

# SAFE and CARING SCHOOLS

A Policy Directive Enhancing  
Proactive Supports to Minimize  
**THE USE OF SUSPENSION**

2023



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A Policy Directive Enhancing  
Proactive Supports to Minimize  
**THE USE OF SUSPENSION**

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning Cataloguing in Publication Data

Safe and caring schools : a policy directive enhancing proactive supports to minimize the use of suspension

Includes bibliographical references.

This resource is available in print and electronic formats.

ISBN: 978-0-7711-6499-6 (print)

ISBN: 978-0-7711-6497-2 (pdf)

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Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

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This resource is available on the Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning website at [https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/safe\\_schools/](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/safe_schools/).

*Disponible en français.*

Available in alternate formats upon request.

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# Acknowledgements

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning would like to express sincere thanks to the following for their contributions and consultation on this policy directive:

- Children's Coalition
- Dr. Lesley Eblie Trudel, University of Winnipeg
- Inclusion Winnipeg
- Manitoba Association of Parent Councils
- Manitoba Association of School Superintendents
- Manitoba School Boards Association
- The Manitoba Teachers' Society
- Student Advisory Council (2021-2022)
- Student Services Administrators' Association of Manitoba
- Student Services Inclusive Education Committee

## ***Land Treaty Acknowledgement***

*We recognize that Manitoba is on Treaty 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10 Territories and the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabe, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline, Ininiwak, and Nehethowuk Peoples. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit.*

*We respect the spirit and intent of Treaties and Treaty Making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation, and collaboration.*

# Manitoba's Philosophy of Inclusion

The Public Schools Act supports Manitoba's Philosophy of Inclusion, which states:

*Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued, and safe. An inclusive community consciously evolves to meet the changing needs of its members. Through recognition and support, an inclusive community provides meaningful involvement and equal access to the benefits of citizenship.*

In Manitoba, we embrace inclusion as a means of enhancing the well-being of every member of the community. By working together, we strengthen our capacity to provide the foundation for a richer future for all of us.



# Introduction

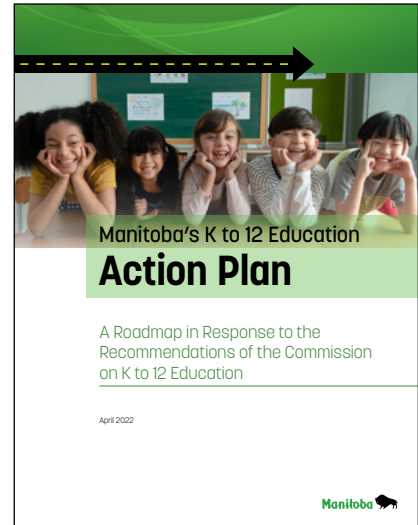
Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning (hereinafter named the department) is committed to fostering inclusion for all students (MEECL, *Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba*, 2022). Under The Public Schools Act (PSA) and Appropriate Educational Programming Regulation (M.R. 155/05), all students in Manitoba have a right to appropriate educational programming in a safe, caring, and inclusive environment that fosters and maintains respectful and responsible behaviours.

This policy directive is identified in [Manitoba's K to 12 Education Action Plan](#) (April 2022) as an action that focuses on improving learning and outcomes for all students and enhancing inclusive mindsets and practices that support student success. All Manitoba students can succeed no matter where they live, their backgrounds, or their individual circumstances (MEECL, *Manitoba's K to 12 Education Action Plan*, 2022).

This policy directive builds upon, and supports, the recommendations made by the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth (MACY) and the Manitoba Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education report [Our Children's Success: Manitoba's Future: Report of the Commission on K to 12 Education](#) (2020), specifically "to limit, reduce, and phase-out exclusionary practices, except in situations of imminent safety risk to students and staff, balancing appropriately the need for at-risk students to receive an education, and ensuring that all students have a safe and orderly learning environment" (Manitoba Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education, 2020, p. 63).

All school divisions and funded independent schools are required to revise and/or develop policies and procedures on the use of suspension consistent with the guidelines within this policy directive. The information and guidelines in this document are intended to support school divisions in meeting these recommendations.

Student safety is a priority for every education stakeholder, and this document is intended to support schools in ensuring student safety through proactive interventions and alternatives to student suspensions whenever possible.



## Related Legislation/Regulation

In Manitoba, the authority to suspend is determined by legislation as set out in The Public Schools Act, The Education Administration Act, and supporting regulation Appropriate Disciplinary Consequences in Schools Regulation (M.R. 92/2013).

### Authority to Suspend

Principals, teachers, superintendents, and the school board are permitted, with different degrees of authority, to suspend (M.R. 92/2013).

