

Kentucky Department of Education
Statewide Student Discipline Guidelines
2024

For use with district codes of acceptable behavior and discipline

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Section I

Introduction

For decades, both research and practice have indicated that students learn at the highest levels in a safe, orderly environment that addresses individual learning styles. When students are actively engaged in school – both instructionally and behaviorally – they are motivated learners with academic successes.

An optimal school discipline framework should include a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) that provides instructional practices for teaching behavior expectations. The MTSS framework is established by a team of school staff and should include the voice of students, families, educators and the community in the creation and use of student discipline codes and procedures. To achieve optimal learning conditions, schools and districts must develop and implement with fidelity positive and proactive discipline policies and practices that promote a safe, equitable and orderly educational environment. Such policies and practices are described in the local district discipline code, which the local school board approves, and the local school council reinforces with defined practices and procedures. [KRS 158.4416](#) requires that school discipline policies be trauma-informed and appropriately address the underlying reason for misbehavior. The Kentucky Department of Education’s (KDE) [Trauma-Informed Discipline Response and Behavior System](#) resource is part of the trauma-informed toolkit required by the School Safety and Resiliency Act that provides additional guidance in ensuring discipline policies and practices are trauma-informed.

The Statewide Student Discipline Guidelines has been prepared in accordance with [KRS 158.148](#) to assist educators, parents, and community members in developing or refining current district discipline codes. Local boards and school councils are urged to annually involve a cross section of their community in the development and review of their discipline codes.

Section II

Statewide Student Discipline Guidelines Purpose

Districts should develop a code of acceptable behavior and discipline, based on the Statewide Student Discipline Guidelines, that describe student behavior expectations and outline graduated, developmentally-appropriate consequences for behavioral infractions, as well as supports and interventions in place to reduce the likelihood of repeated prohibited behavior. While the legislation refers to a district “code of acceptable behavior and discipline,” to promote alignment with Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) through a Multi-Tiered System (MTSS) of Supports, this will be referred to in this document as the District Discipline and Behavior Expectations, though district may choose to refer to it by another name.

The purpose of the Statewide Student Discipline Guidelines is to:

- Ensure safe schools, including definitions for reporting in accordance with [KRS 158.444](#), as well as collect data on major discipline problems and reasons why students drop out of school;
- Outline broad principles and legal requirements to guide local districts in the development of their own District Discipline and Behavior Expectations (i.e., code of acceptable behavior and discipline);
- Assist school districts in the selection of discipline and classroom management techniques by school councils under [KRS 158.155](#) and [160.345](#);
- Guide the development of the district transportation services policy; and
- Assist school districts with the development of the district-wide safety plan.

The Statewide Student Discipline Guidelines provide a framework for local school districts and school councils to:

- Assess school safety and discipline data to determine school- and district-level needs and develop data-driven resources;
- Create policies and procedures that are evidence-based and trauma-informed; and
- Identify immediate and long-term strategies that address school safety and discipline.

The purpose of the District Discipline and Behavior Expectations is to ensure school safety by:

- Prohibiting bullying; and
- Outline the standard behavior expected from each student, the consequences of failure to meet the standards, and the importance of the standards to maintenance of a safe learning environment.

An evidence-based, trauma-informed set of District Discipline and Behavior Expectations should improve the learning environment, improve student achievement, reduce the dropout rate and promote a positive schoolwide culture. It can also decrease unwanted behavior by supporting positive relationships between staff and students and among students themselves.

The District Discipline and Behavior Expectations should provide:

- Clarification of Tier 1, 2 and 3 strategies required for promotion of positive behavior;
- Trauma-informed and restorative classroom management strategies;

- Clear expectations for student and adult behavior; and a plan for communication of these expectations across the school year;
- A progressive set of responses to student misbehavior that will reduce the likelihood of repeating it, and behavior responses that are developmentally appropriate. Student, parent, teacher, counselor, and principal rights and responsibilities;
- Due process procedures for student suspensions or expulsions, and a comprehensive reintegration and support plan upon student return from exclusions;
- Equitable access, representation, meaningful participation and high outcomes;
- Communication procedures for school postings that include dissemination to guidance counselors, use in student discussion, inclusion in school handbooks and providing copies for employees and parents;
- Procedures for school property incidents;
- Procedures for safe removal of students who pose a danger to others, including de-escalation, and a process of debriefing and restoration when violence occurs in the classroom; and
- Intervention strategies (e.g., academic, behavioral, dropout prevention, mental health, etc.) for behavioral infractions which include consequences up to and including expulsion from school for weapons, drug, assault and abuse violations.

