

# Evaluation Report for the Study of Alternatives to Suspension

*August, 2004*

by

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## **Evaluation Report for the Study of Alternatives to Suspension**

### **Introduction**

Across the nation school systems are struggling with the essential conflicts presented when students misbehave in school. The most severe consequence is to suspend or expel students. These approaches, however, result in students losing educational opportunities that may be critical to their futures. Frequently, the students who are suspended are those who are most in need of additional, intensive instruction to meet increasingly stiff academic standards for high school diplomas. Without the structure of attending school, many of these students turn to illicit activities that lead them to incarceration, costing our society even more financial and human resources. Suspension and expulsion contribute to an underclass of poorly educated adults who are employed at the lowest economic levels and are incarcerated at a much higher rate than any other segment of society, resulting in lost wages for the economy, and a host of other social and economic problems for families and for the country. Suspending and expelling students from schools is in diametrical opposition to the basic reason our society has established public education: to educate the children of our society.

The pattern in some cases is an agonizing interplay between the student and administrators. A student who is not performing well in school acts out in frustration. The acting out results in discipline that may cause the student to escalate the behavior. In frustration as well, the administration suspends the student who then fails the semester because of receiving failing grades for the time spent suspended from school. The failing grades and lack of instruction cause further educational gaps that result in further frustration and anger for the student, causing a spiral of increasing behavior problems, academic gaps, and discipline efforts, until the student drops out of school or is arrested and sent to juvenile detention.

Suspensions may range from a day to 15 or more days out of school. Suspended students often have no supervision when out of school, even at the elementary school level if a single parent is working and there is little money for childcare. The lack of supervision contributes to other negative consequences for suspension, including drugs and vandalism that are detrimental to the child, family, and society.

Behavior problems in school in the last two decades have risen to crisis proportions. In Florida, more than 11,000 violent acts were recorded in the 2002-2003 academic year, for all grade levels (2,450 elementary; 5,344 middle; 3,445 high).

During the 2002-2003 academic year, 1.6% of Florida's elementary school children received in-school suspension and 2.6% received out-of-school suspension. During this same period, 16.9% of middle school children in Florida received in-school suspension and 14.4% received out-of-school suspension. At the high school level, 15.8% of Florida's students received in-school suspension and 12.8% received out-of-school suspension.

The total number of in-school suspensions, in Florida during the 2002-2003 school year was over 600,000. Additionally, there were over 446,000 out-of-school suspensions in Florida during the same school year (these numbers include students who received multiple suspensions). During the 2002-2003 school year, Florida expelled approximately 700 students from its schools.

Considering these issues with suspension and expulsion programs, many school systems have been implementing alternatives to suspension. These programs keep students in school instead of sending them home under the sometimes questionable supervision of their parents. The most effective programs provide instruction designed to increase students' academic levels while also addressing their behavior problems. The major types of programs providing alternatives to suspension are:

1. **Prevention Programs.** – students who are disruptive or for some other negative reason come to the attention of teachers or administrators may be referred to school-based intervention teams, social skills, conflict mediation or character education classes, time out in another teacher's class or in the principal's office, or a behavioral specialist may be hired or contracted to work with individual students or with teachers in creating behavior management strategies. These strategies are designed to redirect the student's behavior and avoid suspension. These techniques may often be employed with ESE students and are designed to occur within the regular school day.
2. **In School** – students attend school within structured programs such as:
  - **In School Suspension** – alternative classroom or supervision, often including academic instruction
  - **Work Detail** – students work under the supervision of a counselor or assigned teacher/paraprofessional
  - **Special Class** – students attend a separate class designed for students who were or would have been suspended
3. **Before/After School** – students can make up their academic work before or after school under supervision
4. **Saturday School** – the school provides classes on Saturday in which students can make up their academic work
5. **Community Based** – students may attend a program operated by a community agency such as the YMCA
6. **Special Program/Setting** – the district may have special programs or schools established to provide alternative instruction for students

All of these programs vary in terms of the type of students who can participate, the types of instructional programs provided, the types of people providing the supervision, and other factors. Within one type of program such as in school suspension, the programs vary widely. For example, the supervising person may be a certified teacher who works closely with the homeroom teachers to ensure students receive instruction paralleling the classroom assignments, or a paraprofessional who operates a computer lab where students are assigned instructional lessons based on their proficiency levels. Programs may or may not include a component to help students understand and eliminate behavior problems and learn to control anger, reduce impulsive actions, and recognize the consequences of their behavior. Little information is available currently at the state level that describes or defines these alternatives to suspension programs or the success they have had in reducing student dropout rates, mitigating the academic losses from suspension, or improving student behaviors.

The Florida Department of Education (DOE) has formed a Statewide Advisory Council to coordinate activities funded through federal Title IV funds. Currently, Title IV funds have been used to support 35 local projects to use Service Learning in suspension programs that were funded earlier this year in amounts ranging from \$10,000 to \$130,000. Through Title IV funds the Florida Department of Education has contracted with Evaluation Systems Design, Inc. (ESDI) of Tallahassee, Florida, to conduct a **Study of Alternatives to Suspension**. The study will extend over two years through three phases, culminating in a final report that presents a recommended continuum of outcome-based best practices for alternative suspension services and include information on the use of service learning in these alternative programs. This report is submitted by ESDI as the first in a series documenting the activities and outcomes of the two-year study and encompasses activities conducted from January to July, 2004.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the **Study of Alternatives to Suspension** is to work collaboratively with the Florida Department of Education to document best practices in Florida and across the nation in providing alternatives to suspension, document current practices in Florida, and create a continuum of outcome-based best practices that can be used by school districts in Florida in implementing appropriate and effective alternatives to suspension. Defined purposes of the study are:

- 1. To identify existing practices regarding alternatives to suspension currently being used in school districts within the State of Florida.**
- 2. To identify outcome-based best practices.**
- 3. To identify essential components of outcome-based best practices.**
- 4. To develop an array of programs that can be used by districts as effective outcome-based alternatives to suspension.**



The results of the study will be a comprehensive listing and description of outcome-based best practices that Florida school districts can use to improve and enhance their suspension alternatives.

## **First Year Methodology**

The Department anticipates conducting the **Study of Alternatives to Suspension** in three phases. Phase I has been an examination of the existing programs in Florida to determine their configurations and components. This phase also included a comprehensive review of the national and state literature to document outcome-based best practices. The result has been this report that provides a description of Florida's alternative programs to suspension, a written review of the literature on alternatives to suspension, a catalog that is a representative sample of existing programs in Florida that are alternatives to expulsion and suspension, and a description of the MIS database elements that can be used to track program components and/or outcomes. Phase II of the study will be an application of the results learned from the literature review and program documentation from Phase I to all Florida alternative programs to determine the programs that display the features of outcome-based best practices. Phase III will be a comprehensive report on the most promising outcome-based programs in Florida and nationally, and a continuum of best practices that Florida school districts can implement.

The four major research methods for Phase I were:

- 1. Telephone Interviews with Program Directors in Local School Districts**
- 2. Site Visits to Six Selected Projects**
- 3. Literature Review of National Research on Alternatives to Out-Of-School Suspension Programs**
- 4. Analysis of MIS Database Elements**

### **1. Telephone Interviews with Program Directors in Local School Districts**

ESDI consultants worked collaboratively with the project managers for the study and the Title IV Statewide Coordinating Council to generate a set of structured-response data collection instruments for the interviews. ESDI staff contacted district staff in all 67 school districts to arrange a telephone interview or multiple interviews as needed. Key elements to be investigated through the interviews included:

1. Entrance/exit criteria
2. Target behaviors (academic and behavioral)
3. Outcome data and tracking/follow-up issues
4. Program elements/components (including parent involvement and community service/service-learning features)
5. Duration of treatment or intervention
6. Staff qualifications
7. Level of funding



Each interview took approximately 30-45 minutes, and multiple staff were interviewed in some large districts in which the responsibilities for the various programs serving as alternatives to out-of-school suspension resided in different departments. Twenty districts did not respond to the telephone calls. ESDI also faxed copies of the interview guide to these 20 districts, of which 17 did not respond. Overall, a total of 50 districts responded to these efforts for a response rate of 75%. Individual profiles of these 50 districts are included in a separately bound Appendix B.

## 2. Site Visits to Six Selected Projects

To increase the knowledge and understanding of the details of the programs districts offer as alternatives to suspension, ESDI conducted site visits to six local school districts. At each district, the key district stakeholders for program alternatives to suspension were interviewed, and ESDI consultants visited two of the programs at their school sites. At the schools, ESDI consultants toured the facility and interviewed the principal and the director(s) of the program. As needed and appropriate, consultants also conducted a focus group interview of up to three selected staff members to gather more detailed information about the nuances of the alternative programs.

The six districts were selected using a purposeful selection design sampling by district size and geographic region that ensured representation of large, medium, and small districts in the north, central, and south regions of the state. In addition, as the telephone interviews identified sites with promising practices, these sites were incorporated into the purposeful selection of the districts. Final selection included three large, two medium and one small district, as displayed in Table 1. Four of the six selected districts (marked with an asterisk) also had been funded through Title IV for service learning projects.

| <b>Size</b>    | <b>Large</b>                | <b>Medium</b>    | <b>Small</b>      |
|----------------|-----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>North</b>   |                             | <b>Leon*</b>     |                   |
| <b>Central</b> | <b>Pinellas<br/>Orange*</b> | <b>Sarasota*</b> |                   |
| <b>South</b>   | <b>Broward*</b>             |                  | <b>Okeechobee</b> |

\* District received funding through Title IV for service learning projects

ESDI generated an interview protocol for the site visits. The interview protocol mirrored the telephone interview guide and also contained open-ended questions to encourage elaboration by the participants.

## 3. Literature Review of National Research on Alternatives to Out-Of-School Suspension Programs

ESDI conducted a comprehensive review of the state and national literature related to programs providing alternatives to suspension and expulsion. The primary resource was the ERIC system that was searched with key words related to suspension program alternatives. The result was an annotated bibliography of relevant references published within the last ten years that is included in Appendix A of this report.

#### **4. Analysis of MIS Database Elements**

Finally, ESDI consultants worked with the Department to identify existing data elements already collected from districts through the annual DOE MIS data collection that could be used to track program components and/or outcomes for alternatives to suspension. Examples anticipated were FCAT achievement scores, promotion/retention in grade, and graduation rates. Results from this analysis are incorporated into this report.

ESDI also generated a database from the completed district interviews using Excel, and analyzed the data using SPSS. All structured response items were coded, and responses to open-ended questions were word-processed. The result of this activity was a database by district and program type that is available to the Department and contains consistent data collection elements for each program reviewed including these elements:

1. Entrance/exit criteria
2. Target behaviors (academic and behavioral)
3. Outcome data and tracking/follow-up issues
4. Program elements/components (including parent involvement and community service/service-learning features)
5. Duration of treatment or intervention
6. Staff qualifications
7. Level of funding

This file has been submitted to the Department for future research efforts.

#### **Report Organization**

This report is organized into six major sections as follows:

- ◆ **Introduction**
- ◆ **Purpose of the Study**
- ◆ **First Year Methodology**
- ◆ **Initial Study Findings**
- ◆ **Issues**
- ◆ **Recommendations for Continuation Activities**

The Initial Study Findings section of this report is further divided into three subsections that display results within these areas:

- ◆ **Literature Review Results**
- ◆ **Analysis of Florida Programs**
- ◆ **MIS Data Elements**

Detailed descriptions of the alternatives to out-of-school suspension programs operated in Florida school districts are presented by district in a separately bound Appendix. Note that the most accurate information about these programs probably resides at the school or program level.

### **Data Limitations**

The data contained in this report represents preliminary results of an exploratory research effort. Telephone interview results from 50 of the 67 Florida public school districts represents 75% of the districts serving students in Florida. Most of the non-responding districts were small districts serving fewer than 15,000 students and tend to offer fewer services to students as alternatives to out-of-school suspension. Findings were supplemented and expanded through site visits to selected districts that allowed more time to explore the multiple factors impacting on decisions and services for students in danger of being suspended from schools. These results will be refined and updated in the research effort conducted in 2004-05.

## **Initial Study Findings**

### **Literature Review Results**

The first phase of the literature search was conducted using the ERIC database. Search terms included “alternatives to suspension,” “alternatives to expulsion,” and “Title IV.” This literature search yielded eight articles from the past ten years related to alternatives to out-of-school suspension programs. The second phase of the literature search was conducted using the online search engine google.com. The search terms used were identical to those in the ERIC search. The online search resulted in a list of seven websites relevant to this study. The complete list of references and citations are presented in the Appendix.

Although the programs discussed varied greatly, there were several common themes. Adult mentoring and parental involvement were repeatedly identified as effective components of a disciplinary program. One program in Arizona provided a sequence of classes that were attended by both students and their parents. Community volunteers with different areas of expertise were in charge of leading the classes. Two-hour sessions were scheduled weekly and were designed to cover topics such as law education and juvenile justice, impulse control and anger management, study skills and time management, and substance abuse. This was deemed a highly effective component of a program designed to decrease violence in public schools.

A continuum of alternative placements is recommended by some of the authors. These continua typically include a progression from in-school crisis centers to in-school suspension to longer-term alternative settings, often located off-campus or in a separate facility serving students from across multiple schools in the district. These programs, along with most of the others identified in the literature review, highlighted a few key components that are thought to be highly effective. The importance of conflict resolution, social skills, and anger management training was stressed, as was the need for character and ethics training. The need for a controlled and disciplined environment supervised by a knowledgeable, trained staff was emphasized. Community service and job training were discussed in some articles. Smaller schools, or schools within schools, were also mentioned briefly.

Peer involvement was identified as another potentially effective component of disciplinary programs. Student leadership and peer mediation were discussed, as were teen court programs.

Of particular concern to some of the authors was the fact that minority and special education students were disproportionately affected by suspension policies. New discipline requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) were also a common topic in these articles.

Although the articles reviewed identified several components of disciplinary programs that have the potential to be highly effective, no thorough outcome evaluations were evident from the literature. The field is still lacking a detailed review of the effectiveness of the various program components.

## **Analysis of Florida Programs**

The analyses of Florida's programs serving as alternatives to out-of-school suspension were organized into eleven major areas:

- 1. District Policies and Coordination**
- 2. Prevention Programs**
- 3. In-School Suspension Programs**
- 4. Before/After School Programs**
- 5. Saturday School Programs**
- 6. Alternative Schools/Off-Site Locations**
- 7. Community-Based Programs**
- 8. Use of Program Components**
- 9. Staffing for Programs**
- 10. Program Evaluation**
- 11. Funding and Fund Sources**

Data charts and graphs are presented for each area with supporting narrative explanations.

### **1. District Policies and Coordination**

Florida's public school system is composed of the Florida Department of Education and 67 school districts with service areas that are isometric with county borders, plus several districts composed of separate individual university schools. In the fall of 2003, the number of schools in a district ranged from only two in Glades County to over 350 in Miami-Dade Public Schools, serving a range from 1,012 to 371,691 students. Table 2 presents the in-school and out-of-school suspension rates for the 67 school districts by level of school. Table 3 presents similar discipline data for students with disabilities. With such tremendous variation, the influence of district policies and coordination on the types and effectiveness of alternatives to out-of-school suspension (OSS) programs was a critical component to consider.

| <b>District</b> | <b>District Size</b> | <b>District Population</b> | <b>ISS- Elem</b> | <b>OSS- Elem</b> | <b>ISS- Middle</b> | <b>OSS- Middle</b> | <b>ISS- High</b> | <b>OSS- High</b> |
|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Alachua         | 2                    | 29,422                     | 1.4%             | 3.1%             | 9.4%               | 20.1%              | 3.8%             | 14.6%            |
| Baker           | 1                    | 4,606                      | 2.6%             | 0.5%             | 1.3%               | 35.3%              | 0.1%             | 26.7%            |
| Bay             | 2                    | 26,687                     | 0.6%             | 2.5%             | 15.2%              | 11%                | 12.8%            | 12%              |
| Bradford        | 1                    | 3,897                      | 7.2%             | 4.6%             | 38.9%              | 22.1%              | 32.9%            | 13.2%            |
| Brevard         | 3                    | 73,849                     | 0.5%             | 1.9%             | 10.3%              | 18.6%              | 7.3%             | 17.2%            |
| Broward         | 3                    | 272,782                    | 0.3%             | 0.9%             | 8.8%               | 7.9%               | 7.2%             | 7.2%             |
| Calhoun         | 1                    | 2,223                      | 0%               | 2%               | 0%                 | 21.3%              | 0%               | 18.6%            |
| Charlotte       | 2                    | 18,263                     | 0.4%             | 1%               | 10.2%              | 7.3%               | 9.9%             | 12.5%            |
| Citrus          | 2                    | 15,509                     | 1.7%             | 1.9%             | 27%                | 15%                | 19.5%            | 16.1%            |
| Clay            | 2                    | 31,368                     | 7.1%             | 2%               | 29.2%              | 10.6%              | 25.4%            | 9.8%             |
| Collier         | 2                    | 40,145                     | 3.6%             | 0.3%             | 30.9%              | 0.9%               | 26.1%            | 0.1%             |
| Columbia        | 1                    | 9,780                      | 2.4%             | 2.4%             | 32.9%              | 17.3%              | 34.6%            | 13.4%            |
| Dade            | 3                    | 371,691                    | 0.6%             | 2.4%             | 16.4%              | 14%                | 17.6%            | 10.4%            |
| Desoto          | 1                    | 4,966                      | 7.7%             | 2.2%             | 0.5%               | 6%                 | 0.2%             | 8.5%             |
| Dixie           | 1                    | 2,169                      | 0%               | 2.8%             | 0%                 | 14.1%              | 0%               | 17.6%            |
| Duval           | 3                    | 129,553                    | 1.8%             | 3.7%             | 24.2%              | 27.5%              | 23.9%            | 26.8%            |
| Escambia        | 2                    | 43,984                     | 2.4%             | 3.1%             | 8%                 | 23.9%              | 7.4%             | 18.5%            |
| Flagler         | 1                    | 8,562                      | 11.2%            | 3.6%             | 30.6%              | 14.8%              | 34.9%            | 11.3%            |
| Franklin        | 1                    | 1,347                      | 6.3%             | 4.2%             | 31.8%              | 23.4%              | 20.5%            | 16.4%            |
| Gadsden         | 1                    | 6,946                      | 4.1%             | 8.6%             | 25.7%              | 36.3%              | 30.6%            | 27%              |
| Gilchrist       | 1                    | 2,832                      | 4.2%             | 1.8%             | 28.1%              | 19.2%              | 21.4%            | 13.5%            |
| Glades          | 1                    | 1,012                      | 5.4%             | 4.4%             | 41.5%              | 12%                | 45.4%            | 8.4%             |
| Gulf            | 1                    | 2,150                      | 6%               | 4.2%             | 47.9%              | 19.5%              | 31.4%            | 14.6%            |
| Hamilton        | 1                    | 2,057                      | 9.1%             | 10%              | 38%                | 36.1%              | 30.1%            | 29.1%            |
| Hardee          | 1                    | 4,970                      | 0%               | 0.8%             | 0%                 | 17%                | 5.9%             | 6.7%             |
| Hendry          | 1                    | 7,658                      | 4.2%             | 3.9%             | 4%                 | 24.4%              | 15%              | 21.8%            |
| Hernando        | 2                    | 19,587                     | 4.2%             | 1.5%             | 17.4%              | 10.7%              | 29%              | 12%              |
| Highlands       | 1                    | 11,649                     | 5.2%             | 3%               | 34.8%              | 12.4%              | 38.7%            | 13.5%            |
| Hillsborough    | 3                    | 181,755                    | 2.1%             | 3.4%             | 24.8%              | 12.7%              | 23.4%            | 9.1%             |
| Holmes          | 1                    | 3,383                      | 0.1%             | 0.3%             | 8.4%               | 3.7%               | 11.1%            | 10%              |
| Indian River    | 2                    | 16,619                     | 0.3%             | 2.5%             | 22.7%              | 12.7%              | 19.8%            | 14%              |
| Jackson         | 1                    | 7,182                      | 1.9%             | 3.1%             | 4.9%               | 18%                | 8.5%             | 11.2%            |
| Jefferson       | 1                    | 1,485                      | 19.4%            | 15.5%            | 0%                 | 41.5%              | 0%               | 34.1%            |
| Lafayette       | 1                    | 1,035                      | 10.7%            | 1.6%             | 27.2%              | 7.5%               | 13.2%            | 7.4%             |
| Lake            | 2                    | 33,988                     | 1.2%             | 4.8%             | 11.8%              | 18.4%              | 0.4%             | 16%              |
| Lee             | 3                    | 66,428                     | 0.7%             | 1.6%             | 17.9%              | 10.4%              | 20.1%            | 14.7%            |
| Leon            | 2                    | 32,194                     | 0.8%             | 2.4%             | 12.6%              | 13.4%              | 5.4%             | 7.9%             |
| Levy            | 1                    | 6,191                      | 12.6%            | 3.2%             | 38.4%              | 17.8%              | 29.7%            | 12.9%            |
| Liberty         | 1                    | 1,404                      | 1.3%             | 2.4%             | 5.6%               | 7.7%               | 7.7%             | 1.9%             |
| Madison         | 1                    | 3,245                      | 11.5%            | 3%               | 38%                | 21.3%              | 27.9%            | 17.8%            |



