START: Social skills Training and Aggression Replacement Techniques
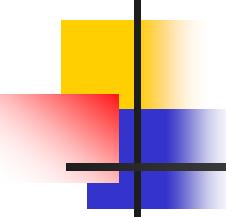
School-Wide Implementation Model

Susan Fread Albrecht, Ed.D.
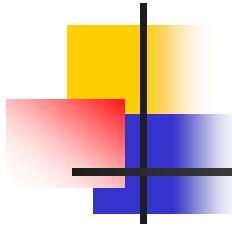
Nationally Certified School Psychologist

Ball State University
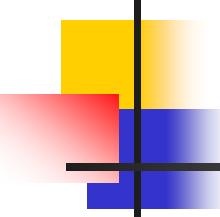
Students fail because....

- Not interested in school – history of academic and social failure

- Lack self-motivation

- Place little or no value in education in relationship to their futures

- Lack developmentally appropriate self-monitoring and self-management skills

Socially Toxic Environments

- The social world of children, the social context which they grow up in, has become poisonous to their development.

- To be a child is to be shielded from the direct demands of adult economic, political, and sexual forces.

- At stake is the essence of childhood as a protected time and place in the human life cycle.
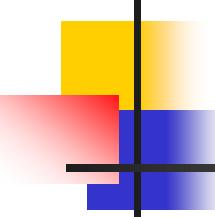
Risk Factors

Children at risk for significant behavior problems can be identified as early as age 3.

50% of children who exhibit significant behavior problems in 1st grade will be identified as delinquent by middle school.

Over time, the cost of remediation becomes more costly with diminishing positive results.

Use of zero tolerance and coercive punishment actually increases aggressive behavior.

Theories of Aggression
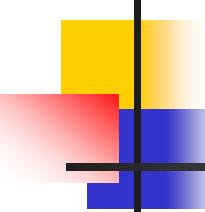
1. **INNATE DRIVES**
   - temperament, biophysical influences

2. **FRUSTRATIONS**
   - If students are not successful on your academic or social curriculum, they will generate their own.
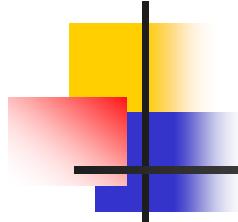
3. **LEARNED BEHAVIOR**
   - Students do not "unlearn" behaviors; they learn alternative, appropriate behaviors.

Choosing to Meet Angering Needs

1. **Aggression may get others to help us.**

2. **Aggression may be used as an excuse for our unwillingness to do something more effective.**

3. **Aggression helps to gain powerful control.**

4. **Aggression helps to gain control and power, even if someone is frightened, small, or feels powerless.**
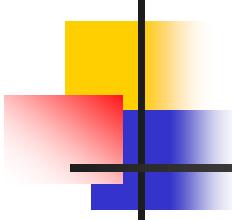
Belligerent Indifference

Current Instructional Model:
(Faulty Thinking on our Part)
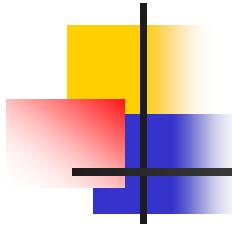
THEY <u>KNOW</u> WHAT TO DO.

