

Blue Card Case Study

It is clear some policies and practices in schools, are inadvertently resulting in alienating and even re-traumatising students. A review of all school policies and processes through a Trauma Informed lens will help schools to identify changes that may be easily implemented, resulting in improved outcomes.

After initially engaging with the Thoughtful Schools Team, one School Champion identified the use of "Blue Cards", to be such, and worked to develop a Trauma Informed alternative.

The "Blue Card"

at this school was used to monitor the behaviour and attitude of children returning from suspension. In many schools similar cards are used for a range of reasons.

It focused on student compliance with:

- following teachers' instructions
- co-operating with peers
- punctuality and preparedness for class
- completing assigned class work

The card was given to students returning from suspension, who retained the card and presented it to every teacher prior to class. It was then to be collected at the end of each class, after being signed and marked by the teacher.

At the end of the designated time students would be required to present their card to a previously assigned staff member, usually someone in Student Services.



"It caused significant daily escalations of staff and students because students would often forget the cards or not complete them. If they forgot them/didn't complete, they had to do detentions which again caused more escalations. The relationship was really fractured between the students and Student Services in doing the blue card."

Blue cards were punitive and often not directly related to the behaviour that had related in suspension, in particular if the behaviour occurred outside the classroom setting.



Frequently the students issued blue cards do not have the executive functioning capacity to follow and keep their blue cards, resulting in further consequences.

The cards were often a cause of escalations and power struggles between teachers and students, and did not give students a fresh start on return from suspension.

It was also clear that Blue cards did not fit with other positive behaviour policies or Trauma Informed Practice.

Generating feelings of shame/humiliation is associated with higher aggression and rage.



A Trauma Informed Response

The "Blue Card" has been replaced by a "Return From Suspension Meeting" with the appropriate staff within the school, engaging in a private **Plan B** conversation, focused on restoring the situation and teaching valuable skills to the student.

Trauma Informed



"The tone has definitely shifted and is more positive. Additionally it takes a lot less admin time."

Asking the classroom teacher to take responsibility for positive reinforcement will encourage staff to look for the good behaviour and assist in developing better student teacher relationships.

Ongoing check-in at Student Services can:

- be a supportive process where a student feels someone is there to support them rather than "keep Tabs" on them.
- provide an opportunity to set and reassess goals
- to develop a relationship with a staff member
- ensure the student feels heard and can feel supported by the process.



Recording and retaining the conversation in a Student File for future reference, enables the student to revisit this conversation if necessary.

A Plan B conversation with involved staff, assists a fresh return to class.

