

OLD FORGE SCHOOL DISTRICT



STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Old Forge School District Student Code of Conduct
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1. Discipline Philosophy

The Old Forge School District (OFSD) takes a restorative, positive approach to discipline rather than focusing exclusively on “punishment.” We respond to misbehavior with interventions and consequences aimed at teaching alternative expected positive behaviors, understanding and addressing the root causes of the behavior. By resolving conflicts and repairing any harm, we are meeting students’ needs and keeping students in school. OFSD takes deliberate steps to create a positive school climate in which every student can learn, fully engage in a rigorous curriculum, and feel safe, nurtured, and welcome. In our district, we utilize school discipline as an opportunity for teaching, repairing relationships and fostering growth among the whole school community.

Our philosophy is non-punitive, holistic, and inclusive of multiple, diverse perspectives. We use a restorative discipline approach that emphasizes relationships and community above rules and regulations. This is not a “soft” response to misbehavior nor does it fail to hold students accountable. Rather, restorative discipline helps students understand the impact of their behavior both on themselves and on others. Students also learn social and emotional skills to help them respond differently in the future. Through the use of restorative discipline, we resolve conflicts, encourage our school community members to take responsibility for their behavior, repair any harm done, restore relationships, and reintegrate students into the school community.

We use schoolwide discipline policies developed and revised with meaningful input by the school community to create a positive and inclusive school climate for everyone. We are committed to applying school discipline policies and practices in a fair and equitable manner so as not to disproportionately impact students of color, students with disabilities, LGB/T students, students with limited English proficiency, or other at-risk students that have been historically marginalized in schools.

2. Rights and Responsibilities

Students have the right and responsibility to:

- be respected as an individual and treated courteously, fairly and respectfully by other students and school staff;
- treat teachers, staff, other students, themselves and property with respect;
- take part in all school activities on an equal basis regardless of race, religion, religious practices, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, national origin, ethnic group, political affiliation, age, marital status, or disability; and
- attend school daily, be prepared for class and complete assignments to the best of their ability.

Parents have the right and responsibility to:

- be informed of their child’s attendance, performance and behavior concerns;
- receive information and prompt notification of inappropriate or disruptive behaviors by their child and any disciplinary actions taken by principals or school staff and have a voice in how to address them in a proactive manner;
- assure their child brings to school only those things that are appropriate in a school setting;
- inform school personnel of any issues that may impact the educational experiences of their child; and

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- participate in decision-making processes affecting school policies and procedures and the educational success of their child.

Teachers, principals and school staff have the right and responsibility to:

- establish a sense of community in the classroom, including opportunities for members of the school community to learn about and be respectful of each other's cultures;
- be knowledgeable about federal and state laws and regulations about the disciplinary process for students with disabilities and for all students;
- enforce the policies, rules, and regulations of the district, school, classroom, and code of conduct, including preventive and positive disciplinary policies in cooperation with students, parents/guardians, and administrators;
- communicate policies, expectations, and concerns to students and parents/ guardians, and respond to complaints or concerns from students and parents/ guardians in a timely manner and in a language they understand;
- engage parents when their child is subject to disciplinary action; and
- seek and receive support in preventing and responding to student behaviors in a supportive manner, including classroom and behavioral management strategies.

District administrators have the responsibility to:

- provide support and professional development training to principals and school staff to help them support all students, including students with disabilities and other special needs, particularly in areas of classroom/behavior management and instructional supports;
- ensure discipline policies are in compliance with civil rights laws, state and federal legislation and best practices in school discipline; and
- monitor discipline data to identify, investigate and address any disparities between students on the basis of disability, race, gender, or other student characteristics and to address unnecessary rates of school exclusion for all students.

3. Participation and Collaboration

The OFSD provides structured opportunities for all stakeholders in our educational community to obtain information, help make decisions, and participate in the educational process. By stakeholders we mean: students, parents, guardians, district and school staff members, teachers, school-based mental health professionals, administrators, members of the school board, and community members. We recognize that involvement of these various stakeholders in our educational community is essential to the success of our school or district, and we actively foster engagement with parents, families and community members.

Notification & Communication

At the beginning of each school year, our schools provide to parents and guardians an electronic copy of our student handbook, which contains our student code of conduct and other important policy guidelines and procedures, as part of the school orientation process on the student's first day of school. Our student handbooks are updated annually and made available online on our district or school's website.

