

In-School Suspension Programs: The King William County Model*

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Keeping suspended students at school—but isolated from other students—makes more sense and is more effective than giving them a “vacation” away from school.

In-school suspension is an idea that is sweeping Virginia in response to the growing national concern among guidance counselors, teachers, and administrators for school discipline (Schaum, 1978; O'Brien, 1976; Moseley, 1977). King William County has become a leader in this current educational trend as one of the first school systems in the state to implement such a program.

Neighboring school systems have quickly followed suit. Twelve school divisions in eastern Virginia have programs presently in operation. Six systems have programs in the planning stages for September 1979. In-school suspension programs are being implemented in both urban and rural schools across the state. The in-school suspension movement in public education is not confined only to Virginia. Other states cited in a recent survey on alternative discipline programs are North Carolina, Minnesota, and Texas (Kreshin, 1977).

The King William Program is in its third year of operation and is funded through a federal grant under the Emergency School Aid Act for \$26,500. It is

designed as a therapeutic model to help those students in grades 8-12, who would otherwise be suspended out of school, overcome the educational disadvantages of minority group isolation. This in-school suspension program, also designated as the Alternative Citizenship Program, is characterized by individualized academic and/or behavioral intervention. Instead of being suspended out of school, they are assigned by the principal to the Alternative Citizenship Program.

When students are kept in the educational environment, their chances for successful re-entry into the classrooms are greatly increased.

Program Development

With the awarding of the \$26,500 grant, a program of alternative citizenship education was designed around two major approaches: punishment, and academic and/or behavioral crisis intervention.

* The author wishes to acknowledge Superintendent Stephen M. Baker and Asst. Superintendent George Stainback whose dedication and support made this innovative concept in school discipline a reality in King William County.

Punishment is accomplished through isolation from peers. Students in the program remain all day—even eating lunch—in a special room set aside for the program. The room has restroom facilities and water facilities, so there is no need for a student to leave until the end of the school day.

The restriction on social interaction imposed by the program works well in rural King William County to discourage disruptive behavior. With the county's sparsely distributed population, the school is a significant socializing agent. School is therefore an integral, fundamental factor of the student's social life. Deprivation of this peer contact is viewed by the students as a very negative consequence for maladapted behavior especially as it occurs within the school setting.

Academic/behavioral crisis intervention is accomplished with intensive tutoring, counseling, and evaluation. When the student has completed his/her stay in the program, an academic and behavior modification plan, based on the information gleaned from testing and interviews with the student, is written and sent to the referring teacher. Follow-up observations are made by the tutors at regular intervals to assess the student's progress.

Staff

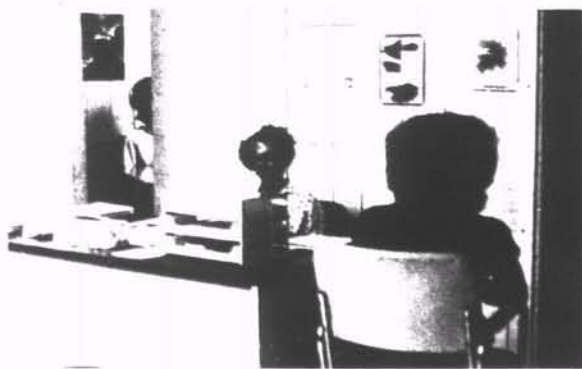
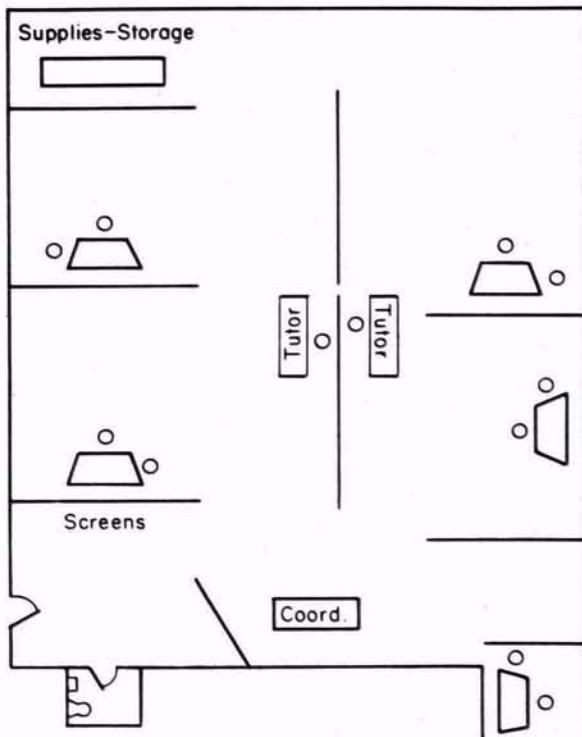
The program is coordinated by a teacher with training in behavior disorders. There are three paraprofessionals designated as tutors who work one-on-one with the students in the program and back in the regular classroom. The tutors are involved with specific individualized instruction, affective listening, and informal assessment. The coordinator plans strategies and conducts any formal assessment and counseling.