A teacher may suspend a student from the classroom, and the principal or superintendent may suspend a student from the school, if

- the student engages in disruptive behaviour
- suspension is the consequence for that behaviour under the school's disciplinary behaviour management policies and the school's code of conduct

A school board may suspend from a school any student who, upon investigation by the school board, is found to be guilty of conduct injurious to the school environment (PSA). In its decisions, the board may choose to identify possible solutions and recommend preferred alternatives.

The school board may limit or place conditions on the teacher's authority to suspend from the classroom, either with respect to any individual student or generally, if the board is of the opinion that the teacher has repeatedly

- suspended an individual student for reasons that are not justified
- suspended students for reasons that are not justified

### Period of Suspensions

Periods of suspension set out in section (8) of Appropriate Disciplinary Consequences in Schools Regulation (M.R. 92/2013) apply to both in-school and out-of-school suspension.

- A teacher may suspend a student from the classroom for not more than two days.
- The principal may suspend a student from the school for not more than one week.\*
- A superintendent may suspend a student from the school for not more than six weeks.

School boards may determine the length of any suspension that they order (Manitoba Education and Training, 2016, p. 2). A school board may, by resolution, prohibit a principal from suspending a student for more than one week without the superintendent's approval (Manitoba Education and Training, 2016, p. 2).

\* A week shall be considered one school week; six weeks shall be considered six school weeks. If the time limit expires on a day when the school is not open for any reason during its regular hours of business or because it is a holiday, the time is extended to the next day the school is open or to the day following a holiday (MEECL, *Standards for AEP*, p. 9).

## Guiding Principles

The Public Schools Act and the Appropriate Disciplinary Consequences in Schools Regulation (M.R. 92/2013) permit the use of suspension. This policy directive is intended to expand upon both the legislation and regulation where suspension is determined to be the appropriate disciplinary consequence when a student's unacceptable conduct or disruptive behaviour is found to be injurious to the school environment and/or deemed an imminent safety risk to students and staff.

Policy and procedures must comply with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and *The Human Rights Code of Manitoba*, as well as the rights and responsibilities related to education in Manitoba as defined in The Public Schools Act and The Education Administration Act and their related regulations, standards, and ministerial directives. Policies and procedures must align with the *Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba* (MEECL, 2022) and *Mamàhtawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With: An Indigenous Education Policy Framework* (MEECL, 2022) and the following guiding principles:

- Ensuring a safe, caring, and inclusive learning environment, policies and procedures must support Manitoba's Philosophy of Inclusion.
- Decisions shall appropriately address safety risk to students and staff, plan for a safe and orderly learning environment, and reflect the best interests of the students.
- Decisions shall respect the right and access to education for children and youth.
- Student success and well-being is a collective responsibility and requires active agency on the part of all who are responsible for children and youth.
- Appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with respecting the child's human dignity.
- Disciplinary alternatives are to be informed by research and best practices.
- Relationships matter in providing a sense of safety and belonging for all students.

It is expected that policies and procedures on the use of suspension are

- consistent with the guidelines in this document
- consistent with the school's discipline and behaviour intervention policies, including the disciplinary consequences for violations of the school's code of conduct
- applicable to all students
- consistent across schools
- in alignment with precepts of due process, procedural fairness, and natural justice
- discussed in consultation with parents\*, who have the right to be informed of the discipline and behaviour intervention policies of the school or school division and to be consulted before the policies are established or revised

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\* The term *parents* refers to both parents and legal guardians and is used with the recognition that in some cases only one parent may be involved in a child's education or that the significant adult in the life of many students may not be their parent. This term may also apply to a student who has reached the age of majority.

## GUIDELINE 1: DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

Policies and procedures must include definitions and terminology consistent with this ministerial directive for the purpose of providing clarity and building common understanding and consistency.

The following definitions of suspension must be used as they apply to policy and procedures. General references made to the term *suspension* shall apply to both in-school and out-of-school suspension unless otherwise noted.

**Out-of-School Suspension (OSS):** “An instance in which a student is dismissed from school for disciplinary purposes for a finite period of time when their peers are expected to be in attendance” (MEECL, *Standards for AEP*, p. 24).

**In-School Suspension (ISS):** “An instance in which a student is temporarily removed from their regular classroom(s) for at least half a school day for disciplinary purposes but remains under the direct supervision of school personnel. Direct supervision means school personnel are physically in the same location as students under their supervision” (MEECL, *Standards for AEP*, p. 25).

### Exclusionary Practices

Exclusionary discipline encompasses any type of school disciplinary action that removes or excludes a student from their usual educational setting (APA Services, Inc., 2019). Regardless of the name used or the intended purpose, exclusionary practices should be exercised with due diligence. Schools and school divisions must develop policy and procedures on the use of exclusionary practices.

