



Denfeld and the Conflict Resolution Center

Presented to the Duluth School Board Committee of the Whole
Thursday, August 4



History

- Denfeld identified for disproportionate out of school suspensions
- Denfeld selected as one of six MN Model schools to help address this
- Partnership with Conflict Resolution Center (CRC) created through MN Model



What is the MN Model?

- Sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Human Services
- Goal is to reduce exclusionary discipline, like out of school suspensions, especially for students of color and preventing incidents that occur in school from resulting in arrests and intake into the criminal justice system
- OSS is the number one predictor of a student dropping out of school*
- Students arrested at school are three times more likely to drop out than their peers who are not arrested*
- Very few students are arrested at school.

*The Minnesota Model of School-Based Diversion for Students with Co-Occurring Disorders, Together Towards Tomorrow: Making space for courageous conversations, Bill Wyss, Minnesota Department of Human Services

What is CRC?



- Denfeld has partnered with the Conflict Resolution Center since 2016
- CRC provides:
 - Individual conflict coaching (Tier III-Individualized Intervention)
 - Mediations (Tier III-Individualized Intervention)
 - Classes: “Words Can Work” provides a group setting that models SEL (Social Emotional Learning) skills and positive conflict resolution behaviors. Have been held during WIN or after school (Tier II-Small Group Intervention)
- Administrators (Principals and Deans) refer students to CRC using a Google Form, this provides initial communication with the mediators from CRC and provides a basis to track participants, demographic data and outcomes.
- Denfeld teaches school wide expectations, uses a student recognition system and provides SEL lessons through our PBIS framework. (Tier I-Whole Group Intervention)



Erica Backstrom , Duluth Program Director

Erica holds a Juris Doctor from Hamline University School of Law and is a qualified neutral under Rule 114. Previously, Erica served as Executive Director of the Volunteer Attorney Program (VAP), a non-profit organization that works with volunteer attorneys to provide quality pro bono civil legal services to low-income individuals and families in Northeastern Minnesota. Bringing over ten years of experience working with victims of trauma, abuse and at-risk youth, Erica is passionate about conflict resolution's ability to empower participants through a process that honors each individual's voice and recognizes the value of seeing other perspectives respectfully. Erica is an experienced Restorative Services practitioner, participating in circles to address youth truancy, community building and Restorative Justice with Woodland Hills, Inc. and Men as Peacemakers.



Jes-wa' Harris, Duluth Youth Programs Coordinator

Jes-wa' is a passionate mentor, coach, and youth service provider with 25 years of experience working with youth in residential treatment facilities, crisis shelters, Intensive Day Treatment programs and school programming. Jes-wa' coaches high school basketball and middle school track in Duluth Schools. Jes-wa' is a member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity and lives by the motto: Culture for service and service for humanity.

CRC Staff that currently work at Denfeld

Source: <http://crcminnesota.org/>



How is CRC used?

- **Resolution:** Primarily, students have been referred to CRC after a conflict has resulted in a confrontation that is either verbal and or physical with the intention of resolving the conflict so further confrontations are avoided.
- **Prevention:** Students are also referred when conflicts become known to staff as a means of preventing confrontations.
- **Process:** Staff from CRC meet with the Denfeld Administrative Team bi-weekly to discuss recent suspensions and the process involved at arriving at that consequence based on the circumstance, investigation and district policy. Assessment of suspensions also explores possible alternatives or changes to process that could be used instead.



Referrals to CRC since 2019:

2019-20: 57 Referrals

2020-21: Distance Learning

2021-22: 97 Referrals



What are the desired outcomes for our work with CRC this year?

1. Make more preventative referrals before conflicts result in verbal and or physical confrontations that result in out of school suspensions in an effort to increase our graduation rate.
2. Use our mediation resources to capacity and look to expand that capacity once reached
2. Host regularly scheduled and ongoing “Words Can Work” classes during WIN and after school
3. Further integrate and clarify the role of CRC within our greater Restorative Practice philosophy and framework

Questions?