STUDENT DISCIPLINE IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS
Support Materials

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Student Discipline in Government Schools
Support Materials

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Student Discipline in Government Schools

Introduction

The purpose of these support materials is to assist schools to revise their current school discipline policy and build on their current practice.

The need to revise the school discipline policy follows from the development of the new policy, *Student Discipline in Government Schools* and related *Core Rules in NSW Government Schools*. These documents replace *Good Discipline and Effective Learning – Ministerial Statement* (1995). In addition, *Respect and Responsibility: the NSW Government’s plan for values, respect and behaviour in our schools* has implications for school policy and practice.

The Department of Education and Training is committed to a positive approach to student discipline. Practices that foster engagement in learning, set clear limits, recognise appropriate behaviour and apply consequences for inappropriate behaviour are more likely to promote positive student behaviour than punishment alone. This approach is assumed in *Student Discipline in Government Schools* and should be reflected in school discipline policies.

As schools evaluate their current school discipline policy, they should also consider other statewide reforms and changes in their own practices and circumstances. Recent initiatives that have implications for student discipline include *The School Uniform Policy*, *The Anti-bullying Plan for Schools*, *The School Attendance Policy*, *Suspension and Expulsion of Students – Procedures*, *Anti-Racism Policy* and Occupational Health and Safety procedures and support materials.

In evaluating the current policy, it is also important to be mindful of the *Disability Discrimination Act (1992)* and the Disability Standards for Education.

At a school level, school policy will need to reflect or respond to changes in the school community, emerging trends in student behaviour, teaching and learning or improvements in recent years to educational programs and practices.

While schools are expected to revise their policies to be consistent with *Student Discipline in Government Schools* and the *Core Rules in NSW Government Schools*, the process outlined in these support materials is optional.

Along with a suggested process for looking at current policy and practice, these support materials also contain hyperlinks to useful resources. Clicking on the hyperlinks will guide you to a website or allow you to download documents.

There is a range of regional support staff who can assist school communities, including school development officers, student welfare consultants, student support officers, quality teaching and curriculum consultants, multicultural/ESL consultants and itinerant support teachers.

For further information, please contact the Leader, Student Behaviour on telephone 02 9244 5514.
The School Discipline Policy

The school discipline policy outlines how discipline is implemented in the school. It will inform and guide students, staff and parents* about the aims, underlying philosophy, expectations, strategies and responsibilities for student discipline.

A ‘statement of purpose’ should be included at the beginning of the policy. This statement should outline the aims of discipline in the school and the key beliefs or principles upon which the school’s policy is based.

Additionally, the school discipline policy needs to include four key areas:

1. The discipline code (or school rules)
2. Strategies and practices to promote positive student behaviour, including specific strategies to maintain a climate of respect
3. Strategies and practices to recognise and reinforce student achievement
4. Strategies and practices to manage inappropriate student behaviour.

The Core Rules in NSW Government Schools need to be incorporated into each school’s code.

The school discipline policy must:

- be consistent with legislation and reflect Government and Departmental policy
- reflect the identified needs of the community
- grow from existing policies and practices
- be developed within a student welfare context
- incorporate the principles of procedural fairness
- define the responsibilities of staff, students and parents.

Finally, it is essential that the school discipline policy is revised collaboratively so that it benefits from a wide range of input and generates understanding, ownership and commitment to its implementation.

* For the purpose of this document, the term 'parent' includes a guardian or other person having the custody or care of a child. (Education Act 1990).
The Planning Process

Step 1: Form a school team

The school team’s role is to facilitate the revision process. The team should be led by the principal or their nominee and should be representative of the whole school community.

The principal remains responsible for the final decisions relating to the school discipline policy.

Focus questions:

- Who are the key stakeholders in our school community?
- What representation is appropriate for each stakeholder?
- What expertise is required to assist the team to successfully complete its task?
- How should the team members be selected?

Groups to consider include:

- Staff (eg executive, teachers, administrative officers)
- Specialist staff (eg school counsellor, support teacher learning assistance (STLA), student welfare coordinator, English as a second language (ESL) teacher, head teacher support, teachers’ aides, itinerant support teachers)
- Community members (eg P&C, Aboriginal, Language Background Other than English (LBOTE) and other cultural groups)
- Students (eg SRC, school prefects, parliament)
- Committee members (eg Learning Support Team, Occupational Health and Safety)
- Other partners who work with students on school sites such as NSW Health, Department of Juvenile Justice and Department of Community Services.
Step 2: Build field knowledge

It is important to develop a shared and sound understanding of student discipline and the revision process.

Regional staff, such as school development officers and student welfare consultants, have the expertise to advise and assist school teams. Regional staff may provide support through regional workshops. The team can refresh its understanding of student discipline through activities such as shared reading, guest speakers, conferences and school visits.

