

COMMERCE SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICY ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR

The Board of Education of the Commerce School District adopts the following policy and procedures dealing with student conduct and behavior:

General Expectations

The Board of Education recognizes that students do not surrender any rights of citizenship while in attendance at Commerce Public Schools. The school is a community with rules and regulations. Those who enjoy the rights and privileges it provides must also accept the responsibilities that inclusion demands, including respect for and obedience to school rules.

Discipline Code

The following behaviors at school, while on school vehicles or going to or from or attending school events will result in disciplinary action, which may include detention, corporal punishment, alternative in-school placement, out-of-school suspension:

1. Arson;
2. Attempting to incite or produce imminent violence directed against another person because of his or her race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, disability, gender or sexual orientation by making or transmitting or causing or allowing to be transmitted, any telephonic, computerized or electronic message;
3. Attempting to incite or produce imminent violence directed against another person because of his or her race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, disability, gender or sexual orientation by broadcasting, publishing or distributing or causing or allowing to be broadcast, published or distributed, any message or material;
4. Cheating;
5. Conduct that threatens or jeopardizes the safety of others;
6. Cutting class or sleeping, eating or refusing to work in class;
7. Disruption of the educational process or operation of the school;
8. Extortion;

9. Failure to attend assigned detention, alternative school or other disciplinary assignment without approval;
10. Failure to comply with state immunization records;
11. False reports or false calls;
12. Fighting;
13. Forgery;
14. Gambling;
15. Harassment, intimidation, and bullying;
16. Hazing (initiations) in connection with any school activity;
17. Immorality;
18. Inappropriate attire (clothing or accessories that display pictures, lettering or numbering that is profane, vulgar, repulsive or obscene, that advertises or promotes dangerous weapons, tobacco, alcoholic beverages, low-point beer, drugs, drug-related items or paraphernalia or that unduly exposes the body; clothing, accessories, make-up, hair styles, or arrangements or decorations worn or displayed on the body that are likely to cause a substantial and material disruption of school operations);
19. Inappropriate behavior or gestures;
20. Inappropriate public behavior;
21. Indecent exposure;
22. Intimidation or harassment because of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, disability, gender or sexual orientation, including but not limited to: (a) assault and battery; (b) damage, destruction, vandalism or defacing any real or personal property; or threatening, by word or act, the acts identified in (a) or (b);
23. Obscene language;
24. Physical or verbal abuse;
25. Plagiarism;
26. Possession of a caustic substance;
27. Possession of obscene materials;
28. Possession, without prior authorization, of a wireless telecommunication device;
29. Possession, threat or use of a dangerous weapon and/or related instrumentalities

(i.e., bullets, shells, gun powder, pellets, etc.);

30. Possession, use, distribution, sale, conspiracy to sell or possess or being in the chain of sale or distribution, or being under the influence of alcoholic beverages, low-point beer (as defined by Oklahoma law, i.e., 3.2 beer) and/or controlled substances;
31. Possession of illegal and/or drug-related paraphernalia;
32. Profanity;
33. Sexual or other harassment of individuals including, but not limited to, students, school employees, volunteers;
34. Theft;
35. Threatening behavior (whether involving written, verbal or physical actions);
36. Truancy;
37. Use or possession of tobacco in any form;
38. Use or possession of missing or stolen property if property is reasonably suspected to have been taken from a student, a school employee, or the school;
39. Using racial, religious, ethnic, sexual, gender or disability-related epithets;
40. Vandalism;
41. Violation of the Board of Education policies, rules or regulations or violation of school rules and regulations;
42. Vulgarity;
43. Willful damage to school property;
44. Willful disobedience of a directive of any school official;

In addition, conduct occurring outside of the normal school day or off school property that has a direct and immediate negative effect on the discipline or educational process or effectiveness of the school, will also result in disciplinary action, which may include detention, corporal punishment, alternative in-school placement, out-of-school suspension.

