

POSITIVE ACTION CENTER: A NEW APPROACH TO DISCIPLINE MANAGEMENT

Susan Armoni, Ph.D., Executive Director ^a
Robert Gonzales, M.R.E., M. Div., Deputy Director ^a

^a paxUnited – The National Mediation Center®

Session Summary

Abstract

Behavior problems in our classrooms are the major deterrent from learning. Millions of dollars are spent each year in dealing with discipline referrals. Many times the students and the adults who work with them are at a loss as to how to change these situations. Join us as we explore Positive Action Center (PAC), a peer-to-peer mentoring program that incorporates a process that allows the situations to be examined and behaviors changed to afford both student success and classroom peace.

Positive Action Center Background Information

Positive Action Center (PAC) was originally developed as an enhancement to the nationally recognized Peers Making Peace© Peer Mediation program. The PAC program was developed and implemented because one out of every three students either drop out or flunk out of school nationally. It has been proven that alternative education settings are often the gateway to dropping out or flunking out of school. The PAC program successfully addresses these issues and provides students with a mentor that helps them to explore new options and solutions for their current situation and for appropriately behaving in potentially negative situations in the future.

Positive Action Center Program Summary

Positive Action Center was designed to be implemented on secondary school campuses. Peers Making Peace©-trained mediators received training in the PAC mentoring program. Once trained, PAC mentors approached students in In School Suspension (ISS) and alternative education programs (AEP) and offered them the opportunity to reflect upon the situation that caused them to be removed from the classroom, reviewed options for improving the situation in the future, and discussed options that would allow for future success.

Positive Action Center Program Findings

The program evaluation of Positive Action Center was conducted at six program sites. A total of 151 mentors were trained during these six sessions; 34.43 percent were male and 65.6 percent were female. The mentors trained were Caucasian at 43.7 percent, African American at 34.4 percent, Hispanic at 16.6 percent and 5.3 percent other. The majority, 54.3 percent, were between 17 and 18 years of age, 37.18 percent are on free or reduced lunch programs, and 1.32 percent had a mental or physical disability. Six hundred eight-six mentoring sessions were completed; 670 successful action plans were created. The success rate for action plans was 97.6 percent. All 151 mentors improved their test scores pre- to post.

Seven adults were trained with the following ethnic breakdown: 7 percent African American; 7 percent Hispanic, 86 percent Caucasian. All adults successfully completed the training and subsequently provided facilitation of PAC programs in their schools. The success rate for both participation and completion were 100 percent. All adults improved their test scores pre- to post.

Table 1. Positive Action Center evaluation results

Number of students trained as mentors	151
Number of teachers and other adults trained	7
Number of mentees involved in mentoring	686
Number and percentage of students assigned to an adult mentor	107 / 15.6 percent
Number and percentage of students successfully completing Action Plan	670 / 97.6 percent
Change in percentage of mentees referred again to ISS	28 percent
Change in percentage of mentees referred again to AEP	4.3 percent
Number and percent of mentees that improved their GPA	600 / 87.5 percent
Reduction in mentee tardiness	70.8 percent
Reduction in mentee absenteeism	53.8 percent
Number and percent of adult and students improving scores on post-tests	158 / 100 percent

Data were collected from mentees from six project sites; 35.3 percent of these participants were male and 64.7 percent were female. The ethnic breakdown of the participants was as follows: 40.9 percent are African American, 23.7 percent are Caucasian, 10.8 percent are Hispanic and 24 percent other. More than one in five (20.4 percent) are 15 years of age, 25.8 percent are 16 years of age, 23.7 percent are 17 years of age, and 30.1 percent 18 years of age. The majority of the respondents reported they are in 11th grade. Nearly three of four respondents (73.1 percent) had been to ISS at least once, and 28.0 percent returned after the program. Prior to implementation of PAC, the recidivism rate was 28.2 percent to AEP. Almost one in six (16.1 percent) of the participants had been in AEP at least once. After receiving PAC mentoring, only 4.3 percent returned to AEP. This shows a reduction in recidivism for both ISS and AEP.

There were 686 initial sessions. The participants attended different amounts of follow-up sessions. The average GPA for the group prior to referral to ISS/AEP was 1.88, and the GPA average after receiving mentoring was 2.25. This shows significant improvement – 12 percent – in the GPA of participants. The absences prior to referral to ISS/AEP were 3,829 and after receiving mentoring only 1,127 absences were reported for the group of participants – a 53.8 percent decrease in absenteeism. There were 3,115 tardies for the group of participants prior to the referral and 910 after receiving mentoring – a 70.8 percent decrease in tardies.

In summary, positive changes were exhibited in the mentees after participation in the PAC program. Program participants' GPA increased by 12 percent, the number of absences decreased by 53.8 percent, the number of tardies decreased by 70.8 percent, and the numbers of students returning to ISS were cut by almost 50 percent.

Positive Action Center Discussion Questions

1. Why do students get sent to ISS/AEP?
2. Why do students drop out or flunk out of school?
3. What are the long-term consequences of dropping out or flunking out of school?
4. What impact does student dropout rate have on American society?
5. What is the financial impact of students dropping out of school?
6. What if we improve the outcome of assignment to ISS/AEP?
7. What are the long-term benefits of creating action plans?

Positive Action Center Summary and Conclusions

Positive Action Center is an innovative and proven approach to discipline management in schools. It allows students who have been in trouble to really examine the situation and discover viable options for improving the current situation and preventing future incidents.

At the conclusion of the program evaluation, it is clear that Positive Action Center had a tremendous impact on school campuses, student mentees and mentors. paxUnited will continue to implement the PAC program on as many campuses as possible with current funding. paxUnited will continue to seek additional funds in order to meet the demand for this program set forth by schools.

Positive Action Center Implications

Based on the evaluation of the Positive Action Center program and the program methodology, schools implementing this program will have fewer students return to ISS/AEP. The students receiving mentoring will also acquire new skills that will make them more productive members of the campus environment and society as a whole.