

STUDENT DISCIPLINE

- I. Talbot County Public Schools is committed to creating a school system where teaching and learning take place every day in safe, supportive, and respectful school environments, and where students, school staff, and families are valued and have the opportunity to succeed.

Healthy and safe school climates and successful school discipline policies and practices are guided by the following philosophical principles:

A. School safety and academic success are created and strengthened when students effectively and actively are engaged in their learning, when positive relationships exist between students and school staff, and when families, communities and school staff work collaboratively to support positive student outcomes. School discipline policies and practices related to school conduct foster and teach appropriate behavior, strive to create a positive school climate and safe environment, and keep students in school so that they may graduate college and career ready.

B. Schools should provide behavioral expectations for all members of the school community that are fair and developmentally appropriate. Educators and other adults within the school should teach students to behave in ways that conform to those policies, and contribute to academic achievement and school success. This is achieved by fostering, teaching, and acknowledging positive behavior, focusing on preventing misbehavior before it occurs, providing necessary supports, and restoring relationships among all members of the school community when the need arises.

C. No student comes to school “perfect,” academically or behaviorally, and many face challenges in their homes and communities. All students, however, can succeed and deserve the opportunity to do so. Schools should provide the instruction and support necessary to address students’ academic and behavioral needs.

D. Students should be afforded opportunities to learn from their mistakes. To do this, school staff should use graduated consequences and interventions to teach students appropriate behavior, and to correct any harm that results from their behavior. Removing a student from school through exclusionary discipline measures should always be a last resort. Students who are removed should have the opportunity to make up work for credit, so that they may stay on pace with their classwork and on track to graduate.

E. School discipline should be administered fairly, equitably, and consistently, and in accordance with due process protections. School must not allow harsh or exclusionary discipline to disproportionately and disparately impact specific groups of students, including but not limited to students of color, students with disabilities, male students, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) students. Whereas such disparities exist, school systems must make continuous efforts to understand the causes of and reduce such disproportionality and disparity.

F. To the extent possible, school staff should be provided access to interventions and supportive services, as well as adequate training and professional development to administer discipline most effectively and appropriately. Partnerships with community-based, city, and local organizations and agencies will help to ensure that school staff and students have access to the supports they need.

G. Safe and positive school environments are built on trusting relationships between students and school staff. School should avoid the unnecessary criminalization of students. Reports to school resource officers, other law enforcement, or Department of Juvenile Justice should be considered when the safety of students or the school community is threatened. Other considerations would include the commission of a crime by a student on school property.

H. The educational benefits of a sound system of student discipline allows for the acquisition of an important life lesson for students; that consequences follow actions.

I. Students should experience a system of school discipline which is administered fairly, equitably, and consistently, and thereby learn to accept responsibility for their actions and the consequences resulting from behavior that violates school rules, policies, regulations, and civil and criminal laws.