

## **CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR PREVENTION: RESTORATIVE PRACTICES RESPONSE IN STUDENT DISCIPLINE**

This regulation is issued to implement LEARN policy 5144.12 and is designed to be consistent with the general purpose and principles outlined in such policy, as well as with federal and state statutes and regulations.

### **Definitions**

**“Restorative practices”** means evidence and research-based system-level practices that focus on (A) building high-quality, constructive relationships among the school community; (B) holding each student accountable for any challenging behavior; and (C) ensuring each student has a role in repairing relationships and reintegrating into the school community.

**“Challenging behavior”** means behavior that negatively impacts school climate or interferes, or is at risk of interfering with, the learning or safety of a student or the safety of a school employee.

**“Evidenced-based practices”** means instructional and school-wide improvement practices that have been shown, through systematic empirical research, to have statistically significant effectiveness.

**“School climate”** means the quality and character of school life, with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the school community; and which is based on patterns of people’s experiences of school life; and that reflects the norms, goals, and organizational structures within the school community.

**“Social and emotional learning”** means the process through which children and adults achieve emotional intelligence through the competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

**“Emotional intelligence”** means the ability to (A) perceive, recognize, and understand emotions in oneself or others; (B) use emotions to facilitate cognitive activities, including, but not limited to, reasoning, problem solving, and interpersonal communication; (C) understand and identify emotions; and (D) manage emotions in oneself and others.

**“School community”** means any individuals, groups, businesses, public institutions, and nonprofit organizations that are invested in the welfare and vitality of the LEARN school system and the community in which it is located, including, but not limited to, students and their families, members of LEARN, volunteers at a school, and school employees.

**“School environment”** means a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program, whether on or off school grounds. This includes a school bus stop, a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by LEARN; and may include other activities, functions or programs that occur outside of a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program, if bullying during such other activities, functions or programs negatively impacts the school environment.

### **LEARN Restorative Practices**

Restorative Practices Response is a set of principles and practices used to build community, respond to harm/conflict, and provide individual support for students. By building, maintaining, and restoring relationships between members of the entire school community, LEARN strives to create an environment where all students can thrive. The Restorative Practices approach to school discipline is to be implemented through a 3-tier, school-wide model.

#### Tier 1: Community Building (Prevention/Relate)

Tier I is characterized by the use of social emotional skills and practices (classroom circles) to build relationships, create shared values and guidelines, and promote restorative conversations following behavioral disruption. The goal is to build a caring, intentional, and equitable community with conditions conducive to learning.

#### Tier 2: Restorative Processes (Intervention/Repair)

Tier 2 is characterized by the use of non-punitive responses to harm/conflict, such as harm circles, or family group conferencing to respond to disciplinary issues in a restorative manner. This process addresses the root causes of the harm, supports accountability for the offender, and promotes healing for the victim(s), the offender, and the school community.

#### Tier 3: Supported Re-entry (Individualized/Re-Integrate)

Tier 3 is characterized by 1:1 support and successful re-entry of students following suspension, truancy, expulsion, or incarceration. The goal is to welcome students to the school community in a manner that provides wraparound support and promotes student accountability and achievement.

### **General Principles**

1. A positive school climate is best accomplished by preventing challenging behavior before it occurs, and by using effective restorative practices in response to challenging behaviors that may occur despite proactive measures.
2. School safety and academic success are formed and strengthened when all school staff build positive relationships with students and their parents/guardians.
3. Effective school climate maximizes the amount of time students spend learning academically, socially, emotionally, ethically, civically, and intellectually, and minimizes the amount of time students cause disruption or are removed from their classrooms due to challenging behavior.

4. School discipline shall be reasonable, timely, fair, age-appropriate, and proportionate to the student's challenging behavior. Response to an act of challenging behavior that is rooted in restorative practices will provide meaningful instruction and guidance, and offer students an opportunity to learn from their mistakes.
5. Effective school climate improvement is a restorative process that engages all school community members. The vast majority of challenging behaviors shall be addressed at the classroom level by teachers. Behaviors that cannot be addressed at the classroom level shall receive more targeted and intensive interventions, as determined by an individualized assessment.
6. LEARN serves a diverse community. In order to serve all students and to prepare them to be members of an increasingly diverse community, schools and staff must build cultural competence, and commit to eliminating institutional racism and any other discrimination that presents barriers to student success, and create a school environment where everyone is safe, welcomed, supported, and included in all school-based activities;
7. Challenging behaviors may be subject to disciplinary action when they are detrimental to the school environment and to the welfare or safety of students or school personnel.

