STUDENT DISCIPLINE

The board is committed to discipline policies that further its mission of serving the whole child. The board expects each school to create a positive school environment in which every student feels safe, respected, accepted and supported through implementation of a culturally responsive Whole Child framework. The board desires that its disciplinary policy enhance equity in school discipline and reduces discipline disproportionality.

The board is committed to the use of positive and proactive approaches alongside restorative approaches to support student social, emotional, academic and behavioral needs. These proactive approaches include but are not limited to:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Universal Positive and Proactive Supports</th>
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<tr>
<td>Maximize structure and predictability in the classroom (room arrangement, active supervision)</td>
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<td>Create, teach and reinforce expectations</td>
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<td>Actively engage students through use of collaborative instructional strategies</td>
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<td>5:1 positive interactions</td>
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<td>Acknowledge expected behavior</td>
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<td>Use a continuum of strategies to respond to behavior</td>
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<td>Foster caring and supportive relationships with students and families</td>
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<tr>
<td>Give frequent opportunities for students to respond in class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teach social and emotional skills for students and adults</td>
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<td>Creating an environment that validates the values, prior experiences and cultural knowledge of students</td>
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<td>Give time for brain breaks and opportunities for movement</td>
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<td>Restorative justice practices including circles, affective language</td>
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<th>Targeted/Intensive Prevention and Interventions</th>
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<td>Small group academic, behavior, social and emotional instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop systems for mentor-based programs/Check-In; Check-Out</td>
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<td>Provide individualized intervention support plans</td>
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The intentional ongoing use of the above preventative and restorative practices minimize the need for discipline and maximize instructional time for every student.
“Discipline” means any action taken by the school district in response to behavioral violations. Discipline can take positive and supportive forms that repairs relationship and harm, and includes skill instruction, practice and feedback. Data show that a supportive response to behavioral violation is more effective than punitive or exclusionary and increases equitable educational opportunities. The purposes of this policy and accompanying regulation include:

- Engaging with families and the community and striving to understand and be responsive to cultural context
- Supporting students in meeting behavioral expectations, including providing for early involvement of parents
- Administering discipline in ways that respond to the needs and strengths of students and keep students in the classroom to the maximum extent possible
- Providing educational services that students need during suspension and expulsion
- Facilitating collaboration between school personnel, students, and parents, and thereby supporting successful reentry into the classroom following a suspension or expulsion
- Ensuring fairness, equity, and due process in the administration of discipline
- Providing every student with the opportunity to achieve personal and academic success
- Providing a safe environment for all students and for district employees

The Superintendent shall establish and make available rules of student conduct, designed to provide students with a safe, healthy, and educationally sound environment. Students and staff are expected to be aware of the district’s rules of student conduct, including behavior standards that respect the rights, person, and property of others. Students and staff are expected to work together to develop a positive climate for learning, for example co-creating norms and values.

**Minimizing exclusion, engaging with families, and supporting students**

Unless a student’s presence poses an immediate and continuing danger to others, or an immediate and continuing threat to the educational process, staff members must first attempt one or more forms of other forms of discipline (e.g. restorative justice practices, counseling, coordinated behavior plan) to support students in meeting behavioral expectations before imposing classroom exclusion, short-term suspension, or in-school suspension. As described in the accompanying regulation, before imposing a long-term suspension or expulsion, the district must first consider other forms of discipline to respond to and change behavior. Schools may not, by policy or practice, impose automatic suspensions or expulsions, or pre-determined number of exclusionary days, based upon specific behavioral violations or a set number of behaviors referrals. Alternatively, before administering suspension or exclusion, a school must consider the student’s individual circumstances, and the context of the behavioral violation to determine whether the suspension or expulsion is warranted, and the length of the exclusion consistent with WAC 392-400-435.

These other forms of discipline may involve the use of best practices and strategies included in the state menu for behavior developed under RCW 28A.165.035. When school staff are considering a response to student behavior, first the function of the behavior (what is the goal, what need isn’t being met, what is the behavior communicating) will be identified to inform the appropriate response to behavior. All forms of discipline should be assessed, and ultimately selected and implemented based on the function of behavior and to help students to: understand why the behavior is unacceptable and the harm it has caused, take responsibility for
their actions, understand what they could have done differently in the same situation, learn social strategies and skills to use in the future, and give opportunity to make amends and repair the harm and relationship. The accompanying regulation will identify a list of other forms of discipline for staff use. However, staff members are not restricted to that list and may use any other form of discipline compliant with WAC 392-400-025(9).

School personnel must make every reasonable attempt to involve parents/guardians and students to resolve behavioral violations in a language they understand. This involvement is more than just communication but could include phone calls or collaborative problem-solving meetings.

The district must ensure that associated notices, hearings, conferences, meetings, plans, proceedings, agreements, petitions, and decisions are in a language the student and parents/guardians understand; this may require language assistance that is of sufficient quality for parents to understand their legal rights and responsibilities. Language assistance includes oral and written communication and further includes assistance to understand written communication, even if parents cannot read any language.

As described in the regulation, the district will offer educational services to students during every suspension or expulsion. When the district administers a long-term suspension or expulsion, the district must timely hold a reengagement meeting and collaborate with parents/guardians and students to develop a reengagement plan that is tailored to the student’s individual circumstances, in order to return the student to school successfully and consider shortening the length of time of exclusion. Reengagement meetings are best practice for in-school and short-term suspensions supporting successful return to the classroom, and to repair relationships. Additionally, any student who has been suspended or expelled may apply for readmission at any time.

