



Implementing Student Discipline Policies and Procedures: Research-Based Principles for School Districts

In response to significant changes to OSPI discipline rules under [Chapter 392-400 WAC](#), school districts are in the process of revising discipline policies and procedures at the local level. The following principles highlight the major policy areas educators need to be aware of to meet state requirements, and the research supporting why implementation is critical for improving equity and fairness in the administration of school discipline.

Engage Families, Students, and Staff in Discipline Decisions

- Research highlights the benefits of inclusive decision-making processes and family engagement¹
- OSPI rules provide multiple opportunities for meaningful parent and family communication²
- School districts must consult with staff, students, and families about discipline policies³

Eliminate Zero-Tolerance Discipline Policies and Practices

- Research finds punitive practices produce negative and racially disproportionate outcomes⁴
- OSPI rules prohibit school districts from administering mandatory exclusionary discipline⁵
- School districts may no longer immediately suspend a student for “exceptional misconduct”⁶

Adopt Positive and Instructional Approaches to Behavior

- Research demonstrates restorative discipline approaches can mitigate disparities⁷
- OSPI rules require district policies to identify best practices to support student behavior⁸
- Educators must attempt or consider best practices before exclusionary discipline⁹

Disrupt Inequitable Discipline Decision-Making Processes

- Research promotes strategies for neutralizing implicit bias in discipline decision-making¹⁰
- OSPI rules establish procedures intended to slow down discipline decision-making processes¹¹
- Educators must consider individual circumstances, context of behavior, and school safety¹²

Focus on the Classroom Context and Data-Informed Decision-Making

- Research shows disproportionality in discipline starts at the classroom level¹³
- OSPI rules provide procedures for classroom exclusion and using disaggregated discipline data¹⁴
- School administrators and teachers must collaboratively review building discipline standards¹⁵

Resources and Contact Information

The following resources are available on OSPI’s [Student Discipline](#) website:

- [Student Discipline Rules Q&A: A Technical Guide](#)
- [Behavior Menu of Best Practices and Strategies](#)
- Discipline training content on [Classroom Procedures](#) and [Administrative Procedures](#)

For technical assistance and training contact:

Joshua Lynch, Student Discipline and Behavior Program Supervisor
joshua.lynch@k12.wa.us | 360-725-4969

References and Endnotes

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¹ Davis, 2017; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013.

² See WAC [392-400-110\(2\)](#); WAC [392-400-335\(2\)](#); WAC [392-400-450\(2\)](#).

³ See RCW [28A.320.211](#); WAC [392-400-110\(2\)](#).

⁴ American Psychological Association, 2008; Curran, 2016; Perry & Morris, 2014.

⁵ See WAC [392-400-330\(2\)](#); WAC [392-400-435\(1\)](#); WAC [392-400-440\(1\)](#); WAC [392-400-445\(1\)](#).

⁶ Prior state regulatory provisions permitted a school district to categorize behavioral violations as "exceptional misconduct" and immediately resort to suspension for behavioral violations under that category. Those regulatory provisions became ineffective July 1, 2019.

⁷ Gregory et al., 2016; Gregory & Ripski, 2008.

⁸ See WAC [392-400-110\(1\)\(e\)](#).

⁹ See WAC [392-400-330\(2\)](#); WAC [392-400-435\(1\)](#); WAC [392-400-440\(1\)](#); WAC [392-400-445\(1\)](#).

¹⁰ Smolkowski, Girvan, McIntosh, Nese, & Horner, 2016.

¹¹ See WAC [392-400-330\(2\)](#); WAC [392-400-435\(1\)](#); WAC [392-400-440\(1\)-\(2\)](#); WAC [392-400-445\(1\)-\(2\)](#).

¹² See WAC [392-400-330\(2\)](#); WAC [392-400-435\(1\)](#); WAC [392-400-440\(1\)-\(2\)](#); WAC [392-400-445\(1\)-\(2\)](#).

¹³ Bradshaw, Mitchell, O'Brennan, & Leaf, 2010; Gregory, Huang, Anyon, Greer, & Downing, 2018; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002.

¹⁴ See WAC [392-400-110\(2\)](#); WAC [392-400-330](#); WAC [392-400-335](#).

¹⁵ See RCW [28A.400.110](#); RCW [28A.600.020\(3\)](#); RCW [28A.320.211](#).