### **School Discipline Administration**

1. LEARN staff responsible for implementing the Restorative Practices policy shall do so without discrimination based on ethnicity, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, sexual identity or expression, age, or disability.
2. Challenging behavior by students receiving special education and tiered intervention supports shall be in accordance with the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), any behavior intervention plan, 504 Plan, and LEARN policies.
3. Developing strong relationships with families is the first step toward establishing safe and healthy schools. School staff members are encouraged to contact parents early in the school year to establish positive school-home communication; and throughout the school year to share student successes and challenges, and to develop plans to help students access a quality education. Schools/programs will convene parent sessions to provide information on Restorative Practices Response and how it will be implemented.
4. LEARN is committed to eliminating disparity in school discipline with respect to its underserved populations by reducing the number of referrals, suspensions, and expulsions. School/program staff shall engage in restorative practices that enhance school climate and develop a system for addressing challenging behavior that promotes equity; and shall monitor the impact of their actions on students from racial and ethnic groups or other protected classes that have historically been over-represented among those students who are suspended, expelled or referred to law enforcement. LEARN shall collect discipline data examining and aggregating referrals and disciplinary responses.

### **School-Level Rules**

In developing school-level rules of behavior, the school/program shall solicit the participation, views, and feedback of at least one representative selected by each of the following groups:

1. Parents/guardians
2. School administrators
3. For middle, junior high and high schools, students enrolled in the school

School level rules of behavior shall be consistent with law, and LEARN policies and regulations. The development of the rules shall be informed by school-level challenging behavior data, and by the above participants' views on whether standards of behavior are being equitably and fairly applied. The confidentiality of student records shall be maintained at all times.

### **Interventions**

**General:** Effective school responses to challenging behavior shall refrain from interrupting a student's education to the extent possible. The use of suspensions, recommendations for expulsion, and referrals to law enforcement, shall be minimized to the extent practicable while remaining consistent with federal and state statutes, regulations and LEARN policies.

**Reasonable Responses to Challenging Behavior Consequences:** Responses shall be reasonable, fair, age-appropriate, and match the severity of the student's misbehavior, and through restorative practice consider the impact on the victim and/or community. Restorative practices that include meaningful instruction and guidance offer students an opportunity to learn from their mistakes and contribute back to the school community, and are more likely to result in having the student re-engage in learning.

### **Relevant Considerations For Determining Restorative Practices**

1. Age, health, and special education status of the student.
2. Appropriateness of student's academic placement.
3. Student's prior conduct and record of challenging behavior.
4. Student's attitude.
5. Student's willingness to repair the harm.
6. Seriousness of the offense and the degree of harm caused.
7. Impact of the incident on overall school community.
8. Availability of prevention programs.

**Interventions/Alternative Means of Correction:** When challenging behavior occurs, school/program staff shall investigate the circumstances and gather facts that will help determine appropriate interventions and a restorative response for the student, with emphasis on correcting student misbehavior through school-based resources. Responses to challenging behavior shall provide students an opportunity to learn from their mistakes, and re-engage them in learning. All interventions shall balance the needs of the student, the needs of those directly affected by the behavior, and the needs of the overall school community.

Each school/program is responsible for incorporating a restorative practices framework into its planning to reduce referrals and suspensions through pro-active intervention, positive behavioral support, restorative practices, and other non-punitive responses to challenging behavior that are focused on maximizing student achievement, reducing such behaviors and avoiding loss of instructional time.

Referral of students from the classroom environment for challenging behaviors shall be avoided. Alternatives to suspension and restorative practices shall be utilized prior to referring a student out of the classroom. Such alternatives shall be undertaken within the classroom, except where suspension for specific offenses is required by statute and/or LEARN policy, or where it can be documented that the challenging behavior imposes a clear danger to others.

There are three types of intervention strategies to be considered: Administrative, Restorative, and Skill-based/Therapeutic.

