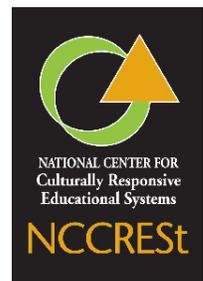




Proactive Culturally Responsive Discipline

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INTRODUCTION The ways that schools intervene with students' challenging behavior have been historically "reactive, exclusionary, and ineffective" (Liaupsin, Jolivette, & Scott, 2005, p. 488). Traditional reactive discipline interventions include detention, suspension, and expulsion, all of which punish students by excluding them from school and limiting opportunity to receive positive support for behavior change. Furthermore, punitive and reactive disciplinary measures have been linked to the *increased* severity and incidence of the target behaviors (Turnbull et al., 2002).

One of several problems with reactive, exclusionary approaches to discipline is that culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students tend to encounter such punitive practices at disproportionately higher rates than cultural and language majority students (Skiba, 2001). Then, one of two things may take place: many CLD students are referred for special education evaluation and consequently diagnosed with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders (EBD) or else become part of a cycle of suspension with greater risk for school expulsion and school drop out. Both of these phenomena contribute to the problem of disproportionate representation of CLD students in special education.

David Osher et al. (2004) emphasized the importance of a proactive approach to discipline in efforts to reduce disproportionate representation of CLD students in special education programs. Proactive approaches to discipline are based on the theoretical model that most behavior is learned and plans are designed to promote children's social and behavioral development. In addition to being proactive, such approaches must also simultaneously focus on students' cultural characteristics, as well as language needs. Cloud (1999, p. 107) refers to student's cultural characteristics as culturally related beliefs, norms, values, customs, and patterns of thoughts and behaviors, which are influenced by primary cultural group, family norms, and wider societal influences. Cultural and linguistic characteristics must be considered in proactive discipline approaches so that acceptable student behavior and interactions, as well as style of student engagement and communication are determined based on the individual and collective characteristics of the students for which they are designed.

This exemplar presents how one urban middle school in Phoenix, Arizona incorporates proactive discipline into the everyday practices of the school community. The result is a safe, positive school climate, leading to a reduction of student discipline problems, and in turn, prevention of disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education due to social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties.

Cordova Middle School (CMS) utilizes a combination of formalized school wide, classroom and individual student-focused approaches to promoting positive behavior. CMS also provides alternative supports for students who require specific social, behavioral, and emotional support, as well as varied opportunities for engagement in academic enrichment activities. CMS

does not use a *prepackaged* approach to proactive discipline. Over time, they have developed various practices they see as relevant for their own unique school community, and evidence of positive student outcomes support that these practices work. This exemplar provides a description of the CMS community, followed by the presentation of their proactive discipline programs and practices. Finally, from our analysis of CMS's programs and practices, we infer a conceptual model that other schools may use to design and implement a comprehensive, culturally responsive approach to proactive discipline for their own unique student population.

CORDOVA MIDDLE SCHOOL AT A GLANCE CMS serves close to 900 fourth through eighth grade students and shares a campus with a primary school attended by about the same number of K-3 students. The school is in an older, low-income neighborhood in west central Phoenix where housing includes federally subsidized single-family homes and high-density low-income apartments. CMS's student body is 83% Latino/a, 7% White, 5% Black, 2% Native American, and 4% Asian/Pacific Islander. There are many languages spoken by the more than 400 English language learners including Spanish, the home language of 93% of CMS's English language learners, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Navajo, Yoruba, and French. Any preconceived notions and expectations of diversity correlating with low student achievement and increased behavioral and attendance problems are not upheld at CMS. CMS has been recognized nationally and by the State of Arizona. Most recently, CMS was recognized as an Arizona A+ Exemplary School (2004) and a National School of Distinction in Leadership Excellence, awarded by the Intel Corporation and Scholastic who selected only 20 K through 12 schools nationally. Additionally, the school's previous principal, Karen Williams, was a National Distinguished Principal of the Year for 2004.