Exclusionary discipline practices are referred to by various names and applied in varying degrees, dependent upon the purpose or intent (Valdebenito et al., 2018). The degree of exclusion for any reason should be commensurate with the least restrictive environment and not be punitive. Although exclusionary discipline practices might typically be viewed on a continuum of severity, educators must take caution that students are not faced with undue hardship or feelings of alienation, as they may not hold the same perception.

Examples of exclusionary practices include the following:

- withdrawal from the classroom setting for less than half a school day for disciplinary purposes but under the direct supervision of school personnel
- detention
- removal of privileges
- removal from school bus ridership

- exclusion time-out
- being sent home early
- in-school suspension
- out-of-school suspension
- expulsion
- seclusion

(Manitoba Education and Training, *Provincial Code of Conduct*, 2017; Manitoba Education, *Enhancing Proactive Supports to Minimize the Use of Seclusion*, 2021).

Within this range of exclusionary practices, suspension, expulsion, and seclusion are considered to be most restrictive.

## Expulsion

Expulsion is an extreme exclusionary discipline practice. Expulsion differs from suspension (Manitoba Education and Training, *Provincial Code of Conduct*, 2017). Although The Public Schools Act and supporting regulation (M.R. 92/2013) allow school boards to expel, the guidelines in this policy directive focus on minimizing the use of suspension due to the negative outcomes and the aim to limit, reduce, and subsequently phase out exclusionary practices. Schools and school divisions must develop policy and procedures on the use of expulsion.

## Seclusion

Seclusion is a safety response. It is never used as a punishment, consequence, disciplinary action, or a way to force compliance. Schools and school divisions must develop policy and procedures on the use of seclusion (Manitoba Education, *Enhancing Proactive Supports to Minimize the Use of Seclusion*, 2021).

## Informal Removals/Being Sent Home

The *Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming* (2022) affirms that “School division policy must identify a mandatory process to inform parents and ensure safety any time a student is sent home for disciplinary reasons” (MEECL, *Standards for AEP: Student Discipline*, p. 19).

There may be instances when a student is sent home due to behavioural disruptions for the purpose of a “reset” or “fresh start.” Although this practice may be well-intended, if a student’s day is reduced outside of the student-specific planning process, such informal removals must be documented.

According to the *Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba* (MEECL, 2022), “School divisions must provide all students with the same minimum number of hours of instruction, and document in the student-specific plan (SSP) any reduction or alternations in the school day, including a plan to return to full-time instruction” (p. 9).

When removals from the classroom and/or school form a recurring pattern, the student-specific planning process should be initiated to identify a student’s learning needs and develop, implement, and evaluate appropriate educational interventions.

## GUIDELINE 2: ENHANCING PROACTIVE AND PREVENTATIVE PRACTICES

Policies must identify preventative practices that promote positive and proactive strategies in order to limit, reduce, and phase out exclusionary practices.

In Manitoba, all schools are expected to engage in preventative practices, emphasizing positive and proactive strategies to foster student learning (Manitoba Education and Training, *Provincial Code of Conduct*, 2017; Manitoba Education, *Safe and Caring Schools: Enhancing Proactive Supports to Minimize the Use of Seclusion*, 2021;

Manitoba Education, *Towards Inclusion: Supporting Positive Behaviour in Manitoba Classrooms*, 2011). Schools and school divisions should seek a proactive approach that supports students by identifying and solving problems early.

**By establishing common values, vision, and practices, a whole-school approach “promotes a sense of belonging to the school community and builds trusting relationships” (Kidde & Alfred, as cited in Passarella, 2017).**

The department provides a model for a whole-school approach to planning for safety and belonging that is based on four perspectives that include comprehensive school health, social-ecological systems, three-tiered planning, and strengths-based practices (Manitoba Education and Training, *Safe and Caring Schools: A Whole-School Approach to Planning for Safety and Belonging*, 2017).

This model outlines a planning process based on research and evidence-based practices in planning for—and sustaining—positive, healthy, and safe schools while aligning with school planning systems already in use in Manitoba schools and school divisions.

Planning in this way helps school communities create a positive and inclusive school culture and meets the *Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba* (MEECL, 2022), which affirms, “School division policy on student discipline must incorporate a continuum of supports, including positive and preventative approaches and strategies, as well as consequences corresponding to the nature, severity, and

frequency of the behaviour or infraction” (MEECL, *Standards for AEP: Student Discipline*, p. 19). Similarly, the student-specific planning process should be utilized to meet the unique needs of individual students and to determine, implement, and evaluate appropriate educational interventions (MEECL, *Standards for AEP: Planning in Education; Student-Specific Planning*, 2022).

