

POLICY

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Related Entries: ACA, ACF, ACF-RA, COA, COA-RA, COB-RA, COC-RA, COE-RA, COF-RA, COG-RA, ECC-RA, IGN, IGO-RA, JGA-RA, JGA-RB, JGA-RC, JGB-RA, JFA, JFA-RA, JHF, JHF-RA, JNA-RB

Responsible Office: Office of the Chief of Teaching, Learning, and Schools; School Support and Improvement

Behavior Intervention, Safety, and Well-being Plan

A. PURPOSE

1. To promote positive, respectful, orderly, and safe learning environments necessary for effective learning; increase student engagement; boost student achievement; and, proactively foster positive school cultures and climates that prevent student misbehavior, when possible, before it occurs
2. To engage all students in learning with effective instruction and to intervene appropriately to support struggling and vulnerable students so that schools are safe places in which to learn
3. To provide a philosophy of behavior intervention that is rehabilitative, restorative, educational, and implemented fairly and equitably with clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations and consequences to address student behavior that is not in line with the *Student Code of Conduct in MCPS*, regardless of whether the instructional environment is in person or virtual
4. To clearly communicate to students, staff members, and parents/guardians/families expected student behaviors and consequences for misbehavior

B. ISSUE

1. The Montgomery County Board of Education believes that promoting student learning is its primary function; to this end, this policy sets forth the expectation of an environment that is conducive to effective learning and acknowledges that appropriate behavior is learned.
2. In addition to a student's home, schools are also communities in which positive

behavior is expected, modeled, and learned within an environment of mutual respect and dignity. The Board affirms parents/guardians as essential partners in establishing and maintaining positive, respectful, orderly and safe learning environments.

3. In order to grow into healthy, productive adults, students require respectful learning environments where every person is a valued member of the community and is trusted to contribute positively to its creation and maintenance. When that community is disrupted, educational leaders seek to understand, acknowledge, and address the causes underlying the disruptions, the learning environment is restored, and students are afforded opportunities to learn from their mistakes, correct any harm that results from their behavior and restore relationships that are disrupted by their conduct.
4. An engaging environment conducive to learning can keep students in school so that they may become college and career ready.

C. PHILOSOPHY

1. Schools that foster positive school climates help to engage all students in learning and intervene appropriately to support struggling and vulnerable students. This philosophy of behavior intervention and expected student behaviors and consequences for misbehavior shall be clearly communicated to students, staff members, and parents/guardians/families through codes of conduct and implementing regulations that establish consistent expectations of conduct and set forth consequences to address student behavior that is not in line with the *Student Code of Conduct in MCPS*.
2. All students have a right to a safe place in which to learn. For those situations in which a student's conduct threatens another, the Board does not tolerate bullying, harassment, including sexual harassment, or intimidation on MCPS property or in its educational programs and activities, as set forth in Policy JHF, *Bullying, Harassment, and Intimidation*, Board Policy ACF, *Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment of Students*.
3. In alignment with Board Policy ACA, *Nondiscrimination, Equity, and Cultural Proficiency*, MCPS schools and work sites will be equitable, safe, diverse, inclusive, and free of discriminatory acts of hate, violence, insensitivity, and disrespect.
 - a) Using language or displaying images and/or symbols that promote hate may be considered as a factor that elevates the level of disciplinary response to incidents that include, but are not limited to, bullying, harassment, or

intimidation, or destruction of property.

- b) Factors impacting discipline decisions must also include consideration of the student's age, previous serious disciplinary infractions, cultural or linguistic factors that may provide context to understand student behavior, circumstances surrounding the incident, and imminent threat of serious harm.
4. In alignment with Board Policy COA, *Student Well-being and School Safety*, and Policy JPG, *Wellness: Physical and Nutritional Health*, every MCPS school shall strive to create a culture that provides not only an optimal learning environment but also serves to promote –
- a) culturally responsive relationship building,
 - b) mental and emotional health of students and staff,
 - c) trauma informed practices,
 - d) restorative practices,
 - e) physical health and wellness, and
 - f) positive character development and empathy.
5. Learning appropriate behavior is a developmental process, and effective behavior intervention strategies meet students' varied behavioral and developmental needs with tiered supports and interventions. It is the role of teachers and staff members to respond to inappropriate student behavior in a timely and age-appropriate way that supports personal growth and learning opportunities for all students.
6. The superintendent of schools will put in place appropriate procedures for students with disabilities, consistent with federal laws and due process for all students.
7. Utilization of positive behavior interventions promotes academic, social, and emotional growth while preventing or reducing challenging behaviors. MCPS shall guide student behavior and facilitate an orderly and effective learning climate by using appropriate, responsible, and effective strategies and instruction that are data-driven and trauma-informed.
8. Montgomery County Public Schools will utilize a restorative, relationship-focused approach that utilizes behavior intervention strategies that are –

