

2024-25 **CODE OF BEHAVIOR**

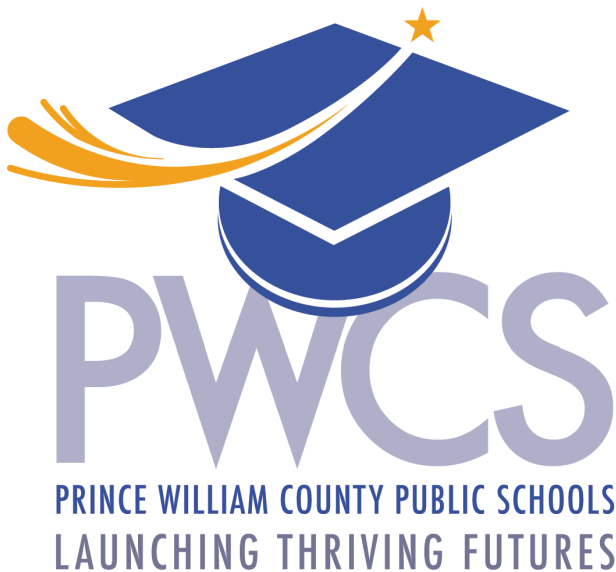


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Introduction

Introduction

The Virginia Constitution confers upon a local school board the authority to supervise the operation of the public schools under the school board's control. This authority includes the power to supervise and discipline students.

The Prince William County School Board seeks to protect the right of all its students to an education commensurate with their abilities, interests, values, and goals by providing safeguards for the health, safety, and rights of the individual student and school employee, and for the protection of school property.

However, the task of training and educating youth must be shared by all members of the school community—students, professional teaching staff, administrators, specialized instructional support personnel, and parent(s)—who all bear the responsibility to equitably support the rules of the school and the integrity of the educational process.

It is the duty of the parent to prepare the child to assume responsibility in the school environment, this includes responsibility for learning and exhibiting conduct that does not infringe upon the safety and rights of another. The school has the right to expect reasonable and self-disciplined behavior from each student. Since self-discipline cannot be imposed from without, the students must be permitted a degree of freedom of choice and action to develop their individual talents and abilities.

Code of Virginia § 22.1-78 states: "A school board may adopt bylaws and regulations including but not limited to the proper discipline of students, including their conduct going to and returning from school." The School Board's rules governing student conduct are summarized in the "Code of Behavior" (COB) and are also addressed in the School Board's policies and Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS) regulations.

Students may be disciplined for violations of the provisions of this COB, PWCS policies and regulations governing student conduct, and for behavior that is incompatible with a K-12 environment. Such as:

- During regular school attendance and whenever present on school property or virtually. At-school activities on property owned by the School Board, including School Age Child Care (SACC).
- When going to and from school and bus stops.
- On school buses and at bus stops.
- In cases involving off-site, school-sponsored activities such as field trips, sporting events, and club activities.
- When conduct by a student occurring off school grounds or school property has a material effect on the operation or general welfare of the school division; impacts the integrity of the educational process; threatens the safety and welfare of students, staff, or school property; occurs when the student is under the school's authority or otherwise invades the rights of students or staff.

For good cause, the Superintendent may approve a deviation from the procedures outlined in the COB in its present form, so long as the basic rights of students, parent(s), the community at large, and/or school personnel are not violated. Good cause means protecting all students' health, safety, welfare, and educational opportunities in the school system.

Note: "Parent(s)," as used throughout, means biological parent(s), adoptive parent(s), or legal guardian(s). For purposes of this publication, references to "School Board" should be understood to indicate the Prince William County School Board.

PWCS Vision 2025 Launching Thriving Futures Strategic Plan

PWCS envisions every student graduating on time with the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind necessary to create a thriving future for themselves and their community. Toward this end, our mission includes a commitment to inclusive practices and equity with an expectation of excellence from every student and every employee each day. Additionally, we are committed to highlighting our core values within our division and school communities. As we aspire to ensure all students experience a positive climate and culture within their respective school communities, we will focus on our students' resiliency, well-being, equity, and inclusivity.

Through the divisionwide use of Restorative Practices, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), and developing Educator Cultural Competency aligned with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) standards, PWCS will provide a learning environment that fosters connectedness, promotes a sense of belonging, and encourages social and emotional wellness for all students.

In case of conflict between this document and PWCS policies and regulations, state or federal law, the latter shall control. The COB may be updated throughout the school year to reflect changes in state or federal law, related School Board policies and regulations, or names of responsible offices. The version of the COB published on the PWCS website is the official version.

Reporting Concerning Behavior

Reporting Student Concerns

"Say Something" Anonymous Reporting System

Students, faculty, staff, and parents share the responsibility for an orderly and safe school environment.

Information about drugs, weapons, threats to self or others, or other factors that may be harmful to the school environment should be reported to a trusted adult or through the "Say Something" Anonymous Reporting System. "Say Something" is designed specifically for students in grades 6-12 and staff to report any serious or potentially violent concerns of unsafe behavior or threats of harm to self or others. Say Something is a youth violence prevention program from the national nonprofit organization Sandy Hook Promise and is provided and sustained at no cost to PWCS.

