



California State Board of Education Policy

POLICY #
01-02
DATE
March 2001

SUBJECT

School Safety, Discipline, and Attendance

REFERENCES

Integrated in text.

HISTORICAL NOTES

This policy supersedes a policy on the same subject originally adopted in October 1983 and revised in September 1993.

It is the policy of the State Board of Education (State Board) that all students enrolled in public schools in California have the right to safe schools.¹ The State Board believes that students cannot benefit fully from an educational program unless they attend school regularly in an environment that is free from physical and psychological harm. The State Board also believes that the leadership in providing safe schools, establishing behavior standards, and improving student attendance must come primarily from local education agency (LEA) boards, superintendents and their staff, and site-level administrators. The leadership must be continuous in order to support comprehensive efforts at each school site to assist students in becoming self-directed and responsible for their own behavior.

It is further the policy of the State Board (supported by reference in statute²) that the substantial benefit students will derive from regular attendance in a safe and orderly school environment justifies a high priority and commitment of personnel and fiscal resources by the Legislature, Governor, and California Department of Education, and by LEAs.

In accordance with California Education Code Section 35294.1 et seq., the State Board recognizes that a beginning step toward safer schools is the development of a comprehensive plan for school safety by every public school and district in the state. The plan should be developed and integrated into the ongoing school planning efforts that currently exist. Education Code Section 35294.6(a) requires that the plan be reviewed and updated annually by March 1. Also, Education Code Section 35294.6(b) requires each school to report in July on the status of its school safety plan (including a description of the plan's key elements) in the annual school accountability report card prepared pursuant to Education Code Sections 33126 et seq. and 35256 et seq. There should be a district-wide statement of philosophy, an enabling policy, and guidelines that serve as a foundation for safe school plans created by individual schools.³ The statement should provide a clear sense of purpose and exemplify district support for the entire planning process. The State Board acknowledges that a student's academic achievement is a great deterrent to school violence; hence, a comprehensive plan should include a focus on high expectations of student performance and behavior in all aspects of the school experience.

¹ Constitution of the State of California, Article 1, Section 28(c), Right to Safe Schools.

² The Carl Washington School Safety and Violence Prevention Act, Education Code Section 32228 et seq.

³ California Department of Education, *Safe Schools: A Planning Guide for Action* (1995 Edition)

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Effective safe school plans are developed cooperatively by parents (guardians), students, teachers, administrators, counselors, and community agencies, including local law enforcement, and approved by the local governing board. The State Board also strongly encourages all LEAs to establish working and collaborative relationships with law enforcement agencies, service agencies, parents (guardians), and community members in order to provide safe and orderly schools, improve attendance, and expand services to students and parents (guardians).

The State Board believes that in order for a comprehensive program for school safety to have long-lasting effects, it should include a planned sequence of strategies and activities appropriate for all students and should be based on specific needs identified by a broad-based safe school committee.⁴ The program should have a major focus that is preventive in nature and supports the development of youths' assets.⁵ In addition, it should include provisions to deal with critical issues, such as truancy; racial conflict; bullying; gang activities on campus; violent behaviors; weapons possession on campus; drug, alcohol, and other substance abuse; and natural disasters. The plan should also incorporate after-school programs and extracurricular and co-curricular activities that address individual student needs to belong and to be respected and appreciated. Finally, the plan should include procedures for accommodating children and youth with disabilities.

The State Board believes that comprehensive safe school plans and programs should focus attention on the strengths and experiences that students, teachers, administrators, and other school personnel bring to the school campus; the physical setting and conditions in which education takes place; the organizational and interpersonal processes that occur in and around school; and the general atmosphere or spirit of the school.

Comprehensive plans and programs will provide a positive learning environment through the implementation of:

- Appropriate rules, regulations, and discipline policies that are well publicized, consistently enforced, and nondiscriminatory, and that take into consideration the due process all students are entitled to receive.
- Appropriate professional development that emphasizes the importance of treating students, parents (guardians), and coworkers respectfully.
- A rigorous curriculum that establishes high expectations for achievement by all students in every subject area, academic and non-academic.

