

# Wording for the Discipline Policy

## **Vision/Values Statement:**

Our vision for our discipline policy is based on the best practices, research, and personal experiences of students, parents, and educators from around our city and the country. It is also built around a human rights framework for schools which recognizes that the goal of education must be to support all children and young people in reaching their full potential. This human rights framework envisions an educational system where schools adapt to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of every student; where students, parents and teachers all participate in decisions affecting education; where all students are treated with dignity and attend school free from discrimination of any kind; and where communities play a central role in monitoring education policies and practices to continuously improve educational outcomes for students. In adopting a human rights approach to education, we aim to respect the rights and needs of every individual who studies in, works in, and supports our schools. **Adapted from Dignity In Schools (DIS) p.3, [http://www.dignityinschools.org/files/Model\\_Code\\_2013.pdf](http://www.dignityinschools.org/files/Model_Code_2013.pdf)**

Decades of disinvestment, discriminatory housing policies (e.g. redlining), neglect, lead exposure, parental incarceration, significant health disparities, and poverty have resulted in historical and intergenerational trauma for many of Baltimore City's school students. It is now well-known that young people who experience this kind of traumatic events can suffer dramatic impacts on their behavior, emotional development, and overall physical and mental well-being. **Adapted from statements made by Dr. Wen, Baltimore City Health Commissioner**

In order to ensure that every child receives a high quality education, schools must create healthy, respectful, trauma-informed climates for learning where the fundamental dignity of students and all members of the school community is protected and nurtured. A school climate that protects human dignity exists when students feel socially, emotionally and physically safe, when there is respect between teachers, students, parents or guardians, and when students' self-expression and self-esteem are supported. **Adapted from DIS, p. 18**

## **Purpose of the policy:**

The purpose of this policy is to reflect the board's desire to move toward full implementation of positive and preventive discipline practices in all our schools to minimize the need for punitive discipline and maximize instructional time for every student. The Board recognizes the importance of developing the social and emotional health of all youth and adults in our organization. The Board desires that its disciplinary policies further its mission of serving the whole child, eliminate discrimination in the use of punitive consequences, and provide each child with excellent teachers who are equipped to promote academic and behavioral learning. (<http://www.ousd.org/domain/68> **Adapted from purpose section of Oakland Unified School District Board Policy 5144--Discipline**

Further, as the district transitions to full implementation of positive and preventive discipline practices in all schools over the next five years, the district recognizes that: (New wording from TDP Policy Collaborative based on conversations with national experts)

1. A transition to school wide positive discipline practices, using strategies such as School Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support--SWPBIS and/or Restorative Practices--RP, constitutes a radical school culture shift. Culture shifts take time, support, and resources and cannot be equated to introducing a single program. Specifically, this kind of school-wide culture shift requires not only training, but also on-site coaching in order to succeed.
2. Stakeholders at each school need an opportunity to explore the advantages and challenges involved in transitioning to a new cultural model prior to any decision to fully adopt. Research shows that involuntary, top-down mandates that call for the immediate introduction of strategies such as RP as a way to reduce suspensions tend to lead to an implementation process that lacks fidelity.
3. Given fiscal constraints at the district level, the early stage of transitioning to a new culture for our whole school district may involve working with outside agencies in order to bring existing community resources into schools to meet the emerging demand.
4. The process for designing a long-term transition plan should be open, publicly accountable, and inclusive of all school stakeholders.

## Definitions

### **School Culture**

A school's culture consists of the customs, rituals, and stories that are evident and valued throughout the whole school. An effective school culture is one in which the customs and values foster success for all; and where clear boundaries are set, known, and agreed to by everyone. In developing a positive culture, effective principals ensure that educational practices are inclusive. They make certain that students and their families do not feel alienated from the culture of the school.

Adapted from *Culture in Kiwi Leadership for Principals*.

<http://pb4l.tki.org.nz/School-Climate-Culture>

### **Preventive and Positive Discipline**

Preventive and positive approaches to discipline create safe, supportive and positive school climates and respond to misbehavior with interventions and consequences aimed at understanding and addressing the causes of misbehavior, resolving conflicts, meeting students' needs and keeping students in school. There are a variety of school wide-models for positive discipline and this section describes key elements that any model should incorporate. (DIS, p. 21)

### **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)**

The process of developing the social and emotional skills/competencies that are critical to success in school and throughout life. This process is based on the understanding that the most

effective way for students to learn is in the context of collaborative and supportive relationships with teachers, staff and their peers. The goal is to make learning challenging, engaging, and meaningful and to prevent and reduce disruption and conflict. SEL strategies are found to be effective in reducing behavioral problems and increasing academic achievement and should be implemented at all grade levels. (DIS, p. 21)

### **Restorative practices**

A framework for a broad range of approaches that proactively build a school community based on relationships, cooperation, mutual understanding, trust, and respect. Restorative practices include both proactive and responsive approaches. These practices are characterized by inclusive community-building processes as well as responses to conflict that are fair, inclusive, and provide all people impacted by a conflict with an opportunity to find their own solutions that allow for healing of individuals and the school community. These practices can be used to nurture and implement positive behavior in classrooms and on school campuses consistent with SWPBIS. (DIS, p. 30)

### **Restorative justice**

An approach to justice based on respect, relationships, inclusiveness and fairness, that emphasizes accountability, healing, and learning rather than punishment. Restorative Justice approaches includes basic components such as: (a) Inviting all of the people involved in and affected by a conflict to participate; (b) identify the harms done, the needs of those harmed, and who is obligated to address those needs, and (c) Creating a process that promotes healing, reconciliation and the re/building of relationships. Restorative justice processes build respect, responsibility and empower participants to develop their own constructive responses to wrongdoing within schools. (DIS, p. 30)

### **Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS)**

SWPBIS is a research-based framework that can help schools design, implement and evaluate their approach to school discipline. Since every school is unique, SWPBIS does not prescribe a specific program or curriculum, rather sets out a process and key criteria for schools to follow. Under the SWPBIS framework, schools must: 1) use data to make decisions and solve problems, 2) focus on both prevention of problem behavior and positive interventions, such as counseling, mediation, restorative practices and other interventions, 3) model and teach behavior expectations and positive relationship skills among students, and 4) continuously monitor implementation and adjust approaches as necessary. SWPBIS is meant to work collaboratively with specific practices such as restorative justice practices to promote positive behavior in classrooms and on school campuses. (DIS, p. 26)

## **References:**

This is a list of references and websites used during our research on how to write progressive discipline policy and the consequences of various kinds of trauma on students and their families.

Pietila, A. 2010. Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City.  
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[http://jprc.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/RJ\\_Literature-Review\\_20160217.pdf](http://jprc.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/RJ_Literature-Review_20160217.pdf)