

# Student Discipline Rules FAQ

## Introduction

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) Student Engagement and Support Division is committed to ensuring that all students in Washington State have equitable access to education, as guaranteed by the Washington State Constitution. This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document aims to support understanding of Washington's student discipline rules and ensure school staff, students and families have clear and accessible information regarding student discipline.

Question	Answer
What is the <b>purpose</b> of student discipline rules?	Washington's student discipline rules aim to reflect a commitment to fostering supportive, inclusive school communities where every student can thrive. These rules intend to guide school leaders in implementing fair disciplinary practices that keep students connected to their learning. By emphasizing collaboration with families and communities and providing strong classroom reentry support, the rules aim to promote academic growth, ensure consistent access to education, and create safe, respectful, and empowering learning environments.
Do the new student discipline rules require an <b>attempt to support</b> the student in meeting behavior expectations before excluding them from the classroom or administering a short term in school suspension?	<p>Yes. Under Washington State's student discipline rules, educators are required to consider alternative options before removing a student from the classroom. These rules refer to "corrective action," which includes both disciplinary and non-disciplinary responses taken by a certified educator to address student behavior.</p> <p>Non-disciplinary corrective actions may include evidence-based interventions and supports designed to help students meet behavioral expectations. These supports are outlined in state laws (<a href="#">RCW 28A.410.270</a>, <a href="#">28A.405.100</a>, and <a href="#">28A.410.260</a>) and may include strategies like behavior coaching, social-emotional learning supports, or positive behavior interventions.</p> <p>Except in emergency situations, teachers must first try one or more of these alternative corrective actions before excluding a student from the classroom.</p>
Will OSPI write <b>guidance</b> for school districts and provide training and other technical assistance to	When the student discipline policy was enacted, no additional funding was provided to support its implementation, including professional development for



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support the revised student discipline rules?	<p>educators. In response, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is leveraging existing resources and encouraging school districts to do the same. OSPI is supporting districts in using the instructional and leadership frameworks to help educators create safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments where all students can succeed. OSPI recognizes that fostering a positive and safe school climate is essential for student learning and for reducing disproportionality in school discipline. Although no new funding is available, OSPI is asking districts to prioritize the use of current resources to strengthen systems of care and support for students across the state.</p>
What <b>standards</b> are used to guide the student discipline rules?	<p>In alignment with current state law, OSPI updated student discipline rules following the repeal of the legal requirement to use a “menu of best practices” as alternatives to discipline in 2021. Rather than relying on a prescribed menu, educators are now guided by the professional standards established by the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB), including the Teacher and Principal Evaluation Program (TPEP) and the Washington State’s Cultural Competency, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CCDEI) Standards.</p> <p>CCDEI Standards—adopted by PESB—along with TPEP, reflect a shared commitment to fostering equitable, inclusive, and effective school environments. Grounded in state law, these standards and evaluation criteria are supported by Revised Code of Washington (RCW) statutes: <a href="#">RCW 28A.410.270</a>, <a href="#">28A.410.278</a>, <a href="#">28A.405.100</a>, <a href="#">28A.410.260</a>, and <a href="#">28A.415.443</a>. These laws affirm the professional judgment of qualified certificated educators in creating positive learning conditions for all students. These frameworks emphasize the use of evidence-based strategies and professional judgment to support positive student behavior and create respectful, responsive classrooms where every student feels a sense of belonging.</p> <p>Educators play a central role in building welcoming school communities for all students and families. Faculty, staff, and administrators are encouraged to</p>

