
NORTHERN LIGHTS

SUCCESS IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND
SCHOOL DISCIPLINE AT
NORTHERN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



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APRIL 2004



For a fair and effective
youth justice system

NORTHERN LIGHTS:

**Success in Student Achievement and School Discipline at
Northern Elementary School**

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This study is the eighth report published by Building Blocks for Youth, a multi-year initiative to reduce over-representation and racial disparities affecting youth of color in the justice system and to promote rational and effective juvenile justice policies. The partners in the initiative are the Youth Law Center, Justice Policy Institute, Juvenile Law Center, American Bar Association Juvenile Justice Center/National Juvenile Defender Center, Minorities in Law Enforcement, and Pretrial Services Resource Center. The Building Blocks initiative is supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Open Society Institute, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the JEHT Foundation. Points of view and opinions in this document are those of the authors and do not represent the official position or policies of the supporting foundations or Spalding University.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Kentucky and across the nation, public education is confronting two critical concerns: the achievement gap between white students and students of color, and discipline policies that result in suspensions and expulsions of large numbers of students for minor misbehavior. In Lexington, the achievement gap was the focus of a report last year by a broad and diverse coalition, One Community, One Voice.¹ More recently, a group of students in Fayette County issued a report on the achievement gap which provided an important youth-oriented perspective on the issue.² School discipline policies, including “zero tolerance” policies, were the subject of a statewide report last year by Kentucky and national children’s advocates.³ The achievement gap and school discipline are related: school suspensions and expulsions fall disproportionately on students of color, and students who are excluded from school inevitably fall behind in their studies. Further, for many students, school suspensions and expulsions, and subsequent prosecution in family court, are the beginning of a “school to prison pipeline” of escalating frustration and failure.

This case study is a follow-up to the statewide report issued last year: *Unintended Consequences: The Impact of “Zero Tolerance and Other Exclusionary Policies on Kentucky Students.”* This study demonstrates that closing the achievement gap can be accomplished while simultaneously maintaining discipline and reducing the number of children who are suspended from school.

Over the course of four years, Northern Elementary School in Fayette County dramatically changed from one of the worst schools in the Fayette County public school system to one of the best:

- * During the 1999-2000 school year, only 15% of the students were reading at grade level. This increased to 32% the next year, to 48% the next, to 62.5% in 2002, and to 81% in 2003.

- * The number of incidents leading to suspensions dropped from 29 in 2000-2001 to 12 in 2002-03,

a decline of almost 60%. During that same three-year period, the total number of children suspended went from 16 in 2000-01 to 7 in 2001-2002, a 56% reduction.

What happened at Northern Elementary School illustrates the importance of outstanding leadership, a different vision for students based on the adoption of core values, and a team of administrators and teachers with a passion for teaching children who had experienced repeated failure in school. Another important ingredient of Northern’s success was the ability to secure additional state and private funds to provide the academic and support services that many children need. In addition, the school discipline program carefully combines old-fashioned techniques with modern methods of providing child and family support programs.

This report sets forth principles and strategies that can be adopted by other schools in the district, throughout the state, and across the country.

NORTHERN LIGHTS:

Success in Student Achievement and School Discipline at Northern Elementary School

by David Richart

INTRODUCTION

It looks like any other school building built in the 1960s, but this particular elementary school is something special. Northern Elementary School is located behind a large church in an open field that was once farmland. It is in the northern part of Lexington/Fayette, Kentucky, near a busy, commercial highway. The school has residential neighbors who live in modest two bedroom brick and frame houses about a block away.

There is something very exciting and promising going on inside the walls of Northern Elementary School. There is an educational culture at Northern that visitors can almost touch and feel. Visitors to Northern leave with a smile and a feeling that their tax monies are well spent at the school.

In Kentucky and across the nation, public education is confronting two critical concerns: the achievement gap between white students and students of color, and discipline policies that result in suspensions and expulsions of large numbers of students for minor misbehavior. In Lexington, the achievement gap was the focus of a report last year by a broad and diverse coalition, One Community, One Voice.⁴ More recently, a group of students in Fayette County issued a report on the achievement gap which provided an important youth-oriented perspective on the issue.⁵ School discipline policies, including “zero tolerance” policies, were the subject of a statewide report last year by Kentucky and national children’s advocates.⁶ The achievement gap and school discipline are related: school suspensions and expulsions fall disproportionately on students of color, and students who are excluded from school inevitably fall behind in their studies. Further, for many students school suspensions and expulsions, and subsequent prosecution in juvenile court, are the beginning of a “school to prison pipeline” of escalating frustration and failure.

