



How a Bronx District Reduced Suspensions by 40%

PBIS & SEL Success Story in Action

Challenges

Since Public Prep's founding in 2005, school and community leaders have sought to provide students with an education that acknowledges and develops the whole child.

Public Prep Network has a unique approach that places equal emphasis on character development, college knowledge, family partnerships and academic excellence through an integrated curriculum to ensure all students are on a path to the North Star to College Completion and beyond.

Their schools establish a culture of joy weaved in with the expectation of learning and critical thinking. Scholars are recognized for academic achievement in equal measures to their representation of the core values.



**BRONX, NEW YORK
5 SCHOOLS**

2,000 TOTAL STUDENTS

55% HISPANIC

40% AFRICAN AMERICAN

5% ASIAN, WHITE & OTHER

83% FREE & REDUCED LUNCH

**19% RECEIVE SPECIAL
EDUCATION SERVICES**

[School Website](#)

Public Prep also recognizes the importance of creating solid community networks to support students.

The Community Council was created for parents, guardians, and families to advocate for their children's needs and participate directly in their education. Home visits and family newsletters also opened forms of communication between school leaders and families.

Despite these efforts, however, Public Prep came across obstacles in the implementation of such processes to create a rigorous yet supportive academic environment for their students.

Leader Caitlin Omeis, Managing Director of Student and Family Affairs, explained, "There were a lot of inconsistencies in the response to behavior infractions across our 5 campuses. We didn't have a network-wide system to capture and analyze social emotional and academic data. These inconsistencies led to our families and students having different experiences across our network. Our first action step to taking a unified approach was to align our Family Handbook and Code of Conduct and then we started thinking about systems. Kickboard was the system we used to capture the social emotional and behavior and the response to the behavior both positive and negative."

"Our goal was to use a system that would be able to capture our vision and build our scholars' capacity to use our core values to make decisions and problem solve. We also needed a way to look at this information across 5 campuses and Kickboard provided us with that opportunity."

The inconsistencies across schools ranged from the dissemination of referrals and suspensions to varying levels of family engagement. Some schools utilized restorative practices while others did not. The diverse set of management styles at each school resulted in different forms of measurement that didn't truly reflect classroom culture. Also cognizant of the detrimental effect out of school suspensions can have on student development, school leaders sought to lower suspension rates to keep kids in the classroom and fully take advantage of instructional time.



Innovative and Proactive Solutions

BUILDING CONSISTENCY

Implementing a system that establishes consistent positive behavior expectations and methods for correcting misdirected behavior not only provides a safe environment for all students to develop, but also creates a clear vision of behavior goals.

To create a similar set of expectations regarding student behavior across Public Prep's five campuses, leadership teams created an agreed upon district-wide Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct outlined a progressive multi-tiered intervention system to address behavior infractions. Additionally, a strong district-wide culture system was created. Clear, scaffolded steps were provided in the plan so that each classroom could contribute to the envisioned goal of a unified positive school culture.

“Kickboard serves as the catch-all for our social emotional and behavior data, it has allowed us to provide consistency in our responses to behavior as well as a place to capture the data. Now, when we meet with teachers, families and leaders, the data is readily available.”

“This has been a great tool for our efforts to support students and teachers with relationship building, creating behavior plans and to see if there is correlation with our behavior data and academic data. At this point each teacher has been inputting data in a similar format, something that we didn't have before,” explained Caitlin.

The dynamic nature of the Kickboard platform allows for school leaders to record multi-tiered interventions made across the district. The district-wide culture system plans included expectations of daily Kickboard data entry, or “Kickboard deliverables,” so teachers could actively track how each student was embodying the Public Prep core values. The Kickboard platform provided the ability to notify families in real-time regarding their child's behavioral progress.



ACCENTUATING THE POSITIVE

One study conducted by researchers from Johns Hopkins University found that the biggest challenge most schools face in their discipline programs is accentuating positive behaviors. Shifting the behavior management attitude away from a punitive stance to a more positive outlook has multiple benefits. Accentuating the positive can greatly improve [school climate and culture](#) while boosting student ownership of their own progress in reaching positive behavior goals.

With this notion in mind, Public Prep increased the number of celebrations and awards for students who demonstrated concerted effort for meeting positive behavior expectations. Awards were supported by Kickboard data, which reflected daily progress in behavior and easily generated buy-in from all students. Students were awarded “Core Value Polos” for meeting both academic and behavior goals. Students were also recognized through the “Star of the Week” and “Sister/Brother of the Week” systems that were viewed on Kickboard each week and reinforced the desired behaviors.



COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

A child's education is shaped by the efforts of families, teachers, school administrators and district leadership teams. Enhanced coordination amongst these stakeholders can provide stronger support networks for each child.