THEY <u>CHOOSE</u> NOT
TO DO IT.
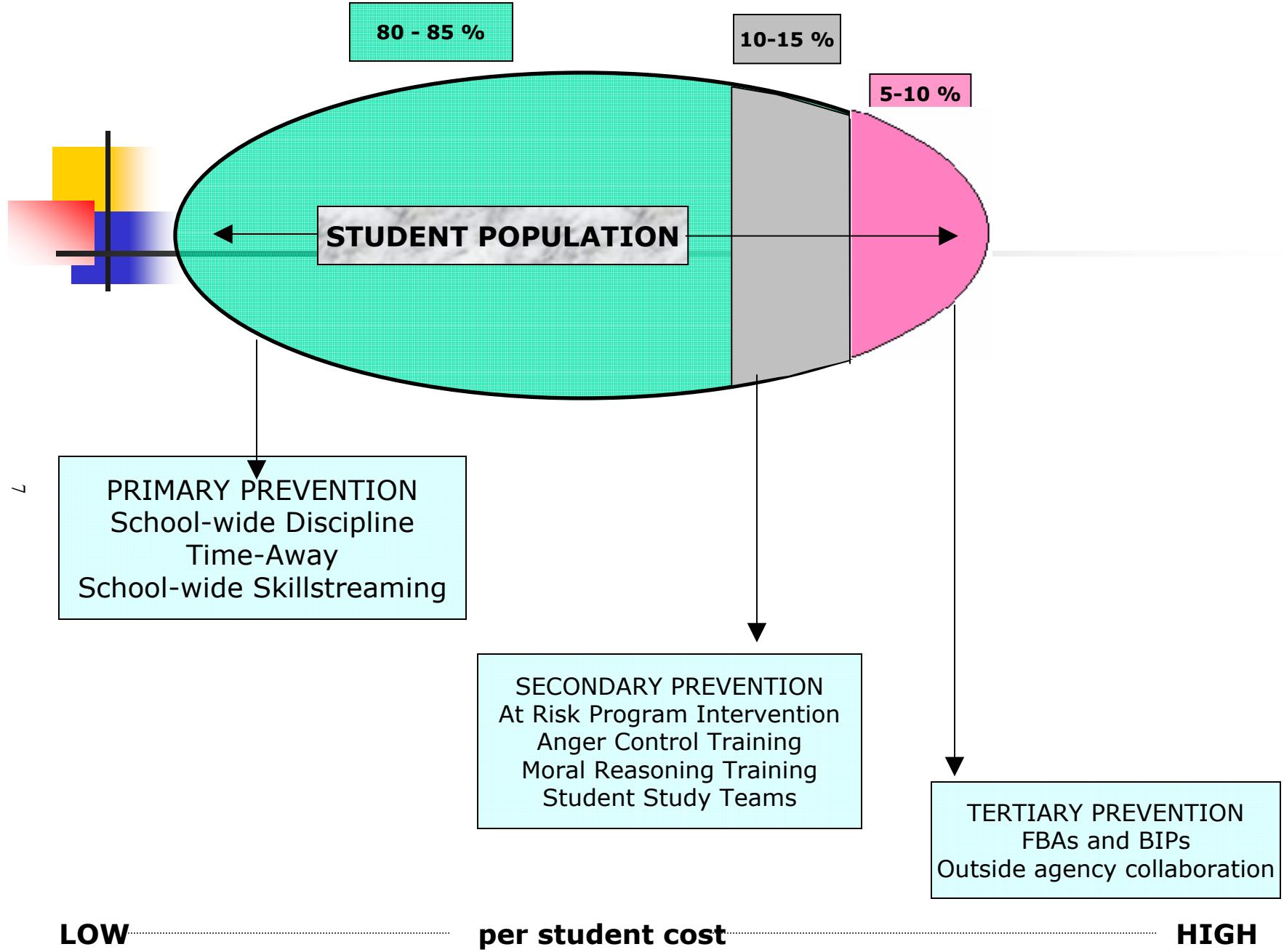
What we must remediate:

- Skill Deficit – lack of knowledge
  Curriculum = Teaching

- Performance Deficit – lack of proficiency
  Curriculum = Practice

Starting Point

> 67% of all elementary school students were referred out of the classroom for disciplinary action.

> 10% of all high school students were expelled.

80 - 85 %

10-15 %

5-10 %

STUDENT POPULATION

PRIMARY PREVENTION
School-wide Discipline
Time-Away
School-wide Skillstreaming

SECONDARY PREVENTION
At Risk Program Intervention
Anger Control Training
Moral Reasoning Training
Student Study Teams

TERTIARY PREVENTION
FBAs and BIPs
Outside agency collaboration
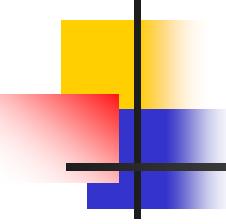
LOW .... **per student cost** .... **HIGH**

S. F. Albrecht
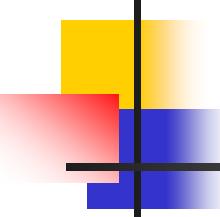
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Components of a school-wide behavioral program
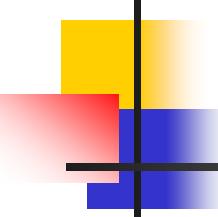
- Establishing a *priority for change*.
- Collaborating, using a *team-based approach*.
- Providing visible *administrative leadership* and support.
- Clearly stating a *need for intervention*.
- *Agreeing as a staff* that a need exists.
- Reflecting decisions as *written policy*.
- *Including all staff and students* in the implementation process.
- Having staff with *behavioral competence* available in the school.
- Using a *proactive, positive, and preventative* approach for managing student behavior.
- Making a *commitment* of necessary resources.

