



## **Alternative to Suspension (ATS) Program**

### **Background & Purpose**

Much of our disciplinary system and methods are guided by the premise that all acts of misbehavior are volitional and within a student's control, and therefore, punishment, alone, and holding one responsible will modify future behavior. Given that the child and adolescent brain is immature, particularly, the prefrontal cortex which is responsible for planning, organization, reasoning, foreseeing consequences of actions, impulse control, and regulating attention and emotions, school suspension has been ineffective in changing behavior and has been associated with increased defiance, more severe problem behavior, negative attitudes toward school and teachers, poor attendance, failure and dropout, and contact with the juvenile justice system. It is imperative that our practices become more dynamic and address how students behave, rather than how we would like them to behave.

### **Staff Survey**

In June and July of 2018, staff at Hoover Middle School and Franklin Middle School were surveyed on alternatives to suspension. A total of 43 staff completed the survey from FMS and a total of 61 staff completed the survey from HMS.

Staff from both schools most preferred, "conferencing / problem-solving / conflict resolution" and "restitution-perform some act to repair damage or harm caused by behavior". There was high support from both schools for utilizing community service as an alternative, particularly for, "assisting custodians in cleaning and/or making repairs".

Regarding indirect supports, both schools most preferred "consultation on behaviorally at-risk students". There was also high support for, "collaborating with community-based leaders/organizations, mental health professionals, CPS, law enforcement, etc..." and for, "facilitating support group circles with parents".

Many written in responses emphasized the importance of including and working with parents.

### **ATS Program**

The ATS Program centers on the philosophy of Restorative Practices (RP). RP emphasizes teaching the student who misbehaved and offering the opportunity to repair harm caused. The Alternative to Suspension Specialist will be primarily responsible for implementing the ATS Programs; however, other staff (administrators and mental health professionals) can participate in and facilitate aspects of the ATS Program.

The principles of Restorative Practices are:

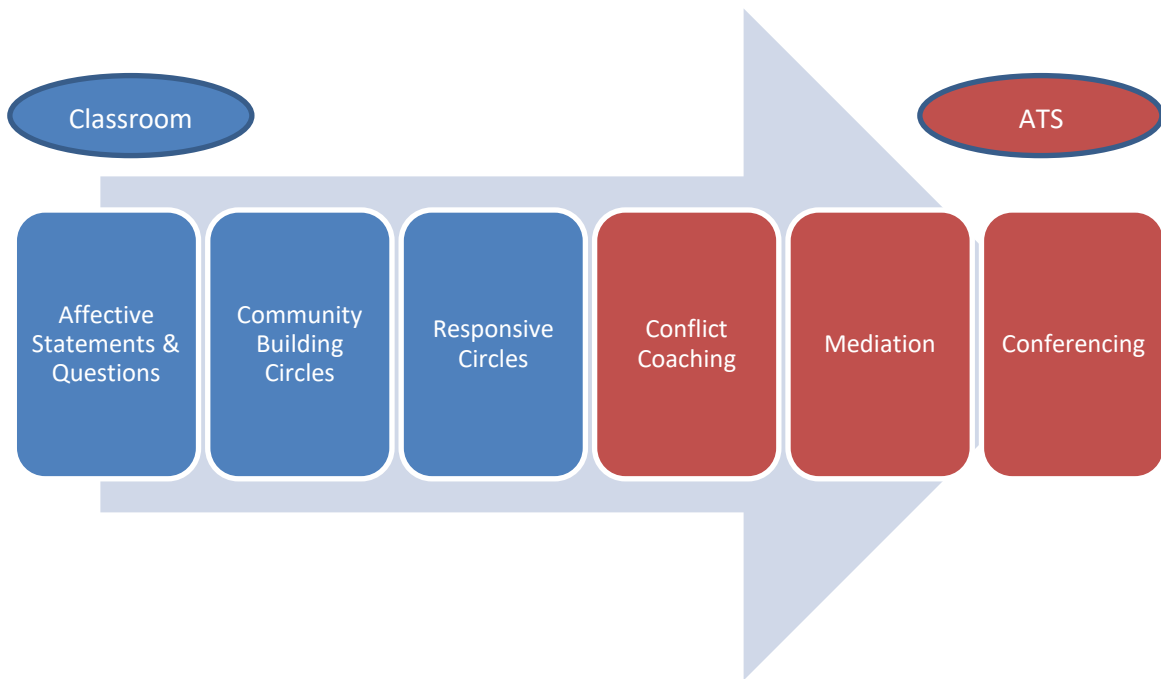
- Voluntary participation
- Respect for all involved
- Inclusion and equal voice of all involved
- A focus on harms, needs, and causes
- Consensus-based decision making to repair harm and prevent future harm
- Expanding the capacity of the community to create a just, fair, and meaningful response



Approaches to Discipline	
Traditional Justice	Restorative Justice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violation of rules/policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violation of people and relationships</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violations create guilt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violations create obligations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Justice requires authority to determine blame and punishment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Justice includes the community, all involved</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting what one deserves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal responsibility</li> </ul>

RP includes various approaches within a 3-Tiered system (universal to intensive). The ATS program will primarily implement Tier 2 and Tier 3 practices.