- a) is preventive and proactive;
 - b) emphasizes building strong relationships and setting clear behavioral expectations that contribute to the well-being of the school community;
 - c) in response to behavior that violates the clear behavioral expectations that contribute to the well-being of the school community, focuses on accountability for any harm done by the problem behavior; and
 - d) addresses ways to repair the relationships affected by the problem behavior with the voluntary participation of an individual who was harmed.
9. A continuum of effective, proactive instructional strategies and disciplinary responses supports teaching and learning, fosters positive behaviors, and reflects a restorative behavior intervention philosophy, as follows:
- a) Provide school staff with training to strengthen classroom behavior management skills with effective strategies for teaching and modeling expected behavior and social and emotional competencies.
 - b) Provide instruction regarding social/emotional learning, cultural awareness, problem solving, and conflict resolution.
 - c) Maintain a continuum of prevention and intervention strategies and programs, as needed, in coordination with the community.
10. Caring adults in schools play an important role in building strong relationships with students, which facilitates their connection to school and decreases their likelihood of engaging in disruptive behaviors. School staff members should seek ways to develop meaningful relationships with students because students who have meaningful relationships with an adult in their school are less likely to engage in disruptive behaviors in class, be absent, or drop out of school.
11. Staff members will collaborate with families and the community to provide guidance, support, and structure to meet student needs. Parent/guardian outreach or conferences are among the strategies staff may use to provide information about inappropriate or disruptive student behavior and to engage parents/guardians in identifying and discussing potential solutions. The superintendent of schools shall set forth parent/guardian notification requirements for responding to serious behavior.
12. Fair, firm, and consistent application of disciplinary action is expected, and students should be made aware of the consequences of misbehavior. However, school

behavior intervention strategies should be administered in a way to keep students within their regular school program to the greatest extent practicable. Suspensions and expulsions are to be used only as a last resort.

13. MCPS will build staff capacity and continuously evaluate its behavior intervention strategies to promote fairness, equity, and achievement for all students.
 - a) To ensure fairness and equity to all students in alignment with Board Policy ACA, *Nondiscrimination, Equity, and Cultural Proficiency*, proactive steps are required to identify and redress implicit biases and structural and institutional barriers that too often have resulted in identifiable groups of students and staff being unjustifiably or disproportionately over-identified in student discipline actions. School staff members will be equipped with the support, knowledge, and skills needed to prevent and, when necessary, respond to conflict, meet the diverse behavioral needs of all students, and fairly and equitably apply behavior intervention policies and practices.
 - b) Staff members shall be equipped and supported to apply behavior intervention strategies using individualized approaches that, as necessary, take into account available information regarding a student's developmental maturity; mental health challenges, and other social, emotional, medical or physical health concerns; cultural and linguistic factors that may play a role in behavior; and outside stressors or trauma, including violence, abuse, neglect, disaster, terrorism, and war which may impact a student's physical and emotional health and ability to function effectively in an educational setting.
14. The superintendent of schools will implement a comprehensive plan for safety and security in alignment with Board Policy COA, *Student Well-being and School Safety*, that maintains an environment for working and learning that protects the rights, health, and welfare of students and staff.
15. Written agreements set clear expectations for the roles and responsibilities of law enforcement personnel as important partners in supporting a positive school climate, while avoiding unnecessary arrests and referrals to the justice system that may have unintended negative collateral consequences for students and their families, as well as disproportionate impacts on students of color and students with disabilities. The superintendent of schools will work with the Montgomery County Department of Police, the Montgomery County State's Attorney Office, and other law enforcement agencies to review, implement, and update such agreements as necessary.

D. DESIRED OUTCOMES

1. Schools will foster positive, respectful, orderly, and safe learning environments necessary for effective learning where positive behavior is expected, modeled, and learned within an environment of mutual respect and dignity.
2. Parents/guardians/families and students will be well informed about school behavior management policies and will be encouraged to participate in efforts to ensure that schools are safe and orderly.
3. Students will understand their responsibilities and rights with respect to behavior intervention strategies.
4. School behavior intervention strategies will be administered fairly, equitably, and consistently. Schools should avoid any disparate and disproportional impact of the policy.
5. School behavior intervention strategies will emphasize strong relationships and clear behavioral expectations so that students may engage in the classroom, contribute to the well-being of the school community, and graduate from MCPS college and career ready.

E. IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

1. MCPS will develop a districtwide code of conduct for students which will be made available to all students and their parents/guardians/families.
2. Each school may develop its own code of conduct with the involvement of families, students, and staff, and review it periodically to incorporate feedback and learning from implementation. Community engagement in the development of school level codes can support parents/guardians/families to understand their roles, responsibilities, and rights regarding students behavior and behavior intervention strategies. The superintendent of schools/designee will review each school's code of conduct to ensure consistency with this policy, MCPS regulations, the districtwide code of conduct for students, as well as applicable federal and state law.
3. The superintendent of schools will monitor issues of concern to the safety and security of the MCPS community and report to the Board as appropriate.
4. The superintendent of schools will monitor behavior intervention-related data from schools to evaluate interventions and programs and develop steps to address any

disparate and disproportional impact of behavior intervention strategies.

F. REVIEW AND REPORTING

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the Board's policy review process.

Related Sources: Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §7-306; Code of Maryland Regulations 13A.08.03-.04; *Student Code of Conduct in MCPS*

Policy History: Adopted by Resolution No. 20-97, January 14, 1997; amended by Resolution No. 9-15, January 13, 2015; amended by Resolution No. 188-22, April 7, 2022.