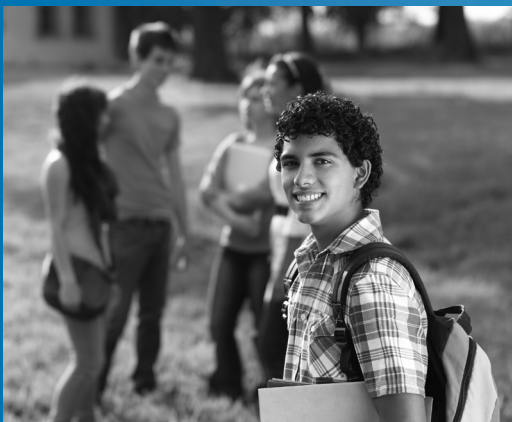


Creating Supportive Environments

that Promote Student Safety and Academic Achievement

A Snapshot of James A. Garfield High School, Los Angeles Unified School District



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Creating Supportive Environments that Promote Student Safety and Academic Achievement:

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Creating Supportive Environments that Promote Student Safety and Academic Achievement : A Snapshot of James A. Garfield High School, Los Angeles Unified School District is available electronically on <http://sshs.promoteprevent.org/publications-sshs/bestpractices> and also on The California Endowment's site at http://www.calendow.org/in_schools/reducing_use_of_harsh_discipline.aspx.

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Introduction

People now realize that this school is a sacred place where students are safe and can succeed academically and have a great future.

—Garfield High School Principal José Huerta

High rates of suspensions and expulsions are daunting problems affecting many California schools. In part, these rates are the result of Zero Tolerance policies enacted in the early 1990s to improve school safety. Although Zero Tolerance policies originally focused on gun carrying, they often were expanded to address other behaviors, such as vandalism, bullying, and dress code violations, leading to dramatic increases in suspensions and expulsions.

Findings from recent studies suggest that Zero Tolerance policies do not promote school safety (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). Instead, this punitive approach to school discipline may have long-term harmful consequences for students. Zero Tolerance policies may increase behavioral problems, the risk of violence and substance use, and the likelihood of academic failure—all of which may help push students who struggle with academic and/or behavioral difficulties out of school and into the juvenile or criminal justice system.

Recent studies have also documented stark racial disparities in how discipline policies are carried out, with higher rates of suspension for students of color, particularly African Americans and English learners (Losen & Martinez, 2013; Losen, Martinez, & Gillespie, 2012). New research from Johns Hopkins University shows that even one suspension in the ninth grade may double the risk of high school dropout (Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2013).

Communities across the country have witnessed the devastating effects that punitive school discipline policies and practices can have on youth and their families. As a result, some community groups have been pushing for changes in school policies and practices to improve outcomes for students. (For more on the benefits of school-community linkages, see sidebar on page 2.)

California is one of a growing number of states, along with Colorado, Florida, Maryland, and Texas, that are taking up school discipline reform at the state level by enacting laws that support the use of positive school discipline practices. Youth and community leaders throughout California have joined in calling for more positive approaches that keep students in school, and a number of the state's largest school districts, including the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), Fresno Unified, and Oakland Unified, have moved to adopt new school board policies aimed at limiting the use of harsh discipline. For example, the LAUSD school board has recently banned suspensions and expulsions for "willful defiance," a subjective type of offense that accounts for a large number of suspensions and expulsions across the state (Frey, 2013).



Former Garfield High Main Building

Schools and Communities Working Together

In the past, community-based groups that sought to improve the social and economic health of their neighborhoods often worked in isolation from their local schools, while schools were often disconnected from the neighborhoods they served. As a result, teachers and staff had an incomplete understanding of, or connection with, the lives of students, their families, and the services and resources offered by the surrounding community.

However in many communities, this is no longer the case. Community leaders now recognize that the fates of schools and communities are closely intertwined. Strong linkages between schools and communities have become more common. In some neighborhoods, schools are now the center of community life, offering afterschool programs; health clinics; and opportunities for training, networking, and employment.

