

Shifting Gears

Recalibrating Schoolwide Discipline and Student Support

A Restorative and Accountable Approach *for* Middle and High Schools

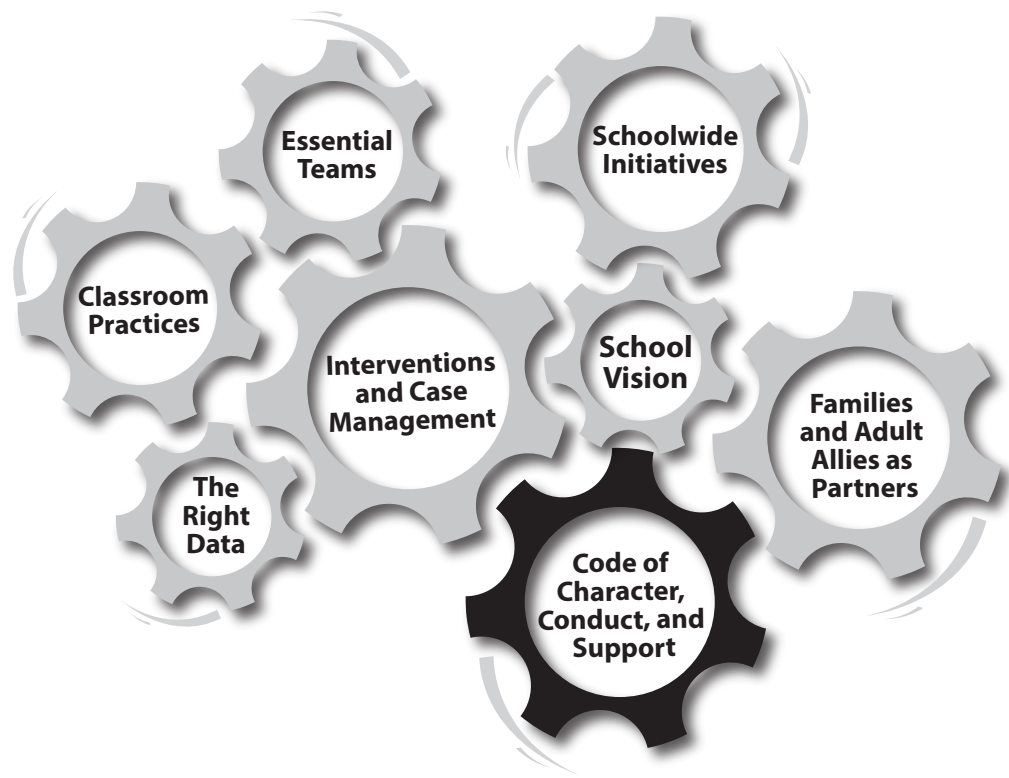
Dear Reader,

For more than four decades, Engaging Schools collaborated with educational leaders, teachers, and other school staff across the country and around the world to create engaging and equitable classrooms and safe, caring, and welcoming school climates for all students.

Unfortunately, for financial reasons, Engaging Schools closed its doors in 2025. We are grateful to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) for providing a home for our resources and making them widely available. We hope that you find useful information in this book which captures our deep experience working over many years with teachers and administrators.

Thank you!

The Engaging Schools Team



6

Code of Character, Conduct, and Support

How does a district's or school's code of disciplinary policies and practices directly support students' good conduct, character, and citizenship?

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Introduction

A More Inclusive Title: Code of Character, Conduct, and Support

Goals for a Revised Code

Critical Elements of District Codes and School Policy Handbooks

Potholes to Avoid and Remedies to Fix Them

Introduction

A Code of Character, Conduct, and Support is a critical resource that has the potential to bring stakeholders together to collaboratively align their efforts in support of each and every student in the district and school. Often the Codes we are asked to review have a multitude of problems and read as vague, confusing, and punitive in nature. As a result, schools can go down various paths resulting in codes that often lack the support and direction needed when working with secondary students and their families.

A thoughtfully crafted Code of Character, Conduct, and Support provides a “behavioral blueprint”¹ that communicates, “This is who we are here at school and ‘this is how we do things around here.’”² This gear is critical for districts and schools to consider because an effective Code of Character, Conduct, and Support provides a framework for a district and school to continually revisit the decisions they make when students struggle academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally. Ideally, revisions to district Codes of conduct delineate district-wide policies and practices. They also lay out policies and practices that individual schools are responsible for developing. When existing district Codes contain language that is vague or confusing, individual schools need to consider how they incorporate more explicit policies and practices into their own school handbooks.

