnographic Study
2. Use research and policy findings to inform advocacy

Contact details

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