**Table 2 (Continued)**  
**In-School and Out-of-School Suspension Rates – By District**

| District   | District Size | District Population | ISS- Elem | OSS- Elem | ISS- Middle | OSS- Middle | ISS- High | OSS- High |
|------------|---------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| Manatee    | 2             | 40,254              | 0.2%      | 4%        | 20.4%       | 19.9%       | 14.9%     | 16.9%     |
| Marion     | 2             | 40,322              | 4.3%      | 4.3%      | 16.1%       | 19.9%       | 23.7%     | 17.7%     |
| Martin     | 2             | 17,771              | 0.5%      | 1.8%      | 23.6%       | 9.9%        | 0%        | 11.3%     |
| Monroe     | 1             | 9,123               | 1.3%      | 2.2%      | 20.2%       | 12.4%       | 19.7%     | 11.5%     |
| Nassau     | 1             | 10,544              | 0.3%      | 1.7%      | 24.8%       | 15.2%       | 23.1%     | 17.2%     |
| Okaloosa   | 2             | 31,017              | 0.8%      | 1.8%      | 9.1%        | 10.6%       | 7.2%      | 10.3%     |
| Okeechobee | 1             | 7,275               | 1.9%      | 3.2%      | 5.5%        | 20.4%       | 21.2%     | 21.2%     |
| Orange     | 3             | 165,881             | 1%        | 3.2%      | 12.8%       | 13.9%       | 10.4%     | 11.9%     |
| Osceola    | 2             | 43,907              | 3.4%      | 3.7%      | 9.8%        | 22%         | 4.4%      | 20.7%     |
| Palm Beach | 3             | 170,214             | 1.6%      | 3.6%      | 8.7%        | 14.8%       | 11.7%     | 13.1%     |
| Pasco      | 2             | 57,498              | 1%        | 1.7%      | 23.9%       | 11.8%       | 27.7%     | 12.1%     |
| Pinellas   | 2             | 114,466             | 1%        | 1.9%      | 24.4%       | 13.3%       | 25%       | 15.6%     |
| Polk       | 2             | 84,066              | 4.6%      | 4.1%      | 22.1%       | 20.5%       | 8.5%      | 17.5%     |
| Putnam     | 1             | 12,237              | 0.2%      | 6.6%      | 31.9%       | 13.1%       | 28.7%     | 8.8%      |
| Santa Rosa | 2             | 23,150              | 0.3%      | 0.7%      | 16.9%       | 6.9%        | 8%        | 7.3%      |
| Sarasota   | 2             | 32,782              | 0.1%      | 1.5%      | 0.7%        | 9.7%        | 2.7%      | 5.5%      |
| Seminole   | 2             | 24,421              | 1.8%      | 1.3%      | 14.2%       | 8.7%        | 16.5%     | 9%        |
| St. Johns  | 2             | 39,519              | 0%        | 1.5%      | 12.8%       | 11.3%       | 7.5%      | 13.6%     |
| St. Lucie  | 3             | 64,853              | 0.6%      | 4.1%      | 26.9%       | 22%         | 30%       | 24.2%     |
| Sumter     | 1             | 6,857               | 7.7%      | 3.6%      | 26%         | 17.1%       | 33.7%     | 17.1%     |
| Suwannee   | 1             | 5,851               | 1.3%      | 3.9%      | 27.1%       | 19.3%       | 28.7%     | 16.9%     |
| Taylor     | 1             | 3,560               | 19.4%     | 11.6%     | 34.6%       | 25%         | 33.9%     | 17.4%     |
| Union      | 1             | 2,171               | 0%        | 4.3%      | 35.2%       | 21.2%       | 26.3%     | 11.7%     |
| Volusia    | 3             | 64,046              | 2.7%      | 4.2%      | 28%         | 15.3%       | 25.5%     | 12.8%     |
| Wakulla    | 1             | 4,728               | 0%        | 0.1%      | 34.4%       | 12%         | 36.6%     | 6.5%      |
| Walton     | 1             | 6,522               | 1.7%      | 1.1%      | 11.7%       | 7.6%        | 17.7%     | 12.5%     |
| Washington | 1             | 3,425               | 2.1%      | 2.9%      | 16.2%       | 10.1%       | 8.8%      | 4.8%      |





**Table 3**  
**Discipline Rates by District for Students with Disabilities**  
**2003-04**

| District     | In-School Suspensions |     | Out-of-School Suspensions |     | Expulsions |     | Alternative Placement |     | Member-ship |
|--------------|-----------------------|-----|---------------------------|-----|------------|-----|-----------------------|-----|-------------|
|              | #                     | %   | #                         | %   | #          | %   | #                     | %   |             |
| Alachua      | 528                   | 8%  | 1,341                     | 21% | 0          | 0%  | 0                     | 0%  | 6,534       |
| Baker        | 12                    | 2%  | 94                        | 13% | 1          | <1% | 31                    | 4%  | 731         |
| Bay          | 632                   | 11% | 727                       | 12% | 12         | <1% | 17                    | <1% | 5,852       |
| Bradford     | 331                   | 29% | 220                       | 19% | 0          | 0%  | 2                     | <1% | 1,148       |
| Brevard      | 877                   | 6%  | 2,028                     | 14% | 6          | <1% | 68                    | <1% | 14,968      |
| Broward      | 2,629                 | 7%  | 2,603                     | 7%  | 3          | <1% | 6                     | <1% | 36,767      |
| Calhoun      | 0                     | 0%  | 82                        | 15% | 0          | 0%  | 0                     | 0%  | 539         |
| Charlotte    | 110                   | 5%  | 145                       | 6%  | 0          | 0%  | 0                     | 0%  | 2,365       |
| Citrus       | 623                   | 18% | 514                       | 15% | 5          | <1% | 0                     | 0%  | 3,504       |
| Clay         | 1,365                 | 20% | 636                       | 9%  | 0          | 0%  | 0                     | 0%  | 6,856       |
| Collier      | 1,638                 | 22% | 73                        | <1% | 0          | 0%  | 4                     | <1% | 7,334       |
| Columbia     | 401                   | 21% | 294                       | 15% | 0          | 0%  | 0                     | 0%  | 1,932       |
| Dade         | 7,507                 | 15% | 7,796                     | 16% | 0          | 0%  | 218                   | <1% | 49,149      |
| DeSoto       | 56                    | 4%  | 83                        | 6%  | 0          | 0%  | 4                     | <1% | 1,348       |
| Dixie        | 0                     | 0%  | 99                        | 15% | 0          | 0%  | 5                     | <1% | 639         |
| Duval        | 417                   | 2%  | 604                       | 2%  | 0          | 0%  | 2                     | <1% | 24,260      |
| Escambia     | 583                   | 6%  | 1,563                     | 17% | 0          | 0%  | 5                     | <1% | 9,249       |
| Flagler      | 480                   | 28% | 248                       | 15% | 0          | 0%  | 0                     | 0%  | 1,692       |
| Franklin     | 57                    | 20% | 59                        | 20% | 1          | <1% | 2                     | <1% | 289         |
| Gadsden      | 332                   | 22% | 435                       | 29% | 13         | <1% | 0                     | 0%  | 1,513       |
| Gilchrist    | 160                   | 19% | 120                       | 14% | 0          | 0%  | 0                     | 0%  | 841         |
| Glades       | 62                    | 23% | 28                        | 10% | 0          | 0%  | 0                     | 0%  | 268         |
| Gulf         | 134                   | 29% | 88                        | 19% | 1          | <1% | 0                     | 0%  | 462         |
| Hamilton     | 91                    | 19% | 92                        | 19% | 0          | 0%  | 0                     | 0%  | 482         |
| Hardee       | 37                    | 3%  | 146                       | 11% | 1          | <1% | 0                     | 0%  | 1,301       |
| Hendry       | 176                   | 10% | 405                       | 24% | 0          | 0%  | 36                    | 2%  | 1,682       |
| Hernando     | 687                   | 18% | 432                       | 11% | 0          | 0%  | 0                     | 0%  | 3,787       |
| Highlands    | 811                   | 32% | 425                       | 17% | 1          | <1% | 7                     | <1% | 2,538       |
| Hillsborough | 5,192                 | 16% | 4,631                     | 14% | 7          | <1% | 10                    | <1% | 33,407      |
| Holmes       | 44                    | 7%  | 47                        | 7%  | 0          | 0%  | 2                     | <1% | 676         |
| Indian River | 426                   | 15% | 410                       | 15% | 1          | <1% | 2                     | <1% | 2,819       |
| Jackson      | 112                   | 7%  | 219                       | 13% | 3          | <1% | 0                     | 0%  | 1,683       |
| Jefferson    | 56                    | 11% | 182                       | 34% | 2          | <1% | 14                    | 3%  | 533         |
| Lafayette    | 33                    | 21% | 13                        | 8%  | 0          | 0%  | 1                     | <1% | 158         |
| Lake         | 323                   | 5%  | 1,082                     | 17% | 1          | <1% | 10                    | <1% | 6,532       |
| Lee          | 1,811                 | 15% | 1,665                     | 14% | 1          | <1% | 463                   | 4%  | 11,766      |
| Leon         | 348                   | 5%  | 635                       | 9%  | 31         | <1% | 0                     | 0%  | 7,153       |
| Levy         | 526                   | 29% | 272                       | 15% | 0          | 0%  | 2                     | <1% | 1,830       |



| Table 3 (Continued)   |                       |            |                           |            |            |               |                       |               |                |
|---|-----------------------|------------|---------------------------|------------|------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Discipline Rates by District for Students with Disabilities |                       |            |                           |            |            |               |                       |               |                |
| 2003-04   |                       |            |                           |            |            |               |                       |               |                |
| District  | In-School Suspensions |            | Out-of-School Suspensions |            | Expulsions |               | Alternative Placement |               | Member-ship    |
|   | #                     | %          | #                         | %          | #          | %             | #                     | %             |                |
| Liberty   | 13                    | 2%         | 17                        | 3%         | 0          | 0%            | 1                     | <1%           | 556            |
| Madison   | 236                   | 22%        | 143                       | 13%        | 0          | 0%            | 8                     | <1%           | 1,085          |
| Manatee   | 953                   | 10%        | 1,644                     | 17%        | 0          | 0%            | 9                     | <1%           | 9,643          |
| Marion  | 1,423                 | 16%        | 1,556                     | 17%        | 1          | <1%           | 3                     | <1%           | 8,919          |
| Martin  | 283                   | 8%         | 400                       | 12%        | 0          | 0%            | 1                     | <1%           | 3,397          |
| Monroe  | 341                   | 17%        | 247                       | 12%        | 0          | 0%            | 4                     | <1%           | 1,978          |
| Nassau  | 281                   | 18%        | 216                       | 14%        | 0          | 0%            | 1                     | <1%           | 1,594          |
| Okaloosa  | 399                   | 6%         | 680                       | 10%        | 0          | 0%            | 5                     | <1%           | 6,487          |
| Okeechobee  | 131                   | 6%         | 304                       | 15%        | 0          | 0%            | 0                     | 0%            | 2,065          |
| Orange  | 2,977                 | 9%         | 4,483                     | 14%        | 1          | <1%           | 1                     | <1%           | 32,589         |
| Osceola   | 748                   | 10%        | 1,463                     | 19%        | 0          | 0%            | 9                     | <1%           | 7,675          |
| Palm Beach  | 2,549                 | 9%         | 4,119                     | 15%        | 2          | <1%           | 9                     | <1%           | 27,945         |
| Pasco   | 2,434                 | 19%        | 1,660                     | 13%        | 1          | <1%           | 1                     | <1%           | 12,824         |
| Pinellas  | 4,696                 | 20%        | 3,838                     | 16%        | 10         | <1%           | 223                   | <1%           | 23,928         |
| Polk  | 1,125                 | 18%        | 1,460                     | 23%        | 0          | 0%            | 0                     | 0%            | 6,331          |
| Putnam  | 548                   | 20%        | 495                       | 18%        | 0          | 0%            | 8                     | <1%           | 2,744          |
| St. Johns   | 317                   | 8%         | 457                       | 11%        | 0          | 0%            | 1                     | <1%           | 4,095          |
| St. Lucie   | 1,056                 | 18%        | 1,248                     | 21%        | 4          | <1%           | 0                     | 0%            | 6,006          |
| Santa Rosa  | 433                   | 9%         | 317                       | 7%         | 0          | 0%            | 15                    | <1%           | 4,798          |
| Sarasota  | 141                   | 2%         | 714                       | 9%         | 3          | <1%           | 0                     | 0%            | 7,633          |
| Seminole  | 1,363                 | 12%        | 1,005                     | 9%         | 1          | <1%           | 14                    | <1%           | 11,073         |
| Sumter  | 381                   | 26%        | 233                       | 16%        | 0          | 0%            | 7                     | <1%           | 1,448          |
| Suwannee  | 179                   | 17%        | 188                       | 17%        | 0          | 0%            | 2                     | <1%           | 1,079          |
| Taylor  | 257                   | 31%        | 214                       | 26%        | 1          | <1%           | 0                     | 0%            | 826            |
| Union   | 117                   | 24%        | 88                        | 18%        | 0          | 0%            | 3                     | <1%           | 484            |
| Volusia   | 2,978                 | 21%        | 2,248                     | 16%        | 0          | 0%            | 0                     | 0%            | 13,969         |
| Wakulla   | 216                   | 20%        | 84                        | 8%         | 2          | <1%           | 2                     | <1%           | 1,077          |
| Walton  | 120                   | 10%        | 128                       | 10%        | 1          | <1%           | 10                    | <1%           | 1,230          |
| Washington  | 71                    | 10%        | 65                        | 9%         | 0          | 0%            | 8                     | 1%            | 732            |
| FSDB  | 5                     | <1%        | 4                         | <1%        | 0          | 0%            | 0                     | 0%            | 760            |
| Dozier/Okeechobee   | 37                    | 8%         | 0                         | 0%         | 0          | 0%            | 12                    | 3%            | 451            |
| FAU Lab School  | 5                     | 33%        | 0                         | 0%         | 0          | 0%            | 0                     | 0%            | 15             |
| FSU Lab School  | 0                     | 0%         | 23                        | 14%        | 0          | 0%            | 0                     | 0%            | 170            |
| FAMU Lab School   | 0                     | 0%         | 0                         | 0%         | 0          | 0%            | 0                     | 0%            | 6              |
| UF Lab School   | 32                    | 19%        | 18                        | 11%        | 0          | 0%            | 0                     | 0%            | 171            |
|   | <b>56,171</b>         | <b>13%</b> | <b>59,898</b>             | <b>14%</b> | <b>117</b> | <b>&lt;1%</b> | <b>1,268</b>          | <b>&lt;1%</b> | <b>439,737</b> |

The district interviews first examined the extent to which the operating definitions employed by the study matched the definitions used by the school districts. The project’s operating definitions used to define the program delivery models that were known to be in use as alternatives to OSS were:

- ◆ **In school.** Students attend school within structured programs such as an alternative classroom often with academic instruction; students are assigned to work detail under the supervision of an adult; or students are assigned to a special class designed for suspended students.
- ◆ **Before/After School.** Students can make up academic work under supervision at the school site before and/or after regular school hours.
- ◆ **Saturday School.** Students make up academic work in classes with adult supervision held on Saturdays.
- ◆ **Special Program/Setting.** Students are re-assigned to alternative school placements within the district.
- ◆ **Community-Based.** Students attend a program operated by a community-based agency such as YMCA.

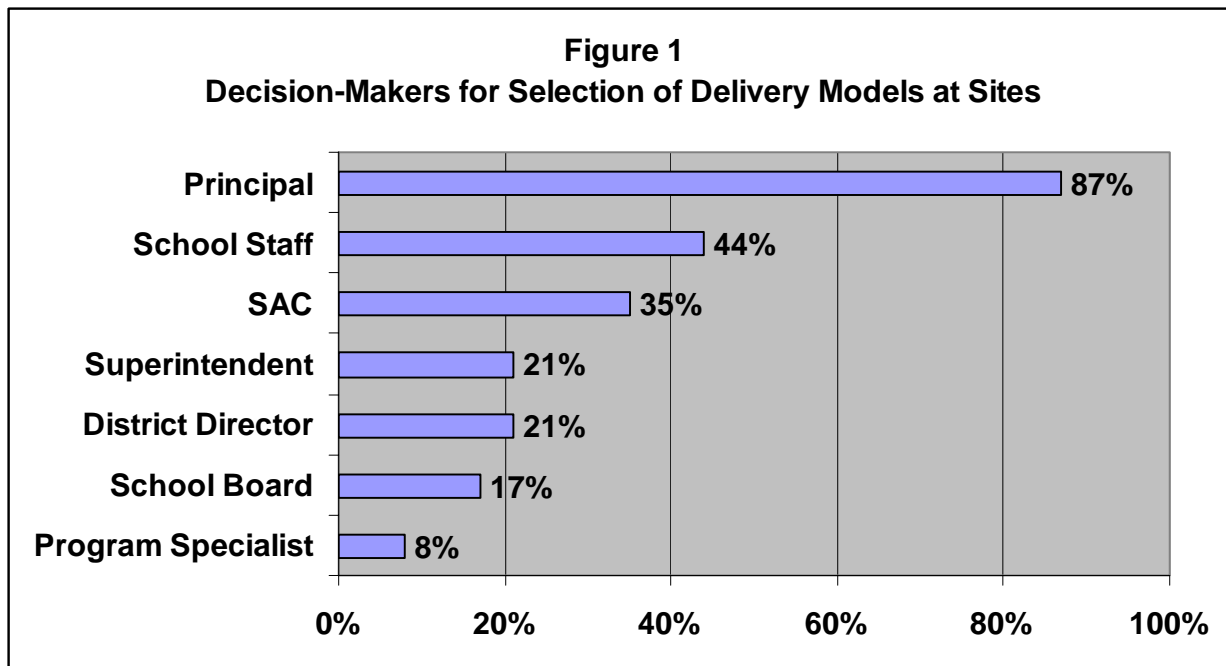
The initial question in the district interviews asked the respondents to review these definitions, with 96% of the participants responding that the definitions provided by the study matched the definitions used in the district for the alternatives to OSS programs (Table 4).

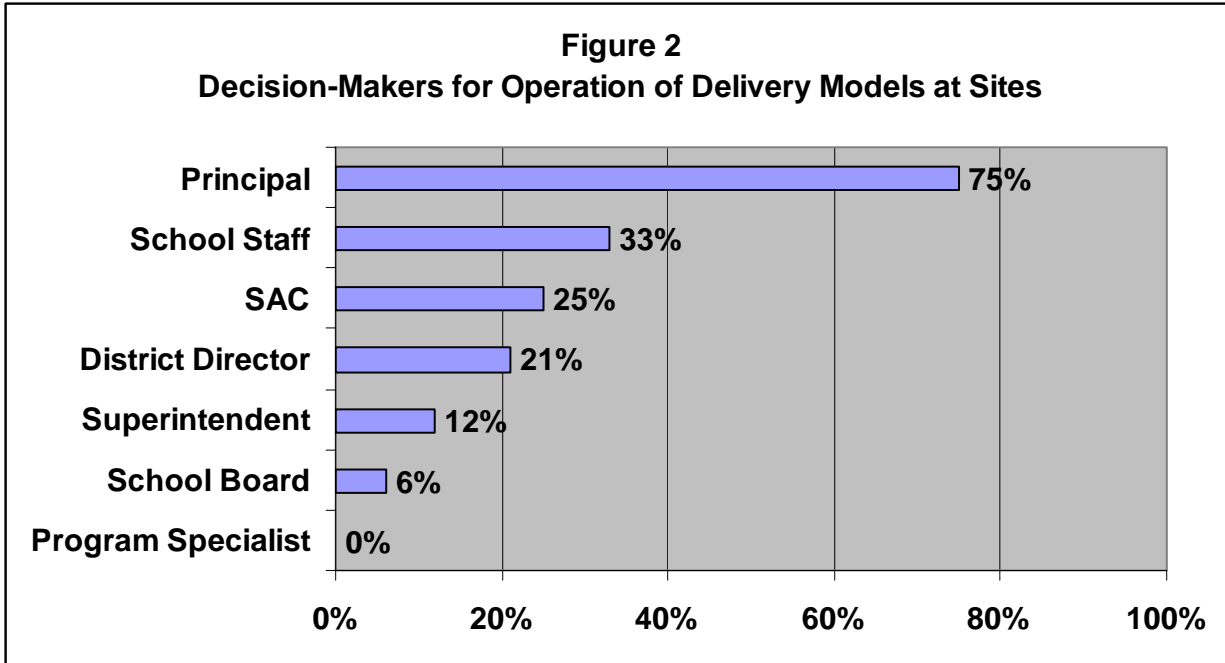
| <b>Table 4<br/>District Definitions and Policies</b>   |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| <b>Question</b>  | <b>Percent Yes</b> |
| Definitions match the terms your district uses for alternatives to out-of-school suspension programs | 96%                |
| District’s Code of Student conduct is guide that defines or sets parameters for operation            | 71%                |

For most districts (71%) the district’s Codes of Student Conduct define the offense levels and set parameters of consequences for behaviors. They also may specify the operational parameters for alternative programs used in lieu of OSS. Some districts may have additional operational guides, program descriptions with specific criteria for entry and exit, or other documents that provide additional guidance to district and school staff.