Suggestions and Resources

Books:

Websites:
Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
http://www.pbis.org/main.htm

Resources:
The School Self-Evaluation Toolkit
Final word protocol
Building a Climate of Respect
Discipline and Students with Disabilities
Step 3: Gather and analyse information

Gather information that will identify the strengths and weaknesses of the current school discipline policy and how it could be improved.

The team should collect and evaluate:

- Copies of the following documents:
  - Student Discipline in Government Schools
  - Core Rules in NSW Government Schools
  - Values in NSW Public Schools
  - The Anti-bullying Plan for Schools
  - Anti-Racism Policy
  - The School Attendance Policy
  - School Uniform Policy
  - Suspension and Expulsion of School Students – Procedures
  - Student Welfare Policy
  - Occupational Health and Safety legislation and regulations.

- Student discipline and welfare data (last three years, disaggregated by Year level; gender; Aboriginality and LBOTE):
  - Suspensions and expulsions (including reasons)
  - Attendance (including whole day and fractional truancy)
  - Classroom discipline referrals
  - Playground incidents - nature and number
  - Incident reports, complaints and discipline referrals involving racism and sex-based harassment
  - Detentions
  - Parent contacts (eg warning letters, interviews)
  - Referrals to the school Learning Support Team
  - Referrals (eg to regional staff such as HSLOs and itinerant support teachers).
• Student learning outcomes (last three years, disaggregated by Year level; gender; Aboriginality and LBOTE):
  - Retention (Year 6-7, Year 10-11, Year 11-12)
  - Added value
  - Literacy and numeracy (eg Basic Skills, ELLA, SNAP)
  - Post-school destinations (for high schools)
  - Distribution of merit awards
  - Parent contacts (eg letters of commendation).

• Attitudinal data (through surveys eg Quality of School Life or focus groups, disaggregated by Year level; gender; Aboriginality and LBOTE):
  - Students
  - Parents
  - Staff.

• School community trends:
  - Enrolments (by last three years, disaggregated by Year level; gender; Aboriginality and LBOTE)
  - Enrolment of students with disabilities
  - Enrolment of refugees
  - Family data (trends over three years, disaggregating by family structures, employment)
  - Staff welfare.

Focus questions:

• What aspects of the current school discipline policy are not consistent with relevant Departmental policies and plans?

• Are all relevant mandatory Departmental policies reflected in the current school discipline policy?

• Which student welfare, student learning, attitudinal or school community trend data has significance and should be considered?
Suggestions and Resources

Policies:
Policy table

Websites:
Occupational Health and Safety Directorate
Occupational Health and Safety – Student Behaviour
Mind Matters
Mind Matters Resources

Surveys:
The Educational Measurement and School Accountability Directorate (EMSAD) website has a number of survey instruments that may be useful. These can be accessed from the links below:

Quality of School Life Survey (QSL)
School Map Surveys
Culture
Planning
Learning
Leadership
Management

Other Surveys:
Student Discipline - Staff Survey
Student Discipline - Student Survey

Workshops:
Identifying and Prioritising Issues

Focus group:
Guidelines for Developing and Facilitating Focus Groups
Step 4: Prepare an action plan

The school team should draft an action plan.

Focus questions:

- What needs to be done to revise the school discipline policy?
- How will each of these actions be achieved?
- When will each be done?
- Who is responsible for completing each action?

Suggestions and Resources

Policy:

*Values in NSW Public Schools*
Step 5: Inform and engage the school community

The school team needs to consult with the school community about its draft action plan.

The team should present the data it has selected to the school community for consideration and have participants respond to prepared questions.

Focus questions:

- How will community members be consulted?
- To which members of the school community should the various data be presented? Consider sensitivity and privacy issues related to some data.
- How can this data be effectively presented so its significance can most readily be recognised?
- What questions should be asked to facilitate understanding and generate ideas?
- What are the perceived causes of concerns identified by the data?
- What is the school's capacity to address these issues?

Step 6: Develop a ‘Statement of Purpose’

A ‘statement of purpose’ should be included at the beginning of the policy. This statement outlines the aims of discipline in the school and the key beliefs or principles upon which the policy is based.

Focus questions:

- What principles should underpin the school's discipline practices?
- What outcomes does the community want the school discipline policy to achieve?
- Are the policies, programs and practices within the school likely to achieve these outcomes?
Step 7: Revise the current school discipline code (or school rules)

The school discipline policy needs to articulate a discipline code (or school rules) consistent with the Core Rules in NSW Government Schools and the needs of the school community.

Given the diversity of school communities, schools have flexibility to refine and add to these rules to suit their local circumstances. This flexibility includes the opportunity to reframe the wording of the rules to suit the community’s preferences (eg using a rights and responsibilities framework), as long as the substance of the core rules is identifiable.