Linkages between schools and communities offer many benefits, including the following:

- Allow the school and community to grow from each other's strengths and assets
- Involve parents in children's education and in the work of the school
- Help parents develop leadership skills
- Increase support for teaching and strengthen the environment for learning
- Help create a unified set of expectations for children
- Increase teacher understanding of children's needs and of community strengths
- Promote coordinated action by teachers, parents, and community leaders for holistic child development
- Build support for efforts to address inequalities in education
- Develop a common vision for school reform and work together to implement the necessary changes
- Create a sense of ownership of the change process and a commitment to making it a success.

Adapted from: Warren, M. (2005). Communities and schools: A new view of urban education reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 75(2), 133–173.

This document highlights the experience of James A. Garfield High School, in LAUSD, a school that dramatically reduced suspensions and expulsions by implementing a comprehensive set of strategies focused on helping each student succeed. The document was developed with funding from The California Endowment, a private statewide foundation dedicated to expanding access to affordable, quality health care to underserved communities and improving the overall health of all Californians. Through its 10-year Building Healthy Communities (BHC) initiative, the foundation is helping 14 California communities develop environments where kids and youth are healthy, safe, and ready to learn.

In 2009, The California Endowment funded a research effort conducted by Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), to better understand suspension and expulsion practices and related student mental health issues in California's schools. This research included a literature review, an online survey of California school districts, in-depth interviews with multidisciplinary community teams in three school districts, and consultation with an advisory board of leaders in education, mental health, and juvenile justice from across California. Eight recommendations (see sidebar on page 3) and related action steps for reducing suspensions and expulsions in California schools were developed based on this research (Education Development Center, Inc., 2011a, 2011b).

To help BHC schools develop and implement effective strategies for reducing suspensions and expulsions, The California Endowment is providing opportunities for schools to learn about effective models and exchange information. This snapshot document, featuring information compiled by EDC staff during a multiday site visit to Garfield High School, will facilitate an exchange of information among six Southern California BHC sites: Boyle Heights, Central Santa Ana, City Heights, Coachella, Long Beach, and South Los Angeles. The ultimate goal of this effort is to create a learning exchange that facilitates the development of supportive environments that promote school safety and foster student achievement.

Eight recommendations from EDC report on reducing suspensions and expulsions in California schools

1. Schools and mental health, juvenile justice, and law enforcement agencies must collaborate to improve outcomes for youth, especially those at risk for suspension or expulsion.
2. Schools and mental health, juvenile justice, and law enforcement agencies must employ improved information-sharing and data collection systems to identify, serve, and communicate about at-risk students.
3. State standards are needed to guide schools' practices related to promoting students' mental health, identifying students who need mental health services, and assisting students to access services.
4. School districts should focus on implementing, adapting, and evaluating evidence-based interventions to decrease suspension and expulsion.
5. School districts must have policies that require programs and services for at-risk youth.
6. School districts must consistently apply suspension and expulsion policies so that existing racial and ethnic disparities are not perpetuated.
7. School districts must identify effective strategies to engage and collaborate with parents.
8. School districts and their community partners should provide support to enable expelled students to rejoin the school community.

Garfield High School's Story

When you step into Garfield's campus, you immediately sense that this school community is different. In the midst of this frenzied urban East Los Angeles neighborhood, you find an oasis of calm. Students are kind and respectful. Teachers and administrators clearly believe that the school has "great kids and outstanding students." This is in marked contrast to a time when Garfield students were seen as good kids but not good students.

—EDC staff member following visit to Garfield High School

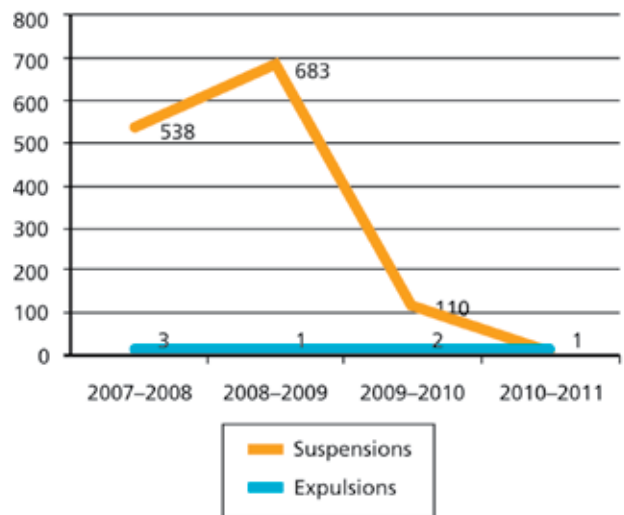
James A. Garfield High School is a comprehensive high school serving 2,500 students in grades 9 through 12. The student body is almost entirely Hispanic or Latino (97 percent in the 2011–2012 school year). Located in East Los Angeles, the school serves many low-income families. Many students are below their grade level in literacy and numeracy skills at the time of enrollment.