This chapter takes a look at the critical elements of an effective Code of Character, Conduct, and Support and provides an annotated outline for revising district and school codes of conduct. We have also identified Code Potholes that lead to ineffective and inequitable practices with suggested remedies to fix them. You will also find a Code of Character, Conduct, and Support Essentials checklist to use when reviewing your Code in Appendix B.

A More Inclusive Title: Code of Character, Conduct, and Support

An effective Code communicates a district’s commitment to support the development of every student’s good character and conduct. As you revisit your current Code, consider the name you give to this document for your district and/or school. Nomenclature is critical when naming a Code. It provides clarity and direction for all of the stakeholders who interface with it, leaving the mystery out of each individual’s responsibility for implementing the Code with fidelity and integrity. We suggest incorporating the words “character, conduct, and support” into a Code’s title for several reasons. An individual’s character reflects his or her attitudes, attributes, values, moral convictions, and social and emotional learning competencies. The word *conduct* refers to the way a person behaves on a particular occasion and in a particular place or situation. The word *character* lives beside the word *conduct* because a student’s character will shape her conduct.

The development of good character is essential to healthy development and responsible behavior, academic success in school today, and future success in college, career, and life. Principals, administrators, teachers, school staff, parents and adult allies, and the larger community have an obligation to cultivate good character in students by enabling them to discern right from wrong; fostering in them the desire to do what is good; and encouraging them to take responsibility for their words and actions.”³

Finally, placing the word “support” in the Code’s title calls attention to the district and school’s responsibility to provide students with equal access to a wide range of supports and interventions that promote positive behavior, help students develop personal and social efficacy, and enable students to correct and reduce inappropriate, unacceptable, and unskillful behaviors. In our work with a 50 member task force charged with rewriting the Code for an urban district, the task force recognized that including “support” in the title of the document set an expectation and accountability for all schools to:

- Promote positive social behaviors and prevent discipline problems through universal practices and procedures.
- Prevent most discipline problems by providing timely and effective responses in the classroom.
- Provide accountable and restorative interventions that would support students to improve their behavior and experience greater success at school.

Goals for a Revised Code

Consider how the goals of a Code might reflect the kind of school climate your district or school wants to promote. “School climate, the collective perceptions, mood, and morale of the staff members and students, is created through the interaction of human relationships, the physical setting, and the psychological atmosphere. Researchers and educators agree that school climate influences students, teachers, and staff members and affects student achievement.”⁴

The overarching goal of the Code is to secure every student’s right to an education in a safe, civil, and caring community. It is based upon the laws, rules, regulations, and policies that create access to education for all while protecting the due process rights of individuals. The Code recognizes that schools are public places where individual rights must be balanced with civic obligations and the responsibilities that make it possible to live in a free, open, and democratic society. A school’s Code of Character, Conduct, and Support serves as a guide to good citizenship and provides the tools for helping students to understand, appreciate, and honor the articulated norms of behavior within the school culture.

In addition, revisions to a Code should make more specific goals transparent:

- Establish the schoolwide and classroom rules, policies, and expectations that all adults are committed to support and enforce.

- Ensure that classrooms and public spaces are physically and psychologically safe, civil, and orderly.
- Reduce the overuse and disproportional use of exclusionary punitive sanctions (student removal from class, suspension, and expulsion).
- Maximize every school's capacity to promote positive behaviors, prevent unskillful, inappropriate, and unacceptable behaviors, and support improved behavior for students with the highest incidents of unacceptable behavior.
- Develop aligned consequences and interventions that enable students to become more self-disciplined by increasing their capacities to self-regulate and interact positively and responsibly with others.
- Increase efficacy of administrators and Student Support Teams to intervene early and effectively with students with high needs.
- Increase capacity of teachers to address unacceptable behaviors effectively and respectfully.

Explicit and transparent goals enable schools to link measurable student and staff outcomes directly to goals put forth in the Code. In addition, concrete goals in a Code can galvanize support for shifting current school policies and practices. For example, when a goal advocates for strengthening students' self-regulation, adults might begin to see discipline incidents as an opportunity to support the student to develop the skills necessary to be self-disciplined, act appropriately, and take responsibility for their actions.