"Tipsters" can send reports on anything from school threats they have seen or overheard to personal crises, including sexual harassment, self-harm, and depression. The system enables school administrators and law enforcement to create effective interventions and intervene upon at-risk individuals to help prevent violence, suicide, bullying, self-harm, and other forms of threatening behavior.

All tips submitted receive an immediate response from one of the highly skilled crisis counselors at the Sandy Hook Promise National Crisis Center; this person then determines the necessary support steps. When credible tips are received that are life-threatening and/or involve an imminent threat, the crisis center will immediately contact local 911 dispatch and involve law enforcement, then notify central office staff and school-based representatives, even after hours.

See a warning sign or threat, use the following suggestions for reporting such information:

- Submit an anonymous tip by calling 1-844-5-SAYNOW or visiting www.SaySomething.net.
- Download the free app from the App Store or Google Play Store, where tips can be submitted instantly; once downloaded, it will ask for a 4-digit code you select and remember.
- Use this QR Code to access the website.



- Call 911 in cases of immediate emergency.

Reporting Suspected Discrimination or Harassment

Students who believe that they have been discriminated against or harassed are encouraged to report the matter with one of the following options:

- Speak to a school administrator (e.g., principal, assistant principal).
- Contact the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Compliance Department at 571-374-6839.
- [Report discrimination or harassment online.](#)
- Or use the QR code below.



Bullying

Each school is committed to creating an environment in which students are free from bullying. Students, parents and school personnel are strongly encouraged to report incidents of bullying in the following ways:

- Speak to a school administrator (e.g., principal, assistant principal). A school administrator will take appropriate steps to respond quickly and decisively to student reports of bullying.
- Students or parents can [report bullying incidents online](#).
- Or use the QR code below.



Relevant PWCS Policies and Regulations

- [Policy 738](#), "Nondiscrimination and Harassment of Students"
- [Regulation 738-1](#), "Resolution of Allegations Against Students of Sexual Misconduct"
- [Regulation 738-2](#), "Title IX – Equal Access to Education Programs and Activities"
- [Regulation 738-3](#), "Resolution of Allegations Against Students of Discrimination or Harassment"
- [Regulation 738-4](#), "Nondiscrimination Against Students on the Basis of Disability"
- [Regulation 738-5](#), "Treatment of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students"
- [Policy 733](#), "Bullying and Harassment of Students"
- [Regulation 733-1](#), "Bullying of Students"
- [Attachment I](#), "Bullying of Students"

Student Behavior Supports

Restorative Practices

Restorative Practices is an emerging social science that studies how to strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within communities. Research demonstrates that the use of Restorative Practices improves school climate and reduces student suspensions and discipline disparities. Research has shown that frequent out-of-school suspensions, zero-tolerance policies, and “get-tough” approaches to school safety are ineffective and increase the risk for negative social and academic outcomes, especially for children from historically disadvantaged groups.

Approaching school discipline from an instructional prevention-based standpoint as with Restorative Practices contributes to a positive school environment and ensures equity, fairness, and continuous improvement. PWCS continues to increase the number of school staff trained in Restorative Practices and Restorative Practice teams throughout the division. Restorative practices are grounded in the need to keep schools safe by building relationships that strengthen the school social structure. Restorative practices incorporate opportunities for school community involvement in the resolution of wrongdoing while empowering students and staff members to take personal responsibility for the well-being of the entire school community.

Restorative practices provide direct opportunities for students who have harmed others to be accountable to those they have harmed, including themselves and their families. Restorative practices emphasize the need to educate students who have harmed others about the effects of disruptive behavior on those harmed, as well as on the school community. Participants in a restorative discipline process learn the underlying factors that lead to making poor decisions. They practice social skills and learn self-improvement strategies that encourage better decision-making in the future.

Multi-Tiered System of Supports

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is an adaptive and responsive framework that helps schools identify and provide targeted supports for students who are struggling academically and/or behaviorally.

The focus is to identify students by name and need while providing differentiated instruction and the necessary academic, behavioral, and social-emotional wellness support for ALL students across ALL schools. In PWCS, MTSS is built upon strong and intentional collaboration, enhanced by the belief that ALL students can learn at high levels.

PWCS will implement coherent, articulated, aligned, culturally and linguistically responsive instructional practices and learning pathways across all grade levels and content areas, focusing on improving the academic progress of English Learners and students with disabilities.

The Key Components of MTSS are:

- Student Support Team (SST) with an identified leader to guide MTSS implementation.
- Culture of collective responsibility for all students.
- High-quality Tier 1 core instruction for academics, behavior, and student social-emotional wellness.
- Goal setting and monitoring student progress.
- Data-informed decision-making across tiers.
- Early implementation of evidence-based interventions with fidelity.
- Families as authentic partners to support student success.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is an evidence-based framework used in schools to promote positive behavior and prevent challenging behaviors. It emphasizes prevention, teaching social skills, and creating a supportive school climate. The goal is to enhance student well-being and academic success while minimizing disruptions and disciplinary actions

The Relationship between PBIS and Restorative Practices

PBIS and Restorative Practices (RP) can complement each other to build a positive climate and culture in schools while reducing the reliance on exclusionary discipline practices. The integration of PBIS and RP does not replace consequences in alignment with the PWCS Code of Behavior. By integrating PBIS and Restorative Practices, school staff can create a comprehensive approach to behavior management that emphasizes prevention, positive relationships, and the restoration of harm.