THE SCHOOL BULLYING PREVENTION ACT
(70 OKLA. STAT. § 24-100.2)

The Oklahoma Legislature established the *School Bullying Prevention Act* with the express intent of prohibiting peer student harassment, intimidation, and bullying. These terms include, but are not limited to any gesture, written or verbal expression, or physical act that a reasonable person should recognize will:

1. harm another student;
2. damage another student's property;
3. place another student in reasonable fear of harm of the student's person or damage to the student's property; or
4. insult or demean any student or group of students in such a way as to disrupt or interfere with the School District's education mission of the student or other students.

The Board has also adopted a policy prohibiting harassment, intimidation, and bullying which defines and explains this conduct and the School District's response to the legislative mandate.

DISCIPLINARY OPTIONS APPLICABLE TO STUDENT MISCONDUCT

Detention

Detention is a correctional measure used when it is deemed appropriate. Students are to report to the appropriate teacher/principal at the specified time with class work to be studied. Detention may be assigned on a week-day or on a Saturday, as deemed appropriate.

Alternative In-School Placement

Alternative in-school placement is an optional correctional measure that may be used by the school when deemed appropriate. It involves assignment to a school site, designated by the school,

for a prescribed course of education as determined by school representatives.

Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment is administered to students according to the following policy:

1. Corporal punishment is a form of discipline when the infraction by the student is considered serious or is a repeated infraction of school rules.
2. Corporal punishment will be administered by a certified staff member in an office or designated area and in the presence of another certified person. Punishment must be applied to the buttocks only. The witness should be informed of the infraction in the presence of the student.
3. A written report shall be made for each student receiving corporal punishment. The report will describe the offense and the disciplinary action taken. The report is to be signed by the staff member involved and the witness.
4. If parents or guardians do not wish for their child (children) to be paddled at school, they must have note saying so in the school files. Often there are medical or other reasons why a student cannot be paddled. The parent's wishes will be respected. Should the occasion arise that such student is involved in an incident where others would be paddled, then said student will attend level II alternative education for five (5) days. After five (5) days have been served, the student may return to the regular classroom.

Student Suspensions

The judicial extension of Fourteenth Amendment protection to students in the public school emphasizes the need for school administrators to protect the procedural due process rights of students in discipline cases. The policy of the School District must be consistent with the due process rights of students and must provide proper machinery for fair and consistent treatment of students. The term "out-of-school suspension" refers to removal out of school for a period not to

exceed one calendar year for offenses involving firearms and the remainder of a current semester and the succeeding semester for all other offenses. **ALTERNATIVE IN-SCHOOL PLACEMENT, DETENTION, AND SIMILAR DISCIPLINARY OPTIONS OR CORRECTIONAL MEASURES ARE NOT CONSIDERED BY LAW TO BE OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION AND DO NOT REQUIRE OR INVOLVE THE DUE PROCESS PROCEDURES SET FORTH WITHIN THIS POLICY.**

Reference to "parent" in this section of the policy refers to a student's parent or legal guardian.

Reference to "principal" means the school principal or the school staff member to whom the principal has delegated the responsibility for student discipline.

BEHAVIOR OR CONDUCT WHICH MAY RESULT IN SUSPENSION

Students who are guilty of any of the following acts may be suspended out-of-school by the administration of the School or the District for:

- a. violation of a school regulation;
- b. immorality;
- c. adjudication as a delinquent for an offense that is not a violent offense. For the purposes of this section, "violent offense" shall include those offenses listed as the exceptions to the term "nonviolent offenses" as specified in Section 571 of Title 57 of the Oklahoma Statutes. "Violent offense" shall include the offense of assault with a dangerous weapon but shall not include the offense of assault;
- d. possession of an intoxicating beverage, low-point beer, as defined by Section 163.2 of Title 37 of the Oklahoma Statutes, wireless telecommunication device without prior authorization, or missing or stolen property if the property is reasonably suspected to have been taken from a student, a school employee, or the school during school activities; and

e. possession of a dangerous weapon or a controlled dangerous substance, as defined in the Uniform Controlled Dangerous Substances Act. Possession of a firearm shall result in out-of-school suspension as provided in the School District's policy related to firearms.

