

**Project EASE
(Educational Alternatives to Suspension and Expulsion)**

Promising Strategies Document

prepared by

**Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention –
Center for the Prevention of School Violence**

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Executive Summary

According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's *Annual Report on Suspensions and Expulsions Final Report: 2001– 2002*, out-of-school suspensions in the 2001 – 2002 school year resulted in over one million lost instructional days. This is an increase from the 615,000 lost instructional days during the 2000 – 2001 school year. Realizing that the issue of suspensions and expulsions is growing in North Carolina, the North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention – Center for the Prevention of School Violence (DJJDP – Center) began work on Project EASE (Educational Alternatives to Suspension and Expulsion) in August 2002. The main goals of Project EASE were to identify, study, and implement promising strategies toward the reduction of suspension and expulsion rates in North Carolina's public schools with regard to the disproportionate number of minorities being suspended and expelled.

Data for the selection of Project EASE participating sites was gathered through quantitative and qualitative. The Project EASE data collection form and school system suspension data allowed for the collection of quantitative data on the schools. Site visits and staff interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data.

The main goals of Project EASE were to identify, study, and implement promising strategies at participating school sites. Promising strategies, importantly, were gathered from both guiding and implementing sites because of their previous efforts toward reducing suspension/expulsion rates. The highlighted promising strategies were all used as part of the schools overall efforts to reduce discipline problems, thus reducing their suspension and expulsion rates. The promising strategies are divided into five broad categories: parental involvement; alternative placement; school climate; leadership; and staff development. Promising strategies may be seen in more than one category because of the implementations at various school sites.

The Project EASE strategies are highlighted because of their potential to be replicated in other North Carolina schools which want to address the issue of disproportionate minority suspensions and expulsions. There is no one answer for schools to reduce suspensions and expulsions. However, schools completing self – assessments, utilizing school and community resources, and selecting strong driven leaders have the process of reducing their suspension and expulsion rates in hand.

DJJDP – Center plans to continue developing the promising strategies identified through Project EASE with the DisMISS (Disproportionate Minority Involvement of Suspended Students) Project. Through the DisMISS Project, DJJDP – Center will implement these promising strategies in ten new schools in an attempt to reduce over representation of minorities in suspension and expulsion rates. DJJDP – Center staff also continue to work with the Project EASE implementing sites to develop the schools' selected promising strategies to reduce their disproportionate minority suspension and expulsion rates.

Introduction

According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's *Annual Report on Suspensions and Expulsions Final Report: 2001– 2002*, out-of-school suspensions in the 2001 – 2002 school year resulted in over one million lost instructional days. This is an increase from the 615,000 lost instructional days during the 2000 – 2001 school year. Acknowledging the importance of the suspension and expulsion issue in North Carolina's public schools, the North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention – Center for the Prevention of School Violence (DJJDP – Center) began work on Project EASE (Educational Alternatives to Suspension and Expulsion) in August 2002. The main goals of Project EASE were to identify, study, and implement promising strategies toward the reduction of suspension and expulsion rates in North Carolina's public schools with regard to the disproportionate number of minorities being suspended and expelled.

North Carolina has seen a twenty percent increase of short-term suspensions and a twenty-seven percent increase of long-term suspensions between 2000 – 2001 to 2001 – 2002 in both. While the number of male and female students being suspended has increased between 2000 – 2001 and 2001 – 2002, the majority of both short-term (seventy-four percent) and long-term suspensions were given to male students. In fact, males were short-term suspended at a rate three times higher than females. The disproportionality did not stop with gender. While all racial groups, with the exception of Asian students, saw an increase in their number of suspensions, Black/Multi-racial males, which only account for sixteen percent of the overall student population, accounted for forty-one percent of the short-term suspensions given in 2000 – 2001 and 2001 – 2002 and thirty-nine percent to forty-three percent of long-term suspensions. In addition to accounting for the majority of out-of-school suspensions, Black/Multi-racial males accounted for forty-three percent of the expulsions in 2001 – 2002.

Realizing the link between juvenile delinquency and suspensions and expulsions from school, DJJDP – Center began work on Project EASE. Project EASE was divided into two phases. Phase I included identifying five schools that had seen a reduction in their suspension and expulsion rates over the past three to four years. These schools were identified as guiding schools. Once identified, DJJDP – Center staff conducted site visits to: determine the various strategies that had been implemented in the schools; obtain teacher reaction to the strategies; and gain an overview of the school at large. Phase II consisted of locating five schools that expressed the need and desire for assistance in reducing their suspension and expulsion rates. These sites were known as implementing schools. Once Phase II schools were identified, DJJDP – Center staff met with school administrators to determine which identified promising strategies would work best for the school. DJJDP – Center then offered the schools technical assistance to implement the selected strategies.

During the course of Project EASE DJJDP – Center identified five categories as promising strategies from the participating sites. These strategies include: parental involvement; alternative placement; school climate; leadership; and staff development.

Identified promising strategies put into practice at each of the guiding school sites assisted in reducing the disproportionate minority suspension and expulsion rates. Discussion of these strategies and their implementation are the focus of this document. Prior to the discussion of the strategies, a brief review of the project’s methodology will be presented.