Critical Elements of District Codes and School Policy Handbooks

In addition to defining the goals for a Code of Character, Conduct, and Support, there are other elements that we would like to highlight when teams are drafting or revising district codes or school policy handbooks. At the district level, Codes should pay particular attention to student and parent rights and responsibilities, "due process" entitlements associated with disciplinary incidents, the alignment of assigned consequences to accountable and restorative interventions, and the role of administrators and staff in implementing discipline and student support practices. At the school level administrators need to pay particular attention to schoolwide expectations and schoolwide rules.

District Codes

Student and Parent Rights and Responsibilities

According to the state, students are citizens, and, as citizens of the United States, children are entitled to the same rights of due process, freedom of expression, and

equal protection under the law as adults 21 and older.⁵ Public school employees are guarantors of these rights. To ensure that students and parents understand their rights, it is important to articulate the freedoms of expression and non-discriminatory protections that public schools afford to students and parents; the type of access to information that the district provides; and most importantly, the specific actions parents, students, and their advocates can take as part of due process, particularly when students are involved in exclusionary punitive sanctions or a district disciplinary hearing.

The language of student responsibilities should describe expectations related to personal conduct, cooperation, the treatment of people and property, responsibilities as a learner, and responsibilities associated with maintaining a safe school community. Parent responsibilities outline specific ways to support their children's success at school and provide guidelines for sharing concerns and complaints, and for engaging in civil discourse with school personnel, other families, and students.

Alignment of School Sanctions/Consequences to Interventions

Assigned school sanctions/consequences need to be aligned to accountable and restorative interventions. In other words, when students commit Tier 2 and Tier 3 behavior violations, they are assigned a Tier 2 or Tier 3 School sanctions/consequence and a Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention. The **consequence phase** begins when a staff member submits an office disciplinary referral. If it is an extremely aggressive, dangerous, or destructive act or an incident that seriously jeopardizes student and staff safety, the student is also likely to be removed from the classroom or other location. Submission of a referral and student removal serve as alarm bells that a student's behavior is unskillful, inappropriate, or unacceptable, and will warrant the assignment of a school sanction/consequence beyond what teachers do in their classrooms.

The consequence phase for serious behavior violations usually involves students' temporary assignment to an Intervention Center or other location where they have an opportunity to calm down, regain their equilibrium, and complete an Incident Reflection and Return Form. Typically, an administrator usually investigates the incident, confers with the student to discuss the incident, and determines what further school sanctions/consequences are warranted. School sanctions are likely to include any of the following responses:

- parent notification
- a parent conference with administrator, dean, or Student Support Coach
- a conference with administrator, student's teachers, the student, and parent
- a school hearing with the principal, student, and parent
- in-school suspension for one to three days

- out-of-school suspension for one to five days depending on the severity of the incident, or an official district hearing to determine further sanctions and interventions

The **intervention** phase involves some action carried out by the student with adult support and supervision. The ultimate aim is to help students acquire the mindsets and skills that strengthen their personal and social efficacy and enable them to function more successfully at school. Interventions enable students to learn replacement behaviors and habits, work through personal obstacles, resolve conflicts, and develop goals and plans to get back on track for school and life success. Lower tier interventions include teacher facilitated problem solving and planning conferences, close monitoring of student progress, mediation, behavior plans that emerge from consultation with a grade level team, or assignment of a Student Support Coach. Restorative group conferences are typically used when students engage in aggressive acts that harm others. More intensive interventions at a Tier 3 level involve a consultation with the school intervention team to determine the type of comprehensive student success plan and combination of interventions that will serve the student most effectively. In situations where students are experiencing multiple behavior, academic, and attendance challenges, students are likely to be involved in longer-term interventions.

Role of Administrators and Staff in Discipline and Student Support

All administrators and staff members play a critical role in helping students learn to be good citizens and lead productive lives. An effective Code of Character, Conduct, and Support deepens their understanding of the ways they can promote pro-social behaviors and prevent disciplinary problems through the use of effective procedures, practices, and strategies. Effective Codes also provide specific information about the roles that administrators, teachers, student support staff, and specific teams play in delivering effective school sanctions/consequences and interventions when students do not meet expected standards of behavior or violate school rules and policies.

The Code needs to be coupled with systematic professional learning to ensure that staff internalize the implications of major shifts in policies and practices and develop the skill sets necessary to implement changes with fidelity and integrity. In our experience, schools that roll-out implementation of revised Codes successfully, identify a small committed team who oversee all activities related to the launch and monitor the progress of implementation over time. See more detailed information about the work of essential discipline and Student Support Teams in Chapter Seven.

