

# Richland School District Two's Discipline Task Force

2015 Report to Executive Staff

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## **Task Force Purpose**

To provide a guide for the district to use in order to work positively with students, teachers, administrators, and the community to improve student discipline.

## **Task Force Activities**

The first meeting was held on August 5, 2014. During this meeting, the team reviewed student discipline trend data and determined that the purpose/goal of the Richland School District Two Discipline Task Force is to provide a guide for the district to use in order to work positively with students, teachers, administrators, and the community to improve student discipline.

The second meeting was held on November 7, 2014. During this meeting, the team studied literature pertaining to the concept of the “School to Prison Pipeline” and literature pertaining to federal guidelines for discipline. A key document for use was “Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline” from the U. S. Department of Education. This document was used as a main resource for developing a guide for the district to use in order to work positively with students, teachers, administrators, and the community to improve student discipline. Subcommittees were developed and charged with researching and developing recommendations for the proposed guide. Subcommittee objectives, taken from task force discussion feedback back, were as follows:

- Subcommittee #1: Provide alternatives for addressing misbehavior in a manner that does not require removal from a learning environment.
- Subcommittee #2: Provide for social and emotional learning.
- Subcommittee #3: Provide training on the understanding of disciplinary procedures.
- Subcommittee #4: Involve the community in providing a positive learning environment for students.
- Subcommittee #5: Provide teachers with research-based strategies on the use of positive behavior supports for at-risk students.
- Subcommittee #6: Ensure that school resource officers serve in a preventive role for school discipline.
- Subcommittee #7: Ensure that schools become transparent with their discipline data.
- Subcommittee #8: Implement a district-wide cultural awareness initiative.

Each subcommittee was presented with a work template, a work plan, and guided questions with the expectations of presenting their report at the next meeting.

Several subcommittee meetings were held to prepare presentations.

The next full Richland School District Two Discipline Task Force meeting was held on February 6, 2015. During this meeting, each subcommittee presented their recommendations of what should be included in the guide for the district to use in order to work positively with students, teachers, administrators, and the community to improve student discipline.

After the presentations, a representative from each committee was selected to prepare the guide. Each subcommittee representative entered their subcommittee recommendations in google docs to be viewed by all other representatives. Next, the representatives met on March 2, 2015 and March 20, 2015 to streamline and formalize the recommendations. Below, using the “Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline” from the U. S. Department of Education, as a resource, is a guide of recommendations for Richland School District Two to use in order to work positively with students, teachers, administrators, and the community to improve student discipline.

## **Recommendations**

**Guiding Principle 1: Climate and Prevention: Districts that foster positive school climates can help to engage all students in learning by preventing problem behaviors and intervening effectively to support struggling and at-risk students. (Ex: Use evidence-based prevention strategies; provide regular trainings for administrative/support personnel; use support of school-based law enforcement officers for reducing inappropriate referrals to law enforcement; engage the support of the community)**

### Recommendations

1. Recommendation: RSD2 should provide training for staff members in the following areas in order to give them skills in the promotion of positive behavior in students. This training will include:

- cultural awareness and competence
- the core competencies of Trauma Informed Care
- appropriate developmental expectations for students of various ages and how disabilities and life experiences impact development
- effective classroom management strategies with inclusion of appropriate prevention strategies, de-escalation techniques, debriefing procedures, and other identified areas
- the infusion of social emotional skill acquisition into classroom instruction, e.g., teaching of classroom responsibilities, behavioral expectations, problem solving skills, group interaction skills; use of service learning opportunities, etc.
- strategies to develop positive relationships with all students and to assist staff in identifying strengths and positive traits of all students
- student distress and early warning signs of mental illness

2. Recommendation: RSD2 should implement the use of a multi-tiered system of support for promotion of positive behaviors in every school, including the following steps:

- use of behavioral data to choose, implement, and evaluate tiered interventions and to plan appropriate interventions. Use of behavioral teams at every school to insure the use of tiered supports for behavior. Use of FBA/BIPs for Tier 3 interventions for students with multiple suspensions
- research the use of multi-tiered approaches to discipline in other districts; how R2 might implement a more systematic utilization of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in our schools.

