Marshall Street

Overview

ANCHORING EMOTIONS

A collection of research-to-impact practices developed with the Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities

COLLECTION OVERVIEW

Anchoring Emotions

Introduction



The Challenge

America's public schools struggle to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Public schools across America struggle to meet the diverse needs of students, particularly those furthest from opportunity. When marginalization intersects with disability, students often face low expectations, are systematically segregated, are denied access to college and career curricula, and do not receive sufficient support to obtain a high school diploma and pursue their dreams. In the 2017–18 school year, **8th graders with disabilities performed 39–41 points lower than their peers without disabilities in reading and math**,[1] illustrating just how deeply schools are failing students with disabilities.

Students of color are over-identified as needing emotional support.

In the last few decades, there has been a growing concern regarding the disproportionate number of students experiencing poverty, particularly students of color, found eligible for special education services.[2] Data continues to show that students of color and those living in poverty are also disproportionately identified as having emotional disabilities or other health impairments.[3] These same students are also more likely to be placed in educational settings that are more restrictive learning environments. Students who are inappropriately placed in more restrictive environments may not receive the level of rigor or expectations academically or behaviorally that they would when educated along with their peers without disabilities, putting them at greater risk of negative outcomes.

Suspension and expulsion are more likely for students with emotional support needs.

Researchers have also found that students with emotional and behavioral disabilities and other health impairments are also far more likely to be suspended or expelled than their peers with and without

disabilities.[4] This is particularly striking because it may be ineffective to use suspension as a form of punishment for students with behavioral or emotional disabilities[5] or students with aggressive, hyperactive, and social skills concerns.[6] Students with these disabilities often also have academic challenges, which can be exacerbated by excluding them from educational experiences.[7]

Exclusionary discipline contributes to a school-to-prison pipeline.

Research also shows the way in which suspension of students increases their likelihood of entering the juvenile justice system or being incarcerated later in life.[8] This school-to-prison pipeline is thus even more concerning for students with disabilities who have an increased likelihood of experiencing suspension or expulsion, particularly students who need additional emotional support. These concerns are warranted because there is a clear overrepresentation of students with disabilities in the juvenile justice system compared to their peers without disabilities.[9]

Mastery Schools' Solution

Mastery Schools developed a program to address these important realities for their students in special education with emotional support needs and to help improve their future outcomes. Mastery's program focuses on using interventions and best practices rooted in research, such as positive behavioral support, differentiated instruction, developmental therapy, and life space crisis intervention, for addressing challenging behaviors. The program's intent is to help students in special education receive learning within Mastery's network and to provide them the opportunity to access the general education curriculum in the least restrictive environment possible. By addressing problem behaviors and educating students in the most rigorous academic setting possible, Mastery is able to reduce the likelihood that their students with emotional support needs will require more restrictive levels of support.



Mastery's continuum of special education emotional supports includes four tiers, as shown in the figure above — from least restrictive to most restrictive. Within each tier, program teams plan for each student's academic needs in addition to the therapeutic system of supports.

Itinerant Emotional Support

Students who receive itinerant emotional support are educated within the general education setting between 80% and 99% of the day. The student appropriate for this tier of support has a diagnosed school-based emotional or behavioral disability that requires mild therapeutic and behavioral interventions to meet academic and behavioral goals. The core components of the itinerant emotional supports include a functional behavior assessment and a positive behavior support plan, as well as aligned behavioral interventions and case management.

FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENTS AND POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT PLANS

A trained individual assesses each student's unique behavioral and emotional needs to determine the most prevalent negative behaviors the student displays, to establish the function of those behaviors, and to identify an aligned replacement behavior. Within the positive behavior support plan, the IEP team decides how the student will receive interventions to learn the discrete skills and replacement behaviors and what reinforcement will help the student generalize new skills across all settings.