Project Methodology

In August 2002, DJJDP – Center staff started the process of selecting school sites to participate in Project EASE. Sites were selected based on the school’s interest in participating, 2000 – 2001 school system (local educational agency) suspension and expulsion rates was used to select schools systems – this school systems in turn selected a site for participation in Project EASE, and previous DJJDP - Center contacts. Other dynamics that played a role in the selection process were school demographics, size, and geographic location. In the selection process, schools were identified as guiding or implementing schools. Guiding schools were sites that had experienced some degree of success reducing suspension and expulsion rates with the selected strategies in their school. Implementing schools acknowledged the problem of overrepresentation of minorities being suspended and wanted assistance to address this issue.

After school sites were identified as guiding or implementing, DJJDP – Center sought additional quantitative and qualitative data from each participating school. Data was collected through the following: site visits; interviews with administrators and teachers; and a participant meeting. At the initial site visit, a data collection form (see Attachment I) was submitted to each school to gather school suspension / expulsion information for 1998 – 1999 through 2000 – 2001 school year. The demographics of each school were also collected via the data collection form. These demographics included school size, student-to-teacher ratio, and location (see Attachment II).

Information was also collected at follow-up site visits and interviews with administrators and teachers. Interviews provided information on promising strategies implemented at guiding schools and the strategies selected at implementing sites.

Parkwood High School

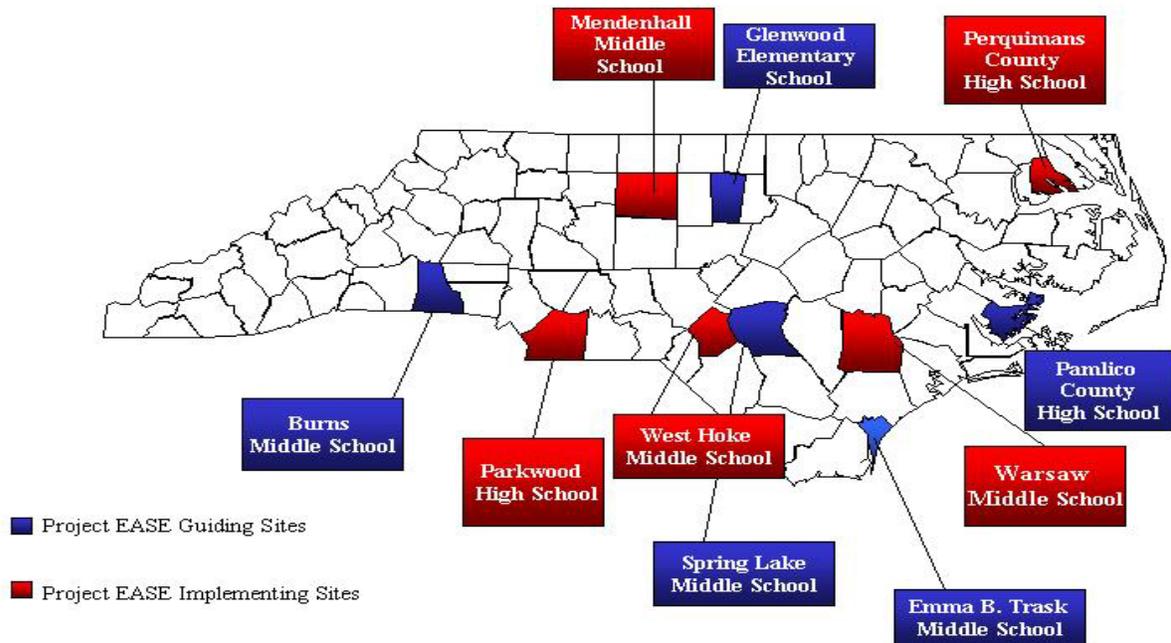
Parkwood High School is located in Monroe, NC, which is in Union County. Parkwood High School is one of six high schools in the Union County school system and serves approximately 1,183 students in grades 9 – 12 with 73 instructional staff. The overall student-to-teacher ratio is 31:1.

Warsaw Middle School

Warsaw Middle School is located in Warsaw, NC, which is in Duplin County. Warsaw Middle School is one of three middle schools in the county servicing approximately 227 students in grades 6 – 8 with 21 instructional staff. The overall student-to-teacher ratio is 11:1.

Finally, a participants’ meeting was held with all participating schools. The goal of this meeting was to start a conversation about the promising strategies that had been identified by DJJDP - Center staff and to build relationships between guiding and implementing school sites.

Figure 1 Project EASE Participating Schools



Promising Strategies

The main goals of Project EASE were to identify, study, and implement promising strategies at participating school sites. Promising strategies, importantly, were gathered from both guiding and implementing sites because of their previous efforts toward reducing suspension and expulsion rates. Promising strategies highlighted in this document were used as part of the schools’ overall efforts to reduce discipline problems, thus reducing their suspension and expulsion rates.

The promising strategies are divided into five broad categories (See Table I). The categories include: parental involvement; alternative placement; school climate; leadership; and staff development. Promising strategies may be seen in more than one category because of their application at various school sites.