⁴ Pursuant to Education Code Sections 35294.1 and 35294.2, the school site council is responsible for developing the school site safety plan or for delegating the responsibility to a school safety planning committee. The site council shall consult with law enforcement in the writing and development of the plan, as well as consult, cooperate, and coordinate with other school site councils and safety committees, where practical.

⁵ Resnic, Michael and Richard Udry. Protecting adolescents from harm: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health. *JAMA* 278 (10). September 10, 1997.



- Effective counseling and guidance services that include personal counseling, peer programs, educational counseling, career planning, and training in job-seeking skills and work-related social skills.
- Supplemental and alternative instructional strategies and learning programs, including extracurricular and co-curricular activities, independent study, work experience, and alternative schools, all of which are designed to empower students to complete high school and to transition successfully to employment or postsecondary education.
- Student handbooks that explain codes of conduct, including information on such topics as student rights and responsibilities, unacceptable behavior, and procedures for due process and appeals.
- Plans for dealing with potential disruptive conflict situations, including procedures for referrals to law enforcement agencies for serious offenses.
- Processes for continually examining the factors in school life that influence behavior and modifying those factors to bring about desired behavior.
- Programs and strategies that develop a student's sense of family and school connectedness, self-esteem, personal and social responsibility, character, and ability to resolve conflict in a positive, constructive way.
- Appropriate professional development activities that include safe school strategies, current laws affecting school safety, and crisis response.
- Collaboration and cooperation among community agencies, law enforcement agencies, neighborhoods, parents (guardians), and schools that lead to increased school safety.
- A system of referrals to appropriate agencies for services that students need and that schools are unable to provide.

Local plans for safe schools should be based on and/or include the following elements:

1. Collaborative relationships among community agencies, parents (guardians), local law enforcement agencies, and the school that lead to a common vision of a safe school and commitment to programmatic goals developed by a broadly based safe schools committee.
2. A district-wide statement of philosophy, an enabling policy, and guidelines that serve as a foundation for safe school plans created by individual schools, provide a clear sense of purpose, and exemplify district support for the entire planning process.
3. An assessment of the incidence of campus violence and vandalism, student behavior referrals resulting in suspensions or expulsions, student behaviors resulting in automatic



expulsion, and students' attendance patterns including actual attendance, number of excused and unexcused absences, and reasons for nonattendance and tardiness.

4. Identification of appropriate and comprehensive strategies and programs that will provide or maintain a high level of school safety.
5. A discipline policy that clearly defines expected behavior, provides consequences for deviations from the expected behavior, and distinguishes discipline problems from law enforcement problems. A discipline policy should provide details on the following:
 - Rights and responsibilities of students;
 - Student code of conduct;
 - Description of specific disruptive behaviors that interfere with the classroom learning environment (such as antisocial behaviors, gang-related attire and conduct, tardiness, and excessive absences) and logical consequences for those disruptive behaviors;
 - Provisions for due process (e.g., appeals, hearings, and grievances); and
 - Processes for reviewing the individualized education programs of individuals with exceptional needs, as defined in Section 56026 of the Education Code, or other children with disabilities that have a Section 504 plan, before punitive action for socially-inappropriate behavior is initiated.
6. Objectives and strategies to improve school safety, attendance, student behavior, and disciplinary practices, and thereby reduce campus violence and foster a positive learning environment.
7. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the designated strategies in reaching the desired attendance, behavior, and school environment goals.
8. A description of the roles and responsibilities of faculty and staff in developing cooperative working relationships with law enforcement agencies, service agencies, parents (guardians), and students to assure the implementation and continuing progress of the comprehensive plan.
9. A description of the identified fiscal and personnel resources for the plan's implementation.
10. Strategies for recognizing situations that may potentially result in conflict (or otherwise be disruptive of education) and implementing appropriate interventions.