

THE SCHOOL DISCIPLINE CONSENSUS REPORT:

STRATEGIES FROM THE FIELD TO KEEP STUDENTS ENGAGED IN SCHOOL AND OUT OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

An Implementation Checklist for School District Superintendents and Other District Leaders

The School Discipline Consensus Report provides 60 recommendations for keeping youth engaged in safe and supportive learning environments and out of courtrooms. Among the 700 advisors, experts, and stakeholders who worked to develop these recommendations were school and district leaders from across the nation. The report recognizes that superintendents and other district leaders play a pivotal role in putting systems and structures in place at the district and school levels to improve school climate and safety while minimizing personnel's dependence on suspensions, expulsions, and arrests to manage student misbehavior, particularly for minor offenses. Many district and school improvement efforts tend to focus overwhelmingly on academic achievement and meeting mandated standards without taking into full consideration the need to promote positive student behavior and improved adult responses to misconduct. And, safety planning, school climate improvement efforts, and disciplinary reforms often progress on relatively parallel tracks, despite each being inextricably linked to academic achievement. School district leaders must work with individual school leaders to think about all of these issues as integral parts of overarching strategic plans to improve school performance and student outcomes.

The following checklist serves as a companion tool that superintendents and district leaders can use to help assess and guide their efforts in implementing *The School Discipline Consensus Report's* recommendations. The checklist is organized by goals and key expectations at the district level to provide oversight and support to school administrators, educators, specialized instructional support staff, and other adults working in schools to support positive outcomes for youth and their families. The checklist should prompt discussions about how other district and school activities, such as developing school improvement plans and instructional improvement plans, can be integrated and aligned with efforts to improve school climate and reform school discipline policies and practices to help meet the district's goals.

Goal 1: Promote a vision for improving conditions for learning for all students that integrates the best thinking on these three cornerstones: school climate, student discipline, and campus safety.

Expectations	Consensus Report Section	Status	Gaps in Current Policies	Next Steps
<p>1. The district's vision for school discipline, climate, and safety is articulated and communicated to school staff, parents, and students in the district code of conduct, employee handbook, job descriptions, and in individual school improvement and school safety plans. The vision should be clear that implementation of it will require that positive behavioral approaches, restorative practices, and social and emotional learning be embraced by all adults working with students.</p>	<p>Conditions for Learning, PS I and PS II</p>			
<p>2. The district's overall policy priorities and strategic plan reflect this vision and help meet specific school discipline, climate, and safety goals. One of these goals addresses the reduction of disproportionality in the use of exclusionary discipline practices.</p>	<p>Conditions for Learning, PS I and PS II</p>			
<p>3. District leaders meet at the beginning of each school year with some combination of school employees, community members, parents, and students to share the district's vision, goals, and priorities around school discipline, climate, and safety, and how this vision aligns with the district's broader goals for improving student outcomes.</p>	<p>Conditions for Learning, PS I</p>			
<p>4. The district develops formal partnerships with local agencies, community-based organizations, private service providers, and other external entities to build sufficient capacity to implement its vision for improved conditions for learning and to support students with unmet behavioral and related needs.</p>	<p>Conditions for Learning, PS II Targeted Behavioral Interventions PS IV</p>			

Goal 2: Provide school staff with the tools and training needed to address challenges in implementing the district’s vision for improved conditions for learning, and use data to provide appropriate resources to schools struggling with high suspension, expulsion, and arrest rates.

Expectations	Consensus Report Section	Status	Gaps in Current Policies	Next Steps
<p>1. Identify schools that are struggling with high suspension, expulsion, and arrest rates and in improving school climate and safety, as documented in school improvement and school climate plans, school climate surveys, and disciplinary data, and prioritize additional resources including professional development, funding, and direct technical assistance to these schools.</p>	<p>Conditions for Learning, PS I</p> <p>Targeted Behavioral Interventions, PS I and II</p> <p>Courts and Juvenile Justice, PS I</p>			
<p>2. A validated early warning data system (EWS) is in place and used by each school (either developed by the district or the state) that identifies students in need of additional academic, behavioral health, and related supports, and tracks their progress over time.</p>	<p>Targeted Behavioral Interventions, PS I</p>			
<p>3. Policies require the establishment of a student support team at each school to help identify students through an EWS who are at risk of disciplinary action and may be in need of more targeted interventions; monitor services; track student progress; and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. Roles and responsibilities of the student support team are articulated in a policy manual that is shared with all school staff, parents, and students before the start of the school year.</p>	<p>Targeted Behavioral Interventions, PS III</p>			