West Hoke Middle School

West Hoke Middle School is located in Raeford, NC, in Hoke County. West Hoke Middle School is one of two middle schools in the Hoke school system servicing approximately 745 students in grades 6 – 8 with 53 instructional staff. The overall student-to-teacher ratio is 14:1.

Table 1 Project EASE Promising Strategies

	<i>School Name</i>	Parental Involvement	Alternative Placement	School Climate	Leadership	Staff Development
Guiding Sites	Burns Middle School	Social Worker	Behavior Intervention Center (BIC)	Eagle Dollars	Leadership by Example Teacher-to-Teacher Mentors Teacher Teams	
	Emma B. Trask Middle School	Project Re-Direct	Project Re-Direct		Leadership by Example	
	Glenwood Elementary School	Glad Calls Social Worker Direct Calls Home Behavior Contract		Cultural Awareness Glad Calls Behavior Contract	Leadership by Example	Year-long Staff Developments
	Pamlico County High School	Saturday Academy Parents Meeting	Chill Out Saturday Academy In-School Suspension Alternative Learning Program	Character Education / Leadership	Leadership by Example	
	Spring Lake Middle School	Behavior Contracts		Calendars with Rules	Teacher-to-Student Mentors Leadership by Example	
Implementing Sites	Mendenhall Middle School			Student Artwork	Leadership by Example	
	Parkwood High School				Leadership by Example	
	Perquimans County High School		Genesis		Leadership by Example	
	Warsaw Middle School				Leadership by Example	

	West Hoke Middle School				Leadership by Example	
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Parental Involvement

Research indicates parental involvement at schools has a direct impact on student performance. Therefore, improving parental involvement was a strategy that all five guiding schools stressed at their individual sites. Improving parental involvement at the sites was accomplished through the use of Saturday School, social workers, Project Re-Direct, direct calls home, and behavior contracts.

Saturday School and Parental Involvement

Pamlico County High School utilized Saturday School as a strategy to also increase

parental involvement and serve as an alternative to short-term suspension. (At the time of Project EASE interviews, Pamlico County High School had stopped using Saturday School due to lack of funding. However, they were planning to restart the program in the 2003 - 2004 school year.) Upon suspension, students were given the option to either attend Saturday School or serve the suspension. Parents were contacted to inform them about the actions taken by the student, the suspension, and the option of being assigned to Saturday School. In order for the student to participate in Saturday School, parents had to sign paperwork giving consent for their child to attend. If the student failed to attend Saturday School on the assigned Saturday (without a valid reason), then a conference was held with the parents, student, and school administration, before the student was able to return to school. In addition to the conference, the student also had to serve the original short-term suspension. (For more information on Saturday School, see the Alternative Placement section.)

Pamlico County High School

Pamlico County High School is in a small rural community located in Pamlico County. Pamlico County High School is the only high school in the Pamlico school system serving approximately 656 students in grades 9 – 12 with 54 instructional staff. The overall student-to-teacher ratio is 12:1.

Upon suspension, students were given the option to either attend Saturday School or serve the suspension. Parents were contacted to inform them about the actions taken by the student, the suspension, and the option of being assigned to Saturday School. In order for the student to participate in Saturday School, parents had to sign paperwork giving consent for their child to attend. If the student failed to attend Saturday School on the assigned Saturday (without a valid reason), then a conference was held with the parents, student, and school administration, before the student was able to return to school. In addition to the conference, the student also had to serve the original short-term suspension. (For more information on Saturday School, see the Alternative Placement section.)

Social Workers and Parental Involvement

Glenwood Elementary School and Burns Middle School both use school social workers to involve parents. The schools’ social workers focus on home visits with the families of at-risk students, provide parent(s) rides to meet with administration, and allow for flexible meeting times for parent(s).

Glenwood Elementary School

Glenwood Elementary School serves approximately 463 students in grades PK – 5 with 73 instructional staff. The overall student-to-teacher ratio is 21:1. Glenwood Elementary School is one of eight elementary schools in the Chapel Hill - Carrboro school system. Glenwood Elementary School has over forty countries represented in its student body.

The purpose of the school social workers visiting the homes of at-risk students is to improve parent relationships with the school. During these visits, the school social worker informs the parent(s) of the warning signs the student is displaying. After informing the parent(s) of the student's behaviors, the social worker and the parent(s) discuss methods to address these behaviors.

Burns Middle School

Burns Middle School is located in Lawndale, NC, in Cleveland County. Burns Middle School is one of two middle schools in the Cleveland school system serving approximately 1104 students in grades 6 – 8 with 71 instructional staff. The overall student-to-teacher ratio is 17:1.

When looking at reasons for why parents were not attending scheduled meetings with school administration, these schools found that transportation was oftentimes a problem for parents. To solve this problem, the school social worker started to pick up parent(s) at a predetermined location, transporting them to the school and returning them to the original location at the conclusion of the meeting. Finally, by arranging transportation, the parents were allowed more flexibility for rearranging their schedules to attend parent conferences.