Setting

The program is located in an isolated classroom, which is one of three in an annex building far removed from the normal flow of student traffic. The classroom has no windows. It has toilet facilities, and a small area has been partitioned off for use either in counseling or as a distraction-free learning station. There are five student worktables and six movable screens that add flexibility for room arrangement to accommodate the varying number of students. The coordinator's desk is sectioned off along with the tutor work areas. (See Figure 1.)

Students work independently or with their assigned tutor. No group activities are undertaken, and students may not take part in extra-curricular activities.

Figure 1. Diagram of Suspension Room



Photos courtesy of Jo Ann Terrell

Procedure

At King William High School there is a student handbook outlining proper behavior and consequences for inappropriate behavior. This is given to students on the first day of school. The teachers are provided a disciplinary handbook that outlines which types of inappropriate behaviors are to be administrative disciplinary referrals. Effective classroom management strategies designed by the principal are also included (Stainback and Stainback, 1972).

With these guidelines in operation, after a teacher refers a student to the principal, a conference is held. The principal determines what type of discipline is warranted to meet the severity of the offense. It is the principal who decides whether or not to place a student in the in-school suspension program, and also the length of stay. Placement in the program begins the next morning. Students are not placed in the program at random during the course of the school day.

After designating a student for the Citizenship Program, the principal notifies the parents (by letter), the Citizenship Program Coordinator, and the referring teacher of the action taken.

The following personnel are notified and the following information requested: (a) guidance counselor—social history; (b) referring teacher—educational evaluation; and (c) classroom teachers of student—current educational objectives.

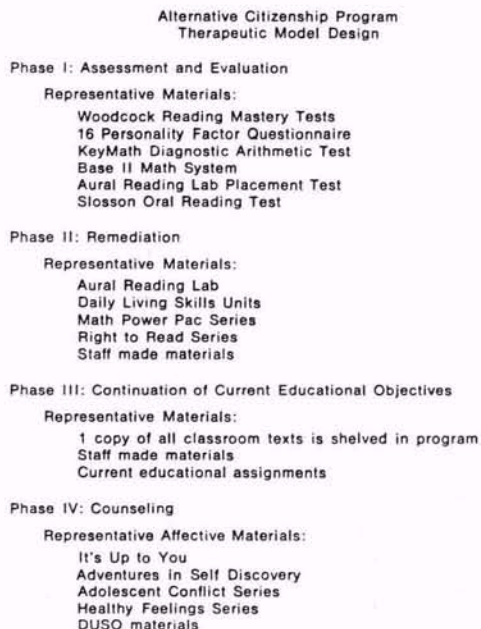
When a student enters the Citizenship Program the following morning, the nature of the offense, the length of stay, and the student's past disciplinary history will have been given to the coordinator by the office of the principal. The coordinator will be prepared to continue the student's ongoing classwork from the assignment sheets turned in by the classroom teachers. By the end of the student's first day in the program, the coordinator should also have received the social history and the educational evaluation.

The Citizenship Program staff then proceeds with the development of an individualized educational plan. The Citizenship Program coordinator writes the plan under the direction of the principal and with the results of appropriate psychological and educational diagnostic assessments.