1. **Administrative Strategies** are required by statute or LEARN policy, and respond “to” the offender. These include removal from the classroom, detention, suspension, and expulsion.
2. **Restorative Strategies** coordinate with Connecticut’s School Climate Policy, and are problem solving interventions responding “with” the offender. They are driven by restoration for the harm caused as much as possible, and focus on the harm caused and how it will be repaired. A successful restorative practice response strategy may utilize interventions with allied agencies and professionals. An assessment of the incident/conduct shall be completed and a determination will be made whether a face-to-face meeting with all parties is appropriate. Examples may include:
  - a. Family group conferencing
  - b. Victim-offender conferencing
  - c. Classroom circles
  - d. Reparation of harm

3. **Therapeutic/Resource Strategies** are responses “by” the offender and require intrinsic motivational behavior change. Such interventions include:
  - e. Mental health counseling
  - f. Informal mentoring and behavior coaching

Teachers and administrators shall intentionally utilize various types of strategies, or multiple strategies simultaneously, to address and correct challenging behavior, especially for multiple offenses.

### **Classroom-based Strategies to Reduce Challenging Behaviors**

Classroom-based strategies include, but are not limited to:

1. Explicit re-teaching of behavioral expectations.
2. Separating students.
3. Phone call to parent.
4. Keeping students after class
5. Restorative conference with student(s) or class.
6. Creation of a positive behavior contract.
7. Conference with student.
8. Conference with parent and the student.

### **School-based Strategies to Reduce Challenging Behaviors**

Students who exhibit a pattern of challenging behaviors shall be provided more intensive support through a system of tiered interventions. Parents shall be notified if there is an escalating pattern of challenging behavior that could lead to classroom or school removal. Appropriate school-based strategies include, but are not limited to:

1. A conference between school staff and the student and parents/guardians.
2. Referral to a school counselor or other school support service personnel for case management and counseling.
3. Referral for drug or alcohol counseling.
4. Convening of an intervention-related team to assess the behavior and develop and implement an individual plan to address the behavior in partnership with the student and parents/guardians.
5. When applicable, referral for a comprehensive psychosocial or psychoeducational assessment, or Applied Behavior Analysis, including for purposes of creating a behavior plan, an individualized education program or a Section 504 plan.

6. Enrollment in a program for building self-management skills.
7. Continuing to encourage participation in a restorative program.
8. A positive behavior support approach with tiered interventions that occur during the school day on campus.
9. After-school programs that address identified challenging behaviors or expose students to constructive activities and behaviors, including, but not limited to, those operated in collaboration with local parent and community groups.

### **Community Service**

In accordance with a restorative practices response strategy, the principal/program director or designee may, at their discretion, allow for a student to perform community service during non-school hours on school grounds; or, with written permission of the student's parent/guardian, off school grounds. Such service may include, but is not limited to, community or school outdoor beautification, campus betterment, and teacher, peer, or youth assistance programs.

### **Referrals**

LEARN supports the adoption of the SRBI framework to facilitate a systems approach for positive, pro-social behavior management. Teachers are expected to attempt SRBI tiered interventions prior to making a referral out of the classroom whenever possible.

When a referral out of the classroom is made, the principal/program director or designee must ensure that the following:

1. Teacher completed a written referral notification/form;
2. Principal/program director or designee reviewed the referral form and, if warranted, assigned appropriate consequences;
3. Principal/program director or designee, or the teacher, contacted the student's parents/guardians and notified them of any consequences;
4. Principal/program director or designee investigated the reasons for the student's conduct;
5. Principal/program director or designee recorded the classroom interventions and referral in the appropriate database.

### **Notice to Parents/Guardians and Students**

At the beginning of the school year, and/or at the time of transfer to a LEARN school/program, parents/guardians shall be notified about the availability of district rules and procedures related to student behaviors and school climate.

Parent groups/programs shall be provided with information on how the school integrates Restorative Practices Response in the student discipline/behavior management system.

### **Annual Review**

Both individual schools/programs and the district shall review student disciplinary data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, age, grade, disability, and gender of the students, where available, and make changes to policies and/or practices if and as necessary. The review shall include:

1. Intervention and prevention strategies.
2. The number of referrals, in school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement,
3. Differences in referrals among staff members.
4. The extent to which the restorative practices policy, including, but not limited to, disciplinary action, is consistently applied to all students.
5. The impact of restorative practices on student discipline and climate.

### **Staff Training**

Staff training shall be provided as needed to ensure that the Restorative Practices in each school are effective and that relevant policies and procedures are equitably applied. Such training shall include, but will not be limited to, strategies and approaches related to Restorative Practices and its theoretical framework.

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