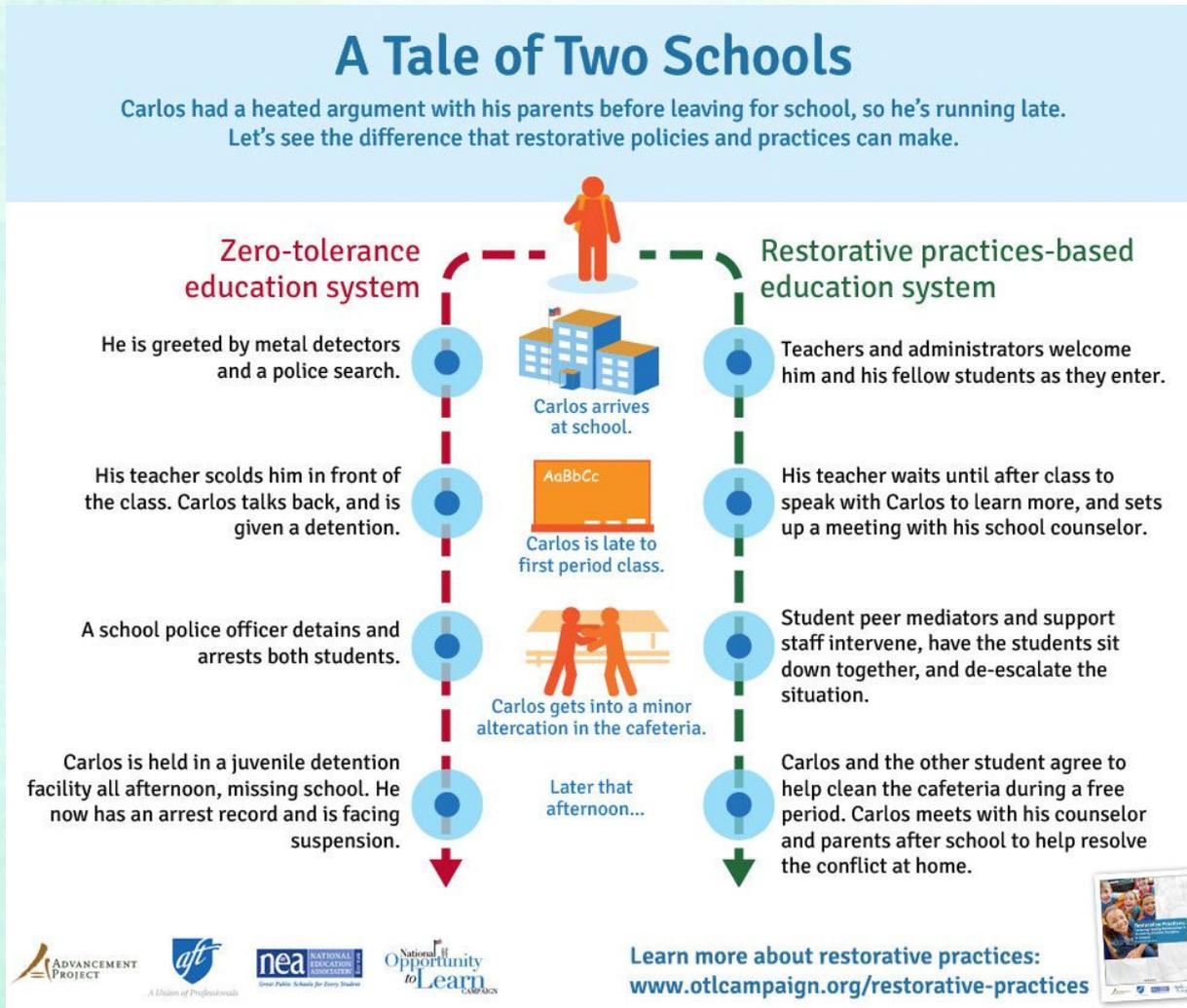


STARTING YOUR DAY A BRAIN-ALIGNED WAY

Let's compare a zero-tolerance education system with a restorative practices-based, BRAIN-ALIGNED education system...