WEEKLY 1:1 COUNSELING AND/OR SOCIAL SKILLS IN A SMALL GROUP

Students gain awareness of their negative behaviors and practice appropriate replacement behaviors through counseling and discrete skill instruction. Mastery meets each student's needs by employing social workers for each school at a 300:1 ratio and using an evidence-based counseling model or a research-based, CASEL standards-aligned social-emotional learning curriculum. Social workers are also responsible for many of Mastery's multi-tiered system of supports' Tier 2 interventions, as well as crisis response and targeted social work case management.

CASE MANAGEMENT

Each student receiving itinerant emotional support is assigned a special education case manager whose role includes managing the positive behavior support plan across all settings, ensuring that interventions are in place, and providing more intensive reinforcements than are provided as part of Tier 1 systems. Additionally, case managers are responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of plans, sharing progress with families, and supporting the IEP team in determining if the plan and associated interventions should be reduced, maintained, or intensified.

Full-Time Emotional Support

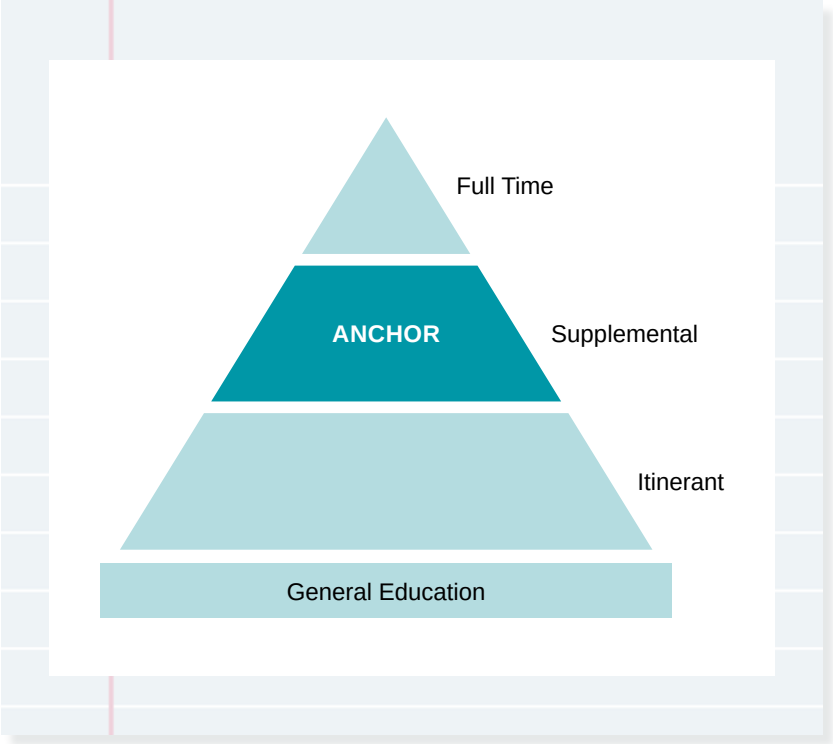
Students receiving full-time emotional support are not educated within general education. Students with this level of need require significant therapeutic and behavioral interventions to meet their academic and behavioral goals. Mastery contracts with a variety of providers for full-time emotional support, including a private school that aligns with Mastery's suite of curriculum, instruction, and assessments. Students at this level access a curriculum that is modified to provide a higher level of daily therapeutic programming. The benefit of this private school partnership is that students can return to a less restrictive environment with less interruption to learning.

Approved Private School

Some students do not respond to placement with the full-time emotional support providers and subsequently are placed by the IEP team in approved private schools that offer more intensive therapeutic environments.

Anchor: Supplemental Emotional Support

Anchor is Mastery Schools' program to provide supplemental emotional support for students in special education with emotional or behavioral disabilities or other health impairments. Students in Anchor are educated within general education settings between 20% and 79% of the day. Students in Anchor require moderate therapeutic and behavioral interventions to meet their academic and behavioral goals.



The Anchor program includes 11 components, known internally as ***The Must Haves***, the most central of which are the following:

- Schedule & Staffing
- Level System
- SAM Skills & Behavioral Feedback
- Daily Skills Class
- Counseling Services

Elements of Anchor's core components were initially developed in partnership with **Greentree School**, an approved private school providing full-time emotional support programming in a private setting. Greentree developed their model based on the **Student Achievement Model** (SAM), the **Boys Town Education Model**, and **Life Space Crisis Intervention**. Core components of the Anchor model are described in depth below and in the collection's chapters.

