

PBIS and the Student Code of Conduct

Introduction

A student code of conduct is intended to teach students that there are consequences for violating behavior norms while under the supervision of educators. A student code of conduct, among other things, publishes a list of unacceptable student behaviors that interfere with the learning environment and the successful operation of the school day. A corresponding and progressive list of possible consequences is defined within a student code of conduct with the intent to promote a safe learning environment.

Georgia law (O.G.C.A. § 20-2-735) requires that all local boards of education adopt a student code of conduct including standards of student behavior and disciplinary action for students who violate the code of conduct. Georgia law also requires school systems to provide an opportunity for parental involvement in developing and updating student codes of conduct.

Need for Balance

When student misconduct becomes a top concern within a school district, more often than not, local boards of education are inclined to expand upon their local student code of conduct by increasing their zero tolerance policies, list of unacceptable behaviors and responses to such violations. There is little evidence that this response is improving desired outcomes in schools. However, there is evidence that such responses are contributing to a negative school and district climate.

At all times, local boards of education should comply with Georgia law as it relates to student misbehavior, but local boards of education should also balance their codes of conduct with the best evidenced-based practices related to behavior support. Balance is needed in addressing what state law says must be in local code and what research says is needed to promote and encourage positive behaviors necessary for student success.

Historically, local boards of education have tended to focus on individual situations or individual student behavior rather than the entire school climate. However, as districts become aware of evidence-based practices, they should reframe their codes in research and evidence-based language. Local boards of education and schools are encouraged to adopt practices that are more proactive and less reactive in the ways they define, teach, and sustain appropriate student behaviors needed for student success.

PBIS

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is an evidence-based framework that helps schools design effective environments and supports that, when implemented with fidelity, increase teaching and learning opportunities for all students.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines discipline as “training that is expected to produce a specific character or pattern of behaviors, especially training that produces moral or mental improvement.” This is the focus of PBIS. Like reading and math, behavior can be taught and since 2008, Georgia’s PBIS team at the GaDOE has worked with over 40 Georgia district’s involving over 400 schools to prevent or reduce problem behaviors while creating more positive learning environments for all students. Georgia’s PBIS schools report reduced discipline rates and increased learning opportunities in their classrooms. This work involves helping districts build the necessary framework to promote positive outcomes for all students over time.

PBIS Framed Student Codes of Conduct

Many districts across the nation are revising their local student codes of conduct to reflect the need to balance their legal obligations with the best evidence-based practices available.

Below is a sample list from various states that have added language from the evidence-based framework known as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) explicitly within their local student codes of conduct. This is an encouraging development. The list below is not comprehensive, but will be updated as information is made available to the GaPBIS team.

The GaPBIS unit within the Georgia Department of Education is dedicated to improving school climate and instructional outcomes in Georgia's schools. Georgia's local boards of education are encouraged to frame their discipline structures around evidence-based practices like PBIS within their local student codes of conduct to aid schools in achieving better student outcomes. **This list was updated 10/28/2013.**

Florida

- Collier County: <http://www.collier.k12.fl.us/ihs/docs/Code%20of%20Conduct.pdf>
- Miami-Dade: http://ehandbooks.dadeschools.net/policies/90/csc_sec.pdf
- Palm Beach County: <http://www.palmbeachschools.org/ssci/StudentCodeofConduct.asp>

Georgia

- Lincoln County: <http://www.lincolncountyschools.org/common/pages/DisplayFile.aspx?itemId=2290460>

Maryland

- Anne Arundel County Public Schools: <http://www.aacps.org/html/studt/studenthandbook.pdf>

New York

- Spencerport Central School District:
[http://www.spencerportschools.org/files/4910/code%20of%20conduct%202013-14%20adopted%20\(updated\)%20\(ar\).pdf](http://www.spencerportschools.org/files/4910/code%20of%20conduct%202013-14%20adopted%20(updated)%20(ar).pdf)

North Carolina

- Chapel Hill City Schools: http://www.chccs.k12.nc.us/www/CHCCS/site/hosting/Code-of-Conduct/Code_of_Conduct_CHCCS.pdf

Wisconsin

- Madison Metropolitan School District: https://boeweb.madison.k12.wi.us/files/boe/Appx%2012-11_0.pdf