



Great Falls High School Builds a Culture of Accountability and Reduces Student Misbehavior by 81%

Case Study

Improved Behavioral Data

Great Falls High
Great Falls, Montana

Total Pupil
Action Reports
September 2022
146



Total Pupil
Action Reports
May 2025
18



The implementation of RCD has had a significant positive impact on Great Falls High School:

Reduction in Behavioral Incidents

Empowered Staff

Improved Culture of Accountability

Alignment with Foundational Principles

Executive Summary

Great Falls High School, a Title I school in Montana with a diverse student population, faced significant challenges in managing student behavior, leading to administrative inefficiencies and frustrated staff. Associate Principal Shianne Currey recognized the need to coach students to own their behavior and adopted Responsibility-Centered Discipline™ (RCD™) to transform school culture. Since its implementation, both staff and students have gained critical tools to foster accountability and engagement, and the school has seen a drastic reduction in behavioral incidents and a stronger alignment with district goals.

Introduction

Great Falls High School is home to 1400 students, of which over 20% have IEPs or 504 plans, almost 60% are free and reduced eligible and nearly 18% identify as Native American. Great Falls serves a diverse population of students from various socioeconomic backgrounds. Faced with escalating student behavioral issues and a growing sense of dissatisfaction among staff, Great Falls recognized the need for a new approach to discipline and behavior management.

The Problem

Before implementing RCD, Great Falls High School was struggling with a myriad of discipline-related challenges:

- **Disproportionate Time Spent on Behavior Management:** Shianne reported spending 60% of her time addressing student behavior, particularly during the school's two 30-minute lunch periods, where students were taking double lunches and leaving teachers and administrators to deal with the ensuing disruptions.
- **Frustrated Staff:** Teachers lacked tools to manage even minor classroom disruptions (level one behaviors) and often responded by sending students to the office or filing Pupil Action Reports (PAR). This created a "Bermuda Triangle" of unresolved issues, further straining relationships between staff, administration and students.
- **Counterproductive Disciplinary Practices:** Students often found loopholes in the punishment system, benefiting from "exits" that allowed them to avoid taking responsibility for their actions.
- **Impact on Learning and Attendance:** Poor behavior management was not only disrupting learning but also fostering a mindset among some students and their families that completing assignments at home was sufficient, hindering classroom attendance and participation.

The school's safety and educational goals were being compromised, prompting leaders to seek a sustainable, values-driven solution.

The Solution

To address these challenges, Great Falls High School adopted Responsibility-Centered Discipline™ (RCD™) in the fall of 2023. RCD empowers educators to equip students with the skills needed to take ownership of their behavior, aligning well with the school's vision to create self-determined, responsible citizens.

KEY IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Rethinking Behavioral Systems:

- Great Falls changed its disciplinary model from "In School Suspension" to "In School Solutions" (ISS), emphasizing growth and accountability over punitive measures. While staffing ISS remains a challenge, assigning skilled and respected teachers to this duty has significantly enhanced staff buy-in.
- Teachers were provided tools like the "Give 'Em Four" strategy, which focuses on a positive 4-to-1 ratio of reinforcement to criticism.

2. Building Staff Capacity:

- Teachers were trained in RCD techniques, empowering them to handle level one and two behaviors within the classroom, reducing administrative burden.
- Plans were established to provide ongoing training through a flexible virtual classroom model, pairing experienced teachers with new hires to ensure continuity in practice and philosophy.

3. Environmental and Structural Changes:

- The school consolidated lunch periods into one, allowing students to use the entire building, including the Field House, for recreational activities. This alone mitigated many behavioral issues tied to unsupervised time.

4. Changing Mindsets:

- Efforts were made to align parents and families with the school's foundational principles of being present, on time and prepared. Staff worked to shift the pervasive "assignment completion equals success" mindset, reinforcing the value of classroom engagement.

RCD empowers educators to equip students with the skills needed to take ownership of their behavior, aligning well with the school's vision to create self-determined, responsible citizens.

Why RCD Stood Out

The RCD philosophy resonated strongly with Great Falls administrators, especially Shianne Currey who was already familiar with similar approaches through her work in Special Education. The emphasis on coaching students to see how their behavior changes benefit them directly aligned with the school's focus on self-determination, employability and community building.

"RCD stood out to me because of my background in Special Education. I actually used a very similar model in my classroom as did our building Principal," Shianne said. "As a Special Educator we often wrote compliance goals which always put me at unease because I believe the focus should be on self-determination. Once I read about coaching students to see how changing their behavior benefits them, I realized that was the piece I was looking for! I also believe we are preparing students to be active participants in our community, having the ability to self-regulate only improves the community experience for EVERYONE (think, employability, crime, parenting and relationships)."