Schedule & Staffing

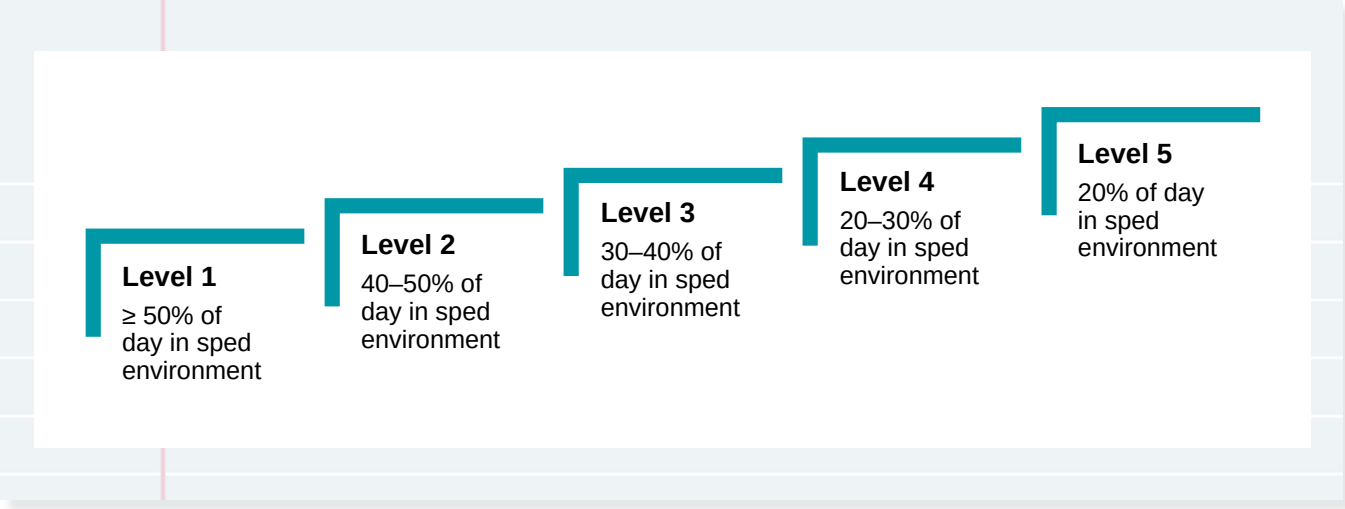
To ensure appropriate, proactive, and responsive adult support is available for students based on need, an increased staff-to-student ratio exists in Anchor compared to similar programs. For every 12 students within three consecutive grade bands, Anchor has:

- 1 full-time emotional support teacher who is also a case manager,
- .5 clinician (20 or 29 hours per week), and
- 2 classroom counselors.

This staffing ratio makes it possible for students to spend between 20% and 60% of their day receiving emotional support in either a general education or a special education environment. Students' levels of support are determined by their current performance. Staff schedules regularly adapt to meet changing student needs.