Expectations	Consensus Report Section	Status	Gaps in Current Policies	Next Steps
<p>4. Ongoing professional development (at least one training session with additional follow-up coaching or assignments throughout the school year) is provided to all school administrators and educators on topics such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engaging instruction ▪ Classroom management and de-escalation techniques ▪ Cultural competency ▪ Restorative practices ▪ Social and emotional learning ▪ Trauma-sensitive approaches ▪ Data-driven decision making; the use of EWSs 	Conditions for Learning, PS IV			
<p>5. Partnerships with educator preparation programs emphasize and prioritize the development of classroom management skills and building positive relationships with students in both coursework and clinical experiences; induction programs for new teachers incorporate training on these issues as well.</p>	Conditions for Learning, PS IV			

Goal 3: Ensure the district code of conduct supports a positive school climate, a transparent and equitable school discipline system, and school safety.

Expectations	Consensus Report Section	Status	Gaps in Current Policies	Next Steps
<p>1. Students, parents, and school staff are provided with opportunities to review and suggest revisions to the district code of conduct at least annually.</p>	Conditions for Learning, PS III			
<p>2. The code of conduct includes positive expectations for student behavior and a graduated system of developmentally appropriate responses by adults to students' misconduct, which emphasizes keeping students in school whenever possible.</p>	Conditions for Learning, PS III			

Expectations	Consensus Report Section	Status	Gaps in Current Policies	Next Steps
3. The code of conduct has as its foundation the use of restorative practices as an alternative to suspensions, expulsions, and arrests for minor student offenses.	Conditions for Learning, PS III			
4. The code of conduct clearly articulates due process protections for students that are accused of misconduct and their families and how to invoke them (e.g., notification of charges; right to parent, guardian, attorney, or advocate; protections for students with disabilities, etc.)	Conditions for Learning, PS III			

Goal 4: Ensure students who are removed from the classroom for disciplinary reasons continue to receive a quality education and needed services.

Expectations	Consensus Report Section	Status	Gaps in Current Policies	Next Steps
1. Policies require schools to establish a safe and supportive place in the school building where students who commit minor code of conduct offenses can go to do classwork and reflect on their behavior. These spaces are staffed with qualified educators to minimize the loss of instructional time.	Conditions for Learning, PS III			
2. Multiple alternative education options exist to serve the diverse needs of students removed from school for disciplinary reasons and all students who are not successful in traditional settings.	Targeted Behavioral Interventions, PS V			
3. Alternative education programs and schools within juvenile correctional facilities meet high-quality standards for academics, educator qualifications, the use of technology, and social/emotional learning. For alternative education programs, there are clear eligibility guidelines for student entrance.	Targeted Behavioral Interventions, PS V Courts and Juvenile Justice, PS III			

Expectations	Consensus Report Section	Status	Gaps in Current Policies	Next Steps
4. Policies and practices support students' reentry back to their home school (unless there is a compelling safety or victimization issue) or another traditional school, if and when appropriate and in the best interest of the student. Each alternative education program, juvenile correctional facility, and traditional school has a dedicated staff person responsible for ensuring a successful transition, including immediate enrollment, appropriate class placement, and the continuation of needed services.	Targeted Behavioral Interventions, PS V Courts and Juvenile Justice, PS IV			
5. Policies and practices ensure that credits and coursework earned in alternative education programs and juvenile correctional facilities are transferable and recognized by the student's home school or other traditional school.	Targeted Behavioral Interventions, PS V Courts and Juvenile Justice, PS IV			

Goal 5: Establish and maintain a partnership with local law enforcement that supports the district's vision for maintaining safety while improving school climate and discipline.

