

Students

Challenging Behavior Prevention: Restorative Practices Response

Introduction

Related to all matters of student discipline, the Board of Education requires district staff to make every effort to correct student challenging behavior through school-based resources and to support students in learning the skills necessary to enhance a positive school climate and avoid challenging behavior.

For most behaviors, schools should minimize the use of in-school and out-of-school suspensions, recommendations for expulsion, and referrals to law enforcement to the extent practicable while in compliance with state statutes, local ordinances, and mandatory reporting laws. It is the goal of the Northwestern Regional School District No. 7 and the Board of Education that the juvenile and criminal justice systems be utilized rarely to address all forms of challenging behavior.

All challenging behavior procedures and responses shall ensure due process and be enforced uniformly, fairly, consistently, and in a manner that does not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, or disability.

For the school year beginning July 1, 2025, the Northwestern Regional School District No. 7 Board of Education adopts this “Restorative Practices Response” policy to be implemented by school employees for incidents of challenging behavior or student conflict that is nonviolent and does not constitute a crime. This policy shall not include the involvement of school resource officers or other law enforcement officials unless the behavior or conflict becomes violent or criminal.

The Board of Education (Board) supports the District’s fundamental mission to provide all students the opportunity to achieve academically and socially and emotionally, ethically, civically, and intellectually at the highest levels and to become a contributing and engaged citizen in our diverse society. All students should have the opportunity to develop their skills, knowledge, and competencies in a nurturing and accountable school setting. Schools play an important role in helping families and children make responsible decisions, cooperate with others, and have a successful life. Children, at times, find it difficult to manage their emotions and focus on their studies effectively. Developmentally appropriate social and emotional skills building allows students to cope with stress so they can access learning and develop into productive adults. Learning is a social activity, meaning children must be ready to learn by regulating their emotions and working constructively with others. Social and emotional learning (SEL) helps build a positive school climate by developing emotional intelligence through self-awareness, self-management, goal setting, social awareness, relationship building, collaborative skills, and responsible decision making. Students should receive effective and engaging teaching, with curriculum, instruction, and assessment designed to address the needs of diverse learners.

Restorative approaches recognize students' unique strengths, needs, and interests and present an opportunity for schools to develop a structure that utilizes practices that will create a more equitable path for all students. Utilizing restorative practices allows schools to embody more equitable approaches and meet students’ short—and long-term needs.

The Board believes that all students have a right to attend schools that are safe and free from unnecessary disruption. Appropriate student behavior, reinforced by an effective system of discipline, is essential to creating and maintaining a positive school climate. This is the joint responsibility of students, staff, parents, and the community.

The Board requires District schools to implement restorative practices in response to conflict and harm. The “Restorative Practices Response” philosophy supported by the Board views misconduct as a violation

against people and damaging to relationships in the school and throughout the community. The Board recognizes that schools may involve a wide range of people in the “Restorative Practices Response” process, including victims (who are often teachers, serving voluntarily), school staff, bystanders, other students, and the school community.

The four main goals of Restorative Practices Response are:

1. **Relationship Building:** creating a school environment where everyone is safe, welcomed, supported, and included in all school-based activities and focuses on high-quality, constructive relationships among the school community members;
2. **Accountability:** Restorative Practices Response strategies hold each student accountable for any challenging behavior;
3. **Community Safety:** Restorative Practices recognize the need to keep the school community safe through strategies ensuring that all students have a role in repairing relationships affected by challenging behavior. In safe, supportive education environments students feel a sense of belonging and allow schools to challenge policies and procedures that prevent student growth;
4. **Competency Development:** Restorative Practices Response seeks to increase the social emotional intelligence skills of those who have harmed others, address underlying factors that lead students to engage in the form of challenging behavior, and build on strengths.