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	<p>elevate and center community voices, forming meaningful partnerships that enhance student learning and reflect the values embedded in <a href="#">RCW 28A.410.260</a> and <a href="#">RCW 28A.415.443</a>.</p>
<p>Are there <b>protections</b> in the new student discipline rules so schools won't suspend and expel without a <b>process</b>?</p>	<p>Yes. The updated student discipline rules continue to place strict limits on the use of long-term suspension and expulsion. These measures should only be used in serious situations and when other interventions have not been successful. The rules also emphasize the importance of ongoing communication with families when a student's behavior challenges persist. Schools are expected to work in partnership with families to support positive behavior and keep students engaged in their education.</p>
<p>What is the <b>role of the classroom educator</b> relative to the new student discipline rules?</p>	<p>Student behavior has become more complex due to the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, increased use of cell phones, and rising anxiety related to local and global issues. Under the previous student discipline rules, burdensome procedures often made it difficult for educators to address these behaviors promptly in the classroom. The updated student discipline rules are designed to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and better support timely, effective responses to student behavior—helping educators maintain safe, supportive learning environments for all students.</p>
<p>Are schools required to <b>notify</b> parents if their student is removed from the classroom?</p>	<p>Under the updated student discipline rules, the specific requirement for schools to notify parents or guardians when a student is removed from a classroom has been removed. Instead, notification protocols fall to local school boards authority to determine what communication practices best meet the needs of their students, families, and communities. School boards play a critical role in fostering meaningful engagement with families and community members on matters related to student discipline. By partnering with families and school staff to make informed, collaborative decisions, school boards can help ensure that discipline policies are clear, effective, and reflective of community values—reducing confusion and building trust.</p>

Question	Answer
Is there a requirement to <b>monitor discipline data</b> to avoid disparate impacts?	<p>Yes. Washington State civil rights laws require school districts to review disaggregated discipline data, including race and ethnicity, to identify and address any discrimination against students in protected classes, as defined in <a href="#">RCW 28A.640</a> and <a href="#">28A.642</a>. Under <a href="#">WAC 392-190-048</a>, districts must conduct this review at least annually to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all students. While districts may incorporate this review into broader efforts under student discipline laws, they must also maintain a civil rights lens to ensure compliance and equity. School boards, in collaboration with superintendents and staff, are responsible for examining discipline data and taking corrective action if patterns of disproportionality or discrimination are found. OSPI is committed to partnering with districts to address these inequities. Educators are highly trained and held accountable for creating inclusive classroom environments that meet the needs of all learners. When a student is struggling, school leaders and district administrators are expected to work together to identify appropriate supports and resources. The updated student discipline rules reinforce this collaborative, student-centered approach by aligning with existing frameworks, tools, and systems already familiar to educators.</p>
What is the definition of <b>restorative justice practices</b> ?	<p>There is currently no legal definition of “restorative practices” specific to Washington State K–12 education. However, the term is generally understood and supported through technical assistance and educational resources as follows: Restorative Practices is an emerging social science focused on strengthening relationships between individuals and within communities. In the school setting, restorative practices foster a trusting and inclusive environment by providing students and staff with opportunities to make positive choices and engage respectfully with one another—both in the classroom and throughout the school.</p> <p>When effectively implemented, restorative practices contribute to a greater sense of safety and belonging</p>

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	for students, which is associated with improved behavior, reduced bullying, and decreased violence.
What are the <b>data collection requirements</b> relative to student discipline?	OSPI does not collect data related to staff perceptions of safety within schools. However, school districts are encouraged to regularly review discipline data to identify patterns and any disproportionality in the application of discipline policies. School and district leadership teams should integrate data from multiple sources and domains to support equitable, data-driven decision-making. This includes conducting root cause analyses, guiding student interventions, identifying professional learning needs, and informing changes to practices, policies, and systems. Statewide data on out-of-school exclusionary discipline is available and disaggregated by district, school, grade level, student demographics, and school year, providing valuable insights to support continuous improvement.
What is the <b>impact</b> of the revised student discipline rules on students receiving <b>special education services</b> ?	Washington State student discipline laws apply to all K–12 students. However, students who are served under or eligible for Special Education or Section 504 services are entitled to additional protections. No changes have been made to special education rules. Students with disabilities continue to be protected under existing federal and state laws and remain entitled to all appropriate services and safeguards. According to <a href="#">WAC 392-172A-05170</a> , if a school district had knowledge—defined in the referenced WAC section—that a student was eligible for Special Education services prior to administering disciplinary action, the student must be afforded the special education discipline protections established by law. Further details regarding the provision of Special Education services are outlined in Chapter <a href="#">392-172A WAC</a> . Specific discipline procedures for students with disabilities are detailed in <a href="#">WAC 392-172A-05140</a> through <a href="#">WAC 392-172A-05175</a> .
What must school districts include in their local <b>student discipline policies</b> , and where can they find guidance?	Per <a href="#">RCW 28A.600.010</a> , each school district’s board of directors must adopt discipline policies and procedures that align with federal and state laws, OSPI rules under <a href="#">chapter 392-400 WAC</a> , and the WSSDA model discipline policy. These policies must clearly outline the district’s