School Policy Handbooks

Expectations

Expectations and rules are often confused by staff and schools. Expectations are normative and aspirational. They communicate the beliefs we hold about what students are capable of doing and achieving; they convey adult's confidence in the students' capacity to succeed and thrive in school and life. Expectations provide reassurance that students can, and will be expected to right themselves when they make mistakes, academically or behaviorally. They provide enduring guidelines for how we present and express ourselves, how we should behave, how we learn, and what we are capable of achieving.

Most schools craft three to five schoolwide academic and behavioral expectations. Narrowing the selection to a few expectations provides the opportunity for conversations with staff, students, and families about the ways in which school expectations align with the school vision (mission, core beliefs and values) and how expectations will be taught, modeled, and practiced, at the beginning of the school year and re-visited at key moments throughout the year (e.g. at end of semester, after long vacations, when there are clear indications that expectations are not being met, etc.). The language of expectations should always be positive and the statements brief. Typical examples include "Be respectful; Be responsible; Work hard; Be safe; and Make your best effort." Because expectations are global, rather than specific, they are not enforceable. Some schools, however, use their global expectations as a basis for crafting very specific and enforceable rules.

School Rules

Many schools with whom we work come to the conversation about rules with a number of perspectives and confusions. We define rules as a set of explicit enforceable regulations, or directives, that govern conduct, which refers to the way a person behaves on a particular occasion in a particular context. A rule can be broken and violations of school rules are linked to tiered consequences and interventions. Even though district codes need to describe up to 40 or 50 explicit behavior violations, rolling out 40 or 50 schools rules at the building level does not work for anyone. Consequently, most schools review their data to identify the big six to eight rules that address the most frequent behavior violations that negatively impact safety, order, and a positive learning environment. Typical school rules provide direction for personal conduct in the classroom and public spaces; what students may and may not do in public spaces; what students may and may not wear; what students may and may not bring to school; where and when students can and cannot travel in the building. Naming something a rule comes with the obligation to enforce it consistently. When rules are clear, and have been explained, students might engage in a version of this internal thought: *"This is what I can do and this is what I cannot do. These rules are here for me to be my best self. These rules will help me feel safe at school. And, if I engage in behaviors that break the rules, I will receive a consequence and someone will help me, so I can avoid making a mistake the next time."*

Rules foster a sense of order, calm, and purposefulness. Even though adolescents are not likely to thank you for creating rules that support responsible behaviors, they are grateful for the high structure and clarity that effective rules provide when they understand the interests behind them.

When creating rules it is important to use language that is appropriate, civil, and courteous at all times. Positively stated rules are important because research has shown that recognizing students for complying with rules is even more important than catching them breaking the rules. When rules are stated positively, the school staff is more likely to acknowledge students for engaging in appropriate behavior. On the other hand, there are always a few students who have a clear need to know explicitly what they are not supposed to do. Figure 6.1 provides samples of typical schoolwide rules.

Figure 6.1

Sample Schoolwide Rules

Issue	Positively Stated Rule	The Rule Violation
Tardy during School Day	Be inside the classroom before the late bell/start of class.	Do not be late to class.
Hall Walking	Get a pass from an adult to travel in public spaces during class time or lunch.	Do not leave class without permission or a pass. Do not run away from an adult who is speaking to you.
Public Space Conduct	Walk calmly, talk in quiet voices, keep your hands to yourself, and keep moving as you travel from one place to the next.	No horseplay, yelling, throwing, or clustering in groups anywhere in the building.

It is important to make sure that staff members and students have an opportunity to discuss the rule, the interests behind the rule, and a reminder to follow the rule, consequences, and interventions when a rule is broken. In most situations, giving students a quick and respectful reminder results in immediate compliance, thus preventing any escalation of the incident or enforcement of further school sanctions/consequences. When students refuse to comply, the enforcement protocol must be very clear to all students and adults.

A school that we worked with in New York surveyed their staff and students to identify behaviors that made the school feel chaotic, unsafe, and disorganized. A Climate Discipline Team analyzed the survey results. They prioritized the six rules for the school, the interests behind each rule, and the consequence and an aligned intervention when the rule is broken. A scaffolded process for developing rules encourages commitment from students who are expected to follow them and for staff who are expected to support and enforce them. Clarity around a targeted number of rules also helps families understand what is expected of their children.

Potholes to Avoid and Remedies to Fix Them

This section illustrates the potholes that surface from poorly written Codes. We use real examples from various Codes of Conduct, and provide suggestions for fixing the potholes. We recognize that many of you may find some of these potholes familiar. This is an opportunity to explore and assess your current Code and consider how some of these remedies might resonate for your district and school context.