Have you heard of the “school-to-prison pipeline?” When we implement these zero-tolerance policies, research shows that “nearly six in ten public school students studied were suspended or expelled at least once between their seventh and twelfth grade school years” (Fabelo, et al., 2011, p. ix). That is a LOT of kids being suspended and/or expelled. Additionally, this is a racial equity issue because there are “disproportionately high suspension/expulsion rates for students of color: Black students are suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than white students” (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Additionally, we know that once a student has been expelled or suspended that their likelihood of being involved in the juvenile justice system increases significantly in the following years (Fabelo, et al., 2011, p. xii). Is this racially biased, zero-tolerance system what we want for our children? I say no. That is why I urge you to make your first interaction with your students each morning count. Instead of making your first interaction with a student one that escalates them, perhaps you could give them a hug and ask them how they are before any needed redirections. We need our students to know from the moment they walk in the door to our classrooms and schools that they are known and loved—that we see them for who they are and not for their behavior.

STARTING YOUR DAY A BRAIN-ALIGNED WAY

Continued

I challenge you to shift the paradigm of behavior management from one of consequences and punishment to one of regulation, restoration, and teaching into the correct behavior. I urge you to shift your thinking from, "What is wrong with this kid," to "What happened to this kid," because many of our students are walking in with a lot of pain and trauma. Instead of always just punishing the negative behavior, we need to help them first regulate their brains and bodies, connect with them to show them we will stick with them through the conflict, and then help them find a way to repair any harm that they may have caused.

One way we as educators can begin to help our students regulate from the moment they walk in is through your classroom environment, brain-aligned bell work, and a morning meeting fueled with love and positive relationship building. In terms of environment, I like to start the day with lavender diffusing throughout the classroom, soft lighting, and the sounds and sights of the ocean by projecting a video of crashing waves on the screen in my room. When each student comes in, I greet them at the door with a good morning, and a hug or high-five. For students who need some extra help regulating in the morning, I sit with them as they do their morning work, talk to them about how they're doing, and even let them hold our classroom lizard to help them start off their day on a positive note. More ideas for brain-aligned bell work and morning meeting ideas to follow.

Written By: Becky Pokrandt, Indianapolis Public Schools Teacher

Works Cited

Fabelo, T., Thompson, M. D., Plotkin, M., Carmichael, D., Marchbanks III, M. P., & Booth, E. A. (2011, July). Justice Center. Retrieved from Breaking schools' rules: a statewide study of how school discipline relates to students' success and juvenile justice involvement: https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Breaking_Schools_Rules_Report_Final.pdf

U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. (2014, March 21). Data snapshot: school discipline. Civil rights data collection. Washington D.C.

BRAIN-ALIGNED BELL WORK ACTIVITIES:

From: <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/new-way-deliver-bell-work-lori-desautels>

1

FANTASY INTERVIEW

When students enter the class, they choose a half sheet of colored paper with a set of instructions displayed on the smart board. In the front of class is an empty chair and a few props to create a comfortable setting. I begin with a question: "If you could spend 15 minutes with any person in the whole world discussing, questioning, and sharing, who would this be and why did you choose him or her?" The students can write or draw their responses and, if they choose, share them following the exercise. When I implemented this experience with middle school and undergraduate students, the sharing and empathy in the room was palpable, and I learned so much about the emotional and social profiles of these students!

Take the time to know.

Make your first interaction each morning count. Let our children know that they are known and loved.

STARTING YOUR DAY A BRAIN-ALIGNED WAY

Continued

2 THE THINGS I CARRY
At the front of the room is a backpack containing five or six items, pictures, or words that I identify with or hold close to my mind and heart. As I model for my students the contents of my own backpack, I begin sharing who I am as a person. This is a powerful way of not only getting to know your students, but also tying in the backpack's contents with a class novel, science experiment, or any standard that you're teaching -- simply by aligning items in the bag with what students need to know. Students can guess what items might be in the backpack before you reveal them. Prediction is an effective brain state which increases the brain's dopamine levels that are responsible for pleasure- and goal-seeking behaviors.