Level System

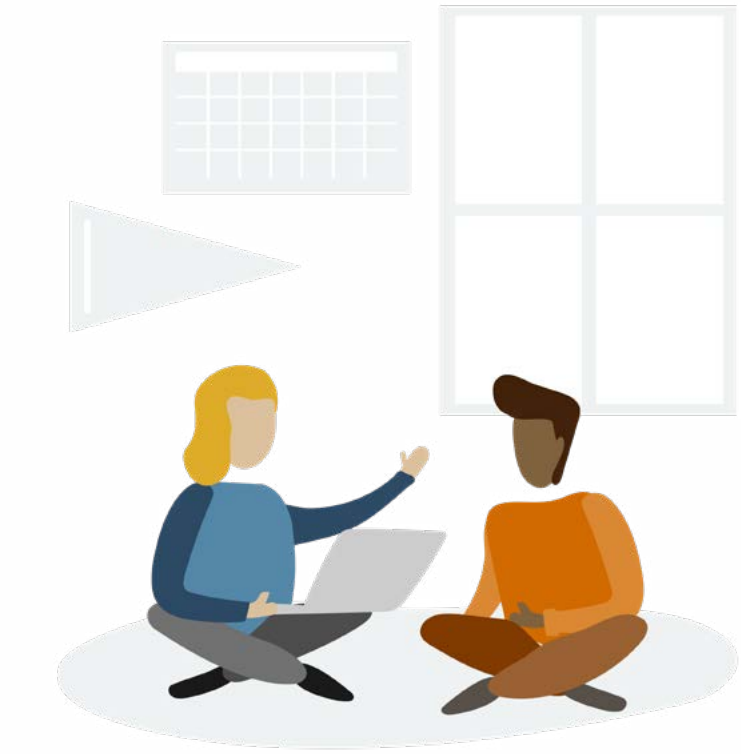
Anchor's level system has five total levels, with Level 5 being the highest (most independence and greatest inclusion) and Level 1 the lowest (most dependence and least inclusion).



Levels are representative of students' current two-week performance based on attendance, discipline, and behavioral feedback data. A student's level reflects the current adult support and therapeutic programming required for them to demonstrate success. Performance is monitored, analyzed, and responded to during biweekly level meetings. Read the case study on **Maximizing Student Progress Through Data-Informed Systems** for more information on Anchor's level system.

SAM Skills & Behavioral Feedback

A behavioral skill is made up of a chain of individual, discrete actions or cognitive operations performed in specific situations. Instruction on behavioral skills must be explicit, intensive, comprehensive, and reliant on antecedent control, reinforcement, and generalization programming. The SAM Model identified 34 behavioral skills across three domains (see the table on the following page) and broke them down into discrete teachable steps known as the SAM skills. Students have from one to five individual SAM skills they are working on at any given time.



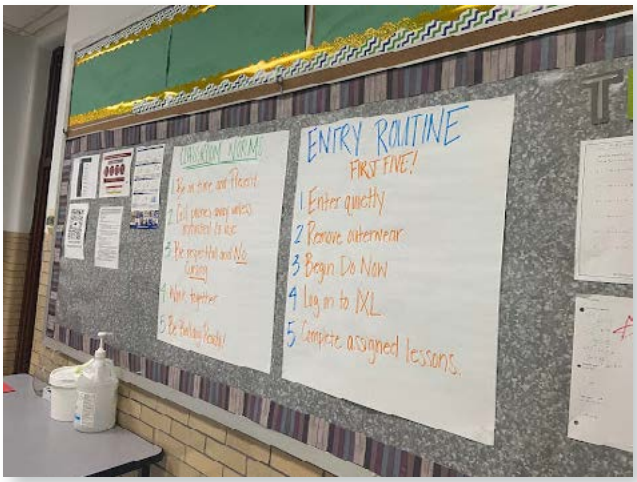
Social Skills	Self-Control Skills	Active Learning Skills
1. Keep all Perspectives in Mind	1. Ignoring Negative Behavior	1. Assignment Completion
2. Following Directions	2. Controlling Your Emotions	2. Homework Completion
3. Accepting Feedback/Criticism	3. Self-Control	3. Initiating a Task
4. Accepting “No” for an Answer		4. Remaining on Task (independent work)
5. Getting the Teacher’s Attention		5. Asking for Help
6. Making a Request		6. Answering Questions
7. Greeting Others		7. Asking Questions
8. Disagreeing Appropriately		8. Checking Your Work
9. Making an Apology		9. Asking for Feedback
10. Volunteering		10. Working Cooperatively with Others
11. Talking with Others		11. Writing Neatly
12. Giving Compliments		12. Completing Accurate Work
13. Accepting Compliments		
14. Introducing Yourself		
15. Resisting Peer Pressure		
16. Reporting Other Youths’ Behavior		
17. Appropriate Conversation (School)		
18. Maintaining Physical Boundaries (school)		
19. Treating Others with Respect		

Behavioral feedback is the intervention used to reinforce and generalize students’ use of SAM skills across all settings. Behavioral feedback is a form of behavioral teaching, which, to be effective, requires timely and specific delivery of feedback targeting the correct behaviors. “Positive Praise” scripts are based on research to support increasing student motivation, and “Learning Point” scripts provide a systematic method to address inappropriate behavior and teach replacement skills.