Garfield High School has a long history in the community. Several generations of community residents attended the high school, and many have come back as teachers or school personnel. This is a source of pride and motivation for staff, students, and community members. The school's football team is also a strong unifier.

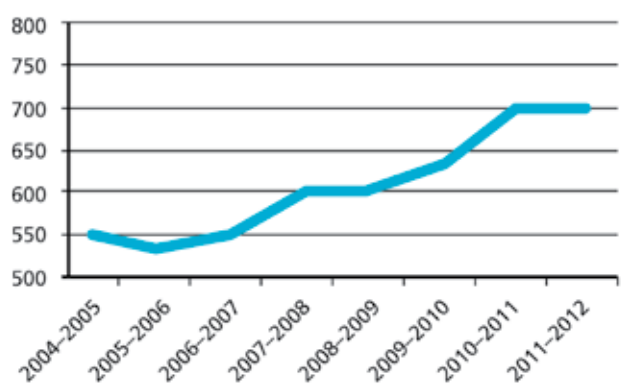
Stepping into Garfield High School today it is hard to imagine that only four years ago the school was at a crossroads. Facing a number of serious problems, including low attendance rates, high rates of suspensions and expulsions, poor academic achievement, and deficiencies in serving students with special needs, Garfield High School was at risk of losing its accreditation.

United by the common goal of saving the school that had served their community for generations, parents, staff, and community members joined forces to help transform the school into a safe and supportive learning environment. As a result of their efforts, Garfield High School is now a different school. Its attendance rate has increased to 95 percent. From 683 suspensions in the 2008–2009 school year, the school issued only 1 suspension

Garfield High School, Suspensions and Expulsions 2007–2011



Garfield High School, API Scores, 2004–2012



in 2011–2012, and none thus far in 2012–2013. Since the 2004–2005 school year, Garfield High School has raised its Academic Performance Index (API) score¹ by 160 points—the highest score among Local District 5 comprehensive high schools (see graphs on the previous page). From 2011 to 2012, the school’s graduation rate increased from 62 percent to 71 percent.

What brought about this dramatic transformation?

These changes did not happen overnight—nor did they result from one particular factor or action. Rather, the implementation of multiple coordinated strategies contributed to Garfield High School’s impressive transformation. These key strategies can be organized under the following areas:

- Supportive leadership
- Engagement of parents and the community
- Personalized curricula
- Focus on academic success
- Data-driven decision-making
- Progressive discipline policy aimed at keeping all students in school

As described next, the combination of these approaches has helped to create a school climate in which everyone—parents, teachers, administrators, and other school personnel—has a role to play in supporting and nurturing Garfield High School students to achieve their full potential.

¹ The API is a score California gives each school based on student test scores—200 is the lowest possible score, 800 is the target API score, and 1,000 is the maximum score.

Key Strategies

The mission of the school is to provide ALL students with the personalized instruction and guidance they need to steadily build and maximize the academic, social, and emotional skills that they will need to be successful in high school, in college, and in life.

— Garfield High School mission statement

Many of the key strategies implemented by Garfield High School are based on models and practices promoted by the California Department of Education (CDE) and LAUSD. These strategies share a number of common elements, such as promoting academic achievement among *all* students, providing support for behavioral and academic needs, and using data to guide decision-making. The following sections describe how Garfield High School implemented these strategies, tailoring them to the school community's unique needs and resources.

Supportive Leadership

Supportive leadership from various levels, including the CDE, LAUSD, and Garfield High School administrators, played an important role in the changes that took place at Garfield High School. As described later in this document, LAUSD provided school personnel with training in positive discipline practices and promoted the adoption of the Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) framework. Leadership from school administrators was critical to obtaining and allocating the resources needed to implement these interventions, and to obtaining buy-in from teachers, other school personnel, parents, and others in the community.