Tiered Support

MTSS is a framework that provides a multi-tiered approach to meeting the diverse behavioral and academic needs of students. PBIS and Restorative Practices can be integrated into different tiers of support within the MTSS framework. PBIS can be implemented as a universal Tier 1 support by establishing schoolwide behavioral expectations and providing proactive strategies for all students. Restorative Practices can also be used at Tier 1 to build a sense of community among all students. Additionally, Restorative Practices can provide structure for targeted Tier 2 or Tier 3 support to address specific student behavioral concerns and provide individualized interventions.

Shared Focus on Positive Behavior

PBIS underscores the importance of promoting positive behavior and creating a supportive environment for all students. Restorative Practices also foster positive relationships and build a sense of community. Both approaches prioritize the development and reinforcement of positive behaviors, which helps to foster a positive school climate.

Prevention and Early Intervention

PBIS aims to prevent challenging behavior through proactive strategies, such as explicitly teaching, reinforcing, and incentivizing expected student behaviors. The objectives of Restorative Practices center around early intervention, providing opportunities for dialogue, reflection, and repairing harm before conflicts escalate. By addressing behavior issues early, both approaches can help reduce the need for exclusionary discipline practices.

Clear and Consistent Expectations

PBIS establishes clear behavioral expectations across the settings in the school, promoting consistency in behavior management. Restorative Practices rely on clear expectations for behavior and communication, enabling students and staff to understand how to engage in restorative conversations (and structures) effectively. By aligning these expectations, both approaches create a common language and understanding among students and staff.

Restorative Consequences

PBIS encourages the use of logical and restorative consequences for behavioral infractions, focusing on teaching and reinforcing appropriate behavior rather than solely relying on punitive measures. Restorative Practices provide a framework for repairing harm caused by a student's behavior through dialogue, empathy, and accountability. By incorporating restorative consequences, both approaches promote growth, assist students in learning from errors in judgment, and reduce recidivism.

Building Relationships and Fostering Empathy

Restorative Practices emphasize building positive relationships, empathy, and understanding among students and between students and staff. PBIS recognizes the importance of positive relationships in fostering a supportive school climate. By promoting empathy and building relationships, both approaches contribute to a more inclusive and connected school community.

Data-Informed Decision-Making

PBIS uses data to inform decision-making processes related to behavior interventions and supports. Restorative Practices also rely on data to assess restorative processes' effectiveness and identify improvement areas. By using data, both approaches can identify behavioral trends, measure the impact of interventions, and make strategic decisions to reduce exclusionary discipline practices effectively.

Educator Cultural Competency

According to Code of Virginia § 22.1-298.7, the Virginia Framework for Cultural Competency is comprised of four domains which are Culturally Competent Self-Reflection, Culturally Competent Pedagogy and Practice, Culturally Competent Learning Environments, and Culturally Competent Community Engagement. As the 10th most diverse school division in the nation, we understand the responsibility of supporting a positive climate and culture. We are all students regardless of race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, ability, national origin, political ideology, area of residency (including rural locations), or gender. This means we value and respect differences within our student populations and support our staff with their commitment to the advancement of cultural competency within our schools and classrooms with an emphasis on the following areas as they relate to K-12 student behavioral expectations:

- Access and opportunity
- Resource equity
- Family communication and engagement
- Intercultural competency and inclusion

Our commitment to a universally positive climate and culture ensures that, when discipline is necessary, students and families are well-informed about the disciplinary process, school communities are restored, and students are provided with access to a supportive system that is in line with PWCS behavioral standards.

Roles and Responsibilities

Prince William County Public Schools

Prince William County School Board

The Code of Behavior has been established for PWCS. The School Board, acting through the Superintendent, holds all school employees responsible for supervising student behavior while students are legally supervised by the schools. The School Board holds all students responsible for appropriate conduct as defined in the policies and regulations of the School Board and as summarized in the COB. Policies and regulations governing student behavior and student discipline are available online at www.pwcs.edu.

All PWCS employees are held to the highest ethical standards and are accountable for their actions. Therefore, all staff must comply with the policies and regulations established by the School Board.

The School Board requires all parents to read the Code of Behavior (COB) and any policies or regulations mentioned within it to support proper student conduct.

Student Management and Alternative Programs Department (SMAPD)

As delineated in [Policy 747](#), "Student Management and Alternative Programs Department," the School Board has designated SMAPD to enforce and coordinate the school division's efforts to provide a safe school environment conducive to teaching and learning. The objectives of SMAPD are as follows:

- To resolve serious student disciplinary offenses.
- To provide a variety of educational opportunities that address the varied needs of students in grades K-12 and adult learners.
- To promote a safe educational environment conducive to teaching and learning and free from violence, conflict, and unnecessary disruptions.
- To decrease the number of long-term suspensions and expulsions through a process that provides increased nontraditional and alternative education opportunities.
- To oversee and conduct the due process procedures applicable to the long-term suspension, expulsion, exclusion, and readmission of students, and to coordinate any appeals to the school board.
- To determine the appropriate educational services, programs, and placements for regular education students who are subject to SMAPD's disciplinary process.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Compliance Department (DEIC)

DEIC supports the PWCS Strategic Plan through the advancement of access and opportunity, resource equity for positive climate and culture, and emphasis on family community and engagement, as well as intercultural competence and inclusion for all. Our team provides support to school communities through training, coaching, and other resources based on the needs of school sites. The DEIC works to address cultural competency within day-to-day school interactions. Specifically, the DEIC team:

- Supports staff as they operationalize cultural competency in practices for all students and staff through shared language and the use of terms that are non-divisive.
- Supports school-level councils and committees with diversity, equity, and inclusion opportunities at the student and staff level.
- Supports families with navigating and understanding the PWCS discipline, suspension, and expulsion process.