Northern Elementary has adopted a multi-faceted approach to improving school discipline and academic

achievement at the elementary school level that may be a model for other schools. The principal of Northern is Peggy Petrilli, who came from the Austin, Texas school system. Starting in 1997 at Northern, she initially served as Professional Staff Assistant (or head teacher) for three years. In the year 2000, she was selected to be Northern’s next principal by the school’s site-based council, a five-member group of teachers and parents.⁷

Between 1997 and November 2001, as compared to other elementary schools in the district, Northern Elementary had the second highest number of problem incidents on school property, a total of 80. During this same period, the school had the highest suspension rate in the system at 3.3 per 100 students. In the 1999 school year, only 15% of the children were reading at appropriate grade level. Local universities would not assign student teachers to Northern because of the school’s poor reputation among educators and university professors.

Changes at Northern began in the fall of 2000 when Mrs. Petrilli became principal. She had two major goals: to improve the quality of instruction and to improve school discipline. Mrs. Petrilli would integrate these goals as she implemented them over the next several years.

The Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to call attention to a success story, particularly on the difficult issue of school discipline. Northern Elementary demonstrates that a school can close the achievement gap while reducing disciplinary exclusion of students. The programs and philosophy that were created at Northern may not be those that would work in every school, but they do illustrate how school personnel can decrease the achievement gap while reducing the number of school suspensions and expulsions. Every school needs to adopt its own unique way of responding to the two school problems identified in earlier reports. What we think this report illustrates is how a dedicated group of parents,

teachers, administrators, and the site-based council, can change the traditional way of responding to the achievement gap *as well as* reducing suspensions and expulsions.

WHAT HAPPENED AT NORTHERN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Profile of the School

Northern Elementary has 29 classrooms and is staffed with 25 classroom teachers and five teacher's aides. There are about 460 children currently enrolled at Northern in grades preschool to fifth. The racial composition of the school is 60% African-American, 30% Caucasian and other races, and 10% Hispanic. By comparison, 18% of students in the entire school system are African-American, 74% are white, 4% are Hispanic, and 4% are other races. Seventy percent of the children in Northern are eligible for the free lunch program for students from low-income families.

Core Values and Beliefs

Principal Petrilli, who the students refer to as "Mrs. Petrilli," had a vision that was driven by a passionate belief in the potential of all children. She said, "I especially believe in 'underdog children'...and I think it is our moral imperative to help them." That vision was based on the following educational values and beliefs that form the core of Northern's academic and discipline program:

Children and Their Parents

- All students at Northern can achieve.
- All Northern children have dreams that deserve to be fulfilled.
- The more exposure students have to new learning opportunities, the more successful they will become, so setting high expectations for students is important.
- All parents want their children to achieve at high levels.
- Parents play an all-important role in reinforcing the

work that teachers do in the classroom. In order for school to work, teachers and parents have to work together as partners in the academic and disciplinary process.

- Parents deserve feedback about their children's school day, and should sign-off on successes and areas in need of improvement.

Teachers

- Northern wants to retain and recruit teachers with a passion for children seen by others as "impossible" to teach.
- Staff, teachers, children and parents can close the racial achievement gap.
- Classroom teachers are absolutely critical to any successful effort to close the achievement gap.
- Classroom teachers should be treated as professionals and should be supported by administrators in their disciplinary decision-making. Teachers should have, in Principal Petrilli's words, "unconditional support" from administrators.
- To support teachers in their decision-making, the school will provide staff development, training and mentoring resources to help teachers manage their classrooms.
- As a result of this training, in-school and out-of-school suspensions become a last resort for teachers.

"I especially believe in 'underdog children'...and I think it is our moral imperative to help them."

***Peggy Petrilli
Principal
Northern Elementary School***

School Climate and the Connection between Fair Discipline and Learning

- Northern should develop a safe, fair, respectful and well disciplined learning environment where teachers can teach and students can learn.
- School discipline and learning go hand-in-hand, and they must be worked on simultaneously.
- Children suspended or expelled from school are denied an opportunity to learn, so suspensions should be used as a last resort.

Accepting the Challenge: Setting High Expectations for All Students

Everyone involved at Northern Elementary recognized

the difficulties in turning the school around. At the beginning, Principal Petrilli and her staff heard skepticism about their new vision for educating students at Northern Elementary. To some, the students enrolled at Northern were too far behind, too unruly, and too poor to catch up to other students. One comment to her was typical: “Peggy, don’t you know what *kinds of kids* you have at Northern?”

