

PROMOTING POSITIVE STUDENT BEHAVIOR

The primary goal of student discipline is to engage and re-engage students in their educational work. Student discipline should encourage students to reflect on behavior that enables them to structure behavior productively and to support moral and ethical growth. Discipline should be governed by a desire for, and commitment to, a strong educational community based on deep and caring relationships and engagement in high-quality work.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Student engagement is integral to creating a positive school culture and climate that fosters students' social/emotional growth and academic achievement. Providing students with multiple opportunities to participate in a wide range of pro-social activities, to take agency and leadership in setting the tone for their school, and, at the same time, to bond with caring, supportive adults can help prevent negative behaviors and create vibrant learning opportunities for all.

Examples can include:

- providing students with meaningful opportunities to share ideas and concerns and to take an active role in school-wide initiatives and decision-making;
- student leadership development that engages a wide variety of students with different interests, personalities and cultural backgrounds (i.e., not just academically excelling, civically engaged or so-called “popular” students) who put their creativity, talents, and peer influence into action to help set the tone of a vibrant school climate;
- regular recognition of students' achievements in a range of academic and co-curricular areas;
- practice sharing constructive feedback;
- school-wide systems that promote hope, aspirations, and positive, pro-social behavior.

Such opportunities, coupled with a comprehensive guidance program of prevention and intervention, provide students with the experiences, strategies, skills, and supports they need to thrive.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Right to High-Quality Education

All students have a right to a high-quality education. As such, school disciplinary measures should be used to help them engage in and realize that right, not to exclude students from school or otherwise deprive them of such an education. The District will strive to reserve suspensions solely for those cases in which graduated disciplinary efforts have been employed without success, or circumstances in which the safety of students or staff or the continuance of the educational process is at risk.

General Principles

School discipline policies shall be aimed at creating a positive school climate, supporting the social and emotional development of students, and teaching non-violence and respect for all members of the school community. By viewing social development as a critical aspect of discipline, RCSD schools shall anticipate and respond to school disciplinary matters in a manner that is consistent with students' sense of dignity and self-worth.

The purpose of discipline must be to understand and address the causes of behavior, resolve conflicts, repair the harm done, restore relationships and reintegrate students into the school community. In addition, particular attention and intervention support shall be provided to vulnerable families and youth at risk of being pushed out. School staff must be supported both to develop these skills and to practice them in conjunction with students, families and their own colleagues. In order for this effort to be successful, students and their families must be valued and empowered to work together with District staff to achieve these goals.

RCSD schools shall abide by the following general principles for the implementation of school discipline:

- **Principle #1 – Positive Relationships**

School safety and academic success are formed and strengthened when all school staff and personnel build positive relationships with students and are actively engaged in their lives and learning.

- **Principle #2 – Fairness and Consistency**

School staff should promote high standards of behavior by teaching, modeling, and monitoring behavior, and by fairly and consistently promoting positive behavior.

- **Principle #3 – Engaging Instruction and Effective Classroom Management**

Effective and engaging instruction and classroom management are the foundation of effective discipline.

- **Principle #4 – Prevention and Intervention**
School discipline is best accomplished by preventing misbehavior before it occurs, and using effective interventions after it occurs.
- **Principle #5 – Discipline with Guidance**
School discipline that is paired with meaningful instruction and guidance offers students an opportunity to learn from their mistakes and contribute to the school community, and is more likely to result in getting the student re-engaged in learning.
- **Principle #6 – Maximize Learning and Minimize Removal**
Effective school discipline maximizes the amount of time students spend learning and minimizes the amount of time students are removed from their classrooms while protecting the safety of the school community and the educational process.
- **Principle #7 – Exclusionary Discipline as a Last Resort**
Use of In-School Suspensions, Out-of-School Suspensions, Expulsion, and Referrals to Alternative Schools should be minimized and used on a graduated basis wherever possible. The priority shall be to keep students in class whenever school safety and continuance of the educational process allow.
- **Principle #8 – Student Supports**
Schools must utilize guidance interventions and other appropriate support services to provide effective discipline and guidance to students, including and especially those returning from exclusionary discipline, to maximize their ability to meet social and academic standards within the school community.
- **Principle #9 – Student Responsibilities**
All students have the responsibility to work to the best of their abilities, attend school daily unless they are legally excused, contribute to maintaining a safe and supportive school environment, treat peers and school staff in a respectful manner, accept responsibility for their actions, hold themselves to the highest standards of conduct and demeanor, and promote a climate of mutual respect and dignity toward all in the school community.
- **Principle #10 – Limited Role of Law Enforcement**
School Resource Officers (SROs), School Safety Officers (SSOs) and other school safety personnel are important resources in supporting school communities to prevent and resolve conflict in positive ways. The District will support or provide training to SROs and SSOs in restorative practices, youth development, and how to respond to the special needs of young persons. All law enforcement personnel shall use, to the maximum extent possible, techniques to de-escalate conflict and repair harm and that minimize the use of arrests; and shall defer to school personnel on all issues considered to be school disciplinary matters. Every effort shall be made to identify alternatives to arrest when applicable.