Mehas, Boling, Sobieniak, Sprague, Burke and Hagan (1998)
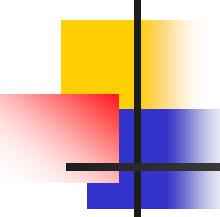
Getting ready

- Plant seeds of interest
- Acknowledge frustration
- Cite examples of curricula
- Encourage pro-active rather than reactive stance
- Stress **investment** of time, energy and resources
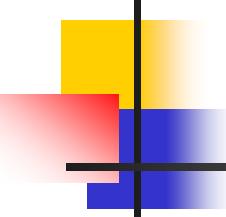
What We Know

☑ Problem behaviors are skill deficits as well as performance deficits.

☑ Street skills are not necessarily school skills.

☑ School survival skills = self-control, compliance, good work habits.

☑ Behavior management strategies must be balanced with academic and social skills instruction.
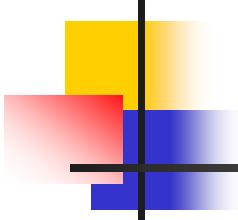
Getting started

- Full staff meeting to discuss what to do
- Anticipated benefits:
  - *improved academic performance*
  - *reduced off-task behavior*
  - *reduced classroom disruptions*
  - *better environment for teachers*
- Overview of START curriculum

START Curriculum

- **Skillstreaming**
  (the behavioral component)
  Teaches what to do.

- **Anger Control Training**
  (the emotional component)
  Teaches what not to do.

- **Moral Reasoning Training**
  (the values component)
  Teaches why to use the skills.

Skillstreaming Procedures

Modeling
(Skill demonstration by trainers)

+

Role-Playing
(Skill rehearsal by youth)

+
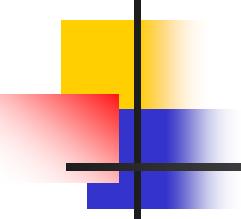
Performance Feedback
(by trainers and all youth in the group)

+

Generalization Training
(to increase both transfer and maintenance)

Anger Control Training

Triggers
(1) External and/or (2) Internal
+
Cues
+
Reducers
+
Reminders
+
Self-Evaluation
+
**Skillstreaming Skill Use**
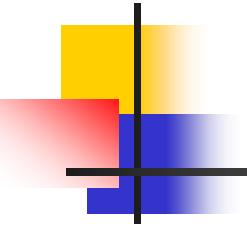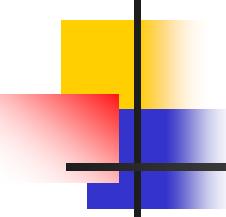
Moral Reasoning Training

Dilemma discussion groups designed to teach children how to:
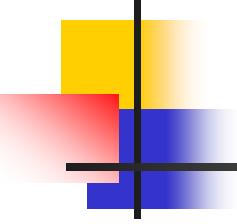
☞ **Think** about moral issues.

☞ **Deal with moral situations** that do not have clear-cut solutions.

☞ **Use principles of fairness and justice** in their interactions with others.
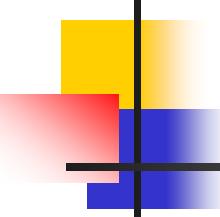
Taking action

⇨ <u>Funding:</u> CJI Safe Haven grant for $32,000 to pay for trainer, materials, and staff time

⇨ <u>Staff training:</u> 12 hours of training; 2 six-hour sessions or 3 four-hour sessions; entire teaching staff and paraprofessionals trained; support personnel (cafeteria staff, playground monitors)

⇨ <u>Implementation plan developed</u>: Plan outlined during training through guided facilitation

⇨<u>Core committees established</u>: According to implementation plan

⇨<u>Examples</u>: Skill of the Month, video presentations, all-school rallies, puppet demonstrations

Project Results

🏆 **Data**

Reduction in discipline referrals by 76%, suspensions reduced by 1/3, and suspension recidivism cut in half after one year; springboard for revising discipline policy to reflect proactive instructional model of behavior change rather than behavior control
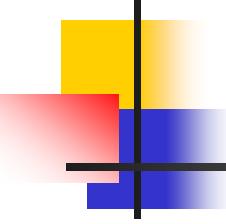
🏆 **Range of training**

5 of 7 elementary schools, all ED teachers and social workers at all levels, alternative school staff at middle and high schools, all Head Start staff; 14 mental health center therapists and family case managers, 5 probation officers

🏆 **Community involvement**

Juvenile corrections, Cornerstone county mental health center, Family Services Society

Collaboration

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.

Indeed it is the only thing that has.

Margaret Mead

Behavioral Institute for Children and Adolescents (BICA)

www.behavioralinstitute.org

~ for training information ~