Transformational leadership. This style of leadership (see box below), embraced by Garfield High School leaders, helps engage and motivate teachers and other school personnel to develop leadership skills and achieve high levels of performance. Many staff members work well past regular hours to be available to meet with families or do afterschool activities. This hard work and commitment inspires all staff to go the extra mile and provide excellent service to students.

What is transformational leadership?

Transformational leadership is an approach to leading a group or organization, characterized by four components (referred to as the *four I's*):

- **Ideal Influence (II):** leader as an ideal role model who “walks the talk”
- **Inspirational Motivation (IM):** leader inspires and motivates followers
- **Individualized Consideration (IC):** leader gives personal attention to needs and feelings of followers
- **Intellectual Stimulation (IS):** leader challenges followers to be innovative and creative, thereby helping them achieve higher levels of performance

Adapted from Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006).

Allocation of resources. Garfield High School allocates its resources to ensure that multiple social and emotional supports and counseling services are in place to address problems that can hinder learning. The school uses its Title I funds to hire additional support staff to address academic and behavioral needs. These staff members include a psychiatric social worker, a pupil services and attendance counselor, and additional academic counselors. The school also directs all its categorical monies, including its Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA) funds, to provide the personnel, materials, and training needed to implement a personalized curriculum and schedule.

Focus on teacher training. New standards for hiring teachers require candidates to not only be passionate about their work but also demonstrate teaching skills by creating and delivering a lesson plan. The school provides training to new teachers once a week to review effective instructional strategies and provide them with data that will inform their instructional decisions. The training sessions also address classroom management and positive behavior support.

Shared decision-making. Garfield High School provides many opportunities for school personnel, parents, students, and community members to participate in decision-making. Several models and approaches described later in this document are based on shared decision-making. For example, in the Small Learning Communities (SLC) model, teachers work together to develop curricula and lesson plans tailored to student abilities and interests. As discussed next, the school also finds many creative ways to engage parents and others in the community.

Engaging Parents and Community

Strong ties to parents and to the local community are also key to Garfield High School's success. The school uses a mix of strategies to develop and maintain these relationships.

Engaging parents. Parents are an important component of the Garfield High School team. The school developed many creative ways to welcome parents to the school campus and keep them engaged. Here are a few examples:

- Garfield High School's Parent Center welcomes parents on a daily basis, helping them solve problems related to their children, providing parents with training in English and computers, and increasing their understanding of how the educational system works.
- The school assigns meaningful responsibilities to parent volunteers who walk around the campus during school hours and talk to students. On any given day, as many as 80 parent volunteers are on the Garfield High School campus.
- With funding from LAUSD, the school hired a parent liaison to oversee all parent engagement activities, and two part-time community representatives who support community involvement and work with the onsite parent volunteers.
- Garfield High School distributes information to parents in English and Spanish via monthly newsletters, flyers, and other print correspondence; and offers many opportunities for parents to visit the school, including parent conference nights, workshops, trainings, and an open house.

To promote parental involvement, the school makes arrangements for translation services, provided by the district's Translation Unit Branch and/or by Garfield High School staff members, for all council meetings and other meetings to which parents are invited.

Involving the community. Several organizations bring together staff, parents, students, and the community. These groups include the Title I and English Learner advisory councils, the School Site Council, and the Shared

Decision-Making Council. The school also works closely with community groups to offer additional services and support to students. For example, the nonprofit organization Mothers of East Los Angeles offers drug counseling on campus, after school. Another nonprofit organization, Circle of Help, works with Garfield High School to offer drug testing, counseling, and meetings with troubled students twice a week. In addition, Garfield High School also established a good relationship with the LAUSD School Police and the Sheriff's department, who help patrol the campus area to make sure students arrive and leave the campus safely.

The school has a physician who works with its youth on medical wellness and health, including treatment for sexually transmitted infections. It offers a full-service clinic on campus that offers vaccinations, family planning services, and mental health services. The clinic is run by LA BEST, an organization that operates clinics at multiple locations.

Personalized Curricula

Engaging students and providing personalized support can be a challenge for a large high school like Garfield High School. As described in this section, changes to its academic calendar and school schedule have made it possible for the school to provide more personalized services and support to its students. An outside development, the opening of a new public high school in the neighborhood, in 2010, helped Garfield High School implement these changes by reducing the size of its student body.

