

# POLICY

## BOARD OF EDUCATION OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

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**Related Entries:** ACF, ACF-RA, COC-RA, COE-RA, COF-RA, COG-RA, ECC-RA, GDB-RA, JGA-RA, JGA-RB, JGB-RA, JFA, JFA-RA

**Responsible Office:** Deputy Superintendent of Schools

### Student Discipline

#### A. PURPOSE

1. To provide a philosophy of discipline that will guide staff and students in promoting good behavior in an environment that is conducive to effective and efficient learning
2. To promote a disciplined environment that is safe, that holds mutual respect as an expectation, and does not tolerate disrespect
3. To ensure that our students and staff are protected against disruptive behavior and encouraged to participate in the pursuit of higher social standards for behavior and respect for others
4. To clearly communicate to students, staff, and parents expected student behaviors and consequences for misbehavior

#### B. ISSUE

The Board of Education of Montgomery County believes that learning is a continuous evolutionary process. The Board also believes that while learning is not confined to a school building, it is nonetheless the primary function of the school. Like all social institutions, the school must evolve a certain set of rules and regulations to govern its participants and to facilitate the performance of its primary function. These rules should reflect a balance between the responsibilities and rights of the individual and the responsibilities and rights of the group. They must also reflect the need to promote good behavior in an environment that is conducive to effective and efficient learning and the need for mutual respect and cooperation among all segments of the school community. Schools should be communities in which positive behavior is expected and modeled within an environment of mutual respect and dignity.

**C. POSITION**

## 1. Philosophy

- a) In a school system the size of Montgomery County, absolutely consistent application of a discipline policy, if valued as the overriding consideration and taken to the extreme, would require the listing of every possible infraction with a specific, mandated disciplinary action in response to each. At the other extreme, recognition of both the diversity of community settings within the county and the individuality of each disciplinary situation would suggest that each school should establish its own disciplinary standards and apply them only as appropriate to each student's situation. The Board finds the need to balance these two opposing considerations and, therefore, elects to follow a middle-ground policy. Certain major infractions are recognized as requiring consistent countywide actions from and direction for all schools. For these infractions, a specified range of responses must be utilized by all school personnel, with the severity and/or frequency of the infraction determining where in the range the penalty should lie. At the same time, for disciplinary infractions not established with mandated disciplinary actions, development of appropriate standards and responses will remain an individual school responsibility subject to review by the appropriate director in the Office of School Administration. Input from students, parents, and school personnel will permit these disciplinary actions to be tailored to the needs and desires of each community within the county. The Board seeks in this way to provide consistent responses to the more severe infractions without prejudging every disciplinary situation and without depriving individual school administrators of the opportunity for flexible and creative responses to the vast majority of cases.
- b) The Board believes that discipline is learned and, therefore, can and should be taught in the home, school, and community. The child also learns through experience and imitation of those around him. Discipline is a developmental process. As the child matures, he/she should be given increased responsibility in keeping with his/her developmental level and social maturity and every opportunity to practice self-discipline in order to positively reinforce responsible action. Classroom models should put children's needs at the center of decisions about classroom management and problem-solving. Children should be helped to understand the consequences of violence and conflict. Our schools should be environments where conflict that may occur can be used as an opportunity to teach and learn. The ultimate goal should be the internalization of discipline so that little external enforcement is required. The Board believes that this philosophy will foster the development of positive, self-disciplined, self-reliant individuals capable of

behaving appropriately as the situation demands. The Board believes that this philosophy will produce individuals with social consciences who see the good sense in acceptable behavior and who are spared the consequences of misbehavior.

While causes are not always evident, misbehavior may be related to economic, social, physical, psychological or emotional factors. It is important for staff to consider that misbehavior could be a symptom. Effective discipline depends on the cause of the behavior. Staff members are encouraged to involve the family to seek solutions. The family and community also must take responsibility to provide guidance, support, and structure to meet student needs. In some instances, changing the environment will be the most appropriate response; in other situations, the student and his behavior must be dealt with directly.