Cordova Middle School places itself at the center of the community by providing a parent volunteer room and meeting space, language and parenting classes with childcare, Saturday classes for students and families, as well as meals throughout the summer. These resources complement existing proactive discipline programs and practices, promote open communication, and help develop mutual respect among the students, faculty, parents, and community. They also are culturally responsive in that they provide opportunities for parent and community presence and input in the school setting, and provide educational opportunities for parents based on their input on interest surveys and informal communication.

An example of just one of many opportunities for parent and community input is the recruitment of parent volunteers, coordinated by a parent/community volunteer coordinator (a paid, full time position). The recognized value of volunteers is demonstrated through school-sponsored volunteer luncheons with food provided by teachers and other staff, and a room specifically for volunteers complete with its own kitchen amenities. Other opportunities for parent and community involvement include the School Community Council, which meets once a month, and the CMS Booster Club, which is a parent organization that provides fundraising monies for extra- and co-curricular activities. Information from the "parent reviews" section of the national schools website greatschools.net, was entirely positive, and included the following parent review:



Over all I feel that Cordova is a school in which your child will learn a great deal from. My son just graduated this year, and I'm very proud of him. I can honestly say that so much of it had to do with the teachers and their ability to show the students that they do count and that they can achieve as much as they want in life. My son went on a lot of outings which were based on culture awareness. I personally feel that this interaction has opened my child's eyes to the possibilities that life has to offer him. And know that he is able to become however successful he chooses to be. Thank You teachers for taking the time to care and support our children. (Quote was slightly modified for readability.)

This positive parent statement related to student learning, teacher skill, respect for and expectations of all students, as well as the school activities related to cultural awareness, embodies a perception of CMS as a culturally responsive institution.

Student perceptions of the school culture reveal much about the school climate. As part of the Arizona A+ award application process, students were interviewed to discuss their perception of the school environment and made overwhelmingly positive statements.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT While the primary purpose of this exemplar is to present examples of proactive discipline approaches, Cordova Middle School also maximizes opportunities for academic engagement as a means for preventing negative behavior. Evidence suggests that increased student participation in academic activities leads to a reduction in disruptive and off-task behaviors for student with EBD (Sutherland, Alder, & Gunther, 2003). Historically, many students identified with EBD have high risks for academic failure that can be displayed through problem behavior (Anderson et al., 1998). CMS's dedication to academic success for all students and the efficacy of its practices are evidenced by high attendance and homework completion rates, as well as above average standardized test scores as compared to national and state averages for schools with similar demographics demonstrates efficacy of CMS's practices. As an example of an additional opportunity for student academic support, CMS's Principal Barbara Marshall provided data that show 23 out of a class of 31 students stay after school for academic enrichment with their teacher, and described a wide variety of academic activities in which students engage. Activities include book clubs, quarterly Saturday Academic Academies for students and parents, as well as six new after school academic classes for students who were identified as "Approaching the Standard" on last year's Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) Test in the area of Reading or Writing. CMS also provides an after school class for students with Limited English Proficiency, specifically for newly immigrated students. Saturday Academic Academies, for example, often center on culturally based activities in order to promote parent and student involvement. One such example is a cooking class at which traditional Mexican food is prepared as a part of science and math lessons in which both students and parents lead and participate.

BOX 1. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE STATISTICS

- 74% of eighth grade Latino/a students **met or exceeded** the Reading standards compared with 47% for Arizona.
- 94% of sixth grade Latino/a students **met or exceeded** the Writing standards compared with 39% for Arizona.

There is evidence that CMS's academic instruction, as well as additional academic engagement opportunities for CLD students have paid off. Recent results from the 2005 AIMS tests for CLD students yielded encouraging statistics. Box 1 lists some data that represent general trends within CMS's achievement data.

Analyses by ethnic/racial group demonstrate that CMS students achieve better than peers who attend other schools with similar demographics. CMS students exceed the national, district, and comparison school averages in mathematics in all grades, and meet or exceed the comparison averages in reading and language. Another significant conclusion is the impressive scores by those students who remain at CMS for more than a year. These students scored above grade level in all subject areas at all grades on the 2005 Stanford Nine Achievement Test.