Section III

District Discipline and Behavior Expectations Contents

The District Discipline and Behavior Expectations should contain an introduction, the district's rationale for the behavioral expectations, philosophy, mission and vision, as well as district policies and procedures.

The district should consider the following when developing the District Discipline and Behavior Expectations:

- Orderly operation of schools as outlined in procedures for expected behavior across all settings;
- Active student supervision;
- Provide enriching opportunities and high student achievement in a productive learning environment;
- Support and assistance for students who face trauma and other economic and social barriers;
- Proactive and positive school atmosphere, healthy culture, and a warm, culturally-responsive climate; and
- Encouraging regular and consistent school attendance.

The District Discipline and Behavior Expectations should detail:

- Rights and responsibilities for students, parents/legal guardians, teachers, principals and transportation;
- Acceptable student behavior, including on transportation;
- Restorative measures for students, staff, peers after a discipline event;
- Disciplinary action and consequences;
- Grievance procedures;
- Discipline procedures for students receiving special education services;
- Referral to alternative education programming;
- Substance use and response;
- Physical restraint and seclusion;
- Safe-space room use;
- Field trips;
- Reports to law enforcement;
- Parent/legal guardian-student consent form; and
- Glossary.

Section IV

Legislation Related to the Student Discipline Guidelines

158.148 Definitions of "bullying" and "parent or guardian" – Discipline guidelines, transportation services policy, and model policies -- Local code of acceptable behavior and discipline -- Required contents of code.

- (1) As used in this section:
 - (a) 1. "Bullying" means any unwanted verbal, physical, or social behavior among students that involves a real or perceived power imbalance and is repeated or has the potential to be repeated:
 - a. That occurs on school premises, on school-sponsored transportation, or at a school-sponsored event; or
 - b. That disrupts the education process; and
 2. This definition shall not be interpreted to prohibit civil exchange of opinions or debate or cultural practices protected under the state or federal Constitution where the opinion expressed does not otherwise materially or substantially disrupt the education process; and
 - (b) "Parent or guardian" means a parent, legal guardian, or other person exercising custodial control or supervision of a student.
- (2) In cooperation with the Kentucky Education Association, the Kentucky School Boards Association, the Kentucky Association of School Administrators, the Kentucky Association of Professional Educators, the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents, the Parent-Teachers Association, the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, the Farm Bureau, members of the Interim Joint Committee on Education, and other interested groups, and in collaboration with the Center for School Safety, the Department of Education shall develop or update as needed and distribute to all districts by August 31 of each even-numbered year:
 - (a) Statewide student discipline guidelines to ensure safe schools, including the definition of serious incident for the reporting purposes as identified in KRS 158.444;
 - (b) Statewide transportation services policy guidelines to ensure the safety of students, operators of vehicles, and other passengers using district-provided transportation;
 - (c) Recommendations designed to improve the learning environment and school climate, parental and community involvement in the schools, and student achievement; and
 - (d) Model policies to implement the provisions of this section and KRS 158.110, 158.156, 158.444, 525.070, and 525.080.
- (3) The department shall obtain statewide data on major discipline problems and reasons why students drop out of school. In addition, the department, in collaboration with the

Center for School Safety, shall identify successful strategies currently being used in programs in Kentucky and in other states and shall incorporate those strategies into the statewide student discipline guidelines, transportation services policy guidelines, and the recommendations under subsection (2) of this section.

- (4) Copies of the statewide student discipline guidelines and the transportation services policy guidelines shall be distributed to all school districts. The statewide student discipline guidelines shall contain broad principles and legal requirements to guide local districts in the development of their own code of acceptable behavior and discipline; the selection of discipline and classroom management techniques by school councils under KRS 158.155 and 160.345; the development of the district transportation services policy; and the development of the district-wide safety plan.
- (5)
 - (a) Each local board of education shall adopt a code of acceptable behavior and discipline based on the statewide student discipline guidelines that shall apply to the students in each school operated by the board. The code shall be updated no less frequently than every two (2) years.
 - (b) The superintendent, or designee, shall be responsible for overall implementation and supervision, and each school principal shall be responsible for administration and implementation within each school. Each school council shall select and implement the appropriate discipline and classroom management techniques necessary to carry out the code. The board shall establish a process for a two-way communication system for teachers and other employees to notify a principal, supervisor, or other administrator of an emergency.
 - (c) The code shall prohibit bullying.
 - (d) The code shall contain the standard of behavior expected from each student, the consequences of failure to obey the standards, and the importance of the standards to the maintenance of a safe learning environment where orderly learning is possible and encouraged.
 - (e) The code shall contain:
 1. Procedures for identifying, documenting, and reporting incidents of bullying, incidents of violations of the code, and incidents for which reporting is required under KRS 158.156;
 2. Procedures for investigating and responding to a complaint or a report of bullying or a violation of the code, or of an incident for which reporting is required under KRS 158.156, including reporting incidents to the parents or guardians of the students involved;
 3. A strategy or method of protecting a complainant or person reporting:
 - a. An incident of bullying;
 - b. A violation of the code; or
 - c. An incident for which reporting is required under KRS 158.156; from retaliation;