**The support document *Safe and Caring Schools: A Whole-School Approach to Planning for Safety and Belonging* is a valuable tool [and] is an example of best practices for creating positive school environments. “When enacted, the approach and strategies in that document will improve the school—and life—experiences of young people and give educators more tools to support young people in the school community” (MACY, *The Slow Disappearance of Matthew*, 2020, p. 13).**

Just as school teams plan and use practices to meet the diversity of individual academic programming needs, so too do they need to plan for safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environments where all students have a sense of belonging.

Many strategies can be used in a variety of settings, circumstances, and combinations to improve student presence and engagement (MEECL, [School Attendance: Information for Educators](#), 2023). A system change or enhancement should be culturally relevant and further truth and reconciliation while influencing ways of knowing, being, and doing from the entire school community (MEECL, *Mamàhtawisiwin*, 2022).

Adopting these strategies may require a paradigm shift. This shift requires looking ahead to the preventative and proactive ways schools can perform their function and influence the behaviour of all students in a positive way. These measures allow for intervention before the conduct reaches the point of suspension, thus leading to fewer incidents where suspension might be considered.

## GUIDELINE 3: ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO SUSPENSION

Policies and procedures must consider alternative approaches before suspension. An in-school suspension must be identified as an alternative response to out-of-school suspension.

While the use of suspension is authorized in The Manitoba Public Schools Act, the rationale at the core and its efficacy is increasingly being questioned (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2020). As a result, schools and school division policies and procedures must consider alternative approaches before suspension (Manitoba Education and Training, *Provincial Code of Conduct*, 2017).

**It is in the best interests  
"of students and society to  
seek alternatives to out-of-  
school suspension whenever  
possible" (AAP, p. e1002).**

No single approach, program, or system may be exclusive to supporting students who are suspended. Rather, "supportive school discipline is a systemic constellation of programs and practices that promote positive behaviours while preventing negative or risky behaviours. It is positive rather than punitive and aims to create a safe learning environment that enhances all students' outcomes" (Education Development Center, 2012, p. 2).

In order to promote a safe, caring, and inclusive learning environment, schools must provide opportunities for students and staff to increase their understanding of behaviour and to learn to respond to unwanted behaviour in alternative ways. Supportive student discipline should be about teaching and learning. Rather than employing a suspension, the supportive strategies are used and reframed as learning opportunities, fulfilling a need the student has identified through their behaviour.

**"[Use] the restorative approach as an alternative, allowing all involved parties to have a civil conversation with an apology and explaining the effects of the misconduct" and that "a [better] alternative is school service, as it allows students to stay in school but also holds them accountable for their actions" (MEECL, *Report of the Student Advisory Council*, 2022, p. 12).**

Providing students an opportunity to reflect on their behaviour and repair relationships is paramount to this learning. Appropriate consequences and supports should help students improve behaviour while considering individual circumstances.

Schools are encouraged to seek relevant resources in implementing intervention and mediation strategies. Schools must focus on the implementation of evidence-based systems rooted in skill development and capacity building. A combination of approaches in the areas of social-emotional learning, positive behaviour supports, cultural relevancy, restorative practice and restitution, and trauma-informed practice can be applied.



As approaches to discipline will vary, school divisions should engage in conversation with school leaders, educators, and the broader school community, while also looking at data sources, to develop an idea of what approaches and strategies would most benefit their students, staff, and schools.

(See [\*Companion Guide for Safe and Caring Schools: A Policy Directive Enhancing Proactive Supports to Minimize the Use of Suspension\*](#))

**“The themes that are common to a successful approach include the development of a positive school climate, a positive school-wide approach, team planning, community involvement, and professional support” (Manitoba Education and Training, *Provincial Code of Conduct*, 2017, p. 8).**

## In-School Suspension as an Alternative to Out-of-School Suspension

For the purpose of offering a safe, structured, and supervised environment, an in-school suspension may be applied for a finite period of time in lieu of an out-of-school suspension when it is considered safe and appropriate (Noltemeyer & Ward, 2015).

An in-school suspension allows for the opportunity to apply targeted interventions and supports that address behaviour and facilitate problem solving. There is benefit to maintaining connection to the school community and adults in a safe environment and with uninterrupted learning.

Although an in-school suspension may be an alternative response to an out-of-school suspension, it is important to note that it is still viewed as a punishment and there are known associated negative outcomes to this exclusionary practice (Noltemeyer & Ward, 2015). Unintended consequences may arise, and stigma can emerge from labelling, alienation, and negative behaviours influenced by exclusion (Wolf & Kupchik, 2017). Further, negative consequences may be ineffective when overused (Manitoba Education and Training, *Provincial Code of Conduct*, 2017).

## GUIDELINE 4: DISCRETION AND CONSIDERATION

Policies must include procedures in determining whether suspension is an appropriate disciplinary consequence.