Focus questions:

- Do any of the core rules need to be refined to suit this school community? If so, which, why and how?
- Are there any rules that need to be added?
- How should the school’s discipline code be communicated to students, parents and staff?
- Into which community languages does the discipline code (or school rules) need to be translated?

Suggestions and Resources

Documents

Core Rules in NSW Government Schools

Rules for rules

Website:

Interpreter and Translation Services

Student Discipline in Government Schools

Step 8: Revise the current school discipline policy’s strategies to promote positive student behaviour

The school discipline policy must outline the major strategies used by the school to foster positive behaviour. These should be at the heart of teaching and learning programs and practices, provide opportunities for enrichment and leadership and support the needs of individual students. Strategies need to be revised so they remain relevant and reflect recent improvements in school programs and practices.

Focus questions:

- Which strategies identified in the current policy remain a vital part of the school’s programs and practices? Which are no longer relevant?
- Are the strategies applied consistently across the school?
- What improvements has the school introduced in recent years that have enhanced student behaviour and learning?
- Do these strategies enhance student behaviour and learning? Do students think so?
- Taking into account the policy revision and the analysis of school data, are these strategies sufficient?
- How can the dimensions of the NSW Quality Teaching model support the school discipline policy’s strategies?
- What other strategies should the school consider to further promote positive behaviour?
- Do the strategies and practices support and reflect the aims and beliefs articulated in the ‘statement of purpose’?
Suggestions and Resources

Website:
- Quality Teaching in NSW Public Schools
- Knowing Makes the Difference: Learnings from the NSW PAS Program

Resource:
- Social Responsibility Years K - 6 (NSW DET 2002)
- Social Responsibility Years 7 - 12 (NSW DET 2002)
- Resources for Teaching Respect and Responsibility

Suggestions:
- Promoting Positive Student Behaviour – Some Suggestions
Step 9: Revise the current school discipline policy’s strategies to recognise and reinforce student achievement

The school discipline policy must outline the major strategies that the school implements to recognise and reinforce student achievement.

Focus questions:

- Which strategies identified in the current policy remain a vital part of the school’s practices? Which are no longer significant?
- Are the strategies implemented consistently across the school?
- What improvements has the school introduced in recent years that have enhanced the recognition and reinforcement of student achievement?
- Do students find these strategies recognise and reinforce their achievement?
- Taking into account the policy revision and the analysis of school data, are these strategies sufficient?
- What other strategies should the school consider to further recognise student achievement?
- Do the strategies and practices support and reflect the aims and beliefs articulated in the ‘statement of purpose’?

Suggestions and Resources

Recognising and Reinforcing Student Achievement – Some Suggestions

Surveys:
- Recognising and Reinforcing Student Achievement - Staff Survey
- Recognising and Reinforcing Student Achievement - Student Survey
Step 10: Revise the current school discipline policy’s strategies to manage inappropriate student behaviour

The school discipline policy must outline the strategies that the school uses to manage inappropriate student behaviour and support students experiencing difficulty. These strategies will need to be revised to ensure that they remain effective and consistent with the purpose of the policy.

Focus questions:

- Are the strategies and practices described in the current policy still used?
- Are the strategies and practices described in the current policy still relevant?
- Have new strategies and practices been introduced?
- Taking into account the analysis of school data and staff views, are current strategies and practices clear, practical and effective?
- Are current strategies and practices consistent with Departmental policies and procedures?
- Does the current policy provide additional strategies for students who do not respond to normal disciplinary practices?
- Does the current policy adequately articulate how students with disruptive behaviour are managed?
- Does the current policy reflect Occupational Health and Safety legislation and regulations regarding the management of students with disruptive behaviour?
- What other strategies or practices should the school consider to further manage inappropriate student behaviour?
- Do the strategies and practices support and reflect the ‘statement of purpose’?

Suggestions and Resources

Documents:
- Strategies to Manage Inappropriate Student Behaviour – Some Considerations
- Consequences, Rewards and Sanctions
- Level systems
- Time out

Website:
- Legal Issues Bulletins
Step 11: Define the responsibilities of staff, students and parents

The school discipline policy needs to outline the responsibilities of staff, students and parents in relation to student discipline.

These responsibilities should be readily identifiable from the statements made throughout the policy.

Focus questions:

- What is expected of students?
- What is expected of staff? Consider different positions, specialist roles and committees.
- What is expected of parents?

In Conclusion

Ideally, schools will establish a cycle of revision. A list of suggestions and issues should be kept throughout the year to assist the school to refine its discipline policy.

Once the new discipline policy is approved by the principal, copies need to be provided to staff, parents and students.

A copy must be forwarded to the school education director.

A copy of the discipline code (or school rules) must be provided to parents whenever their child is suspended.

It may be useful to place a copy of the school discipline policy on the school internet site.