4. A process for informing students, parents or guardians, and school employees of the requirements of the code and the provisions of this section and KRS 158.156, 158.444, 525.070, and 525.080, including training for school employees; and
 5. Information regarding the consequences of bullying and violating the code and violations reportable under KRS 158.155, 158.156, or 158.444.
- (f) The principal of each school shall apply the code of acceptable behavior and discipline uniformly and fairly to each student at the school without partiality or discrimination.
 - (g) A copy of the code of acceptable behavior and discipline adopted by the board of education shall be posted at each school. Guidance counselors shall be provided copies for discussion with students. The code shall be referenced in all school handbooks. All school employees and parents or guardians shall be provided copies of the code.
- (6) (a) Each local board of education shall adopt a transportation services policy to apply to students while on transportation provided for or by the district, and to their parents or guardians. The policy shall be updated no less frequently than every two (2) years, with the first update being completed by the first instructional day of the 2024-2025 school year.
- (b) The superintendent or designee shall be responsible for overall implementation and supervision. The board shall select and implement the appropriate discipline and transportation management techniques necessary to carry out the policy. The board shall establish a process for a two-way communication system for bus drivers and other employees, volunteers, or contractors to notify a supervisor, superintendent, or other administrator of an emergency.
- (c) The policy shall contain the standard of behavior expected from each student while being transported by or for the district and the consequences of failure to obey the standards. The policy shall include:
1. Procedures for identifying, documenting, and reporting incidents of bullying, incidents of violations of the policy, and incidents for which reporting is required under KRS 158.156;
 2. Procedures for investigating and responding to a complaint or a report of bullying or a violation of the policy, or of an incident for which reporting is required under KRS 158.156, including reporting incidents to the parents or guardians of the students involved;
 3. A strategy or method of protecting a complainant or person reporting a violation of the policy from retaliation;
 4. When a student is alleged by an operator of transportation to have committed a violation of the policy that places the student or others at risk of physical harm or otherwise makes it unsafe for the driver to continue transporting students, and as permitted by state and federal law, a process that allows the operator of the vehicle to:

- a. Refuse further transportation of the student at the time of the incident, upon notification of the emergency pursuant to paragraph (b) of this subsection, and transfer the student to:
 - i. An appropriate district official who has reported to the location of the vehicle;
 - ii. An appropriate district official located at a location designated in the transportation services policy or by an appropriate district official, including but not limited to a bus compound or transfer station;
 - iii. Law enforcement; or
 - iv. The student's parent or guardian; and
 - b. Upon filing and submitting a written report to the superintendent or designee, refuse future transportation of the student until an interim or final determination of disciplinary action by the superintendent or designee pursuant to local board policy;
5. For alleged violations of the policy not covered by subparagraph 4. Of this paragraph and submitted by the operator of the vehicle, a requirement that the superintendent or designee issue an interim or final determination of disciplinary action pursuant to local board policy within one (1) week of the report being submitted;
6. A process allowing for the operator of a vehicle to:
- a. File a written or electronic complaint or report of the misconduct, including a recommendation regarding revocation of the student's transportation privileges; and
 - b. Be heard during any disciplinary proceedings against a student relating, at least in part, to misconduct that occurred during the operator's transportation of the student;
7. A requirement that any recommendation by the operator of a vehicle shall be considered by the superintendent or designee as a factor in the interim or final determination of disciplinary action on the complaint or report;
8. A requirement that the operator of a vehicle, to the extent permitted by law, receive written notice from the superintendent or designee of the investigation, disciplinary action imposed, and reasoning in response to the reported misconduct; and
9. A disciplinary structure that provides for:
- a. Interventions or disciplinary consequences that reflect the severity of the violation; and
 - b. Increased intervention and consequences upon subsequent violations of the policy.
- (d) The policy shall contain the standard of behavior expected from parents or guardians of

students being transported by or for the district while interacting with district transportation staff and the consequences of failure to follow the standards. The policy shall include:

