

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Schenectady City School District Code of Conduct is based on key principles for ensuring that our schools are safe, healthy and supportive environments.

All adults have an obligation to help students learn to be good citizens by:

- ◆ Helping kids learn right from wrong
- ◆ Fostering in them a desire to make good decisions
- ◆ Encouraging them to take responsibility for their actions and words
- ◆ Modeling behaviors that we want to cultivate

Policies and practices must be implemented in ways that are considered to be respectful. Adults are expected to protect the dignity of every student and ensure a tone of decency, compassion and respect.

Improving educational outcomes for all students requires that schools provide support and that behavior support is directed at addressing academic learning gaps and the **causes** of misbehavior. Prevention and intervention strategies may include more personalized instruction, support, service and programming to address personal and family circumstances and social-emotional learning. Examples of strategies include conflict resolution, peer mediation, anger management, behavior replacement strategies, circles and other restorative interventions.

School personnel is responsible for developing and using strategies that promote learning and positive behavior in school, and for addressing behaviors which disrupt learning.

Administrators, teachers, counselors, social workers, psychologists, other school staff and parents are expected to engage students in the intervention and prevention strategies that address behavioral issues. These should be discussed with the student and parents, guardian or caregiver through the **School-Based Support Team (SBST)**.

The School-Based Support Team (SBST) is a problem-solving team that supports student social, emotional and academic need.

A referral can be made to the SBST by a parent, staff member or administrator by contacting the school psychologist.

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

School psychologists are valuable resources to solve problems and provide knowledge/recommendations through the committees on special education, section 504 and the SBST. Each school in our district has at least one school psychologist who collaborates with colleagues, administration and families to support student growth. School psychologists are responsible for psycho-educational evaluations as a tool to make instructional and behavioral recommendations on a case-by-case basis. They work closely with administration in order to guide and support best practice in our schools for school climate, suspensions, tiered behavioral and instructional support.

THE ROLE OF THE BEHAVIOR SPECIALIST

Behavior specialists are clinically trained professionals who support school staff in exploring best practice solutions for overcoming barriers in the classroom. They are skilled at working to help promote academic engagement, positive behaviors and social-emotional skills. Using a preventative approach, they empower, collaborate and problem-solve with teachers and school teams with a focus on trauma-sensitivity, cultural responsiveness and equity.

OTHER SERVICE-PROVIDERS

Other related service-providers, who are able to provide resources for the SBST, include school counselors, social workers and a psychiatric nurse practitioner.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES: RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Student discipline, policies and practices must be implemented in ways that are accountable and restorative. Students and families need to know that the school will provide interventions inside and outside the classroom that support a restorative, rather than punitive, response. Students have the option to accept assigned consequences and fully participate in the interventions designed to address specific behaviors. **These interventions require students to own the problem, reflect on the impact of their behavior on themselves and others and understand why the behavior was unacceptable or inappropriate.** It does not mean there are no other consequences to the behavior, but we know that administering consequences without re-teaching and reflection does little to change behavior in the long run.

We need to be aware that the person whose actions we are attempting to correct, must be in a place where they admit they were wrong, and they want to make amends or alter their behavior.

As an administrative team we are trying to use the common language developed by the *International Institute for Restorative Practices* when discussing discipline referrals with students:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking about at the time?
- What have you been thinking about since?
- Who has been affected by what you have done?
- In what way have they been affected?
- What do I need to do to make things right with this teacher, student or other person, so I can participate and access my education?



Restorative practices and the use of affective statements are practices on the continuum that can lead to restorative justice for larger offenses usually involving long-term suspension or involvement with law enforcement.

Examples of Restorative Practices:

Affective Statements refer to the tone in which we speak to students to help us build relationships and show that we care about the student. For example, “I liked the way you worked the whole class period today,” is more effective than, “good job.”

Classroom Circles can be used as a response to wrongdoing and as a vehicle for discussion when creating respect and classroom norms. This should be used from the beginning of the school year so that students understand how they work before significant issues need to be discussed.

Restorative Conference is a formal response to wrongdoing where the facilitator helps both parties explore what happened and who was affected. This can be done with a facilitator, teacher and a student after a disruption to the learning environment has occurred.

Restorative Reflections is an exercise in which students complete a writing assignment and go through the restorative questions and steps as they try to reflect on their actions and make a better plan for the future.

Restorative Justice Circles are full-scale circles involving parents, advocates and those affected. This is appropriate with students who acknowledge they have done harm and want to repair the relationship.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

PARENTS, GUARDIANS AND CAREGIVERS AS PARTNERS

Students, parents, guardians, caregivers and school personnel all have a role in making school safe and must cooperate with one another to achieve this goal. School staff should ensure that parents are informed of their child's behavior and enlist parents as partners in reinforcing positive behavior and addressing areas in need of growth.

Parents, guardians and caregivers are encouraged to discuss, with their child's teacher and other school staff, issues that may affect student behavior and strategies that might be effective in working with the student. Open communication is essential.

EQUITY

Student discipline, policies and practices must be implemented in ways that are fair, equitable, differentiated and ensure that race, economics and disability are never predictors of student achievement. All students must be treated fairly without favor toward or prejudice against any one group of students according to ability, age, gender, disability, race, ethnic group, socioeconomic status, religious or spiritual orientation or indigenous heritage.

TRAUMA SENSITIVITY

Awareness and intervention is essential when behaviors may be symptomatic of more serious problems that students are experiencing. It is important that school personnel be sensitive to issues that may influence the behavior of students and respond in a manner that is most supportive of their needs. Appropriate disciplinary responses should emphasize prevention and effective intervention, prevent disruption to learning and promote a positive school culture.

A **sensory space** is a special room or space, therapeutic in nature, that is designated to engage a person's senses usually through special or soft lighting, music, objects and manipulatives. It is designed as a safe place for students to retreat to avoid anticipated behavior escalation. Sensory spaces promote self-organization and positive change.

A **turnaround space** is a designated place where a student goes, in response to a behavior or multiple behaviors, where he or she can discuss what happened, take responsibility for it and work to better understand why it happened. Highly skilled staff work with the student to problem-solve, so it won't happen again, and practice pro-social behaviors.

PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Each SCSD school is expected to promote a positive school climate and culture that provides students with support so that they can grow both academically and socially. Schools are expected to take a proactive role in nurturing students' pro-social behavior by providing a range of positive behavioral supports as well as meaningful opportunities for social-emotional learning. Effective social-emotional learning helps students develop fundamental life skills.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Engagement is integral to creating a positive school climate and culture that effectively fosters academic achievement and social-emotional growth. Providing students with multiple opportunities to participate in a wide range of pro-social activities and develop a bond with caring, supportive adults, positively influences behavior. A few examples include providing students with opportunities to share ideas and concerns and participating in school-wide initiatives.

EXPECTATIONS, RESPECT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

It takes the commitment and responsibility of all staff for the healthy development of students including modeling the skills, behaviors and mindsets that they seek to cultivate in students. All staff is urged to set high expectations for student success, build positive relationships with students and model how to behave successfully in school settings.