

Sterling Community School



Restorative Code of Conduct

I. Summary

Sterling Community School's mission is to foster a safe and engaging learning community of critical thinkers, effective communicators and collaborators, creative problem solvers, and imaginative innovators that will persevere to become self-motivated learners who are responsible, compassionate, contributing citizens in our ever-changing society ([Sterling Community School Strategic Plan Executive Summary](#)).

The purpose of the Sterling Community School District Code of Conduct is to provide school personnel, students, parents and guardians with a consistent framework of expected behaviors and responses to behaviors that are harmful or negatively affects others' ability to learn. The Code is designed to ensure that:

1. Behavioral expectations are fair, age appropriate and consistent across all grade levels.
2. Behavioral expectations protect and support the educational process and every student's right to an education.
3. All students understand the behaviors expected of them.
4. All students understand what will happen if they engage in behaviors that harm others and/or disrupt the learning environment.

This Code applies to every student under the jurisdiction of the Sterling Board of Education. It is in effect on all school properties and wherever school personnel have responsibility for students. It also applies to all students when they travel to and from school.

The Code reflects a restorative approach to supporting cooperative and productive behaviors in our school communities. Restorative Practices "are processes that proactively build healthy relationships and a sense of community to prevent and address conflict and wrong doing" (International Institute for Restorative Practices, IIRP). Therefore, a restorative approach is meant to restore balance, improve or build relationships, and promote cooperation between community members. It is most effective when used proactively to prevent conflict and harm, rather than solely as a response to events.

In all cases, the rights of individuals will be ensured and protected. Sterling Community School will make every reasonable effort to administer the Code of Conduct consistently. When applicable, individualized plans will be reviewed for appropriate consequences.

II. Explanation of Restorative Practices

As applied in the Sterling Community School District, restorative practices describe an approach to building positive, healthy relationships and community as a means to cultivating safe, supportive, and positive learning environments; preventing conflict as much as possible and responding to conflict and harm within the school community by seeking to repair the harm.

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Restorative practices promote and nurture:

- Respect for all persons
- Social and emotional skills
- Cultural competency
- Building and restoring positive relationships
- Collaborative approaches to solving community issues
- Recognizing and addressing the needs of students, teachers, parents, guardians, school staff and district administrators
- Taking responsibility for harm
- Repairing harm

Restorative practices foster improved learning through positive relationships and interactions among peers, teachers and staff. Restorative practices recognize the impact of trauma and loss on our youth, while also establishing consequences and accountability for those causing harm and repairing harm that disrupts the learning environment. These practices recognize the importance of social and emotional health as a central component of learning.

Consequences for disruptions to the learning community are outlined in this Code. Whenever possible, the Sterling Community School District strives to avoid exclusionary responses by employing consequences that seek to repair the harm done to individuals and the community. A restorative response includes solutions that support both the recipient of the harm and the person who has committed the harm, so that both move forward safely, cooperatively, and productively.

These practices address the needs of the community through:

- Identification and discussion of community and individual need
- Building healthy relationships resolution of conflict by exploring how each person has been affected and holding individuals and groups accountable
- Repairing harm and restoring positive relationships
- Reducing, preventing and improving harmful behaviors

When thinking about a consequence, key questions to inform the decision are:

- Has the person(s) who was harmed met with the person who committed the harm?
- Did the person harmed express his/her needs and identify what is needed to repair the harm?
- Will this consequence work to **repair** the harm that has been done?
- Will this consequence **restore** the relationships in the community to one that promotes mutual respect and cooperation?

III. Expectations for Essential Stakeholders

Cooperation and attention to the needs of parents, guardians, family members, school personnel, and students are necessary to achieve a school climate that enables learning.

Students

Students are expected to actively engage in the learning process and respect all members of the school community, including other students, teachers, and school staff. With the assistance of adults, including parents/guardians, teachers, and school staff, students should understand and follow their responsibilities as defined in the “Rights and Responsibilities” section of this document.

