

# Positive Schoolwide Engagement Plan

Behavior Standards Discipline Policy for Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS)

When students are engaged and challenged in the classroom, the opportunity to misbehave decreases.



## A Message from Dr. Johnson

This past school year we engaged our staff, students, families and the community to develop a new behavior standards policy with the goal of increasing the amount of quality time students spend learning. In part, we plan to do this by increasing the connection to school and engagement in learning and by reducing suspensions and out-of class time, especially for students who are disproportionately affected by discipline that places them out of class. For example, African American males, especially those receiving special education services, are currently overrepresented in suspension and expulsion statistics and will benefit from this work. Students cannot learn if they are not in school and do not have access to quality instruction.

We want to create a culture where every student has the opportunity to thrive. When students are engaged and challenged in the classroom, students are focused on learning and there are fewer opportunities to misbehave. I firmly believe that this effort will positively affect all students, not just those who are struggling during class. More effective learning environments will enhance classroom management practices for all students and will also help to prevent misbehavior from occurring.

This change has as much to do with a new policy as it does with a change in mindset and practice. We must set high expectations for both students and staff members to positively engage in learning.

MPS has created a behavior standards implementation committee to support schools and staff members to enhance positive climates in classrooms. We are providing professional development to school teams this summer and fall and equipping them to share the required training with instructional staff members who will be implementing the new policy. Strengthening cultural competency is also central to this work. As employees continue to build their understanding of the students and families we serve, they are able to adjust their practices to lead to improved outcomes for students.

Our goal is to increase quality instructional time.

We all have a responsibility to help create positive climates in our schools. What we do in school must be done in partnership with families and the community. Our investment in students' positive behavior means that more of our students will be successful in school and in life.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bernadeta H. Johnson".

Bernadeta H. Johnson, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

# Frequently Asked Questions

## What can you expect?

As a result of the work being completed, we are committed to maintaining safe learning environments. Further, we expect to increase learning time and reduce the time students lose because of disciplinary actions that take them away from classroom instruction.

### The behavior standards policy will result in:

- ✓ Aligned schoolwide and classroom positive engagement plans
- ✓ Instruction in skills and routines so that students can attain high behavioral standards
- ✓ Consistent collection and review of behavioral data so that schools can recognize and celebrate accomplishments and identify areas needing continued training and growth or adaptations of the plans
- ✓ Reduction in instructional time lost and greater reliance on restorative practices and alternatives to suspension
- ✓ Reduction in the racial disparity of disciplinary actions
- ✓ Regular review and revision of plans

This fall, each school will adopt aligned schoolwide and classroomwide positive engagement plans. The plans will clearly define and teach expectations for behavior and routines at school and teach social skills in a way that is appropriate to the age of the student.

By increasing the use of social skills instruction, restorative practices and alternatives to suspension, the response to behavior will emphasize actions that reduce lost instructional time and strengthen the relationships between students and between students and school staff.

By collecting and regularly reviewing school data, sites will be able to recognize and celebrate accomplishments and adjust their practices when needed. Data will also help school district staff know what additional supports and training are needed and to tailor delivery to the needs of specific schools, school teams or individual staff members.

Through these actions, students should feel more connected to school, have stronger school relationships and be more engaged in learning.

## Why make the policy change?

The rate at which students of color, especially black boys, are suspended and disciplined in our schools is alarming. Our current practices and policies have had an adverse impact on our students and our ability to close the achievement gap. Our new policy is a shift toward achieving better academic results for all students.

While suspensions are sometimes necessary, they often do not result in the change in behavior that leads to more success in school. By proactively managing student behavior, we can create more effective learning environments for all students. This change helps those who struggle and those who do not.

## Why include our community partners?

We are engaging MPS' community partners, especially our contract alternative schools, to define a clear role for our partners as we fully implement the new policy. Community partners will:

- ✓ Receive quarterly summaries of disciplinary data
- ✓ Participate in the District Steering Committee or implementation of the behavior standards initiative
- ✓ Work collaboratively with the Youth Coordinating Board's Youth Congress
- ✓ Provide training and direct service in restorative practices



## How will it be implemented?

In January 2014, MPS undertook revision of the discipline policy. School district data indicated that disciplinary practices resulted in a significant amount of instructional time being lost and a disproportionate impact on students of color (related specifically to removal from class and suspensions).

