



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PUBLIC)
Report No. 19-062

21 MAY 2019

Student Suspension Report for 2017-2018 School Year

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PURPOSE:

1. To provide to Committee of the Whole student suspension data and analysis from the 2017-2018 school year, including information on how principals determine if suspension is appropriate, and measures being taken proactively to reduce instances which may result in suspension.

CONTEXT:

2. Board Policy P.020.SCO, Student Suspensions, requires that a summary report of student suspensions be submitted annually to the Board. This report provides an overview of student suspensions for the period of 5 September 2017 to 28 June 2018. The report is provided to help identify emerging trends in unacceptable or unsafe behaviour. It is important to note that while the information presented describes the general trends in suspensions over time, conclusions cannot be drawn as to what specifically is contributing to these trends.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

3. A positive school climate helps to promote an environment in which students, parents/guardians, staff and community members feel safe, welcome and respected. Creating this positive learning environment requires the efforts of everyone involved to help promote healthy relationships and encourage appropriate student behaviour. Prevention and early intervention strategies are utilized throughout the OCDSB in an effort to promote an inclusive, safe, and caring environment to foster student learning.

Some examples of these strategies include:

- Collaborative problem solving;
- Continuing to build teacher capacity to engage students in learning through differentiated instruction;
- Evidence-based bullying, violence and harm reduction programs (i.e., WalkAway, Ignore, Talk it out, Seek help (WITS); Look and listen, Explore points of view, Act, Did it work? and Seek help (LEADS); and, Fourth R);
- Itinerant Educational Assistant (IEA) Support;
- Link crew and transition programming;
- Reality Check;
- Restorative practices training;
- Rideauwood Addiction and Counselling services;
- Safe and accepting school teams and school bullying prevention and intervention plans;
- Systemic use of multi-disciplinary teams in schools; and
- Tiered supports for behaviour intervention (see Appendix B for more details).

During the 2017-2018 school year, in response to needs identified by staff and the community, training for principals and vice-principals in promoting positive student behaviour was identified as a priority. Principal and vice-principal participated in three half-day sessions of professional learning activities. Topics addressed during these training sessions included progressive discipline, student suspension and expulsion, building attachment, strategies to promote self-regulation, understanding Behaviour Management Systems (BMS) principles, implementing Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) strategies with students who have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and collaborative problem solving. This work has continued into the 2018-2019 school year.

While the focus remains on the use of prevention and early intervention strategies to promote a positive learning environment, there are occasions in which student behaviour is considered to be unacceptable or unsafe. In these circumstances schools use a progressive discipline approach in an effort to promote positive student behaviour and help students to learn from their choices. A range of options are considered that take into account both the situation and individual circumstances. This allows the school to determine the most appropriate course of action. Discipline is to be both corrective and supportive. In some circumstances, a principal may determine that a suspension or expulsion is warranted. Before making this determination, a principal is required to consider the severity of the behaviour, its impact on school climate, whether some alternative to suspension may suffice, and the behaviour and discipline history of the student. Principals are also required to consider mitigating and other factors before imposing or determining the length of a suspension. These factors include such things as the age of the student, their ability to understand the consequences of their behaviour, and what impact a suspension may have upon their achievement.

4. The Analysis of 2017-2018 Student Suspension Data (attached as Appendix A) provides the following information pertaining to student suspensions:
- a. Number of Suspensions and Suspension Rate by Enrolment :
The District has seen a rise in the suspension rate relative to increases in enrolment. This is largely in the elementary panel and is consistent with reports of increasing dysregulated pupil behaviour in the younger grades. Inappropriate behaviour can be understood as a student's way of communicating a need or responding to something in the environment. The data showing boys continue to be suspended at significantly higher rates than girls across all grades may reflect that boys are more apt to communicate their dysregulation through physical modes.
 - b. Suspension Analysis by Identified Groups:
Beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, the District will begin the process of collecting identify-based data. It is anticipated that this data will be incorporated into future reports on student suspension once it is available. This year's report introduces the concept of a disproportionality index which gives an indication of over/under representation of specific groups of students in a particular program/outcome, where larger index values indicate higher levels of disproportionality. Use of this index has helped to identify that students who reside in lower income neighbourhoods, particularly those who also belong to any other group or combinations of groups, are particularly overrepresented in the suspension data.
 - c. Suspensions by Student Exceptionality,
The five-year trend indicates that students identified with a behaviour exceptionality are suspended at the highest rate, while students identified as gifted are suspended at the lowest rate of any identified group, a rate even lower than that of students not identified with special education needs.
 - d. Suspension Data by Infraction Location and Nature:
Most incidents which lead to suspension occur in the classroom, on the school grounds or in the hallways. Of the possible reasons for imposing a suspension, conduct injurious to the physical or mental well-being of others is the most common.
 - e. Suspension Frequency and Duration:
The majority of students who receive a suspension are suspended for one school day. In most cases the students have no further suspensions, suggesting that the behaviour has improved and that suspensions can be an effective corrective intervention for many students.

In some cases, a principal may "refuse to admit to the school or classroom, a person whose presence would in the principal's judgment to be detrimental to the physical or mental well-being of the pupils" (i.e., exclusion under section 265(m) of the *Education Act*). Student exclusions are not disciplinary and should

not be confused with suspension and expulsion, and as such, are not included in this report.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

5. There are no resource implications attached to this discussion report.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION:

6. No consultation was required in preparing this report. The information contained in this report will be shared with principals.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

7. The monitoring and reporting on student suspensions contributes to the strategic priority of *Well-being: A culture which supports and respects the well-being of every individual in a safe and caring learning and working environment.*

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

8. How can this information be used to inform and support the work and priorities of the District?

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APPENDICES

Appendix A - Analysis of 2017-2018 Student Suspension Data