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	<p>authority and guidance on student discipline and be accessible to students, families, and the community.</p> <p>Districts and school boards are also required to regularly review and update these policies to ensure consistent enforcement of student behavior expectations across schools and classrooms. For support, districts may utilize WSSDA's Featured Policies and Procedures, which offers model documents for adoption.</p>
<p>What is the <b>definition of classroom exclusion</b>?</p>	<p>According to <a href="#">WAC 392-400-025</a>, classroom exclusion is defined as the removal of a student from a classroom or instructional/activity area due to behavioral violations. However, it does not encompass brief instances where a teacher or other school personnel attempts alternative disciplinary measures, provided that the student remains under the supervision of the teacher or other school personnel during this brief duration. This definition is further elaborated in <a href="#">WAC 392-400-330</a>, which outlines the conditions and limitations for administering classroom exclusions.</p>
<p>What are the <b>definitions of discretionary and non-discretionary discipline</b>?</p>	<p>Outlined in <a href="#">RCW 28A.600.015(6)</a>, "discretionary discipline" means a disciplinary action taken by a school district for student behavior that violates rules of student conduct adopted by a school district board of directors under RCW <a href="#">28A.600.010</a>.</p> <p>Non-discretionary discipline constitute action taken in response to any of the following: (a) A violation of RCW <a href="#">28A.600.420</a>;</p> <p>(b) An offense in RCW <a href="#">13.04.155</a>; (c) Two or more violations of RCW <a href="#">9A.46.120</a>, <a href="#">9.41.280</a>, <a href="#">28A.600.455</a>, <a href="#">28A.635.020</a>, or <a href="#">28A.635.060</a> within a three-year period; or</p> <p>(d) Behavior that adversely impacts the health or safety of other students or educational staff.</p>
<p><b>Why</b> was the term emergency expulsion <b>changed to emergency removal</b>?</p>	<p>In 2023, Washington State law (<a href="#">RCW 28A.600.495</a>) updated the terminology from "emergency expulsion" to "emergency removal" to better reflect the nature of the action. The law affirms that schools have the authority to immediately remove a student who poses</p>

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	<p>an immediate and ongoing danger to others or causes significant disruption to the educational process.</p> <p>Emergency removal is limited to a maximum of 10 consecutive school days. During this period, the student must have access to educational services. Additionally, both the emergency removal and any subsequent suspension or expulsion can be appealed.</p> <p>The legislature recognized that the term “emergency expulsion” can harm a student’s reputation and lead to negative assumptions, potentially resulting in harassment or bullying. To avoid this, the term “emergency removal” is now used to emphasize that this is a temporary action intended to allow for proper assessment and response to urgent situations.</p>
<p>How will <b>families and community members</b> be <b>involved</b> in the implementation of the updated student discipline rules?</p>	<p>Local school leaders have a responsibility to actively create and implement meaningful opportunities for engagement with educators, families, and community members. This collaboration ensures that diverse perspectives inform school policies and practices, promoting a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. In accordance with WAC 392-190-048, school boards are required to regularly review discipline data to identify any patterns of disproportionality or disparities among student groups. When such disparities are found, school boards must respond promptly and effectively by developing and implementing strategies to address these inequities. This process supports the district’s commitment to fairness, equity, and culturally responsive education for all students. By combining ongoing community engagement with data-driven accountability, school leaders and boards work to ensure equitable treatment and positive outcomes for every student.</p>
<p>How will school districts <b>implement</b> the updated student discipline rules?</p>	<p>School districts shall actively collaborate with their respective local school boards to conduct comprehensive reviews and necessary updates of existing student discipline policies and procedures. This collaborative effort aims to ensure that district practices are fully aligned with current legal requirements, state regulations, and best practices in student discipline.</p>

Question	Answer
	<p>Through this partnership, districts and school boards will work to strengthen policy coherence and clarity, thereby supporting the effective and consistent implementation of disciplinary measures across all schools. This process is essential to promoting equitable, transparent, and accountable discipline practices that foster safe and supportive learning environments for all students.</p>