In the event of a suspension in excess of five (5) days for any of the reasons listed above, an education plan as discussed in the Individualized Plans for Out-of-School Suspension section of this policy, below, shall be applicable for acts which fall within parts "a" through "d," above. As allowed by law, no education plan will be provided for acts which fall within part "e," above.

Students suspended for a violent offense directed toward a classroom teacher shall not be allowed to return to the teacher's classroom without the teacher's prior approval. Whether an offense is considered a violent offense, requiring an affected teacher's approval as a condition of return to a particular classroom, shall be based on applicable provisions of the Oklahoma school law regarding student suspension and applicable Oklahoma criminal law distinguishing between violent and nonviolent offenses.

**SCHOOL DISTRICT'S OBLIGATION
APPLICABLE TO ALL OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS**

Alternative In-School Placements:

Before an administrator recommends out-of-school suspension, alternative in-school placements including, but not limited to: placement in an alternative school setting, reassignment to another classroom, placement in in-school detention, or other available disciplinary or correctional options shall be considered. These shall not be considered as an out-of-school suspension but shall be treated as disciplinary or correctional actions that may be used, if warranted, as an alternative to out-of-school suspension. **STUDENTS IDENTIFIED AS DISABLED UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT OR SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 AND WHO ARE SUSPENDED OUT-OF-SCHOOL OR**

RECEIVE DISCIPLINARY REMOVAL FROM THE CLASSROOM MAY REQUIRE ADDITIONAL PROCEDURAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Pre-Conference Applicable to Out-of-School Suspensions:

1. When a student violates board policy or a school rule or regulation or has been adjudicated as a delinquent for an offense that is not a violent offense (as set out in OKLA. STAT. tit. 57, § 571), the principal shall conduct an informal conference with the student.

2. At the conference with the student, the principal shall read the policy, rule or regulation which the student is charged with having violated and shall discuss the conduct of the student which is a violation of the policy, rule or regulation.

3. The student shall be asked whether he/she understands the policy, rule or regulation and be given a full opportunity to explain and discuss his/her conduct.

4. If it is concluded that an out-of-school suspension is appropriate, the student shall be advised that he/she is being suspended and the length of the out-of-school suspension.

5. The principal shall immediately notify the parent by phone and in writing that the student is being suspended out of school and that alternative in-school placement or other available options have been considered and rejected. The written notice should state that alternative in-school placement or other available options have been considered and why they were rejected. Elementary and middle school students shall not be dismissed before the end of the school day without advance notice to the parent.

Immediate Out-of-School Suspension Without a Pre-Out-of-School Suspension Conference:

1. A student may be suspended out-of-school without the above pre-out-of-school suspension conference with the student only in situations where the conduct of the student reasonably indicates to the principal that the continued presence of the student in the building will

constitute an immediate danger to the health or safety of the students, or school employees, or to school property, or a continued substantial disruption of the educational process.

2. In such cases, an out-of-school suspension conference with the student and the parent or guardian will be scheduled as soon as possible after the student has been removed from the building.

Conferences With Parents:

1. The principal will seek to hold a conference with the parent or guardian as soon as possible after the out-of-school suspension has been imposed. The parent should be advised of his/her right to a conference with the principal at the time he/she is notified that an out-of-school suspension has been imposed. The conference will be held during the regular school hours, Monday through Friday, with consideration given whenever possible to the hours of working parents.

2. At the conference, the principal will read the policy, rule or regulation which the student is charged with having violated and will briefly outline the conduct or behavior on the part of the student. The principal will also explain the basis for an out-of-school suspension rather than the use of alternative options. The parent should be asked by the principal if he/she understands the rule and the charges against the student.

