Revising School Discipline Policies and Procedures to Promote Equity
Training Guide for Using Data to Promote Equity in School Discipline Series

This series includes

- Introduction: Planning and Facilitating Work Sessions to Improve School Discipline
- Work Session: Revising School Discipline Policies and Procedures to Promote Equity
- Work Session: Using School Discipline Data to Pinpoint Concerns and Track Progress
- Work Session: Using Reflection Groups to Learn How Families and Educators View Their School or District
- Work Session: Identifying Strategies to Promote Equity in School Discipline

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Find a partner

• Find a partner

• Prepare a 1–2 minute introduction of your partner that includes
  Name
  Position
  One success related to school discipline or making students feel welcome
Agenda

1. Introduce yourself
2. Discuss reasons for reviewing discipline policies
3. Review school discipline policies
4. Plan next steps
Objectives

• Discuss why school discipline policies are shifting, both nationally and within your district, from a zero-tolerance approach to school discipline to one that focuses on prevention and keeping students in school.

• Review your district’s school discipline policies using the Discipline Policies and Procedures Summary (DPPS).

• Identify resources and example discipline documents to inform revision of your district’s discipline policies and procedures documents.

• Begin organizing and planning revision of the district’s discipline policies.
Why are school discipline policies and procedures important?

• Communicate values and mission
• Set the stage
• Provide guidance
"Zero tolerance" was initially defined as consistently enforced suspension and expulsion policies in response to weapons, drugs, and violent acts in the school setting.
Suspension rates by race/ethnicity

Zero-tolerance policies

• Higher rate of exclusionary discipline
• Wider racial discipline gap
• Used for nonviolent behaviors:
  • Disrespect
  • Defiance
  • Disruption
  • Minor verbal and physical aggression
Suspensions and chronic absenteeism are costly for students

- Removes students from classroom instruction
- Weakens the students’ connection with their school, teachers, and peers
- Lowers students’ academic achievement
- Increases risk of repeating a grade and/or dropping out

(Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2015; Fabelo et al., 2011; Hinze-Pifer & Sartain, 2018; Noltemeyer, Ward, & Mcloughlin, 2015)
Think, pair, share

Why is your team reviewing your district’s school discipline policies?
Discipline Policies and Procedures Summary (DPPS)
Organization of the DPPS

The DPPS has three sections

1. Rate 9 elements
2. List alternatives to suspension
3. Inventory reasons for suspension or expulsion
Equity is a district priority

• Clearly states that eliminating discipline disparities is a district priority

• Mandates an equity focus in discipline decisions
Focus on prevention

• Expectations and rights are stated positively
• Positive acknowledgement systems are in place
• Discipline approach includes:
  • Prevention and early intervention strategies
    – Evidence-based practices
“The best way of formulating a comprehensive discipline policy was involving everyone . . . principal, deans, teachers, parents, students, and community members at large, and ask them what they could see as the problem. If that was done, then everyone would be supportive.”

Murkuria, 2002, p. 444
4. Use disaggregated data

Number of suspensions per 100 students

Source: Fictitious data for example purposes
Disaggregated data may tell a different story

Average number of suspensions per 100 students

- White
- Students of Color

Minimize academic penalties

- Guidance preventing academic penalties for disciplinary concerns
- Allows students to make up credit for assignments missed during exclusion
Apply to school only

- Applies to school activities only
  - On school grounds
  - School activities that are off school grounds
- Prohibits assigning discipline consequences for incidents that do not directly influence school functioning
Outlines graduated discipline responses

• Promotes discipline policies that focus on early intervention and student support

• Limits use of exclusionary discipline and includes alternatives to suspension
Mild

Student conference
Parent conference/involvement in planning
Prompted reflection
Verbal reprimand
Planning with counselor
Loss of privilege
Afterschool conference with teacher
Coordinated behavior plan/monitoring plan
Alternative programming
Counseling/mentoring

(Payne & Welch, 2010)
Restorative

Restitution
Community/school service
Work duties or tasks
Verbal/written apologies
School project(s)

(Payne & Welch, 2010)
Suspension
In-school suspension
Afterschool detention
Saturday school
Lunch academy