Expectations	Consensus Report Section	Status	Gaps in Current Policies	Next Steps
1. Any decision about determining the appropriate school-police partnership model for particular schools is based on a collaborative process, and includes evaluating the potential placement and role of any school-based officers. The process engages multiple stakeholders and uses an analysis of school climate and safety indicators, including incident and perception data.	School-Police Partnerships, PS I			
2. The district code of conduct explains the role of police in response to student misbehavior on campus and when officers must be called.	Conditions for Learning, PS III			

Expectations	Consensus Report Section	Status	Gaps in Current Policies	Next Steps
<p>3. In cases where there is not a school-based officer, an MOU between schools and local law enforcement agencies articulates the district's vision for improved conditions for learning as well as a common understanding of when officers will be asked to respond to school incidents and what activities they will conduct. Where school districts direct their own police agency, the role and activities of school police officers should be clear and MOUs or agreements should be in place for any overlapping law enforcement jurisdiction.</p>	<p>School-Police Partnerships, PS IV</p>			
<p>4. For those schools that have a state, county, or municipal police officer assigned to a school, an MOU emphasizes that officers are not responsible for classroom management or enforcing code of conduct violations that can be appropriately addressed through the school's discipline system; officers use their discretion to minimize arrests and use alternative strategies when possible. Among the MOU elements are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goals for the partnership ▪ Roles and responsibilities of officers ▪ Recruitment, selection, and training for on-campus officers ▪ Officer supervision and evaluation ▪ Information-sharing and communication protocols between officers and school-based staff and leaders, including adherence to privacy mandates and principles 	<p>School-Police Partnerships, PS II, III, and IV</p>			
<p>5. By the beginning of the each school year, cross-training is provided at least once to school leaders, educators, other school staff, and law enforcement on the roles of officers in schools, protocols for when staff involves officers, and school-based alternatives to suspensions and arrest.</p>	<p>School-Police Partnerships, PS III</p>			

Goal 6: Support a continuous improvement process to improve conditions for learning and achieve school discipline, climate, and safety goals.

Expectations	Consensus Report Section	Status	Gaps in Current Policies	Next Steps
<p>1. Data collection policies require schools to routinely collect and publicly report discipline data by students' age/grade, race/ethnicity, gender, disability status, ELL status, type/duration of disciplinary action, and type of offense to determine disproportionate impact and to develop strategic plans.</p>	<p>Conditions for Learning, PS I Data Collection, PS I</p>			
<p>2. Each school has a dedicated centralized staff member responsible for managing the collection of data related to school climate, school discipline, school safety, and behavioral health, and to continue to monitor these data points and track progress as new policies and practices are implemented.</p>	<p>Data Collection, PS II</p>			
<p>3. Each school utilizes an already existing team structure, e.g., the school improvement team or the school leadership team (or a school's research department, if one exists) to analyze data, compile the data into concise and meaningful reports, and to inform the development of measurable goals related to school discipline, behavioral health, climate, and safety.</p>	<p>Data Collection, PS II</p>			
<p>4. Measurable short and long-term goals are established at the district level to improve school climate, safety, behavioral health, and measures of success, and the district is tracking progress toward these goals.</p>	<p>Conditions for Learning, PS II</p>			

Expectations	Consensus Report Section	Status	Gaps in Current Policies	Next Steps
<p>5. Each school in the district employs tool(s) to assess school climate, school safety, and behavioral health, and the results of these assessments are used to set measurable goals, such as improving relationships between adults and students or decreasing substance use by a particular percent. Schools then incorporate these goals into their school improvement and school climate plans.</p>	<p>Conditions for Learning, PS I</p> <p>Targeted Behavioral Interventions, PS II</p>			
<p>6. Principal and teacher evaluation systems include school climate indicators, and the evaluation results are used to guide professional development.</p>	<p>Conditions for Learning, PS IV</p>			
<p>7. A process is in place to collect and analyze school-based arrest and other related data in collaboration with law enforcement leaders, to determine if officers and school personnel are adhering to both the criteria for involving officers and the guidance for officer responses, particularly for minor offenses.</p>	<p>School-Police Partnerships, PS I</p>			
<p>8. A process is in place to annually evaluate district partnerships with community-based organizations, police agencies, other public agencies, and private providers to determine the partnership's effectiveness in achieving goals to improve conditions for learning as identified in the agreement.</p>	<p>Targeted Behavioral Interventions, PS IV</p> <p>School-Police Partnerships, PS I and IV</p>			