POTHOLE #1

Too much discretion related to removal of students from the classroom

In many districts, student removal from the classroom is permitted for infractions simply identified as “disruptive” and teachers are not required to document strategies they have used to address the behavior prior to removal. In addition, students can often be removed for the lowest level of behavior concerns such as not following directions, not bringing materials to class, having difficulty getting along with others, etc. This removes the expectation that a teacher is responsible for engaging the student in interventions that will address the unskillful, inappropriate, or unacceptable behaviors. Remember, student removal from the classroom is directly connected to the vast majority of suspensions.

Example of Poor Code Language:

“Removal of Disruptive Student: *On occasion, a student’s behavior may become disruptive. For purposes of this Code, a disruptive student is a student who is substantially disruptive of the educational process or substantially interferes with the teacher’s authority over the classroom.”* (In many schools, the “disruptive” descriptor provides the unfortunate license to use student removal as a catch-all consequence when students are non-compliant.)

The Fix: Eliminate the use of student removal for Tier 1 behavior concerns (low impact behaviors), eliminate “disruptive” as a descriptor, insist that teachers identify exactly what the student said and did when Tier 2 or 3 behavior violations require a behavioral referral, and provide an Intervention Center referral slip that identifies specific behaviors that warrant student removal from the classroom.

POTHOLE #2**Use of vague, global language to describe behavior concerns and violations**

The Codes in many districts include vague language to describe behavior violations. We encounter words like disruptive, disrespectful, disobedient, disorderly, and defiant to describe a range of behaviors. Vague words and phrases prompt multiple interpretations. As an example, one person's understanding of defiant may include a "student's refusal to complete assigned work" or a "student's refusal to follow directions," while a much more clinical understanding of "defiant" might refer to "student's repeated displays of relentless argumentativeness, aggressively hostile refusal to comply with adult requests and rules, and vindictive and spiteful responses to adults in authority."⁶ In other words, low-level non-compliant behaviors are a long shot from more serious behaviors associated with defiance.

Example of Poor Code Language:

Behavior Violations	The Fix
Disorderly Behavior	Avoid using the "D" words (disruptive, disrespectful, disobedient, disorderly, defiant) and the word insubordination to describe rule violations or behaviors. As much as possible, use precise language that describes specific behavior concerns and violations. Precise language helps teachers to depersonalize students' inappropriate behavior, so they are less likely to perceive typical adolescent behaviors as a personal attack.
Defiance	
Disobedient	
Disrespect	
Insubordination	

Example of Specific Code Descriptors for Concerns and Violations

Tier 1 Behavior Concerns	Tier 2 Behavior Violations	Tier 3 Behavior Violations
Does not comply with classroom rules, norms, and procedures.	Persistent confrontational and aggressive arguing, refusal, or back talk.	Persistent verbal aggression against school personnel:
Refuses to respond to school staff directives, questions, or requests.	Verbal aggression against school personnel: Name calling, profanity, insults, offensive language, or threatening gestures.	Name calling, profanity, insults, offensive language, or threatening gestures.
Makes excessive, distracting, or disruptive movements or noises.	Unsafe explosive outburst or rage.	
Does not work cooperatively in small and large groups.	Leaves the classroom without permission.	
Initiates or joins in "side bar" conversations, interrupting, blurting out, and talking out of turn.		
Occasional incidents of arguing, refusal, or back talk.		

POTHOLE #3**Behavior descriptors that do not differentiate similar behaviors**

Often behavioral violations are described under broad labels like fighting or aggression without attaching qualifying words that pinpoint key differences among similar, but distinct behaviors. As a result, individual administrators are left to interpret what constitutes minor or major fighting or determine for themselves what distinguishes physical aggression from minor fighting.

Example of Poor Code Language:

Behavior Violations	The Fix
Physical aggression	Use precise and exacting language to differentiate similar, but distinct behavior violations. For example, consider calibrating the severity of violent incidents by using fuller explanations.
Minor fighting	
Major fighting	

- **Attack on Student with Serious Bodily Injury with No Provocation:** Hitting, kicking, or punching another student
- **Attack on Student with Serious Bodily Injury with Provocation:** Hitting, kicking, or punching another student
- **Fighting with Serious Bodily Injury:** All students involved engage in hitting, kicking, or punching the other person
- **Fighting with No Serious Bodily Injury:** All students involved engage in hitting, kicking, punching the other person
- **Minor Physical or Verbal Aggression or Threat without Injury:** Unwanted touching, poking, pushing, shoving, physical intimidation, verbal threats, persistent teasing, taunting, or name calling

POTHOLE #4**Too many levels of consequences**

Most teachers and administrators are familiar with the PBIS / MTSS (Multi-tiered support system) of three tiers. Incorporating four to six tiers of consequences can become confusing, particularly when schools make attempts to align consequences to appropriate interventions, which are most often sub-divided into three tiers, not four to six tiers.