1. Procedures for investigating and responding to a complaint or report made by an operator of transportation alleging parent or legal guardian misconduct;
 2. A requirement that the operator of a vehicle be provided an opportunity to be heard and to make a recommendation regarding future transportation of the student during any disciplinary proceedings relating, at least in part, to alleged misconduct by the student's parent or guardian and the impact upon a student's transportation privileges; and
 3. An intervention or consequences structure that provides for the placement of conditions upon or revocation of a student's transportation privileges based upon parent or guardian misconduct that provides for:
 - a. Interventions or consequences that reflect the severity of the parent or guardian's misconduct; and
 - b. Increased intervention and consequences upon subsequent violations of the policy.
- (e) The policy shall include references to relevant criminal violations based on potential misconduct covered by the policy, including but not limited to the following statements:
1. "KRS 511.020 makes it a Class B felony for a person, with the intent to commit a crime, knowingly entering or remaining unlawfully upon a school bus, and when in effecting entry or while upon the school bus or in the immediate flight therefrom, the person or another participant in the crime causes physical injury to another person or uses or threatens the use of a dangerous instrument against another person.";
 2. "KRS 508.078 makes it a Class C felony for a person to intentionally threaten to commit any act likely to result in death or serious physical injury to any employee of an elementary or secondary school, which includes a school bus driver.";
 3. "KRS 508.025 makes it a Class D felony for a person to recklessly, with a deadly weapon or dangerous instrument, or intentionally cause or attempt to cause physical injury to a school bus driver or other school employee acting in the course and scope of their employment.";
 4. "KRS 519.020 makes it a Class A misdemeanor for a person to obstruct governmental operations, which includes intentionally obstructing, impairing, or hindering the performance of a governmental function by using or threatening to use violence, force or physical interference."; and
 5. "KRS 525.070 makes it a Class B misdemeanor for a person, with intent to intimidate, harass, annoy, or alarm another person, to strike, shove, kick, or otherwise subject another to physical contact."
- (f) The policy shall include a process for an operator of a vehicle, upon the reinstatement of

a student's transportation privileges after an interim or final determination of disciplinary action, to elect to receive an alternate route assignment in lieu of transporting the student.

- (g) The superintendent or designee of each district shall apply the transportation services policy uniformly and fairly to each student without partiality or discrimination.
- (h) The superintendent or designee shall require every student in the district and at least one (1) parent or guardian of each student to acknowledge in writing the receipt, comprehension, and agreement of adherence to the transportation safety policy within seven (7) days of the student's first day of attendance during each school year. Failure to submit written acknowledgement by a student or their parent or guardian may be grounds for revocation of a student's transportation privileges until the acknowledgment is properly received.
- (7) Any action under this section related to students with disabilities shall be in compliance with applicable federal law.

Effective: July 15, 2024

History: Amended 2024 Ky. Acts ch. 9, sec. 2, effective July 15, 2024; and ch. 174, sec. 37, effective July 15, 2024. -- Amended 2016 Ky. Acts ch. 81, sec. 1, effective July 15, 2016. -- Amended 2014 Ky. Acts ch. 132, sec. 12, effective July 15, 2014. -- Amended 2008 Ky. Acts ch. 125, sec. 3, effective July 15, 2008. -- Amended 2000 Ky. Acts ch. 452, sec. 4, effective July 14, 2000. -- Amended 1998 Ky. Acts ch. 493, sec. 11, effective April 10, 1998. -- Amended 1996 Ky. Acts ch. 8, sec. 1, effective July 15, 1996; and ch. 362, sec. 6, effective July 15, 1996. -- Amended 1990 Ky. Acts ch. 476, Pt. IV, sec. 204, effective July 13, 1990. -- Amended 1985 (1st Extra. Sess.) Ky. Acts ch. 10, sec. 13, effective October 18, 1985. -- Created 1984 Ky. Acts ch. 397, sec. 3, effective July 13, 1984.

Legislative Research Commission Note (7/15/2024). This statute was amended by 2024 Ky. Acts chs. 9 and 174, which do not appear to be in conflict and have been codified together.

Legislative Research Commission Note (7/15/2016). In codification, the Reviser of Statutes has altered the internal numbering of subsection (5) of this statute from the way it appeared in 2016 Ky. Acts ch. 81, sec. 1 under the authority of KRS 7.136(1)(a).