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Parents and Guardians

As children's initial and ongoing teachers in the home environment, parents/guardians play a major role in the success of their children at school. Parents/guardians can help ensure success for their children in school and beyond, by becoming familiar with and cooperating with restorative approaches to managing harm and behaviors that disrupt the learning environment. Parents/guardians can further support student school success through the following:

1. Maintain a positive attitude toward school and education.
2. Show interest in their children's educational progress.
3. Monitor and encourage children to complete homework assignments.
4. Ensure that their children arrive at school on time.
5. Teach their children respect for the authority of school personnel by cooperating with school personnel in solving any behavioral or educational problems.
6. Encourage their children to follow the Code of Conduct.
7. Encourage students to share if there are problems at school.
8. Cooperate with school personnel in solving behavioral problems.
9. Ensure that their children are neat, clean, and appropriately dressed.

School

With support from the Board of Education, the school shall develop a whole school restorative practices plan to promote a safe and supportive learning environment for all students, teachers, and staff. The plan will include restorative practices and a positive behavior support system which develop mutual respect, promote constructive restorative conflict resolution skills, encourage good behavior and have fair, reasonable, and restorative consequences for inappropriate behavior.

School Staff (other than teachers & administrators)

Other school staff, bus drivers, cafeteria, clerical, administrative, and custodial staff are important contributors to the school and school transportation environment. In their interactions with students, school staff should contribute to promoting a safe and supportive learning environment using a restorative approach.

Teachers

Classroom behavior management begins with the relationship between teacher and student. Teachers are, therefore, expected to maintain a responsive classroom environment, practice, model, and encourage restorative practices, and to manage behavior proactively in the classroom in an age-appropriate manner.

The teachers will take the following actions:

1. Employ restorative practices in class that are appropriate to the situation and grade-level. This includes community building circles, problem solving circles, and the development of classroom norms using the community building circle process for creating classroom expectations.
2. Engage proactively in positive and restorative rapport building with the student's parent/ guardian, starting with student strengths.
3. Request a proactive and restorative conference with student, teacher and administrator.
4. Refer the student to their grade level Behavior Data Team to discuss use of school-based restorative processes, such as a conflict circle or formal restorative conference.
5. Schedule a conference with the parent/guardian, to build a common understanding of the needs of the classroom community. Teachers will use restorative questioning techniques to resolve minor issues within the class. Teachers will also use restorative/affective questions and affective statements (**see table below**) to increase interpersonal understanding, model social emotional skills, increase cultural

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competency and promote cooperation within the classroom.

6. When plans are developed (e.g., Behavior Strategy Guides, Behavior Intervention Plans, accommodations as part of IEP and 504 documents, etc.), teachers will implement strategies set forth with fidelity

Traditional Punitive Model	Restorative Model
What Rule was broken?	Who has been harmed or affected?
Who broke the rule?	What are the needs of that person?
How shall we punish them?	Who is obligated to meet those needs?

In any situation where harm has occurred or is alleged to have occurred, the principal or designee will hear the student’s explanation and investigate the matter fully before determining a response. The principal or designee will determine the extent of the harm and what needs have arisen as a result of that harm, what restorative practices have been employed in response to the harm, previous incidents involving the student, and what restorative practices or programs are available and appropriate to address the needs any harms or disruptions to the learning community that may have been caused by the behaviors of others.

IV. Classifications of Behaviors that Result in Harm or Disruption to the Learning Environment and Responses

A restorative practices approach should be used in response to behaviors that harm others. Suspensions are reserved for more serious behaviors and/or when restorative approaches have not resolved the problem. Expulsions are reserved only for the most serious behaviors that impact the safety of the school community.

Previous restorative responses shall be documented and considered in any suspension or expulsion hearing. However, the principal’s primary responsibility is to maintain order and protect the safety and security of all students and faculty. Therefore, in response to any given situation, the principal should exercise his or her discretion consistent with promoting a safe and supportive learning environment.

The following behavior code classifications include travel to and from school, behavior at school, and while participating in any school-sponsored events.

Level 1: Behaviors that Affect Others Negatively

Progressive discipline processes will be utilized as outlined in the following sections. Progressive discipline indicates that the degree of discipline will be in proportion to the severity of the behavior leading to the discipline. Other factors to consider include the previous discipline history of the student and due process procedures required by federal and state law.