Example of Poor Code Language:

	Level of Consequence					
Offense/Violation	1	2	3	4	5	6

The Fix: Streamline school sanctions/consequences by using three tiers throughout the Code, even if it means subdividing Tier 3 into 3A and 3B school sanctions/consequences in order to accommodate the most serious tier of violent or dangerous incidents.

Tier 1	Official District and School Sanctions/Consequences		
	Tier 2	Tier 3A	Tier 3B
<p>There are no official office disciplinary referrals, classroom student removals, official school consequences/sanctions, or suspensions for Tier 1 behavior concerns</p> <p>Teachers observe the behavior, use a range of strategies to support the student and submit observation notes electronically describing the behavior and attempts to remedy it.</p>	<p>From submission of Behavior Referral, to removal of student with assignment to Intervention Center, to possible one or two day in-school suspension to possible one day out-of-school suspension.</p>	<p>One to three day out-of-school suspension.</p>	<p>From three day out-of-school suspension to possible five day out-of-school suspension with District hearing request for long-term suspension.</p>

POTHOLE #5

Consequence levels that include too broad a range of options

A very broad range of options within one consequence level leads to inconsistent application from one administrator to another. This creates unnecessary confusion and frustration among students, parents, and teachers.

Example of Poor Code Language:

Behavior Violations	Consequence Levels			
	1	2	3	4
<p>Level 1 consequences range from a warning to a teacher conference to parent-student conference with administrator to optional office referral, to detention, to removal of student from the classroom.</p>				
<p>Level 2 consequences range from teacher conference to detention, to required office referral to a two-day suspension.</p>				
<p>Level 3 consequences range from detention, to in-school intervention, to assignment to decision making room, to one to three day in-school suspension to one to five day out-of-school suspension.</p>				
<p>Level 4 consequences range from five to ten day out-of-school suspension to adjustment transfer to expulsion.</p>				

The Fix: Narrow the range of consequences within each specific tier. This is the same fix as Pothole #4.

Tier 1	Official District and School Sanctions/Consequences		
	Tier 2	Tier 3A	Tier 3B
<p>There are no official office disciplinary referrals, classroom student removals, official school consequences/sanctions, or suspensions for Tier 1 behavior concerns</p> <p>Teachers observe the behavior, use a range of strategies to support the student and submit observation notes describing the behavior and attempts to remedy it.</p>	<p>From submission of Behavior Referral, to removal of student with assignment to Intervention Center, to possible one or two day in-school suspension to possible one day out-of-school suspension.</p>	<p>One to three day out-of-school suspension</p>	<p>From three day out-of-school suspension to possible five day out-of-school suspension with District hearing request for long-term suspension</p>

POTHOLE #6

Too many consequence levels attached to the same behavior violation

When consequences for a specific behavior violation spill across many levels, the assignment of consequences becomes muddled and, as a result, overuse and disproportional use of student removal and suspension are likely to continue. We have observed deans and assistant principals responsible for the oversight of discipline for different grade levels within the same building assign anywhere from detention to five days of out-of-school suspension for incidents committed by different students that are more or less identical.

Example of Poor Code Language:

Behavior Violations	Consequence Tiers				
	1	2	3	4	5
Behaviors that Disrupt Student Learning or Distract Students from Learning		•	•	•	
Physical fighting		•	•	•	•
Disrespectful Behavior	•	•	•		
Verbal aggression directed at an adult	•	•	•	•	

The Fix: As much as possible identify only one consequence tier that is associated with each behavior violation.

Behavior Violations	Consequence Tiers			
	1	2	3A	3B
Attack on Student with Serious Bodily Injury with Provocation: Hitting, kicking, or punching another student				•
Attack on Student with Serious Bodily Injury with No Provocation: Hitting, kicking, or punching another student				•
Fighting with Serious Bodily Injury: All students involved engage in hitting, kicking, or punching the other person			•	
Fighting with No Serious Bodily Injury: All students involved engage in hitting, kicking, punching the other person		•		
Verbal Aggression against School Personnel: Name calling, profanity, insults, offensive language, or gestures		•		

POTHOLE #7

No mention of more intensive responses for multiple violations or chronic violations for the same behavior

Teachers often share their frustrations when the list of behavior violations does not account for students who engage in multiple low-impact behaviors or commit chronic violations of the same or similar misbehaviors.