When recruiting new teachers, Principal Petrilli looked for teachers with a passion for teaching underachieving students and an intrinsic belief that all children could achieve -- and achieve at high levels.⁸ The school’s site-based council, which hired the principal and serves as the governing body for the school, also supported that vision. All personnel knew that they would be engaged in a high-risk venture. The school’s program overview document ends with the following statement: “We attempt to foster the characteristics, skill and abilities that build resilient children and buffer against risk.”

The Importance of External Funding

The faculty and administrators at Northern understood that teaching challenging students would require additional professional development for the staff. That need for help meant that school officials at Northern would have to secure training and technical assistance for teachers to help them respond to children who present very difficult learning problems.

It took an investment of additional resources to close the achievement gap and create a different climate for school discipline. The faculty and staff applied for grants and in-kind gifts necessary to supplement the school’s basic budget. They also recruited volunteers to work at the school.

One of the most important sources of outside revenue was a grant from the Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice⁹ and the Mayor’s Youth Violence Prevention Program (often referred to as the “Partners for Youth” program), based on the concept that the creation of a safe, fair, respectful and well-disciplined learning environment would reduce unnecessary referrals to family court. The \$63,000 initial grant¹⁰ provided resources to address school discipline problems by:

- setting and reinforcing explicit expectations about student responsibilities and behavior, as well as

- explicit understandings about student rights,
- setting a daily system of communication between parents and teachers -- through a take-home school planner -- that informs parents how their children are doing academically and behaviorally, and provides a vehicle for parents to respond,
- establishing constructive disciplinary practices, including:

- a small, in-school suspension room where children continue to learn while they are out of the classroom,
- case management services, which include assessing the problems and strengths of each child, then providing targeted services, and then tracking the child’s behavior and performance, and
- after-school and Saturday school programs that students attend to make up the time they lose when they are removed from the classroom to go to the in-school suspension room.

Praise for Teachers, Staff and Students

Positive reinforcement has been a critical element in the Northern Elementary program. Mrs. Petrilli makes it clear that the way discipline problems are resolved at Northern is a team effort, and not just the fruits of her own labor. She gives effusive praise to all her teachers and staff, and singles out Doug Adams, Child Guidance Specialist, and the rest of the school’s “Student Assistance Team.” She also commends Teresa Davis, Dean of Students, who runs the in-school suspension classroom and the Saturday program. The governing body for the school -- the site-based council -- has, in turn, strongly supported the reforms she developed.

In classrooms, teachers regularly praise students. In one classroom, the teacher tells students “Good job,” followed by the child’s name. Then the teacher slaps hands with the student who is being praised. In another classroom, the teacher asks the whole class a question, which they answer correctly, prompting the teacher to exclaim, “You all are fantastic!”

HOW THE SCHOOL DISCIPLINE PROGRAM WORKS

1. Establishing Clear Expectations

The administrators and faculty first decided to make their expectations for students *explicit* so that the children would know what rules they were to meet, and what consequences would occur if they misbehaved. To reinforce the point, the following admonition appears on one bulletin board outside a second grade classroom, displayed in bold and colorful print:

Take Care of Yourself.
Take Care of Each Other.
Take Care of This Place.

Outside another second grade classroom are lists of “Rights of a Child,” “Responsibilities of a Child,” and a comparison between home and school “authority figures.”

The staff also decided that students should dress in similar clothing as a form of respect for their school. Mandatory uniforms were considered – but rejected -- because the staff thought they would be too restrictive and wouldn’t allow students to express individuality. The dress code requires boys to wear solid color shirts with collars, and solid color khaki, navy or black pants or shorts. Girls must wear solid color shirts or blouses with collars, and khaki, navy or black pants, dresses, jumpers, skirts or shorts. Students must wear belts and shirts must be tucked in. Students are not allowed to wear blue jeans or open-toed shoes, and they must take off overcoats during class periods. No false fingernails are allowed.

2. Setting High Expectations

Though outsiders were skeptical about setting high standards for Northern’s students, Principal Petrilli added new subjects to the elementary curriculum: Latin, Spanish, and music theory. She intended these subjects to challenge her students and to build skills and abilities that would transfer to other subject areas.

3. Creating a System for Daily Communication Between Parents and Teachers

Each child has a “planner” that resembles a spiral notebook calendar and shows the homework due the next day. Teachers can place disciplinary notes in this planner. Parents have to sign the planner every night, and if the child does not bring the planner the next day, they may be disciplined. Teachers may also tuck a separate “incident report” about discipline into the planner, and parents must sign that form too.

