

## **School District Response to the 2006 Disciplinary System Evaluation**

In July 2005, the School District of Philadelphia initiated an evaluation of its student disciplinary system. The internal evaluation looked at 13 schools out of the 268 schools in the District in 2005. The sampling of schools included schools that the District considered to face a high number of disciplinary issues.

This study was commissioned at the request of the Chief Executive Officer to assess the effectiveness and fairness of the current disciplinary system and to make recommendations for its improvement.

The study found a number of concerns with the Districts' disciplinary process and policies and also, just as important, an equal number of significant achievements in the improvement of the student disciplinary system. The improvements cited include:

- Since 2004, the District has been successful in eliminating the restrictive requirements of various Consent Decrees and streamlined the disciplinary process. Several cumbersome and unnecessary steps have been removed from the process, thereby significantly reducing the time it should take to resolve disciplinary matters.
- The District has been successful in publishing a more comprehensive and comprehensible Code of Student Conduct in which disciplinary offenses are more clearly defined and corrective measures and punitive responses are more clearly delineated.
- As of September 2005, the Student Incident Management System ("SIMS"), a technological initiative that has been years in the making, became operational District wide. This web-based system enables schools to complete basic disciplinary forms on-line and to electronically share this information, which should enhance the efficiency and reliability of certain aspects of the disciplinary process.
- The District continues to make improvements in the collection, completeness, and quality of data regarding serious disciplinary incidents. The District is currently in the planning and development phases of building a central data repository that will collect information from various sources in an effort to integrate disparate yet interrelated data sources. When complete and fully functioning, this information system will facilitate identifying emerging patterns and monitoring trends in order to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and policies.
- The District has contracted with private providers to operate six alternative remedial/disciplinary schools for disruptive and/or dangerous students who are in grades 5 -12 and eleven regional highly structured classrooms for students in grades 3-4 who need behavioral and other supports.
- The District is developing and implementing various innovative School Based Behavioral Health programs and classes to provide students with "short-term, intensive behavioral health services during the school day in an effort to increase

positive behaviors so that the children can effectively participate in their education”.

- In the fall of 2006, the Office of Special Services produced a Principals’ Best Practice Toolkit to offer guidance to administrators on the CSAP process. Additionally the Office of Special Services is in the process of creating a CSAP best practices manual in conjunction with other pertinent District offices which will be utilized during mandatory annual principals’ training.
- The District has worked to improve coordination and communication efforts among and between the District and various City agencies that are involved with students who are disciplinary problems including the Philadelphia Police Department, Department of Human Services, Family Courts, Probation, and juvenile placement facilities.
- Efficiency in the overall operations of District has improved as a result of the centralization of the District’s administrative offices into one facility, which was a massive undertaking.
- The District has made significant improvements in the centralization, efficiency, and transparency of its training/professional development operations.
- The District is devoting significant resources to prevention and intervention programs and services that address issues related to discipline, school climate and safety, special education, truancy, student behavioral/emotional/mental health, juvenile justice, parenting, teenage pregnancies, drug and alcohol abuse, mentoring, and tutoring, among others.

Since the completion of the study the District has moved quickly to correct and address a number of the issues highlighted:

- The District is working with the Pennsylvania Department of Education Safe Schools Advocate to review a number of consent decrees that limit the Districts’ disciplinary practices and procedures. Specifically, the Safe School Advocate is looking to modify the decrees that limit the District from relocating students to alternative schools for no longer than one year.
- Student disciplinary record keeping is now fully automated and available district-wide under the Student Incident Management System allowing school based personnel to have full historical access to disciplinary data.
- The District is currently developing a comprehensive disciplinary procedure manual for teachers and staff. This is a how-to manual for all personnel.
- District initiative mandatory training on its Comprehensive Student Assistance Program (CSAP) for principals, counselors, teacher leaders, and climate managers.
- Expanded school based behavioral health partnerships with the Department of Human Services and the Community Behavioral Health.

- Created a behavioral health internship model that increases the number of psychologists, social workers, and counselors in our schools.
- Monthly SchoolStat meetings are held to review detailed attendance and incident data. These meetings allows regional and school based personnel to identified disruptive students and assure that immediate action is taken.
- The District launched a reviewed the restoration from disciplinary schools protocol and is making recommendations for some added layers within the law to ensure the students are absolutely ready to transition back into neighborhood schools.
- Regional offices are required to meet with school based personnel to review data for high school students who have been suspended 2 or more times for level 2 offenses to assure that the following steps are taken:
  1. Ensure CSAP and the necessary follow-up supports have been given to the identified students.
  2. Connect students to Behavioral Supports and/or DHS.
  3. Conduct Interagency Meetings to ensure communication.
  4. Update Individual Educational Plan to include Behavior Plan
  5. Submit EH-21 Disciplinary Transfer for the most severe cases.
  6. Follow up with Discipline Truancy Liaison to monitor logs/incidents at least monthly.
  7. School Safety Teams monitor and evaluate data weekly.