Daily Skills Class

Daily Skills Class is the time and space where students in Anchor are provided explicit instruction and practice opportunities on discrete skills to promote the learning and generalization of skills across all settings. Daily Skills Class is required five days per week for a minimum of 25 minutes per day. The course is taught by a special education teacher or clinician and uses evidence-based curricula that have shown success as Tier 3 interventions.

Counseling



Mastery Schools staff a half-time licensed clinician for every 12 students in Anchor. This clinical staffing ratio allows for students to receive 1:1 counseling a minimum of once per week as well as therapeutic small groups as determined appropriate by the IEP team. The primary focus of individual counseling is school-related, including appropriate classroom behaviors, coping skills, and social functioning. Individual counseling supports SAM skill acquisition, skill maintenance, and skill generalization across multiple settings. Therapeutic small groups support social, emotional, and behavioral skill acquisition, maintenance, and generalization. Clinicians use modalities and evidence-based social and emotional curricula designed for schools to support skill development.

Enabling Conditions

Each of the aforementioned Anchor components contributed to improved experiences and behavioral outcomes for Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty within the NIC. The effective implementation of these practices was made possible because of three core enabling conditions that were in place in Mastery Schools' emotional support programming: a program designed for each individual student's needs, effective data systems, and network-level support. Without these three conditions, the impact of the practices is dramatically reduced.

Program Designed for Students

Mastery developed Anchor as a supplemental emotional support program that individualizes its services to meet each student's needs rather than expecting students to fit within the program as designed. Mastery's full range of emotional and behavioral support programs, and the Anchor program within it, embodies the true intention of providing a full continuum of services for students. Anchor is successful because it attempts only to support students who need the level of support that the program was designed for. Students requiring less support are served with itinerant services, and those benefiting from more support are served in Mastery's specialized school setting. Anchor itself was designed to be flexible, adapting to each student's individual needs as they progress in the level system. By analyzing student data every two weeks — as opposed to waiting for a school suspension or manifestation of determination like many emotional support programs — Anchor staff ensure that students always receive a level of support that corresponds to their current needs.

Mastery wanted to ensure that the mindsets held by Anchor staff were shared by all school staff as they interact with students with emotional and behavioral disabilities, so they created their Modified Anchor Response Plan (MARP) as an adaptation to their existing culture plan. All students at Mastery are held to behavioral expectations, but for students in the Anchor program, school staff might need to respond differently to behaviors, which MARP helps define. To help all staff understand MARP and feel confident

implementing it, Anchor network and campus leaders led professional development for assistant principals of school culture and specialized services. Anchor and the assistant principals then planned training for their school teams. Now, as new leaders Mastery, this training is part of their onboarding process. Mastery has also started requiring assistant principals of school culture and specialized services to submit annual plans for their implementation of MARP so that network-level leaders can support campuses throughout the school year as they work to differentiate how they respond to the behavioral needs of students in Anchor.

Effective Data Systems

Many of Anchor's systems rely on constant data collection from school administrators, special education teachers, classroom counselors, and other school and network staff. Mastery has been able to include the data necessary for Anchor's success in their existing school and network-wide student information systems. When adding Anchor-specific data to these systems, a concerted, network-wide data integration effort ensured that existing data and new, Anchor-specific data could work together.

To successfully align the existing student information systems to Anchor program data, Mastery Schools spent considerable time and effort developing a network culture that understands emotional and behavioral disabilities. A key way in which this was accomplished was by making it possible for network staff to analyze the network's key performance indicators for the subset of students in Anchor. This analysis not only allows the network to better respond to trends related to students' emotional support needs, but it also allows network and building leaders to focus on academic growth and proficiency for these students. In addition, Mastery has been able to build a system that allows Anchor staff to collect granular, real-time data around behavioral feedback. All stakeholders, from network leaders to students and families, can view data in real time to see how students are demonstrating their prosocial behaviors.

