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## From the Street to the Classroom

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# EDUCATION FROM THE STREET TO THE CLASSROOM

28<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL NATIONAL YOUTH-AT-RISK CONFERENCE,  
SAVANNAH GA

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# What's Missing

## 'Someone Get Rid of the Bees'

- ⦿ Are we addressing the 'root cause' of problem behavior in the class room?
- ⦿ PREVENTION
  - We are not likely to prevent poverty, but can we work towards preventing problem behavior that is the result of that poverty.
- ⦿ Do we have programs (in and out of the classroom) to assist those in need:
  - Yes
- ⦿ Do we have enough:
  - No
- ⦿ Can we do more: ???? Let's talk about it:

# Statistics

- 1 in 5 students are likely to have a MH Dx.
- 75% to 80% of children with MH issues do NOT receive services.
- Approximately 50% of students age 14 and older who are living with a mental illness drop out of high school. On the street, closer to 75%.
- Over 75% of crimes are committed by high school drop outs
- 75% of all problem behaviors in school are exhibited by 10% of the students.
- 70% of those students have some MH Dx.

# ON THE STREET

- Kids 'on the street' are likely to have (3xs) the rate of MH issues than kids in the 'general population'
- Kids on the street are (5xs) more likely to be incarcerated than their rural counterparts.
- 20% of OSS is the result of 'insubordination'
- 20% of OSS is for fighting
- Less than 5% of OSS is for weapons or drugs
- Higher the poverty rate in the school the higher the rate of OSS.
- I can find NO literature that indicates that OSS is an effective intervention for problem behavior.

# Environmentally Beaten Up

- ⦿ Poverty
- ⦿ Hunger
- ⦿ No Hugs
- ⦿ Sexual Abuse
- ⦿ Physical Abuse
- ⦿ Unsanitary Conditions
- ⦿ Lack of Sleeping areas
- ⦿ Fear of Being Beat Up
- ⦿ Changing Schools/Homes

# Environmentally Beaten Down “Toxic Stress”

- ⦿ No love
- ⦿ Being Preyed upon
- ⦿ No way to Study
- ⦿ Mom on drugs
- ⦿ Mom on alcohol
- ⦿ No paternal figure
- ⦿ Many Many Paternal Figures
- ⦿ No Hugs (the wrong hugs)
- ⦿ Gang pressure



# Cause I Ain't Got a Pencil

by Joshua T. Dickerson

I woke myself up  
Because we ain't got an alarm clock  
Dug in the dirty clothes basket,  
Cause ain't nobody washed my uniform  
Brushed my hair and teeth in the dark,  
Cause the lights ain't on  
Even got my baby sister ready,  
Cause my mama wasn't home.  
Got us both to school on time,  
To eat us a good breakfast.  
Then when I got to class the teacher fussed  
Cause I ain't got a pencil.

# Code of the Street

- ⦿ NEVER appear weak or vulnerable
- ⦿ You are either prey or predator
- ⦿ Always hang with a group (or gang)
- ⦿ Strike first when ever possible
- ⦿ Never let anybody get away with anything
- ⦿ School will not keep you safe
  - (on the street)

# Mental Health and the Behavior

## Disorder

## Implication

- ◉ Depression

- ◉ Little interest in school work
- ◉ Increase in refusal behavior
- ◉ Excessive absences

- ◉ Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

- ◉ No boundaries
- ◉ Impulsive and uninhibited
- ◉ Lack receptive communication
- ◉ Low frustration threshold
- ◉ Short term memory deficits

- ◉ PTSD

- ◉ Impulsive, Impatient,
- ◉ Easily confused

# Mental Health and the Behavior

## Disorder

## Implication

- ◉ ADHD

- ◉ Little ability to concentrate
- ◉ Memory deficits
- ◉ Little emotional control
- ◉ Poor social skills
- ◉ Inability to concentrate

- ◉ Bipolar Disorder

- ◉ Changes in mood and energy
- ◉ Impulsive and uninhibited
- ◉ Difficulty concentrating
- ◉ Low frustration threshold
- ◉ Short term memory deficits
- ◉ Poor social skills

# In The Classroom

- Remember, Street Kids will not be going home to study, do home work, or work on projects.
- Each student will require a specific method of teaching to assure they learn.
- The very behavior that keeps these kids alive on the street is the very behavior that gets them in trouble in school.

# In the Class Room

- Know who your street kids are
- Have a plan to reward their desirable behavior
- Focus on positive behavior
- Punishment will NOT work with these kids
- Do not call them out in front of peers
- Make arrangements for home work to be done in school
- Are students involved in setting classroom expectations?

# In the Class Room

- Before you 'react' to a problem behavior ask yourself: Why did this behavior happen? What will the student get from exhibiting this behavior?
- Then make sure you do NOT reinforce the problem behavior.
- In Elementary School are we TEACHING appropriate social and emotional skills or are we relying up incidental learning??

# In the Class Room

- ⦿ DO NOT set the student up for failure.
- ⦿ NEVER speak down to the student. Always speak as though they CAN do it.
- ⦿ Rely on a Functional Assessment of problem behavior to develop appropriate interventions.
- ⦿ Break assignments and tests into amounts comparable to the students attention.
- ⦿ Establish just a few, clear and realistic expectations (Rules).
- ⦿ Do NOT punish for behavior that is directly the result of a disability/disorder.

# Discipline

- ⦿ Does your discipline method teach appropriate or replacement behavior?
  - Will the process teach an alternative to the problem behavior?
- ⦿ Does the discipline reduce problem behavior?
  - Are discipline decisions data driven?
  - Are we keeping data and does the data indicate progress is being made?
- ⦿ Does the discipline focus on academics?
  - Or does the discipline remove the student from the learning environment?

# In the School

- ⦿ Are students involved in establishing 'Expectations'?
- ⦿ Are students involved in determining consequences for meeting expectations?
- ⦿ Are students involved in determining consequences for violating expectations?
- ⦿ What other student committees does your school have?
  - Bullying, Safety, Homework, Sports,

# In the School

- ⦿ Do students know the expectations?
- ⦿ Are these taught?
- ⦿ Is reinforcement applied more frequently than punishment?
- ⦿ Are students greeted upon arrival to class?
- ⦿ Are students involved in decision making?
- ⦿ Are students given responsibilities, in and out of school?
- ⦿ Do students BELIEVE staff care for them?

# What Needs to Happen

- ⦿ School
  - A look at the rules
  - Educational workshops
  - Begin in session teaching (a behavior class) in kindergarten
- ⦿ Church
  - Who is in our youth groups
  - Are we community oriented
- ⦿ Community
  - Clubs
  - Organizations
- ⦿ Police
  - Community relations
- ⦿ Volunteers
  - University students
  - You and Me
- ⦿ GSU \* Collegiate 100

# What is your classroom slogan?

- MY CLASSROOM IS A SAFE CLASSROOM, YOU ARE SPECIAL TO ME!

## NOT

- THE BEATINGS WILL CONTINUE UNTIL THE MORAL IMPROVES !

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