Definitions

Through adopting the Connecticut School Climate Policy (5131.911), the Board endorses a “Restorative Practices Response” approach to student discipline. As defined in Policy 5131.911,

Restorative Practices mean 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 such 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” in education refer to instructional and school-wide improvement practices that systematic empirical research has provided evidence of 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. It is based on patterns of people’s experiences of school life and 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 a public school system and the community in which it is located, including, but not limited to, students and their families, members of the local or regional board of education, 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, including at a school bus stop or on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a local or regional board of education, and may include other activities,

functions or programs that occur outside of a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program if bullying at or during such other activities, functions or programs negatively impacts the school environment.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to support school discipline that:

1. The school district community has a shared vision and plan for promoting and sustaining a positive school climate that focuses on prevention, identification and response to all challenging behavior;
2. Maintains safe and engaging learning communities;
3. Assures consistency and coherence across all schools in the District;
4. Defines and communicates expectations for student behavior;
5. Defines and communicates expectations for staff responsibility related to school discipline;
6. Balances the needs of the student, the needs of those directly affected by “challenging behaviors,” and the needs of the overall school community;
7. Assures equity across racial, ethnic, and cultural groups and all other protected classes, including, but not limited to, gender, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity and expression.

General Principles

1. A positive school climate is best accomplished by preventing challenging behaviors before they occur and using effective restorative practices, in response to those challenging behaviors that may occur despite proactive measures;
2. School safety and academic success are formed and strengthened when all school staff and employees build positive relationships with students and their parents and/or guardians;
3. Effective school climate maximizes the amount of time students spend learning academically, socially, and emotionally, ethically, civically, and intellectually and minimizes the amount of time students cause disruption or are removed from their classrooms due to an act of challenging behavior;
4. School discipline should be reasonable, timely, fair, age-appropriate, and should be 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, offer students an opportunity to learn from their mistakes and be more likely to result in engaging rather than punitive responses to challenging behavior. The school community should adopt policies that promote a restorative school environment focused on overcoming barriers to teaching and learning by building and supporting meaningful relationships which promote school and community engagement;
5. Effective school climate improvement is a restorative process that engages all school community members in promoting a positive school climate. The vast majority of challenging behaviors should be addressed at the classroom level by teachers; however, behaviors that cannot be addressed at this level should receive more targeted and intensive interventions, as determined by an individualized assessment;
6. The District 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. We must commit to eliminating institutional racism and any other discrimination that presents barriers to success. The school community should create a school environment where everyone is safe, welcomed, supported, and included in all school-based activities;
7. Challenging behaviors, which may be subject to disciplinary action, including any within the school environment, but not limited to those occurring during either curricular or extracurricular activities, in classrooms, in school buildings, on school grounds, or in school vehicles, when such conduct is

detrimental to the school environment and to the welfare or safety of other students or school personnel.

General Policy Guidelines

The District's system of school climate improvement is built on the incorporation of restorative practices, which should include:

Evidence and research-based system-level restorative practices that focus on:

- 1) building high-quality, constructive relationships among the school community;
- 2) holding each student accountable for any challenging behavior; and
- 3) ensuring each such student has a role in repairing relationships and reintegrating into the school community.

Restorative practices should be guided by the Connecticut School Climate Standards:

1. The school district community has a shared vision and plan for promoting and sustaining a positive school climate that focuses on prevention, identification, and response to all challenging behaviors.
2. The school district community adopts policies that promote: a) a sound school environment that develops and sustains academic, social, emotional, ethical, civic, and intellectual skills; and b) a restorative school environment focused on overcoming barriers to teaching and learning by building and supporting meaningful school-wide relationships, and intentionally reengaging any disengaged students, educators, and families of students in the school community.
3. The school community's practices are identified, prioritized, and supported to: a) promote learning and the positive academic, social, emotional, ethical, and civic development of students. b) enhance engagement in teaching, learning, and school-wide activities. c) address barriers to teaching and learning; and d) develop and sustain a restorative infrastructure that builds capacity, accountability, and sustainability.
4. The school community creates a school environment where everyone is safe, welcomed, supported, and included in all school-based activities,
5. The school community creates a restorative system that cultivates a sense of belonging through norms and activities that promote social and civic responsibility, and a dedication to cultural responsiveness, diversity, equity, and inclusion.
 - a. Practicing early identification and assessment of struggling students;
 - b. Using a problem-solving/collaborative process to provide interventions matched to student needs;
 - c. Ensuring timely progress monitoring and feedback; and
 - d. Delivering scientific research-based interventions.

The District shall post this policy on the District website and in each school. A copy of this policy and accompanying procedures shall be readily available in each school's administration office.

Copies of this policy, any accompanying procedures/regulations, and school rules will be made available, upon request, to each student and parent/guardian and, upon request, promptly translated into a language that the parent/guardian can understand.