A series of discipline programs and practices are in place at Cordova Middle School in order to support CLD students. We have grouped these initiatives into two categories: *Proactive* and *Alternative Support* Practices. *Proactive* and *Alternative Support* Practices. Within the *Proactive* category, approaches focus on preventing behavioral problems at either the *school-/classroom-wide* level or at the *individual* student level. Within the *Alternative Support* category, approaches are in response to students who already display behavior difficulties, and focus on individual students, either served individually or in small groups of students with similar areas of need. All programs and practices have certain goals, which can be described as building and strengthening the protective factors for and/or specific behavioral skills of students at CMS. (Academic skills are also strengthened through other programs and practices implemented at several levels, We have referenced some such practices within this exemplar, such as increased opportunities for academic engagement and support before and after school, but greater detail is outside the scope of this work.)

Protective factors include a school culture of mutual expectations and respect, motivational systems that provide recognition for positive behavior, and relationships with caring adults in the school setting. Behavioral skills include conflict resolution, behavioral self-monitoring and evaluation, as well as identifying appropriate ways to express emotions and generate solutions in frustrating circumstances. The following sections provide overviews, implementation steps, and supportive data for proactive discipline programs and alternative supports implemented at the school- and classroom-wide, and individual levels.



Proactive Discipline Programs and Practices

Proactive practices, as defined in the introduction, include Choose High Achievement, Citizenship, Homework, and Attendance (CHA CHA) and Rights and Responsibilities. CMS's programs and practices meet the behavioral needs of students through positive intervention rather than punishment. This places important emphasis on culturally responsive discipline practices, rather than on exclusionary practices that are often used with CLD students with social/emotional needs that affect behavior. In addition, CMS's programs and practices aim to alleviate the cultural conflict that can occur when educators do not fully understand and fail to integrate the cultures of their students into the school environment.

SCHOOL-/CLASSROOM-WIDE FOCUSED APPROACHES

CHOOSE HIGH ACHIEVEMENT, CITIZENSHIP, HOMEWORK, AND ATTENDANCE (CHA CHA)

WHAT IS CHA CHA? CHA CHA is a program that encourages students' individual accountability for responsible decision-making, positive social behavior, meeting homework deadlines, and being present and punctual. The behavioral criteria associated with CHA CHA are the following:

- students treat peers and adults with respect as measured through compliance with school and classroom rules;
- students arrive to school on time;
- students complete all homework each day (students may stay after school everyday for homework help with one teacher from each grade level, or call the district's *homework hotline*); and
- students must attend school everyday and arrive on time, or if they are absent, the absence must be excused.

HOW DO YOU IMPLEMENT CHA CHA? The school year starts with a kick off assembly at which the principal explains the CHA CHA program and asks students' commitment to a positive school community. Time is set aside every Friday for in-class discussions in which the class determines which individual students "CHA CHA-ed" that week (this is based on the above CHA CHA criteria). Although these discussions may also take place on a daily basis, there is specific time set up for doing so each Friday. Students who meet CHA CHA criteria, as determined by class consensus, receive a sticker that is placed on the classroom CHA CHA chart. During this time, the teacher facilitates discussions about positive social behavior and academic responsibility.

Each quarter, all students receive academically related prizes and attend "reward field trips" (e.g. ice cream, movies) for meeting CHA CHA criteria. An awards assembly is held at the end of the school year, during which one boy and one girl from each class are chosen by their teacher for exhibiting exemplary academic and social responsibility and

receive a gift certificate to a local department store. The students are treated to their teachers and administrators performing skits, who involve the students in the fun. Third grade students from the primary school that shares CMS's campus are invited to attend in order to familiarize them with CMS's behavioral expectations, the CHA CHA language, and expose them to the recognition and fun rewards connected to positive academic and social behavior.