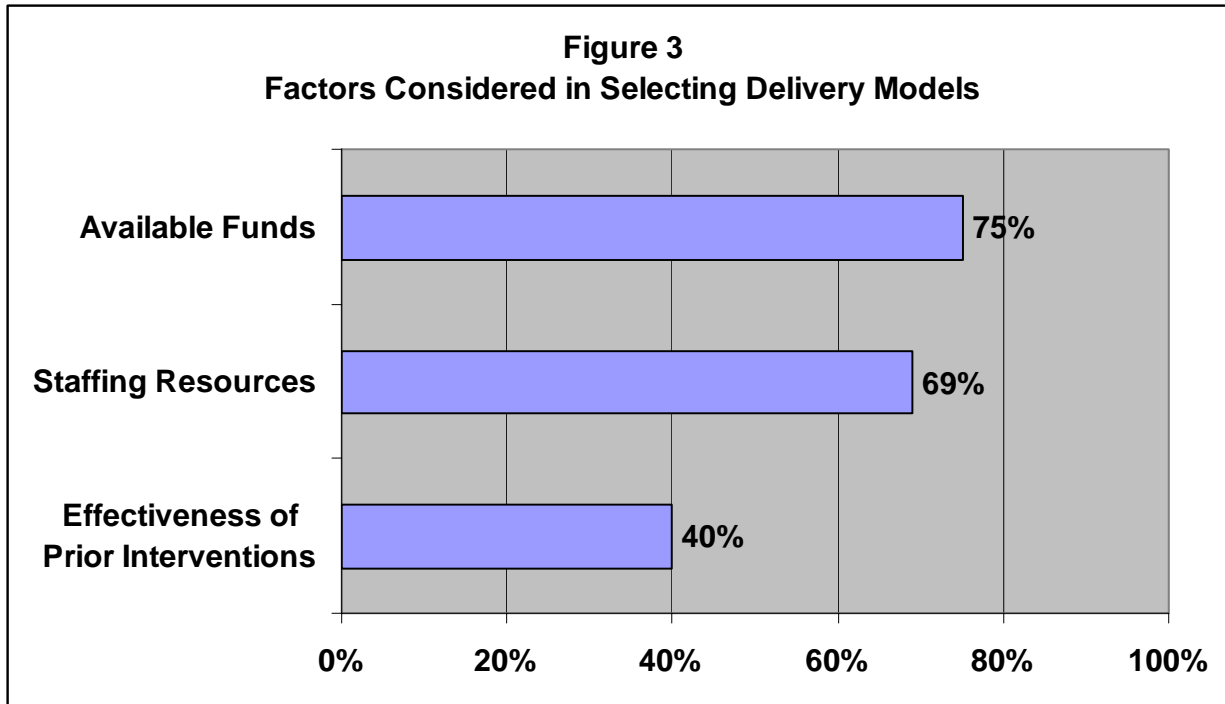
As displayed in Figure 1, generally, decisions about which program delivery model or models operate at a particular school or site are made at the building level by site principals and/or assistant principals (APs), school staff, and School Advisory Councils (SACs). District staff, superintendents, and school boards tend to be less involved in these decisions, although they set the overall parameters for operations through approval of the district’s Code of Student Conduct and fiscal approval of various program delivery models. For example, a district may approve the implementation of dropout prevention programs in schools, but individual schools decide what type of program to conduct, choosing among such alternatives as an afterschool program or a pull-out counseling program.

Principals or assistant principals, school staff, and the SACs usually make decisions concerning the operations of programs serving as alternatives to OSS (Figure 2). In most schools the principals and APs have the final say in how and what consequences are used at a school site, with APs for discipline making these decisions in larger middle and high schools. The application of consequences that determine entry into alternative programs are most often a function of the severity and frequency of the offense.



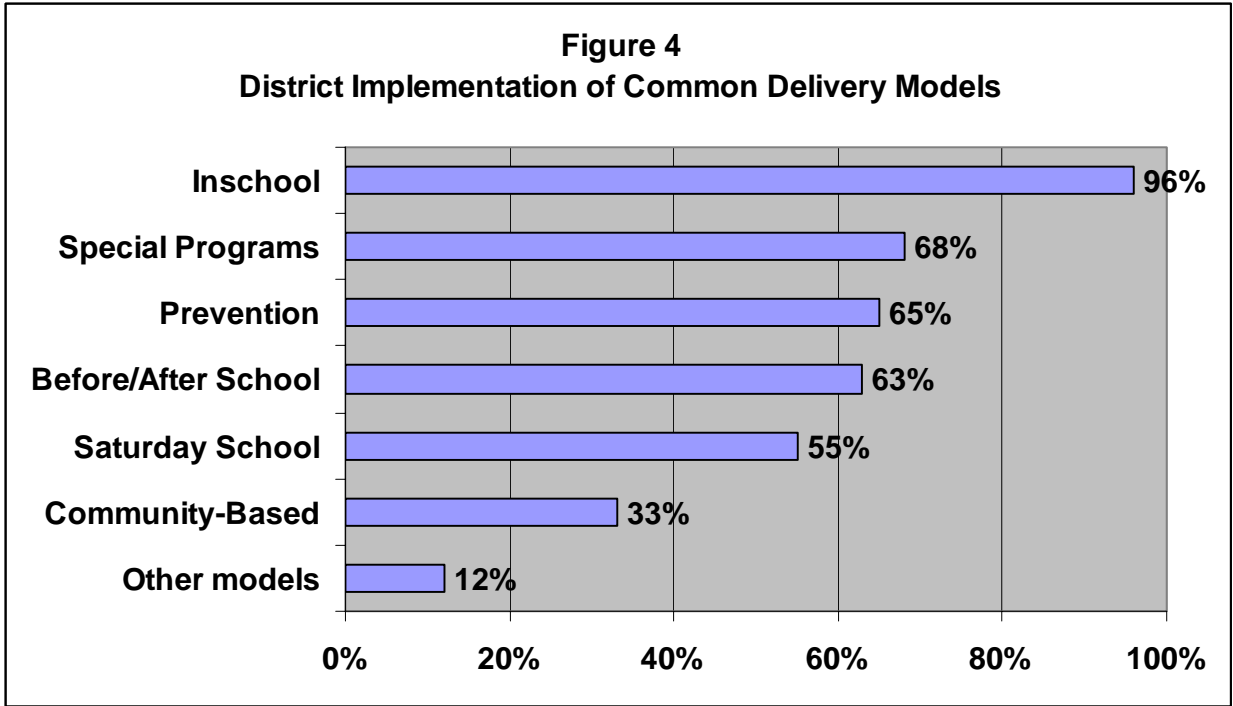


As displayed in Figure 3, the factors that were most frequently considered in deciding which program delivery models and program components will be used as alternatives to OSS are available funds (75%) and staffing resources (69%). Although 40% of the responding districts indicated that the effectiveness of prior interventions with individual or groups of students was a factor in deciding what delivery models to use. Site visits documented very little data collection or systematic review of the effectiveness of prior interventions that might be used to inform future decisions concerning selections among possible delivery models.



Overall, these district factors varied with the size of the district. Larger districts had more detailed policies in place at the district level that set parameters for the operation of various school-based programs. For example, Orange County has developed a detailed program manual for use in the school-based programs, and Pinellas County has compiled an extensive set of descriptions of programs in operation in the district. In small districts, most of the decisions about the operations of programs and consequences are made at the school level by a combination of the principal, AP, and selected staff with overall approval by the SACs.

Figure 4 presents the percent of responding districts that indicated they were using various common delivery models. Almost all districts (96%) are implementing some form of in-school suspension programs. Most districts were also using special programs or special schools (68%), prevention programs (65%), programs operating before or after school (63%), and Saturday school programs (55%). Only 33% of the districts indicated that they used community-based programs, and 12% identified a range of other program models that were in place in the district, often as a result of strong support from specific interest groups or decision-makers.



An analysis was also conducted to examine the relationship between ISS and OSS rates in Florida’s school districts as well as the correlation of these rates with the size of the districts as represented by student population. As displayed in Table 5, there was a strong positive correlation at the elementary level between the percent of students placed in ISS programs and the percent placed in OSS programs. This relationship, however, was not reflected at the middle and high school levels. Possible explanations may be that elementary schools with more difficult populations use both ISS and OSS as methods for disciplining students, while middle and high schools may use more of one method than another. At the elementary level, there was a weak but significant relationship between the percent of students placed in ISS and the size of the district in student population. As the size of the district increases, the use of ISS decreases at the elementary level. Similar weak, negative correlations were noted for middle and high schools, and for all three levels with OSS, although none of the correlations were statistically significant. One conclusion may be that larger districts tend to place fewer students (proportionately) in ISS at the elementary school level.

| School Level | Correlation of OSS with ISS | Correlation of OSS with District Population | Correlation of ISS with District Population |
|--------------|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Elementary   | .647**                      | -.118                                       | -.248*                                      |
| Middle       | .057                        | -.127                                       | -.123                                       |
| High         | .016                        | -.093                                       | -.100                                       |

\* Correlation is significant at the  $p < .05$  level

\*\*Correlation is significant at the  $p < .01$  level

Table 6 presents the ten districts with the lowest and highest ISS and OSS rates by school level. Eleven of the districts were consistently low or high for all three levels of schools, although overall there was little consistency across school level in the districts identified as high or low. Three districts had consistently low ISS rates: Calhoun, Dixie, and Sarasota. Two districts had consistently high ISS rates: Bradford and Taylor. Three districts had consistently low OSS rates: Broward, Collier, and Santa Rosa. Three districts had consistently high OSS rates: Gadsden, Hamilton, and Jefferson. It was noted that only three large districts had ISS or OSS rates at the extremes (either very low or very high) for any levels: Broward, Duval, and Seminole. Most large district rates were in the middles of the distributions.

The specific types of alternative programs to OSS are described in the following sections. Prevention programs analyzed in the next section generally are targeted towards groups of students that schools anticipate may have future problems leading to out-of-school suspension. The remainder of the program models reviewed usually target students who have already committed offenses for which out-of-school suspension may be applied as a consequence and are considered diversion programs.



| <b>Table 6</b><br><b>Districts with the Lowest and Highest ISS and OSS rates by School Level</b> |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
|  | <b>Lowest ISS</b>  | <b>Highest ISS</b>   | <b>Lowest OSS</b>  | <b>Highest OSS</b>   |
| <b>Elementary</b>  | <b>Calhoun</b><br><b>Dixie</b><br>Hardee<br>St. Johns<br>Union<br>Wakulla<br>Holmes<br><b>Sarasota</b><br>Manatee<br>Putnam    | <b>Bradford</b><br>Desoto<br>Sumter<br>Hamilton<br>Lafayette<br>Flagler<br>Madison<br>Levy<br>Jefferson<br><b>Taylor</b> | Wakulla<br>Holmes<br><b>Collier</b><br>Baker<br><b>Santa Rosa</b><br>Hardee<br><b>Broward</b><br>Charlotte<br>Walton<br>Seminole     | Union<br>Marion<br>Glades<br>Bradford<br>Lake<br>Putnam<br><b>Gadsden</b><br><b>Hamilton</b><br>Taylor<br><b>Jefferson</b>         |
| <b>Middle</b>  | Hardee<br><b>Calhoun</b><br><b>Dixie</b><br>Jefferson<br>Desoto<br><b>Sarasota</b><br>Baker<br>Hendry<br>Jackson<br>Okeechobee | Wakulla<br><b>Taylor</b><br>Highlands<br>Union<br>Madison<br>Hamilton<br>Levy<br><b>Bradford</b><br>Glades<br>Gulf       | <b>Collier</b><br>Holmes<br>Desoto<br><b>Santa Rosa</b><br>Charlotte<br>Lafayette<br>Walton<br>Liberty<br><b>Broward</b><br>Seminole | Bradford<br>Franklin<br>Escambia<br>Hendry<br>Taylor<br>Duval<br>Baker<br><b>Hamilton</b><br><b>Gadsden</b><br><b>Jefferson</b>    |
| <b>High</b>  | Martin<br><b>Dixie</b><br><b>Calhoun</b><br>Jefferson<br>Baker<br>Desoto<br>Lake<br><b>Sarasota</b><br>Alachua<br>Osceola      | Gadsden<br>Gulf<br><b>Bradford</b><br>Sumter<br><b>Taylor</b><br>Columbia<br>Flagler<br>Wakulla<br>Highlands<br>Glades   | <b>Collier</b><br>Liberty<br>Washington<br>Sarasota<br>Wakulla<br>Hardee<br><b>Broward</b><br><b>Santa Rosa</b><br>Lafayette<br>Leon | Calhoun<br>Osceola<br>Okeechobee<br>Hendry<br>St. Lucie<br>Baker<br>Duval<br><b>Gadsden</b><br><b>Hamilton</b><br><b>Jefferson</b> |

Note: districts marked in bold appeared on the list for all three levels of schools.

## **2. Prevention Programs**

All school districts operate a variety of programs designed to reduce academic failures that may also prevent students from dropping out of school. These programs are funded and regulated through state and federally funded Academic Improvement programs in which students receive individual Academic Improvement Plans and other academic interventions, and a large variety of other district or school-based interventions designed to increase academic achievement for the lowest performing students. The No Child Left Behind Act has specific requirements related to academic remediation for students not meeting reading standards. Additionally, federally subsidized Dropout Prevention programs may target all students in a school for a variety of programs that may generally lead to preventing disruptive behaviors, such as the Just Say No to Drugs program, anti-bullying, and character education programs. Through this study, districts were queried about specific programs designed to keep students from engaging in behavior that would result in disciplinary action such as ISS or OSS. Note that most of these programs operated not as a consequence of an immediate infraction that would cause the school to suspend a student, but rather as ways to keep students channeled into appropriate activities that would prevent future incidents warranting suspension.

As previously displayed in Figure 4, 65% of the districts interviewed reported using prevention programs in their districts as a direct method for reducing out-of-school suspensions and keeping students productively involved in their educational programs. Over half of the districts indicated that all schools in the district are implementing prevention programs, most commonly dropout prevention programs and drug addiction prevention programs such as the DARE program. The total number of students participating ranged from a single class to the entire student population of the district. Interviews with district staff and site visits to schools documented a variety of programs in use that are specifically targeted toward preventing disciplinary actions. Elementary and middle schools tended to use prevention programs with a specific academic curriculum such as computer-based systems that provide skill remediation. Students who are scoring at Levels 1 and/or 2 on FCAT may be scheduled into these programs that may also be used in combination with other components such as tutoring, mentoring, and counseling. In some schools, students are placed for the whole day in a separate “dropout prevention class” that may be given other, more positive names such as “Super Stars.” Other schools may assign students with potential problems to specific teachers as an inhouse “buddy” mentoring system.

Peer mediation programs such as the Teen Court program were identified as effective prevention programs, especially at the high school level, in which possible at-risk students are identified to participate in judging the infractions of other students. A range of conflict resolution programs may also be used at all three levels, including training students on ways in which to solve differences short of violence such as the Peace Builders program.

Another program that was widely used was the Developmental Guidance curriculum, and in some districts concerted efforts are made to train teachers in classroom management strategies when high rates of discipline referrals are noted in a particular class or school. Other prevention efforts include Student Intervention Support Teams and consistent training for and implementation of parent conferences. Statewide, character education programs such as Character Counts and Peace Builders are being used widely as well as consistent behavior and classroom management programs. DARE programs to reduce drug involvement of students are also frequently implemented district-wide. Some of these programs are implemented for entire districts through initiatives from superintendents or district staff, while others are initiated by principals or staff within individual schools without district-wide coordination or support. Some districts such as Palm Beach, have selected schools that have high proportions of at-risk students or fit a demographic profile that predicts lower student achievement and concentrate prevention programs in this subset of schools. More commonly, there appears to be little coordination in districts on what kinds of prevention programs schools should implement.

**Entry/Exit Criteria.** Thirteen of the districts reported that there were entry criteria for the prevention programs, and four reported no entry criteria. Most of the entry criteria were informal and school based. Example descriptions of the entry criteria and process were:

- ◆ Entry criteria based on academics, failed courses, behind in credits, and/or students performing at levels 1 & 2 on the FCAT.
- ◆ At the elementary schools, students are assigned in lieu of suspension, as determined by the AP.
- ◆ If the student is disruptive, he or she is referred to the school-based intervention team and then on to the particular programs operating within the schools.
- ◆ Entry is based on referrals from law enforcement, parents, and DJJ in addition to teacher referrals.
- ◆ The Child Study Team meets and looks at the student's academic and behavior record. Entry into the prevention program is determined at the meeting. They develop a plan to work with the child.
- ◆ The Guidance Counselor determines entry into the program, based on a referral by teachers or other staff. For ESE students, entry is based on behavior referrals to administration and review of teachers' anecdotal notes.

Exit criteria were even less explicit. Most districts did not know if there were exit criteria. When they existed, the exit criteria were almost always based on time: the number of days "served" or the specified length of the program (semester or year). Three examples were noted of other exit processes:

- ◆ Exit from the program is when the case is closed by the Child Study Team.
- ◆ Exit is based on a functional behavioral assessment.
- ◆ Students exit when they meet their academic, behavioral, and attendance goals.

**Program Intensity/Duration.** The intensity and duration of the prevention programs varied extensively. Several districts cited programs in which the time is very limited such as “2 hours per incident” or “30 minute conference one time in which the student is sent to the school counselor or School Resource Officer (SRO) or staff.” Other programs are designed as separate classes lasting a 9-week term on a “wheel” or a whole semester. These programs may be once a week or everyday, depending on the school structure. Some programs last all year long as a targeted counseling or peer mentoring program for a targeted set of students.

District staff found it difficult to estimate the number of students participating in prevention programs that were targeted toward reducing the number of students placed in out-of-school suspension programs. Responses ranged from about 100 to 178,800 with several districts indicating that all students participate to some degree in such programs as character education or DARE. Others indicated that all elementary schools participated, or that only targeted sets of students were involved in the prevention programs.

### 3. In-school Suspension Programs

The most commonly used alternative to OSS was inschool suspension programs, with virtually all of the responding districts (96%) reporting the use of this model in some schools. Note that the Department of Education provides funds for dropout prevention services that are used to support the inschool suspension programs and therefore are widely recognized throughout school districts. For clarification, three types of ISS programs were cited in the definitions provided to school districts during the interviews with district staff:

- **In School Suspension** – alternative classroom or supervision, often including academic instruction
- **Work Detail** – students work under the supervision of a counselor or assigned teacher/paraprofessional [during the school day]
- **Special Class** – students attend a separate class designed for students who were or would have been suspended

Typically, students who have committed infractions for which out-of-school suspension can be the consequence are given an option of participating in an inschool program. Inschool suspension programs vary extensively but have the common factor of providing services to the student during the school day within the school building. Examples of frequently used arrangements for ISS are:

- ◆ A separate classroom to which students are assigned for the whole day in which students complete classroom assignments for credit.
- ◆ Assignment to a different teacher within the same “pod” or grade level.
- ◆ A short-term, one-hour assignment during a “specials” time period such as physical education to an ISS class with a guidance counselor, AP, or other assigned staff providing supervision and sometimes informal counseling.
- ◆ A 9-week or semester assignment to an ISS class one hour a day.