Structural changes. For 15 years, Garfield High School had used a three-track schedule that divided students and teachers into different tracks with different instructional times and vacations. (This type of schedule allows schools to accommodate a greater number of students, as one group can attend school while another is on vacation.) At the end of the 2009–2010 school year, Garfield High School went back to a traditional single track, year-round schedule that allows all students to attend school at the same time. Concurrently, the school also adopted a modified “4 by 4” schedule (four quarters of four classes), consisting of three classes that meet daily each quarter, and two classes that meet on alternating days over one semester. Class periods are 90 minutes long.

The new calendar and schedule allow students to complete up to 17 courses in a regular school year, rather than the traditional 12. As described next, this change supported the development of personalized curricula using the SLC model.

Small Learning Communities. Garfield High School adopted the SLC model (see box on the next page). The school created five cooperating SLCs organized around instructional themes. Each community includes about 35 teachers and 500 students. Students choose the community they want to join. In addition to taking classes offered in their community, students can also take extracurricular classes, which helps to enhance their sense of being a part of the larger school. An SLC coordinating committee organizes the activities of the five communities.

Use of pretesting and periodic assessments ensures that students are properly placed as they move from one grade to the next. Students with below-level skills can take skills acceleration courses. Students who do not need this supplemental support can use the extra classes for enrichment.

By allowing students to develop personalized curricular paths, the schedule supports the RtI² approach described later in this document. This approach to scheduling enables teachers to be available to help students in the classroom and via conferencing periods, and provides teachers with more time for professional development.

Small Learning Communities (SLCs)

An SLC, or school-within-a-school, is a model that reconfigures large secondary schools into small academies. This simple structural reduction in school size promotes more one-to-one contact among students and school personnel, allowing them to know and care about one another in a way that is hard to achieve in large schools. Personalization can help to promote school retention and student success.

The organizational structure of SLCs may be less rigid than in traditional high schools. Administrators and teachers often have shared roles in decision-making and more influence on budget, curriculum, and program offerings.

SLCs often are organized around instructional themes that reflect community interests. For example, students may choose to be part of a technical academy, an environmental science academy, or a business leadership program. Community organizations and businesses may support these programs through internships or consultation.

The SLC format can help large, comprehensive schools better meet student needs. Many schools, particularly those in urban districts with high minority and low-income student populations, are turning to SLCs as a way of closing achievement gaps and preventing students from leaving school without a diploma.

Adapted from Lara, J., & Hartford, S. (2010).

Focus on Academic Success

The academic success of our students was our focus, more than on behavior and discipline. The byproduct of student success was less discipline problems.

— Garfield High School Principal José Huerta

A clear focus on promoting the academic success of all students is the most important driver leading to recent advances in student achievement at Garfield High School. Academic success is closely linked to positive behaviors, as students who do well in school are less likely to be bored or act out.

Professional Learning Communities. Garfield High School has adopted the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) model (see sidebar on the next page), which provides teachers with the time and structure they need to analyze student performance, refine their instructional methods, and enhance student learning. The school allocates time during the week for teachers of all core subjects to meet in course-alike teams for 90-minute sessions to analyze student work, develop common lessons and assessments, and improve their instructional strategies.

Response to Intervention (RtI). Initially created to improve practices in special education, RtI is a model used to prevent, identify, and address problems that interfere with student learning (see sidebar on page 11). The model, when used in conjunction with Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is commonly referred to as RtI²—an approach that Garfield High School has also adopted.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

PLCs view the core mission of formal education as not simply to ensure that students are taught but to ensure that they *learn*. PLC educators recognize that they must work together to ensure that all students learn. As a result, all teachers provide struggling students with additional time and support.