WHAT EVIDENCE SUPPORTS CHA CHA? Since its implementation in 2000, the daily attendance rate has improved over 15%, students qualifying for academic recognition have increased by more than 20%, and the homework completion rate has increased from 60% to over 95% throughout the entire school. This program won an Arizona School Board Association Golden Bell Award in 2001.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT IS RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES? The Rights and Responsibilities program builds teamwork and social-interdependence *within classrooms*. It encourages positive peer relationships so that members within any given class promote appropriate behavior and encourage one another to make wise socialization choices. This program also builds conflict resolution skills and improves communication and social interaction within the classrooms, which transfers throughout the entire school community.

HOW DO YOU IMPLEMENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES?

Each quarter, classrooms that are "referral-free," that is, do not have any students sent to the office due to a discipline referral, are rewarded with an end-of quarter party in the cafeteria with pizza, ice cream floats, and other treats.

WHAT DATA SUPPORT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES? As a result of this positive interaction, student discipline referrals have dropped 42% since the program's inception in 1998. This program won an Arizona School Board Association Golden Bell Award in 2000.

INDIVIDUALLY FOCUSED APPROACHES The following individually focused approaches are components of the CHA CHA and Rights and Responsibilities Programs. These approaches are designed to meet the needs of students who are having difficulty meeting the success criteria for these programs, as defined above.

If a particular student shows a pattern of behavior in need of remediation, the classroom teacher meets with the principal, and they develop an action plan for supporting the student through school and community resources, including school counseling, assignment to a GEAR UP mentor (see below), and participation in the peer mediation program. Additionally, any further negative behaviors by the student do not impact the referral-free status of the class, since there is a plan in place for that student and the teacher and principal are in close communication regarding the student's progress.



FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHA CHA AND RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES Suggestions for future considerations within the CHA CHA and Rights and Responsibilities program is the analysis of the following school data in order to prevent misrepresentation of CLD students as EBD: Topics for professional development include establishing a classroom atmosphere that respects individuals and their cultures (Montgomery, 2001), which includes a diversity self-assessment for teachers. This tool allows teachers to acknowledge and address utilize in order to their own beliefs, values, and biases related to students from diverse backgrounds.

The previous programs address a school-wide preventive approach to student behavior problems, while the following examples provide individual supports for students in need of support with social and behavioral skills, as alternatives to punitive practices.

Alternative Supports Programs and Practices

Alternative Support practices include those initiatives that aim to provide guidance and skill building for students who are already displaying behavioral or emotional difficulties.

INDIVIDUALLY FOCUSED ALTERNATIVE SUPPORTS These practices include GEAR-UP mentoring, and New Directions, which are formal programs developed by school staff. Other supports include peer mediation and counseling groups.

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR-UP) is a federally-funded program in collaboration with Northern Arizona University and Alhambra High School. The GEAR-UP grant provides the means to help students continue their education beyond high school. The following two programs are funded through the GEAR-UP grant: GEAR-UP Mentoring and New Directions.

GEAR-UP MENTORING

WHAT IS GEAR UP MENTORING? The GEAR-UP Mentoring program provides individual students with adult mentors from the immediate community, many of whom were former CMS students. This particular approach is culturally responsive in that it provides students with mentors who are of similar primary language and cultural backgrounds as role models students may more readily relate and respond to. Additionally, parents and families of mentored students often know mentors and their families due to community interaction outside the school.

TOPICS ADDRESSED IN MENTOR TRAININGS:

- Confidentiality issues
- Appropriate topics to discuss with students
- When to ask for help, and from whom

HOW DO YOU IMPLEMENT A MENTORING PROGRAM?

Mentors are supervised by a particular staff member and provided initial and ongoing training for working with students by the school psychologist, counselor, and mentor supervisor. Mentors meet once a week with the mentor supervisor to provide updates on student progress, discuss concerns, and receive peer support.

If a particular student shows a pattern of behavior in need of remediation, the classroom teacher contacts the mentor supervisor and discusses the student's particular needs. The mentor supervisor carefully pairs students with mentors to make the best mentor-student match possible. Considerations for matching students to mentors include gender, primary language, and shared interests. The mentor works with the student both within the classroom during instructional time and outside of the classroom during non-academic time.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CMS MENTORS:

- Positive role model
- Familiarity, or preferably, a member of the community
- Ability to speak students' primary languages
- History of responsibility and ability to commit to long term employment

WHAT DATA SUPPORT GEAR UP MENTORING? School discipline records suggest that individual students' referral rates are significantly reduced following consistent mentor partnerships.