3. At the conclusion of the conference, the principal shall state whether he/she will terminate or modify the out-of-school suspension. In all cases, the parent will be advised of his/her right to have the out-of-school suspension reviewed by the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education, or the out-of-school suspension review committee as provided by this policy. If the parent is in agreement with the principal's decision, he/she will be requested to sign a waiver of review.

Out-of-School Suspension Requirements:

1. An out-of-school suspension shall be long-term or short-term. A long-term out-of-school suspension shall be an out-of-school suspension in excess of ten (10) school days. A short-term out-of-school suspension shall be a period of ten (10) or fewer school days.

2. In no event should an out-of-school suspension extend beyond the current school semester and succeeding semester, except in the case of possession of a firearm, in which case an out-of-school suspension for up to one calendar year is appropriate. Out-of-school suspensions involving firearms are governed by the School District's Gun-Free Schools Policy. Out-of-school suspensions should have a definite commencement and ending date; indefinite out-of-school suspensions are not permitted. It is recommended that out-of-school suspensions beyond ten (10) days be imposed only in serious situations.

3. Out-of-school suspensions should be consistent; that is, one student should not be suspended out of school for a few days and another student suspended out of school for an extended period for the same or similar offense. However, the principal may take previous conduct and previous disciplinary actions and out-of-school suspensions of the student into consideration.

4. Out-of-school suspensions until the student performs some remedial act are not permitted; however, the student may be advised that an out-of-school suspension of definite length will be terminated at an earlier date if he/she performs a prescribed remedial act or acts.

Individualized Plans for Out-of-School Suspension:

Out-of-school suspensions in excess of five (5) days shall include an Individualized Plan for Out-of-School Suspension ("Plan") which shall describe either a home-based school work assignment setting or other appropriate work assignment setting. The plan shall be prepared by the principal with the assistance of other school employees as warranted by the circumstances of the out-of-school suspension.

The Plan shall provide for the core units in which the student is enrolled. Core units shall consist of the minimum English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and Art units required by the Oklahoma State Department of Education for grade completion in grades kindergarten through eight and for high school graduation in grades nine through twelve.

A copy of the Plan shall be provided to the student and parent or guardian. The parent or guardian shall be responsible for provision of a supervised, structured environment in which the parent or guardian shall place the student. The parent or guardian shall bear responsibility for monitoring the student's educational progress until the student is readmitted into school. The Plan shall set out the procedure for education and shall also address academic credit for work satisfactorily completed.

Records and Reports:

The principal will keep written records of each out-of-school suspension conference containing the date of the conference, the names of the persons present, the time duration of the conference, and the basis for rejection of alternative disciplinary options. Also, the principal shall maintain records related to the Education Plan and the student and/or parent's compliance or non-compliance with the Plan.

**LONG-TERM OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS
OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS FOR MORE THAN TEN (10) SCHOOL DAYS**

Right of Appeal:

A parent or the student may appeal the principal's out-of-school suspension decision in excess of ten (10) school days to the Superintendent of Schools and, following the appeal to the Superintendent, to the Board of Education.

Method of Appeal to the Superintendent of Schools or His/Her Designee:

1. An appeal can be presented by letter to the Superintendent of Schools.
2. If no appeal is received within five (5) calendar days after the principal's decision is received by the parent or student, the principal's out-of-school suspension decision will be final and nonappealable.
3. The Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee should hold a conference with the parent or guardian as soon as possible after receipt of the appeal. The conference will be held during the regular school hours, Monday through Friday, with consideration given to the hours of working parents whenever possible.
4. At the conference, the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee will read the policy, rule or regulation which the student is charged with having violated and will briefly outline the conduct on the part of the student. The parent should be asked by the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee if he/she understands the rule and the charges against the student.
5. At the conclusion of the conference, the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee will state whether he/she shall terminate or modify the out-of-school suspension. In all cases, the parent shall be advised of the parental right to have the out-of-school suspension reviewed as determined by the Board of Education. If the parent is in agreement with the decision of the Superintendent of Schools or the Superintendent's designee, the parent shall be requested to sign a Waiver of Final Review by the Board.

