

# Student Discipline Rules

## [An Introduction]



### Why new discipline rules

Washington's discipline rules were created four decades ago. Students and schools are vastly different today.

In 2016, the state Legislature passed a law ([House Bill 1541](#)) to help close opportunity gaps in learning. One area of concern is discipline. Some groups of students are more likely to be suspended than their peers.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) saw the bill's passage as an opportunity to improve the rules' readability, clarify requirements, and support family engagement. After almost two years of collaborative work—including three public comment periods and eight public hearings—OSPI is adopting new discipline rules.

The rules ensure school discipline policies are fair across the state. They require schools to take a "prevention-based" approach, meaning that an attempt is made to correct a behavior before it requires discipline.

### Family engagement

The new discipline rules provide more ways for parents and families to engage. They require increased parent communication from schools, and they provide for more collaborative discipline procedures.

School districts are now required to consult with students, families, and the community when developing and updating district discipline policies. OSPI strongly encourages parents and families to work with school districts as they update district policies in response to the new rules.

### Student protections

Additional protections now minimize the use of suspensions and expulsions. For example, the new rules prohibit schools from excluding students from school for absences or tardiness. The new rules will further limit the use of exclusionary discipline for behaviors that do not present a threat to school safety and will prohibit the use of expulsion for students in kindergarten through grade four.

### Best practices

The new discipline rules emphasize the use of research-based best practices. School districts will be required to identify those practices that school personnel must attempt or consider before or instead of exclusions. The practices may include positive behavioral interventions and supports and other evidence-based practices.

### Educational services

State law requires that, when a school district suspends or expels a student, the district must provide the student the opportunity to receive educational services. Under the new rules, the student must be allowed to continue to participate in general education curriculum; meet the standards of the district; and complete subject, grade-level, and graduation requirements.

### Discipline Rules Implementation: Effective Dates

#### For the 2018–19 School Year:

- Classroom Exclusions
- Absences and Tardiness
- Educational Services
- Reengagement

#### For the 2019–20 School Year:

- Parent Notification Requirements
- Appeal Procedures
- District Grievance Procedures
- Conditions and Limitations

### For more information

#### Learn more about the rules:

[k12.wa.us/studentdiscipline/](http://k12.wa.us/studentdiscipline/) Rules

#### Learn more about discipline:

[k12.wa.us/studentdiscipline/](http://k12.wa.us/studentdiscipline/)

**Do you have concerns about discrimination in discipline?** [k12.wa.us/equity/](http://k12.wa.us/equity/)

**Do you have questions about policies in your area?** Contact your school district.