4. Forming a Student Assistance Team (SAT)

Through grants and other forms of outside funding, Northern Elementary has created a Student Assistance Team that focuses services on children. The chart below compares the staff in most elementary schools with the staff at Northern:

Northern Elementary School	Other Elementary Schools
Family Resource Coordinator (full time)	Family Resource Coordinator (full time)
Title I Social Worker (0.3 of full time)	Title I Social Worker ¹¹ (0.4 of full time)
Child Guidance Specialist (full time)	Child Guidance Specialist (full time)
School Nurse (full time)	School Nurse (full time)
Mental Health Clinician (0.5 via contract) ¹²	(no similar position funded)
Family Service Worker (full time)	(no similar position funded)
Family Service Worker (0.5 of full time)	(no similar position funded)

Thus, compared to other schools, Northern Elementary has the equivalent of two additional staff with mental health and student assistance duties.

5. Providing Intensive Case Management Services

When necessary, the Student Assistance Team (SAT) “surrounds” the child with “wraparound” services. Doug Adams, a social worker, runs Northern’s Intensive Case Management program and heads the SAT.¹³ SAT members may check on a child one or two times per day, observe their behavior during lunch times when behavior problems might break out in a more open setting, check the daily student planner to see if the teacher is seeing more behavioral problems, check the daily logs to see if the student’s work was completed on time, refer children with more acute or chronic mental health problems to the mental health clinician for testing, and if necessary refer that child to a psychiatrist or psychologist.

In addition, they check the “incident reports” filed by the In-School Suspension staff. Several of the staff provide therapy through one-on-one counseling. In addition, these staff may meet with parents or guardians for counseling. On occasion, they also conduct family therapy sessions. The “family resource coordinators” play an essential role in assuring that children have basic resources.

6. Providing Mental Health Testing and Counseling Services for Children Who Need It

Northern has a half time, Masters-degreed psychologist who is a contract employee with Bluegrass Comprehensive Care Center, a regional mental health center that serves Lexington and the counties surrounding it, and is certified to conduct evaluations. A serious mental health problem may necessitate a referral to a psychiatrist or psychologist. Most children at the school are eligible for Medicaid reimbursement for such services. Northern also has a licensed clinical social worker that provides therapy to individual children and groups of children. This social worker also provides consultation to teachers and staff on ways to deal with behavior problems.

7. Creating an In-School Suspension Classroom

The In-School Suspension Classroom is one of the cornerstones of the prevention and discipline program. To reduce automatic referrals to in-school suspension, Principal Petrilli undertook some staff development. She mentored teachers who frequently referred children to administrators for disciplinary action, so that they learned how to manage minor incidents within their own classroom. But not all incidents of disrespect or behavioral problems can be handled in the classroom, so Northern also relies on an in-school suspension program headed by Teresa Davis, the Dean of Students.¹⁴ Responsibility and consequences are the hallmarks of the program.

The in-school suspension process usually begins when a teacher places a telephone call to Ms. Davis from the classroom to indicate that there is a behavior problem and that a child is going to be sent to the in-school suspension room, or that Ms. Davis should come to the classroom and pick-up the child personally. If a child comes out of a classroom crying, Ms. Davis may have the child put his or her head down on a desk in

the suspension classroom, and may have a whispered conversation with the child to find out the underlying reasons for the misbehavior. In-school suspension may expand into other periods that are particularly special to students. For example, for young children, the ultimate consequence is missing recess. For other children, the sanction is spending their lunch period in the in-school suspension room.

The in-school suspension classroom is small, with a desk for Ms. Davis, a few desks for students, and a file cabinet full of educational materials that Ms. Davis uses to continue instruction for children sent to her. Students’ desks are positioned very close to Ms. Davis’. There are posters on the wall with messages about “responsibility,” “effort,” “caring,” “respect,” and “honesty.” In-school suspension is no fun for the students. On average, children spend less than 30 minutes in in-school suspension. Ms. Davis gives them assignments and instructs them not to talk. If the students have to spend more than 30 minutes in the in-school suspension program, the students have to make up the time after school or on weekends. The time that each child spends in in-school suspension depends on the nature of the misbehavior and age of the child. Ms. Davis takes a child’s developmental stage and their sense of time into account in an age-appropriate way.