In addition to being systematic and schoolwide, the PLC's response to students who experience difficulty is:

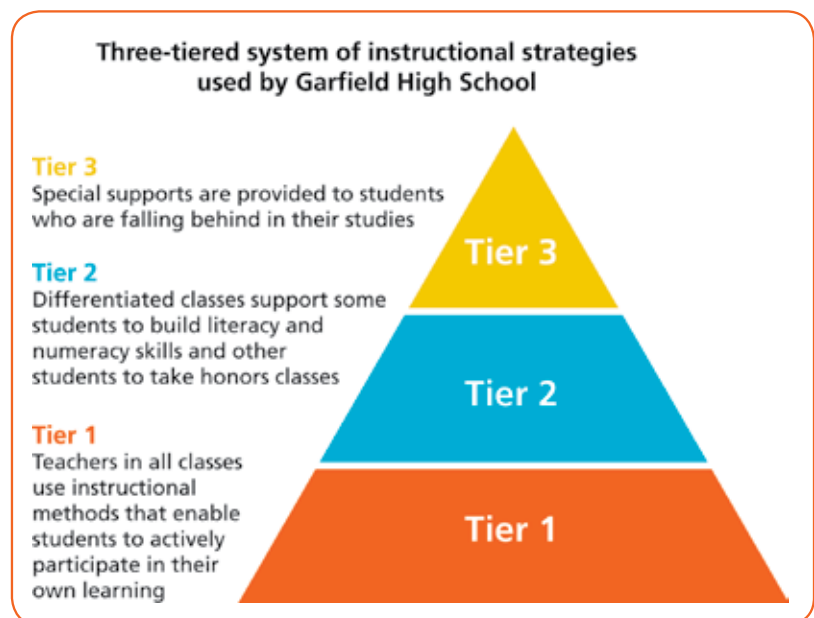
- **Timely.** The school quickly identifies students who need additional time and support.
- **Based on intervention rather than remediation.** Students receive help as soon as they experience difficulty rather than relying on summer school, retention, and remedial courses.
- **Directive.** Learning is not optional, so teachers prioritize providing extra assistance to students in need.

PLCs judge their effectiveness based on results. Working together to improve student achievement becomes the routine task of everyone in the school.

Adapted from DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & Karhanek, G. (2004).

Garfield High School uses the RtI² approach, which is also called Response to *Instruction* and Intervention, or RTI squared. Developed by a work group formed by CDE, the RtI² framework emphasizes effective instruction and earlier intervention for students experiencing difficulty learning, to ensure that they are not misdiagnosed or over-identified for special education services due to lack of appropriate instruction (Ventura County Office of Education & California Department of Education, 2011). The model integrates resources from general education, categorical programs, and special education through a comprehensive system of core instruction and tiered levels of interventions.

Tiered response. As recommended by RtI², Garfield High School has adopted a three-tiered system of instructional strategies and supports (see pyramid graphic). Tier 1 calls for all teachers in all classes to use instructional methods that enable students to actively participate in their own learning. Tier 2 consists of differentiated classes that support some students to build literacy and numeracy skills and other students to take honors classes. Tier 3 consists of special supports provided to students who are falling behind in their studies. Continual assessments enable students to receive the most appropriate supports, thereby preventing behavioral and academic problems from emerging.



Response to Intervention (RtI)

RtI supports students with learning and/or behavior problems by delivering a range of interventions. The RtI model has four main components:

In addition to being systematic and schoolwide, the PLC's response to students who experience difficulty is:

1. A schoolwide, multilevel instructional and behavioral system for preventing school failure
2. Screening
3. Progress monitoring
4. Data-based decision making for instruction, movement within the multilevel system, and disability identification (in accordance with state law)

Student needs and student performance are systematically assessed. This information guides decisions about changes in instruction or goals.

Adapted from Ventura County Office of Education & California Department of Education. (2011). *Response to Instruction and Intervention RtI2: an implementation and technical assistance guide for districts and schools*

Data-Driven Decision-Making

Garfield High School has put into place information systems that allow it to continually collect, analyze, and use data from various sources to make decisions regarding all academic and behavioral issues. Data from regular academic assessments allow the school to comply with federal, state, and LAUSD requirements; develop personalized curricular paths for its students; and ensure that students are placed in the classes that best meet their needs. Data on behavioral issues allow Garfield High School to follow up on each discipline referral until the issue is fully resolved.

Integrated Student Information System. Garfield High School uses the Integrated Student Information System (ISIS), available from LAUSD, to capture and track information on academic performance on various assessments. Because the information is comprehensive and available in real time, ISIS helps the school closely monitor student performance and ensure the appropriate placement of students and timely delivery of special services. For example, data from the state-mandated California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE), a test given multiple times throughout the year, allow Garfield High School to identify students who may benefit from its CAHSEE Boot Camp.