**Staff authority**

District staff members are responsible for supervising students during the school day, during school activities, whether on or off campus, and on the school bus. Staff members will teach school-wide and classroom expectations and reinforce the acceptable behaviors provide ongoing feedback and opportunities to practice. Staff members will seek early involvement of parents/guardians in efforts to support students in meeting behavioral expectations. The Superintendent has general authority to administer discipline, including all exclusionary discipline. The Superintendent will identify other staff members to whom the Superintendent has designated disciplinary authority. After attempting at least one other form of discipline with fidelity, teachers have statutory authority to impose classroom exclusion for behaviors that disrupt the educational process. Because perceptions of subjective behaviors vary and include implicit or unconscious bias, the accompanying regulation will seek to identify the types of behaviors for which the identified district staff may administer discipline.

**Ensuring fairness, providing notice, and an opportunity for a hearing**

When administering discipline, the district will observe all of the student’s constitutional rights. The district will notify parents as soon as reasonably possible about classroom exclusion and before administering any suspension or expulsion. The district will provide opportunities for
parent/guardian participation during an initial hearing with the student. The district will provide parent(s)/guardian(s) with written notice, consistent with WAC 392-400-455, of a suspension or expulsion no later than one school business day following the initial hearing. As stated above, language assistance includes oral and written communication and further includes assistance to understand written communication, even if parent(s)/guardian(s) cannot read any language. The district has established procedures for review and appeal of suspensions, expulsions, and emergency expulsions, consistent with WAC 392-400-430 through 392-400-530.

The district has also established procedures to address grievances of parents or students related to other forms of discipline, classroom exclusion, and exclusion from transportation or extra-curricular activity. The grievance procedures include an opportunity for the student to share their perspective and explanation regarding the behavioral violation.

It is further the policy of the Tacoma School Board that administrators and community volunteers may be appointed by the School Board to serve on a Discipline Appeal Council that will hear student discipline appeals from initial hearing officer decisions. A member of the Board shall serve on any appeal council panel and will chair the panel. The discipline appeal council shall receive appropriate training to fulfill their duties.

Any student who has been suspended or expelled shall be allowed to make application for readmission at any time. The Superintendent will annually appoint a Readmission Committee which may be called upon to review an application for readmittance following a long-term suspension or expulsion. The Readmission Committee shall make a written recommendation to the Superintendent regarding any readmission application, and the Superintendent will accept, modify, or reject the committee’s recommendation and convey the same to parents or legal guardians in writing.

Staff members are expected to comply with Student Discipline policies and regulations, and are subject to District Policy 5010, Employee Conduct Rules.

**Development and review**

Accurate and complete reporting of all disciplinary actions, including the behavioral violations and conditions that led to them, is essential for effective review of this policy; therefore, the district will ensure such reporting.

The district will periodically collect and review data on disciplinary actions in response to students’ behavior in each school. The data will be disaggregated into subgroups as required by RCW 28A.300.042, including students who qualify for special education or Section 504. The data review will include classroom exclusion, in-school and short-term suspensions, and long-term suspensions, expulsions, and emergency expulsions. The district will invite school personnel, students, parents/guardians, families, and the community to participate in the data review. The purpose of the data review is to determine the extent to which disproportionality exists; and advise the district on next steps to ensure progress towards goals of reducing and eliminated disproportionality. Action steps could include updating this policy and regulation, opportunities for training, and support for implementation of other best practices to improve fairness and equity regarding discipline.
Distribution of policies and procedures
The district will make its discipline policies and procedures available to families and the community. The district will annually provide its discipline policies and procedures to all district personnel, students, and parents, which may require language assistance for students and parents with limited-English proficiency under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The district will ensure district employees and contractors are knowledgeable of the discipline policies and procedures. The district will provide necessary training to administrators and others authorized to impose exclusionary discipline.

Cross References:
2121 - Substance Abuse Program
2161 - Special Education and Related Services for Eligible Students
2162 - Education of Students with Disabilities Under Section 504
3111 – Nondiscrimination and Equity
3122 - Excused and Unexcused Absences
3200 – Rights and Responsibilities
3240 – Student Conduct
3210 - Nondiscrimination of Students
3244 - Prohibition of Corporal Punishment
3520 - Student Fees, Fines, or Charges
4210 - Regulation of Dangerous Weapons on School Premises

Legal References:
RCW 9A.16.100 Use of force on children — Policy — Actions presumed unreasonable
RCW 9.41.280 Possessing dangerous weapons on school facilities — Penalty — Exceptions
RCW 28A.150.240 Certificated teaching and administrative staff as accountable for classroom teaching — Scope — Responsibilities — Penalty
Chapter 28A.225, RCW Compulsory school attendance and admission
Chapter 28A.320, RCW Provisions applicable to all districts
RCW 28A.400.100 Principals and vice principals — Employment of — Qualifications — Duties
RCW 28A.400.110 Principal to assure appropriate student discipline — Building discipline standards — Classes to improve classroom management skills
Chapter 28A.600 RCW, Students
WAC 392-190-048 Access to course offerings – Student discipline
Chapter 392-400, WAC Pupils
34 CFR Part 100.3 Regulations implementing Civil Rights Act of 1964

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