MPS contracted with FaceValu, an evaluation consulting firm, to coordinate staff and community outreach and engagement, which provided opportunities for community members, staff members and students to provide input into the development of the new policy.

After significant staff and community engagement, the Board of Education approved the new behavior standards policy in December 2013 to be implemented in August 2014.

Over the past six months, an implementation committee has worked to prepare for the change. A major part of this work was designing the professional development that would be necessary to support employees in understanding and implementing the new behavior standards policy and developing schoolwide and classroom engagement plans.

MPS families and community partners will become more engaged in this focused work starting this fall.

The process timeline on the following pages shows more in-depth details about the plan for implementing schoolwide and classroom wide engagement plans across MPS.

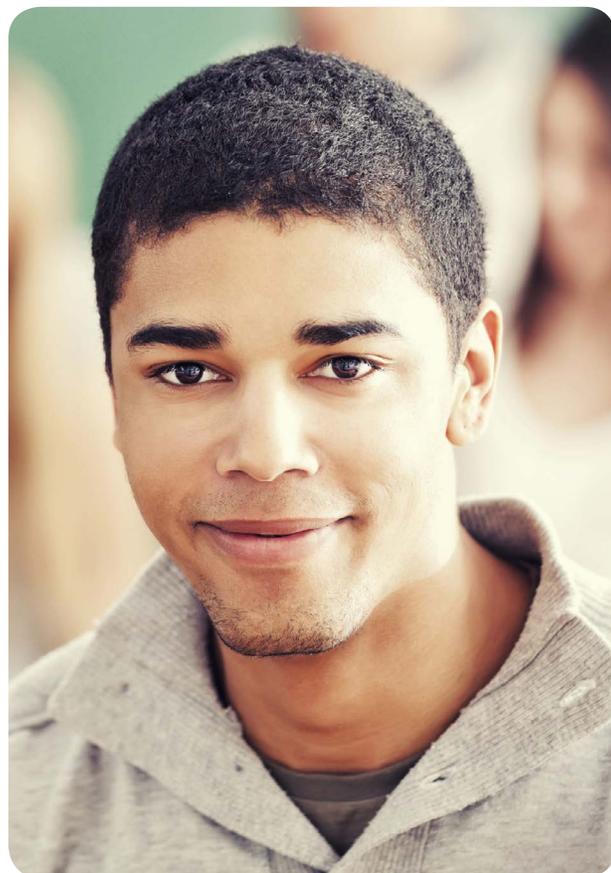


### Using data to continuously improve

We will use data to help inform the implementation of the behavior standards policy as we move forward. Schools will collect a consistent set of data that will:

- ✓ Regularly be reviewed by the site leadership team, the principal, the associate superintendent and central office staff
- ✓ Recognize and celebrate improvement and success
- ✓ Identify needs for additional training, support and adaptation of practices
- ✓ Monitor racial disparities and guide actions to reduce the differential impact of discipline

Data will also be shared with the community to increase transparency and guide the development of community supports.



## Restorative Practice

Restorative practices promote the building of relationships, recognizing and repairing harm and providing ways to take responsibility for one's behavior and restore one's place in the community. These practices include proactively building listening and problem solving skills, a sense of belonging and safety in the group and responsive actions ranging from using restorative questions to mediation to formal circles. Essential to all of these is the focus on recognizing and repairing harm, rather than focusing on assigning blame and administering punishment.



## Discipline

Central to the behavior standards policy is the understanding that one size of response does not fit all situations or students. Instruction in skills and routines and overall positive school climate are the foundational, preventative elements of the new policy. As we work toward a more proactive approach to supporting positive behavior in school, we know that there will need to be responses to disruptive and harmful behavior. Schools must be places where everyone is safe and learning can occur in the classroom. As part of the new behavior standards policy, disruptive and/or harmful behavior is identified in a graduated way from least harmful/disruptive to most harmful/disruptive.

As examples, level one behaviors include behaviors that are minor disruptions to the school environment. Possible responses to level one behaviors are based on a menu of skills-

based supports such as reminders/redirection of classroom routines and rituals. Level three behaviors include behaviors targeting others and result in responses that could include small- group skill instruction, anger management, conflict resolution or restorative “back-to-class plan” based on a menu of skills supports. For the most serious behaviors (level five), which present serious disruptions to the learning environment or significant safety concerns or harm to others, the options of suspension or removal from the learning environment are available. When considering responses to any disruptive/harmful behaviors, the emphasis is on being proactive and intentional and responding in ways help build skill in the student, repair harm and restore the relationships. When it is necessary to remove a student from class, staff should choose options that will result in the least possible amount of instruction time lost.

