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

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

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. 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.

In order to grow into healthy, productive adults, students should be afforded opportunities to learn from their mistakes, correct any harm that results from their behavior and restore relationships that are disrupted by their conduct. 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. 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.

2. 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.

3. The superintendent of schools will put in place appropriate procedures for students with disabilities, consistent with federal laws and due process for all students.

4. Utilization of positive behavior interventions promotes academic, social, and emotional growth while preventing or reducing challenging behaviors. Data-driven, trauma-informed actions, instruction, and appropriate, responsible strategies guide student behavior and facilitate an orderly and effective learning climate.

5. Montgomery County Public Schools will utilize a restorative, relationship-focused approach that utilizes behavior intervention strategies that —
   a) are preventive and proactive;
   b) emphasize building strong relationships and setting clear behavioral expectations that contribute to the well-being of the school community;
   c) responded 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) address ways to repair the relationships affected by the problem behavior with the voluntary participation of an individual who was harmed.

6. A continuum of proactive instructional strategies and disciplinary responses supports teaching and learning, fosters positive behaviors, and reflects a restorative behavior intervention philosophy, as follows:

a) Provides school staff with training to strengthen classroom behavior management skills with strategies for teaching and modeling expected behavior and social and emotional competencies

b) Provides instruction regarding social/emotional learning, cultural awareness, problem solving, and conflict resolution

c) Maintains a continuum of prevention and intervention strategies and programs, as needed, in coordination with the community

7. 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.

8. Staff members will collaborate with families and the community to provide guidance, support, and structure to meet student needs.

9. 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.

10. 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 need to 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.

11. The superintendent of schools will implement a comprehensive plan for safety and security in alignment with Board Policy COA, Student Well-being and School
that protects the rights, health, and welfare of students and staff. 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 as necessary, written agreements that 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.

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. 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