NEW DIRECTIONS

WHAT IS NEW DIRECTIONS? New Directions is a program that assigns students with minor behavior difficulties to a group led by a staff member trained in teaching students conflict resolution and social skills. This program is an alternative to an office referral for discipline problems.



HOW DO YOU IMPLEMENT NEW DIRECTIONS? A CMS staff member, who is also the GEAR UP coordinator, initially conferences with teachers who have identified students who are displaying a need for social/emotional support. This staff member then uses the student’s elective period to provide a structured environment for students to reflect on behaviors and strategies. This is *not* a counseling session nor is it a discussion of the particular misbehavior. Rather it is a program to help students build self-image, resist peer pressure, achieve goals, and negotiate teacher-student relationships. This is a new program, just implemented in the 2005-2006 school year. At this point, eclectic strategies for teaching students positive alternatives to negative behavior are utilized. Future goals include more formalized programmatic approaches, including the use of specific social skills curriculum with evidence of efficacy with students from diverse backgrounds. Such a program may be considered culturally responsive in that it attempts to reverse many of the historically negative experiences related to discipline students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families experience in relation to school. Instead, there is a promotion of positive interaction around

problem behaviors so that students, families, and schools, may work together to support student development rather than educational exclusion.

WHAT DATA SUPPORT NEW DIRECTIONS? This program was implemented at the start of the 2005-2006 school year. Since that time, through the end of January 2006, office referral numbers have been dramatically reduced. Current data show an approximate average monthly referral number of 25 students per month, which is approximately one student office referral per day, out of an overall student population of just under 900 students. Prior data ranged from approximately 5 office referrals per day. Additionally, administrators examine office referrals in order to identify any patterns of referral correlated to race/ethnicity of students or special education eligibility so that over representation of particular groups may be addressed with staff.

We provide the following table as a visual representation of all the programs and practices presented above.

OVERVIEW OF PROACTIVE DISCIPLINE AND ALTERNATIVE SUPPORTS PROGRAMS/PRACTICES AT CMS

PROACTIVE DISCIPLINE PROGRAMS/PRACTICES		ALTERNATIVE SUPPORTS PROGRAMS/PRACTICES
SCHOOL-/CLASSROOM-WIDE FOCUSED APPROACHES	INDIVIDUALLY FOCUSED APPROACHES	INDIVIDUALLY FOCUSED APPROACHES
	CHA CHA	GEAR UP MENTORING
		NEW DIRECTIONS
		PEER MEDIATION
	RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES	COUNSELING GROUPS

