

Chapter 7

School Profiles: Different Approaches to Establishing Prosocial Discipline

Philip M. Brown with Eight School Leaders

The eight schools profiled below each has a unique history regarding how they manage their student behavior and discipline issues. They have been chosen as examples to learn from through recommendations from colleagues and national recognition they have received from a number of different sources, including Character.org , the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, and the Graduate School of Education at the University of Virginia. They all have seen positive behavioral changes in their students as a result of their efforts as well as reduction in discipline problems.

What follows is basic information about the schools and a brief highlight describing one or more aspects of their approaches and programs that have proven successful. Fuller descriptions of their process and programs can be found on the website of the *National School Climate Center*, which has generously agreed to host this portion of the book on their website. Go to <http://srcr.schoolclimate.org/> [editor note: a more complete website address will be provided once the exact location/page is determined]

1. Leataata Floyd Elementary School

Basic Description: (LFE) is a neighborhood elementary school with 350 students serving the Seavey Circle/New Helvetia neighborhoods in the Sacramento City, California Unified School District. For many years LFE has had the highest referral/suspension/expulsion rate in the district while having the lowest daily attendance percentage. It is currently in year four of “priority” status under the US Department of Education's "turnaround school" designation system for low-performing schools.

Highlight: Historically, this school was created as a segregated school that targeted specific subgroups of students within the district. After having been designated a failing 'turn around school' under the NCLB guidelines, the staff of Leataata Floyd decided to focus on three prosocial practices of inclusive pedagogy to address the most significant needs of the students and families: Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), Positive Behavioral and Intervention and Support (PBIS), and Restorative Justice (RJ). Their simple starting point included three principles around which they oriented their work:

- 1) Kids have to like school,
- 2) Students and parents/guardians must develop trust and confidence in the school, and
- 3) These two needs must be directly addressed while academic needs are attended to.

2. Marcus Garvey Elementary School

Basic Description: Marcus Garvey School is a Pre-K through 8th grade elementary school with approximately 300 students located in the Washington Heights Neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago, Illinois. It serves children who live in the immediate neighborhood. Ninety-four percent of the students qualify for free or reduced price lunches, and all are African-American.

Highlight: March Garvey has partnered with the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning and adopted an evidence-based SEL program, *Second Step*, to teach behavior and social skills. In addition to classroom instruction, every staff member (including the administrators) is assigned a group of 8-12 students from different grade levels, and each week begins with a 20-minute period of reflection and skill building on topics that are organized monthly by the key SEL objectives. Through the use of these strategies, the school has been successful in assisting students to take greater responsibility

for managing and controlling their own behavior.

3. Stewartsville Elementary School

Basic Description: Stewartsville Elementary School is a Pre-K to 5 school with 430 students in rural Goodview, Virginia nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Sixty-eight percent of its largely white student body qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Highlight: When Principal Susan Mele arrived in 2010 student behavior was completely out of control and discipline was in chaos. She chose to implement an evidence-based program, the *Responsive Classroom*. Within a year of implementation and staff buy-in, teachers began to change their attitudes about how they looked at the children they taught, and this had profound effects on their behavior. Where teachers previously felt helpless and frustrated and felt that nothing would work, they now enjoy their jobs more, which is evident through the supportive language they used with the children. Discipline referrals dropped by 75% and academic test scores began increasing.

4. Charles Boehm Middle School

Basic Description: Charles Boehm Middle School serves 730 students in grades 6 through 8 and is located in Yardley, Pennsylvania. It is one of three middle schools in the Pennsbury School District serving two boroughs and two townships in the suburbs of Philadelphia, PA. The majority of students (82%) report that they are Caucasian, .2% ELL, 22% socio-economically disadvantaged and 20% receiving special education services.

Highlight: Following teacher surveys of discipline issues, Charles Boehm introduced a combination of positive behavioral support and character education programs which are designed as a system to increase intrinsic motivation in students throughout middle school.

School discipline referrals and suspension are down and the school has been recognized as a National School of Character.

5. Cherry Hill Alternative High School

Basic Description: The Cherry Hill, New Jersey School District's Alternative High School is a replacement program for at-risk students in grades 9 to 12. Approximately 65% of its 44 special education classified students are Caucasian, 20% Black/African American, and 15% Hispanic/Latino. Forty-one percent of the school's students are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Highlight: While on the surface this school might appear similar to many alternative education settings, the principal and staff tell a powerful story of their journey in changing the culture of the building over the past six years. The school adopted the *Nurtured Heart Approach Model for Educators*, as a common lens and language in furthering their commitment to build the character of each student in a personal and individualized way, and uses a professional learning communities model for continued staff development and school improvement. The path taken by two different principals and the staff resulted in better attendance, discipline academic improvement and the school being recognized as a National School of Character.

6. Lake Braddock Secondary School

Basic Description: Lake Braddock Secondary School (LBSS), located in Burke, Virginia, is part of the Washington, DC, suburban sprawl, and one of three secondary schools (combined middle and high school) in the Fairfax County Public Schools- the 12th largest school system in the country. The school is the largest in Virginia, currently enrolling over 4,000 students in grades seven through twelve. 12.8% percent of students receive special education services,

and 16.2% of students receive free or reduced priced meals 7.2% of students are identified as limited English proficient. The school's white (non-Hispanic) population, is the largest student group at 52.7%.

Highlight: Starting in the 2014-2015 school year Fairfax County Public Schools created a new position in all 25 high schools called “System of Support Advisor (SOSA).” The position coordinates continuing professional development, and prevention programs and in-school intervention opportunities for students in the discipline process. The intention is to provide strategies, language, and behavioral options to help students effectively manage challenges and frustrations.

The SOSA uses PBIS and Response to Intervention models to reduce behavior incidents, reduce recidivism rates, and respond to student behavior issues, as well as build whole-school teacher capacity to respond to behavioral issues. In order to promote positive approaches to discipline Lake Braddock's SOSA has also received additional training in conflict resolution, peer mediation, and restorative justice practices.

7. Scarsdale Alternative School

Basic Description: The Scarsdale Alternative School, known as the A School, is a satellite of the larger public suburban school, Scarsdale High School in New York, and enrolls 82 students in the 10th -12th grades. Students of this National School of Character apply to be part of a program that includes disaffected, gifted, average, and learning disabled students with a balance of boys and girls.

Highlight: The A School was founded as a Just Community School in 1972 and dedicated itself to promoting moral growth. A host of democratically informed processes such as

Agenda, Core Group, Internship, and Community Meeting are closely linked structures designed to push students to enhance their perspective taking and other prosocial skills.

The Fairness Committee determines consequences for those who do not abide by the school's rules and norms. It consists of a representative group of students including one trained student facilitator who leads the case. A teacher also sits on the case as a voting member of the Committee. The task of the Fairness Committee is to hear and decide cases of alleged rule violations such as cheating, bullying, use of drugs, and disrespect of fellow community members.

8. Jerome Harrison Elementary School

Basic Description: Jerome Harrison Elementary School is a suburban preK-2 school located in a predominately middle class community in North Branford, Connecticut. The student population of 412 is represented by 94% white/Caucasian and the remaining 6% including Asian, Black, Hispanic and Indian. The special education population is roughly 10%, an ELL population of 2%, and free and reduced SES classification of 18% and rising.

Highlight: This elementary school principal led the North Branford School District in establishing a Threat Assessment Program as part of a broader approach to school climate improvement and prosocial disciplinary practices. The profile provides a practical example of how one local district and school came to realize what they needed to change and how they made progress over the course of a year in a way that was proactive and supportive of existing positive school climate measures.