

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

MEMORANDUM #59 (2003-2004)

September 15, 2003

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: STUDENT DISCIPLINE

PERTINENT FACTS:

A positive school discipline policy helps prevent and control student behavior problems. Research indicates there is no single solution to discipline problems. Gushee (1984) in his article "Student Discipline Policies" asserts that discipline policies must be communicated to students, parents, and school staff, allow for some flexibility, and yet be consistently enforced. He states, "If students are to cooperate with a discipline code, they must believe they will be treated fairly." (Gushee, 1984, ERIC, pg. 3).

Gaustad (1992, ERIC, pg. 1) states, "School discipline has two main goals: (1) ensure the safety of staff and students, and (2) create an environment conducive to learning." She goes on to say classroom disruptions can cause both the students disciplined and those affected by the disruptions in the classroom to lose valuable learning time.

Gaustad (1992) goes on to claim that school rules need to be communicated fairly and that consistent enforcement helps to maintain the students' respect for a school's disciplinary system. A hearing process in which students tell their side of the story and having an appeal process "...increases students' and parents' perceptions of fairness" (Gaustad, 1992, ERIC, pg. 2).

A review of discipline policies in other states indicated codes of conduct for students with inclusion of due process language.

The Anchorage School District utilizes a discipline system that is clearly communicated to students and parents through the dissemination of the student handbooks and the rights and responsibilities document, newsletters to parents, and student orientations on school rules. Administrators have flexibility to

evaluate situations while striving to maintain consistency. Students are afforded due process rights by being asked to explain their side of the situation before any discipline sanction is imposed. Students may request administrators to talk to witnesses on their behalf. It is incumbent upon the administrator handling the situation to investigate the situation prior to issuing any sanctions. Students and parents have the right to appeal discipline sanctions at the building level, at the administrative level, and, in some cases, to the School Board. Much of the discipline process is instructive by assisting students to learn appropriate school behavior.

Tonight's work session will include brief presentations by the directors of the following divisions, with an opportunity for Board members to ask questions and discuss discipline issues at the completion of the presentations. A representative of Jermain, Dunnagan, and Owens will also be present to answer questions.

Elementary Education  
Middle Level Education  
High School Education  
Special Education  
Safe and Drug Free Schools

Prepared by: Jan Christensen, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction

Approved by: Carol Comeau, Superintendent