- **Principle #11 – Address Racial Disparities in School Discipline**
The District must address and respond to racial inequities, institutional racism and other forms of discrimination or bias that present barriers to student success. To do so, a process must be provided whereby members throughout the school community can engage with issues honestly with the goal of healing and strengthening relationships and of uniting resolve to change how we do things and rectify the damage done by institutional racism and implicit bias.
- **Principle #12 – Non-Discrimination**
School discipline must be implemented without discrimination based on ethnicity, race, color, religion, religious practice, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, age, weight/appearance or disability.
- **Principle #13 – Due Process**
Effective discipline can only be implemented with profound respect for the due process rights of students' and parents,' consistent with New York State Education Law § 3214 and the U.S. Constitution, and including, but not limited to, the right to notice of the penalty to be imposed and an opportunity to present a student's version of the facts and circumstances that led up to the event.
- **Principle #14 – Training**
Teachers, administrators and school staff shall receive training on classroom/school management, conflict resolution, and non-punitive approaches to discipline.
- **Principle #15 – School-Level Policy**
Schools-level rules and codes of conduct must be consistent with this Policy, approved by the Superintendent or designee and distributed to students and parents in a manner consistent with this Policy. Schools are also expected to develop plans for improving school climate.
- **Principle #16 – Distribution of Policy**
Students, parents, teachers and other school personnel must be well-informed of school discipline policies. The District shall distribute a summary of this Policy to all students and their parents and post the Policy on the District website and in an accessible place within each school.
- **Principle #17 – Family Engagement**
Schools exist to support families in the education of their children and all staff should embrace reciprocity and meaningful engagement. School staff will keep parents informed of their children's behavior—both positive and negative, enlist them as partners in addressing areas of concern, and always inform them directly when exclusionary discipline is called for.

- **Principle #18 – Shared Accountability**

Schools should collaborate with union, community and agency partners in order that school staff are made aware of resources and supports that will aid in their personal development and maximize their abilities to meet the academic and social needs of students in the Rochester community.

FAMILIES AS PARTNERS

Students, parents, and school personnel all have a role in making schools safe and must cooperate with one another to achieve this goal. Routine outreach to parents can include, but is not limited to, a phone call and/or a written communication. As role models, parents and school staff should exhibit the behaviors that they would like to see students emulate.

To ensure that parents become active and involved partners in promoting safe and supportive school environments, they must be familiar with the Code of Conduct. School officials are responsible for sharing the information in this document with students, parents, and staff. Schools are encouraged to provide workshops for parents on understanding the Code and how best to work with the school to support their children's social-emotional growth. Educators are responsible for informing parents about their children's behavior and for nurturing the skills students need to succeed in school and in society. Parents are encouraged to discuss with their children's teacher and other school staff issues that may affect student behavior and strategies that might be effective in working with the student.

It is important that there be robust consultation and communication between the school and the home. Guidance conferences attended by the principal or his/her designee, a school counselor, the student's parent(s), and one or more of the student's teachers are an effective means of encouraging parental input and should be held with students when appropriate. Parents who want to discuss interventions in response to student behavior should contact their

ATTENDANCE

Attendance at school is vital to a student's academic progress and success. School personnel must ensure that appropriate outreach, intervention, and support are provided for students who exhibit attendance problems that may manifest themselves as truancy or patterns of unexcused absence or educational neglect. In cases of truancy, school personnel must meet with the student and parent in order to determine needed supports and an appropriate course of action, which may include, but is not limited to: guidance intervention, referral for counseling, and/or referral to after-school programs.

Each school should review cases of chronic absenteeism, classroom removals, and/or truancy and should involve attendance teachers, administrators, school counselors, teachers, social workers, and other school staff in facilitating a resolution.