(Payne & Welch, 2010)
Provides alternatives to suspension

- Uses discipline policies that focus on early intervention and student support
- Limits use of exclusionary discipline and includes alternatives to suspension
Has procedures to address serious threats to school safety

- Procedures address behaviors that pose a serious and credible threat to the safety of students and self
Organizing the discipline policy revision process
Completing Section 1: Scoring 9 elements

**Directions:** Review the indicators for each element. Indicate the degree to which your district's policies, code of conduct, student/parent handbook, or other documents describe the indicator and implementation guidelines. Record the documents used in your review and key discussion points including strengths, areas of concern, and recommendations to improve the current policies and procedures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element 1</th>
<th>Eliminating disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline is a district priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Few or no statements support the component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Equity is identified as a district priority in the mission statement and/or school improvement plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Elimination of discipline disparities is identified as a district priority in the mission statement and/or school improvement plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>District mandates that discipline actions are imposed without bias for students who have been historically underserved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>District uses disaggregated data to monitor exclusionary discipline among different student groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments and information sources:

1a. 2010–16 Strategic Plan (pg. 8). District Values statement includes the following:
- Diversity: Diversity is an essential asset of our community and a source of learning and opportunity in our schools.
- Equity: Student achievement belongs to each student and will not be predicted by race, ethnicity, family economics, mobility, gender, disability, or initial proficiencies.

1c. 2012-13 Student Parent Resource Handbook
- Strategy 1: Supportive, inclusive learning environments ensure each and every student, regardless of background, experiences success (p. 8)
- Educators/school staff responsibilities include, “respecting race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, marital status, age, veterans’ status, genetic information or disability in any education programs, activities or employment” (p. 11 and 21)

1b and 1d. We could not find any statements identifying eliminating discipline disparities as a priority. Likewise, no statements on using disaggregated data to monitor progress on reducing the use of exclusionary data overall, and for students of color in particular.
## Completing Section 1: Scoring 9 elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description of the DPPS rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not in place</td>
<td>Few or no statements identified to support the element</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Some statements about the element or the documents provide resource information about the element, but their use is optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressing</td>
<td>Statements describe the element as part of the district’s discipline approach, but guidelines for implementation are vague or unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In place</td>
<td>Statements describe the element as part of the district’s discipline approach and provide clear guidelines for implementation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Completing Section 2: Alternatives to suspension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Implementation guidelines</th>
<th>Source and comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent or student conference</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>School board policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional social skills instruction</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Guide to Policies, Rules, and Procedures on Student Responsibilities, Rights, and Discipline (pp. 23–49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving (e.g., restorative chat)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior support plan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restriction from extracurricular activities</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection to mentor</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break or reflection room</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-school suspension</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch or afterschool detention</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics restrictions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol/drug assessment</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Completing Section 3: District guidelines for discipline actions by type of behavior or infraction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors</th>
<th>First infraction</th>
<th>Second infraction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suspension</td>
<td>Expulsion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example Disorderly conduct, including disruption of the school environment</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automobile misuse</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying/harassment/cyberbullying</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus misconduct</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangerous drugs</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defiance of authority</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorderly or disruptive conduct</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disruptive appearance/student dress</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire setting, attempted fire setting, fireplay</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgery, lying, or academic integrity</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewd conduct/profanity</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loitering (afterschool suspension)</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Organizing the discipline policy revision process

1. Convene a policy revision team
2. Gather planning information and organize resources
3. Revise your school discipline policies and procedures
4. Get necessary approvals for final documents
## School discipline policy and revision checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Staff and timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff/team responsible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Convene a policy revision team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gather planning information and organize resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Review Discipline Policy and Procedures Summary (DPPS) findings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Determine the approvals needed for policy and procedure revisions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Identify strategies for gathering stakeholder input</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Organize resources and examples</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Develop a plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional thoughts?

• What has been one benefit of reviewing school discipline policies and procedures?

• What challenges did you encounter and how did you solve them?

• What are next steps to completing the policy revision process?
Ask A REL

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