The most commonly described model for an ISS program was operation as a time out/study hall setting in which students are placed in a separate classroom, given their regular classroom work by the classroom teacher, and told to sit quietly and complete their seat work. These ISS programs usually are proctored by a paraprofessional who maintains discipline but does not assist students in completing their academic assignments. In some settings, paraprofessionals are prohibited by the bargaining unit's contract from providing any academic assistance.

Staffing for ISS programs vary greatly, ranging from a teacher unit assigned full time to the program to staffing by a part-time paraprofessional. Infrequently, districts responded that a guidance counselor is available for the ISS program to intervene with particularly troublesome students.

Very few districts provided any behavioral curriculum within ISS through which the students' referring behaviors were addressed in any formal manner. Examples of districts that did provide such curricula were Broward, Hillsborough, Hernando, Highlands, and Orange. Some of the curricula were developed by a publisher and disseminated through the ISS coordinators or instructors, and others were developed inhouse as a composite of teacher-made exercises and activities.

**Entry/Exit Criteria.** Students entering ISS programs usually are assigned a certain number of hours or days depending upon the "crime." The entry criteria typically used is the Code of Student Conduct, although within a district the application of the code may be determined at the school level and vary considerably across schools within the district. The exit criteria typically are dependent upon serving the sentenced hours/days, complying with the behavior requirements and other rules, and completing their assigned academic work. Examples of responses to queries on entry/exit criteria for ISS included:

- ◆ The Code of Conduct outlines what is in school versus out of school.
- ◆ In the Code of Conduct it is a Level 1 or higher. The exit criterion is to serve the amount of time assigned.
- ◆ Level 1 & 2 offense.
- ◆ We use a behavior model based on number of referrals that is determined by the school.
- ◆ Entry: administrator or teacher referrals, based on discipline, type of offense, uses CERCES classification. Exit: time served, skill acquisition.
- ◆ Have a discipline grid that states infractions. Have a protocol of so many points to get out, not just serving days.
- ◆ We look at each child case-by-case and have a range of options for kids. We use an escalating system of consequences so there are no special entry criteria. Exit is determined by the number of days assigned.
- ◆ Some schools have specific criteria after a certain number of referrals/warnings. In general it is after the 5<sup>th</sup> referral, and students may be sent to ISS, Saturday, or community based alternatives.
- ◆ Ladder - progression discipline - time assigned for exit.
- ◆ Minor offense.

**Program Intensity/Duration.** The intensity and duration of the ISS programs varies extensively. In elementary schools, these programs almost always ranged in duration from one hour to a couple of days, while in middle and high schools the duration typically was longer and ranged from 5-10 days. In some schools students are sent to ISS for a specific period of the day (during the subject/class in which the latest offense had occurred). More commonly, students are sent for the entire day for several days running. Some rare examples were noted of ISS programs that operate all day or everyday for an extended time period. For example, several programs are designed to last all year long as a targeted counseling or peer mentoring program for a targeted set of students. Other programs are designed as separate classes lasting a 9-week term on a “wheel” or a whole semester. Students may be assigned to these programs for once a week or everyday, depending on the school structure.

District staff found it easier to estimate the number of sites operating ISS programs and the number of students participating in these programs that were targeted toward reducing the number of students placed in out-of-school suspension programs. Over one-third of the districts responded that all secondary schools operate ISS programs with six of these districts indicating that all schools use ISS programs as an alternative to OSS. Student participation estimates ranged from 120 students to 17,000. Some districts indicated that approximately 20% of all students participate to some degree in ISS programs over the course of a school year. Others could document participation in number of days served without knowing the number of different students participating.

District staff were asked to estimate the length of assignment of students to ISS programs. As displayed in Table 7, the minimum assignment ranged from 15 minutes to 5 days, with 72% of the districts indicating that the minimum assignment was 1-2 days. The range on the maximum time students spent in ISS programs was from one classroom period to 10 days, with 59% of the responding districts estimating that the maximum assignment was 3-5 days.

| <b>Length</b>             | <b>Partial day</b> | <b>1-2 days</b> | <b>3-5 days</b> | <b>6+ days</b> | <b>Lowest</b>      | <b>Highest</b> |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Minimum Assignment (n=39) | 21%                | 72%             | 8%              |                | 15 min             | 5 days         |
| Maximum Assignment (n=41) | 2%                 | 17%             | 59%             | 22%            | 1 classroom period | 10 days        |

### **Advantages/Disadvantages.**

Primary advantages of ISS programs as alternatives to OSS are:

- ◆ students in some of the ISS programs continue to learn through the academic work completed,
- ◆ students are counted as present in school and therefore do not automatically fail the grading period or semester,
- ◆ students continue to earn credits toward promotion and graduation, and
- ◆ teachers are relieved of handling the discipline and behavior issues within the regular classroom.

Disadvantages of some of the ISS programs approach include:

- ◆ the students' loss of instruction on the subjects/topics taught during the time they spend in ISS,
- ◆ students are stigmatized by removal from class,
- ◆ the lack of a certified instructor in some ISS classes decreases the academic benefits of maintaining the students within the school structure, and
- ◆ the programs fail to address the underlying behavioral causes of the misbehavior increases the likelihood that these students will act out again and repeat the process.

Another issue in operation of the ISS programs is the coordination of academic assignments between the regular classroom teacher and the teacher or paraprofessional supervising the ISS class. In some settings, students arrive in ISS without classroom assignments, or assignments given by the ISS teacher may be inappropriate or duplicative of previous work the student has completed. Little time is available for coordination, especially in large schools in which an elementary ISS classroom may have 18 or more students, each with a different classroom teacher, or in middle and high school classes where each student has up to seven different classroom teachers for any given day.

### **4. Before/After School Programs**

Another alternative to out of school suspension is to place students into programs that operate prior to or after school. Many schools already have before and after school programs with a range of recreational and academic activities for students. Typically these programs also offer breakfast in the morning and a snack in the afternoon that increase the nutrition levels of participating students. Schools may have an associated before/after school disciplinary class or student assignment that operates in conjunction with these other non-punitive programs or may make such assignments independently of and in the absence of any non-punitive before/after school program.

Of the responding school districts on the telephone interviews, 63% identified before/after school programs as an option being used in their schools. For schools that have existing before/after non-punitive school programs, students who qualify for OSS may be given the option of attending a special class within the school’s before/after school program. All schools may require misbehaving students to come early or stay late and assign the student to a teacher to monitor, often the teacher in whose class the student infraction occurred. This very common model in both middle and high schools is often referred to as “detention,” and may also occur during lunch time. Detention may also be assigned for the afternoon portion of early release days.

Activities assigned during before/after school programs may include working silently on classroom work or homework, or on assignments provided by the monitoring teachers who may or may not be the teacher for the class in which the infraction(s) occurred. Assignments may also include cleanup duties around the school. Before school and lunch time detention may include cafeteria clean-up duties, while after school assignments more typically include cleaning the grounds or classroom cleanup activities. Behavioral interventions are rarely incorporated into before/after school programs, other than the punishment of staying after school to do school work. Usually these before/after school programs are informally operated and dependent on the supervising teacher or paraprofessional for structure. Student transportation is often a factor in determining if detention is assigned after school. If the school does not have an after school activities bus, the alternative usually is not used because of the responsibility of the school district to provide transportation for the student.

**Entry/Exit Criteria.** Almost all of the responding districts reported that the criteria for entry into the before/after school programs was based on the type of infraction committed by the students and determined through the Code of Student Conduct for the district. Usually the criteria are applied by the principal or an administrator for discipline, and may vary considerably across schools within a district. Exiting is almost always determined by serving a set number of days, as in a sentence.

**Program Intensity/Duration.** These programs, by definition, tend to last for 1-2 hours at the beginning or end of the day. As displayed in Table 8, 83% of the districts reported that before/after school programs typically lasted a minimum of one day or less with the shortest amount of time reported as 15 minutes. Students most typically are assigned for 2-5 days as a maximum duration for the assignment. The longest reported assignments were 10 days in approximately 11% of the responding districts.

| <b>Length</b> | <b>1 day<br/>or less</b> | <b>2-5<br/>days</b> | <b>6+<br/>days</b> | <b>Lowest</b> | <b>Highest</b> |
|---------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Minimum       | 83%                      | 17%                 |                    | 15 min        | 5 days         |
| Maximum       | 17%                      | 72%                 | 11%                | 1 day         | 10 days        |



### **Advantages/Disadvantages.**

Primary advantages of before/after school programs as alternatives to OSS are:

- ◆ students in before/after school detention programs continue to learn by participating in regular classwork during the school day; thus, they are counted as present in school and therefore do not automatically fail the grading period or semester, and they continue to earn credits toward promotion and graduation, and
- ◆ students receive extra time to work on homework assignments, resulting in a greater opportunity to succeed academically and avoid failing grades resulting from missed homework assignments.

Disadvantages of some of the before/after school programs approach include:

- ◆ additional staffing needs to be available after student hours to provide the supervision for the programs,
- ◆ lack of transportation for students may limit the use of these programs in some schools, and
- ◆ the programs fail to address the underlying behavioral causes of the misbehavior increases the likelihood that these students will act out again and repeat the process.

## **5. Saturday School Programs**

Another commonly employed alternative to OSS is the Saturday School program in which the school provides classes on Saturday during which time students can make up their academic work. As previously displayed in Figure 4, 55% of the responding districts reported using Saturday School programs in at least some of their schools as a diversion from out-of-school suspension. This program model is employed most often at the high school level. Students typically are assigned to one or two morning sessions that last from 8:00 AM until noon. Assignments vary considerably from silent seat work or homework to structured academic assignments or projects generated by the instructor. Rarely, students in some schools work in a computer laboratory on a computer-based academic skills program. Campus clean-up or other restitution-type activities are usually part of the model. Saturday School is typically staffed by a school administrator whose salary may be supplemented with an hourly pay rate or through an annual supplement. Note that many schools offer an academic Saturday School that is not based on discipline referrals but operates as additional preparation time for FCAT-tested skills. For these schools, assigning students to be on campus for disciplinary actions does not increase the costs or staffing for the alternative.

**Entry/Exit Criteria.** District staff were less clear on the entry and exit criteria for Saturday School programs. Assignment appears to be controlled at the school level based on minor infractions, and exit is based on serving the number of assigned days in Saturday School.

**Program Intensity/Duration.** Almost all of the reported Saturday School programs had a duration of 1-4 hours with 94% listing a minimum of a day or less and 78% with a maximum of a day or less (Table 9). The shortest assignment was one hour and the longest reported was a total of 10 days.

| <b>Table 9</b>  |                          |                     |                    |               |                |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------|----------------|
| <b>Saturday School Program Estimated Length of Assignment</b> |                          |                     |                    |               |                |
| <b>(n=18)</b>   |                          |                     |                    |               |                |
| <b>Length</b>   | <b>1 day<br/>or less</b> | <b>2-5<br/>days</b> | <b>6+<br/>days</b> | <b>Lowest</b> | <b>Highest</b> |
| Minimum   | 94%                      |                     | 6%                 | 1 hour        | 6 hours        |
| Maximum   | 78%                      | 11%                 | 11%                | 2 hours       | 10 days        |

**Advantages/Disadvantages.** Primary advantages of Saturday School programs as alternatives to OSS are:

- ◆ students in Saturday School detention programs continue to learn by participating in regular classwork during the school day; thus, they are counted as present in school and therefore do not automatically fail the grading period or semester, and they continue to earn credits toward promotion and graduation, and
- ◆ students receive extra time to work on homework assignments during Saturday School, resulting in a greater opportunity to succeed academically and avoid failing grades resulting from missed homework assignments.

Disadvantages of the Saturday School programs include:

- ◆ additional staffing needs to be available on Saturday to provide the supervision for the programs, although in some schools the administrators are already present to supervise the academic Saturday School program,
- ◆ lack of transportation for students may limit the use of these programs in some schools, and
- ◆ the programs fail to address the underlying behavioral causes of the misbehavior increases the likelihood that these students will act out again and repeat the process.

## **6. Alternative Schools/Off-Site Locations**

Another commonly employed model for keeping students in school instead of giving them OSS is to place students in an alternative school or an “inschool” suspension that is served at a different school location from the school in which the student is enrolled. Most districts have at least one alternative school site, with 68% of the districts in the telephone interviews indicating they use alternative schools or off-school locations as an optional alternative to OSS (see Figure 4, previously displayed). Districts operating alternative schools may offer these as alternative placements for students displaying serious behavior problems or for chronic minor offenses. Placements typically are longer than ISS or before/after school programs and tend to range from a grading period to a semester.

The level of services provided in the alternative school programs varied considerably across districts. In most of the programs, students earn credit for work completed while attending the alternative school or off-school location, and academic work is usually the most emphasized component of the programs. Some alternative school programs include using student contracts for behavior change and/or academic accomplishments. Other components may include some form of counseling or behavioral change curriculum, and parental involvement. Parent involvement is typical as placement in the alternative site requires parent agreement and may require the parent to provide transportation.

Districts employing alternative schools or schools at off-school locations for these programs, typically have established a feeder school pattern to serve all of the schools in the district. One-third of the districts who indicated they use alternative programs responded that the programs were limited to middle and high schools where most of the more serious offenses occur. Reported number of students served each year ranged from 15 in a small district to 8,000 in a large district. These programs may also serve other types of students, such as:

- ◆ students who have been expelled and are not allowed on regular campuses but want to continue their education,
- ◆ students who have dropped out of school and are returning to work on a GED,
- ◆ students who are seeking an alternative curriculum, and
- ◆ students who are failing academically and may learn better in an alternative setting.

Specialized curricula and behavioral programs were more frequently cited for the alternative schools and off-site programs than in other types of alternative programs for OSS. Examples were computer assisted instructional programs in which students’ academic performance levels were assessed and students learned on computers at their own pace, and behavioral programs that helped students understand the causes and consequences of inappropriate actions and behaviors.

Some of these alternative schools are operated under contract to private non-profit organizations, church affiliated programs, and for-profit organizations. Others may be conducted as charter schools within the school system or under other provisions that allow more flexibility in the academic and behavioral programming provided to students.

**Entry/Exit Criteria.** District staff were more certain about the entry criteria for the alternative schools. Entry included Level 3 and 4 offenses, drug abuse offenses, and serious or continuous violent behavior. Example descriptions of the entry criteria were:

- ◆ Level 3 or 4 offense. Not necessarily an expulsion. Most are there for multiple offenses.
- ◆ Either charges pending or expulsion.
- ◆ Expulsion for violent offense or continuous disruptive behavior.
- ◆ Expelled, chronically disruptive.
- ◆ Entry based on referral from the sending school and intake interviews with parents and students.
- ◆ ESE students are assigned for 30 - 45 days or completion of the level program. Regular education student: a year to a year and a half. Yes, working through the exit system - this needs to be better defined though - not for ESE this is more clearly defined. The ESE noticed that the kids were not moving through the levels - put someone in place to get them to get through.
- ◆ Students with gross violations or a history of disruptive behavior or zero tolerance situation - possession of substance or weapon - disciplinary program.
- ◆ Students enter from the school board and are staffed in for 45 days. An application process looks at the offense that occurred and the child's history. After 45 days the school board decides if it will place the student some place permanently. Other students can apply to come on voluntary basis. Some attend for academic reasons. The program is also used as an OSS from other school for infractions that are not zero tolerance. The students spend their amount of time of OSS in the alternative school.
- ◆ Entry is based on habitual probation, judicial intervention, and serious infractions.
- ◆ We have seven entry criteria.

Most exit criteria reflected a combination of days served and performing academically with no further behavioral incidents. Some alternative schools tie exiting to the behavioral contracts students have signed. Others have point or level systems and totals that students must meet to exit. Examples of descriptions of exit criteria included:

- ◆ Serving time - along with other program completion criteria but the time served is most important.
- ◆ We have a portfolio-based level program. 12-18 weeks of behavior to be considered and academically producing.
- ◆ You have to work through the levels or through the 180 days until expulsion is complete.
- ◆ Exit criteria are based on performance - for 6<sup>th</sup> grade, students must attend 45 days, and for grades 7-12 placements are for 90 days, but you can earn your way out. They can stay longer but they tend not to repeat the offense when they return to their regular school.
- ◆ Exit criteria: be able to sustain good conduct in program - not receive any referrals for the last nine weeks - maintain passing grades - 90-95% attendance.
- ◆ Exit criteria: have to have "C" grades in all courses - improved behavior with minimal referrals - have to reach a certain level in the behavior system.
- ◆ Exit criteria - earn points - amount of time and behavior.
- ◆ To exit they have 90 good days on level system of four levels they must complete.

**Program Intensity/Duration.** Placement into alternative schools usually is for longer periods of time than for the other alternatives to OSS previously discussed, and almost always is for the entire school day. Three-fourths of the districts using alternative schools indicated that the minimum placement time is over 11 days, with the lowest reported amount being 4 hours and the highest minimum placement of one year or 180 days (Table 10). More than half of the district staff reported a maximum placement time of more than 45 days with the highest amount at two years. Many of the students never return to a regular school, either dropping out of school entirely or obtaining a GED. The referring regular schools often refuse to take the students back onto their campuses.

| <b>Length</b> | <b>½-10<br/>days</b> | <b>11-45<br/>days</b> | <b>46-90<br/>days</b> | <b>90+<br/>days</b> | <b>Lowest</b> | <b>Highest</b> |
|---------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Minimum       | 24%                  | 36%                   | 20%                   | 20%                 | 4 hours       | 180<br>days    |
| Maximum       | 20%                  | 32%                   | 16%                   | 32%                 | 8 hours       | 2 years        |

**Advantages/Disadvantages.** Primary advantages of alternative school programs as alternatives to OSS are:

- ◆ Students receive an academic program that may be tailored to their performance levels and increase the likelihood that they will graduate with a high school diploma.
- ◆ While in the alternative school placement, students continue to earn credits toward promotion and graduation.
- ◆ Some programs provide staffing with smaller classes and more individualized instruction.
- ◆ Students are more apt to receive some instruction or assistance in changing adverse behavioral patterns that are disruptive to their academic learning and overall adjustment to society.
- ◆ Teachers and administrators at the referring schools appreciate the removal of disruptive students and the increased time they have to teach more cooperative students.

Disadvantages of the alternative school and off-site programs include:

- ◆ Separating students from their zoned schools stigmatizes the students and decreases the likelihood that the students will continue with their education to graduation.
- ◆ Locating appropriate facilities for these programs is an issue in some districts, especially those experiencing student population increases.
- ◆ Attracting and keeping trained and competent faculty to teach this difficult population may be an issue in some districts.
- ◆ Failure to provide trained and competent faculty in alternative schools and off-site locations results in an inferior education for students who have demonstrated needs for very skillful instruction.
- ◆ Transportation to the alternative schools and off-site locations limits participation or becomes an additional cost item for the district.
- ◆ Some programs emphasize only the academic performance of students and fail to address the underlying behavioral causes of the misbehavior, thereby increasing the likelihood that these students will act out again and repeat the process.

## **7. Community-Based Programs**

As previously presented in Figure 4, only 33% of the school districts reported using community-based programs as alternatives to OSS. These are programs operated by community groups such as the YMCA, and may be used in a wide variety of configurations and arrangements with public schools. Examples identified through the study included these community-based programs:

- ◆ The school district partners with the YMCA for an after school program through a no-cost agreement in which the district provides transportation to the YMCA facility and students complete academic assignments after school.
- ◆ The school district contracts with Boys and Girls Clubs to provide after school programs that target students with disruptive behavior.
- ◆ Several districts in the Panhandle and in Central Florida contract with private for-profit organizations to staff and operate alternative schools.
- ◆ School districts contract with local community mental health providers for counseling component in some programs.
- ◆ In Central Florida a school district contracts with a private for-profit organization for student alternative placements in schools serving adjudicated youth in the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice.
- ◆ A school district participates in a grant from the Department of Juvenile Justice to the Jewish Foundation to conduct a program within two elementary schools targeting repeat offenders that provides a strong counseling component.
- ◆ Several school districts have approved charter schools operated by local church groups that serve as alternative schools for youth who may be suspended or expelled from school.

These programs were more commonly noted in medium and large districts with small districts reporting that they have very limited options or available community organizations in their communities. The number of students reported participating in community-based programs ranged from 15 in one district to over 1,600 a year in a large district. The structure and operation of the programs varied widely including:

- ◆ after school programs that students attended daily for an hour or more,
- ◆ pull-out programs within schools for targeted sets of at-risk students,
- ◆ alternative schools for students attending full time for a semester or year, and
- ◆ schools within schools for failing and disruptive students operated under charter to school districts but within the public school structure and facility.

