

## The Cost of Disruption: A Case for One Middle School

### OVERVIEW

During any given year the number of incidents of disruptive behavior in a school requires that education personnel take the time to address the interruption, complete the requirements for documenting the disruption, monitor the sanction imposed as a part of the disruption, and possibly employ an intervention after the disruption (i.e. counseling, mentoring). The model that has been developed calculates the amount of time it costs to address disruptions in relation to the salaries for all personnel involved in managing school based disruptive behaviors. For the purpose of this model disruptions are categorized as minor disruptions (the sanction is in school suspension – ISS) and major disruptions (the sanction is out of school suspension – OSS). Only the direct cost of instruction associated with personnel is included in the model. The average cost of personnel in like roles are used for the purposes of analysis. Calculations of personnel salaries are based on the contract length for personnel in this school district. This model is designed to provide schools and districts with an overall understanding of how much disruptive behavior costs districts and thus takes away actual resources that should be used for instruction and learning.

### SCENARIO

Marshall Magnet Middle School<sup>1</sup> is a medium sized middle school located in an urban area. During the time of this analysis, the school’s principal was in his first year as principal of this school. By the end of the third year he was moved to one of the high schools in the district that was experiencing challenges with the level of disruptive behaviors. We applied the model for calculating the cost of disruption to this school based on personnel salary data (see Table 1). All other data regarding disruption was acquired from annual reports to the state.

Table 1. The annual salary for education personnel

Marshall Magnet Middle School	
Teacher	\$45,413
Assistant Principal	\$83,432
Para Professional	\$29,347
Counselor	\$35,509

### MINOR DISRUPTIONS

Minor disruptions are defined as those that would most likely end with a student receiving in school suspension (ISS). For minor disruptions there are approximately four (4) persons involved in a five-step non-instructional activity, thus taking direct support away from instructional and interpersonal development activities. (1) The classroom teacher or other staff person completes the referral. (2) An administrator processes the referral. (3) A staff person is assigned to monitor the student during in school suspension (ISS). (4) An administrator will process the student back into the learning environment. And (5) in an ideal situation a professional (i.e. teacher or counselor) will address the initial behavior to increase the probability that the behavior will not occur again. For this model, the estimated time for steps 1, 2, 4 and 5 of the process is conservatively one hour and forty-five minutes of personnel time to address one minor disruption. For step 3 an additional seven hours of time by a para professional is required for every 30 students assigned to in school suspension (ISS).

Table 2. Amount of time and cost for each minor disruption

Process for Addressing a Minor Disruption		
Process	Amount of Time	Cost
Initiating the referral	15 minutes	\$7.28
Processing the referral	30 minutes	\$20.06
Monitoring the sanction	7 hours	\$131.67 <sup>2</sup>
Reintroducing the student to the learning environment	30 minutes	\$20.06
Follow-up of the redress	30 minutes	\$11.38
<b>TOTAL ISS Related Cost</b>		<b>\$58.77</b>

<sup>1</sup> All data are from an actual middle school. However, the name of the school has been changed and all non-essential features have been altered to protect all personnel involved.

<sup>2</sup> The cost for monitoring the sanction of in school suspension is \$131.67 for every 30 students assigned this sanction within a given reporting period.

In the case of Marshall Magnet Middle School (MMMS) during the 2012-2013 academic year there were 756 documented minor disruptions. The personnel cost associated with initiating the referral, reporting information regarding the disruptive behavior, reintroducing the student to the learning environment and follow-up was \$44,430. The staff cost for monitoring students based on incidents of minor disruptions was \$3,318. The total personnel cost of minor disruptions to MMMS for that year was \$47,748.

During the 2014-2015 academic year, personnel from MMMS worked with the Foundation For Educational Success on creating a high performing culture and climate. The number of minor disruptions dropped from 756 cases to 166 cases for a decrease of 590 or 78%. In terms of monetary assets, this means that \$37,264 of personnel costs can be used for instructional and/or interpersonal development activities instead of disruptive behaviors.

Table 3. Three years of data for minor disruptions

<b>The Case for Marshall Magnet Middle School</b>				
Year	ISS Cases	ISS Related Cost	Monitoring Sanctions	Total
2012-2013	756	\$44,430	\$3,318	\$47,748
2013-2014	548	\$32,206	\$2,405	\$34,611
2014-2015	166	\$9,756	\$728	\$10,484

**MAJOR DISRUPTIONS**

Although less frequent than minor disruptions, major disruptions are not only more emotionally taxing for students, faculty and staff, they are expensive because of the amount of time personnel must expend addressing each incident. Major disruptions are defined as those that would most likely end with a student receiving out of school suspension (OSS) as a sanction. For major disruptions there are approximately three (3) persons involved in a four-step non-instructional activity, thus taking direct support away from instructional and interpersonal development activities. For major disruptions (1) the classroom teacher or other staff person completes the referral and (2) an administrator processes the referral. After the student completes their out of school suspension, (3) an administrator processes the student back into the learning environment. And in an ideal situation (4) a professional (i.e. teacher or counselor) will address the initial behavior to increase the probability that the behavior will not occur again.

Table 4. Amount of time and cost for each major disruption

<b>Process for Addressing a Major Disruption</b>		
Process	Amount of Time	Cost
Initiating the referral	1 hour	\$29.11
Processing the referral and calling family	1 hour	\$40.11
Reintroducing the student to the learning environment	1 hour	\$40.11
Follow-up of the redress	1 hour	\$22.76
<b>TOTAL ISS Related Cost</b>		<b>\$132.10</b>

Table 5. Three years of data for major disruptions

Year	OSS Cases	OSS Related Cost
2012-2013	459	\$60,632
2013-2014	444	\$58,651
2014-2015	153	\$20,211

An examination of MMMS’s major disruptions during the 2012-2013 academic year found that there were 459 documented major disruptions. Whereas it is estimated to take approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes to process each minor disruption, it is estimated that it takes approximately 4 hours to process each major disruption. During the 2012-2013 academic year MMMS spent approximately \$60,632 in personnel cost addressing major disruptions. After working with Foundation For Educational Success during the 2014-2015 academic year the number of major disruptions at MMMS went from 459 cases to 153 cases. This represents a decrease of 67% and a monetary savings of \$40,421.

In total Marshall Magnet School went from spending \$108,380 in personnel cost for disruption during the 2012-2013 academic year to spending \$30,695 on disruption during the 2014-2015 academic year. The overall amount in personnel costs that are now available for Marshall Magnet Middle School to use for instruction instead of inappropriate behavior is \$77,685 annually after creating a healthy, high performing culture and climate!