We clearly communicate our policies and behavioral expectations to all school stakeholders by:

- displaying our positive behavioral expectations prominently in a highly trafficked area of our school with expectations specific to each setting (e.g. hallways, bathrooms, etc.);

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- teaching these expectations and discipline policies in an age-appropriate manner, as well as acknowledge positive expected behaviors;
- conducting follow-up schoolwide teaching lessons based on data review and schoolwide need, as necessary;
- developing classroom-based expectations and conducting classroom lessons on the behavioral expectations and discipline policies at least twice a year; Conducting classroom lessons more frequently as needed, based on data and classroom need; and
- holding informational sessions for all or specific groups, including one before the start of the school year regarding the student code of conduct and seeking input on the behavioral expectations for the entire school.

Feedback and Evaluation

We routinely evaluate our policies and procedures to make sure they are effective. We also regularly conduct a comprehensive review, at a minimum once every three years, by inviting the full participation of all stakeholders. We readjust as necessary our policies and procedures with meaningful input from all stakeholders and based on a review of data that informs our revision process.

4. Prevention, Intervention and Disciplinary Responses

4A. Discipline Framework

Within a restorative framework for discipline, our district provides proactive, differentiated interventions for students. These interventions are aimed at addressing the root causes of students' behaviors and focus on teaching behaviors rather than excluding students for punishment. Challenging behaviors must be addressed in the context of a comprehensive, multi-level approach to behavior support that is designed to teach, nurture, and encourage positive social behaviors.

We offer academic, behavioral, mental health, and social-emotional interventions and supports for students who have fallen behind academically and/or are being disciplined. We use schoolwide positive behavior support, social-emotional learning, and restorative practices. We seek to identify students who are at risk of dropping out or being pushed out of school, using a systematic review of already existing data (e.g. course failures, discipline referrals, and attendance).

We limit the use of out-of-school student discipline to keep students connected to school so that they may graduate high school and be college- and/or career-ready. Every situation will be judged after gathering and analyzing the facts and surrounding circumstances carefully and objectively. Our schools redirect students to correct inappropriate behavior, teach positive and expected behaviors and minimize the possibility of the behavior escalating or recurring.

The OFSD recognizes that a safe, civil school environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve. To ensure the physical and emotional safety of all our students, our district has adopted a bullying prevention policy that is readily available for all stakeholders on our district website. As part of that policy, we seek to prevent, respond to, and put an end to bullying behavior by students and adults using interventions and supports that reflect a commitment to our restorative discipline philosophy. Our focus is on teaching, rather than punishing, by engaging in restorative practices to repair relationships. We emphasize age-appropriate responses that help educate and rehabilitate the student responsible, while fully addressing the impact of the bullying on the targeted student.

4B. Approach to Student Behaviors

Our goal is to create a safe and supportive environment where all students can develop the academic, social, and emotional skills needed to become engaged citizens. Therefore, we are committed to addressing challenges in student conduct in the most constructive way possible. The goal of school discipline is to be instructional and corrective so as to reduce the likelihood of behaviors reoccurring.

Out-of-school suspensions and expulsions are the most serious form of disciplinary consequence and should be used only as a last resort and for legitimate educational purposes. When an incident occurs, consideration shall be given first as to whether the incident can be appropriately addressed using a restorative practice, through behavior support practices, or through another available, appropriate intervention that will enable the student to remain in school. To prevent students from being excluded from school unnecessarily, school staff must attempt non-exclusionary discipline prior to using out-of-school suspensions or expulsions, except in exigent and emergency situations involving school safety.

Our discipline approach is tailored to the individual incident and varies in method and severity according to the nature of the behavior, the age and developmental level of the student, and the student's history of problem behaviors and performance. We use the approach illustrated in the graphic below as a means to identify classroom-based responses or other supports and interventions that can be used instead of suspension or expulsion.

Our District or School Does Not...

- Use zero-tolerance policies that require school staff to suspend or expel students for certain behaviors except if required by law (for example, for certain offenses involving weapons). This means out-of-school suspension cannot be a minimum or required consequence for any other offense. Therefore, our district encourages the use of alternative approaches to zero tolerance. We support staff in delivering alternatives to suspension and expulsion, with a focus on restorative practices and the teaching of desired behaviors that will promote future success.
- Advise or encourage students to drop out voluntarily due to behavioral or academic difficulties or to leave the school voluntarily in order to avoid formal disciplinary proceedings through either formal or informal "push out" procedures.
- Issue a monetary fee or fine as a disciplinary consequence, although students can be asked to pay for lost, stolen or damaged property.
- Use corporal punishment.
- Use restraint or seclusion for punishment or discipline.

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