**Entry/Exit Criteria.** Entry and exit criteria depended on the structure of the program and the targeted student population. Nine of the programs had established entry and exit criteria, although the exit criteria were primarily serving the suspension time. Some programs were voluntary in which any student who was assigned to an out of school suspension could participate in lieu of time being suspended and receive credit while they were in the community-based programs.

**Program Intensity/Duration.** The duration and intensity of the programs varied widely, depending on the structure of the program and the targeted student population. Reported ranges were from one day to an entire year.

**Advantages/Disadvantages.** These programs are too diverse to categorize easily the advantages and disadvantages. Some potential advantages that may be common to all of them, however, stem from the commitment of many community groups to reaching and helping students through strategies not typically used in public schools including the strong beliefs of the staff in faith-based organizations and reality-based therapy programs that are a hallmark of some DJJ programs. Potential disadvantages may result from the lack of oversight and possible liability when students are placed away from public school facilities, and the possible reduction in the quality of the instructional programs delivered to the students.

## **8. Use of Program Components**

Many different components may be implemented within any of the types of programs previously discussed. These components typically are focused on increasing the academic successes of the students, decreasing inappropriate or destructive behaviors, and increasing personal responsibility for actions, all of which are expected to help the student avoid future repeat offenses. The phone survey conducted of district staff responsible for alternative programs to OSS included an assessment of the extent to which these program components were part of any of the alternative programs operated by the district:

- a. Individualized student improvement plans or contracts
- b. Specific Academic Curriculum
- c. Tutoring
- d. Behavioral Curriculum
- e. Reward System
- f. Service Learning
- g. Job Shadowing/Internships
- h. Mentoring younger students
- i. Volunteering
- j. Community clean-up projects
- k. Parent involvement
- l. Individualized or group counseling
- m. Restorative Justice model
- n. Work detail
- o. Conflict mediation class
- p. Field trips to the jail, court room, juvenile detention, Second Chance school
- q. Anti-bullying/Character education class

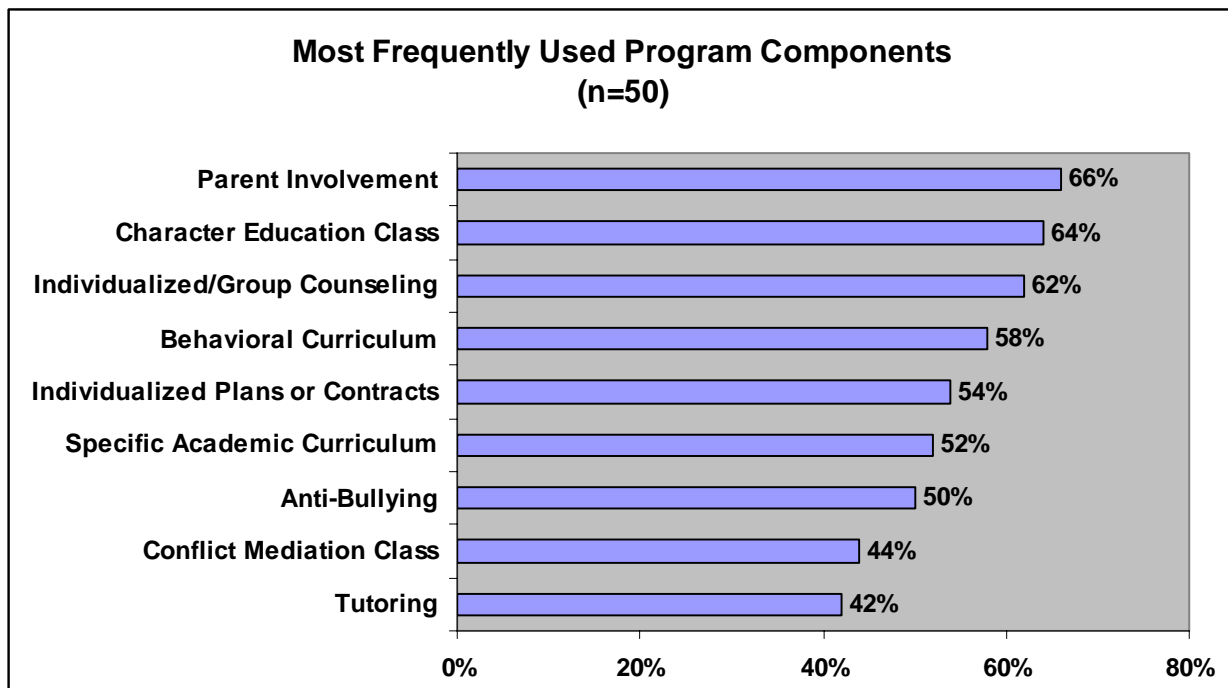
The following charts and graphs display the extent to which these components are reported by districts to be included in any of their alternative programs to OSS, and provide a breakdown by specific programs. The basis for these data are the 50 interviews with district staff; therefore, the unit of analysis is at the district level. Interpretations can be viewed from the perspective of the frequency with which these components are used by Florida school districts. Note, however, that for some programs, district staff may be unaware of the use of some components when schools have direct operational control.



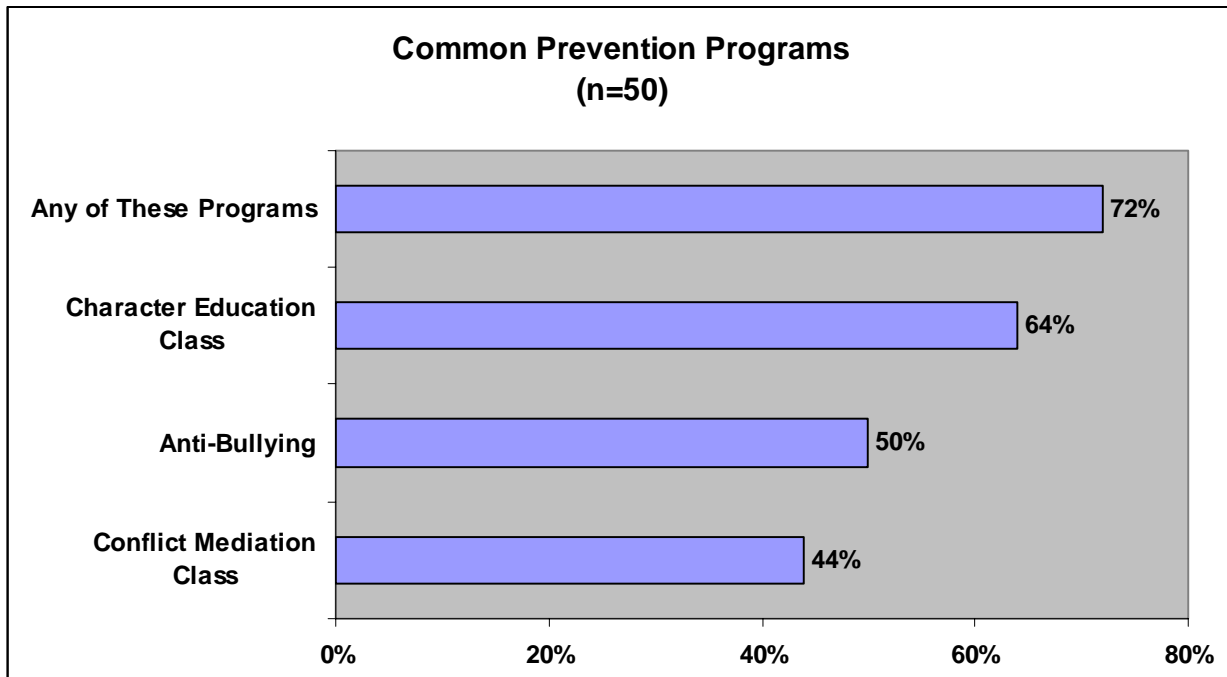
**Overall Use of Components.** As displayed in Figure 5, the most frequently used components are parent involvement, character education classes, and individual or group counseling. Two-thirds (66%) of district staff reported the use of parent involvement in at least one of the six major types of alternative programs, 64% of Florida districts identified Character Education classes as a strategy, and 62% listed individual or group counseling as a component. More notably, however, is the lack of these components in one-third or more of the alternative programs operated by districts. That is, over a third of Florida school districts do not involve parents in working with their children who are at immediate or longer-range risk of being suspended, do not provide character education programs to assist students in clarifying their responsibilities within the school community and larger society, and do not ensure that students who have committed offenses leading to suspension receive counseling to help prevent recurrence and resolve the underlying causes of disruptive behavior.

Over half of the districts reported using some type of behavioral curriculum, individualized plans or contracts, or a specific academic curriculum within their alternative programs (58%, 54%, and 52%, respectively). Half or less of the districts are using the program components of anti-bullying, conflict mediation classes, or tutoring (50%, 44%, 42%). Note that some districts may use either character education, conflict mediation classes, or anti-bullying programs as school or district-wide prevention programs without using the other components. When analyzed jointly, over 70% of the Florida school districts report using at least one of these prevention components within their schools (Figure 6).

**Figure 5**

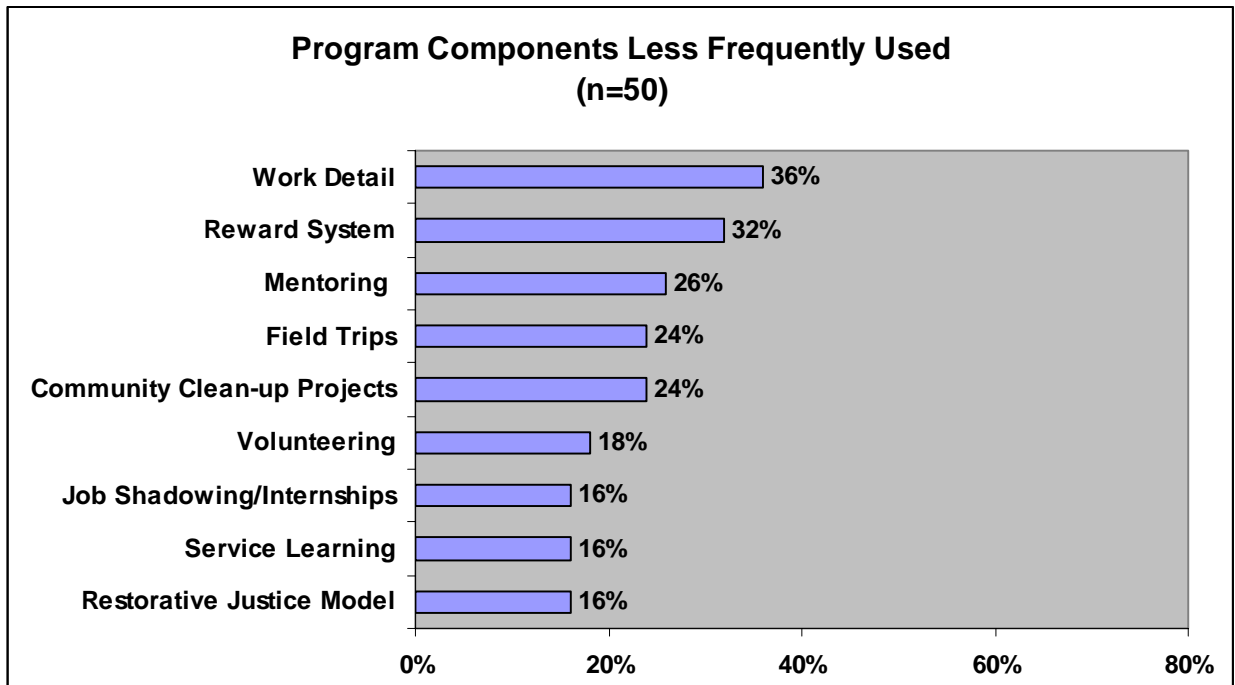


**Figure 6**



As displayed in Figure 7, approximately one-third or less of the Florida school districts employ strategies in alternative programs that include assignments of students to work detail (36%) or using a reward system to encourage appropriate behaviors (32%). Also infrequently used were the components of mentoring (26%), field trips (24%), or community clean-up projects (24%). The least commonly used program components, with less than 20% of school districts reporting use in any of their alternative programs, were volunteering, job shadowing or internships, Service Learning, or the Restorative Justice Model. Note that these strategies may be employed in some programs targeted at students with risk factors (low academic achievement, high poverty, poor attendance, and limited family support systems) who have not yet committed offenses, but be considered by districts to involve too much liability for use after a student has demonstrated violent or disruptive behavior.

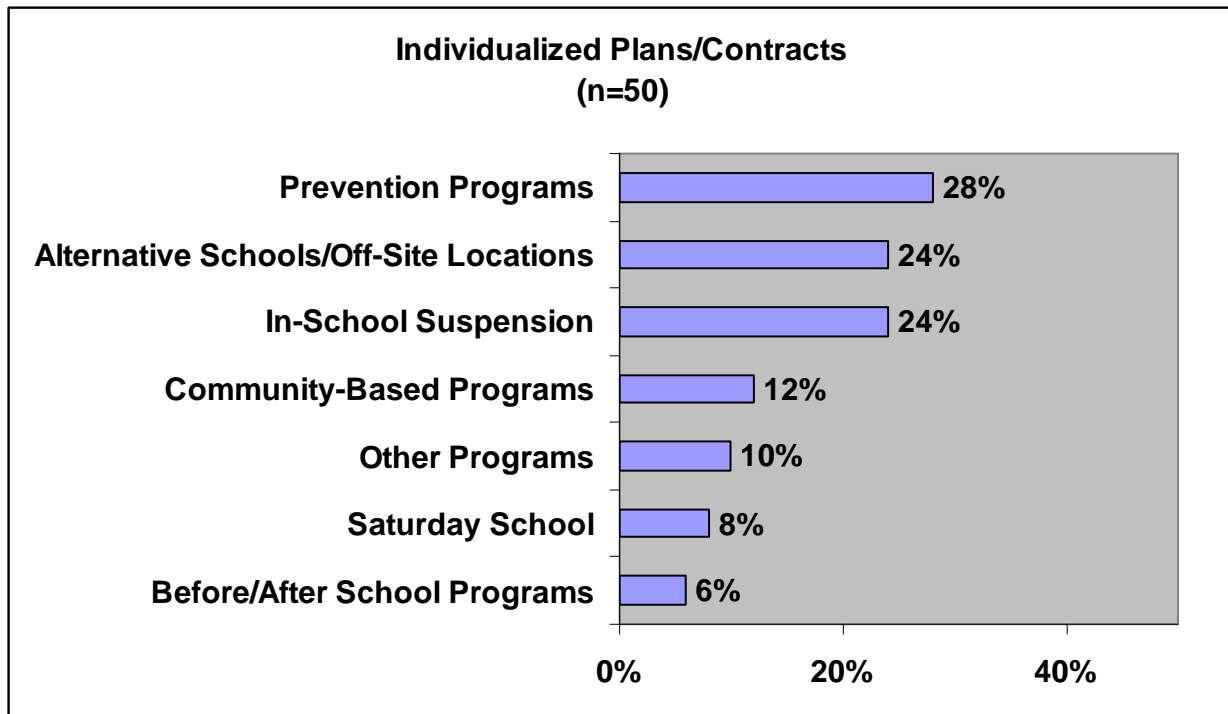
**Figure 7**



**Use of Components within Program Types.** The interview data were analyzed by the use of various program components within each of the major program types that have been suggested in the literature or through experts in the field as having potential for reducing the causes of out-of-school suspension. These results are presented in Figures 8 to 18. Percents represent the proportion of Florida school districts using the specified program component within each type of program. Interpretations may be most useful in revealing the relative use or lack of use of the components for specific program types.

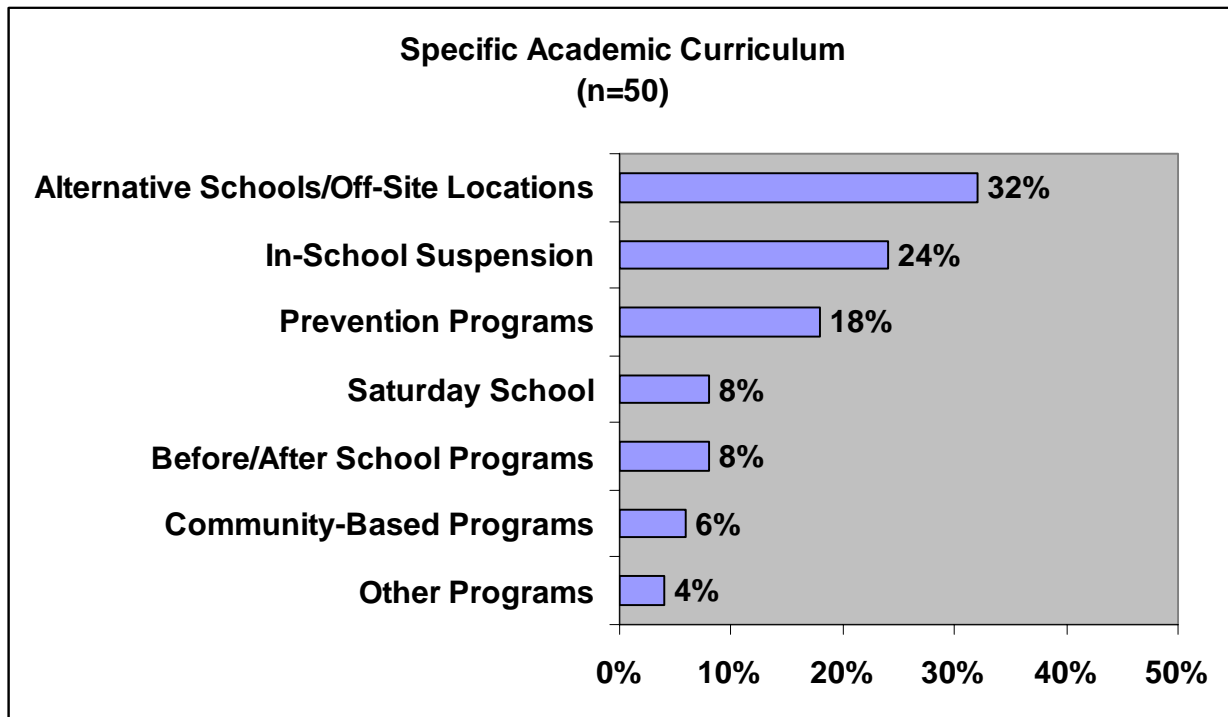
Individualized plans or contracts are a strategy used in some programs to increase the student’s awareness of and commitment to academic goals and appropriate behaviors to display in school. As displayed in Figure 8, 28% of the school districts use individualized plans or contracts as part of prevention programs, and 24% of the districts employ them in alternative schools and inschool suspension programs. In prevention programs, the plans tend to be more focused on academics and are required for students who have scored at Levels 1 or 2 on any of the FCAT tests in the form of an Academic Improvement Plan (AIP). Individual plans and contracts used in alternative schools and ISS programs are more likely to include behavioral goals such as being on time to classes, participating in group discussions, or maintaining set levels within a system of points for good behavior (or negative points for unacceptable behavior). Individual plans or contracts are rarely used (12% or less) in other types of programs.

**Figure 8**



Another strategy or component is to implement a specific academic curriculum within the program serving as an alternative to OSS. These academic curricula are most frequently noted in alternative schools or programs located off-site (32% of districts) and in ISS programs (24%). Most of the specific academic curricula observed during the site visits were a continuation of the district’s curriculum. In ISS programs, such curricula most often took the form of assigned homework by the regular classroom teacher. Rarely were different curricula mentioned, although occasional use was noted of computer-assisted instructional programs (CAI) that drill students on skills tested on the FCAT. Examples were FCAT Explorer and SuccessMaker. The Steck-Vaughan series of individualized instructional booklets and accompanying computer-based system were also noted occasionally to help prepare students to pass the GED.

