

Evidence of Excellence



Behavior Solutions™ transforms school district



MODEL PLC at WORK® DISTRICT

DEER VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT • PHOENIX, ARIZONA



LET'S SEE WHAT WE CAN DO TOGETHER



32,131 STUDENTS / 34% FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH / 4.4% ENGLISH LEARNERS / 13% SPECIAL NEEDS

61.5% WHITE / 22.9% HISPANIC OR LATINO / 5.6% MULTIRACIAL / 5.2% ASIAN /
3.5% BLACK / 1% AMERICAN INDIAN / 0.4% HAWAIIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER

Student suspension rate drops by **65%**

CHALLENGE

While academic multitiered system of supports (MTSS) structures were in place at Deer Valley Unified School District (DVUSD), the need for a more systematic approach to behavioral support became apparent. Administrators observed an increase in behavioral incidents post-COVID, a trend supported by rising suspension rates and anecdotal reports from educators, including Jessica Tucker, MTSS behavior specialist, regarding students' difficulties with emotional regulation.

At the start, district leaders set an ambitious goal: to reduce suspensions by 25%. The fluidity of staffing due to substitute rotations and increased class sizes added further strain, underscoring the urgent need to reinforce proactive behavioral supports throughout DVUSD.

IMPLEMENTATION

In 2021, DVUSD embarked on a multiyear implementation plan, spearheaded by Jessica Tucker and Gary Diaz Zehrbach, PhD, deputy superintendent of administrative leadership and services, to address student behavior.

The shift began when an MTSS specialist from DVUSD, attending the Summit on RTI at Work™ in Austin, Texas, came across the book *Behavior Solutions*, by John Hannigan, Jessica Djabrayan Hannigan, Mike Mattos, and Austin Buffum. Inspired, Dr. Zehrbach championed a districtwide book study in the 2021–2022 school year, involving leaders from all departments.

During the 2022–2023 school year, district and pilot teams participated in the **Behavior Solutions™: A Practical Road Map for Behavior Success in All Tiers** virtual workshop, deepening their understanding and laying the foundation for active implementation.

Soon after, the DVUSD team held a pivotal professional development meeting with John and Jessica Hannigan to officially launch a multiyear coaching plan. This collaborative work with the Hannigans helped establish the framework for a K–12 districtwide rollout of Behavior Solutions, ensuring alignment and consistency across all sites.

- The Summit on RTI at Work™
- *Behavior Solutions* book study
- Behavior Solutions™: A Practical Road Map for SEL Success in All Tiers (virtual workshop)
- Professional Development meeting with John and Jessica Hannigan
- RTI at Work™ Institute
- *Behavior Academies* book study
- Achieved Model PLC at Work® district recognition

DVUSD also established behavior academies in select schools to provide targeted support for students with persistent behavioral challenges. Created by John and Jessica Hannigan, and presented in the book *Behavior Academies*, this approach offers a structured pathway for intervention, skill-building, and reentry into general education.

RESULTS

Three years into implementing Behavior Solutions, DVUSD is seeing measurable success. A consistent, proactive approach to student behavior has helped foster a more positive school culture where students feel supported and emotionally equipped to learn.



What's most powerful is hearing assistant principals say this work has truly transformed their role. Where they once spent the majority of their day managing discipline, they now spend their time building relationships, supporting instruction, and doing the work they're passionate about. That transformation is happening across the board, and it's making a real difference in our schools.