# Timeline

Dec. 2013

- Approved the behavior standards policy to:
  - Develop, identify and teach clearly defined expectations for social skills for students and adults
  - Reduce actions that result in loss of instructional time and the disproportionate impact on students of color
  - Identify and implement alternatives to suspension
  - Expand the use of restorative practices
  - Embed consistent data and accountability systems and report progress quarterly

Feb. 2014

- Identified skills, expectations and areas of needed training for probationary teachers, related services staff, education support professionals (ESPs), school resource officers (CROs) and other staff members
- Formed work group to develop training content and opportunities for teacher on boarding and ESPs
- Aligned expectations for the behavior standards policy to the following:
  - Newly passed Safe and Supportive Schools Act (Bullying Prevention and Responses)
  - The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) investigation

Apr. 2014

- Led professional development and information sharing sessions with school administrators (principals and assistant principals) so that sites could begin to implement the expectations for the behavior standards policy. This included providing administrators with:
  - Specific delineation of responsibilities for leading the implementation at the building level
  - A self-assessment tool
  - Criteria for developing a positive schoolwide engagement plan
  - Expectations for summer professional development
  - Alignment with the School Improvement Plan (SIP) climate and culture component
- Identified a separate work group (cross-departmental, programs and school sites) to develop the framework for the classroom engagement plan that aligned the behavior standards policy expectations to Domain 2 (SOEI)
- Defined the criteria and identified resources so that classroom teachers can develop their own engagement plan
- Shared updates regularly with the chief academic officer and presented updates to the academic leadership team and the executive cabinet
- Initiated the development of supporting data reports and consistent data analysis

Jan. 2014

- Appointed interim Principal on Special Assignment (POSA) to lead development of implementation plan
- Began individual meetings with school sites to identify where elements of the policy were being implemented in MPS schools in order to rely on local expertise to inform planning
- Identified community partners for the district planning team
- Formed planning team (cross-departmental programs, community and school sites) to operationalize the requirements of the policy and develop a plan for implementation and support
- Engaged multiple departments, programs, school sites and community partners in planning for the implementation of the policy

Mar. 2014

- Identified foundational professional development opportunities for school teams and began identifying trainers for June professional development
- Defined the criteria and identified resources for each building's positive schoolwide engagement plan
- Developed self-assignment for schools aligned with the behavior standards policy, OCR and proposed safe schools legislation
- Expanded mental health services to schools and identified related training
- Expanded the use of restorative practices provided by community partners in response to school site requests
- Expanded targeted community partner supports for students
- Aligned grant resources to support the implementation of the behavior standards initiative.
- First round of POSA Interviews, no candidate met criteria, re-posted the position

May 2014

- Provided principal and assistant principal PD on the opportunities and responsibilities for summer PD and the roll-out plan for the development and implementation of schoolwide and classroom positive engagement plans
- Identified a school team for each building that would develop the positive schoolwide engagement plan and support the development of classroom engagement plans
- Finalized June PD for site teams including logistics and trainers

# Timeline Cont.

Jun. 2014

- Hired a permanent POSA to provide leadership for the implementation of the behavior standards policy
- Engaged principals and assistant principals on June 18 in sessions to learn about alternatives to suspension and equitable practices
- Developed alternative training day Aug. 5 for school sites that were not able to attend June training and contract alternative schools
- Engaged with teachers from each school site at PD sessions on June 19 and 20 to develop a “train-the-trainer” model to be facilitated to all site teams on Aug. 13, when teams return to share their plans
- Initiated the development of site team’s schoolwide plans

Aug. 2014

- Provided training for site teams who were not able to attend June training
- Participation by all site teams in one day session Aug. 13 to share plans for school wide plans and plans for building roll-out
- At the district PD day Aug. 19, content leads, administrators, department staff members and others specialists who support teachers in the classroom co-facilitated a PD inquiry toolkit presentation to support the development of classroom engagement plans.
- Provided training for SROs

Oct. 2014

- Monthly PD for building leads for restorative practices
- Provide SRO training on non-student days
- Report to Minneapolis Board of Education