Definitions:

- Diversity – Values and respects differences of each individual person regardless of race, ethnicity, age, gender, ability, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, or political ideology.
- Equity – The fair and impartial provision of resources, access, and opportunities to all students based on their individual needs regardless of race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, area of residence (rural locations), or sexual orientation.

- Inclusion – Creating conditions for all students and staff to feel welcomed, valued, and positioned for success.

Educational Team

While discipline is ultimately the individual's responsibility, implementing an effective discipline program requires a cooperative team effort. An equitable and preventive approach to discipline shall be taken in an effort to clarify standards of conduct, effectively assess a student's individual needs, and identify any significant factors that may be contributing to a student's misconduct. The school principal is the instructional leader responsible for the development of school-based behavior expectations that are consistent with the School Board policies, PWCS regulations, and the COB. Administrators, teachers, and support personnel all work together to ensure the rights and responsibilities of each student in the school division.

The educational team is responsible for:

- Providing a safe and positive school environment.
- Providing a favorable psychological environment for learning.
- Encouraging self-discipline.
- Providing an atmosphere of mutual respect.
- Treating each student as an individual in accordance with one's needs.
- Encouraging, monitoring, and evaluating the progress of students.
- Initiating and maintaining open lines of communication with parents.
- Discussing the COB with students at the beginning of each school year and providing periodic reviews during the school year.
- Formulating and implementing school rules and regulations in compliance with the policies and regulations of the School Board and the COB throughout the school setting.
- Providing both instruction and access to the COB to all new students upon registration throughout the school year.
- Developing a plan of action, whenever possible, based on the needs of the student and the school environment as a whole.
- Maintaining the educational records of individual students to include a record of disciplinary actions involving the student.
- Such records may contain information on police arrest or court action if the student is involved in unlawful behavior. Whenever charges are placed with juvenile court authorities, it may be considered an "arrest" even if the student is not physically taken into custody by police.
- School administrators are responsible for appropriate follow-up action whenever students report misconduct that violates the COB. Teachers, counselors, and other educational support staff are responsible for helping students obtain the assistance they may need from administrators. Staff response to each student complaint should be documented.

Professional Teaching Staff

According to Virginia's Standards of Accreditation ([8VAC20-131-220](#)), "The professional teaching staff shall be responsible for providing instruction that is educationally sound in an atmosphere of mutual respect and courtesy..." Teachers are responsible for establishing and maintaining a safe, supportive developmentally, and culturally appropriate environment that promotes student academic, behavior, and social-emotional development. Developing positive relationships with students built on mutual trust and respect has demonstrated some of the highest positive effects on student achievement and behavior. Developing relationships requires "specific skills of the teacher such as the skills of listening, empathy, caring, and having a positive regard for others." The impact of teacher-student relationship variables includes gains in positive behavior, critical/creative thinking, math skills, verbal skills, and overall grades.

Given the correlation between student behaviors, a positive school climate, academic achievement, and keeping students in the classroom with uninterrupted instruction, teacher responsibilities include:

- Developing positive relationships.
- Developing a safe and positive physical environment.
- Teaching (and reteaching when necessary) behavioral expectations.
- Reinforcing positive behavior.
- Providing instructional feedback on behaviors.

- Utilizing the school’s tiered framework of interventions and supports for students who are not meeting behavioral expectations.
- Recognizing personal stress, reactions that may escalate negative student behavior, and personal bias.
- Using individual and classroom data to monitor student behavior and the teacher’s responses to behavior.

If a student is not meeting the behavioral expectations and the teacher has implemented classroom or school-based interventions as outlined in school procedures, the teacher may request that a student be removed from a class.

Specialized Instructional Support Personnel

The Virginia Board of Education’s Model Guidance for Positive and Preventive Code of Student Conduct Policy and Alternatives to Suspension recognizes that these professionals have a direct role in promoting and supporting a positive school climate that focuses on prevention, intervention, and support to assist students in meeting the behavioral expectations of the COB.

School Counselors

School counseling programs support the Virginia Standards of Learning by guiding students in their academic, career, personal, and social development. School counselors collaborate with parents, teachers, administrators, and others to promote learning and to help students establish and achieve their education, career, and personal goals using the following standards:

- Academic Development – Students will acquire the academic preparation essential to choose from various educational, training, and employment options upon completion of secondary school.
- Career Development – Students will investigate the world of work to make informed career decisions.
- Social-Emotional – Students will acquire an understanding of and respect for self and others, and the skills needed to be responsible citizens.

School Social Workers

School social workers have special expertise in understanding family and community systems and linking students and their families with the community services that are essential for promoting student success.