- mentor students that need another positive influence in their lives. Provide district coordination of mentoring programs to include district-wide events with access to community resources
- design of an assessment of behavioral practices appropriate for all levels: elementary, middle and high. Assessment of our strengths, priorities, and next steps by school site.
- review of effectiveness of IAT implementation and provision of appropriate training
- widespread educational interventions addressing decision making about alcohol, drugs, and sexual relationships
- RSD2 should enhance communication with SROs to reinforce the goal of avoiding criminal charges for students:
- SRO Command Staff should be invited to school administrators annual meeting at the beginning of each year to address the group and educate new administrators and teachers about what the role of an SRO is and what is expected from them.

3. Recommendation: RSD2 through its Learning Support Services Team should develop a strong support system for students and staff members that fosters positive social and emotional maturity at all levels, with the following suggestions for accomplishing this:

- implementation district-wide of the National Model of a Comprehensive Developmental School Counseling Program developed by the American School Counselors Association (ASCA); model promotes the use of school counselors for social emotional development of all students and provides guidelines for counselors in the foundations, delivery, management, and accountability of a school counseling program.
- identification of appropriate ratios of staffing for members of the LSS teams at each school (counselors, social workers, nurses, psychologists, family intervention counselors) and mechanisms for implementing this plan.
- identification of exemplary and evidence-based programs that teach social and emotional competencies and include evaluations of program effectiveness; scheduled visits to schools that have implemented these programs
- collaboration between school administrative and LSS teams on development and use of strategies to include LSS staff members in provision of support for students with challenging behaviors and teachers experiencing challenging classroom environments.
- continued positive focus on the provision of family interventions and study of other means of supporting students and families with family services/parenting interventions/family opportunities, etc.

4. Recommendation: RSD2 staff should enhance collaboration with community agencies to increase services to schools, families, and students with such suggestions as:

- compile, keep, and update a list of community resources, their contact information, and the services they are willing to give. They should also identify whether the services are preventative, rehabilitative, or deterrent/punishment.
- have a designated person/team at the district level who maintains the community resource list and aids administrative staff, teachers, and support staff in connecting with community resources. This person/team would also be pivotal in maintaining and fostering community involvement.
- develop a clear procedure for starting relationships with community resources and a clear

procedure for administration, teachers, and support staff reaching out and working with community resources. This allows clear communication and understanding which fosters commitment in a positive way.

- make administrators, teachers and support staff aware of the different community resources available to aid schools prevent and repair negative behaviors by students. There is no need to reinvent the wheel if there is a good community program out there that can help. Encourage administrators and teachers to seek out community partners for help.
- develop a clear procedure for starting relationships with community resources and a clear procedure for administration, teachers, and support staff reaching out and working with community resources.
- ask students, parents, and established community partners to recommend/suggest new community resources so RCSD2 is always optimizing its options to provide students with needed services.
- Develop a procedure or process for feedback/input regarding community resources both from the schools, students, and the community partners.
- Implementation of regular data analysis and review for use of different community resources. Partner with the community resources if they are already collecting this data. This helps both sides be more effective and gain more funding to be able to continue helping the students.

5. Recommendation: RSD2 should implement activities that directly foster multicultural awareness with activities such as:

- implement a district-wide celebration of multicultural awareness
- ensure that courses are evaluated for cultural awareness in access for students, curriculum resources, etc.

**Guiding Principle 2: Clear, Appropriate, and Consistent Expectations and Consequences: Districts that have discipline policies or codes of conduct with clear, appropriate, and consistently applied expectations and consequences will help students improve behavior, increase engagement, and boost achievement. (Ex: Provide instructional approach to discipline; involve families, students, and school personnel, and communicate regularly and clearly; ensure clear, developmentally appropriate consequences; create policies with appropriate procedures for students with disabilities; remove students from classroom only as last resort)**

#### Recommendations

Recommendation 6: RSD2 should initiate discipline procedures designed to increase consistency across the district and ensure that the district's discipline program is effective while promoting a positive social atmosphere.