DEFINITION: Level 1 disruptive or harmful behaviors include those which disrupt the educational environment, including conflict with other students, but does not include safety risk, damage to property, or physical harm to self or others.

Level 1 behaviors include those recurrent or continued instances of disruptive behaviors that interfere with the ability of students to learn, the teacher’s ability to teach or interferes with school activities or processes (such as movement about the building, meals, transportation to and from school, sports events, etc.). Using **affective** restorative language, simple, isolated reminders of expectations and agreements and/or calling the student’s

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attention to the need to change disruptive behavior should be considered part of ordinary classroom and school management.

Where a student or students persist in disruptive behavior or repeats a disruptive behavior, then the student's actions would be considered Level 1. Profane, obscene, or vulgar language or expression (in any language) directed at others, whether verbal, written, or by gesture, may be considered Level 1 behavior, depending upon severity.

When the behavior is recurrent, whenever possible and preferably prior to the behavior being reported as Level 1, the parent(s)/guardian should be contacted to discuss whether there are issues impacting the student's behavior and to discuss ways to improve the student's behavior to promote optimal learning.

Responses to Level 1 Behaviors should employ restorative practices and focus on prevention of future disruptive or harmful behaviors and/or repetition of the behavior.

The teacher or staff person will give notice to the school administration through the school's referral process and the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified about the behavior and actions taken. School administration will provide assistance to enhance the student – teacher (or student- staff member) relationship and to promote a positive educational environment.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Use of informal restorative practices
- Circle process
- Formal restorative conference to repair harm and /or repair relationships, which **always includes** the person(s) harmed and the person who committed the harm
- Detention
- In-School Suspension
- Referral to grade level Behavior Data Team and/or school-based clinical supports
- Consultation with parent(s)/guardian(s)

Level 2: Intermediate Behaviors that Affect Others Negatively

DEFINITION: Intermediate behaviors include behavior that substantially disrupts the educational environment and has the potential to put at risk the safety and security of students, teachers, and staff. Intermediate behaviors also include chronic Level 1 behaviors that have not responded to restorative approaches (three or more reports of Level 1 behaviors within a relatively short period of time) and actions which compromise the integrity of students or the school.

Intermediate behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- serious and intentional disruption of a school activity
- harassing behavior targeting another student, teacher, or staff member whether verbal, physical, written, or electronic.
- physical fighting by students in grades K-8
- using social media in ways that disrupt school activities or to embarrass or harass others
- distributing to others non-prescription medication, such as Tylenol, that is generally considered non-harmful

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Responses to Level 2 Behaviors should employ restorative practices and focus not only on prevention of future incidents, but also on ways to repair any harms caused by or the disruptive or harmful behavior. Responses should be age appropriate. In addition to preventing and repairing harms, the purpose of responses to harmful behavior should be to promote relationships and support and develop positive social interactions.

The teacher or staff person will give notice to the school administration through the school's referral process. The parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified of the behaviors and actions taken. School administration will provide assistance to deepen the student – teacher (or student- staff member) relationship and to enhance the educational environment.

Examples include, but are not limited to the following:

- *All Level 1 Responses*

Specific actions for the student, school staff, family, or others will be determined through the restorative process, will be appropriate to the student's age and nature of the behaviors, and may include behavioral contract, restitution and/or remediation, community service, and/or referral for supportive services.

Levels 3 and 4: Major Behaviors that Affect Others Negatively I & II

Major behaviors are those which may result in out-of-school suspension. It is a goal of the State of Connecticut to reduce the incidence of out-of-school suspension in public schools. The state requires the use of the following decision making guide in determining whether or not out-of-school suspension is warranted. However, in the absence of legislation requiring the use of in-school suspension and in the absence of fully funded in-school suspension programs in all the schools, it should be recognized that out-of-school suspension remains an option for the harmful behaviors in these categories. The decision guide, criteria, and consideration of mitigating factors described below apply to both Level 3 and Level 4 behaviors.

Level 3: Major Disruptive or Harmful Behaviors I

DEFINITION: Major Disruptive or Harmful Behaviors I includes behavior that severely disrupts the educational environment, endangers students or staff, and/or causes significant damage to school property.