Disciplinary responses should be viewed as an opportunity to problem-solve. Before a course of action is taken, all circumstances that may lead to suspension as a disciplinary consequence require an assessment of the situation, context, and mitigating factors.

According to the *Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba* (MEECL, 2022), the Provincial Code of Conduct “sets out a range of appropriate disciplinary responses for all schools to follow consistently. The Appropriate Disciplinary Consequences in Schools Regulation 92/2013 under The Education Administration Act confirms and restates the authority of principals, schools, and school divisions and requires principals of Manitoba schools to ensure that appropriate interventions and disciplinary consequences are included in their school codes of conduct” (p. 18).

- School divisions must provide reasonable accommodation when disciplining a student and must take into consideration the student’s state of development, ability to comply, and the amount of support required (MEECL, *Standards for AEP*, 2022).
- School division policy on student discipline must incorporate a continuum of supports, including positive and preventative approaches and strategies, as well as consequences corresponding to the nature, severity, and frequency of the behaviour or infraction (MEECL, *Standards for AEP*, 2022).

This means that, for some students, the approach to student discipline will need to consider the student’s special learning needs and abilities including whether

- the student is able to access the information
- the student understands the policy or rules
- the disciplinary actions used for the majority of students are appropriate for the student

As affirmed in the *Provincial Code of Conduct: Appropriate Interventions and Disciplinary Consequences* (Manitoba Education and Training, 2017), interventions and consequences may be applied appropriate to the context and that, in every situation, when selecting appropriate consequences, staff should be sensitive to any student who has been the target of unacceptable conduct, as well as to the student who engaged in the misconduct. These factors encourage those with the authority to suspend to avoid disciplining students who did not act deliberately.

Additional factors may direct the course of action. The decision to suspend should consider the following:

- the information gathered from the student, reporting staff, and others who may have witnessed or been affected
- whether a process should be initiated for determining the risk of threat to self or others, and the risk of recurrence
- possible motivation or underlying reason(s) that led to the incident (e.g., setting events, antecedent)
- previous disciplinary incidents
- previously employed interventions and their effectiveness
- the student's background and support network
- alternative approaches not previously employed
- whether the suspension will be a breach of probation, if applicable

The decision to suspend may also include the following:

- a discussion with the parent(s)
- a discussion with the in-school team and/or divisional-level staff

**X** Policies must prohibit the use of suspension as a response to absenteeism. Suspensions are inappropriate and counterproductive responses to absenteeism, and must be eliminated from practice (MEECL, *Safe and Caring Schools: A Policy Directive and Action Plan to Enhance Student Presence and Engagement*, 2023).

**X** Suspension duration must not incrementally increase based on the number of suspensions a student has previously received.

## GUIDELINE 5: SUSPENSION PROCEDURES

Policies must include in-school and out-of-school suspension procedures.

Schools and school divisions must develop procedures for suspension. Procedures should address all steps, responsibilities, and expectations in sufficient detail to ensure clarity and consistency. For example, policy and procedures should clarify the restrictions of in-school and out-of-school suspensions for both students and parents.

Policy and procedures should make clear that school personnel shall not dismiss from the school a student who presents an imminent safety risk to self or others before parents have been notified.

### Notification to Parents

School division policy must identify a mandatory process to inform parents and ensure safety any time a student is sent home for disciplinary reasons (MEECL, *Standards for AEP: Student Discipline*, p. 19).

As per The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA), all forms of communication should be produced in a way that enhances accessibility by using plain language and clear print, and by notifying the public that alternate formats are available upon request. For example, if actions or details are given verbally, they are also provided in a format that is accessible to the student and their parents.

If the student is suspended, the parents must be promptly notified of the reason and period of suspension by

- the principal of the school, if the student is suspended by a teacher or the principal
- the superintendent, if the student is suspended by the superintendent

Within 24 hours of the decision to suspend, a written letter will be sent to the parents with information that includes the following:

- the student's name, birthdate, and student MET number
- the nature of the suspension (in-school or out-of-school)
- the reason(s) for the decision to suspend in relation to the code of conduct and divisional policy
- the period of suspension (with beginning and end dates)

- information regarding the re-entry process
- the date, time, and location of the re-entry meeting
- information regarding the opportunity for parents to be provided with accommodations such as an interpreter or having a supporting person accompany them to the re-entry meeting
- the name and contact information of the school/division staff who will serve as the parent's initial contact for the purpose of arranging appropriate educational programming and maintaining regular contact with the student
- information regarding the parent's right to make an appeal and the appeal procedures of the school board
- clarity of any other restrictions

## Written Report

Within 24 hours following the decision to suspend, the principal will give the school board or designate a written report that includes

- the student's name
- the period of suspension
- a description of the behaviour for which the student was suspended

The report must be entered in the school division's student information system within 48 hours of the suspension.

