# Alternatives to Discipline

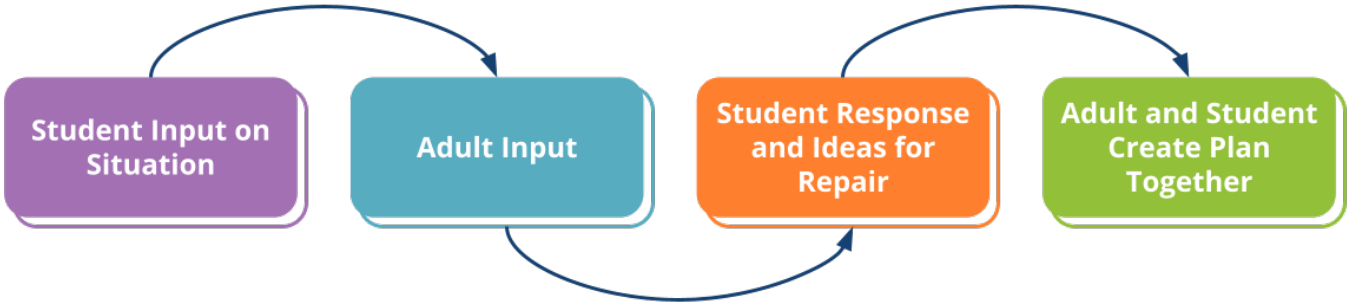
Alternatives to traditional discipline practices can be used at all developmental levels with students who exhibit challenging behaviors. By including a developmentally-appropriate reflection, restorative process, and instructional practice, students can heal and learn new skills to solve conflicts or make better decisions in the future.

Strategies that help students reflect, learn, and restore relationships can come from materials and curriculum that are already being implemented in your classroom and social-academic groups.

- Social Emotional Learning curriculum includes skills that can be taught on self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsibly decision-making.
- Anti-bullying curriculum includes strategies on how to ask for help, assertiveness and empowerment skills, and how to stay safe.
- Breaking rules related to cyberbullying, alcohol and drugs, bullying that falls under the harassment category and threats to the school. Most of these behaviors will have some sort of exclusionary consequence tied to them, however, those consequences can be decreased in length and return to school can be facilitated by implementing alternative to discipline approaches. Counselors, social workers, deans and community mental health partners are excellent resources for specific lessons to address specific issues.

## Process and examples

Reflective discussions are a process of interaction between the student(s) and adult(s) pictured in the visual below. Discussions will not always move smoothly through the steps and might require the adult to help the student revisit an early stage in the process. The end goal is to jointly determine a plan for learning and restoration together.




- Begin all discussions with the student input: “What happened?” “Tell me more.”
- Share your concerns related to the event or ongoing situation.
- Ask the student for their ideas: What did they not understand? What do they need to do differently? What resources do they need to learn those skills? How can his situation be resolved and repaired?

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<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Elementary</th><th>Middle</th><th>Secondary</th></tr>
<tr><td>Reflective Practices</td><td>» What happened?<br>» Tell me more.<br>» How does your friend/teacher feel?</td><td colspan="2">» What happened?<br>» What are your thoughts about the situation?<br>» How do you think this made others feel?</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Instructional Practices<br>Teaching a missing skill to increase understanding and empower student to act/respond positively in the future.</td><td>SEL skills<br>Identify feelings and communicate them rather than hitting.</td><td>SEL skills<br>Communicate feelings in an appropriate way in many different environments.</td><td>SEL skills<br>Communicate how their feelings are influencing their response to a trigger.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Bullying<br>Small group/individual sessions on bullying to increase their understanding.<br>» Teach to find an adult to assist.<br>» Teach how to respond and stand up to someone who is bullying.<br>» Teach communication/basic conflict resolution skills to decrease bullying behavior.<br>» Teach how to be safe.</td><td colspan="2">Bullying<br>Small group/individual sessions on conflict resolution<br>» Vocabulary<br>» Sentence starters<br>» Responding verbally<br>» Responding with body language</td></tr>
<tr><td>Restorative Practices</td><td>» Did someone or something get hurt?<br>» How can I fix that?<br>» Can I say something to fix this?<br>» Must I do something to help the hurt go away?</td><td colspan="2">» Did my actions harm someone?<br>» Did I hurt my relationship with a person or group of people?<br>» How can I repair that and begin to build trust again?<br>» What does the individual or group need from me to understand I am sorry and do not intend to treat them the same way again?</td></tr>
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# Alternatives to Discipline - Scenarios

During professional development, use these scenarios to practice identifying and creating alternative practices.

