



The Richardson School

BOBCAT BEAT

Fall 2019

**K**ids do well if they CAN. If they can't, something is getting in the way.

This belief contradicts conventional wisdom which tells us that if you motivate a child enough, you will get the desired outcome. While operant (if/then) strategies work well to teach basic lessons, they do not teach complex thinking skills, build relationships or help kids stay regulated. For a child with a disability, any task (even one seemingly as simple as sitting quietly at a desk) can require complex thinking skills that they may not yet have. At The Richardson School (TRS), we utilize Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) to shift the focus from manipulating a child's behavior via point or reward systems to building the skills needed for success in all environments.

Collaborative Problem Solving developed by Dr. Stuart Ablon and Dr. Ross Greene, is a framework for solving difficult problems and building relationships in the process. The basis for Collaborative Problem Solving is for students to be a part of creating the solution through discussions of their concerns and staffs' concerns. Through



Staff at TRS-Brookfield are updating student profiles to reflect changes seen from the start of the school year.



# Collaborative Problem Solving at Work

these conversations, referred to as 'Plan B', difficult behavior is reduced, societal expectations can be pursued, skills are taught, and problems are solved so they don't repeat. At TRS, staff that work closely with the student come together to develop a Thinking Skills Inventory, which highlights areas of strength and weakness. Triggers are then discussed and are the basis of initial conversations. As

each problem is resolved, a new trigger and problem area is focused on. Although there may not be an immediate change for students, over time, the long-term benefit of the skills that have been built become evident.

Since the ability to access language may decrease when a student becomes upset, one Plan B solution that has been generated

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The Richardson School

A MyPath Company

# Creating A Culture of Care

“We have to do better with the staff to expect them to do better with the kids.” That statement from The Richardson School’s Director of Operations, Kevin Silkey, has sparked a revolution of sorts. While TRS has seen tremendous growth and success in its near nine-year history, the focus has primarily been the students.

In 2018, TRS leadership read the book “Start With Why” by Simon Sinek, and as a group, began reflecting on The Richardson School’s “why”, as well as its place in the educational ecosystem.

Thus began a renewed focus and commitment to not only the care of those TRS supports, but of those who provide that support.

**“We have seen a reduction in staff turn-over of almost 50%. That’s statistically significant and very promising.”**

we are here to hire good people to do good work with our kids.” He noted that after less than one year of implementing the plan, more people are applying to work at TRS, and fewer are leaving. “We have seen a reduction in staff turn-over of

As a direct result, the retention committee was re-dedicated, with representatives from every TRS location and level of operation. Craig Brimacombe, TRS-Madison Day School Director and chair of the committee shares his excitement about its redefined purpose: On Our Path to retaining top talent. Brimacombe says, “We wanted to incorporate the new MyPath name (see ‘From the Director’s Desk’ article for more information on MyPath) and communicate to staff that



*TRS staff gather for the annual Fall Kick-Off Event located at TRS-Beloit this year.*

almost 50%. That’s statistically significant and very promising.”

One major development was the revaluation of staff wages, which culminated with a considerable increase in the hourly wage for frontline staff. In addition, an HR Director and two assistants were added for on-site staff support, an important component that had been missing previously. Additionally, the health insurance package offered to staff was expanded and as a result, TRS saw a 30% increase in staff participation of this benefit.

Safety enhancements for each of the four schools became a reality after securing an \$86,000 grant from the Federal Government and TRS adding \$47,000, for improvements totaling over \$133,000. Even more improvements are scheduled for the upcoming 2020 calendar year.

While these are all important successes in which progress can be tracked and measured, one of the most important pieces when looking to create a culture of care is something that cannot be quantified, and that is the strong level of teamwork and support that staff experience when they come to work each day. Alicia R., who just celebrated her three-year anniversary at TRS, sums this up well. She shares, “I would not still be working at TRS if it were not for the constant staff development. The awareness of bettering ourselves and others makes a huge difference.”