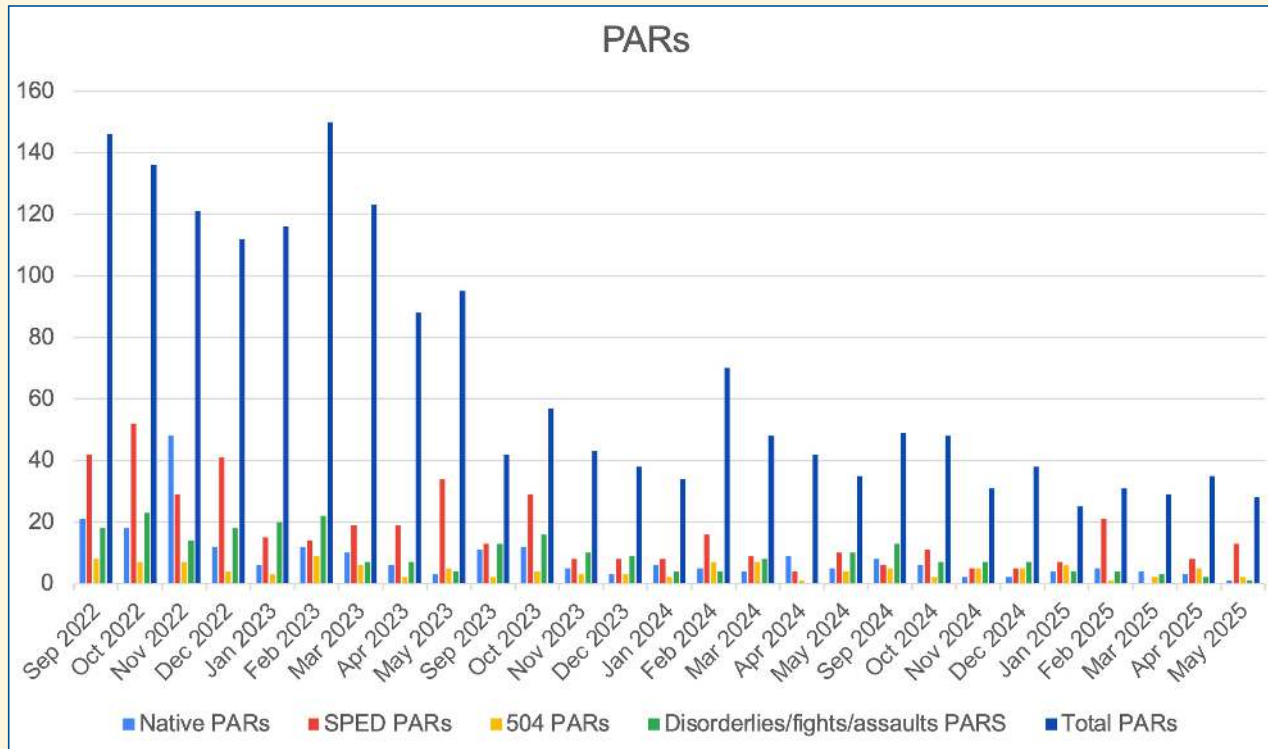
Additionally, the flexibility and lack of rigid programming that RCD provides made it easier to integrate into the school's existing culture and goals, unlike many other behavior management systems.

Results

The implementation of RCD has had a significant positive impact on Great Falls High School:

Reduction in Behavioral Incidents:

- The number of Pupil Action Reports (PARs) to address misbehavior **decreased by 81%** – from 146 total PARs in September 2022 to 28 in May 2025.
- PARs relating to disorderlies, fights and assaults decreased from 18 in September 2022 to 1 in May 2025 – a **99% decrease**.
- Administrators reported seeing far fewer level two and three behaviors as the staff now had the tools to address issues proactively within the classroom.
- Teachers realized that RCD compliments good teaching and embraced the use of strategies like “Give ‘Em Four,” creating a more positive and engaging classroom environment.



Empowered Staff:

- Teachers and administrators now address behaviors collaboratively, eliminating the frustrations of the previous fragmented approach. Staff feel more equipped and supported, which has contributed to improved morale and professional efficacy.
- The staff realized that RCD isn't a program and provides the flexibility to feel autonomous. Because leadership and staff are consistent with their expectations, they have the power of teacher efficacy to make change. “Our staff report feeling more empowered,” noted Shianne. “The real power is leading with support. We are all benefiting by being on the same page as well, the teachers and admin address the behavior together.”

Improved Culture of Accountability:

- Students are increasingly taking responsibility for their actions, and the partnership between staff and families has strengthened. According to Shianne, “Most parents now thank me at the end of behavior-related conversations, rather than excusing their child’s behavior.”

Alignment with Foundational Principles:

- The RCD approach has seamlessly integrated into existing building foundations, such as “Do What’s Right: Be Present, On Time and Prepared,” reinforcing goals like improved attendance and stronger engagement.
- “With RCD, we’re no longer just handing out exits like candy. Students are learning the power of self-regulation, and that benefits not only them but our entire community,” shared Shianne.

Conclusion

Great Falls High School successfully transformed its approach to behavior management by implementing the Responsibility-Centered Discipline model. This shift empowered staff and students alike, reduced behavioral disruptions and PARs by 81%, and strengthened the school's alignment with its broader goals of inclusivity, accountability and community impact.

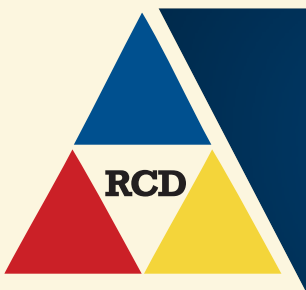
Moving forward, the school plans to:

- Continue refining its ISS model and invest in more consistent staff training
- Deepen its commitment to building teacher and family partnerships
- Focus on maintaining calibration and alignment across its growing and changing staff.

Great Falls' implementation of RCD demonstrates how purposeful, values-driven solutions can address complex challenges, supporting both short-term success and long-term community building.

Shianne concluded, "I appreciate RCD because it's not a program. There was no way I was going to be able to sell our staff on another program. We have an excellent teaching staff, but they lacked tools to address behavior which impacted them as professionals. In our first introduction to RCD we used the quote, 'How many educators have stopped counting how many lives they have changed and have started counting the number of years they have left until retirement?' This was powerful because We KNEW we had staff thinking this way. RCD also fit with the district goal we had regarding staff retention. In addition, my husband and I piloted RCD at home with our own kids to see what the impact would be, and we saw the benefit right away!"

Principal Geoff Habel added, "Shianne has done such a tremendous job with implementing Responsibility-Centered Discipline, and it has been wonderful. RCD isn't a program. It's a way of existing. It's a culture that is created because the collective of people works to improve an environment."



Learn How to Bring Responsibility-Centered Discipline to your School or District

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