

## Tracking Disruptive Behaviours in Schools

### Full Reference

LeBlanc, J.C., Tully, R., Jull, S., Armstrong, D., Augusta-Scott, C., King, J., MacPhail, M., & van Grup, H. (2001). The School Incident Tracking System (SITS): Surveillance of disruptive behaviours in elementary schools. *Canadian Child Psychiatry Review*, 10, 6-10.

### Keywords

Disruptive behaviours, school, tracking, record keeping, SITS,

### Main Question

Does our tracking system, the School Incident Tracking System (SITS), provide a low-cost, useful means for recording disruptive behaviours in school?

### Background

Teachers and other educators send children to the office for various disciplinary reasons including disobedience, conduct interference, disrespect, and fighting. Most schools range from 1-3 office referrals per day. Prior to the current study, no Canadian statistics were available on how Canadian schools respond to disruptive behaviour.

Keeping track of the disruptive behaviours brought to the attention of school offices helps in many respects. Looking at records kept in school offices on suspension, detention, and office referrals are practical because school staff collect them regularly. These records are essential because they highlight important discipline problems within a school and with individual students and they also predict school dropout rates. Even more importantly, they aid in assessing interventions in schools focused on promoting pro-social behaviour. Finding simple ways to track these disruptive behaviour incidents will make monitoring them easier and will make the monitoring more likely to happen in the first place.

### Who Was Involved

Five elementary schools in an Eastern Canadian province helped to pilot the School Incident Tracking System for one school year. The SITS is a standard form developed to monitor child aggression in school. The form helps staff in recording and interpreting disruptive behaviours of individual students over time. Unique school, classroom, and student identifiers are used to track students.



The SITS is divided into 5 sections:

1. School and student identifiers
2. Description of the incident
3. Intervention by teacher
4. Intervention by office
5. Parent information

Teachers and staff complete closed and open-ended items that describe the incident and record the interventions undertaken. When an incident occurs, the teacher immediately fills out the identifiers and writes a brief (1-2 sentences) description of the incident. Then the teacher sends the student to the office with the SITS form. An office staff member reviews the form and determines the appropriate response to the incident and records his/her decision on the form. Copies of the form can be sent home for parents to review and sign.

### What We Found

The SITS form was successfully used in all five schools. Teachers found the form easy to use, helpful in classroom-office communication, and good at establishing and maintaining consistency in the school-wide disciplinary procedures. Across the five schools, 3,570 referrals were made during the year and 27-62% of students had at least one referral. Approximately half of the boys in school were referred at least once and a quarter of the girls were referred. Children were referred least in kindergarten and Grade 1 (15%) and the numbers climbed steadily up to Grade 6 (64%). Boys were always sent to the office more often than girls, but the differences became smaller with increasing grade.

### Implications

SITS is an effective behaviour tracking system for schools to use that is easy and accepted by school staff.

The benefits of the SITS procedure include:

1. Teachers and school staff like and use the forms because they help with the communicating between staff and parents.
2. The unique identifiers allow schools to track specific behaviours of specific students over time.
3. Information can be examined at the individual, classroom, and school level.
4. The system captures teachers' observations at the time of the incident.
5. The system is easy to incorporate into daily teaching and school routines because it builds on what many schools already do in some fashion.





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<http://www.cpha.ca/antibullying/english/surveys/intro.html>



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