They work to remedy barriers to learning created because of poverty, inadequate health care, and neighborhood violence. School social workers often focus on providing support to vulnerable populations of students who have a high risk for truancy and dropping out of school, such as homeless and foster children, migrant populations, students transitioning between school and treatment programs or the juvenile justice system, or students experiencing domestic violence.

They work closely with teachers, administrators, parents, and other educators to provide coordinated interventions and consultation designed to keep students in school and help their families access the support needed to promote student success.

School Psychologists

School psychologists have specialized training that enables them to understand and work with students in relation to their academic progress, behavior, social-emotional development, and relationships.

School psychologists specialize in analyzing complex student and school problems and selecting and implementing appropriate evidence-based interventions to improve outcomes at home and school.

They may consult with teachers and parents to coordinate services and supports for the students’ academic, social, and behavioral needs.

Their training in conducting risk and threat assessments and in evaluation, data collection, and interpretation can facilitate identifying and implementing the support that students may need to ensure their success.

Behavior Specialists

Behavior specialists conduct assessments to identify the underlying causes of student behaviors and support school staff in developing strategies to address challenging student behavior.

Behavior specialists coach teachers to strengthen proactive classroom management strategies and appropriate behavioral responses to maintain the momentum of high-quality instruction.

They consult with school teams to strengthen PBIS and Restorative Practices as part of a comprehensive MTSS framework.

They collaborate with school administration and division support staff to provide ongoing professional learning around the best practices for supporting student behaviors.

School Nurses

The school nurse provides emergency care assessments and interventions, management of acute and chronic health conditions, referral and support to access primary care, preventive services, communicable disease control measures, counseling for health promotion, and identification and management of health-related barriers to student learning.

Non-Certified Staff

All school community members should be engaged in and responsible for establishing a positive school climate and every school employee is responsible for ensuring a safe, supportive, and effective learning environment.

Families as Partners

PWCS recognizes the importance of partnerships between schools and families in making schools safe, effective learning environments and in promoting children's social-emotional development. PWCS emphasizes the significance of positive communication between families and educators and encourages avenues for families to communicate their concerns, provide suggestions, and access information regarding their children to create a positive partnership between families and schools, thus strengthening the school community.

Under Virginia law, parents have a duty to:

- Assist the school in enforcing the standards of student conduct and compulsory school attendance in order that education may be conducted in an atmosphere free of disruption and threat to persons or property, and supportive of individual rights ([Code of Virginia § 22.1-279.3\(a\)](#)).
- Review and acknowledge the COB, promote proper student conduct, assist the school with the discipline of the student, and meet with school officials, if requested, to discuss matters related to discipline and school.
- Safely store any firearm present in the household.
- Sign a statement showing that they know their responsibilities. This statement is in the Back to School packet in [ParentVUE](#).
- Complete an annual review of the COB and other necessary legal acknowledgments immediately before the start of school or during the first weeks of the school year.
- Ensure that the student is appropriately dressed for school as determined by the dress code, which is developed cooperatively at local schools by students, parent(s), and school staff.
- Provide such books, materials, instruments, uniforms, and equipment as are required for effective participation in the school program.
- Know promotion and graduation requirements as published each year for middle and high school students in the "[Secondary Course Catalog](#)."
- Provide current emergency information, including a telephone number, to the school to ensure that the school can contact the parent immediately in case of an emergency.
- Provide a certified copy of the student's birth certificate, and/or immigration documentation, physical examination, and record of the completed series of immunizations, upon initial entry to school.
- Understand that drugs and weapons, as described in the COB, will not be tolerated at school activities, on property owned by the school board, when going to and from school and bus stops, on school buses, at bus stops, and in cases involving off-site, school-sponsored activities such as field trips, sporting events, and club activities; and that violators are subject to corrective action, up to and including expulsion.

(Parents have the right to disagree with a school's or school division's policies or decisions. Parents may appeal decisions concerning their student using the procedures outlined in [Regulation 731-1](#), "Appeal of Student Matters.")

School Resource Officers

The school resource officer (SRO) is defined in [Code of Virginia § 9.1-101](#) of the Virginia Code as "a certified law enforcement officer hired by the local law enforcement agency to provide law enforcement and security services to Virginia public elementary and secondary schools." However, law enforcement officers are not school disciplinarians. Their role in PWCS is to promote positive and supportive school climates and to create and maintain safe and secure school environments by focusing on incidents that may involve a violation of criminal law, while school administrators focus on whether student conduct violates the provisions of the COB.

School administration is required by [Code of Virginia § 22.1-279.3:1](#) to report certain potential criminal offenses to local law enforcement.

Student Rights and Expectations

Right to Be Free from Bullying, Discrimination, and Harassment

Bullying

PWCS is committed to creating an environment in which students are free from bullying. Bullying is any aggressive and unwanted behavior intended to harm, intimidate, or humiliate the victim; involves a real or perceived power imbalance between the aggressor or aggressors and victim; and is repeated over time or causes severe emotional trauma. Bullying includes cyberbullying. It does not include ordinary teasing, horseplay, argument, or peer conflict. Students who believe they have been bullied are strongly encouraged to report such conduct to the school administration. The school administrator will take appropriate steps to respond quickly and decisively to student reports of bullying. Students or parents can [report incidents of bullying online](#).