### Restorative Practice Continuum



### Conflict Coaching & Mediation

Conflict between students and between students and staff are a common occurrence in our schools. The ATS Specialist will facilitate Conflict Coaching and Mediation for conflicts between students and for conflict between staff and student(s). Teachers and other staff can refer students to the ATS Specialist through Infinite Campus for a Mediation, in order to resolve a conflict and prevent future harm and disciplinary action.

Conflict Coaching is done with individuals involved in the conflict, prior to conducting a Mediation. Conflict Coaching is short-term and not recurring counseling. It might be determined from the Conflict Coaching that a Mediation should be delayed or not occur, if an involved party is not emotionally ready to participate or not willing to participate within the expectations of the Mediation.

It is important to note that Mediation is voluntary. Students and staff who participate in a Mediation must agree to do so and within the expectations of the Mediation. At any point, other disciplinary action for students will be



considered, if further problematic behavior and/or violation of mediation expectations, occurs. The outcome of the Mediation will be recorded in Infinite Campus.

### **Restorative Conferencing**

Restorative Conferencing will occur as a result of a major discipline referral, where harm in relationships has occurred. The primary objective is to provide a restorative conference, in lieu of a suspension; however, there may be some severe cases which mandate a suspension, and in these cases, a Restorative Conference might occur when the suspension is completed (i.e. readmit conference).

The school administrator processing the major discipline referral must notify parents of all students involved and gain consent to conduct the Restorative Conference. Parents might also be required to participate in the Restorative Conference. The ATS Specialist will conduct pre-conferences with offender(s) and victim(s) and expectations for the Restorative Conference will be explained and agreed to. The ATS Specialist will facilitate the Restorative Conference and record the outcome in Infinite Campus and directly communicate with relevant parties, if necessary.

If there is a failure to cooperate within the Restorative Conference expectations or the agreement is violated, the case is referred back to the administrator to determine another consequence.

### **Restitution & Community Service**

Giving students an opportunity to repair damage or harm they have caused can be a learning and healing experience. In lieu of a suspension, Restitution could be used in the event that misbehavior results in vandalism or property damage. Within reason, students could participate in a clean-up or repair of damage.

Community Service could also be applied, in lieu of suspension, and might be part of an agreement from a Restorative Conference. Community Service will be performed on school grounds, during and/or after the school day. The service performed will be intended to repair harm caused or to improve the physical environment of the school and/or school culture and climate. Assisting cafeteria and custodial staff, in a manner that is deemed appropriate, could be a type of Community Service that is performed.

Parents must be informed of and in agreement with the Restitution or Community Service, in order for it to be implemented. This will be the responsibility of an administrator, if not the outcome of a Restorative Conference. The ATS Specialist will coordinate and oversee the implementation of Restitution and Community Service.

### **What the ATS Program is NOT**

The ATS Program will be primarily implemented as an alternative to or in lieu of suspension. It will not be implemented, when a student is serving a suspension or is removed from class for a period of time for behavioral reasons. For more serious offenses, which require a formal school suspension, a restorative practice might be applied, if deemed appropriate, when the suspension is completed (i.e. a readmit conference), in order to repair harm and restore safety and responsibility.

The ATS Program is not to be used as a time-away or for the removal of students from an assigned setting.

The ATS Program does not provide recurring counseling and is not intended to address the chronic mental health and emotional needs of individual students.

The ATS Specialist is not responsible for developing and implementing Functional Behavior Assessments and Behavior Intervention Plans.

The ATS program does not eliminate the use of suspension, nor will it end the removal of students to time-away for severely disruptive behavior. It also will not be a be all and end all for addressing our most severe cases which require more individualized responses.



## Goals of the ATS Program

1. Reduce short-term and long-term suspensions
2. Eliminate disproportionality in suspensions across race and for students with disabilities
3. Improve safety, culture, and climate of school
4. Increase student participation and engagement
5. Support and foster positive relationships with students, staff, parents, and community

## ATS Specialist Schedule

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
HMS 8:00 – 11:15	KW 8:45– 12:00	HMS 8:00 – 11:15	KW 8:45 – 12:00	KW 8:00 – 11:15
KW 12:15 – 2:22	HMS 1:00 – 3:30	KW 12:15 – 2:22	HMS 1:00 – 3:30	HMS 12:15 – 3:00
KW 2:30 – 3:30 Afterschool ATS Programming	HMS 3:00 – 4:15 Afterschool ATS Programming	KW 2:30 – 3:30 Afterschool ATS Programming	HMS 3:00 – 4:15 Afterschool ATS Programming	