When misbehavior is more serious, Ms. Davis calls the parents.¹⁵ This action is also reported on a disciplinary report sent home as part of the daily communication between the school and parents, and gives parents an opportunity to respond. Ms. Davis is equal parts strict disciplinarian, mother figure, and kind-hearted champion of children. She initially adopts a stern manner with students and they answer her questions with “Yes, m’am” or “No, m’am.” But when they leave the room, she always says, “Have a good day!” or “I’m proud of you!” She says that children often enter the room with a frown on their faces but leave with a smile and a better attitude.¹⁶

8. Developing After-School and Saturday School Programs

Northern has after-school and Saturday programs that allow children to make-up the time they have missed in class. Students come to Saturday school for three very different reasons: (1) they have had a discipline problem, (2) they have volunteered for special tutoring

from the certified teacher on duty on Saturday, or (3) they have enrolled in a special enrichment program. This third aspect of Saturday school includes a program called “Discoveries,” which engages undergraduate education majors from nearby Transylvania University who volunteer to help children and is supervised by their professors and school officials. According to school officials, 253 students participated in the Saturday School Program during the 2002-03 school year, receiving almost 900 additional hours of instruction provided by a certified teacher. Thus, each student stayed, on average, about three and a half hours per Saturday.

The Saturday School Program places students who are disciplinary problems with those who want to increase their knowledge and ability. Thus, Northern takes some of the stigma out of coming to school on Saturday. Saturday school is not just for losers, but also for students who want to achieve at high levels.

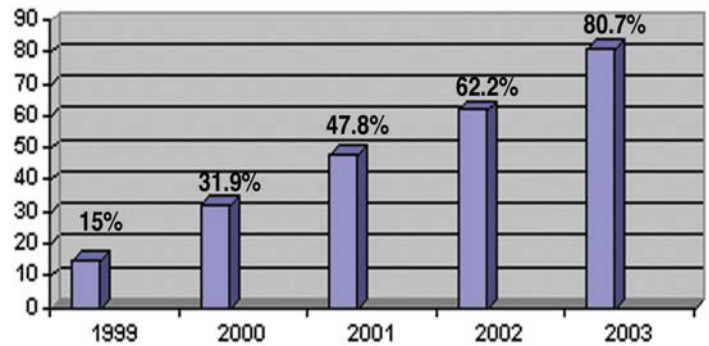
At the beginning of her tenure, recognizing that some parents and children might be resistant, Principal Petrilli called the parents of “no show kids” early on Saturday mornings to find out where their children were. After several weeks, the great majority of children showed up. Soon some of these children *volunteered* to come in on Saturday to receive additional instruction.

IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR NORTHERN STUDENTS

Achievement Scores

In Northern Elementary as a whole, there have been dramatic changes in school achievement. Taking reading as an example, only 15% of the students were reading at grade level in the 1999 school year, just five years ago. According to data supplied by the school, by 2000, the percentage of students reading at grade level had increased to 31.9%, which increased to 47.8% in 2001, and again, in 2002 to 62.2%, and 80.7% in 2003.¹⁷

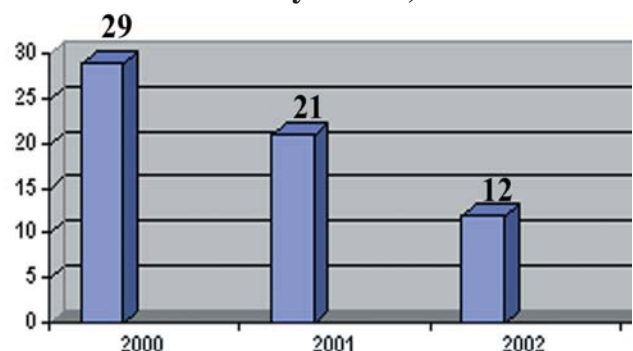
Figure 1: Percentage of children at Northern Elementary reading at a grade level 1999-2003



Suspensions

Suspensions can be counted in several ways. The graph below shows the number of “disciplinary incidents” that have occurred during the last three year school years.

Figure 2: Disciplinary incidents at Northern Elementary School, 2000-2002

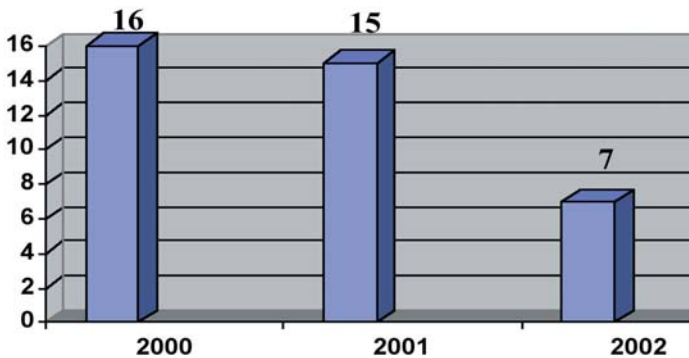


Northern Elementary has effectively addressed both issues: it has significantly raised student achievement while dramatically reducing school suspensions.