School-Wide Information System. Garfield High School uses the School-Wide Information System (SWIS), a Web-based system, to collect and track information on all discipline referrals (Educational and Community Supports, 2013). The system provides school personnel with the ability to evaluate individual student behavior, the behavior of groups of students, and behaviors occurring during specific time periods of the school day. As discussed in the next section, Garfield High School uses SWIS to track, review, and resolve each referral using a personalized approach to discipline.

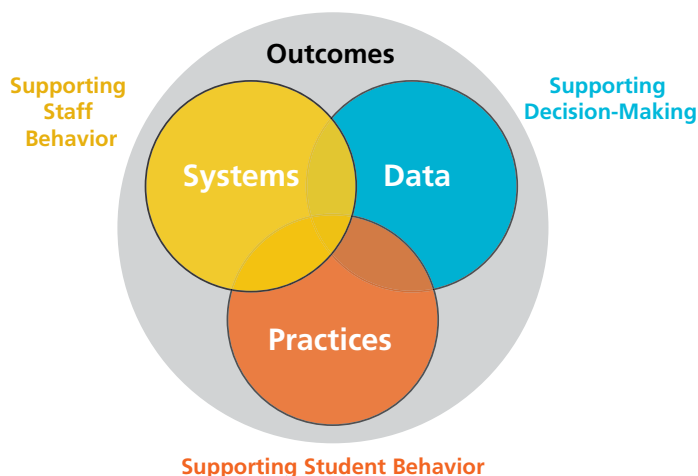
School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (SWPBIS)

SWPBIS, also referred to as SWPBS, is an approach aimed at promoting academic and social success for all students. SWPBIS is not a specific “model” but a compilation of effective practices, interventions, and systems change strategies.

SWPBIS emphasizes four integrated elements: (1) data for decision-making, (2) measurable outcomes supported and evaluated by data, (3) practices with evidence that these outcomes are achievable, and (4) systems that efficiently and effectively support implementation of these practices.

Adapted from OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (2009).

4 PBS Elements Supporting Social Competence and Academic Achievement



Progressive Discipline Plan

As a police officer, you are not the one to suspend—that is a disciplinary decision. . . . We understand that this kid isn't going anywhere if you suspend or not. They will be in your school, or another school, and we will see the student again.

—Garfield High School police officer

Garfield High School has developed a progressive discipline plan that is based on the SWPBIS approach.

School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support training. Prior to 2009, Garfield High School had 683 suspensions. Students with disabilities had more than 135 suspensions in the 2008–2009 school year, placing the school out of compliance with the consent decree (LAUSD, 2003). As a result, the school district required that Garfield High School staff be trained in School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (SWPBIS) (see box above). The training helped advance the development of the school’s progressive discipline plan.

Replacing suspensions with referrals. Garfield High School enacted a moratorium on suspensions and implemented a multistage process for resolving behavioral infractions while keeping students in school. As recommended by LAUSD, the school formed a Coordination of Services Team (COST). Facilitated by a psychiatric social worker, the COST team also includes a nurse, a pupil services assistant, a counselor, a parent liaison, a dean of discipline, the assistant principal, and representatives from campus police. When a student has a

problem, any staff member can make a referral to the COST team. The COST referral form is extensive and ensures that the student will receive all of the interventions and services he or she needs. The COST team meets once a week to follow up on all referrals. Staff members carefully review each case and develop an action plan targeted to the student. All referrals are tracked using a computer-based system and reviewed weekly by a discipline review team.

Resolving conflicts. The first step in resolving conflicts is to speak separately with the parties involved. All parties then come together and share what they discussed. Usually, the students involved in the conflict agree that the fight was avoidable and inconsequential. If a student acts out in class, the student may be required to eat lunch in the dean's office and catch up on schoolwork.

Creating teachable moments. School personnel view conflicts as educational opportunities. For example, when bullying issues emerged on campus, the school added assemblies to discuss bullying and why it is unacceptable. If a student is sent to detention for using a racial slur, a teacher will lead a discussion about why slurs are harmful and unacceptable. Detention is a time for reflection and discussion.

