



SKOKIE 73.5

Elizabeth Meyer School • John Middleton Elementary School • Oliver McCracken Middle School

Office of the Superintendent

Dr. Zipporah Hightower
Superintendent

August 17, 2023

Dear Skokie School District 73.5 Families,

We hope you and your family have been enjoying your summer. In an effort to begin the school year in a positive and proactive manner, we are sharing our detailed District Behavior Response Protocol with all stakeholders. Our first priority is to provide a safe and welcome learning environment for all of our students and staff.

Each school utilizes a tiered behavior management system with both proactive and reactive strategies. This requires both clear communication and explicit teaching of expected behaviors throughout the school year. Our approach to student behavior is restorative and we strive to treat all incidents as learning experiences with opportunities to repair and restore relationships. We understand that students may struggle with decision making which is developmentally appropriate for this age group. Each behavior incident is handled in an equitable and respectful manner to allow for all students to receive individualized support. In addition to providing increased supports, students may also earn consequences based on gathered evidence related to any behavior incident report. Consequences are aligned to Board of Education disciplinary policies as well as State and Federal guidelines. Per the Illinois School Student Records Act and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, except in emergency situations where there is an articulable and significant threat, disclosure of student information is limited to those school professionals who have an educational or administrative interest in the student in furtherance of that interest, and is not shared with school professionals who do not interact with the student, with other students or other students' parents/guardians.

Over the last year, we have observed an increase in hate language being used by our students to target peers in inappropriate and disrespectful ways. Some of this language was offensive, racist,

homophobic, sexist, and anti-Semitic. Some students view comments they state as “funny” and may express that they were “only kidding” and did not mean any intentional harm. This reasoning is not a valid excuse for using offensive language. All reports made to staff and administration must be taken in a serious manner and appropriately investigated. When there is evidence of repeated and targeted harassment focused on one or more students this is when it rises to the threshold of bullying behavior and will be addressed by school administration in a swift manner to support any alleged victims. We have an obligation to protect all of the students in our schools and we will continue to be committed to providing an inclusive and safe environment to allow for students to reach their full academic and social and emotional potential.

We look forward to partnering with families and students during the 2023-2024 school year. Please see the information below reviewing our general behavior procedures as well as accompanying policies and legislation governing these protocols. In addition, we have listed our proactive behavioral supports. Please note that each behavior incident is individualized based on the specific situation and the individual student characteristics and needs.

Procedures for Addressing Concerning Student Behavior

- A thorough investigation by administration is initiated when any student or staff disciplinary report is received.
- If a report received by administration concerns bullying, the school will make diligent efforts to notify the parent/guardian of all students involved in the alleged incident of bullying within 24 hours after administration is made aware of the student's involvement. For more information about bullying, please see Board of Education Policy 7:180 on the District's website.
- Administration gathers pertinent information related to the report.
 - Relevant students and staff are interviewed and/or asked to submit witness statements related to the alleged incident.
 - Administration may reach out to members of the student support team (school psychologist and social workers) to provide social and emotional support to the student if needed.
 - Administration may communicate and involve any District staff members if warranted (Director of Student Services, Superintendent, etc.).

- If the report alleges an immediate safety concern, the student who may pose a direct threat is identified and isolated to the school office for safety.
 - The student, personal belongings, and lockers may be searched if there is evidence to suggest that the student possesses any weapon.
 - Outside agencies may be contacted for support (Skokie Police Department, DCFS, etc.)
 - Available camera footage is reviewed for clarity and evidence.
 - Parents/guardians are contacted to share details of the reported incident.
 - Parents/guardians may be asked to report to the building to pick up the student or participate in a conference.
 - Student records are reviewed to reveal any patterns or trends
 - Using this data, school administrators can determine whether the behaviors are bullying behaviors or individual peer conflicts.
 - A Risk Assessment and/or Threat Assessment is completed by trained staff and administration when there is evidence of possible harm to self or others.
- Appropriate consequences may be issued in accordance with District disciplinary policies, state and federal laws, and SB 100 legislation.
 - Any recommended exclusionary consequences are communicated to the superintendent for approval.
 - If a student is issued an out of school suspension there is a re-entry meeting held with the student, parent, administration, and student support team member.
 - If a student has an IEP/504, administration will reach out to the special education team to determine if the student requires additional services and/or to determine if an IEP meeting needs to be scheduled
 - This could result in an increase in special education services, change of placement, the review/addition of a Behavior Intervention Plan, etc.
 - Relevant staff are notified of the reported incident, investigation, and next steps are shared as soon as possible.
 - Relevant staff are members of the student's educational team who would need to know information about the student in accordance with student rights to confidentiality.

The District is required to consider rights students have to a public education in the least restrictive environment.

The District takes the student rights included below into account when investigating, analyzing, and addressing student threats.