Cyberbullying and any mistreatment or bullying behavior that occurs on school property, at a school-sponsored activity, or that prevents a student from going to or from school safely violates the COB and will be investigated and responded to by school officials. However, not all mistreatment or bullying behavior constitutes discrimination or discriminatory harassment.

All complaints will be followed by an investigation. Those accused and the parent(s) of students involved will be informed of complaints, witnesses will be interviewed, and all information will remain confidential except for that which must be shared as part of the investigation.

School administrators must notify parents of any student involved in an incident of alleged bullying as soon as practically possible but no later than 24 hours after learning of the allegation of bullying.

Discrimination

Discrimination occurs when one or more individuals are treated differently or not given fair consideration or the same opportunity as others because of their race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions including lactation, age, marital status, veteran status, disability, genetic information, or any other basis prohibited by law. Discrimination against students or staff is strictly prohibited. Students who believe they have been discriminated against are encouraged to report the matter to the school principal or to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Compliance at TitleIXEquity@pwcs.edu or 571-374-6839.

[Report discrimination or harassment online.](#)

Harassment

Harassment is a form of discrimination. Harassment is a course of conduct that targets one or more individuals based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions, including lactation, age, marital status, veteran status, disability, genetic information, or any other basis prohibited by law. Harassment:

- Demeans, threatens, intimidates, or harms an individual or group in such a way as to cause anxiety or fear for safety.
- Creates an intimidating, hostile, and/or offensive environment; substantially or unreasonably interferes with a student's education; or otherwise limits a student's ability to participate in or benefit from a PWCS educational program.
- May target an individual even when the individual does not actually possess any characteristic that is the basis for the harassment (so long as the harassment is based on the belief that the target possesses such characteristic).
- May be expressed in various ways, including through physical actions or through verbal, nonverbal, electronic, or written communications, and may take various forms, including but not limited to:
 - Offensive comments, name-calling, gestures, "jokes," or rumors.
 - Demeaning drawings, cartoons, or graffiti.

- Acts of aggression toward individuals or their property, including threats or physical assaults.

Students who believe that they have been subject to discrimination or harassment are encouraged to report the matter to the school principal or to the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Compliance Department at TitleIXEquity@pwcs.edu or 571-374-6839.

[Report discrimination or harassment online.](#)

Sex-Based Harassment and Sex-Based Misconduct

Discrimination under Title IX means conduct on the basis of sex stereotypes, sex characteristics, pregnancy or related conditions, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Sexual harassment under Title IX means conduct on the basis of sex that meets one or more of the following conditions:

- A PWCS employee or agent provides or offers to provide aid, benefit, or service to a person in exchange for the person's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct.
- A person is subjected to unwelcome sex-based conduct that is severe or pervasive enough to deny or limit the person's ability to participate in or benefit from a PWCS educational program or activity.
- Sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking as defined by federal regulations implementing Title IX.

Not all allegations of sex-based misconduct are considered discrimination or sexual harassment under Title IX but may still constitute a violation of the PWCS Code of Behavior. Sex-based misconduct is any misconduct of a sexual nature or mistreatment that is based on sex or sex stereotyping. Sex-based misconduct may be verbal, nonverbal, electronic, or physical and may target a person regardless of the person's sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Sex-based misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Making sexual advances, including requesting sexual favors, leering, or engaging in unwelcome and repeated flirting.
- Engaging in sex-based verbal abuse, including using slurs or epithets or making graphic and/or degrading descriptions about an individual's body.
- Making, sharing, and/or displaying sex-based jokes, gestures, objects, or images (including sexting, drawings, photographs, or video).
- Spreading sex-based rumors.
- Making sex-based threats or threats of a sexual nature.
- Impeding or blocking an individual's movement in a sexually intimidating manner.
- Sexually assaulting or improperly touching another individual.
- Sex-based misconduct may constitute Sex-Based Harassment, which is prohibited by law. All sex-based misconduct that occurs on school property, at a school-sponsored activity, or that prevents a student from getting to or from school safely violates the COB and will be investigated and responded to by school officials.

[Report discrimination or harassment online.](#)

Reporting Suspected Discrimination or Harassment

Students who believe that they have been discriminated against or harassed are encouraged to report the matter to the school principal or the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Compliance Department at 571-374-6839. The initial report may be verbal, in writing, or through the use of this QR Code.



[Report discrimination or harassment online.](#)

Preventing Discrimination and Harassment

School officials will act to stop and prevent discrimination and harassment. Students can help stop and prevent discrimination and harassment by:

- Speaking up and letting the students engaging in the misconduct know that their behavior is hurtful and that they should stop.
- Asking for help from a parent, teacher, counselor, school administrator, or other trusted adult.
- Reporting the misconduct to a school administrator, a trusted adult at school, or the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Compliance Department.