## Access to Educational Programming during Suspension

School divisions must offer and arrange educational programming for students who are suspended for more than five days (M.R. 92/2013). Educational programming may range from work at home to alternative courses at a different location or remote learning, depending on the student's needs, length of suspension, or age.

Policy and procedures regarding educational programming and placement must align with those policies related to dispute resolution at the school and school division levels, as well as existing legislation, regulation, and the *Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba* (MEECL, 2022).

During suspension, access to learning should be maximized by providing students with the resources they need and by utilizing universal design principles. The intention of accessing learning in an alternate, supervised environment must be viewed as an opportunity to offer continuity of learning, maintain connection to the school community, and build skills rather than convey a sense of punishment or discipline.

## Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)

During an out-of-school suspension, students will not be permitted to be present at school and, at the discretion of the principal, may not be permitted to participate in school-sponsored activities, whether they occur inside or outside the school, on the school bus, or on school property.

Following a decision to suspend a student out of school, the principal will ensure that expectations are communicated with the student, parents, classroom teacher(s), in-school team, and relevant school/divisional staff with details such as the following:

- period of suspension (beginning and end dates)
- name of the school/division staff who will serve as initial contact for any questions/concerns
- arrangement of appropriate educational programming and regular contact with professional staff (e.g., virtual, telephone, in person)
- clarification of expectations noting any restrictions
- information regarding the time, date, and location of the re-entry meeting
- additional people or agencies and their contact information and any expectations set forth (if relevant)

School division policy on student discipline must direct staff to develop a student-specific plan for a student who has been suspended out of school more than two times during a school year (MEECL, *Standards for AEP*, 2022).

Manitoba schools and school divisions must work collaboratively with other agencies to develop a coordinated plan that involves appropriate parties and follows interdepartmental protocols. A multi-faceted approach is expected to be considered for students with

- two or more out-of-school suspensions (MEECL, *Standards for AEP: Student-Specific Planning, Student Discipline*, 2022)
- educational programming due to suspension for more than five days

The Protecting and Supporting Children (Information Sharing) Act supports these collaborative and timely intervention efforts by enabling information sharing about supported children and their parents/guardians by service providers for the purposes of providing services or benefits to children.

Community agencies, organizations and associations, other education authorities, and regional health and children's services authorities should be invited to plan collaboratively in support of appropriate educational programming for students when they are currently involved with, or could benefit from, programs or services offered.

It is recommended that school teams familiarize themselves with The Protecting and Supporting Children (Information Sharing) Act, which supports the timely information sharing and planning process for children.

## In-School Suspension (ISS)

An in-school suspension is to be carried out in a supervised educational environment with restricted contact to peers during the instructional day. During an in-school suspension, a student may be restricted from attending one or more classes and/or school-sponsored activities, whether they occur inside or outside the school or on the school bus.

Provided there is no safety risk to students or staff, the superintendent, principal, or designate may determine that a student observing an in-school suspension can continue to participate in school-sponsored activities with direct supervision, whether they occur inside or outside the school, in order to maintain connection, relationships, and a sense of belonging.

Following the principal's decision to suspend the student, the principal will ensure arrangements are made and communicated to the student, parents, classroom teacher(s), in-school team, and relevant school/divisional staff with details such as the following:

- date(s), including the expected date of return to classroom learning with peers
- location of alternative supervised learning environment
- expectations for contact with professional staff (who, when, purpose)
- expectations for non-structured times (e.g., lunch/breaks, extracurricular, transportation, arrival/dismissal), noting any restrictions to peers/activities
- a structured plan outlining the appropriate educational programming the student is to be engaged in during the suspension
- details of the re-entry process
- a meeting with the student prior to the date of re-entry to communicate expectations and to develop strategies to repair relationships

If a student receives two or more in-school suspensions during a school year, school teams should consider ways to support that student in an effort to decrease future suspensions.

The repeated use of an in-school suspension may indicate that a student-specific plan should be developed and/or revised.

## Suspension from Class by a Teacher

A suspension from class by a teacher is to be considered an in-school suspension. A teacher who suspends a student from class must promptly document and report the suspension to the principal (M.R. 92/2013).

Following the teacher's decision to suspend the student from class, the teacher will

- notify the principal, who will inform the parents of the reason and duration of the suspension, which may not exceed two days
- provide the principal with a written report outlining the antecedent event(s) and reason for suspension from class, and action(s) taken by the teacher
- arrange for a supervised learning environment and ensure appropriate educational programming continues
- discuss with the principal the re-entry process, as well as who will communicate this to parents
- meet with the student, principal, and parents prior to re-entry to communicate expectations and to develop strategies to repair the relationship

### GUIDELINE 6: RE-ENTRY PROCESS

Policies must include a written process and procedures for student re-entry.