Project Re-Direct and Parental Involvement

Project Re-Direct is an alternative-to-suspension program implemented at Emma B. Trask Middle School. Student participation in Project Re-Direct requires parents to meet with the principal and Project Re-Direct teacher. During this meeting, the principal and Project Re-Direct teacher discuss with the parent(s) and student the reasoning for the student being placed in the program, the rules of the program, and what the student will accomplish while in the program. In addition to the initial parent meeting for participation in the program, parents must drop off and pick up their student daily from the program. If a problem arises during the day, the teacher talks to the parent(s) about the problem or makes arrangements to discuss the behavior at a more appropriate time. (For more information on Project Re-Direct, see the Alternative Placement section.)

Emma B. Trask Middle School

Emma B. Trask Middle School or Trask Middle School as it is commonly known, is located in Wilmington, NC, which is in New Hanover County. Trask Middle School is one of six middle schools in the New Hanover school system serving approximately 786 students in grades 6 – 9 with 52 instructional staff. The overall student-to-teacher ratio is 15:1.

Direct Calls Home and Parental Involvement

Glenwood Elementary School has instituted two methods of direct parent calls in its discipline prevention plan: beginning of the school year initial contact calls and “glad calls.” At the beginning of each school year, Glenwood Elementary School staff divides the student population and contacts every student's home. These calls are made with the intention of establishing a positive relationship between the schools and parents by opening the lines of communication. By opening the lines of communication between the school and parents, the school establishes a method for parents to contact the school with

concerns and / or behavior problems, thus laying the foundation for more parental involvement.

With “glad calls” students are nominated for overall good behavior or exceptional actions. At the end of each month, student names are drawn by the administration for “glad calls.” Once these names are drawn, parents are called to inform them of their child’s outstanding actions. Calls are made, if at all possible, while the parent is at work. The purpose of this call is two-fold. The first purpose is to continue developing a positive relationship between the school and parents. Second, the unexpected calls from school about their child’s positive behaviors give the parents the opportunity to share this positive information about their child with co-workers. In addition to the calls made each month by the administration to parents, teachers can also make “glad calls” at any point during the school year as they see fit. (For more information on “glad calls,” see the School Climate / Positive Recognition section.)

Behavior Contacts and Parental Involvement

Glenwood Elementary School and Spring Lake Middle School have both instituted behavior contracts for students

who are at-risk or have already been suspended in attempts to avoid being suspended again (See attachments III and IV.)

At both schools, students meet with designated personnel, (either the assigned counselor or administration), to discuss the behavior that is contributing to the student

becoming at-risk for suspension or caused the previous suspension. During the discussion, the student and designated personnel discuss the root cause for the suspendible behavior and alternative reactions the student can make in response to these behaviors. At this point, the student and designated personnel discuss what the consequences will be if the behavior contract is broken.

Spring Lake Middle School

Spring Lake Middle School is located in Spring Lake, NC, which is in Cumberland County. Spring Lake Middle School is one of twelve middle schools in the Cumberland County school system. Spring Lake Middle School serves approximately 665 students in grades 6 – 9 with 57 instructional staff. The overall student-to-teacher ratio is 12:1.

Once these alternative behaviors have been established and consequences for not following through with these behaviors are agreed upon by the student and designated personnel, the student writes them down and then signs the contract. The student must then take the form home for a parent signature. If broken, the contract is reviewed during a parent conference and the agreed upon consequences are followed.

Alternative Placement

Alternative placement is used to address two behavioral issues. First, when a student is disrupting class or acting out in a manner that does not warrant suspension, alternative placement is used to offer both teachers and students a reprieve. The second reason for alternative placement is when a student has performed a suspendible action that requires

short-term removal from the school environment. Four school sites provided alternative placement programs that remove students from the general student body and allow students to continue their education while addressing the behavior that caused the suspension. Implementation of alternative placements was accomplished through the use of Chill Out / Timeout, Behavior Intervention Center, Saturday School, Project Re-Direct, and Genesis.

Chill Out / Timeout as an Alternative Placement

Pamlico County High School and Burns Middle School have both instituted chill out and timeout rooms. Either a licensed teacher or another school staff member instructs these classrooms. When a student disrupts a classroom, the classroom teacher sends the student to chill out / timeout where the student remains for the duration of the class period. Upon arrival in the room, the teacher gives the student a few moments to calm down, to think about his / her action, or to just “chill out.”

The chill out / timeout teacher and the student then discuss what happened in the classroom. They also discuss alternative responses to what caused the student to be placed in chill out / timeout. After the student has regained composure and the class they were removed from has ended, the student returns to complete the regular academic day.

In the next few days, the classroom teacher and student get together to discuss the student’s time away from class and the behavior that resulted in chill out / timeout. Both Pamlico County High School and Burns Middle School keep a record of the number of times a student is sent to chill out / timeout, classes involved, and the reason for placement. These records are kept and reviewed regularly to make sure that neither students nor teachers are abusing chill out.

Behavior Intervention Center as an Alternative Placement

Burns Middle School has a Behavior Intervention Center (BIC) that is used when students have gone to timeout numerous times and have failed to change their behavior. A licensed school counselor oversees BIC in a small isolated classroom located inside the school. The students attend BIC for the duration of the school day. The focus of instruction while in BIC is changing behavior patterns of students while continuing schoolwork.