Each incident is one child being suspended for some action they took. The number of incidents declined from 29 in 2000-2001 to 21 in 2001-2002, and to 12 in 2002-2003, a reduction of 59%.

A second way of counting suspensions is to count the number of students who are suspended, which is an unduplicated count. The number of students suspended

Figure 3: Number of students suspended from Northern Elementary School, 2000-2002



declined from 16 in 2000-2001 to 15 in 2001-2002, and to 7 in 2002-2003, a reduction of 56%.

Figure 3. Number of students suspended from Northern Elementary School, 2000-2002

Special Program Evaluation of the NEPP

There is also data on reduction of misbehavior by Northern students. With respect to school discipline, the Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice and the Mayor’s Office funded NEPP, the Northern Elementary Prevention Program, which set a goal of reducing out-of-school suspensions by 20%. They also expected changes in

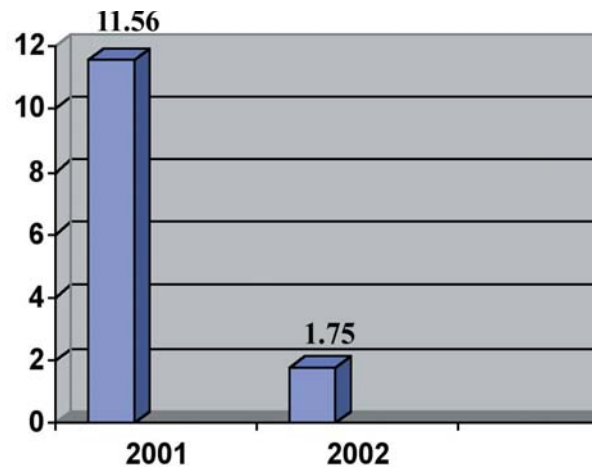
(a) improved behavior in school, (b) increased student attendance, (c) improved academic performance, (d) increased parental involvement, and (e) increased school attachments.¹⁸ As with their other prevention grants, KDJJ also funded a program evaluation of NEPP.

Researchers from the University of Kentucky’s School of Social Work conducted an assessment of the Northern Elementary Prevention Program by taking a close look

at 20 students identified as being most at risk. Of the 20 students, 65% were African American and 30% were white.¹⁹ The vast majority (80%) was in fourth and fifth grade and most were between 9 and 10 years old.²⁰ Nineteen of the twenty original participants were boys. For comparative purposes, however, the evaluators compared the 2000-1 and 2002-3 school years and tracked 16 children who remained in the program for both school years.

In tracking sixteen students enrolled in a special prevention program, the number of teacher referrals to administrative officials for student misbehavior also decreased significantly, from 11.56 incidents for these students during the 2001-2 school year to 1.75 incidents in the 2002-3 school year.²¹ This decline of 85% was well above the 20%

Figure 4: Teacher referrals to administrative officials for misbehavior, per student, for 16 “at risk” students, 2001-2002



The researchers also found that the students felt more “attached” to their schools. Students felt that they were being taken seriously at school and that they “belonged” at the school. Specifically, the measure used to determine “school connectedness” found that these at-risk children felt more accepted by teachers, more accepted by their peers, and they felt “less different” than other students. The authors of the report concluded: “These findings provide additional support for the claim of a marked improvement in school attachments.”²² This finding would seem to indicate that children were not being labeled or stigmatized for participating in this special program, and reduced their alienation from the school and increased the prospects that they would stay in school.²³

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CONCLUSION

Northern Elementary has effectively addressed both issues: it has significantly raised student achievement while dramatically reducing school suspensions.

Principal Petrilli has understood that the success of the discipline program lay in simultaneously establishing a new school culture and supporting the teachers' classroom disciplinary approaches. "The key," Mrs. Petrilli said, "was the teachers." Children feel that there is a reason for them to be hopeful and optimistic about their futures. New leadership in the school played a central role in the creation of a new school environment, and additional resources from external funding from the state and Mayor's Office was essential. Northern Elementary has made great strides in decreasing achievement gaps and lowering school suspensions, which has brought it statewide attention.²⁴