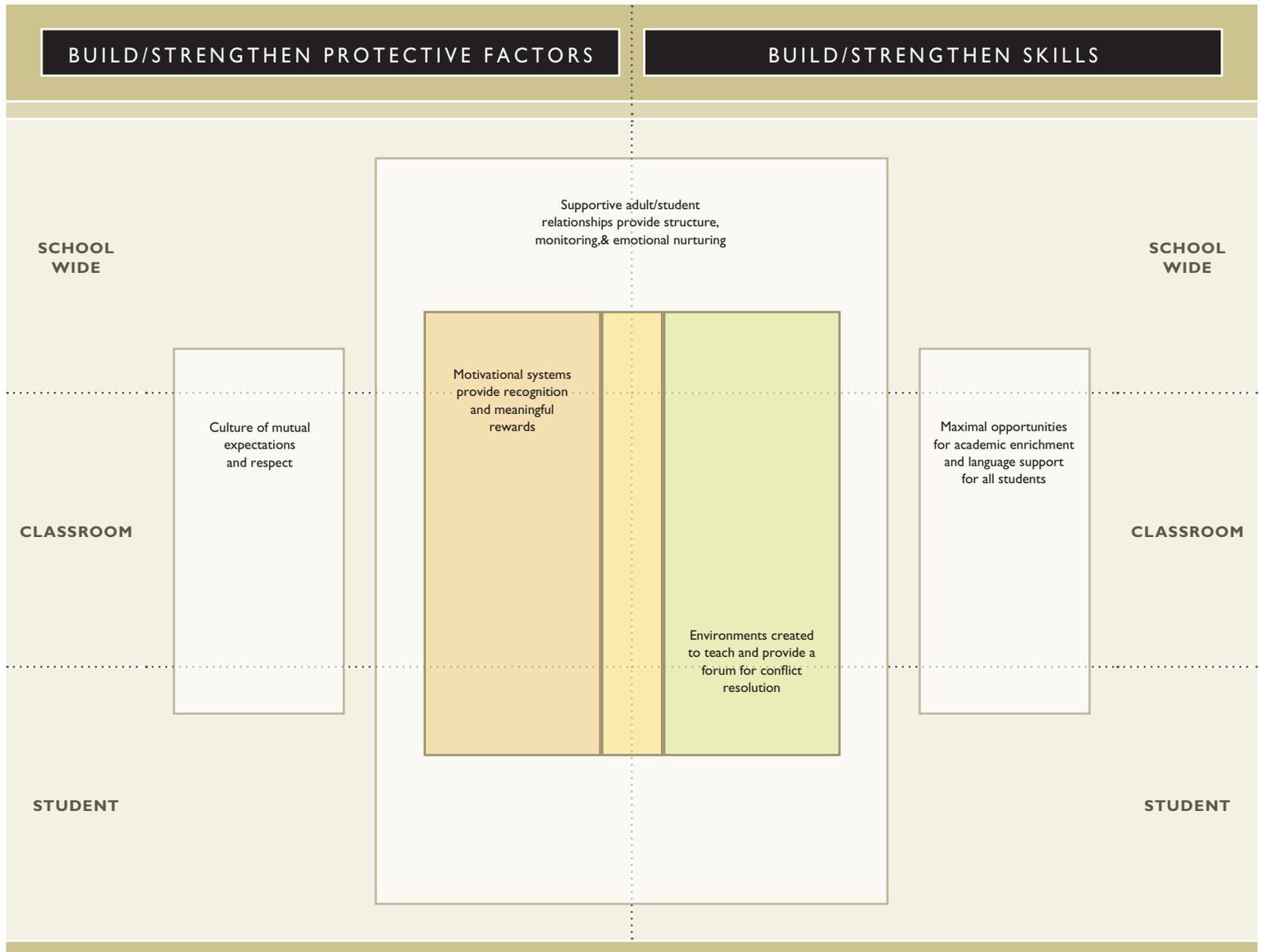


A Model for Proactive Culturally Responsive Discipline

Through analysis of the proactive discipline and academic programs at Cordova Middle School, as well as consideration of factors related to creating protective schools, a comprehensive model for addressing student behavioral and academic needs emerged. This model, as presented below, can be developed at individual schools because its flexibility allows for consideration of local norms, goals, and needs within educational settings. Although descriptions of the *types of programming (proactive discipline and alternative*

supports), programmatic goals (building/strengthening protective factors and building/strengthening skills), and units of focus (school-/classroom wide and individual), as well as descriptions of individual programs are included above, we have included the figure below as a visual representation of a model we use to represent the combination of CMS's programs and practices.

Cordova Middle School's combination of proactive discipline, alternative support programs and varied academic enrichment activities are evidence of a school striving to meet the needs of the diverse student population they serve. This combined-method approach supports students at the school wide, classroom, and individual levels and serves to reduce disproportionate representation for CLD students in the category of Emotional Disturbance, while at the same time providing support for students displaying emotional and/or behavioral difficulties.



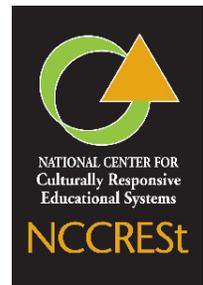


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