Applying the goals related to Restorative Practices Response, this policy's definitions, purpose, principles and guidelines, the Superintendent, or his/her/their designee shall develop such procedures and provide for any training necessary as may be needed to effectively implement this policy.

(cf. 1110.1 – Parent Involvement)

(cf. 4131 – Staff Development)

(cf. 5114 – Suspension/Expulsion; Student Due Process)

(cf. 5131 – Conduct)
(cf. 5131.1 – Bus Conduct)
(cf. 5131.6 – Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco)
(cf. 5131.7 – Weapons and Dangerous Instruments)
(cf. 5131.8 – Out of School Grounds Misconduct)
(cf. 5131.9 – Gang Activity or Association)
(cf. 5131.911 – Connecticut School Climate Policy)
(cf. 5131.913 – Cyberbullying)
(cf. 5131.92 – Corporal Punishment)
(cf. 5141.4 – Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect)
(cf. 5144 – Discipline/Punishment)
(cf. 5144.3 – Discipline of Students with Disabilities)
(cf. 5145.4 – Nondiscrimination)
(cf. 5145.5 – Sexual Harassment)
(cf. 5145.52 – Harassment)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

4-177 through 4-180. Contested Cases. Notice. Record, as amended.

10-233a through 10-233f Suspension, removal and expulsion of students, as periodically amended.

21a-240(9) Definitions.

53a-3 Definitions.

GOALS 2000: Educate America Act, Pub. L. 103-227.

18 U.S.C. 921 Definitions

Title III - Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Act Sec. 314

Elementary and Secondary Schools Act of 1968, as amended by the Gun Free Schools Act of 1994

PL 105-17 The Individuals with Disabilities Act, Amendments of 1997

P.L. 108-446 Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004

State v. Hardy, 896 A.2d 755, 278 Conn 113 (2006)

Public Act 23-167, Section 74, An Act Concerning Transparency in Education

Policy adopted: 2/26/25

Students**R5144.12(a)****Challenging Behavior Prevention: Restorative Practices Response**

The following procedures are developed for implementing Board Policy #5144.12. They are designed to be consistent with the general purpose and principles outlined in the aforementioned policy and with federal and state statutes and regulations.

The District and staff are committed to establishing positive learning environments that ensure that all students have access to a quality education. The District recognizes that a key aspect of maintaining a healthy and safe environment is establishing and maintaining positive and constructive behavior in our schools. This goal can only be achieved through the cooperative efforts of our school personnel, students, parents, guardians, and our community.

School Discipline Administration

1. Staff training will 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 will include, but not limited to, strategies and approaches related to Restorative Practices and its theoretical framework.
2. School district staff responsible for implementing this 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.
3. Challenging behavior related to students receiving special education and tiered intervention supports shall be in accordance with the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), and behavior intervention plan, 504 Plan, and Board policy.
4. The District believes that developing strong relationships with families is the first step in establishing safe and healthy schools. School staff members are encouraged to contact parents early in the school year to proactively establish positive school-home communication and throughout the school year to share student successes and challenges, and develop plans to help students have access to a quality education.
5. The District is committed to eliminating the disparity in school discipline with respect to its underserved populations by reducing the number of referrals, suspensions, and expulsions. The staff will engage in restorative practices that enhance school climate and develop a system for addressing challenging behavior that promotes equity. Staff members are specifically charged with monitoring 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. The District will collect discipline data examining and aggregating referrals and disciplinary responses.

School-Level Rules

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

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

The "rules" shall be consistent with law, Board of Education (Board) policy, and District administrative regulations. The development of the rules shall be informed by school-level challenging behavior data as

described in policy #5144.12.

Through annual climate surveys, the school shall also solicit participants' views on whether school-level and District-level 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 related to challenging behavior shall promote interventions that refrain from interrupting a student's education to the extent possible. Schools should minimize the use of suspensions, recommendations for expulsion, and referrals to law enforcement to the extent practicable while remaining consistent with federal and state statutes, regulations, and Board policies.

Reasonable Responses to Challenging Behavior Consequences: Responses should 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 the overall school community.
8. The availability of prevention programs designed to address challenging behavior should also be considered before determining a restorative practices response.