Copies of this plan are sent to the referring teacher, the principal, and any other teachers who may benefit from it when the student returns to regular class. The program coordinator discusses the plan with the regular classroom teacher, and, where warranted, a tutor is assigned to the regular classroom teacher for a specified time to facilitate implementation.

Students who have participated in the program

Figure 2. King William County Therapeutic Model In-school Suspension Program



are monitored on a regular basis by their tutor to ascertain their progress in the classroom setting. A record of all observations is kept on file.

Program Design

The average length of stay in the Citizenship Program is three to four days. There are never more than four students in the program on a given day. All students are tested on the first day with the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire, Form E. Experience has shown us that an informal assessment is warranted as well as formal educational testing. Classroom assignments are begun after the initial testing phase. Through behavioral observation, testing, and counseling, the needs of the student can be assessed, and a plan can be formulated to help the student successfully re-enter the regular classroom.

Each student is approached as a separate case, the only uniform treatment being the described testing. A student's time in the program is divided among the four phases of the program: assessment; remediation; continuation of current educational objectives; and counseling. The needs of the student determine which area or areas are emphasized more than others.

For each phase, the Citizenship Program has selected curriculum materials and the necessary A-V equipment to maintain the program. A representative selection of materials used is presented in Figure 2.

The Plan

The individualized plan that accompanies the first-time offender back to the regular class highlights areas of academic and behavioral strengths and weaknesses. Comments on observational data/test results are made or specific intervention strategies may be offered, as well as a recommendation for referral for further services.

For repeaters, a follow-up report is written and includes further information on the student in the defined problem area.

Program Efficacy

A pre- and post-testing design has been implemented to assess academic achievement and self-confidence for program participants. October and April SRA scores are to be compared as well as the results of the 16 Factor Personality Questionnaire.

With the implementation of the Citizenship Program, out of school suspensions during the first semester of 1977-78 were reduced by 60 percent. The overall reduction for the school year 1977-78 was 40 percent. The total number of administrative disciplinary referrals remained the same between first semester 1976 and 1977. However, with the new alternative disciplinary option—in-school suspension—the number of out-of-school suspensions decreased. By June 1978, the number of administrative disciplinary referrals was also decreasing. In its first year of operation, the in-school suspension program had an overall effect of improving school discipline. Comparative data is shown below:

Out-of-School Suspensions

| | | |
|---------|----------------------------|----|
| 1976-77 | First Semester Suspensions | 53 |
| 1977-78 | First Semester Suspensions | 21 |

These 21 suspensions out of school involved 17 students. There were 16 males and one female suspended. A breakdown by grade reveals that more than half of the suspended students were in the eighth grade.

The Citizenship Program during the first semester 1977-78 serviced 49 different students who accounted for a total of 72 placements in the program. Of these 49 different students, 12 (24 percent) were repeaters, who accounted for 35 placements. There were 37 single placements. Both in-school and later out-of-school suspensions were required for two students.

An analysis of students participating in the in-school suspension program by sex and grade reveals the following:

Sex: Male—34; Female—15

Grade: 8th—23; 9th—14; 10th—8; 11th—3; 12th—1

The target student for in-school suspension is a male eighth grader who is experiencing academic difficulty. The flexibility of the program offers the staff and the student more time on subsequent placements to concentrate on specific problem areas of repeaters.

Summary

For King William County, the design of this in-school suspension program is effective in helping meet the educational needs of students and also maintain discipline. The individualized plan helps the teacher prepare appropriate educational strategies in the particular subject area by focusing on the identified academic and behavioral strengths and weaknesses.

Progress in resolving the question of curriculum relevancy and designing appropriate treatment models to deal with maladaptive behaviors has long been a concern of school administrators. The King William therapeutic model of an in-school suspension program is only one form of the variety of differing models of in-school suspension programs already in operation around the state and country.

Programmatic differences aside, the basic theme of in-school suspension programs is the same. All have as a core foundation the belief that maintaining a problem student in the educational environment is a more effective way of dealing with inappropriate behavior than out-of-school suspension. *EJ*

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