Saturday School as an Alternative Placement

Pamlico County High School instituted Saturday School as an alternative to short-term suspension. (At the time of Project EASE interviews, Pamlico County High School had stopped using Saturday School due to lack of funding. However, staff was planning to restart the program in the 2003 – 2004 school year.) Students were given the option to either take the short-term suspension or serve one day in Saturday School. Participation in Saturday School is completely voluntarily. When a student was given this option, the parents were contacted. If the students and parents decided that the student was to attend Saturday School, the parents then signed the proper paperwork and the student was assigned a Saturday to attend the session.

Pamlico is a rural community and some students have to work to help provide for the family; therefore consideration of work schedules was taken into account. Students were only allowed to attend Saturday School once a year. After attending Saturday School, if a student committed another suspendible offense, he / she was then suspended from school. If the student decided not to show up for Saturday School, then the suspension was put into effect and the student could only return to school after a parent conference.

In Pamlico County, a certified teacher and former United States Marine operated the Saturday School. The students arrived for Saturday School mid-morning and stayed approximately four hours. The day started with clean up around the school or some other physical activity. After the clean up or physical activity had been completed, the students then focused on academic work provided by their teachers. While students were doing work, the instructor talked to the students individually to discuss the behavior that caused them to be in Saturday School and the different actions they could take in the future to avoid getting into trouble. (For more information on Saturday School, see the Parental Involvement section.)

Project Re-Direct as an Alternative Placement

Emma B. Trask Middle School started an alternative learning program named Project Re-Direct to address the needs of short-term suspended students. A semi-retired licensed teacher operates the program. Project Re-Direct meets for half a day in an isolated on-campus classroom. Parents are responsible for providing transportation to and from the program.

While in Project Re-Direct, students focus on both academics and behavior. Because the program is so small, the teacher is able to give individualized instruction to the students. The teacher and the student also meet one-on-one during the student's time in Project Re-Direct to discuss the behaviors that caused them to be in the program and alternative actions they could have taken to avoid being sent to Project Re-Direct. Students are only allowed to attend Project Re-Direct once a year. If a student commits another suspendible offense after attending Project Re-Direct, he/she must then complete the assigned short-term suspension for the new offense. (For more information on Project Re-Direct, see the Parental Involvement section.)

Genesis as an Alternative Placement

Perquimans County High School instituted an alternative-learning program to address the needs of students that have been short-term and long-term suspended. The program is called Genesis. Genesis is housed in a mobile unit beside the school and is coordinated by a staff member working on her teaching licensure. The students are allowed to use school transportation to and from the program.

While in Genesis, students receive one-on-one instruction, either by the coordinator or with the assistance of a computer education

Perquimans County High School

Perquimans County High School is located in Hertford, NC, which is in Perquimans County. This rural community has four schools with Perquimans County High School being the only high school. Perquimans County High School serves approximately 577 students in grades 9 – 12 with 41 instructional staff. The overall student-to-teacher

program, NovaNET. NovaNET is a commercially developed computer education assistance program purchased by Perquimans County for students to use to improve their academic skills. The Genesis coordinator and the student meet one-on-one to discuss how the student's behavior can be modified so that suspensions can be avoided. The students also take a career aptitude test, research various career fields, and complete a project in the career field they select.

School Climate

Four schools focused on implementing strategies to improve overall school climate. By focusing on positive recognition of student actions and celebrating the differences of students, the schools attempt to create environments in which positive behavior is celebrated. Improving the school climate at the sites was accomplished through the use of In-School Positive Recognition Programs, Glad Calls, Cultural Awareness, Student Planners, and student artwork.

In-School Positive Recognition Programs to Improve School Climate

Pamlico County High School and Burns Middle School focus on positive student actions. Students at both schools are given rewards for outstanding behavior. These behaviors include portraying a character trait from the character education curriculum, improving grades, and taking extraordinary actions. At Pamlico County High School, students are rewarded with tickets to upcoming athletic and school events, school merchandise, or donated prizes by various community members (e.g., free movie rentals, food from a local restaurant).

Students at Burns Middle School are awarded Eagle Dollars (the Eagle is the school mascot). The students are allowed to either purchase small candy at the time the dollars are given to them or save the dollars and enter to win a bigger prize at the end of the month (e.g., school t-shirt, sweat shirt, donated prizes from the community).

Glad Calls to Improve School Climate

Glenwood Elementary School allows for teachers to nominate students who have shown exemplary behavior to receive "glad calls." Students can be nominated for improving grades, displaying overall good behavior, exhibiting the character trait of the month, or completing an extraordinary action. Teachers or administration make the "glad calls" to inform the parent(s) of the action and the effect it had on the student and classroom (if others are involved). By reinforcing positive behavior, students are challenged to display this behavior more often. (For more information, see Parental Involvement section.)