# From the Director's Desk with Kevin Silkey



As you may know The Richardson School (TRS) is currently an operating company under the umbrella of Oconomowoc Residential Programs, Inc. (ORP). ORP started 35 years ago with what was then Oconomowoc Developmental Training Center, a residential care facility for children, along with eight group homes for adults. Since then, our services have grown exponentially.

We now operate schools, community living arrangements, in-home supports, day services, therapeutic programs, respite care and much more.

- ▶ We have traveled far outside the boundaries of Southeastern Wisconsin; our 2,500 caregivers support more than 2,000 individuals each year, across 160 locations in two states.
- ▶ We transitioned to 100% employee ownership in 2016 through an Employee Stock Ownership Plan.

To reflect our growth and diversity of scope, effective September 1, we are re-branding ORP as MyPath. The new name highlights how we support both those we serve, and those who provide care.

- ▶ We assist the individuals we support to carve life paths that reflect their specific talents, abilities, and desires.
- ▶ We offer our employee co-owners the opportunity to build careers and long-term financial security.
- ▶ For all, we offer a place to grow – a place to find your path.

In the months ahead, we look forward to continuing our work with you, and to sharing stories of how our clients, students, residents and co-owners have found a path at MyPath. If you have any questions about the name change, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Thanks, as always, for your support of our mission.

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An Effective, Positive Educational Alternative

*“To reflect our growth and diversity of scope, effective September 1, we are re-branding ORP as MyPath. The new name highlights how we support both those we serve, and those who provide care.”*

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frequently has been figuring out how a student can communicate what kind of break or tool they need. Many Plan B discussions have resulted in the creation of successful strategies, such as using pictures of the student using a preferred break option, or just having the options available in written form to pick from.

Taking it a step further, staff will seek solutions to solve the problems which are causing a student to become upset in the first place. When a high school student at TRS-Brookfield began refusing weekly trips to the grocery store, staff used Plan B to help figure out what was causing the refusal. Once the root cause was identified, the student was able to brainstorm ideas with staff and create a plan to make trips successful.

Collaborative Problem Solving allows staff to maintain authority and achieve compliance via collaboration rather than extrinsic motivators such as point or reward systems. More information regarding Collaborative Problem Solving can be found at [www.thinkkids.org](http://www.thinkkids.org).

The Richardson School



Bobcats

**Bobcat Camp**

Children practice skills in both a safe school setting and community environment on a weekly basis over school breaks. Call for more details.

Check out the school calendar on our website!

**RichardsonSchool.com**



**Beloit**

321 Olympian Blvd.  
Beloit, WI 53511  
608.473.3244

**Brookfield**

175 S. Barker Rd.  
Brookfield, WI 53045  
262.468.0700

**Madison**

2802 International Ln.  
Madison, WI 53704  
608.421.5267

**West Allis**

6753 W. Rogers St.  
West Allis, WI 53219  
414.540.8500

*Creating*

**LIFE CHANGING**

*Experiences*

at **Bobcat Camp**

A Growing Tradition



*Bobcat Campers explore the aquarium at Discovery World.*

**The Richardson School (TRS) has run Bobcat Camp during winter, spring and summer breaks for the last nine years, serving over 200 children, adolescents and young adults.**

**L**ocated at all four schools: Beloit, Brookfield, Madison and West Allis, Bobcat Camp focuses on providing learning opportunities as well as community-



*TRS-Madison Campers experiencing horseback riding at Heartland Horseback Riding.*

integration activities and experiences. Children attending Bobcat Camp have the unique opportunity to be in the community almost daily on field trips that have historically included the zoo,

museums, parks, swimming activities, cookouts, horseback riding and more.

Interest from families and the community continues to grow. This past summer, camp grew by 51% in Madison, the newest TRS location. TRS appreciates the opportunity to partner with families and counties in supporting the campers. Call your local Richardson School for more information if you are interested in registration.



*A visit to Hartland Park cools Bobcat Campers off on a hot day.*

**UPCOMING CAMP DATES:**

**November 29  
December 23, 24, 26, 27, 30 & 31**