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Jul. 2014

- Initiated contracts for community agencies to provide training and direct services in restorative practices
- Hired coordinator for restorative practices and schoolwide engagement plans
- Initiated planning for training and support of district level coaches to support sites and teachers in implementation of schoolwide and classroom engagement plans
- Finalized logistics and trainers for Aug. PD

Sep. 2014

- Form a permanent implementation workgroup to oversee the planning, training, implementation and support of schools during the year, including community partners and representatives from the following departments: Special Education, Multilingual, PD, Teaching and Learning and The Office of Black Male Student Achievement
- Integrate the behavior standards work with the Office of Black Male Achievement to ensure that culturally relevant practices and resources are developed, disseminated and supported in schools
- Initiate uniform monthly data summaries for school sites
- Begin monthly data review meeting with chief of schools and associate superintendents
- Associate superintendents begin monthly data reviews with school sites
- Hold first quarterly district steering committee meeting to review data progress in training and service
- Develop plan for translation of quarterly reports to the community

Nov. 2014

- Provide quarterly report to the community that is disaggregated and in home language
- Convene community partners forum to review data and status of services
- Engage licensed and non-licensed staff in evaluation of implementation progress

# Professional Development for 2014-15 and beyond

Professional development (PD) this summer is just the beginning of support employees will see as the new policy is rolled out. We are surveying participants to better determine what continued learning resources will be needed to support our employees and schools throughout the implementation.

A more intensive planning process will occur as evaluation data from the summer sessions and other feedback is reviewed. We are also designing differentiated and comprehensive PD plans to support the many employees who will have a role in this new work.

We will continue to identify and provide ongoing professional development and support for staff members who are implementing the new practices in their schools and classrooms. This will include dedicated staff members from Student Support Services to support schools and teachers to develop their schoolwide and classroom positive engagement plans training and support for using alternatives to suspension and culturally responsive practices support and training in restorative practices from community partners and as direct service from community partners in using situation-specific restorative practices.

We will:

- Build capacity to design, implement, and monitor positive schoolwide engagement plans and classroom engagement plans
- Identify differentiated professional development to support all staff groups
- Offer professional development focused on alternatives to suspension and restorative practices
- Develop consistent data systems and structures in collaboration with Instructional Technology Services and the Research, Evaluation and Assessment Department
- Embed data analysis process with SIP quarterly review assessment
- Incorporate data analysis and related action planning in principal and assistant principal PD



# Collaborative Plan Development

During June, July and August, teams comprised of administrators, teachers, educational support professionals, deans, behavior interventionists and other staff members participated in foundational professional learning about the behavior standards policy, restorative practices, proactive positive schoolwide and classroom engagement strategies and mental health-related concepts. Each school site had teams ranging from 6-15 members accounting for over 600 staff members attending the Positive Schoolwide Engagement Institute.

## Online Resource:

- [Overview and Expectations](#)

As part of the professional learning process and the implementation of the behavior standards policy, school site teams developed positive schoolwide engagement plans during the summer to share with all staff members in their school and with their communities.

## Online Resources:

- [Behavior Standards Criteria](#)
- [Classroom Engagement Team Planning Tool](#)
- [Procedures Self-Assessment](#)

On Aug. 13, school sites shared their positive engagement plans with other sites, were provided PD for developing classroom engagement plans and continued planning for leading professional learning at their sites during workshop week. The creativity and energy of these teams was clear on this day with many effective practices.

## Online Resource:

- [Example Plans](#)

Other departments and staff were also engaged in professional learning about their role in implementing the behavior standards and positive engagement plans. The work involved educational support personnel, school resource officers, and staff from transportation, nutrition services, facilities and grounds, and Maintenance.

Feedback from the positive schoolwide engagement planning teams and training sessions will inform the development of ongoing professional learning that will be offered throughout the 2014-15 school year. A Positive Schoolwide Engagement Institute for all school teams is being planned for June 2015, so that sites can deepen their understanding of the concepts embedded in the behavior standards policy and utilize data from their end of year report to inform their planning for 2015-16.



“I am excited to see the folks in our building ready for change.”

-Middle School Dean

“We have had very strong commitment from our planning team and high levels of engagement from all staff during workshop week.”

-High School Principal

“I am really excited for my team to incorporate consistent practices that will support our students. After all, we are here for our students first.”

-Elementary Teacher