Cultural Awareness to Improve School Climate

Glenwood Elementary School has over forty different nationalities represented in its student body. Glenwood has addressed diversity with two strategies to ensure all students feel welcome. The first strategy involves hanging the national flags of every country represented at the school in the hallways. This gives the students the reassurance

that they are welcome in the school even though they come from different places around the world. Secondly, because there are so many nationalities represented at Glenwood Elementary School, all students are referred to as gators – the school mascot - and the rules of the school are “gator rules.” This is called the “gator plan.” With the gator plan, the school rules are clearly posted throughout the school and reviewed with the students regularly. When a student begins to exhibit signs of acting out, the teacher, administrator, or staff member witnessing this can simply ask, “Are you behaving like a gator?”. This makes the action wrong and not the student. It also makes all the students equal; no matter where they are from in the world, they are all gators.

Student Planners to Improve School Climate

Spring Lake Middle School has designed a student planner for the year which includes all the important school dates, school contact information, and, most importantly, school rules and code of conduct that explain expected student behavior. Every student receives a calendar at the beginning of the school year and transfer students receive a calendar upon arrival at the school. These rules are thoroughly reviewed by teachers with the students. When a student questions a rule or why something is being handled the way it is, the teachers and administration use the calendars as a point of reference.

Another benefit of the calendars is that they also have interesting facts throughout the year. These facts include brief biographies of important people in history, quotes, and historical quick facts. The calendars are formatted for students to be able to put their homework assignments in it as well.

Student Artwork to Improve School Climate

Mendenhall Middle School students complete murals on school halls every year to encourage student pride in the school. The art students come together and design the mural. The school equips the students with all the art supplies needed to complete the project. The students work on the mural after school until it is completed. Once the artwork is completed, it is displayed for the student body and visitors to view when they come to Mendenhall Middle School.

Mendenhall Middle School

Mendenhall Middle School is located in Greensboro, NC, in Guilford County. This community is a largely urban community. Mendenhall Middle School is one of seventeen middle schools in the Guilford school system. Mendenhall Middle School serves approximately 790 students in grades 6 – 8 with 53 instructional staff. The overall student-to-teacher ratio is 28:1.

Leadership

All of the Project EASE sites had strong positive leaders at their school. These leaders not only saw the need to reduce their suspension and expulsion rates but also took action to address the need(s) of their school. Two schools’ administrators (Burns Middle School and Spring Lake Middle School) specifically made leadership a part of their plan to

reduce their suspension and expulsion rates. Improving school leadership at the sites was accomplished through leadership by example and leadership through mentors.

Leadership by Example

The principal at Burns Middle School started the position three years ago. At the first staff meeting she explained expectations for the school year. All administration and staff had an opportunity to review the expectations together and provide feedback. The principal understood that the teachers needed a clear understanding of what was expected from them by the administration and the students needed a clear understanding of what was expected from them by both school staff and administration. One strong example of this leadership is staff presence in halls during class change. The leadership of the Burns Middle School administration was not only noted by DJJDP - Center staff, but also during teacher interviews. All teachers indicated that the clear rules and expectations of the school applied to everyone from the principal to the newest student arrival.

Leadership through Mentors

Burns Middle School and Spring Lake Middle School both have instituted mentoring programs at their schools to enrich staff and student leadership. The program at Burns Middle School pairs an experienced teacher with a new teacher to serve as a mentor. At Spring Lake Middle School, the principal employed a teacher-student mentoring relationship.

Teacher-to-Teacher Mentoring Program:

Burns Middle School implemented two different teacher-to-teacher mentoring programs. The first teacher-to-teacher mentoring program partners experienced and returning teachers with new teachers (either new to the profession or new to Burns Middle School). These relationships are used to help new teachers prepare for the upcoming school year, answer questions, provide feedback about projects, and help the teachers learn the expectations of Burns Middle School.

Because the mentors and mentees may teach different grade levels, be located in different parts of the school, or not have as much time to continue these relationships as the year progresses, a second mentoring level has been put into place. This is a grade-level teaching team with a lead teacher. The grade level teams all have the same planning period, which allows for them to have meetings to discuss issues that may have arisen during the day or week. This mentoring program is used to ensure that grade level teachers feel supported and stay on track.

Teacher-to-Student Mentoring Relationships:

Spring Lake Middle School has incorporated a teacher-to-student mentoring program. This program partners male teachers with male students and female teachers with female students. These groups meet everyday for the last thirty minutes of the school day. During these sessions, students are able to discuss any concerns with their classmates and teacher even if they are not school related. Spring Lake Middle School staff stated that these sessions have been very useful tools in preventing many discipline problems. The teachers use this relationship to get the students to communicate about the challenges

they are facing. The students also discuss their concerns about Spring Lake Middle School and the mentor teacher then reacts by taking these concerns to the proper person (e.g., administrator, counselor, parent).

During interviews, staff indicated that the mentoring program is only as strong as the mentor. If the mentor takes the time to develop relationships with his/her students, then the program runs much smoother. If not, it can be a waste of time not only for the teacher but for the student as well. Therefore, Spring Lake Middle School administration implemented a common reading book to be used during these sessions for the duration of school year. Teachers use this book to set up lesson plans for the mentoring time; however, if the students need to discuss something else, the lesson plan is rescheduled for another day and the student needs are addressed.