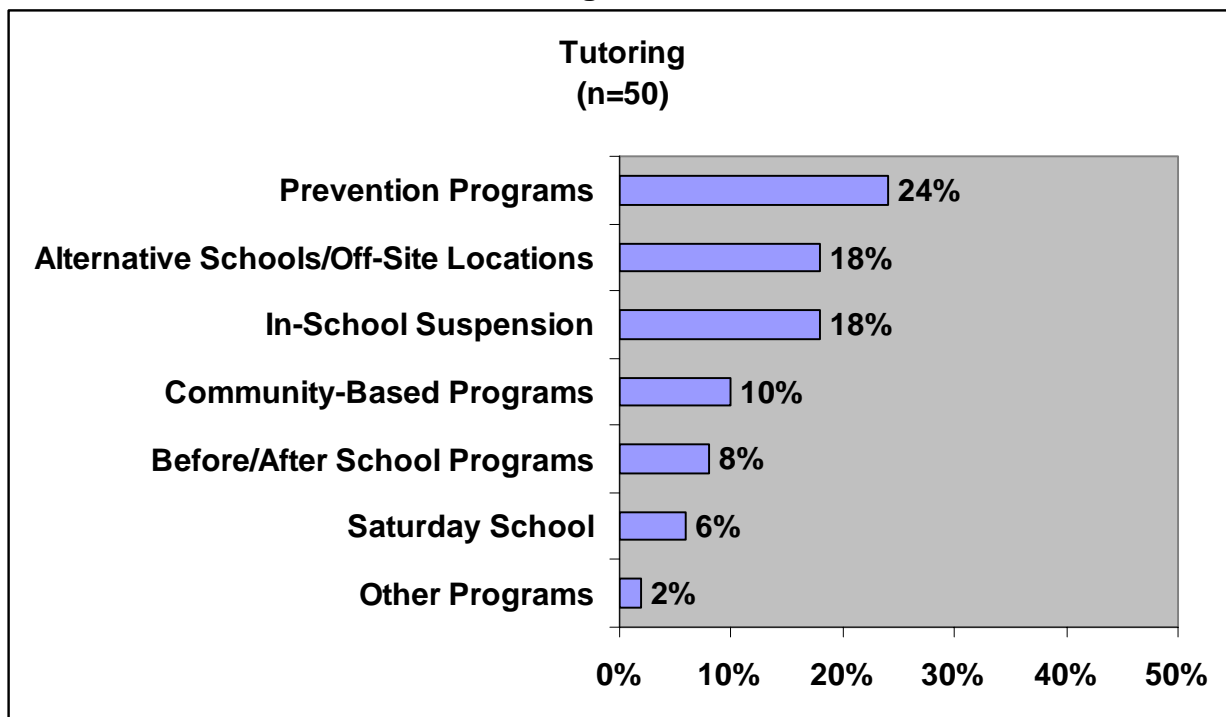
**Figure 9**



Many of the students assigned to alternative programs to OSS have already encountered academic difficulties in addition to the behavior issues that may contribute to triggering an out-of-school suspension. Often these multiple problems are intertwined with mental health issues and issues stemming from poverty until the student is enmeshed in a complex spiral of school and social failure. Tutoring students may reduce the contribution of the academic issues to this volatile “stew” of counterproductive factors. Tutoring may take the form of small classes in which the teacher has additional time to sit one-on-one with a student, students from another school (usually higher grade levels) or a cooperating post-secondary institution, or volunteers from the community such as senior citizens, retired teachers, or community centers.

Almost one-quarter of the districts (24%) reported using tutoring in their prevention programs (Figure 10), and 18% indicated that tutoring is used in alternative schools/off-site locations or in ISS programs. Rare use was also noted (10% or less) in community-based programs, before/after school programs, and Saturday schools. Site visits documented that a few community-based programs are designed as tutoring programs (sometimes with a mentor or volunteer from the community group) combined with a behavioral change curriculum such as Character Counts or anti-bullying materials.

**Figure 10**

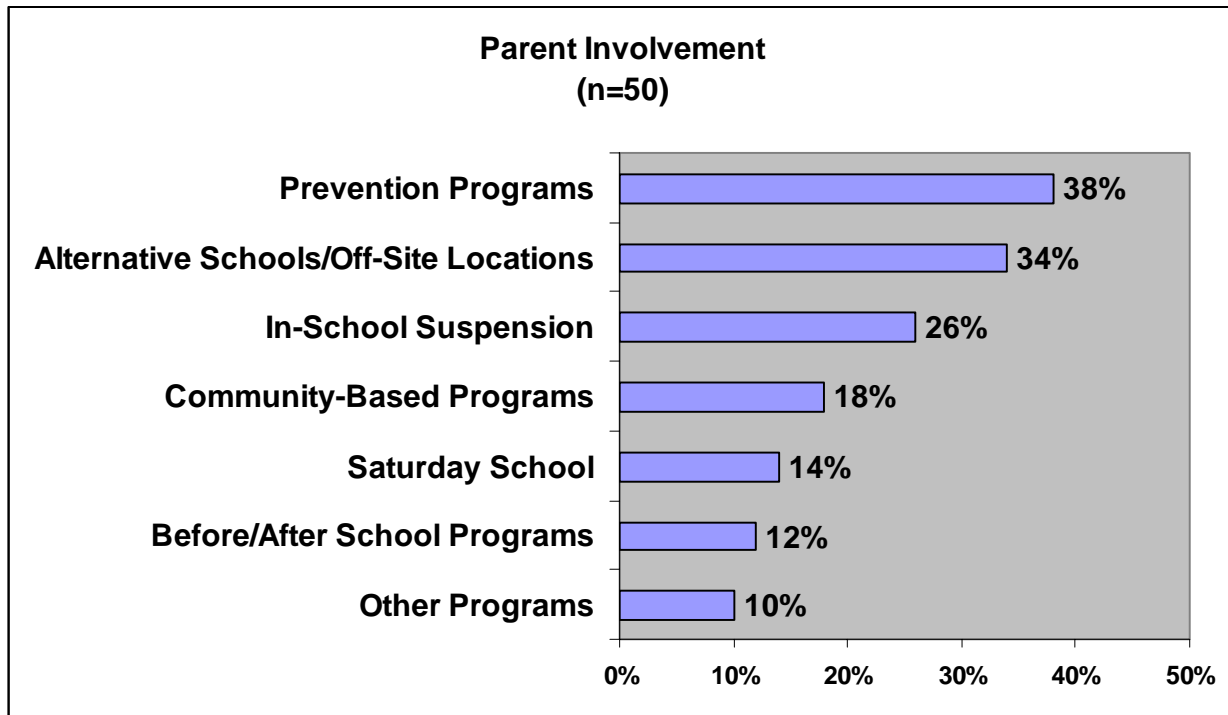


The parents of many of the students referred for behavioral or academic problems in public schools often are having difficulty coping with their children's issues or may have their own issues that cause disruptive or dysfunctional relationships that are reflected in the student's performance in school. Again, these factors tend to be multi-faceted and interactive. For example, if parents are going through a divorce, children in the family may display academic failure or behavioral outbursts that then contribute to increased tension in the family and exacerbate parental communication that accelerates the divorce process. In another example, if a single mother loses her job, an older child may be forced to skip school to look for work to help make rent payments. Parents living in poverty have little time to participate in their children's education and often leave all educational decisions to the school system. Increasing parent involvement in the student's school program can help resolve some of the issues contributing to the student's offending behaviors and increase the willingness of the student to complete the assigned alternative programs to OSS.

As displayed in Figure 11, concerted efforts to increase parent involvement were most frequently noted in prevention programs (38% of the districts), alternative schools or programs located away from the regular public school (34%), and ISS programs (26%). Less than 20% of the districts reported using additional strategies or efforts to involve parents in community-based programs, Saturday school programs, or before or after school programs. The parent involvement efforts in prevention programs may take many different forms. In some districts, increased parent involvement may be as simple as the requirement that parents agree to the alternative placement of students who otherwise would be given OSS. Parent involvement was noted as well in providing transportation to alternative schools or off-site programs. More concerted efforts to involve parents include contracts with parents to participate in group meetings or assisting students with homework. Rarely mentioned were joint parent/student counseling sessions (either family counseling or group counseling sessions) or parent volunteering to assist in the education programs.

District staff expressed their concerns about the difficulty school staff have in involving parents in their children's educational programs and in alternative programs to OSS. One district described a pilot program to set up a parent university in which parents receive training in parenting skills. The purpose was to teach parents how to control their child and mimic the life skills that the alternative program was teaching to the students.

**Figure 11**



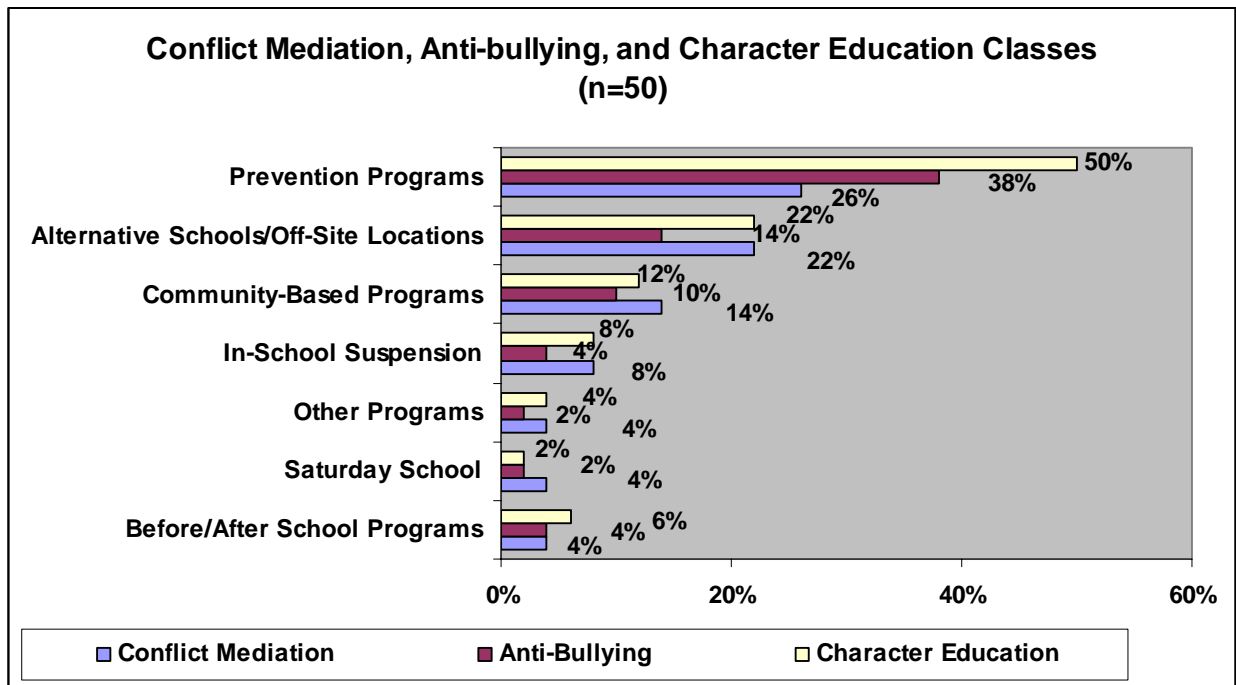
As previously discussed, prevention programs in schools frequently take the form of special classes or curricula addressing character education, conflict resolution or mediation, or anti-bullying programs. The 1999 Legislature required school districts to provide a character development program in elementary schools, similar to Character First or Character Counts. The 1999 Legislature also amended the Florida Statutes on dropout prevention programs to require that all dropout prevention and academic intervention programs provide character development and law education. The required annual district “School Safety and Security Self-Assessment Form” includes indicators requiring incorporation into the curricula programs addressing pro-social skills, character education, conflict resolution, and peer mediation, as well as providing teachers professional development in teaching students about these issues.

Figure 12 presents results from the telephone interview on these major anti-violence thrusts: 50% of the responding districts indicated that their prevention programs include character education classes, 38% listed anti-bullying classes, and 26% referenced conflict resolution instruction in prevention programs. When analyzed jointly, 72% of the districts cited at least one of these anti-violence curricula as operating in their prevention programs. Some alternative schools or off-site programs serving as alternatives to OSS were also identified as incorporating these types of anti-violence programs. These efforts to reduce violence and increase peaceful classrooms, however, were much less evident in all other program types, with percentages ranging from 14% to 2%.



Some districts reported using character education classes formally across all schools, sometimes within a specific set of classrooms such as the language arts program. Other schools mentioned peer mediation as a program implemented in some schools with selected sets of students who have committed minor offenses. One district is conducting a pilot study at one school for an anti-bullying class and hoping to roll it out for all schools next year. Other efforts included implementing the Positive Peer Culture program, and providing staff development for counselors on violence prevention.

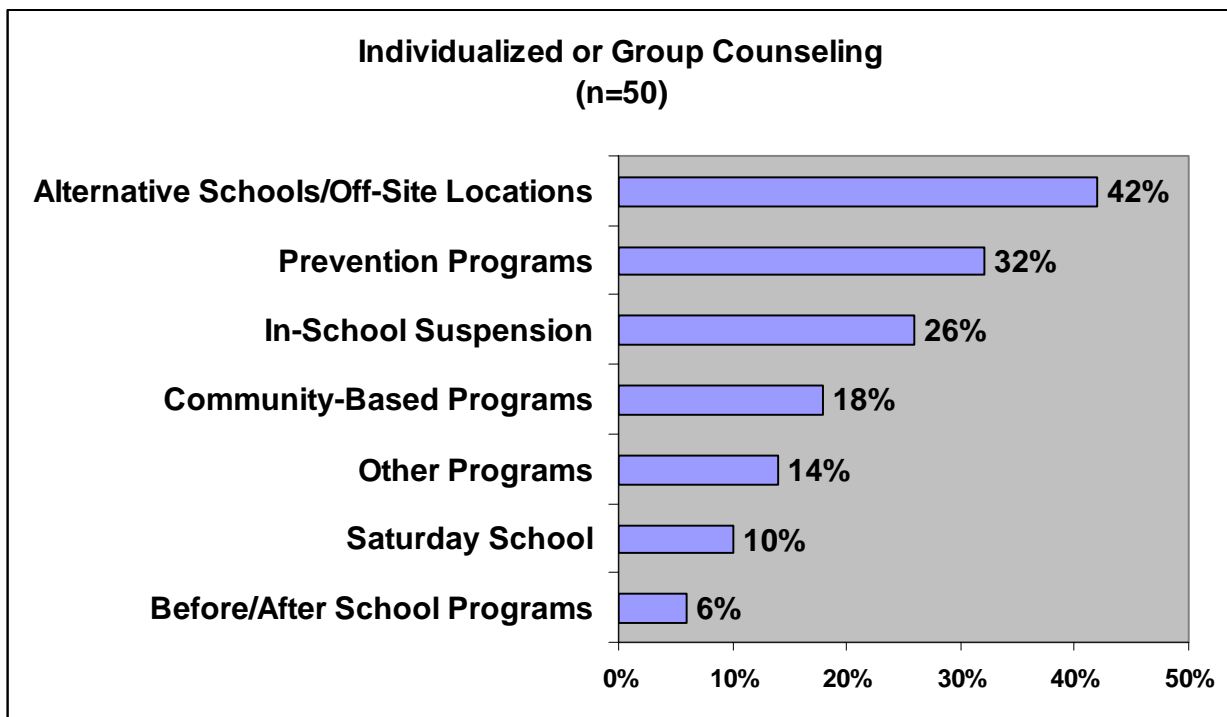
**Figure 12**



A more staff-intensive approach to improving the behavior of offending students is to provide individual or group counseling that addresses the underlying issues that may be causing disruptive or violent behavior. These programs are most frequently implemented in alternative schools or off-site alternative programs (42% of districts), in prevention programs that target specific sets of students (32%), and in ISS programs (26% of districts). Other program types may use counseling as a strategy, but the inclusion is much less frequent (18% or fewer of the districts) (Figure 13).

It was noted that districts that place a heavy emphasis on prevention often have this component in place in special programs. Some counseling services are provided through contract or other arrangement with community mental health agencies and may also include parent involvement through family counseling with the student. Some districts deploy behavior specialists who work with multiple schools and may provide counseling to individual or groups of students. One district reported providing a behavior specialist in every school who sets up behavior contracts and monitors student behavior to help students be more successful in class. Another county reported extensive counseling services for their students as part of their diversion efforts to keep students from being suspended. While in their community programs (in lieu of OSS), students receive daily counseling sessions as well as conflict resolution education. The program is heavily laden with therapeutic interventions, even when students return to their “home schools.” In another district, an elementary school program for targeted students provides an hour of counseling and behavior therapy each day through a special scheduling arrangement. Two mental health counselors staff the program. These examples, however, were rare in the overall study.

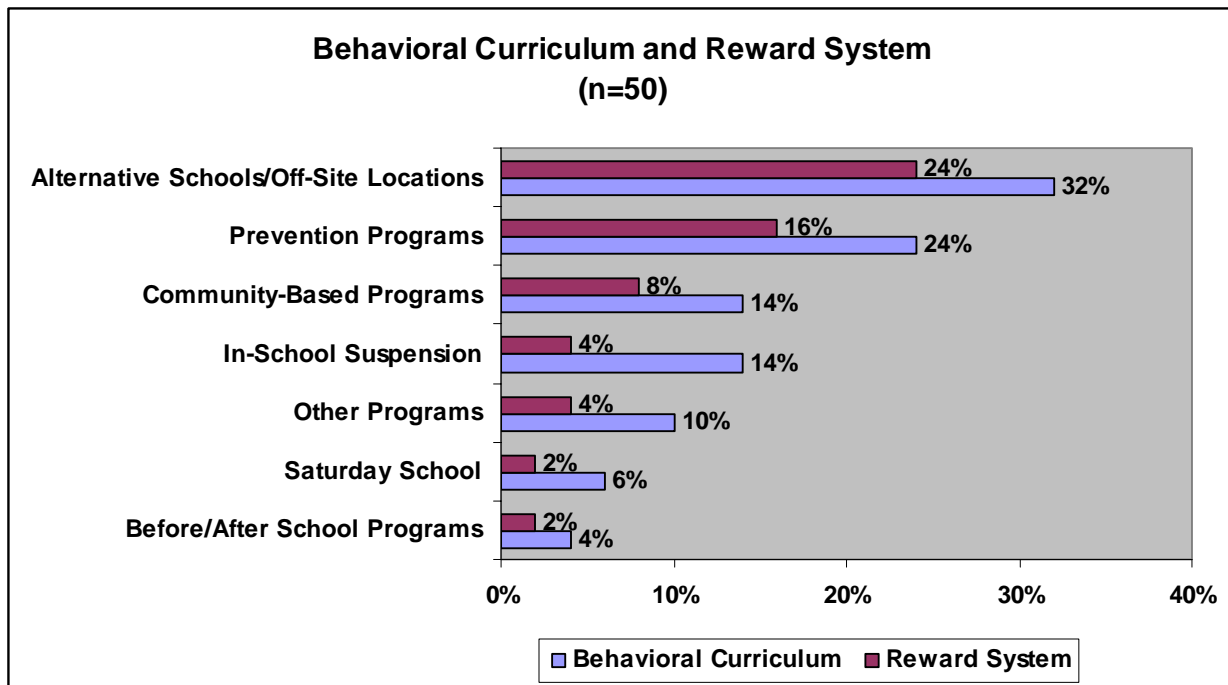
**Figure 13**



Two other methods for increasing students’ positive interactions with others and reducing inappropriate behaviors are to use a structured behavioral curriculum or a reward system. Typical behavioral curricula lead students through a series of activities to gain a better understanding of their responsibilities within society, the causes and consequences of good and bad behaviors, and how to make responsible choices in their actions. Reward systems often are based on earning points for good behavior and may be coupled with losing points for inappropriate behavior. These types of interventions may be implemented together and are more frequently used in programs for adjudicated youth.

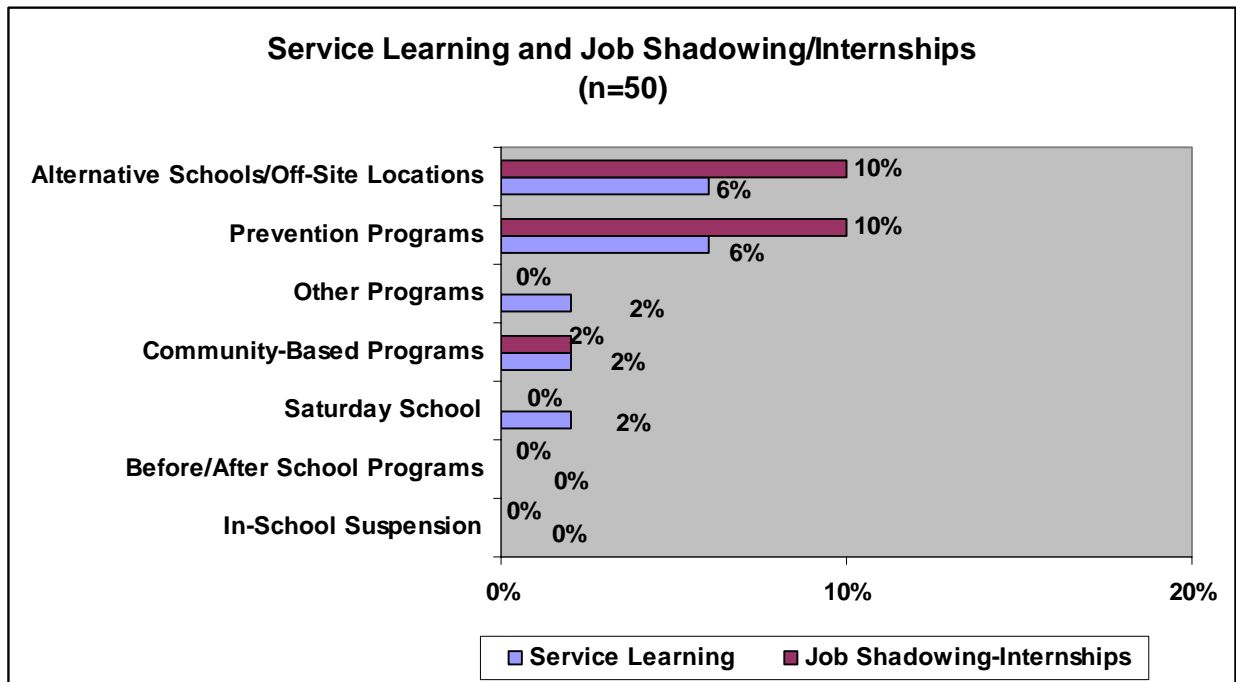
Within the programs serving as alternatives to OSS, 32% of the districts reported using behavioral curricula in their alternative schools or off-site programs, and 24% indicated they are used in prevention programs (Figure 14). Less than 15% of the districts use behavioral curricula in other types of programs serving as alternatives to OSS. Reward systems were even less frequently reported by districts for any of their alternative programs to OSS, with 24% of the districts using reward systems in alternative schools or off-site programs, 16% in prevention programs, and less than 10% of the districts reporting using reward systems in other types of programs.