Example of Poor Code Language:

This box is empty because any language related to persistent misbehaviors is simply absent from violation descriptions.

The Fix: The description of behavior violations in the Code needs to include a statement that reassures teachers that they are able to red flag situations in which students persistently engage in low-impact misbehaviors or engage in chronic violations of the same or similar behaviors.

Some district codes include this statement, “Multiple incidents or chronic violations of the same or similar behaviors (three to five incidents) will warrant

more serious consequences and more intensive interventions.” They also list “Persistent Tier 1 Misbehaviors” as a Tier 2 behavior violation. Submitting an office disciplinary referral under this coding is likely to prompt a conversation with the student’s grade level team, an assistant principal, or someone on the School Intervention Team to assess the student’s situation and explore the most appropriate Tier 2 interventions.

POTHOLE #8

Placing all interventions in a single list

Listing all interventions that the school offers in one big cluster can be very confusing for teachers, for students, and for parents who want to know “What will happen when…” In addition, guidelines need to be developed that help them to standardize interventions delivered at each Tier.

Example of Poor Code Language:

School Interventions	
Alternative school-based program	Counseling
Campus clean-up	Decision-making room
Check In-Check Out (progress monitoring)	Informal and/or preventative school-based mentoring
Community Conferencing	Modified school day
Community Service (Volunteer work for any non-profit organization, public or private, as a form of restitution)	Referral to Student Support Team
Conflict resolution	Restitution
	Restorative Group Conference
	Small group skill-building sessions
	Student re-entry or success plan

The Fix: For serious incidents that jeopardize student and staff physical and psychological safety, try to align specific interventions to the behavior violation and the assigned school sanction/consequence.

Behavior Violation	Assigned School Sanctions / Consequence	Intervention
Attack on Student with Serious Bodily Injury with No Provocation: Hitting, kicking, or punching another student with no provocation	Tier 3B →5 day out-of-school suspension and District hearing	Anti-violence treatment program delivered by community agency Highly recommended “Restorative Group Conference” if both the aggressor and the target agree to participate. School re-entry protocol when student returns to school
Bullying: Persistent and repeated incidents targeted at same person or group	Tier 2 →One day in-school suspension for first time incident Student-administrator conference Administrator-parent conference	Three anti-bullying sessions with bullying-harassment facilitator Close monitoring of student through staff feedback and student support coaching for one month
Verbal Aggression: Persistent confrontational arguing, refusal, and backtalk	Tier 2 →One day in-school suspension during which student receives the appropriate intervention	Student-teacher conference facilitated by Student Support Team member Behavior replacement intervention Monitoring and feedback of student progress for one month

For each tier of behavior violations, cluster the array of interventions that are most likely to be used in conjunction with assigned school sanctions/consequences for that tier. Remember, assigned school sanctions/ consequences involve other school staff beyond the classroom teacher. The interventions involve some action carried out by the student, accompanied by adult support and supervision with the ultimate aim of helping students acquire skills and mindsets that strengthen their personal and social efficacy and enable them to function more successfully at school.

Tier 2 Behavior Violations	
Tier 2 School Sanctions / Consequence	<p>Submission of office disciplinary referral.</p> <p>Student removal from classroom or other location and temporary assignment to Intervention Center.</p> <p>Assignment to Intervention Center.</p> <p>Student conference with administrator or dean.</p> <p>Student conference with grade level team.</p> <p>Parent conference with administrator, dean, or Student Support Coach.</p> <p>One to two day in-school suspension.</p> <p>One to two day out-of-school suspension.</p>
Options for Tier 2 Aligned Interventions	<p>Teacher facilitated problem solving and planning conference, coaching, and support to close behavior and/or academic learning gaps.</p> <p>Restorative practices that may include an act of apology, restitution, mediation, or Restorative Group Conference.</p> <p>Student-teacher restorative conference (without or with a facilitator) when student returns to class after being removed.</p> <p>Assignment of Student Support Coach who engages student in restorative conferencing, coaching, behavior replacement skill building, development of positive mindsets, strengthening of personal and social efficacy, and progress monitoring.</p> <p>Grade level team consultation to determine a common set of strategies across classes to implement with the student.</p> <p>Small group social skill building sessions.</p>