Relevant PWCS Policies and Regulations

- [Policy 738](#), “Nondiscrimination and Harassment of Students”
- [Regulation 738-1](#), “Resolution of Allegations Against Students of Sexual Misconduct”
- [Regulation 738-2](#), “Title IX – Equal Access to Education Programs and Activities”
- [Regulation 738-3](#), “Resolution of Allegations Against Students of Discrimination or Harassment”
- [Regulation 738-4](#), “Nondiscrimination Against Students on the Basis of Disability”
- [Regulation 738-5](#), “Treatment of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students”

Student Expectations

Students, staff, and parents share responsibility for an orderly and safe school environment. Information about drugs, weapons, or other factors that may be harmful to others or the school environment must be reported. Any attempted or actual retaliation for the reporting of COB violations shall be addressed by corrective action, up to and including expulsion.

Students who have knowledge of drugs, weapons, violence, or other behaviors that may be harmful to others or to the school environment may be subject to disciplinary action for failure to report such information to school authorities.

Students who discover something in their possession that is not permitted at school must report it to an administrator or other staff member immediately. School staff responsible for initiating follow-up action shall consider that the student voluntarily brought this to the staff’s attention. Students should contact an administrator, teacher, counselor, or other trusted adult immediately if they have information about, or believe that they have been, victims of misconduct that violates the COB.

Video Security

Please be aware that security cameras are in all PWCS buildings and will be used to promote the safety and security of all PWCS students, staff, and property.

Attendance Policy

Under Virginia law, students are responsible for attending school every day that school is in session. [Regulation 724-1, “Attendance, Absences, Excuses, and Tardies.”](#) contains the specific information related to student attendance as summarized here. Absences, tardies, and/or early dismissals must have documented parental and/or school personnel approval. Within five days of the absence from school, the parent shall provide documentation to the appropriate school staff to excuse the absence. Classwork for excused absences may be made up according to Regulation 724-1. The student or parent is responsible for obtaining assignments. Students arriving late to school should follow the school’s procedures for checking in.

Types of Excused Absences

- Students experiencing mental and/or behavioral health issues, disorders, or disturbances in accordance with established school guidelines provided by the VDOE.
- Personal illness of the student.
- Medical and dental examination and/or treatment of the student when such appointments cannot be scheduled outside school hours.
- Student participation in school-sponsored activities taking place during school hours.

- With prior approval of the principal, seniors may be excused for college admission visitations or to apply for post-graduation jobs.
- Death in the student's immediate family or household.
- Required court appearance.
- Observation of a religious holiday (Students should not be denied any award, eligibility, or the opportunity to compete for an award, nor should they be deprived of the right to take an alternative test or examination because of their absence).
- Emergency conditions in the student's home that require special help from the student in caring for the sick or injured; however, repeated use of this excuse or requests for absences for more than five consecutive days must be referred to the Student Health and Wellness Department for approval.
- Per [Regulation 724-1](#), preapproved absences are discouraged and will only be granted on a case-by-case basis by the principal or designee. Family trips are encouraged to be scheduled during school holidays and over summer break. Absences for family trips will not be excused unless accompanied by extraordinary circumstances. A determination of whether extraordinary circumstances exist lies at the discretion of the principal, in collaboration with the Student Health and Wellness Department. Such factors as the reason for the absence, the educational value of the proposed experience, and the impact of the absence on the student's academic progress will be considered in determining whether a prearranged absence is approved or disapproved.
- Pre-approved absence for certain reasons pertaining to a parent's military deployment.
- Any student who is a member of a state-recognized or federally recognized tribal nation that is headquartered in the Commonwealth and who is absent from school to attend such tribal nation's pow-wow gathering shall be granted one excused absence per academic year, provided that the student's parent provides advance notice to the student's school.
- Reasons of extenuating circumstances as judged by the principal.
- Students experiencing homelessness who are awaiting transportation arrangements.
- Parents/guardians retain the option of not permitting their child to attend school in circumstances when, in the judgment of the parent/guardian, the roads or walkways in their neighborhood are too hazardous to use.
- Engaging in a civic event (middle and high school students only).
- Out-of-school suspension. When a school administrator places a student on out-of-school suspension, the absence from school shall be classified as excused.

Types of Unexcused Absences

- All-day truancy.
- Class truancy.
- Missing a ride, or a bus, or car trouble.
- A virtual-only student who does not sign in for live instruction for the class or school day using Canvas.
- A virtual-only student who has not requested and been approved by the teacher and/or administrator for alternate attendance/participation procedure due to unique circumstances and does not turn on the camera or cannot be seen by the teacher during instruction and learning activities for the class or school day.
- Failure to produce an appropriate explanation or requested documentation for an absence.
- Prearranged absences without prior approval of the school principal.

Per Virginia Code, the VDOE, and PWCS [Regulation 724-1](#), "Attendance, Absences, Excuses, and Tardies," schools will convene attendance intervention meetings and develop attendance improvement plans for students who accumulate five or more unexcused absences. Parents may be required to participate in attendance intervention meetings. Parents of severely truant students may be subject to legal action for not complying with compulsory attendance laws.

Student Dress and Grooming

Students are urged to dress for success each school day. Their overall appearance, while on school grounds or virtually, should be based on the health and safety of an inclusive school community. It is understood that student dress may reflect outdoor weather conditions throughout the school year, however, students should refrain from wearing any item of clothing which may cause a distraction or disruption to the educational process or compromise the physical and emotional health and safety of the student or others. Students whose appearance disrupts instruction may be asked to change clothing.

