

2017 Discipline Rules Rewrite: Major Changes

Parent Engagement: The proposed rules involve parents in early efforts to address behavior issues by requiring:

- Districts to develop policies to provide for the early involvement of parents in efforts to support students in meeting behavioral expectations.
- Notice to parents of classroom removals and more detailed notices for suspensions and expulsions.
- Educational services and reengagement plans to be developed after meaningful input from students and families.
- Parents to have access to their student's educational records prior to an appeal hearing.

Alternatives to Suspension and Expulsion: The proposed rules encourage the use of alternatives to suspension and expulsion by requiring:

- District discipline policies to identify the other forms of discipline that school personnel should administer before or instead of classroom exclusion, suspension and expulsion, including best practices identified by OSPI.
- Districts to attempt other forms of discipline before using short-term suspension.
- Districts to consider other discipline before using long term suspension or expulsion.
- Notices of suspension and expulsion to document the other forms of discipline administered or considered and explain the district's reason.

Limits on Suspension and Expulsion: The proposed rules limit the use of exclusionary discipline by:

- Prohibiting expulsion for students in grades K-4
- Requiring districts, prior to imposing long-term suspension, to find (i) an imminent threat to the educational process or other students and staff and (ii) that the student behavior is a serious violation (weapons, drugs, etc.) listed in statute.
- Requiring districts to find an imminent threat to other students or staff before issuing an expulsion.

Equitable and Culturally Responsive Discipline: The proposed rules attempt to improve equity in discipline administration and provide for more culturally appropriate discipline practices by requiring:

- Most (but not all) discipline notices, decisions, and proceedings to be in the language the student and family understand.
- Consideration of a student's individual circumstances before imposing suspension and expulsion.
- Consideration, as appropriate, of the students' cultural histories, family cultural norms and values, and other community resources in developing reengagement plans.

Education Services: The proposed rules clarify a district's obligation to continue to educate students who have been suspended or expelled. The rules require:

- Make-up work and assignments for exclusions shorter than 5 days, plus access to school support personnel.
- Additional school support and communication to ensure completion and grading of make-up work and assignments, for exclusions between 6 and 10 days.
- Alternative learning programs (including instruction and other support) for exclusions longer than 10 days.