Method of Appeal to the Board of Education:

1. An appeal can be requested by letter to the Superintendent of Schools or to the Clerk of the Board of Education.

2. If no appeal is received within five (5) calendar days after the decision of the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee is received by the parent or student, the decision of the Superintendent or his/her designee will be final and nonappealable.

Hearing the Appeal:

1. The Board will hear the appeal as soon as possible. The Board's decision is final and nonappealable.

2. The parent and student will be notified in writing of the date, time and place of the hearing.

3. The parent and student will have the right to an "open" or "closed" hearing, at their option.

4. Reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate the work schedule of parents.

Procedure for Student Out-of-School Suspension Appeal Hearing Before the Board of Education:

1. The Board President should:

a. Announce that the next agenda item is an out-of-school suspension review hearing for the student. In order to protect the confidentiality and privacy of the student, the student's initials should be used and not the student's name.

b. Ask whether the parents/child wish the hearing to be open to the public or in executive session. The offer of an open hearing and their response is to be made a part of the minutes of the meeting. If parents/child request a closed hearing, a motion to go into executive session per their request should be made and voted on.

2. The Board President should advise the parents/child:
 - a. That they are entitled to legal counsel, if they desire it.
 - b. That the administration will present its witnesses first and that after each witness the parents or their legal counsel will be given an opportunity to cross-examine.
 - c. That the parents/child will be given an opportunity to call any relevant witnesses and present any relevant evidence they may wish, subject to cross-examination by legal counsel for the administration.
 - d. That the Board will consider the evidence and documents and reach a decision which will be recorded by vote in open session.
 - e. That the parents/child may ask any questions about the procedure.
3. Following presentation of 1 and 2 above, all administration witnesses and documents should be presented subject to cross-examination.
4. Parents/child may call any witnesses and present any documents subject to cross-examination.
5. After each witness is presented, School Board members may ask the witness any questions.
6. Parents'/child's closing statement.
7. Administration's closing statement.
8. Deliberate in private. (If the hearing is not in executive session, the Board may deliberate in executive session only with permission of the parents or student.)
9. Return to open session and vote. After adopting a motion making certain findings of fact the Board must make a motion to: (1) affirm the out-of-school suspension; (2) modify the out-of-school suspension (increase or decrease severity of the out-of-school suspension); or (3) revoke the out-of-school suspension.

Attendance at School Pending Appeal Hearing:

Pending the appeal hearing of an out-of-school suspension to the Board, the student will have the right to attend school under such "in-house" restrictions as the principal deems proper, except that at the discretion of the principal, the student may be prohibited from attending school pending any appeal hearing if in the judgment of the principal:

- a. the conduct for which the student was suspended out of school reasonably indicates that continued attendance by the student pending any appeal hearing would be dangerous to other students, staff members or school property; or
- b. the conduct for which the student was suspended out of school reasonably indicates that the continued presence of the student at the school pending any appeal hearing would substantially interfere with the educational process at the school.

**SHORT-TERM OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS
OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS OF TEN (10) OR FEWER SCHOOL DAYS**

The Board of Education recognizes that student out-of-school suspensions of ten (10) or fewer school days (referred to as "short-term out-of-school suspensions") involve less stigma and require less formal due process procedures than are required for out-of-school suspensions of greater than ten (10) school days. Appellate rights in such instances are satisfied in an effective and expedient manner by giving the student the right to appeal the out-of-school suspension decision to a committee composed, at the Superintendent's discretion, of administrators, teachers, or both. The composition of the committee shall be reserved to the School District's discretion.