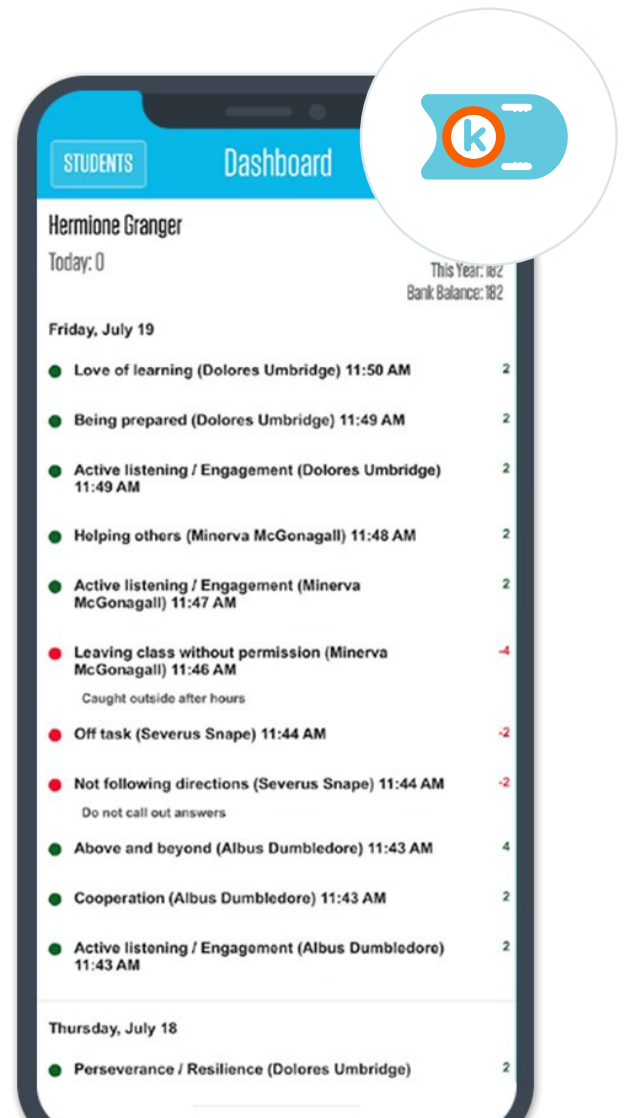
Public Prep aimed to facilitate communication between district and school leaders through "data dialogs" in which both academic and behavioral data sets were discussed by leadership teams. Best practices and experienced success at one school could now be shared and implemented on a district-wide level through such conversations. With the Kickboard platform, effectiveness in social emotional learning programs could now be quantified.

"We now have some tangible data in terms of behavior and classroom culture as well as consistent responses to behavior from our teachers and leaders. Our conversations on how to make improvements and provide support were centered around the data Kickboard provided,"
— Caitlin Omeis

A key objective included emphasis to increase teachers' ability to record and communicate student progress to the students themselves, their families, and the school's administration. Following the behavior plan outlined in the district-wide Code of Conduct, teachers now record behavior progress through the Kickboard platform. Positive behavior tracking through Kickboard gives students the recognition for their efforts that they crave and deserve.

Teachers are also able to quickly track negative student behavior choices and communicate infractions to administration and families without taking away from valuable instructional time.

Presentations of Kickboard data during "Unity Meetings" allows for enhanced family engagement at each Public Prep school. These student-led assemblies involve proud scholars showcasing their progress and success in exemplifying their school's core values of Scholarship, Responsibility, Sisterhood/ Brotherhood, and Merit. The behavioral data, made tangible by Kickboard's student portal, allowed students and their support systems to receive recognition for their efforts.



DECREASING SUSPENSIONS

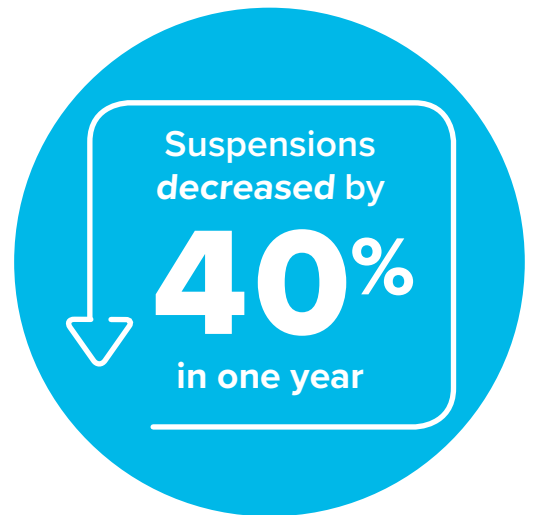
Public Prep created a unified initiative to better monitor behavior in order to implement early interventions and reduce suspensions. Each student received an “Initial Behavior Intervention Plan” which tracked both their academic and behavior progress. The plan incorporated family involvement to ensure success. The district appointed an administrator to be in charge of the process and review each incident to ensure consistency and to also serve as a representative to share promising practices at the district level.

Acknowledging that the root cause of negative behavior choices could stem from a myriad of issues or miscommunications depending on the student, Public Prep also developed and implemented a social and emotional learning ([SEL](#)) curriculum to meet students’ needs. The schools implemented a “Buddy Group”, or mentor system that allowed older students to help younger students navigate obstacles that may be impeding their success.



Results and Outcomes

After making these changes, Public Prep schools decreased suspensions by 40%, from 215 to 130 suspensions for all 5 schools in one year. Each school now has baseline classroom culture, behavioral expectations and data. The Kickboard platform has supported this district-wide consistency. This has allowed for leadership teams to make data-driven decisions regarding school culture and behavior interventions and has informed the direction Public Prep will take as a cohesive unit in the future.



“Kickboard offered us the best platform to create the consistency we needed throughout the network. The system provided our network with the flexibility to create a platform specific for our schools. In addition to tracking our core values we have also been able to get more information about relationships between students and teachers based on the feedback students are getting via Kickboard. We can see the feedback students were getting throughout the day from multiple sources such as teachers and administrators.”

“Our goal was to create consistency and after creating a unified system we were able to dig into other areas of school culture and behavior that has really helped us make more gains.” — Caitlin Omeis



“Kickboard offered us the best platform to create the consistency we needed throughout the network.”