- revisit and clearly define language in the code of conduct to ensure there is no ambiguity.
- create, implement, and monitor a consistent set of consequences for infractions at each level (elementary, middle, and high).
- examination of the language used in discipline referrals; review of discipline categories and descriptions
- distinguish between situations necessitating school imposed discipline and those where there is a threat to school safety or serious criminal conduct has taken place
- review of alignment of consequences and misbehaviors; definition of out of school suspensions as only appropriate for behaviors disruptive and detrimental to school operation
- In School Suspension should be “rebranded” and “reformatted” to promote positive behavior intervention support. System should include evidence-based strategies to teach behavioral expectations. Should be specific and target the expected behavior infraction assigned to the student. Should also include an opportunity for student to have a voice and a “rebuilding opportunity” with the staff member where the infraction occurred. \* The recommendation for consideration would include a certified staff member filling this role in order to also follow up with students and teachers regarding possible strategies that may provide support. (Ex: Behavior Interventionist?)
- develop a system of interventions for level 1 offenses to target and “teach” an expected behavior prior to implementation of punishment/consequence.
- implementation of problem solving and educational interventions as part of a set of progressive discipline alternatives, including referral to LSS staff (school counselor, social workers, psychologists and Intervention Services) prior to suspensions
- cite specific examples of when the SROs should be involved vs. when administrators should handle the situation with internal discipline (for example, SRO involvement vs. taking a kid into custody).
- SROs need to have continued presence with kids starting as young as possible which establishes trust.
- create a system for continuing education for students in “limbo” while waiting for expulsion hearings or outcomes.
- schools can provide information on expectations for students at Open House, Parent University, New Student/New Parent Orientation at the beginning of the school year.

- schools can have information on student expectations available in enrollment packets for new students and parents, on school websites and teacher websites.
- schools can provide link to District Code of Conduct and Student Handbook on websites.
- consideration of student justice councils in all levels and student led initiatives for discipline alternatives
- explore how best to train our school staffs in the Restorative Justice discipline model as an additional strategy for reducing suspensions and expulsions. This approach has been especially effective when dealing with minority males and in improving school climate and classroom management in general.
- utilize a system to empower students to take ownership and responsibility for their choices (ex: classroom disruptions, “She/He is treating me unfairly) and also give them a voice WHILE at the same time protecting the instructional environment. A plan is needed to give some students an “out” to prevent classroom disruptions.
- include potential community resources when considering sanctions/consequences for behavior at each level. Including these in the procedures will work these options in consistently.
- encourage feedback from the community via public sessions at board meetings, further conversations at the discipline task force meetings, and SIC and PTO meetings at individual schools.
- the above data should be shared at various degrees within the community. For example, more specific data should be shared at the individual schools (i.e. SIC and PTO meetings). More general information should be shared in a public forum by Student Services, members of the discipline task force committee, the department of community relations and strategic partnerships, and or the department of assessment and accountability (i.e. school board meetings, R2TV recordings of board meetings, an online dashboard with state and national comparisons).

**Guiding Principle 3: Fair and Consistent Practices Coupled with Continuous Improvement: Districts that build staff capacity and continuously evaluate the district’s discipline policies and practices are more likely to ensure fairness and equity, and promote achievement for all students. (Ex: Train all school staff to apply school discipline policies and practices in a fair and fair and consistent manner; use proactive, data-driven, and continuous efforts, including gathering feedback from families, students, teachers, and school personnel to prevent, identify, reduce, and eliminate discriminatory discipline and unintended consequences)**

Recommendations
<p>Recommendation 7: RSD2 should continuously collect and analyze discipline data through the following practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● continue the discipline task force committee to monitor district, state, and national trends.</li><li>● implement regular data analysis and review measures for discipline actions</li><li>● review the Richland 2 discipline policy at a minimum of every other year to consider needed revisions</li><li>● annual training at back to school administrative in-service to review school board policy updates, school law updates, and preparation for expulsion hearings.</li><li>● annual professional development sessions for new administrators or as a refresher throughout the year to keep up to date on policies, procedures, law related information, etc...</li><li>● development of a communication plan that provides opportunities for individual schools to provide feedback/input regarding discipline goals and objectives.</li></ul>