

Letter

from Principal to an *Existing Partner*

Dear (Community Mental Health Professional):

As principal of Castle Hill High School, I feel fortunate to count you and your organization as a partner in the important work of educating, supporting, and encouraging our students. As I know you are aware, recent newspaper and television reports have expressed concern about (insert discipline-related issue:) the number of minority students in our community who are being removed from school each year through what are being described as *harsh, punitive, and discriminatory discipline practices*. I want to assure you that I take this concern very seriously, and that we—Castle Hill High School and the Castle Hill School District—are committed to turning this negative into a success story for our students, district, and community.

The data regarding this issue are troubling. It is critical that we help students understand when their behaviors are harming others and the school community, but we need to do it in a way that does not include a “vacation from school” (which is often unsupervised) or push them to drop out or become involved in the juvenile justice system.

My goal is to explore some of the proven alternatives to our existing punitive discipline system—approaches that not only lower suspension rates and hold students accountable, but also result in overall academic and attendance gains for *all* students, not just those struggling with behavior issues. However, the school cannot do this alone. We need the input, energy, expertise, and commitment of a wide range of stakeholders, both our existing partners and new ones. In short—we need *you!*

Because of your role in addressing (insert issue of concern:) issues of mental health within our community and your work directly with our school, you are the ideal person to join our team of community leaders, school and district staff, and parents. You would bring a necessary perspective, along with your years of experience working with youth and families and your insights into how our schools and community can work effectively to improve the future for our students.

Can you spare an hour to sit down with me and our group to begin to discuss the best way to transform our current practices around school discipline and make the school climate safer and stronger for all of our children? I will follow up by phone and e-mail to see about your availability. Thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely,

William Jackson, Principal
Castle Hill High School