Staff Development

Staff development enables schools to keep up with the changes in legislation, school system guidelines, and overall education trends. Although all schools in Project EASE had some form of staff development, Glenwood Elementary School focused on using one topic for staff development throughout the year to reduce discipline problems.

The Year-long Staff Development

Glenwood Elementary School takes time during its summer preparation for the upcoming school year to concentrate on one issue that was a concern during the previous school year. The assistant principal researched possible root causes of the issues the school experienced and methods to address those root causes. Previous issues have included cultural diversity training and bullying prevention. The assistant principal then presented that information with activities to his staff to use throughout the school year. To keep the topic fresh in the teachers' minds, the trainings continued once a month for the rest of the year using a variety of techniques including role-playing, readings, and interactive activities.

The trainings did not stop with the teachers. During the first semester of the school year, the assistant principal introduced the topic to every student by visiting each classroom and presenting the information in age appropriate formats. A follow-up session in the second semester with a story or interaction of some kind to illustrate how the students could perform and address these traits / ideals was completed.

Implementation of the Promising Strategies

The Project EASE strategies were selected because of their potential to be replicated in North Carolina schools desiring to address the issue of disproportionate minority suspensions and expulsions. The following section will review how these strategies can be implemented.

The method of implementing promising strategies will vary from site to site because each school is unique. Each school should embark on a self - assessment to determine their most pressing needs and the best way to address these needs. The self - assessment

process can be completed in a variety of ways, but the process needs to include defining the problem, identifying the possible root causes of the problem, acknowledging the skills within the school to address the root causes, and locating outside resources to help address those root causes that can not be solved from within. Reduction of a school's suspension and expulsion rates begins by addressing the root causes identified during the self - assessment process. For some sites this root cause will be lack parental involvement; for others it will be a poor school climate in which students, parents, teachers or administration do not have pride in their school. Whatever the root causes are determined to be, the school must take action to make positive changes.

Most of the strategies do not require large amounts of funds; they only need people to take the initiative to lead the project. "Glad calls" are an example of people taking the initiative to improve parental relations as well as school climate, while making efforts to reduce suspension and expulsion rates. Schools should elect one person to lead this project. The lead person should develop criteria for students to be nominated for the school-wide drawing for calls to parents. After the criteria are set, the lead should review the criteria with the school's administration and then with the school staff. Finally, a calendar should be formulated of when and who should make the "glad calls" to parents. Contact information for the parents can be obtained through the emergency contact paperwork filled out at the beginning of school.

The positive recognition strategies highlighted are low-cost programs that can be implemented by using current school supplies and community resources. Schools can use regular colored paper with the school's mascot printed on it to create tokens for students to turn in for rewards. These tokens can be made reusable by laminating them. Student names can be written on the laminated tokens with non-permanent marker so they can be erased after the drawing is complete or the student has used it. Also, schools can involve community businesses by getting them to donate merchandise to the school for students to win as prizes after the drawing.

Staff development can be low cost as well. The school's administration can complete a self-assessment to determine the areas which need to be addressed the quickest. From that point, the school can use its internal resources (teachers, counselors, or administrators) to brainstorm creative solutions to the identified issues. In addition to using internal resources, schools can also use parents, local businesses, and statewide agencies to help solve the issues that were decided upon. By being creative and using resources that are currently at hand for the school, staff developments can be fun and informative.

Although most strategies are low cost, some strategies do require a financial commitment by the school. Off-site alternative placement programs are examples of these strategies. The start-up cost of the program would include, but is not limited to, securing a site to house the program, hiring or redirecting personnel, and purchasing materials needed to run the alternative placement program. Reoccurring cost might be reduced once the school has incurred the necessary start-up expenses needed to maintain the integrity of the program.

Leadership is key in all of the promising strategies. As stated in numerous Project EASE interviews, programs are only as strong as the people leading them. When schools are determining the leaders to implement promising strategies, the administration needs to be sure that the person is organized, passionate, and driven. By selecting strong motivated personnel to lead these strategies, schools are well on their way to success.

As stated before, there is not one solution for the schools to reduce suspensions and expulsions. However, schools completing self – assessments, utilizing current and community resources, and selecting strong driven leaders have the process of reducing their suspension and expulsion rates in hand.

Conclusion

The North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention – Center for the Prevention of School Violence (DJJDP –Center) began working on Project EASE (Educational Alternatives to Suspension and Expulsion) in August 2002. The goals of this project were to identify, study, and implement promising strategies for the reduction of suspension and expulsion rates in North Carolina’s public schools. The project staff completed these goals by researching promising strategies aimed at reducing disproportionate minority suspensions and expulsions in the participating schools.

The DJJDP – Center organized promising strategies into the following categories: parental involvement; alternative placement; school climate; leadership; and staff development. The promising strategies were placed in these categories to maximize the variety of ways these strategies can be useful to schools. Although these promising strategies aided in reducing the disproportionate minority suspension and expulsion rates at the guiding schools, these strategies were not the only strategies employed at the schools. These strategies were used in conjunction with the schools' and school systems' overall discipline plans.