These additions to Mastery's data infrastructure have been invaluable to the continued success of emotional support programming, making it possible for network staff to analyze Anchor data by aggregating the data from multiple schools' Anchor programs to determine areas of strength and opportunities for growth within the Anchor program as a whole. They are also able to compare the different schools' Anchor programs to learn from programs that are seeing positive outcomes for their students and to more intentionally support programs that have additional needs. Each school's Anchor program can similarly analyze data to identify needs within the different areas of their program or to respond appropriately for individual students. This type of data support makes it possible for Anchor staff to tailor their program to students' needs and ensure that each student is receiving what they need to make progress academically as well as emotionally.

Network Support

Mastery Schools, as a network, has invested significant time and resources into building their full continuum of emotional support programs to meet the diverse needs of students with emotional and behavioral disabilities. The Anchor program has a team of three network-level staff members who oversee and support each school's Anchor program. These team members have successful school-based experience working with students with emotional and behavioral disabilities that lends them expertise and credibility. The network team members provide direct coaching and support to each school's Anchor team, provide professional development throughout the school year, document the core program components, develop implementation guides, and continue to research and modify the

current model to ensure it is meeting the needs of each student. In addition, the network team engages in ongoing cross-collaborative and teaming structures with other network-level departments to ensure Mastery Schools is providing a fully aligned continuum of therapeutic services.

This mindset within network leadership means that there is also considerable investment in staff development, technology, and new strategies. These investments increase programmatic capacity and improve outcomes for students, which further demonstrates the effectiveness of providing their full continuum of services for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities. Continuous engagement from network-level leadership ensures that Anchor programs continue to receive guidance, support, and investment.

Mastery's Role in the NIC

The partnership between Mastery Schools and the NIC stemmed from a shared commitment to tackling systemic inequities in the US education system, particularly for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities. Mastery joined the NIC to refine and improve their Anchor program model in a way that allowed them to spread it across their organization and, ultimately, to share it with schools nationwide. The program was already well-established and showing promising gains for students at Mastery Gratz. Yet, Mastery and the NIC recognized the program's potential to impact the broader field of education by sharing it with schools nationwide.

Participation in the NIC provided Mastery with dedicated improvement coaching, continuous improvement tools, and data support to refine and improve their model; access to a community of experts and practitioners with whom to learn and collaborate; and resources to help codify the Anchor program to share and spread it broadly with schools nationwide. Engaging with the NIC spurred the evolution of Mastery's practices, which led to the piloting and adoption of initiatives such as behavioral feedback and peer-to-peer mentorship. During this time, Mastery addressed barriers like staff capacity, mindsets, and training, improving staff awareness of how best to serve students with emotional and behavioral disabilities across the school. With the benefit of coaching, data assistance, and peer networking, Mastery refined its model, increasing student access to general education settings, boosting student attendance, and reducing suspensions, while also gearing up to expand the program's impact beyond its current schools.



Members of Mastery, Marshall, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation teams together on the NIC New York learning tour

The Collection

This collection includes **two best practices** that support the education of students with emotional or behavioral disabilities on behalf of improving learning outcomes for all students and **two case studies** on larger macro-level practices to support a full continuum of services for students with emotional or behavioral disabilities.

Each of the practices detailed in this book is an independently strong and valuable practice. However, each practice is most effective when built on a programmatic foundation that provides opportunities for academic learning and disability-related skill development.



Enabling Conditions:
Program Designed for Students
Effective Data Systems
Network Support

The audience for this collection is educators, schools, and districts who believe that all students are capable of increasing their academic achievement, who fundamentally believe that it is the system's responsibility to ensure this is a reality for all students it serves, and who are looking for ideas on how to initiate or refine their approach to this work. While a great many research papers, reports, and technical assistance centers provide guidance on practices for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities, this collection is unique:

- It ties together the multiple elements critical to addressing the needs of all students, specifically for Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty.
- It emphasizes the importance of using data at all levels of the school system to improve outcomes for students.
- Each chapter is grounded in both the foundational and current research on the practice but emphasizes (1) detailed, real-world examples of the practice as implemented at Mastery Schools and (2) a step-by-step guide to implementation of the practice.