- **Senate Bill 100:** The School Code requires that for both students with and without disabilities, schools must minimize exclusionary discipline. Before excluding a student from school, the District must attempt appropriate and available interventions and before expelling a student who is a threat to the school environment, the District must exhaust appropriate, available interventions. Interventions may include, for example, counseling services, behavior intervention plans, restorative justice techniques, safety plans, referral to mental health care, and shorter suspensions from school.
- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504):** Except in limited circumstances, for students with IEPs or Section 504 Plans, the District is unable to change a student's placement for disciplinary reasons without parent agreement if the IEP team determines that the student's behavior was caused by or had a direct and substantial relationship to the student's disability. Threat assessments also take into account a student's disability, developmental level, and emotional maturity.
- **Least Restrictive Environment:** The IDEA and Section 504 also require that a student be educated in the least restrictive environment where he or she can receive educational benefit. Schools are required to attempt positive supports, aids and interventions before moving a student to a more restrictive placement.
- **Illinois School Student Records Act and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act:** Except in emergency situations where there is an articulable and significant threat, disclosure of student information is limited to those school professionals who have an educational or administrative interest in the student in furtherance of that interest, and is not shared with school professionals who do not interact with the student, with other students or other students' parents.
- **Board of Education Policies:** The District acts in accordance with Policies 7:190, 7:180 and 7:230, which incorporate the laws described above, as well as Policy 4:190.

PROACTIVE BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS	
<p>Second Step Curriculum</p> <p>Everyday Speech</p>	<p>District-wide grade-level specific social and emotional curricula aligned to the Illinois Social and Emotional Learning Standards.</p> <p>Examples of standards/skills covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Empathy and Communication ● Bullying Prevention ● Emotional Management ● Goal Setting ● Digital Citizenship and Cyberbullying ● Problem Solving
<p>Zones of Regulation</p>	<p>Social emotional learning that helps students identify and manage feelings, providing common language for communication, problem solving, and emotional understanding.</p>
<p>Digital Citizenship Curriculum</p>	<p>District adopted the Digital Citizenship Curriculum from Common Sense Media. Topics include online identity, safety, chatting safely online, online hate speech, cyberbullying, and digital footprints.</p>
<p>CHAMPS/MAC</p>	<p>Classroom Management System implemented by all staff to clearly define expected behaviors related to conversation, help, activity, movement, participation, leading to student success throughout a variety of instructional settings</p>
<p>PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention Supports)</p>	<p>Students receive explicit teaching and reteaching of expected behaviors in common areas throughout the building. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safe use of technology ● Bathrooms, hallways, stairs ● Arrival/dismissal ● Before and after school activities ● Office procedures ● Cafeteria and recess ● Bus

PROACTIVE BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS	
Parent/Student Handbook (Middleton/McCracken)	At the beginning of the year and at regular intervals teachers/advisors review sections of the parent/student handbook with students that includes student behavior and discipline.
Data Review/Curriculum	Each trimester staff reviews the discipline data to identify existing trends or patterns and creates an action plan specific to their grade level.
ADL No Place for Hate	The District is also researching curriculum to be used across the District to reinforce expected behaviors related to equity. Specifically the District is considering ADL No Place for Hate programming.
Anonymous Student Safety Form	Our Schools are committed to providing a safe, comfortable learning environment for all students. We have preventative programs such as Second Step, PBIS, CHAMPS, social and emotional skill groups, care cards and peer mediation that combat peer conflict. However, with an increasingly digital world, we want to provide students, families, and community members with an opportunity to make reports using our online student safety reporting form. This form encourages students, parents, and staff to report serious safety concerns to administration confidentially. An example for using this form may include, but are not limited to, bullying, bias, or unsafe behavior.
Care Cards (McCracken and Middleton)	This card provides students with a discreet opportunity to communicate with staff about incidents of bullying or teasing so that we may provide the needed support.

PBIS (POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS)	
Restorative Practices	Restorative practices provide peers with the opportunity to solve a conflict through a conference facilitated by a trusted adult. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Restorative reflections ● Restorative circles ● Peer mediation ● Conflict resolution
School Assemblies	PBIS assemblies provide school-wide, predictable events that build a positive school culture and publicly celebrate positive student behaviors.
Behavior Matrix	Each school-wide has a behavior matrix that outlines expectations in every part of the building.
Behavior Incentives	Our schools provide incentives to students for exhibiting positive behavior. Rewards vary from school to school.
McCracken Postcards/Spotlight on Success Certificates	McCracken students are eligible to earn a wide variety of honors for their success in school! This includes Spotlight on Success, which recognizes students' academic growth and achievement. Each month, teachers celebrate the many students who have demonstrated academic success in each grade level to honor them for making progress toward learning standards, meeting or extending learning standards, demonstrating great interest in a particular subject area, and/or demonstrating a growth mindset. Students are also acknowledged for a variety of reasons by individual teachers and administrators throughout the year with positive postcards.

**View the District Behavior Response Protocol on our website at
www.sd735.org/behavior**