
Alternatives to Suspensions and Expulsions: A Teacher and Administrator Guide to School Discipline

The development of effective systems for school discipline requires a broad set of resources. The intent of this guidance document is to support schools in their movement towards more effective, evidence-based methods of behavior management and school discipline for all students. These considerations are offered for staff at the classroom level (see *individual and classroom level response*) as well as administrators at the school and district level (see *school and district response*).

This handout was developed by Indiana Resource Network (IRN) Centers. Special thanks for the contribution to the PBIS Indiana Resource Center and the HANDS in Autism Interdisciplinary Training and Resource Center.
Learn more about IRN Centers: <http://www.doe.in.gov/achievement/individualized-learning/indiana-resource-network>

PROACTIVE BEHAVIORAL AND ACADEMIC STRATEGIES

Setting up the environment for success

Individual or Classroom Level

- Form structured (i.e., supportive, balanced, consistent) and positive relationships with students.
- Provide clear expectations in classroom for:
 - schedules and routines timing of activities and
 - roles and responsibilities for students and staff
- Provide challenging material and instruction to all students to promote student engagement and critical thinking.
- Arrange the environment to promote physical and emotional comfort, and efficient, well-paced instruction.
- Take into consideration ADA regulations (e.g., augmentative communication devices) and medical considerations (allergies, foods).

- Examine school and district discipline codes to ensure:
 - A focus on building a positive climate through systemic approaches such as PBIS or restorative justice
 - Clear guidelines governing the use of suspension and expulsion.
- Determine which behaviors should be addressed within the classroom and which warrant an office referral.
- Ensure staff accountability in maintaining consistency in expectations across classrooms and the school.
- Communicate corporation policies and related supports or procedures in ways that foster effective sharing and use of such policies.

School or District Level

Engaging students through differentiated instruction

Individual or Classroom Level

- Develop skills through differentiated instruction, modeling, practice and feedback.
- Provide students with frequent opportunities for practice and feedback to maintain and generalize skills
- Support skill development through structured prompting and teaching methods (e.g., errorless learning, behavioral momentum, task analyses, chaining).
- Set specific, measurable goals for both academic and behavioral skills.
- Encourage students to be active learners by increasing student choice of activity.
- Incorporate areas of student interest to promote engagement with materials and concepts.

- Provide professional development opportunities regarding:
 - Methods of differentiated instruction.
 - Strategies for individualizing behavioral and academic interventions.
- Monitor the extent to which differentiation on the basis of individualized learning styles and student needs is occurring.
- Assure that all lesson plans include objectives, materials, and activities that are engaging and relevant to students.

School or District Level

Classroom and behavior management

Individual or Classroom Level

- Model prosocial behaviors such as conflict resolution, positive reinforcement, and respect for diversity.
- Establish, post, and teach definitions of behaviors and rules/expectations in the classroom.
- Identify precursor behaviors through screening that can be targeted for intervention before behavior escalates or further intervention is necessary.
- Utilize positive attention and reinforcement to increase desired behaviors.
- Use a continuum of classroom strategies, beginning with differential reinforcement and planned ignoring, to decrease undesired behaviors.
- For students with recurring behavioral problems, conduct a functional behavior assessment (FBA) and develop an individualized Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP).

- Develop schoolwide systems for acknowledging students for meeting behavioral expectations.
- Implement proactive schoolwide strategies (e.g., PBIS, restorative justice) for developing a positive climate and teaching prosocial behaviors.
- Provide training and coaching in:
 - Effective use of proactive behavioral strategies.
 - Effective and consistent classroom management strategies.
 - Strategies for addressing more serious classroom disruption, and integrating those strategies into BIP's.
 - Information to increase understanding of both general discipline policies and special education regulations.
- Be aware of the protections provided by IDEA 2004 with regards to procedures related to suspensions of students with disabilities.

School or District Level

DATA DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING

Process and policies

Individual or
Classroom Level

- Consistently follow district or school procedures for collecting and using data about students' academic and behavior performance.
- Utilize data to set specific, measurable goals for both academic and behavioral skills.
- Use multiple methods to assess student's skills, progress, and outcomes.

- Develop systems to collect academic/behavioral data to monitor student outcomes and program effectiveness.
- Ensure that data related to student behavior and discipline referrals/actions are consistently and accurately collected.
- Provide professional development and implement policy to support teachers and administrators in using data.
- Review and evaluate classroom management policies for effectiveness in improving behavior, and maintaining productive learning environments.
- Establish and continually review HEA 1419 plan in relationship to data related to school behavior and discipline.

School or District Level

Data collection methods

Individual or Classroom
Level

- Use both formative and summative data collection and assessment to monitor individual progress and intervention effectiveness.
- Collect assessment information about both academic and behavioral skills that is relevant and meaningful to classroom instruction.
- Maintain and review ongoing assessments of academic, behavioral and functional skills.

- Provide professional development in data collection phases (e.g., baseline, progress monitoring, reassessment), methods and analysis.
- Model use of data for accountability and evaluation of student and school progress.
- Ensure that all data can be disaggregated to assess impact of instruction and behavior management for all groups

School or District Level

Data analysis and presentation

Individual or Classroom Level

- Use data to inform decisions regarding behaviors or skills warranting intervention.
- Use data to set goals and criteria for success, and to monitor progress towards goals and identified outcomes.