School division policy must identify a re-entry process for students who are suspended. The process should involve the student, parents, and appropriate school team members, include timelines, and ensure re-entry occurs on the day following completion of the suspension (MEECL, *Standards for AEP: Student Discipline*, 2022).

The purpose of a re-entry process is to

- provide an opportunity to debrief
- review the reason for the suspension
- reflect upon the incident and circumstances
- clarify expectations
- work towards addressing relational problems, if applicable
- plan for the student to rejoin the classroom/school community
- restore a sense of safety and belonging for all

Suspension leads to a disruption in learning, routine, and connections. Schools are expected to use a restorative approach, which places focus on accountability, empathy, and healing.



## Re-entry Meeting

Re-entry meetings are an opportunity to bridge and repair relationships. A meeting prior to the student's return to school is especially important to the re-entry process. The student, parents, and appropriate school/division team members should be in attendance.

Students will feel safe when they see the adults from school and home come together to focus on their interests. When teachers and parents communicate regularly and work collaboratively, they are more likely to develop a degree of trust (Manitoba Education and Training, *Provincial Code of Conduct*, 2017).

Parents are valued partners in education. To ensure the ongoing participation and support of parents in the education of all students, it is important that they are involved in meaningful ways. For some parents, this could mean being provided with an interpreter or, for others, having a supporting person accompany them to school meetings (MEECL, *Standards for AEP*, 2022).

If a parent is unable or refuses to attend the re-entry meeting, schools must document the reasons for refusal and/or actions undertaken by the school to obtain consent and/or resolve concerns.

The discussion at the re-entry meeting should

- review the school's code of conduct
- restore a sense of safety and belonging (i.e., establish a connection with an adult in the building who provides daily check-ins for positive feedback and problem-solving)
- structure transitions, resources, and environmental considerations to be in place for a safe return
- determine programming needs (e.g., academic support, increased opportunities to attend to social-emotional learning and regulation)
- review planning needs if a student-specific plan is already in place
- develop a student-specific plan for a student who has been suspended out of school more than two times during a school year (MEECL, *Standards for AEP*, 2022)
- determine whether individual counselling and/or divisional supports are needed (i.e., determine and support student's protective factors)
- refer to community-based/agency supports, as appropriate
- reaffirm goals for personal and/or school success, respecting the student's right to be heard, and participate in decisions that affect them
- designate staff to case manage (i.e., ensure planning needs are met and follow-up is embedded for ongoing support)

- review recommendations and update plans as necessary
- encourage the repair of relationships with those who may have been harmed or affected and who also should be treated with courtesy, compassion, and respect for their dignity and privacy (YCJA)

- ✗ The completion of schoolwork must not be used as a condition of re-entry.
- ✗ Suspension must not be prolonged due to the parent's inability to be present at the re-entry meeting.

## GUIDELINE 7: APPEAL PROCESS

Policies must include written procedures for an appeal process for suspensions.

Appeal processes protect the rights of students and parents, and address differences of opinion about the education of students. "A school's code of conduct must include the disciplinary consequences, in as much detail as is reasonably possible, of violating the code of conduct, and the process for appealing disciplinary decisions" (Manitoba Education and Training, *Provincial Code of Conduct*, 2017, p. 6). The appeal process for the school division must be developed and made accessible to parents. It is always important that the partnership between schools and parents is strong and that issues are resolved at the local level whenever possible (MEECL, *Standards for AEP: Dispute Resolution*, 2022).

Students and parents must follow the established appeal process. Typically, this process involves an appeal to the teacher if they made the disciplinary decision, then to the principal if not resolved, then to the superintendent of schools if not resolved, and finally to the school board. Exceptions are suspensions in excess of five days.

In the case of a student who has been suspended more than five days, the school board must permit the student and their parent(s) to make representations to the school board about the suspension. The school board may confirm the suspension, modify it, or reinstate the student (M.R. 92/2013; Manitoba Education and Training, *Provincial Code of Conduct*, 2017).

A scheduled meeting with the board does not necessarily delay the commencement of a suspension (Manitoba Education and Training, 2016). School board appeal procedures should be fair and expeditious. Procedures must include the following considerations:

- advise parents of their right to make a formal appeal (within 14 days) of decisions about their children’s educational programming and of their right to be accompanied by a supporting person (MEECL, *Standards for AEP: Dispute Resolution*, 2022)
- address the appeal at the next scheduled school board meeting or sooner
- ensure procedures support and maintain confidentiality
- provide those affected with the opportunity to give or provide a written statement
- document in the cumulative file component of the pupil file any information about behavioural misconduct and disciplinary measures meted out, including suspension relating to the student (Province of Manitoba, 2000, rev. 2012)
- record the decision of an appeal in the pupil file

## GUIDELINE 8: DOCUMENTATION

Policies must include procedures for documentation of suspension.