Responsibility and Authority of the District Board of Education

Issue	KY Statutes	KY Regulations	Other
Statewide Student Discipline Guidelines authorization	KRS 158.148		
Parent/student distribution and public inspection	KRS 158.148(4), (5)d		
Gun-free provision	KRS 158.150(2)		
Criminal acts reporting in close proximity to a public school	KRS 158.155(4)		
Board requirement to adopt policies concerning the conduct and discipline of students	KRS 158.440; KRS 160.290(1)(2)		
Center for school safety responsibility for developing model interagency agreements between local school districts and other local public agencies for cooperative education-related services	KRS 158.443		
School safety and discipline assessment	KRS 158.445		
Student code of rights and responsibilities	KRS 160.295		
Student policies on file in central offices	KRS 160.340(2)(b)		
Attention to student rights	KRS 161.180(1)		
Trauma informed plans			

Responsibility and Authority of the Superintendent and District

Issue	KY Statutes	KY Regulations	Other
Superintendent responsibility for “overall implementation and supervision” of the District Discipline Code	KRS 158.148(5)(b); KRS 160.370		
Superintendent authority to suspend students	KRS 158.150(6)		

Responsibility and Authority of the School-based Decision-Making Council

Issue	KY Statutes	KY Regulations	Other
Adoption of policies addressing “selection and implementation of discipline and classroom management techniques a part of the comprehensive school safety plan...”	KRS 160.345(2)(i)(7); KRS 158.148 (5)		

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Issue	KY Statutes	KY Regulations	Other
Conduct conformity/ disciplinary action	KRS 158.150(1)		
Conduct infringing on the rights of others	KRS 160.295(7)		
“Should have access to a safe, secure and orderly school that is conducive to learning”	KRS 158.440		
Code applied uniformly and fairly, without partiality or discrimination	KRS 158.148 (5)(f)		

Section V

Legislation References to Develop District Board Policies and Discipline Guidelines

Processes and Procedures

Process/Procedure	KY Statute	KY Regulation	Other
Due process	KRS 160.295(6); KRS 158.150		
Discrimination			1st/14th Amendments of the U.S. Constitution
Student records disclosure	KRS 61.878(1)(a); KRS 61.878(1)(k); KRS 160.700; KRS 160.705; KRS 160.710; KRS 160.720(2)(c)(d); KRS 160.730		Family Education Rights and Privacy Act 1974, 20 U.S.C. §1232g
Student records maintenance	KRS 161.200		
Student records transfer	KRS 158.032(3)-(5)		
Grades, grade reduction and loss of credit	KRS 158.140		79 OAG 539
Search and seizure	KRS 158.4415		4th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution; 79 OAG 168; 93 OAG 32

Student Consequences

Student Consequence	KY Statutes	KY Regulations	Other
Alternative education	KRS 160.345(1)(b); KRS 161.020	704 KAR 19:002	
Corporal punishment	KRS 158.444; KRS 503.110		78 OAG 704
Non-discrimination and children with disabilities: suspension/expulsion	KRS 157.200; KRS 158.150		Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 20 U.S.C. §1400 et. seq.
Non-discrimination and children with disabilities: weapons/illegal drugs	KRS 158.150;		20 U.S.C. §1415
Disciplinary action and expulsion/suspension	KRS 157.320(1); KRS 158.148; KRS 158.150		521 S.W. 2d 76 (Ky. 1975); 77 OAG 547; 20 U.S.C. §1415
In-school alternative to suspension (alternative education programs)	KRS 158.148; KRS 158.150		
Detention			61 OAG 293
Probation	KRS 160.290		

Student Violations

Student Violations	KY Statutes	KY Regulations	Other
Attendance	KRS 159.010; KRS 159.030; KRS 159.051		
Drugs and alcohol	KRS 158.150; KRS 218A.500; KRS 218A.510		Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act, 20 U.S.C. §7101 et. seq.; 82 OAG 633
Tobacco	KRS 438.050; KRS 438.310; KRS 438.311; KRS 438.313		Pro-Children Act of 1994, 20 U.S.C. §§6081- 6084; 79 OAG 168; 93 OAG 32
Truancy	KRS 159.010; KRS 159.080; KRS 159.130; KRS 159.150		
Theft and vandalism	KRS 158.150; KRS 405.025		
Student dress code	KRS 160.295(6)(a)		1st and 14th Amendments of the U.S. Constitution; 73 OAG 284
Weapons	KRS 158.150(2)(a); KRS 158.154; KRS 527.070; KRS 527.100		Gun-Free Schools Act, 20 U.S.C. §7961
Bus discipline	KRS 158.150(4); KRS 161.180	702 KAR 5:030; 702 KAR 5:080	78 OAG 392
Personal telecommunication devices	KRS 158.165		National School Lunch Act, 42 U.S.C. §1751
Gangs	KRS 506.140; KRS 506.150		