3 JUST TEN WORDS
Write or draw a ten-word story on a specific topic that you're teaching, or have students write a ten-word story describing their strengths and expertise. Another option for those who don't want to write is creating an infographic.

4 PREDICT AN OUTCOME
Choose a short TED Talk or documentary and watch the first minute. Following this one-minute presentation, students will predict two or three outcomes as to how this presentation will end. This can be related to subject matter that you're teaching, or it could be a motivational video addressing social and emotional skillsets.

5 BELIEFS OUTCOME
Using images, words, colors, or technology, have students design an infomercial about a strong belief that they hold. It could be a longtime personal belief, one that they've developed through recent experiences, or one that they're beginning to question.

6 REINVENTING GUM
Place a stick of gum on every desk as students walk in. On five notecards, have them design five new inventions for chewing gum. Students can share and compare at the end of the bell work.

7 MEETING OF THE MINDS
Students will select characters from a book, historical figures, or any author, inventor, scientist, or individual whom they've been studying. Given a 21st-century challenge, how would these individuals solve it? What would their discussion look like, and how would they relate to one another?

8 THE TRAVELING PANTS
Place an old pair of trousers or blue jeans on a table in the front of the room. Present a variety of questions and activities about these pants, such as: Where have they been? Where would you travel? Describe three places you'd travel or goals you'd accomplish while wearing these pants. What will it take for you to get there? How can you begin creating these destinations or goals today?

STARTING YOUR DAY A BRAIN-ALIGNED WAY

Continued

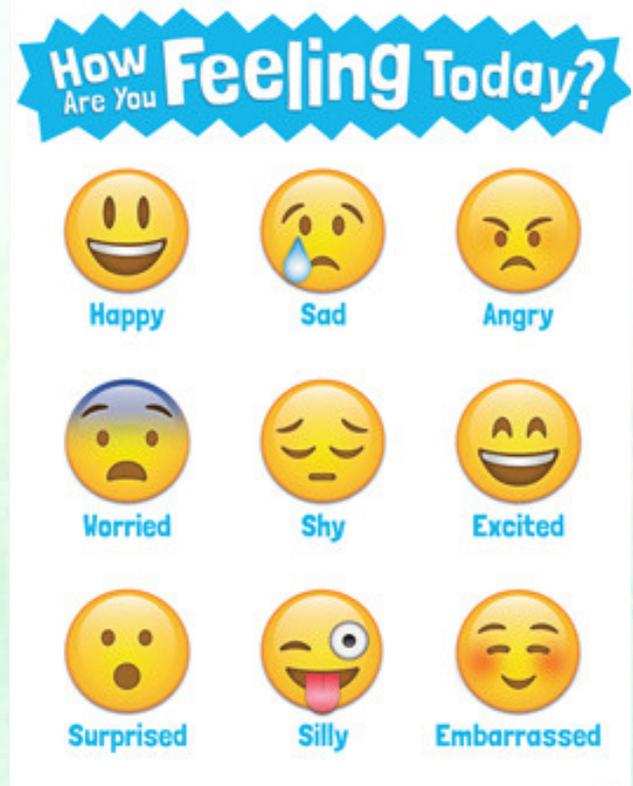
MORNING MEETING ACTIVITIES:

THE EMOJI SHARE

Project the "How are you Feeling Today?" poster on the projector. Have students share what emoji(s) they are feeling today and why.

PITS & PEEKS

Students can share a "pit" and a "peek" about their day, week, etc. A "pit" is something not great happening in their life, and a "peek" is something great happening. You can also call this "highs" and "lows" if you prefer.



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We tend to view **misbehavior as resistance** because we understand where we want children to go. Children view **misbehavior as protection** because they know where they've been.

- L. Tobin

Tobin, L. (1991). What do you do with a child like this?: inside the lives of troubled children. Whole Person Associates .