## 2. Student Behavior

- a) Student conduct that disrupts class work, involves disorder, or invades the rights of others will not be tolerated and may be cause for suspension or other disciplinary action.
- b) The administration of disciplinary action will focus both on consequences and on changing or managing inappropriate behavior. To that end, all available resources should be utilized, including preventive and responsive interventions to support students' needs. These interventions should include interdisciplinary – psychological, curricular, behavioral – services which should take place within classrooms, schools, and alternative settings. Exclusion from the classroom should be the disciplinary action of last resort. Fair, firm, and consistent application of disciplinary action is expected, and students should be made aware of the consequences of misbehavior. It is equally important that there be careful evaluation of the individual situation so that the school's response to the student is appropriate.
- c) The superintendent will ensure that major infractions that are recognized as requiring consistent countywide actions from and direction for all schools are described in Regulation JFA-RA: *Implementation of Students Rights and Responsibilities* and summarized in the *Student Guide to Rights and Responsibilities*.

- d) Each school will maintain a local school discipline policy developed and reviewed regularly with the active involvement of parents, students, and staff. All school discipline policies and procedures shall be consistent with the philosophy of this student discipline policy.

3. School Climate

School organizational and operational structures are as important a focus for change as the individual student's behavior.

The superintendent will implement a comprehensive plan for safety and security that will ensure a learning and working environment that protects the rights, health, and welfare of students and staff.

**D. DESIRED OUTCOMES**

1. Students will understand their responsibilities and rights.
2. Schools will be safe and orderly environments where students are engaged in learning.
3. Students will exercise self-discipline, self management, and demonstrate appropriate behavior in order to become productive citizens.
4. Parents and students will be well informed about school discipline policies and will be encouraged to participate in efforts to ensure that schools are safe and orderly.

**E. IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES**

1. Information from this policy will be described in *The Student's Guide to Rights and Responsibilities* which will be made available to all elementary school students and will be distributed to all students entering secondary schools.
2. Specific rights and responsibilities which all members of the school community should assume are presented in Regulation JFA-RA: *Implementation of Student Rights and Responsibilities*.
3. Each school is responsible for disciplinary infractions not established with mandated disciplinary actions based on analysis of local data and input from students, parents, and school personnel.

4. Procedures for disciplining students for major infractions that require consistent countywide actions from and direction for all schools are found in specific regulations such as:
  - a) Regulation ACF-RA: *Sexual Harassment*
  - b) Regulation CFA-RA: *Site-based Participatory Management*
  - c) Regulation COC-RA: *Trespassing or Willful Disturbances on MCPS Property*
  - d) Regulation COE-RA: *Weapons on MCPS Property*
  - e) Regulation COF-RA: *Intoxicants on MCPS Property*
  - f) Regulation COG-RA: *Portable Communication Devices*
  - g) Regulation ECC-RA: *Loss of MCPS Property*
  - h) Regulation GDB-RA: *Protection of Employees, Students, and Property*
  - i) Regulation IGT-RA: *Appropriate Use of Computer Networks*
  - j) Regulation JGA-RA: *Maintenance of Classroom Control and Discipline*
  - k) Regulation JGA-RB: *Suspension or Expulsion of an MCPS Student*
  - l) Regulation JGB-RA: *Search and Seizure*
5. The superintendent will monitor issues of concern to the safety and security of the MCPS community and report to the Board, particularly those items for which legislative positions need to be taken.
6. The superintendent will monitor recordkeeping and other data collection from schools and field offices regarding disciplinary infractions and interventions to evaluate and develop programs.
7. The superintendent will strengthen existing instructional programs to include such skills as respect for others, conflict resolution, interpersonal relations, etc. Efforts to improve discipline should include students in identifying effective classroom management strategies and problem solving in a diverse environment.

8. The superintendent will seek a continuum of alternative strategies to address students who are chronically disruptive and/or dangerous to the school including:
  - a. Strengthening classroom behavior management skills through staff training
  - b. Expanding the repertoire of curriculum based instruction about conflict resolution, positive social skills, problem solving, bias awareness and prejudice reduction
  - c. Increasing prevention, intervention and alternative strategies, programs, and/or sites

**F. REVIEW AND REPORTING**

1. The Board of Education will receive suspension information in the annual Success for Every Student report.
2. This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis in accordance with the Board of Education's policy review process.

*Policy History:* Adopted by Resolution No. 20-97, January 14, 1997.