Climate & Culture: *From* 200 Suspensions To Just 3

Lyon Elementary Reduces Suspensions by Creating a Positive School Culture

Part of St. Louis Public Schools, Lyon Academy began using Kickboard in August 2014 to improve student behavior. In its first semester of use, the urban Title I school reduced the number of in-school and out-of-school suspensions, and improved the school culture. In addition, Lyon Academy's school leaders focused on saving teachers time and helping parents become more engaged.

**Challenges**

Lyon Academy at Blow Elementary is a K-8 magnet school in St. Louis Public Schools.

Behavior was a big issue at the school, according to Wesley Owings, a teacher and elementary team leader at Lyon Academy.
In fall 2014, Lyon Academy implemented Kickboard in every classroom in kindergarten through eighth grade.

Kickboard helps build safe and happy schools where students and staff thrive. Educators, school leaders, and district administrators use Kickboard to improve school culture through positive behavior reinforcement, intervention management, classroom management, and district-wide school culture analysis. This unique combination of features allows districts to address problems such as absenteeism, disciplines & referrals, suspensions, teacher turnover, and low student achievement due to ineffective school culture.

“A couple years ago, our school had one of the highest percentages of out-of-school suspensions in St. Louis Public Schools. We wanted to reduce the number of suspensions and find ways to deter the behaviors that were putting students out of school,” he said.

After implementing Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), the school began looking for a way to better track how teachers responded to student behaviors. The goal was to help teachers shift from punishing negative behaviors to rewarding positive behaviors.
“One of things we like most about Kickboard is that it has options for tracking both positive and negative behaviors,” said Owings.

“We also like that it provides automatic triggers to help teachers know when to call parents, or when send a student to the counselor or to our Reflection Room, which is our version of an in-school suspension.”

Within Kickboard, Lyon Academy aims to have a positivity ratio — the ratio of positive to negative behaviors that a teacher assigns — of at least 3:1 to help teachers build stronger relationships with their students. Each week, students are recognized for their positive behaviors with a Kickboard “paycheck,” which they can use in the school store or for incentives such as “dress down days” or school dances.

“While we use Kickboard to track all behaviors, our focus is on the positive,” said Owings. “Before teachers can enter a negative behavior, we ask that they try to reward at least two or three positive behaviors. This not only supports our PBIS model, but it’s changed the way teachers interact with students. As a result, we’ve transformed our school culture from being negative to being positive.”

**Focusing on the positive to improve the school culture**

To promote positive behaviors and feedback, the school leadership team decided to implement a paycheck-based PBIS reward system in Kickboard by assigning a dollar value to each positive behavior. The team then developed a consequence hierarchy to identify which actions would be triggered by specific negative behaviors in Kickboard.
Increasing parent involvement

In addition, with Kickboard, teachers can easily print and share weekly progress reports with parents. The reports show parents a weekly snapshot of their child’s behavior, which helps to boost their participation in their child’s success at school. To further increase involvement, schools can also require parent signatures to allow parents and students to reflect on their progress each week.

“We’ve received lots of positive feedback from parents.

They’re excited to see everything their child is doing in class — especially the positive behaviors,” said Owings. “Having this data also makes it easier to conference with a student or a parent, and paint a better picture of how the student is performing.”

“Since we began using Kickboard, we’ve seen a huge transformation in our school culture. Students are happier, teachers are happier and we have a lot fewer discipline infractions,” said Owings.
Four years ago, during my first year teaching here, we had over 200 suspensions. Since then, we’ve dramatically reduced the number of suspensions. **This school year, in our first semester with Kickboard, we had only three or four out-of-school suspensions.**

“We’ve also drastically reduced the number of students being sent to our Reflection Room. It’s the positive reinforcement. Before, students were scared of getting in trouble for doing the wrong thing. Now, they’re focused on doing the right thing. That’s a big shift and it’s made a big difference in our school.”

— WESLEY OWINGS, A TEACHER & ELEMENTARY TEAM LEADER AT LYON ACADEMY