- Develop a data collection system to track disciplinary referrals and consequences, including a standard form for reporting disciplinary incidents
- Provide professional development regarding the effective collection, analysis, and presentation of data for driving educational decisions.
- Share data in accessible and meaningful formats so that staff is aware of patterns and trends that exist within a building.

School or District Level

Effective data teams

Individual or Classroom Level

- Use multiple sources of information to determine appropriate interventions.
- Consult with other school professionals to interpret data and plan interventions based on data.

- Develop effective school team (e.g., PBIS team) to examine disciplinary referral and consequence data to monitor the effectiveness of interventions and improve programs.
- Provide the time and support needed for staff to engage in collaborative data review, analysis, and discussion so that information is used to improve instruction and intervention.
- Share data in a meaningful way with entire faculty on a regular basis.

School or District Level

CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

Culturally responsive behavioral and instructional practices

Individual or Classroom Level

- Consider how differences in cultural perspectives influence the way in which student behaviors are perceived.
- Use multiple teaching strategies and methods to promote student understanding.
- Consider cultural, environmental, and linguistic factors in the differentiation of instruction, strategies, and interventions

- Provide professional development to all staff with regards to culturally responsive classroom management.
- Engage staff in ongoing discussion about ways to adapt practices and create culturally responsive instruction and intervention to address the needs of diverse groups of students.

School or District Level

Data driven decision making

Individual or Classroom Level

- Review data for patterns or trends by gender, race, linguistic background, and disability.
- Participate in building team meetings to examine data (e.g., office discipline referrals, referral for intervention services, intervention effectiveness, referral for special education evaluation, etc.) by gender, race, and linguistic background.

- Provide professional development on using consistent definitions, guidelines, and data to assess appropriateness of suspension/expulsion.
- Regularly review disaggregated discipline data at the building level to assess levels of disproportionality in discipline

School or District Level

Collaboration, advocacy, and leadership

Individual or Classroom Level

- Continuously review data to ensure that rules and policies are equally applied to all students.
- Offer students the opportunity to share their experiences and ideas regarding discipline in constructive classroom conversations.
- Establish open and effective communication between school staff, families, and students to ensure a shared understanding.

- Demonstrate a clear commitment to addressing disparities in school disciplinary and academic achievement
- Engage staff in ongoing conversations about issues of equity for all groups of students
- Provide professional development for all staff (e.g., inservice training, courageous conversations, text-based discussion) to increase awareness of stereotypes, and increase skill in culturally responsive practices.
- Ensure that school-based leadership teams are representative of a diversity of roles, demographics and community input.
- To the extent possible, assign administrative responsibilities (e.g., dedicated position) to develop and maintain culturally responsive strategies for reducing disparities in discipline.

School or District Level

Family engagement and communication strategies

Individual or Classroom Level

- Keep parents well informed while recognizing cultural differences in communication preferences.
- Represent students' cultures in the classroom environment through student work, signs, and other academic and non-academic materials.
- Translate classroom information, newsletters, materials into relevant languages to reach all families.
- If applicable; provide interpreters during family events and meetings.

- Encourage and support school staff to participate in community events with students and their families.
- Involve students and families in the formulation of school-wide behavioral expectations.

School or District Level

COLLABORATION/ ADVOCACY

Culturally responsive behavioral and academic practices

Individual or Classroom Level

- Acknowledge and be responsive to family concerns and requests
- Take time to explain information in family friendly language.
- Get to know students' families and communities, and their interests, in order to utilize strength-based approaches.
- Offer family engagement activities in the community to minimize logistical barriers to participation

- Communicate with families and students in consistent, comprehensive and family-friendly ways.
- Ensure provision of information regarding procedural safeguards, caregiver rights, and resources available under the law.
- Encourage a proactive approach to caregiver involvement in school discipline and other decision-making.
Work with parents to design a home-school communication system about behavior that contributes to increased home-school consistency.

School or District Level

Data driven decision making

Individual or Classroom Level

- Obtain consent for and gather information relevant to student progress from community professionals involved in student care.
- Provide resources pertaining to students' disabilities when necessary and appropriate.
Provide families with information related to community resources.

- Develop memorandums of understanding (MOUs) within a system of care/wraparound approach to facilitate sharing of information with community agencies.
- Involve the community in school-related activities, mentoring, projects, health programs and available opportunities to enhance educational and functional programming.

School or District Level

Collaboration, advocacy, and leadership

Individual or Classroom Level

- Regularly meet and share information among staff to inform interventions and ensure consistency of implementation.
- Incorporate staff input in decisions related to student programming (e.g., preferences, strengths, adaptations).

- Develop scheduling and common free time to enable school staff to engage in collaborative problem-solving regarding student behavior.
- Provide professional development for support staff related to
 - Student disabilities and best practice in behavior management.
 - Decision making with respect to appropriate alternatives to suspension/expulsions.

School or District Level

Family engagement and communication strategies

Individual or Classroom Level

- Regularly meet and share information among therapists, general education teachers, and other school staff to inform interventions, ensure consistency, and seek options for inclusion.
- Provide resources, information and training regarding best practice interventions, especially for students with disabilities, as needed.

- Support and allow adjustment of schedules as necessary to enable regular meetings and communication among staff.
- Include support for related staff in professional development offerings.

School or District Level