POTHOLE #9

No timelines for expected delivery of disciplinary protocols and interventions

Although newly revised Codes often outline disciplinary protocols and interventions, they may not be accompanied by timelines for their expected delivery. As a result, the loop between the initial incident, the processing during the consequence phase, and the determination and delivery of interventions might take days or even weeks. Staff members feel frustrated when the loop is not closed quickly and parents become concerned or frustrated when they have not received timely notification or when interventions are not delivered close to the incident. Most importantly, students are left either wondering why they are not getting the help they need or assuming that nothing much will really happen after the incident.

Example of Poor Code Language:

“In instances where a student receives an out-of-school suspension, the student must receive their due process and parents must be informed in writing of the suspension and any follow-up interventions. Parents may request conference with an administrator.” Notice that there are no specific time windows within which the due process investigation must occur, an administrator must inform the parent, a parent can request a conference, or start time for the intervention.

The Fix: Disciplinary protocols and interventions that are time-sensitive or require consistent delivery should be described in some detail in the Code, so administrators, teachers, or student support staff who are responsible for delivering them have a clear pathway to follow.

Examples**Intake Conference when Student Has Been Removed from Class or Another Location:**

Students who have committed behavior violations serious enough to warrant immediate removal from the classroom or other location will be escorted to the Intervention Center for the remainder of the class period (for more information about the Intervention Center, see Chapter Eleven). The Intervention Center coordinator or a Student Support Team member will facilitate an intake conference to defuse emotional upset, reflect on the incident, and discuss what the student will need to do to repair the harm, right oneself, and restore one's good standing. An administrator will determine whether the student returns to regular classes or remains in the Intervention Center for the remainder of the day while a parent is being contacted.

Restorative Conference After Student Has Been Removed from Class: Within 48 hours of the student's return to class, the teacher must facilitate a one-to-one conference with the student or arrange for a Student Support Team member to facilitate a conference between the student and teacher to discuss reasons for removal and make a plan to improve the student's behavior and engagement in the classroom.

Comprehensive, Longer Term Interventions: The Case Management Team will identify students who are experiencing multiple problems (social, emotional, and academic challenges; personal distress and/or family crisis) that have become barriers to functioning successfully at school. Within a week of a student's identification, the Case Management Team will consult with the student's teachers, parent/guardian, and others to determine components of a long-term intervention that will include a Comprehensive Student Success Plan as well as other interventions that are facilitated by Student Support Team members within the school as well as referral for services provided by the District or external partner agencies.

Return from Suspension: Upon a student's return from out-of-school suspension, the student can expect six things to happen:

1. On the day of a student's return→ Student and parent will conference with an administrator or designated Student Support Team member.
2. On the day of a student's return→ A learning and behavior plan will be signed.
3. Within 24 hours of a student's return→ The plan will be distributed to the student's teachers.
4. Within 24 hours of a student's return→ A Student Support Coach will be assigned to the student and will check-in with the student on a regular basis during the two weeks following the student's return.
5. At the end of the first and second week following a student's return→ The student's teachers will provide written or verbal feedback to the student's support coach in order to assess the student's progress.
6. Within the first week of a student's return→ An administrator will check-in with the student to discuss the student's learning and behavior plan.

The beauty of identifying potholes is that you can fill them in once you have a team to evaluate the current Code against criteria for an effective one. Getting the right people at the table to draft a scaffolded work plan with key deliverables and a timeline will enable you to confidently move forward to tackle each pothole. We understand the complexity of this work, and the time it takes. It is time well spent, as the Code, when effectively written, becomes a strategic resource for multiple stakeholders to responsibly do their jobs in service of their students and the community at large.

¹ Deal, T., & Peterson, K. (2009). *Shaping school culture: Pitfalls, paradoxes, and promises* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

² Bower, M. (1966). *The will to manage; corporate success through programmed management*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

³ Center for Character and Social Responsibility <http://www.bu.edu/ccsr/resources/publications/>

⁴ Perkins, B. (2006). *Where We Learn: The CUBE Survey of Urban School Climate*. The Urban Student Achievement Task Force.

⁵ Tauber, R. (2007) *Classroom Management, Sound Theory and Effective Practice*. Praeger.

⁶ Mayo Clinic, Patient Care and Health Information: *oppositional defiant disorder*. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/oppositional-defiant-disorder/basics/definition/con-20024559>