Positive Action Center©

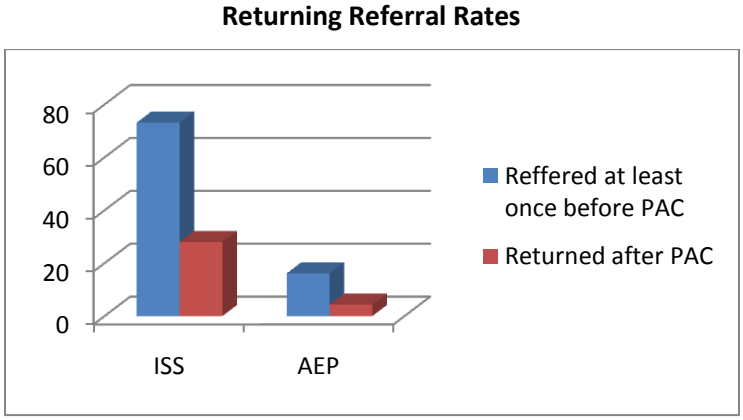
A paxUnited® Program

paxUnited's *Positive Action Center (PAC)* is not simply a mentoring program for at-risk students. It's a mentoring program that produces results for all. Aimed at reaching students upon arrival to In School Suspension (ISS) and Alternative Education Programs (AEP), *PAC* dramatically improves three problem areas schools face on a daily basis, no matter the subgroup. From entrance into the program to the end of a school year, research shows that students receiving *PAC* mentoring show a:

- 12.0% improvement in GPA (many times this means going from failing to passing)
- 70.8% reduction in tardiness
- 53.8% reduction in absenteeism

Reaching the Unreached

Positive Action Center is a structured integration process into the existing ISS and AEP programs. Selected staff and students participate in training to learn specific skills, such as communication, listening, dispute resolution, problem solving, and goal setting, which they specifically learn to apply in the *PAC* setting. Once trained, the staff and *PAC* mentors work with ISS/AEP students who volunteer to participate in the *PAC* program. The benefits to schools are that students referred to *Positive Action Center* take ultimate responsibility for correcting their own negative behaviors, and teachers can then concentrate on teaching. Students receiving mentoring are far less likely to return to ISS/AEP, as seen in the chart below:



Positive Action Center is a voluntary program that is meant to enhance the current ISS and AEP corrective policy, not replace it. If a student chooses not to participate, the student can remain in ISS and proceed through the regular disciplinary process.

The way that schools handle student discipline has a profound impact on the overall school environment. *Positive Action Center* redefines student management once they enter the ISS and

AEP rooms. Through an adaptation of the mediation process, students assigned to ISS and AEP for one or more days may volunteer to work one-on-one with a *PAC* mentor. The mentor leads the student through the structured *PAC* process that assesses the situation. The mentor then assists the student in creating an action plan that defines the strategies the student will use to rectify the situation.

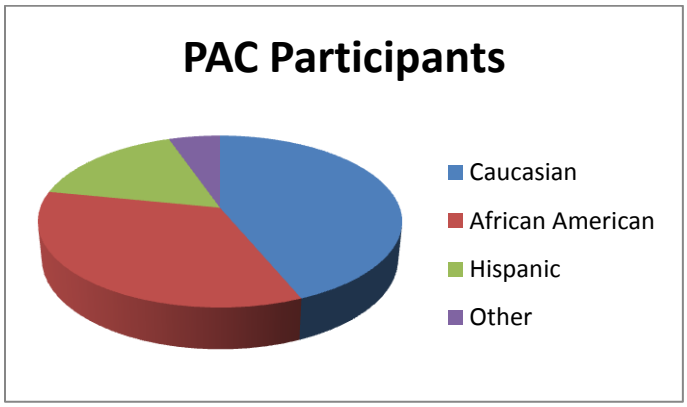
Positive Action Center empowers active resolution of student dilemmas through improved and specific communication and problem-solving skills. *PAC* includes skills development in the areas of anger and conflict management within a safe and structured environment. As a result, the student is less likely to engage in behaviors that will bring about other referrals through the disciplinary process.

The mentor works with the student to construct an action plan that finds his/her own solutions and reaches an agreement that the student will follow once he/she returns to the classroom. The mentor does not to give advice, take sides, find fault, or take responsibility for solving the problem. A scheduled follow-up meeting at a time convenient for the student and the mentor occurs shortly after the student returns to class. The success rate for *PAC* action plans is 97.6%. Even more impactful is the far-reaching effect on the at risk student who has felt the power of self-efficacy and self-responsibility

Achieving Success across Groups and Subgroups

In addition to the decreased referral rates to ISS and AEP shown in the Returning Referral Rates Chart, *Positive Action Center* reduces the risk level of expulsion, dropping out, or failing out of school, resulting in an overall improvement in students' ability to succeed short term and long term. Once *PAC* is fully integrated into the overall disciplinary plan, the process allows administrators to do what they do best—function as instructional leaders. Additionally, *PAC* is proven to work with students representing all ethnic and socioeconomic groups:

Ethnic Breakdown



In addition to ethnic diversity, 34.4% of *PAC* participants were male and 65.6% were female. 37.08% were on free and reduced lunch programs and 1.3% had mental or physical disabilities.

Confronting the Bully and the Bullied

The recent deaths of Asher Brown, Tyler Clementi, and the numerous other senseless bullying related suicides are prevalent in the current news cycle. In the wake of these suicides, questions of "why?" inevitably lead to how can it be stopped from happening again. Improved observation among parents and teachers is necessary, but in order for the pattern of bullying to truly change for the better, action must be taken by students. Nearly every program *paxUnited* has is meant to do just that – empower students to act.

Communication is vital to solving problems, and a lot of times that is exactly what is lacking in the lives of many suicidal students. Countless people take their pain, their burdens, and their secrets to their grave without ever talking through the emotions that torment them. Additional therapy and counseling are often necessary to work through those emotions, but *PAC* works to identify and solve problems at their source.

If students knew how to behave in a way that would insure success and praise in the classroom, they would act in that way. Merely thinking about things in a lonely ISS room with cubicles is not an effective solution. *Positive Action Center* provides skills and guidance to help the student modify the negative behavior and return to a successful classroom and school experience.

Bringing Change for the Better

In-School Suspension (ISS) and Alternative Education Programs (AEP) are the opening of the door for many students to dropout, fail-out, or be expelled out of school. Very rarely is there any type of habilitation for the student's behavior. Therefore, all ISS provides is a vacation—for the teacher from the student; for the student from the teacher. The *Positive Action Center* changes that. It provides the student an opportunity to reflect on the situation that causes his/her removal from the classroom, review options for making positive changes and a plan for success upon returning to the class. Rather than losing these students "to the streets" and having these students lose much of the promise of their futures, *PAC* helps them take responsibility for their actions and their lives.

***PAC* Students:**
Feel significant in the school environment
Identify and communicate his/her needs
Express feelings
Explain his/her points of view
Explore solutions
Learn problem-solving techniques

Behavior problems in classrooms are the major deterrent from learning. Countless amount of time each year is wasted with discipline referrals. Many times the students and the adults who

work with them are at a loss as to how to change these situations. The *PAC* process allows the situations to be examined and behaviors changed to afford both student success and classroom peace.

A new approach to the way we deal with students referred to the school's ISS and AEP programs may be challenging, even uncomfortable. However, the results will be more than worth the effort.