**Figure 14**



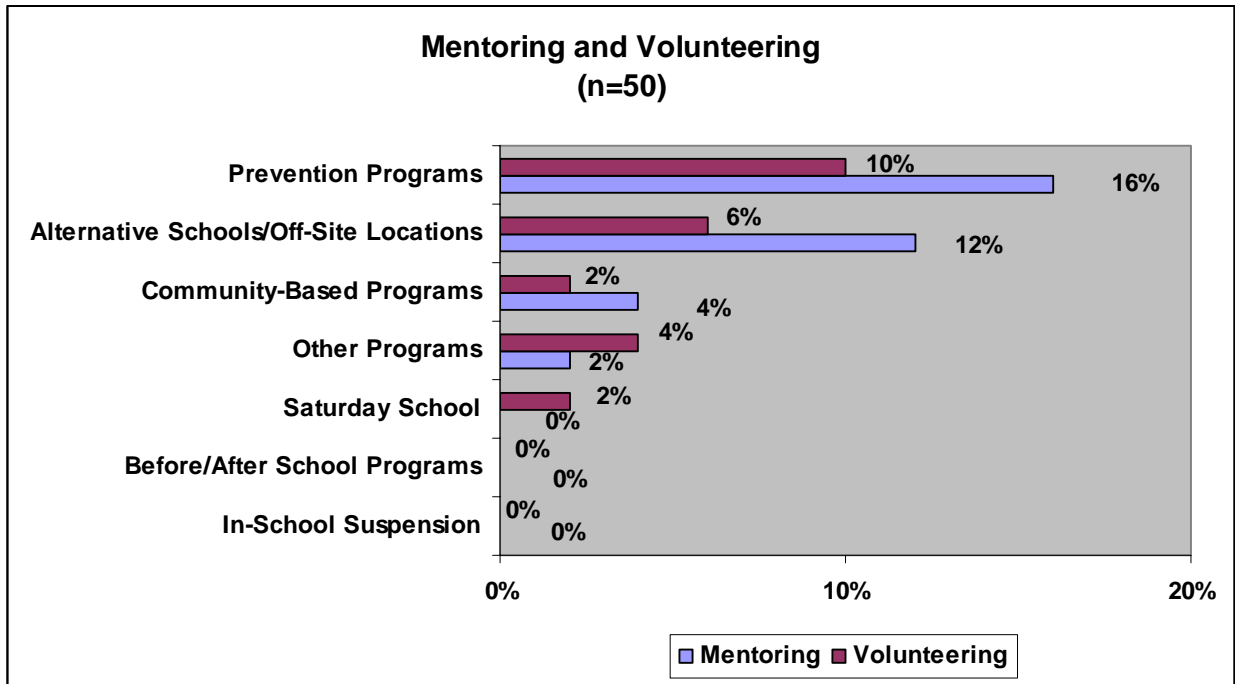
The remaining components examined through this initial study were seldom used by districts in any of the alternative programs to OSS. As displayed in Figure 15, job shadowing or internships were reported by 10% or fewer of the districts to be used in any of the types of programs, and service learning was even less frequently noted with only 6% of the districts indicating that service learning is incorporated into some alternative schools or off-site locations and in some prevention programs. Note that the Florida Department of Education, through federal Title IV funds, has support for 35 local projects to use Service Learning in alternatives to OSS programs that in amounts ranging from \$10,000 to \$130,000. These efforts are just beginning to be known in districts as a viable strategy for increasing student participation and interest in schools and decreasing inappropriate behaviors.

**Figure 15**

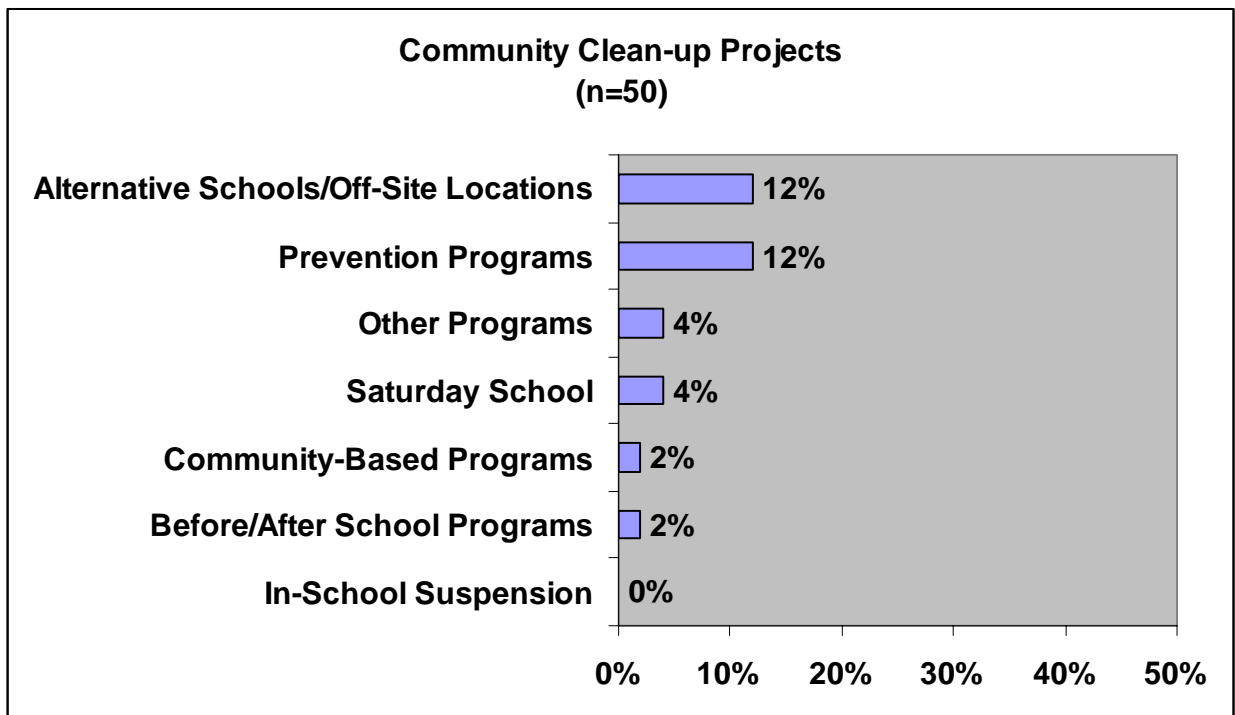


Mentoring and volunteering also are rarely used as components of OSS-alternative programs, as displayed in Figure 16. Although these methods may be used in some prevention programs and alternative schools or off-site programs, less than 16% of the districts reported using them in any of the alternative programs. Community clean-up projects had similar results that are presented in Figure 17. Only 12% of the school districts use community clean-up projects in some prevention programs and alternative schools or off-site programs, and less than 5% of the districts reported using these assignments in other types of programs such as before or after school programs or Saturday school.

**Figure 16**

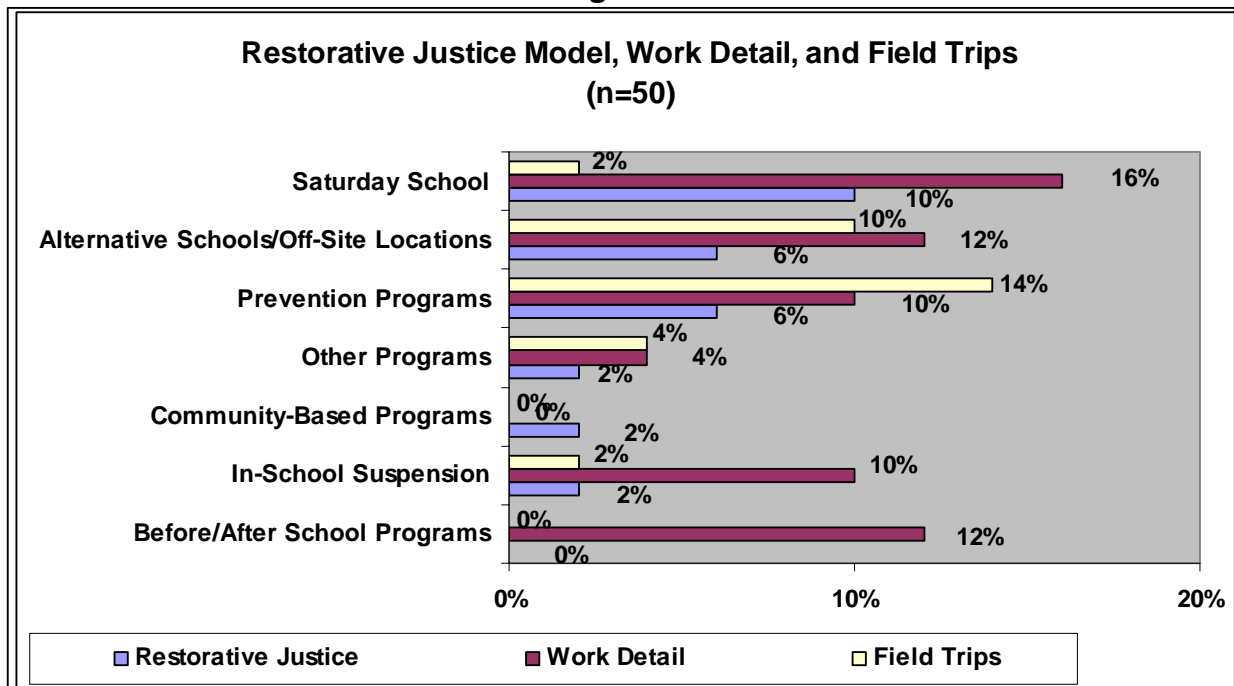


**Figure 17**



As displayed in Figure 18, assigning students to work detail involving cleaning up the school campus or classrooms, or helping with the kitchen cleanup activities were more frequently noted, with 10%-16% of the districts reporting that this method is used in Saturday School, alternative schools or off-site locations, prevention programs, before or after school programs, and ISS programs (Figure 18). Field trips were identified by 14% of the districts as used in prevention programs and 10% of the alternative schools or off-site programs, but rarely in other programs. Field trips usually took the form of visits to jails, court rooms, or juvenile detention to help students understand the next level of consequences if they repeated their offenses. Key components of the Restorative Justice Model are restitution, community service and victim offender mediation. These practices create an awareness in offenders of the harmful consequences of their actions, requiring that they take action to "make amends" to victims and the community. Very few districts use the Restorative Justice Model in any of the programs operating as alternatives to OSS. Some districts, however, contract with outside agencies or for-profit groups to serve students referred from the school system within programs operated under contract to the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice for juvenile offenders. These programs may be using the Restorative Justice Model for the entire facility.

**Figure 18**



Overall, most of the components or strategies explored through the study were used infrequently in any of the program types. One-half of the school districts reported using character education curricula or classes in prevention programs, and 42% of the school districts use individual or group counseling in alternative special schools or programs located away from the school site. Parent involvement in some form was noted in 38% of the school districts' prevention programs, and the same level of use was recorded for anti-bullying classes or curricula in prevention programs. All other components or strategies were employed by approximately one-third or less of the districts in any of the program types.

## **9. Staffing for Programs**

Staffing for all of the programs examined varies widely, with little consistency noted for any of the program models. Staffing for any of the models may be provided by classroom teachers, teachers with special supplements, administrators with or without supplements, paraprofessionals, guidance counselors, volunteers, school resource officers, contracted staff, or any combinations of these and other staff. In part these variations in staffing patterns reflect the lack of statewide standards for staffing of the programs and the locus of decision-making control within individual schools. Consequently, even within a single district, the same type of program may be staffed differently across schools. District staff most often were not able to delineate the staffing provided for many of the alternative programs within their districts.

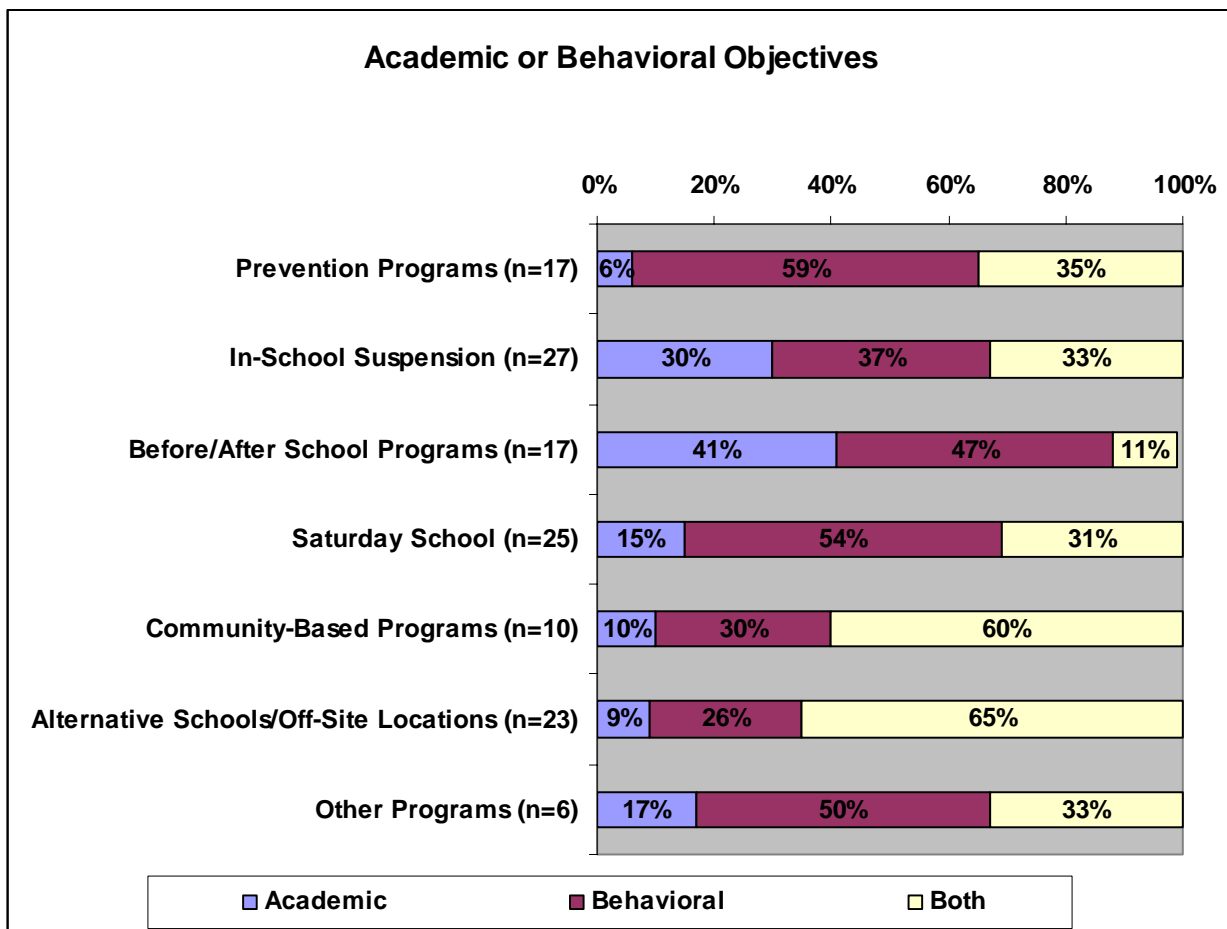
## **10. Program Evaluation**

Very few districts conduct formal or informal evaluations of the effectiveness of the various alternative programs to out-of-school suspension. As depicted in Figure 19, some of the programs have defined academic or behavioral objectives. Prevention programs target primarily behavioral objectives (59%) or a combination of both behavioral and academic objectives. In-school suspension and before/after school programs emphasize academic objectives more heavily than other program models, but still have a preponderance of behavioral or combined targets. For community-based programs and alternative schools/off-site locations, over 60% of the responding districts indicated that the targeted objectives were both behavioral and academic.

Schools and districts may track discipline referrals by the types of incidents and the number of students, and the number of incidents by the number of students. Some districts have fairly extensive systems to collate and display these discipline data. Occasionally, a school may also analyze discipline referrals by the time of day, location, and grade levels of students involved and use these data for modifying the school schedule or other operations. Most districts reported that no efforts are made to measure the effectiveness of the program delivery models or program components. Some districts indicated that the schools operating the programs informally review the progress of students as they return to regular classes.

With a few exceptions, if districts evaluate their programs it is conducted using general district data by tracking such things as attendance, grades, referrals, and suspension. These evaluation efforts rarely use program specific data. More typically, little effort is made at the school or district level to track students after program exit to determine academic success or recidivism, especially after students leave an elementary or middle school or if students move into an alternative school and do not return to the referring school for further education. Several excellent examples were noted of districts that track the progress of students over time and return data to schools for their review and program improvement. Overall, however, few systems were in place to collect data systematically on student success or recidivism for most of the program models.

**Figure 19**





## **11. Funding and Fund Sources**

Funding for these various program models to serve students in lieu of out-of-school suspension is obtained from many different sources. The most common funding mechanism is through the school's budget. Occasionally, districts allocate teacher units to schools for ISS or detention. School Academic Improvement (SAI) funds may also be used, but more often these funds are earmarked for academic remediation. Some districts have received grants from the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) as part of their efforts to prevent entry of students into the juvenile justice system; these grants previously have been prevalent but currently are less available to school districts. In the past, dropout prevention funds were allocated to districts through a weighted cost factor that supported some of the costs of the programs, but these funds no longer are available. More recently, federal 21<sup>st</sup> Century grants have been used to fund alternatives to OSS. Occasionally schools have had to delete ISS staffing from their budgets in favor of other priorities.

### **MIS Data Elements**

The purposes of this section of the report are to:

- (1) describe current data being collected for Dropout Prevention Program Evaluation,
- (2) suggest supplementary information that might be useful in the evaluation of alternatives to out-of-school suspension, and
- (3) describe a longitudinal tracking system pilot project.

#### **1. Data Currently Collected for Dropout Prevention Program Evaluation**

The Florida DOE organizes the data elements in its Automated Student Information System into formats or collections of data elements intended for specific applications. The Dropout Prevention Program has its own format for program evaluation that consists of the following data elements (see Table 11), all of which are submitted by school districts at the end of the school year (August).

| <b>Data Element</b>                                 | <b>Number</b> |
|---|---------------|
| District Number, Current Enrollment                 | 115225        |
| School Number, Current Enrollment                   | 172825        |
| Student Number Identifier, Florida                  | 175625        |
| Dropout Prevention/Juvenile Justice Programs        | 115680        |
| Dropout Prevention, Length of Prescribed Program    | 115660        |
| Dropout Prevention, Length of Program Participation | 115662        |
| District Number, Current Instruction/Service        | 115325        |
| School Number, Current Instruction/Service          | 172875        |
| Dropout Prevention Program Enrollment Date          | 115675        |
| Dropout Prevention Program Withdrawal Date          | 115685        |
| Mentoring Program Participant                       | 147425        |
| Mentoring Program Participant's Days of Contact     | 147475        |

These data elements can be used to establish the provision of alternatives to suspension services and then matched to academic (e.g., FCAT) indicators of success. For evaluation purposes it would be necessary to also identify similar students who were actually suspended in order to make more relevant comparisons.

