



**TASK FORCE ON STUDENT DISCIPLINE REGULATIONS  
MARCH 28, 2019**

**ADMINISTRATOR'S PANEL**

**Ms. Rebecca Amstutz**

*Assistant Principal, Leonardtown Middle School, St. Mary's County Public Schools*

**Mrs. Lori Austin**

*Assistant Principal, Waugh Chapel Elementary School, Anne Arundel County Public Schools*

**Ms. Nicole Bolden**

*Assistant Principal, Milton Somers Middle School, Charles County Public Schools*

**Mr. James Funkhowser**

*Assistant Principal, Rockland Woods Elementary School, Washington County Public Schools*

**Ms. Jennifer Gasdia**

*Assistant Principal, Havre de Grace Elementary School, Harford County Public Schools*

**Mr. Reggie Gunter**

*Assistant Principal, Monocacy Middle School, Frederick County Public Schools*

**Mrs. Rebecca Miller**

*Assistant Principal, Bay View Elementary School, Cecil County Public Schools*

**Mr. Travis Mister**

*Assistant Principal, Plum Point Middle School, Calvert County Public Schools*

**Mr. Ken Popp**

*Dean of Students, Wicomico High School, Wicomico County Public Schools*

**Mrs. Stacey Royster**

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**Ms. Connie Stahler**

*Assistant Principal, Laurel Woods Elementary School, Howard County Public Schools*

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**ADMINISTRATORS PANEL**

**GENERAL EXPERIENCES**

1. What are the greatest challenges you face as it relates to student behavior? What kinds of supports – either from the state or your local district -- would help you overcome those challenges?
2. Maryland Public Schools' discipline data show that most out-of-school suspensions in Maryland are for non-violent offenses such as insubordination, disrespect, or continued class disruptions. Should students be suspended (in-school or out-of-school) for non-violent behavior?
  - a. If so, under what circumstances would this be appropriate?
  - b. If not, what other actions could be taken?
3. By a show of hands....How many would say that most of the discipline problems that confront you during any given day is with those who could be called "repeat offenders."

**SERVICES/INTERVENTIONS AND ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES**

4. What educational services are provided to students who receive out of school suspensions?
5. What alternative programs does your school offer in the place of suspension? Explain. What are the pros and cons of the program?
6. Several school districts have established alternative schools. By a show of hands, which counties have alternative schools? For elementary students? For secondary students?
7. Please tell us what behaviors could result in students being assigned to an alternative school in your district and what is the process or steps involved? How long do students remain, and what is the process for their return to regular schools?
8. In your experience, has a placement in an alternative school been rehabilitative? Are you familiar with the programs or strategies that the staff uses with students in the alternative schools?

**UNDERSTANDING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY/GUIDELINES**

9. On a scale of 1 (little knowledge) to 5 (very knowledgeable), how familiar are you with COMAR [**Code of Maryland Regulations**] dealing with school discipline? Do you have access to a copy?

10. What is your major concern regarding the current rules and regulations on suspensions that are in place by the state?
11. Have MSDE regulations been possibly interpreted as meaning “no suspensions for any reason?”
12. What is your understanding in COMAR pertaining suspensions for students with IEPs?
13. What specific regulations, if any, do you feel are detrimental to students, educators, and/or the safety of public schools?

### **IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS**

14. Does excluding misbehaving students either through out-of-school suspensions or in-school suspensions improve student behavior or improve the safety of your school?
  - a. If so, how does it help?
  - b. If not, what else could be done to improve behavior or safety?
15. It appears that many across the state are seeing an increase in physical aggression of younger students (PreK-2) towards staff, however state law limits the use of suspension for this age group.
  - a. Have you seen similar changes in your younger populations, and how are you responding to those changes?
16. Reports to the board in 2012 cited data showing that school discipline disproportionately impacted students of color and students with disabilities. In addition, current MSDE data shows that school discipline disproportionately impacts boys, especially boys of color.
  - a. Do you see this happening in your school or district? If so, what do you think could be the cause?
  - b. What strategies could be used to help reverse this trend?
17. Some research studies indicate a negative relationship between the use of school suspensions/expulsions and school-wide academic achievement. Could you comment on those findings?

### **BEST PRACTICES**

18. What strategies or innovative practices are used at your school or other schools in your district that have proven effective in decreasing discipline problems and improving school climate?
19. Restorative Practices and PBIS – among others - have received much attention and are being advocated for use in Maryland schools.
  - a. Which of these does your school use?

- b. If not these, what other similar programs?
- c. How effective are they in improving behavior and your school environment?

### **STUDENT, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT**

20. By a show of hands....How many would say that the cause of most of the discipline problems in your school are caused by your boys.
- a. What have been some of the challenging behaviors you or your teachers have experienced with your male students?
21. Research studies have shown that schools utilizing proactive measures to identify and intervene early with at-risk youth, especially boys, show some success in controlling the behavior of difficult children.
- a. What are some proactive measures used in your school or schools in your district to identify and intervene early with at-risk youth?
22. Those same studies have shown those schools that attempt to foster positive community relations by involving parents show some success in controlling the behavior of difficult children.
- a. Could you share how your school or schools in your district attempt to form positive community relations and involve your parents?
23. Some districts have seen an increase of problems due to the lack of parental support, accountability, and responsibility. What should be the school's or district's response when this occurs?
24. Overall how supportive are parents when their student is suspended or when they are contacted due to their student's negative behavior? Please elaborate.
25. Do you have partnerships with community entities to provide support for students who frequently violate the code of conduct?
- a. If so, were these in place before the MSDE regulations were changed in 2014 or after?
  - b. Is there funding to support the partnerships?
  - c. Do the partnerships meet the needs of all students?

### **DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES, PRACTICES, AND IMPLICATIONS**

26. What factors do you consider when determining an appropriate consequence for a student when he/she violates the code of conduct?
27. Do you believe there are offenses that should result in an automatic suspension? Automatic request for expulsion?
28. Does your school implement in-school interventions, in-school suspension, or both?
- a. If you have in-school **interventions**, how are they structured or coordinated? Who in your school is given this responsibility?

- b. If you have in-school **suspension**, how is it structured? Who in your school is given this responsibility?
29. When a student is suspended from school what is the readmit process at your school and who are involved?

**TEACHER TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

30. The Board is currently reviewing academic and training requirements for teacher certification and renewals (soon to be called teacher *licensing*).

What professional development or training should teachers be required to have...

- a. ...to better prepare them to work with culturally diverse student populations?
  - b. ...to establish a safe and orderly environment in their classes?
  - c. ...to support the school's discipline plan?
31. How could teachers in your school or district help decrease the number of discipline problems that possibly lead to suspensions/expulsions?
32. What **pre-discipline referral** strategies has your school implemented?
- a. How successful have these been? What are teachers expected to do before referring a student to the administrator?

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

33. Please give us **THREE** recommendations that if enacted immediately could help every school in Maryland maintain a safe and orderly environment where teachers could teach, children could learn, and the administrative team could focus on being instructional leaders.