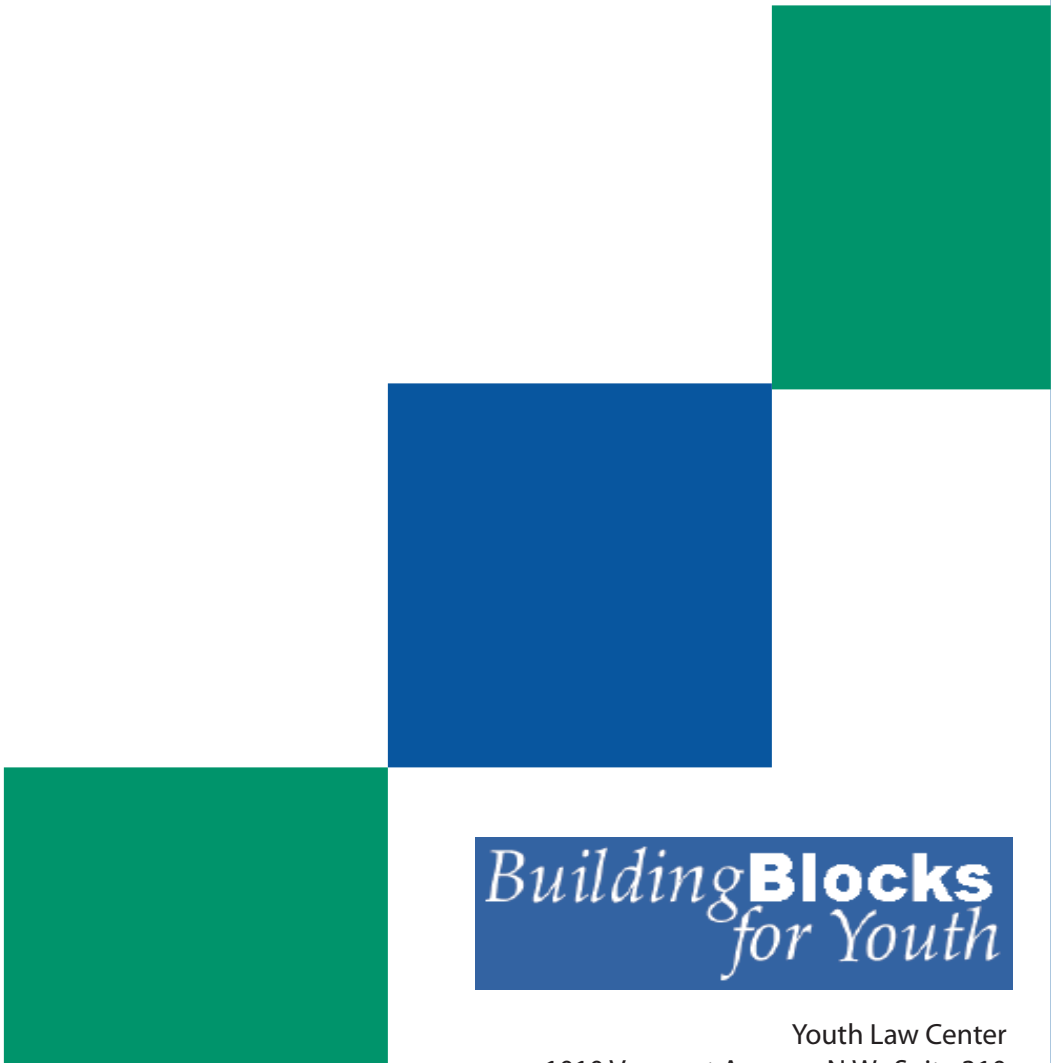
If educators and members of the community in Lexington and Fayette County are to level the playing field in our schools by eliminating the achievement gap, if they are to break up the "school-to-prison pipeline" that starts with suspensions of students and referrals to family court, there are valuable lessons to be learned from the experience at Northern Elementary. At a time when most education news is discouraging at both the state and national levels, Northern Elementary provides reasons for hope.

While not all of the aspects of the Northern approach will work for other elementary schools, or even be appropriate for middle and high schools, the attitudes towards children and parents, the general strategies used, and the vision all can be adapted to any school in this -- and other -- school districts.²⁵