Chapter 1: Building Student Leaders: Peer-to-Peer Mentorship for Secondary Students

Student mentorship is a peer support structure pairing two students together in a mentee/mentor relationship for regular formal and informal check-ins to build positive peer relationships and increase student sense of belonging. Mentees in Mastery's peer mentorship program were able to develop relationships with older students whom they could look to for guidance and rely on for additional emotional support. This chapter offers the learning from Mastery's implementation and the steps to implement a peer mentorship program in any school context.

Chapter 2: Providing Timely Behavioral Feedback Across Classrooms

Educators follow a defined protocol to provide immediate feedback to students on their application of taught behavioral skills, enabling them to effectively apply these skills in various contexts. To successfully implement behavioral feedback, program leaders must also devote time to the training, observation, and coaching of staff so that feedback is provided consistently and with fidelity. This chapter is a guide to setting up the necessary conditions and implementing behavioral feedback. When implemented with quality, behavioral feedback can have significant positive impacts on student skill development and overall behavior and, subsequently, on academic learning.

Case Study: Maximizing Student Progress Through Data-Informed Systems

This case study describes Mastery's goal-setting, collection, analysis, decision-making, and reflection of and based on data at essential programmatic points to ensure fidelity, quality, and outcomes at all levels of the program. Mastery's investment in data systems that support data specific to the Anchor program ensures that the needs of students with emotional and behavioral disabilities are not overlooked by school or network staff. The case study highlights the importance of creating clear systems and structures that make it feasible for staff and students alike to make data-informed decisions.

Case Study: Refining Program Implementation Via Quarterly Collaborative Evaluation at Mastery Schools

This case study explains how Mastery's network leaders use rubrics to evaluate and design programmatic support for each school's Anchor program on a quarterly basis to create accountability and continuous improvement cycles for programs. Network- and school-level Anchor leaders collaborate with one another using data from this program evaluation to highlight areas of strength and identify areas for further growth. Mastery's network leaders also use this data to ensure fidelity across their schools' Anchor programs and to identify individual exemplars that can demonstrate excellence across the network.

How to Approach this Collection

The pieces in this collection can be read in any order, as one is not necessarily dependent on another. Chapters are written to help the reader replicate the practices in their own context. Case studies can be read to inspire ideas but will not necessarily give the depth needed to implement the practice.

Further Reading

Mastery Schools' Modified Anchor Response Plan

Mastery Schools' Anchor Program Guidebook



Appendix

Notes

1 US Department of Education, “Focus on NAEP: Students With Disabilities”

2 Artiles and Trent, “Overrepresentation of Minority Students”; Hosp and Reschly, “Disproportionate Representation of Minority Students”; Ladner and Hammons, “Special but Unequal”; Harris-Murri, King, and Rostenberg, “Reducing Disproportionate Minority Representation”

3 Grindal et al., ”Racial Differences in Special Education”

4 Achilles et al., “Sociocultural Correlates of Disciplinary Exclusion”; Anderson, “The Relationship between Inclusion, Absenteeism, and Disciplinary Outcomes”; Bowman-Perrott et al., “Patterns and Predictors of Disciplinary Exclusion”

5 Krezmien et al., “Suspension, Race, and Disability”

6 Atkins et al., “Suspensions and Detentions in an Urban, Low-Income School”

7 Kutash & Duchnowski, “The Mental Health Needs of Youth with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities”

8 Christle, Jolivette, and Nelson, “Breaking the School to Prison Pipeline”; Fabelo et al., *Breaking Schools’ Rules*

9 Coalition for Juvenile Justice, *Abandoned in the Back Row*; Kim, Losen, and Hewitt, *The School-to-Prison Pipeline*

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