Each event of suspension must be documented.

Documentation must include

- information about the misconduct
- disciplinary measures issued
- the actions undertaken by the school in relation to a student

A copy of the documentation is to be placed in the pupil file (Province of Manitoba, 2000, rev. 2012) and entered in the divisional student information system.

Procedures for documenting suspension should consider

- consultation with the superintendent or designate
- maintenance of accurate information
- a record of communication between staff and the student and parents
- a record of the re-entry meeting
- a process to identify students with multiple/recurring suspensions
- a consistent manner to document attendance in the divisional information system for students who are suspended

## GUIDELINE 9: MONITORING AND REVIEW

Policies must include procedures to collate, monitor, evaluate, and review data related to the use of suspensions, both in school and out of school.

*Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba* states school divisions must “require schools to keep records on the nature and duration of all suspensions, both in school and out of school” (MEECL, *Standards for AEP: Student Discipline, 2022*, p. 18).

A principal must

- develop categories for the reasons of a student suspension and ensure that each suspension is categorized (M.R. 92/2013)
- ensure that, for each category, the total number of students suspended and the duration of suspensions are tabulated (M.R. 92/2013)

School divisions must ensure that the categories are consistent across schools, and develop uniform processes for tabulation and entry into the divisional information system.

Data must be reviewed at the school and divisional levels annually or sooner (i.e., following regular reporting periods). Data collection should be used to

- inform the annual review of the school’s code of conduct and emergency procedures (M.R. 77/2005)
- plan for safety and belonging (Manitoba Education and Training, *Safe and Caring Schools: A Whole-School Approach to Planning for Safety and Belonging, 2017*)
- enable schools and school divisions to understand circumstances around the use of suspension while facilitating the implementation of more effective strategies to support educational programming and responses
- monitor and analyze suspension rates and trends

Schools must have a designated group to review suspension data. The school’s safe school advisory committee, as identified in M.R. 77/2005, or an existing organized school group functioning as the school’s safe school advisory committee, may fulfill this purpose.

School divisions should establish a divisional committee to review division-wide suspension data.

Schools and school divisions are encouraged to use data as part of their planning and reporting processes. Gathering and exploring data is an essential element identified within a whole-school approach (Manitoba Education and Training, *Safe and Caring Schools: A Whole-School Approach to Planning for Safety and Belonging*, 2017). Evidence from a variety of sources builds an understanding of strengths and areas for growth and development. Data monitoring and measurement

- enhance continuous improvement
- inform policies and/or procedures
- identify trends, patterns, and needs
- establish priorities
- inform decision-making to determine appropriate interventions and supports
- foster shared responsibility and collaboration
- promote alignment and consistency
- support professional learning opportunities for staff and improve practices
- mitigate the negative impacts of exclusionary practices

Suspension-related data will be collected provincially.

**“An equitable, inclusive, and diverse education system fosters a sense of belonging in all learners so that they feel they can succeed, take responsibility and find their purpose in life, and achieve The Good Life/*Mino-pimatisiwin* (Ininew)/*Mino Bimaadiziwin* (Anishinabemowin)/*honso aynai* (Dene)/*tokatakiya wichoni washte* (Dakota)/*minopimatitheewin* (Anisininimowin)/ᐱᓐᓄᓂᓄᓂᓄᓂᓄᓂ (Inuktitut)/*Miyo-pimatishiwin* (Michif)”**  
(MEECL, *Mamàhtawisiwin*, 2022, p. 8).

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**Note:** This bibliography includes all works cited as well as the resources that informed the development of this policy directive and *Companion Guide for Safe and Caring Schools: A Policy Directive Enhancing Proactive Supports to Minimize the Use of Suspension*.

## Relevant Legislation

The following provides the legislative and regulatory references relevant to developing policies and procedures on the use of suspension:

- Activities and Programs – Learning to Age 18 Regulation
- Appropriate Disciplinary Consequences in Schools Regulation
- Appropriate Disciplinary Consequences in Schools Regulation, amendment
- Appropriate Education Programming Regulation
- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Safe Schools Regulation
- Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba
- The Education Administration Act of Manitoba
- The Human Rights Code of Manitoba
- The Preparing Students for Success Act (Various Acts Amended)
- The Protecting and Supporting Children (Information Sharing) Act
- The Public Schools Act of Manitoba
- The Safe Schools Charter
- Youth Criminal Justice Act of Canada

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