ENDNOTES

1. One Community, One Voice. (2003), *Report to the Fayette County Board of Education and the Community*. Lexington, KY: One Community, One Voice.
2. Crossen, et.al. (2004). *The achievement flap: A student investigation of the achievement gap in education*. Lexington, Ky: National Conference for Community and Justice. (The students participating were David Crossen, Bryan Station H.S., Becky Grossman & Iris Schwering, both from Lafayette H.S., Alanna Hultz, John Malloy and Kate Newnam, all from Henry Clay H.S., and Yasi Mazloomdoost, Paul Lauerence Dunbar H.S. Adult partners to this project were Rachel Belin, Mahjabeen Rafiuddin, and Courtney Hightower.)
3. Richart, D., Brooks, K., and Soler, M. (2003), *Unintended Consequences: The Impact of "Zero Tolerance" and Other Exclusionary Policies on Kentucky Students*. Washington, DC: Building Blocks for Youth.
4. One Community, One Voice. (2003), *Report to the Fayette County Board of Education and the Community*. Lexington, KY: One Community, One Voice.
5. Crossen, et.al. (2004). *The achievement flap: A student investigation of the achievement gap in education*. Lexington, KY: National Conference for Community and Justice. (The students participating were David Crossen, Bryan Station H.S., Becky Grossman & Iris Schwering, both from Lafayette H.S., Alanna Hultz, John Malloy and Kate Newnam, all from Henry Clay H.S., and Yasi Mazloomdoost, Paul Lauerence Dunbar H.S. Adult partners to this project were Rachel Belin, Mahjabeen Rafiuddin, and Courtney Hightower.)
6. Richart, D., Brooks, K., and Soler, M. (2003), *Unintended Consequences: The Impact of "Zero Tolerance" and Other Exclusionary Policies on Kentucky Students*. Washington, DC: Building Blocks for Youth.
7. Under Kentucky law, these councils have the authority to choose the school principal.
8. This belief -- that all children can learn, no matter their background -- is a central theme of the Kentucky Education Reform Act, the state's landmark legislation that was passed in 1990.
9. House Bill 117, passed in 1996, created the Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice, which includes provisions that mandate the agency to develop and administer programs to prevent juvenile crime.
10. The second year funding was \$75,000.
11. For those schools that qualify based on the high numbers of low-income students enrolled at schools.
12. According to school officials at Northern, there are only two or three other elementary schools that have a contract for a part-time Mental Health Clinician.
13. Mr. Adams is a masters-trained social worker who is an LCSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker) and is certified as a school social worker. He fills a position that the Fayette County system refers to as a "Child Guidance Specialist."
14. Ms. Davis started her educational experience in 1978 with the Fayette County Schools, but felt "burned-out" from working exclusively with children with behavior problems. She has about two years completed toward her baccalaureate degree.
15. On one occasion, one particularly troublesome boy was being disrespectful, prompting Ms. Davis to call the parent. The parent asked to speak to the child, and the student listened to his mother for about a minute, and then passed the phone back to Ms. Davis. From that point on, the child was a model of obedience.
16. When Ms. Davis has a particularly problematic child, she asks students to write a short essay to respond to the following question: "What kind of person are you?" and the student would have his choice of selecting one of the following five, positive words: "honest? caring? respectful? trustworthy? responsible?" It is this accentuation of the positive, along with teaching children to take responsibility for their actions and to learn about consequences that is characteristic of the In-School Suspension Program.
17. From a document provided by staff at Northern, entitled "Northern Elementary Prevention Project, 2002-2003."
18. Sutphen, R. & Ford, J.P. (2003). *Northern Elementary Prevention Program (NEPP), a program, 2002-2003 school year*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky School of Social Work, 1.
19. Sutphen & Ford (2003), Appendix A, page 2.
20. Sutphen & Ford (2003), 2. The mean age was 9.75. (see Sutphen & Ford, Appendix B, page 3)

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21. The University of Kentucky researchers found this decrease to be statistically significant although it involved small numbers of students.
 22. Sutphen & Ford (2003), 5 and 8. The researchers used The Psychological Sense of School Scale (PSSM).
 23. There was mixed results on how the teachers *perceived* these students, however. Perhaps because they were looking more closely at these students as program participants, the researchers concluded: “In other words, the teachers rated students slightly worse for all of these [internalized behavior, delinquent behavior, aggressive behavior] behaviors, except for a significant deterioration in externalizing behaviors.” Sutphen & Ford (2003), 4. (“Externalizing behaviors” are those in which children “acted-out” their feelings on their peers or teachers.) Even the researchers were perplexed by the teachers’ observations: “It is difficult to explain these results. As will be shown in this report, the students in the program made behavioral improvements over the course of the school year that resulted in significant reductions in referrals to SAFE [the in-school suspension program] and out-of-school suspensions.” Sutphen & Ford (2003), 4-5. So, while the data suggested significant changes in the students’ external behavior, the teachers *perceived* these students’ behaviors as worse in certain respects, and better in others areas.
 24. On October 6, 2003, 56 people visited Northern, which included 30 legislators, some legislative staff, and officials from the Kentucky Department of Education. In a symbolic act, when newly-elected Governor Ernie Fletcher announced the appointment of his new Education Cabinet Secretary, he used Northern Elementary School as a backdrop for the press conference.
 25. The recent student report, *The Achievement Flap*, reminds us to “recognize that all classrooms and schools have a special dynamic, which means that one solution won’t work for every school or every student. Flexibility is key.” Crossen, et.al. (2004), 4.



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