Interventions/Alternative Means of Correction: When challenging behavior occurs, schools shall investigate the circumstances and gather facts that will help determine appropriate interventions and a restorative response for that student, with emphasis on correcting student misbehavior through school-based resources. Responses to challenging behavior should provide students an opportunity to learn from their mistakes and re-engage the student in learning. All interventions should 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 is responsible for incorporating a restorative response framework into its planning to reduce referrals and suspensions through proactive intervention, positive behavioral support, restorative practices, and other non-punitive approaches to challenging behavior focused on maximizing student achievement, reducing such behaviors and avoiding loss of instructional time through the use of tiered interventions. That intervention framework shall integrate a Restorative Practices framework.

Referral of students from the classroom environment for challenging behaviors should be avoided. The District expects alternatives to suspension and restorative practices to be utilized before referring a student out of the classroom. The District expects that alternatives will be undertaken within the classroom except where suspension for specific offenses is required by statute and Board 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 statutorily or policy-required interventions that respond "to" the offender. These include removal from the classroom, detention, suspension, and expulsion.

2. **Restorative Strategies** coordinate with Connecticut's School Climate Policy as they are problem-solving interventions responding "with" the offender. They are driven by an opportunity to restore 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 will be completed, and the school or district will determine whether a face-to-face meeting with all parties is appropriate. Examples may include:
 - a. Family group conferencing
 - b. Victim-offender mediation
 - c. Classroom mediation circles
 - d. Reparation of harm
3. **Therapeutic/Resource Strategies** are responses "by" the offender and require intrinsic motivational behavior change. Such interventions include:
 - a. Mental health counseling
 - b. Anger management classes
 - c. Informal mentoring and behavior coaching

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

Restorative Justice in Northwestern Regional School District No. 7

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

Tier 1: Community Building (Prevention/Relate)

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, mediation, 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 individualized and personalized support and successful re-entry of youth following suspension, truancy, expulsion or incarceration. The goal is to welcome youth to the school community in a manner that provides wrap-around support and promotes student accountability and achievement.

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 should be provided more intensive support through a system of tiered interventions. Parents should 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 his/her 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 a Student Study Team (SST) or other intervention-related team to assess the behavior and develop and implement an individual plan to address the behavior in partnership with the student and his/her 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 anger management skills.
7. Continue to encourage participation in a restorative justice program.
8. A positive behavior support approach with tiered interventions that occur during the school day on campus.

Detention After School

Students may be kept after school for disciplinary reasons (up to one hour) after the school day has ended.

If a student will miss his/her school bus because he/she is kept after school or is not transported by school bus, the principal or designee shall notify parents/guardians of the detention at least one day in advance so that alternative transportation arrangements may be made. The student shall not be detained unless the principal or designee notifies the parent/guardian.

Students shall remain under the supervision of a certified employee during the period of detention.

Community Service

For consideration with a restorative practices response strategy, the Board, Superintendent, Principal, or Principal's designee may, at his/her discretion, allow for a student to perform community service during non-school hours on school grounds or, with the 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

The Board supports the adoption of the SRBI framework to facilitate a systems approach to positive, prosocial behavior management. The District expects teachers 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 or his/her designee must ensure that staff making the referral complete the following:

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

Notice to Parents/Guardians and Students

At the beginning of the school year, the Superintendent or his/her designee shall notify parents/guardians about the availability of district rules and procedures related to student behaviors and school climate.

The Superintendent or his/her designee shall also provide written notice of behavior rules to transfer students at the time of their enrollment in the District.

Parent programs that relate to how the school integrates Restorative Practices Response in the student discipline/behavior management system will be provided.

Annual Review/Discipline Committees

Both individual schools and the district will evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of the school behavior plan using school disciplinary data disaggregated by race, ethnicity and gender of the student. This will allow schools and the district to identify areas of need; target areas of concern; access professional development, supports, and services; and revise school procedures as needed.

In consideration with the Connecticut Positive School Climate Policy, schools will review student discipline data.

The review will include the following:

1. Intervention and prevention strategies.
2. The number of referrals, in school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, age, grade, disability, and gender of the students, where available.
3. Differences in referrals among staff members.
4. The extent to which the policy, including but not limited to disciplinary action, is consistently applied to all students.
5. Review of Restorative Practices and their impact on student discipline and climate.

Based on the review, schools will make changes consistent with the intent of this and other related policies.

Schools are encouraged to establish a discipline committee including school personnel, parents and students to develop, monitor, and evaluate school discipline policy and school climate. The use of school discipline data is recommended in this process.

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