Major Disruptive or Harmful Behaviors I may result in referral to outside agencies such as the Youth Services Bureau and Juvenile Review Board, other social service or mental health agencies or programs, *or as a last resort*, the police department. Major Disruptive or Harmful Behaviors I also includes chronic intermediate behaviors (three or more occurrences) that continue despite use of restorative approaches.

Examples include, but are not limited to the following:

- Restricted Substances: the use, possession, sharing, or being under the influence
- Bullying and other forms of repeated harassment
- Distribution of a non-prescription medication
- Electronic tampering: unauthorized access to information systems or unauthorized use of school or others' electronic equipment (including computers, fax machines, telephones, etc.)
- Possession of a common pocket knife or other weapon or dangerous instrument (other than a firearm, deadly weapon, or martial arts weapon)
- Other serious behaviors that result in harm or disruption to the educational environment which the principal/designee reasonably believes fall within this category

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Responses to Level 3 / Disruptive or Harmful Behaviors I should employ restorative practices and focus on ways to repair any harms caused by the harmful behavior as well as include prevention of future harmful behaviors. Responses should be age appropriate. To repair harm and prevent future behaviors that result in harm or disruption to the educational environment, restorative processes should be utilized.

Notification of parent/guardian is required.

NOTE: Appropriate law enforcement agencies may be notified if the principal/principal's designee reasonably believes that the behavior involved qualifies as a criminal act under Connecticut Law.

****In the case of bullying ONLY, refer to the full Bullying Policy and implement progressive discipline as noted.**

Responses to instances of Disruptive or Harmful Behaviors I include, but are not limited to:

- *All Level 2 Responses PLUS:*
- Restorative conferencing that includes student's family/guardian/ and or educators
- Restorative conferencing for serious incidents may require outside adult assistance
- Referral to Youth Services Bureau and Juvenile Review Board or other support services
- Based on the restorative process used and as determined by the restorative process, additional responses may include, but not be limited to, assignment to an alternative educational program, restitution, community service, or referral/access to supportive services
- Suspension (see in-school and out-of-school suspension description below)
- Recommendation for expulsion may be appropriate, but only where instances of Major Disruptive or Harmful Behaviors result in serious harm or disruption to the educational environment

In-school suspension may be used, where needed for safety, protection of those harmed, or the short term prevention of further disruption. Suspension from school or transportation services may be used for safety concerns or to protect person(s) harmed from further harm. The length of suspension is determined by the need for safety or protection, the nature of the behavior and the number of previous instances of harmful or disruptive acts. Restorative approaches should be considered and previous restorative applications should be documented prior to suspension.

During any period of suspension pending application of a restorative practices process, students lose all privileges pertaining to extracurricular events and activities. Any further loss of privileges would be determined through the restorative practices process.

Level 4: Major Disruptive or Harmful Behaviors II

DEFINITION: Major Disruptive or Harmful Behaviors II includes behavior that severely disrupts the educational environment, puts the safety and security of students and staff at risk, and/or leads to consequences defined by state law. Disruptive or harmful behaviors at this level include harm to self or others, and/or significant damage to school property.

Major Disruptive or Harmful Behaviors II includes referral to outside agencies such as 211, the police department, or Youth Services Bureau and Juvenile Review Board. Behaviors also include Major Disruptive or Harmful Behaviors I that have become chronic (three or more occurrences).

Examples include, but are not limited to the following:

- Restricted Substances: sale or attempted sale, distribution or attempted distribution

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- Assault/Battery on a student or students or on a school board employee resulting in serious bodily harm
- Weapon: the use or threatened use of a weapon or dangerous instrument against a person
- Weapon: the willful possession of a deadly weapon (not including a common pocket knife, dangerous instrument, or martial arts weapon as defined by State law)
- Introduction of a foreign substance (toxic or harmful) into food or drink
- Other serious behaviors that result in harm or disruption to the educational environment which the principal/designee reasonably believes fall within this category

Responses to Level 4 / Major Disruptive or Harmful Behaviors II should employ restorative practices approaches as much as possible and focus on ways to repair any harms caused by and/or contributing to the disruptive or harmful behavior as well as include prevention of future disruptive or harmful behavior. Responses also should be age appropriate.