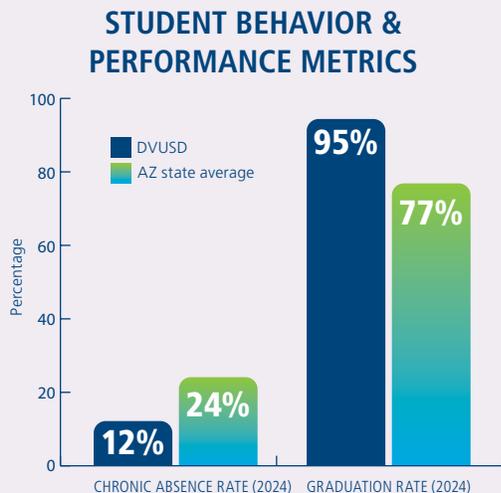
GARY DIAZ ZEHRBACH, PHD / DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP AND SERVICES

BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY NOTEWORTHY:

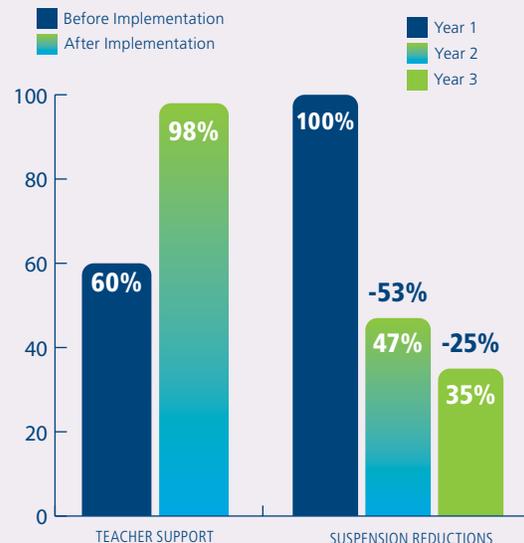
- Districtwide suspensions have dropped significantly, while teacher support for handling student discipline rose from **60% to 98%**.
- The district achieved a **53% decrease in suspensions in year one** and an additional **25% decrease in year two**.
- One high school reported **zero suspensions in one month**, a milestone achievement for a school with zero tolerance policies.
- In a high school Behavior Academy, **25 of 30 students successfully exited**, demonstrating the effectiveness of targeted intervention.

THE DISTRICT HAS ALSO ACHIEVED REMARKABLE ACADEMIC SUCCESS:

- 27 schools earned an A rating from the Arizona State Board of Education in the 2023–2024 school year
- 28 schools received the prestigious A+ School of Excellence award. Students consistently outperformed the state average on FY 2024 assessments by 13 points in math, 11 in English language arts, and 18 in science.
- 14 schools were recognized by the state of Arizona in 2024–2025 for effective schoolwide Positive Behavior Intervention Systems: 12 for Tier 1 implementation, one for Tier 1 and Tier 2, and one for Tier 1, 2, and 3.
- The district earned Model PLC at Work recognition in 2021.



IMPACT OF BEHAVIOR SOLUTIONS™ ON TEACHERS AND SUSPENSIONS



Start your success story



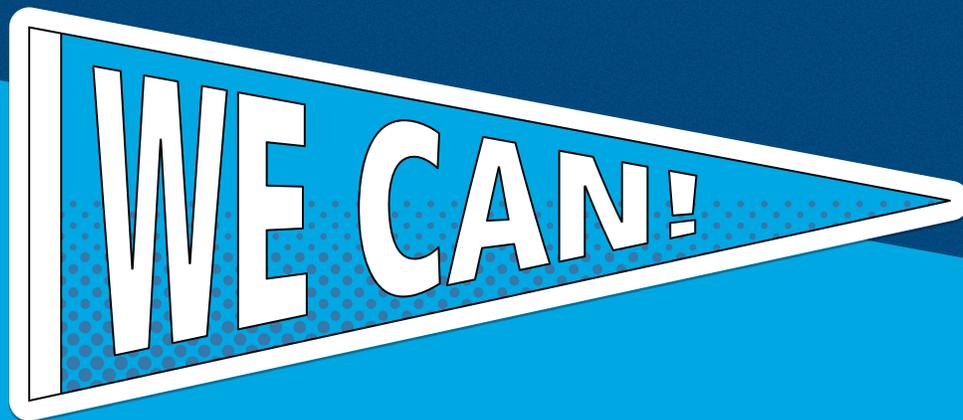
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