Although the Project EASE period has ended, DJJDP – Center will continue to work with Project EASE sites to assist the schools in developing the selected promising strategies to reduce their disproportionate minority suspension and expulsion rates. In addition, DJJDP – Center plans to continue developing the promising strategies identified through Project EASE with the DisMISS (Disproportionate Minority Involvement of Suspended Students) Project. The DisMISS Project seeks to reduce the number of students, specifically minority students, suspended in North Carolina’s public schools as well as enhance the number of alternatives to suspension and expulsion options available. The goals of the project will be accomplished through the implementation of promising strategies identified during Project EASE in ten additional schools throughout North Carolina. An evaluation of the process of implementing selected promising strategies into participating schools will be conducted in order to determine possible practices to implement which will be disseminated to all schools requesting information regarding alternatives to suspension and expulsion.



**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Center for the Prevention of School Violence**

Michael F. Easley
Governor

George L. Sweat
Secretary

Project Education Alternatives to Suspension and Expulsion (EASE)

School Name: _____	
LEA: _____	Region: _____
Principal: _____	Contact (If different from principal): _____
E-Mail: _____	
Address: _____	
Phone: _____	Fax: _____

I agree to provide the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention – Center for the Prevention of School Violence a summary of our school, programs, and any requested discipline trends identified in our school.

Principal's Printed Name: _____

Principal's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please mail original (please keep a copy for your records) to:

**DJJDP – Center for the Prevention of School Violence
Lisa Bateman, Project EASE Coordinator
1801 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1801
Phone: 1 800-299-6054 Fax: (919) 715-1208
E-mail: lisa.bateman@ncmail.net**

I. School Demographics

Grade Levels Served:

Student to Teacher Ratio:

Number of Students Served:

Number of Male Students: _____

Number of Female Students: _____

Number of Instructional Staff: _____

- Number of Female: _____
- Number of Male: _____
- Number of African-American: _____
- Number of Asian: _____
- Number of Caucasian: _____
- Number of Hispanic: _____
- Number of Native American: _____
- Number of Other Personnel: _____

II. Ethnic Background of Students:

African-American:

Asian and Other:

Caucasian:

Hispanic:

Native American:

III. Suspension and Expulsion Information

Please use SIMS information or other tracking information to give background of your suspension records for the school years of 1998-1999, 1999-2000, 2000-2001, and 2001-2002. Please include a total suspension and expulsion breakdown in these forms:

- Overall Total
 - Suspension and Expulsion
- Gender Breakdown
 - Suspension and Expulsion
- Ethnic Group Breakdown
 - Suspension and Expulsion
- Grade Level
 - Each separate level listed please

School Demographic Information

School Name	LEA	Location	Student Population	Student / Teacher Ratio
Burns Middle School	Cleveland	Rural	1104	17:1
Emma B. Trask Middle School	New Hanover	Mixed	786	15:1
Glenwood Middle School	Chapel Hill - Carrboro	Urban	463	21:1
Mendenhall Middle School	Guilford	Urban	790	28:1
Pamlico County High School	Pamlico	Rural	1,183	31:1
Parkwood High School	Union	Rural	656	12:1
Perquimans County High School	Perquimans	Rural	656	12:1
Spring Lake Middle School	Cumberland	Urban	665	12:1
Warsaw Middle School	Duplin	Rural	227	11:1
West Hoke Middle School	Hoke	Rural	745	14:1

Glenwood Behavior Analysis Form

Name _____

This Time:

<u>Behavior:</u>	<u>Why (What was your goal):</u>	<u>Consequences</u>
<u>Details:</u>	<u>Was It Effective:</u>	<u>Was It Worth It:</u>

Next Time:

<u>Option 1</u>	<u>Pros:</u>	<u>Cons:</u>	<u>Yes/No</u>
<u>Option 2</u>			
<u>Option 3</u>			
<u>Option 4</u>			

Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

The following behavior contract has been developed to assist _____ in complying with the rules at Spring Lake Middle School. Your child participated in the development of this behavior contract by identifying these areas of concern, therefore, he/she is expected to adhere to the behaviors as outline below. Since the behavioral plan is an ongoing process, the Student Services Team will do periodic monitoring and updates to determine the continued need for current behavior plan.

Behavior Areas of Concern:

- 1.
- 2.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the At-risk counselor, Mr. McMillan at 497-1175.

Student Signature

Parent Signature

Behavior Contract

This behavior contract is for _____

_____ has demonstrated an inability to control:

- 1.
- 2.

_____ agrees to the following goals and objectives.

Goal:

Objective:

Steps:

Goal:

Objective:

Steps:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

I _____ accept responsibility for my own actions and know that I am expected to be successful in following this contract.

This contract will be in effect for the remainder of the 2002-2003 school year. I understand that if I do not follow this behavior contract the Administrative Team will take the necessary actions deemed appropriate.

I have read and understand this contract and agree to abide by the goals and objectives in this contract.

Student Signature

Date

**Strategies that will help me counteract my
anger/frustration triggers:**

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-
-

A list of triggers that will frustrate me or cause me to get angry or upset:

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