## 2. Supplementary Data Elements

In addition to the data elements listed in the preceding section, there are others that could be used to supplement academic measures and perhaps provide a more comprehensive description of the impact of suspension alternatives, as displayed in Table 12. It would be important to know if there were subsequent disciplinary/referral actions that took place after placement in a suspension alternative program. A student's withdrawal code could provide information about dropping out of school. Days present and absent could be used to compare attendance patterns between those who were placed in suspension alternatives and those who were not. Grade promotion status would indicate promotion or retention at the end of the school year. Grade point average could be used to supplement other academic (e.g. FCAT) information.

| <b>Data Element</b>                   | <b>Number</b> |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| Disciplinary/Referral Action Code     | 114425        |
| Duration, Disciplinary Action         | 115855        |
| Withdrawal Code, PK-12                | 188425        |
| Days Present Annual                   | 113225        |
| Days Absent Annual                    | 112025        |
| Days Present Summer Terms             | 113250        |
| Days Absent Summer Terms              | 112050        |
| Grade Promotion Status                | 126425        |
| Grade Point Average State, Cumulative | 125625        |

From the perspective of forming appropriate comparison groups of students who were given suspension alternatives versus those who were not, it would be important to know something about students' demographic and background characteristics (see Table 13). Such information could include students' gender, race, economic background and whether or not they were exceptional students or Limited English Proficiency. These are common demographics that need to be considered in the analysis of differences between groups of students. It would also be important to know about students' relative age in grade. From the Student Discipline/Referral Action format, it would helpful to know if students had any substance abuse, weapons or gang related involvement. In theory, at least, this source of information would be more comprehensive than that available about specific incidents in the School Environmental Safety Incident Report format.

The ultimate purpose of having student background information would be to form a demographically similar comparison group of students who were actually suspended versus those given a suspension alternative. All of these data elements would have to be matched to the Dropout Prevention Program Evaluation format, using the common student identifier or alias.

| Data Element                       | Number |
|------------------------------------|--------|
| Gender                             | 173625 |
| Racial/Ethnic Category             | 168025 |
| Lunch Status                       | 146025 |
| Exceptionality, Primary            | 118575 |
| English Language Proficient, PK-12 | 144025 |
| Birth Date                         | 104025 |
| Grade Level                        | 124025 |
| Student, Use of Alcohol            | 175635 |
| Student, Use of Drugs              | 175640 |
| Student, Involved in Hate Crime    | 175210 |
| Student, Weapon Use                | 175645 |
| Student, Involved in Gang          | 175200 |

### 3. Longitudinal Tracking

What is clearly missing from the previous lists of supplementary data elements is any indication of recidivism. The extent to which students do or do not have repeat disciplinary actions or referrals is in itself an important evaluation outcome. At present, the most logical way of obtaining recidivism data (short of adding a data element) would be to match records across years. The feasibility, however, of the longitudinal tracing option needs to be examined. Is it possible to accurately track students involved in suspension alternatives and their demographically similar cohorts who were actually suspended from school? Perhaps the best way to answer this question would be to establish a longitudinal tracking pilot project that would:

- i) identify a set of students who received a suspension alternative,
- ii) identify a group of demographically similar students who were actually suspended, and
- iii) track their subsequent school experience using data from the DOE's Automated Student Information System.

The primary objective would be to assess the degree to which students could be tracked across years. If successful, the pilot project would also examine student outcomes in terms of academic performance, supplementary outcomes and repeat disciplinary actions/referrals in the suspension alternative and comparison groups.

## **Brief Summary of Initial Study Findings**

Major program models examined included:

- ◆ **Prevention Programs.** Students who are disruptive or for some other negative reason come to the attention of teachers or administrators may be referred to school-based intervention teams, social skills, conflict mediation or character education classes, time out in another teacher's class or in the principal's office, or a behavioral specialist may be hired or contracted to work with individual students or with teachers in creating behavior management strategies. These strategies are designed to redirect the student's behavior and avoid suspension. These techniques may often be employed with ESE students and are designed to occur within the regular school day.
- ◆ **In school.** Students attend school within structured programs such as an alternative classroom often with academic instruction; students are assigned to work detail under the supervision of an adult; or students are assigned to a special class designed for suspended students
- ◆ **Before/After School.** Students can make up academic work under supervision at the school site before and/or after regular school hours.
- ◆ **Saturday School.** Students make up academic work in classes or participate in work details on the school campus with adult supervision on Saturdays.
- ◆ **Community-Based.** Students attend a program operated by a community-based agency such as YMCA through a district wide or individual school contract with the agency.
- ◆ **Special Program/Setting.** Students are re-assigned to alternative school placements within the district.

A brief summary of major findings included:

- ◆ Principals are the primary decision-makers for determining what delivery models are used for alternative programs to out-of-school suspension and the ways in which they operate (87% and 75%, respectively)
- ◆ The two most prevalent factors considered in selecting delivery models are available funds and staffing resources (75% and 69% of districts, respectively)
- ◆ The most prevalent delivery models are in-school programs (96%), special programs (68%), prevention programs (65%), and before/after school programs (63%).
- ◆ The most frequently used components within programs are parent involvement (66%), Character Education classes (64%), and individualized or group counseling (62%).
- ◆ The least frequently used program components were Restorative Justice Model, Service Learning, job shadowing or internships, and volunteering.
- ◆ A specific academic curriculum was reported as used in 32% of the alternative schools or off-site locations, but less than 10% of the Saturday school, before/after school, or community-based programs.
- ◆ Parent involvement was reported as employed in over one-third of the prevention programs and alternative schools or off-site locations, but in less than 15% of the Saturday school and before/after school programs.
- ◆ Staffing for all programs examined varied widely, with little consistency noted for any of the program models. Staffing for any of the models may be provided by classroom teachers, teachers with special supplements, administrators with or without supplements, paraprofessionals, guidance counselors, volunteers, school resource officers, contracted staff, or any combinations of these and other staff.
- ◆ Very few districts conduct formal or informal evaluations of the effectiveness of the various alternative programs to out-of-school suspension.
- ◆ Funding for these various program models to serve students in lieu of out-of-school suspension is obtained from many different sources. The most common funding mechanism is through the school's budget.

## **Issues**

During the course of the initial phase of this extended research effort, several issues were identified that need continued exploration.

- ◆ Some districts continue to use corporal punishment as an alternative to out-of-school suspension.
- ◆ Some severe offenses (e.g. fighting) result in automatic out-of-school suspension, even in schools that have in-school suspension programs.
- ◆ Very few instances were noted of counseling or behavioral interventions included as a component in any of the alternative programs.
- ◆ Most districts rely on the Code of Student Conduct to define the policies and procedures for programs serving as alternatives to out-of-school suspension. Few examples were noted in which the districts defined the components of and procedures for these programs for standard implementation in schools or other sites.
- ◆ Principals and school staff determine what components/features to implement for most programs.
- ◆ The models being used are reflective of the staffing and resources available in the schools.
- ◆ Using the term “prevention” resulted in confusion with the myriad of academic programs targeted.
- ◆ Virtually no programs were noted in Florida or in the national literature that had outcomes-based evaluations.
- ◆ Schools collect and maintain data on attendance, but little or no follow-up or tracking is conducted to see what happens with the students after participation.
- ◆ Schools and districts seldom analyze the data that they have collected to determine the effectiveness of program alternatives or any other purpose.
- ◆ ESE students are included in some programs, excluded from others, and some programs intentionally do not collect data on which students may be ESE to avoid liability.

## **Recommendations for Continuation Activities**

Based on the results from Phase I of the *Study of Alternatives to Suspension*, the following recommendations are made for continuing the research through the 2004-05 school year through these activities:

- 1. Conduct Site Visits to Ten Additional Districts.**
- 2. Conduct Pin-Point Research on Selected Promising Practices.**
- 3. Generate Evaluation Template for Program/District/State Use.**
- 4. Generate Final Report for Phase II.**

### **1. Conduct Site Visits to Ten Additional Districts.**

During Phase I, site visits to six school districts were conducted to gain more indepth knowledge about the programs serving as alternatives to out-of-school suspensions and interview in person the people most directly involved with these programs. For Phase II, an additional ten school districts should be visited that will bring the total visited to 16 out of 67 (24%). Districts should be selected to represent promising practices that have proven success records; seek to include large, medium-sized, and small districts; and represent the geographical diversity of the state. Further examination should also be conducted of districts that have been funded for Title IV local programs to capture those programs that appear to be having the greatest impacts.

### **2. Conduct Pin-Point Research on Selected Promising Practices.**

Phase I of the *Study of Alternatives to Suspension* demonstrated that virtually none of the alternative programs have evaluation components that track the success of students after leaving the program or demonstrate successful program outcomes. Most relevant outcomes for these programs are reduced recidivism, increased school attendance, increased earned credits, and remaining in school longer. Site visits revealed that some of these data may be available in districts through district or state databases, but districts and programs have little or no incentive or resources to compile and use these data.

Up to ten promising programs should be identified for which data are currently available and pin-point research conducted on the outcomes of the programs. Examples are programs in which attendance for the last two years has been maintained that includes a student ID number that can be linked to the state database, programs that have conducted follow-up surveys of students to determine their subsequent status, and programs for which formal evaluations are in progress or contain useful outcome measures. Key to this aspect of the study will be the cooperation of the school district and access to the district's database to track individual student academic success over time. The result of this activity will be outcome evaluations for up to ten programs. Evaluation designs should be created for each selected program, and plans made to collect and analyze the data and generate a written report that will be in a format that will be publishable.

### 3. Generate Evaluation Template for Program/District/State Use.

Although Phase I of the *Study of Alternatives to Suspension* demonstrated that virtually none of the alternative programs conduct outcome evaluations that track students exiting the program or compare results with students not participating in the program, local program managers expressed considerable interest in being able to document the successes of their programs. An evaluation template should be generated that will be usable by local program managers in organizing and conducting outcomes-based program evaluations. This template should be in a format that districts can use for multiple programs or that the state can use to conduct statewide outcome evaluations. Included in the template should be the following components:

- ◆ rationale, logic, and design of outcomes-based evaluations,
- ◆ specific data collection processes for the major types of programs,
- ◆ uses of comparison groups or longitudinal data to isolate the impact of the program efforts,
- ◆ appropriate data summarization and analysis techniques and methods,
- ◆ methods and templates for reporting results and recommendations on timing and sequencing of reports, and
- ◆ uses of results for improving programs and dissemination to key stakeholders and decision-makers.

The result of this component will be a template or set of templates with explanatory materials for use at the program, district, or state levels to plan, conduct, and use outcomes-based evaluations.

### 4. Generate Final Report for Phase II.

A final report should be generated that cumulates results from Phases I and II of the study. Included should be updated descriptions of district programs, specific details on at least ten promising programs that can be used by districts to set up and replicate these programs, results from the pin-point outcomes-based research on ten programs, and the templates for outcomes-based evaluation. The report should summarize the findings of all of the study activities to date. The final report of the *Study of Alternatives to Suspension* should include an executive summary, methods, findings, interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations for ongoing improvements in Florida's alternatives to out-of-school suspension programs and further outcomes-based evaluations of their efforts.

For a pdf copy of the full report, refer to the publications section of the Evaluation Systems Design, Inc. website at <http://www.esdi.cc/>. For further information concerning the complete study, contact Dr. Constance C. Bergquist at Evaluation Systems Design, Inc. ([esdi@talstar.com](mailto:esdi@talstar.com) or 850-893-9504).



## **Appendix A**

### **Literature Review**

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**STUDY OF ALTERNATIVES TO SUSPENSION**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

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**Title:** **Administrative Sanctions, Classroom Management, and Intervention Strategies: Building Blocks for School-Wide Discipline. CASE/CCBD Mini-Library Series on Safe, Drug-Free, and Effective Schools.**

**Author:** Evans, Cal

**Source:** ISBN-0-86586-950-2, 48p. 2002

**Accession Number:** ED466866

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**Abstract:** Part of a series of monographs on safe, drug-free, and effective schools, this monograph discusses the new discipline requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the role of administrators in developing a range of intervention strategies to manage the behavior of students with behavior problems. Following an introductory chapter, Chapter 2 explores discipline, punishment, and behavioral interventions. It describes administrative sanctions for misbehavior, disciplinary alternatives to suspension, and disciplinary removals. The benefits and shortcomings of alternative sanctions are listed and it is concluded that alternative sanctions provide school administrators with some viable choices. Chapter 3 focuses on classroom management and describes strategies for creating a positive classroom environment; a motivating, individualized curriculum; good classroom rules; and positive reinforcements that promote appropriate behavior. The importance of implementing a feedback loop to home is stressed, and steps for administrators and teachers to follow in implementing a Daily Home Note are provided. Chapter 4 describes a continuum of behavioral intervention procedures for use in special education classrooms, including preliminary strategies, positive behavioral change through functional assessment, and use of a hierarchy of behavioral interventions. Positive intervention procedures, mildly intrusive contingent procedures, and moderately intrusive contingent procedures are explained.

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**Title:** **Schools, Discipline, and Students with Disabilities: The AFT Responds.**

Author: Bader, Beth D  
Source: 21p. Apr 1997.  
Accession Number: ED408737

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**Abstract:** This position paper of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) addresses issues related to the discipline of students with severe behavior disorders or other disabilities. It specifically considers: (1) placement of disruptive and/or dangerous students; (2) cost issues of alternatives to suspension and expulsion; (3) legal parameters under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; (4) staff issues (teachers have a right not to be verbally or physically assaulted by students); and (5) minority issues (since minority students have been disproportionately represented among suspended and expelled students). The paper encourages a focus on prevention and early intervention through use of discipline codes, improved classroom management, low-level classroom interventions, and behavior specialists. It also recommends a continuum of alternative placements including in-school crisis centers, in-school suspension, and longer-term alternative settings. The paper reaffirms AFT's position favoring alternative schools. Attached is a resolution on the issue of alternative schools passed by the AFT at its 1996 Convention; an outline of prevention and intervention strategies; and guidance on the law surrounding the discipline of students with disabilities.

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**Title:** **Taking a Stand against Violence. Leadership and Responsibility: One School's Quest to Create a Safe Harbor.**

Author: Nor, Laksmi; And Others  
Source: Schools in the Middle; v5 n4 p14-17 May-Jun 1996  
Accession Number: EJ524908

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**Abstract:** Details how one urban middle school took an active stand against violence by establishing programs in student leadership, conflict resolution, peer mediation, and violence prevention. Highlights benefits, student participation and training, and several innovative alternatives to suspension and traditional school discipline measures of the program, now in its fourth year.

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**Title:** **Toward Prescriptive Alternatives to Suspensions: A Preliminary Evaluation.**

Author: Morgan-D'Atrio, Cindy; And Others  
Source: Behavioral Disorders; v21 n2 p190-200 Feb 1996  
Accession Number: EJ524417

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**Abstract:** Analysis of data on discipline problems and suspensions at a large urban high school found a high frequency of disciplinary referrals and suspensions and poor correspondence between school disciplinary policy and disciplinary actions. Students with recurrent suspensions were found to be a very heterogeneous group. Implications for developing proactive treatment alternatives to suspension are discussed.

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**Title:** **P.A.S.T.: Positive Attitude Student Training.**

Corporate Author: Putnam County School Board, Palatka, FL.

Source: 39p. [ 1996].

Accession Number: ED407612

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**Abstract:** Some students need help in solving their daily challenges. The program described here teaches students to function more efficiently in the school environment and the community. Various strategies provide students with alternatives to suspension /expulsion, and encourage parental and community involvement with "at-risk" youth. The program is designed to help students in the school system, who have been referred according to the discipline guidelines, to alternate class, suspension, expulsion, special placement, or who have been referred by their parents. This prevention/enrichment program provides a sequence of classes that are attended by students and their parents. Community volunteers with different areas of expertise lead the classes. Two-hour sessions are scheduled weekly and cover such topics as law education and juvenile justice, impulse control/anger management /parenting skills, substance abuse, and study skills and time management. A prison tour and attendance at a court during a criminal sentencing are also part of the program. The manual includes the different forms (in English and Spanish) used for the program. Survey information provides participant comments on the program's effectiveness.

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**Title:** **Making a Difference for Students at Risk. Trends and Alternatives.**

Author: Wang, Margaret C Ed; Reynolds, Maynard C Ed

Source: Report: ISBN-0-8039-6189-8. 238p. 1995.

Accession Number: ED380519

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**Abstract:** Papers in this collection were commissioned for a conference entitled, "Making a Difference for Students at Risk," to serve as springboards for discussion. Discussions and recommendations from conferees were incorporated into the versions presented in this volume. The two topics that dominated discussion at the conference were: basic forces that affect development and schooling of at-risk children and adolescents, and innovative initiatives that apply research and practical knowledge. Papers are: (1) "Introduction: Inner-City Students at the Margins" (Margaret C. Wang, Maynard C. Reynolds, and Herbert J. Walberg); (2) "Twice Victims: The Struggle to Educate Children in Urban Schools and the Reform of Special Education and Chapter 1" (Marleen C. Pugach), commentaries by Kenneth K. Wong and Martin E. Orland; (3) "The Plight of High-Ability Students in Urban Schools" (Joseph S. Renzulli, Sally M. Reis, Thomas P. Hebert, and Eva I. Diaz) with commentaries by Barbara L. McCombs and Brenda Lilienthal Welburn; (4) "Street Academies and In-School Alternatives to Suspension" (Antoine M. Garibaldi), commentaries by Harriet Arvey and Edmund W. Gordon); (5) "Alternatives and Marginal Students" (Mary Anne Raywid), commentaries by Ann Masten and Pauline Brooks; (6) "The Impact of Linguistic and Cultural Diversity on America's Schools: A Need for New Policy" (Eugene E. Garcia), commentaries by Richard Ruiz and Kris D. Gutierrez; and (7) "Epilogue: A Summary of Recommendations" (Maynard C. Reynolds, Margaret C. Wang, and Herbert J. Walberg). Appendixes list participants and give the conference agenda. Each paper contains references.

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**Title:** **Reduction of School Violence: Alternatives to Suspension.**  
**Author:** Johns, Beverly H; And Others  
**Source:** Report: ISBN-0-934753-08-3. 150p. 1995.  
**Accession Number:** ED394177

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All administrators and teachers face the challenge of implementing discipline procedures that are effective, particularly for special-education students. This book provides an array of practical solutions to everyday problems, primarily for use with special-education students who challenge discipline techniques. The techniques described are based on the authors' practical experiences. Chapter 1 reviews literature on suspension that shows that black students and special-education students are disproportionately affected by suspension policies. Chapter 2 offers guidelines for changing to an approach that sets high standards for behavior and teaches students how to develop appropriate social behaviors. One option is to create a climate committee, comprised of students, staff, and parents, that acts as an informal court. The third chapter offers guidelines for "precision planning," a systematic process in which the administrator provides leadership to ensure the implementation of procedures for creating a safe and productive environment. Practical strategies for encouraging appropriate student behavior are outlined in the fourth chapter. Chapter 5 describes techniques to prevent behavior problems: developing effective rules and expectations; communicating with students; accentuating the positive; and managing educators' stress. Sample behaviors and effective interventions are offered in chapter 6. One figure and an index are included. References accompany each chapter. Appendices contain sample forms.

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**Title:** **School Violence. Report of the Superintendent's Task Force.**  
**Corporate Author:** Arizona State Dept. of Education, Phoenix.  
**Source:** 31p. Jan 1994.  
**Accession Number:** ED381704

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**Abstract:** The Task Force on School Violence was convened to generate recommendations to key state policy makers to stem the rising tide of violence on school campuses. This report presents the task force's conclusions in two sections: (1) Findings; and (2) Recommendations. In their findings, the task force identified some key elements of prevention strategies: coordination of community services/site-based social services, adult mentoring/parent involvement, training in social skills and conflict resolution, community service and jobs for youths, alternative to suspension, non-violent messages in the media, and smaller schools or schools within schools. The task force also outlined elements of effective intervention strategies in the school. These included: caring, knowledgeable, trained staff; a controlled, disciplined environment; physical training/teamwork; accelerated learning/high expectations; character education, ethics education and self-discipline; adult role models/parent involvement; and community service/job training. Successful educational alternatives outside public schools are also discussed. The task force's recommendations targeted the legislature, the state board of education, the state superintendent, and local governing boards. Some of these recommendations included increased consequences for possession or use of weapons, alternatives to suspension or expulsion, increased governmental responsibility, increased funding for alternative programs, promote student involvement, more information on successful parenting, and better communication between the home and school. Citations of current statutes and recommended changes are included. Contains 15 references.

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