Right of Appeal:

A student who has been suspended out of school for a period of ten (10) or fewer school days is entitled to all pre-appeal rights presently accorded by School District policy to students who have been suspended out of school for periods of greater than ten (10) school days. A student who has been given a short-term out-of-school suspension and that student's parent has a right to appeal an out-of-school suspension decision to a committee composed of administrators and/or teachers. A student with a short-term out-of-school suspension and his/her parent shall be informed by the principal of this right and the method of submitting an appeal.

Method of Appeal to the Committee:

1. An appeal to the committee can be requested by letter to the school principal, which must be received within five (5) calendar days after the principal's out-of-school suspension decision is received by the student or his/her parent. The out-of-school suspension decision will become final and nonappealable if a request is not timely submitted.

2. Upon receipt of the request, the school principal shall confirm that the student's out-of-school suspension falls within the category of out-of-school suspensions to which an appeal to the committee is authorized. If the school principal determines that the period of out-of-school suspension is greater than ten (10) school days, or if for any reason, the short-term out-of-school suspension is extended beyond ten (10) school days prior to the committee hearing, the procedures applicable to long-term out-of-school suspensions must be followed and the student must be given the opportunity to appeal any adverse decision as provided by this policy for long-term suspension.

Hearing the Appeal:

1. The Superintendent of Schools shall appoint a review committee consisting of not less than three School District employees who shall be certified administrators and/or teachers, and

shall designate a chairperson for the committee. No administrator or teacher is eligible to serve on the committee who was a witness to the student's conduct, nor is any teacher eligible to serve who has the student in his/her class for the current school term.

2. The Superintendent of Schools shall schedule the committee hearing as soon as possible during regular school hours, Monday through Friday. Reasonable consideration shall be given to accommodate the work schedules of the parent or guardian whenever possible. The student and his/her parent or guardian will be notified in writing of the date, time and place of the hearing. The principal who issued the out-of-school suspension decision shall attend the committee hearing. Either party choosing to have legal counsel at the committee hearing shall give the other party twenty-four (24) hours advance notice of that decision. The failure to give such notice will preclude the party's right to have counsel attend the hearing.

3. The committee will conduct a full investigation of the student's out-of-school suspension in an informal manner. The principal will briefly outline the student's conduct, read the policy, rule or regulation which the student's conduct violated, and present any evidence and witnesses that support the principal's decision to suspend the student. The student and his/her parent or guardian will be asked by the committee if they understand the rule and charges against the student. The student and his/her parent or guardian will then briefly explain the student's conduct, and present any evidence and witnesses that support the student's position.

4. At the conclusion of the presentation of the evidence, the committee shall retire to render a decision by a majority vote as to the guilt or innocence of the student. The committee shall also determine the reasonableness of the term of the out-of-school suspension. The committee's decision shall be confirmed in writing and a copy will be mailed to the parent or guardian of the student, the principal and the Superintendent of Schools.

5. The decision of the committee shall be final and nonappealable.

**STUDENT PRIVILEGES WHILE UNDER OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION OR
UNDER OTHER DISCIPLINARY OR CORRECTIONAL MEASURES**

Participation in and attendance at the extracurricular activities of the school is a privilege and not a right. Accordingly, when a student's behavior results in a determination by the principal of an out-of-school suspension, the student immediately, notwithstanding the filing of an appeal, forfeits the privilege of participating in and attending all extracurricular activities of the school. In addition, when a principal determines to impose alternative in-school disciplinary or other correctional measures against a student, then the student will not be permitted to participate in any extracurricular activities offered by the school during the term of the discipline unless, in the sole judgment of the principal, such participation is appropriate given the nature of the offense committed by the student.

"Extracurricular activities" include, but are not limited to, all school sponsored teams, clubs, organizations, ceremonies, student government, band, athletics and all other school sponsored activities and organizations.

Adopted this 9th day of May, 2005.