Notification of parent/guardian is required as soon as possible.

NOTE: Appropriate law enforcement agencies may be notified if the principal/principal's designee reasonably believes that the behavior involved qualifies as a criminal act under Connecticut Law.

****In the case of bullying ONLY, Refer to the full Bullying Policy and implement progressive discipline as noted.**

Responses to instances of Major Disruptive or Harmful behaviors II include, but are not limited to:

- *All Level 3 Responses PLUS:*
- Mediation, which may require external, experienced, adult mediators
- [Expulsion](#)

In-school suspension may be used, where needed for safety, protection of those who have been harmed, or prevention in the short term of further disruption. Suspension from school or transportation services may be used for safety concerns or to protect those who have been harmed from further harm. The length of suspension is appropriate to the needs for safety or protection, the nature of the harmful behavior, and to the number of previous instances of behaviors that have resulted in harm or a disruption of the learning environment. Restorative approaches should be considered and previous restorative applications should be documented prior to suspension.

During any period of suspension pending application of a restorative practices process, the student(s) lose all privileges pertaining to extracurricular events and activities. Any further loss of privileges would be determined through the restorative practices process.

NOTE: Since Major Disruptive or Harmful Behaviors II actions involve possible criminal acts under Connecticut Law, the appropriate law enforcement agencies will also be notified. Suspension from school or transportation services is required pending implementation of a restorative practices process or initiation of expulsion proceedings.

If the principal determines that there are extenuating circumstances, length of the suspension should be appropriate to the harmful behavior exhibited, to safety and protection of those who are harmed and others, and to the number of previous violations. Current and previous restorative applications with the student will be documented and considered.

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Initiation of expulsion proceedings is required, based on state law, for possession of a firearm, dangerous weapon, dangerous instrument, or martial arts weapon or offering for sale or distribution of a controlled substance. In other situations, the principal may recommend initiation of expulsion proceedings for students in grades three through twelve based upon the seriousness of the behavior, any extenuating circumstances, and after review and documentation of previous restorative practice applications and a determination that those have not worked.

The principal and/or designee may alternatively refer the student to a restorative practices alternative, including but not limited to the following:

- Restorative Conference
- Referral to Youth Services Bureau and Juvenile Review Board
- Referral to Behavior Data Team
- Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services (211)
- Title 9 Coordinator

VI. Suspension Decision Guide

School administrators are required to use this decision guide to inform the decision for an out-of-school suspension ([A Fact Sheet for CT Families](#)). The student must meet either Criterion 1 or Criterion 2 in order to be considered for out-of-school suspension. Where the student's actions meet either of these criteria, the school administrator should first examine what restorative practice alternatives may be available and document restorative practices previously applied for the student. In addition, the school administrator should then examine the list of mitigating factors that are applicable to each criterion because they may have a role in determining a course of action.

CRITERION 1 – Endangerment to Persons/Property

Student poses a danger to persons or property that exposes a pupil or property to damage or injury, peril, risk, hazard or any harmful situation, (e.g., violent crimes, weapons possession and drug distribution) that out-of-school suspension is warranted.

CRITERION 2 – Serious Disruption

Student poses such a serious disruption to the educational process that causes a serious disorder, confusion, interruption or impediment to the operation of a class, study hall, library, assembly, program or other gathering involving pupils or staff members that out-of-school suspension is warranted.

Questions to consider:

1. Does the behavior markedly interrupt or severely impede the day-to-day operation of a school?
2. Is there a pattern of frequent or recurring incidents versus a single incident?
3. Have restorative practices alternatives been applied or could they be applied?

Mitigating Factors to Weigh in the Determination

1. Intensity of any or all offenses
2. Age, grade level and developmental stage of the student
3. Learning/behavioral support provided to the student (e.g., through special education, Section 504, etc.)
4. Student's discipline history and likelihood of repetition
5. Student's intent and expressed reasons for the behavior
6. Student's academic progress and relative risk of lost instruction
7. Interpretation of culture and communication factors

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8. History of school and family collaboration in supporting positive behaviors
9. History of restorative practice applications
10. Student's mental health
11. Availability of mental health support services