### Level: Pre-Kindergarten, Early Childhood Education

Two students, Tyler and Darius, are playing with the building blocks, each creating their own “house.” Both students want to use the longer blocks for their base, but there are not enough for both students’ buildings. When the teacher looked over, the students were laying on the floor both holding on to an end of one of the blocks. They were asked to calm down and let go of the block, but neither student did that. When the teacher came closer, Tyler kicked her. Her response was to raise her voice and direct the two students to get up and leave the room. They continued to hold tightly onto the block and did not respond to the teacher. The teacher grabbed Tyler and pulled him away. In the process, her arm was scratched and the student’s glasses were knocked off his face. The classroom paraprofessional called for help. When the principal arrived, Tyler was crying and Darius was still holding onto the longer block.

**Activity:**
Discuss a reflective, restorative, and instructional response to the students’ behavior and the resulting tussle in the classroom. This can be one response or a combination of different actions as long as it is reflective, restorative, and instructional for students of this age.

## Level: Elementary

During recess a group of students playing four-square began to argue about the "new" rules. Jon stepped into the top square and stated his own new rule for the next round. Sam and Christine did not like Jon's new rule of bouncing the ball twice in each turn and said the squares were too small for that rule. Jon stated that he was in the top box and could make any rules he wanted to. In response, Sam threw the ball at Jon's head and called him a bully. Jon stepped out of his box and pushed Sam over. Christine and a fourth student, Aaron, tried to break up the fight, but it continued until a teacher came over and separated them. Without discussion, they were sent to the office to talk with the principal and receive their consequences.

**Activity:**
Discuss a reflective, restorative, and instructional response to the students' behaviors at recess. This can be one response or a combination of different actions as long as it is reflective, restorative, and instructional for students of this age.

## Level: Secondary

Janelle and her friend, Danielle, were in need of money to pay for their tickets to the winter dance, buy dresses, and pay for their dinner. They had observed that a senior boy, Jack, carried a lot of cash to and from school, leaving it in his locker during the day. The two girls decided they were going to "borrow" his money to meet their needs. Janelle studied how to pick a lock and was able to get into his locker during third period. She asked for a pass to the nurse and stopped at Jack's locker on the way. The girls bought what they needed. When the theft of the money was reported and investigated, Janelle was identified as the person who took the money. She was referred to the vice principal for the disciplinary process and was given a week of out-of-school suspension.

**Activity:**
Discuss a reflective, restorative, and instructional response to the students' actions in this scenario. This can be one response or a combination of different actions as long as it is reflective, restorative, and instructional for students of this age.

# Alternatives to Discipline - Resources

## Social and Emotional Learning

**What are the Core Competency Areas of Social and Emotional Learning?**
A downloadable document that describers each area of social and emotional skills and gives further descriptions of those areas.

> What are the Core Competency Areas and Where are they Promoted? CASEL. https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CASEL-SEL-Framework-11.2020.pdf

**Competences**
The Social and Emotional Competencies separated into three areas: Emotional Development, Self-Concept, and Social Competence listed by grade level PK-Adult.

> Herman, Beth and Collins, Rebecca. Social and Emotional Learning Competencies. (2018, May). Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Pp. 18-26. https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sspw/SEL-Competencies-Guide-web.pdf

## Anti-Bullying

**Resources to Fight Bullying and Harassment at School**
The resource includes websites, organizations, articles, planning guides, lesson plans and other resources dedicated to preventing bullying and harassment in schools.

> Resources to Fight Bullying and Harassment at School. (2018, October 3). Edutopia. https://www.edutopia.org/article/bullying-prevention-resources

**Embedding Bullying Prevention in Core Curriculum**
In response to a 2010 Massachusetts state law addressing bullying, the Boston Public Schools developed this PDF. Messaging for all students is included that can be used in session directly targeting bullying.

> Focus on Children. (n.d.) Embedding Bullying Prevention in the Core Curriculum: A Teacher's Guide K-12. https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/cms/lib/MA01906464/Centricity/Domain/204/embedding%20bullying%20prevention.pdf