Discipline and safety plan. The school has created a written plan that makes it clear that safety and discipline are everyone's responsibility (see sidebar on the next page). Building on its SWPBIS training, Garfield High School identified three core behavioral expectations for students—Be Safe, Responsible and Respectful—and incorporated them into its Expected School-wide Learning Results: Persons of Character, Communicators, and Critical Thinkers. Rules and policies are reviewed at SLC assemblies, where school police officers discuss laws related to sexual harassment, weapons, and drugs. Students contribute to assemblies in many ways, such as determining topics and creating motivational posters addressing school rules.

Garfield High School Discipline and Safety Plan

The school's Discipline and Safety Plan describes the roles and responsibilities of all members of the school community. The plan also presents Garfield High School's Progressive Discipline Policy. The following are a few excerpts.

“Students are required to arrive at school and at each class on time. They must come prepared to learn and have their homework completed. Students must interact respectfully with all their teachers, peers, and staff. When questions or conflicts with others arise, students are expected to attempt to address their problems or ask an adult for assistance. . . .

Parents/guardians are expected to send their students to school on time and with adequate supplies each day. Parents/guardians must understand the school's expectations, rules, and policies. Parents/guardians are expected to maintain regular communication with their student's teachers and counselors and work with them to promote school success and social growth. . . .

Teachers will provide a well-planned, standards-driven curriculum in a clean, safe, nurturing environment. They will model respectful communication, sound decision-making, and lifelong learning skills through teaching of the course content. Teachers will work with all other staff to implement the school-wide expectations, rules, policies, and procedures on a daily basis. . . .

Counselors, SLC lead, coordinators, and deans will communicate with all other stakeholders to support academic success and social growth of students. They enforce school expectations, rules, and policies at all times. They assist and support teachers when students experience academic or behavioral problems, and counsel students and parents/guardians when interventions are necessary.”

Adapted from the James A. Garfield High School Discipline and Safety Plan 2012-2013 with permission.

Summary

Our number one goal is keeping students on campus where they can receive the support they need to get them through their problems, which will allow them to focus on their studies.

— Garfield High School Principal José Huerta

Only a few years ago, Garfield High School's large student body and standard curriculum made it easy for students who struggled with academic or behavioral problems to fall through the cracks. Overwhelmed teachers and school personnel lacked essential training and resources to support these students. Suspensions and expulsions pushed troubled students out of school. In the process, many promising futures were being jeopardized.

With guidance and support from LAUSD and school leaders, the entire school community came together to carry out the needed reforms. In doing so, they succeeded in creating a positive school climate (see box below) characterized by high expectations for learning and achievement, a safe and caring environment, high student motivation and engagement, and partnerships with families and the community. Each member of the school community has a role to play in sustaining the new school climate.



Garfield High School Courtyard

What is school climate and why is it important?

School climate refers to the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of students', parents', and school personnel's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures.

A positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing, and satisfying life. In a positive school climate:

- Norms, values, and expectations support people in feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe.
- People are engaged and respected.
- Students, families, and educators work together to develop a shared school vision.
- Educators model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning.
- Each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.

Adapted from National School Climate Center website (<http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/>)

Garfield High School's impressive transformation is a story of hope. It is also living proof that schools that face similar challenges can adapt existing models and strategies to develop interventions that are consistent with their unique needs and resources. By creating a supportive environment that provides opportunities tailored to each student's interests and abilities, schools, parents, and communities can help all students reach their full potential and achieve healthy, productive, and satisfying lives.

Resources

A teacher's guide to rerouting the pipeline

<http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-43-spring-2013/feature/teachers-guide-rerouting-pipeline>
http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/Rerouting_the_Pipeline.pdf

National Center on Response to Intervention

<http://www.rti4success.org/>

OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports

www.pbis.org

Response to Instruction and Intervention RtI²: an implementation and technical assistance guide for districts and schools, Ventura County Office of Education, & California Department of Education, 2011

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/ri/>

RTI Action Network

<http://www.rtinetwork.org>

What is a professional learning community? Richard DuFour, 2004

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may04/vol61/numo8/What-Is-a-Professional-Learning-Community%C2%A2.aspx>

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