The PWCS student dress and grooming guidelines are created to ensure equity in student expression and staff enforcement and are not intended to discriminate based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, genetic information, or any other basis prohibited by law. The dress and grooming standards apply equally to all students regardless of gender, gender identity, or gender expression.

Students are permitted to wear any religiously and ethnically specific or significant head covering or hairstyle. Permitted head coverings and hairstyles include, but are not limited to:

- Braids
- Cornrows
- Headwraps
- Hijabs
- Locs
- Yarmulkes

Prohibited items of clothing include:

Clothing items which:

- Reveal or expose undergarments.
- Fit in a manner as to reveal or expose undergarments.
- Contain vulgar, discriminatory, lewd, patently offensive, or obscene language or images.
- Contain threats or gang symbols.
- Promote violence or the illegal use of weapons, or the use of alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, and/or associated paraphernalia.
- Cause or may foreseeably cause a disruption to the learning environment.
- Are accessories that could be regarded as or used as a weapon.
- Headwear that covers one's entire head or face, unless the headwear is:
 - Worn as part of one's religion.
 - Worn for medical reasons.
 - Worn for personal prevention practices like in the case of infectious diseases.
 - Worn for an approved school event.
 - Worn as an expression of one's cultural or ethnic background.

No PWCS employee may enforce the Student Dress and Grooming provisions by direct physical contact with the student or the student's attire. No student shall be required to undress in front of any individual to comply with these provisions.

Acts for Which Students May Be Disciplined

Acts For Which Students May Be Disciplined

A basic element of effective prevention of misconduct is the setting of divisionwide school rules which are implemented consistently. Students may be disciplined for conduct incompatible with a K-12 educational environment, for conduct specifically in violation of Prince William County School Board policies and regulations, certain provisions of state and federal law, those offenses summarized below, or other conduct that has a negative impact on the operation of the school, the health, safety, or security of students, staff, or school property, or the educational opportunities of other students. Equitable and consistent implementation of rules and regulations shall occur across school sites and within all student groups.

The principal has the authority to set the appropriate consequences for infractions, which may range from counseling to a referral for further disciplinary action (long-term suspension, placement in a nontraditional setting, or recommendation for expulsion) by the Student Management and Alternative Programs Department, or the School Board depending on the severity of the infraction. The student's age and grade level, the circumstances surrounding the infraction, and other relevant factors will be considered when determining the appropriate corrective measure.

In making certain disciplinary decisions, PWCS takes into account the presence of aggravating circumstances. As defined by the VDOE, aggravating circumstances include:

- Misconduct that caused serious harm (including but not limited to physical, emotional, and psychological harm) to another person(s) or posed a credible threat of serious harm to another person(s), as determined by a threat assessment;
- The student's presence in the school poses an ongoing and unreasonable risk to the safety of the school, its students, staff, or others in the school; or
- The student engaged in a serious offense that was persistent and unresponsive to targeted interventions as documented through an established intervention process. Virginia Code requires that the above also include consideration of the student's disciplinary history.

Please see [Leveled Responses to Student Misconduct](#) for guidance on possible interventions and disciplinary consequences for violations of the COB.

Acts for which a student may be disciplined include, but are not limited to:

Abuse of Car/Vehicle Privileges

Cars and other vehicles may be brought onto school grounds only with permission of the administration and must be operated safely in compliance with school rules and state and local laws. The owner and/or operator of any car or other vehicle that is located on or operated on school property consents, by virtue of such operation and/or location of the car or vehicle on school property, to the search of such a vehicle when reasonable suspicion exists that prohibited items as described in [Regulation 737-1](#), "Searches and Seizures," may be inside it. Violators are subject to corrective action at school, which may include loss of driving privileges on school grounds, out-of-school suspension, further disciplinary action, and applicable legal penalties.

Assault

An intentional act that puts another person in reasonable fear of imminent harmful or offensive contact.

Assault and/or Battery of a School Division Employee

The assault and/or battery (as defined here) of any school division employee, including substitutes, is strictly prohibited.

Battery

When a person intentionally causes harmful or offensive contact with another person.

Bullying

Bullying means any aggressive and unwanted behavior that is intended to harm, intimidate, or humiliate the victim; involves a real or perceived power imbalance between the aggressor or aggressors and victim, to include victims of a group that is protected from discrimination under the [Virginia Human Rights Act \(§ 2.2-3900 et seq.\)](#), and is repeated over time or causes severe emotional trauma. Bullying includes cyberbullying. Bullying does not include ordinary teasing, horseplay, argument, or peer conflict. Students should immediately report all incidents of bullying to a teacher, counselor, or administrator using the “Complaint of Bullying” form, verbally, or through other means of communication. Students are strongly encouraged to report bullying.

Retaliation against a student who reports bullying or participates in an investigation regarding bullying is strictly prohibited and will be addressed by corrective action, up to and including further disciplinary action.

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that involves the transmission, receipt, or display of electronic messages and/or images. Cyberbullying refers to any threats by one student toward another, typically through emails, texts, or websites (e.g., blogs and social media sites). Electronic communications that support deliberate, hostile, hurtful messages intended to harm others is a form of bullying. Cyberbullying includes such things as sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images, posting sensitive, private information about another person, pretending to be someone else to make that person look bad, and using defamatory online personal polling websites.

Cyberbullying that occurs at schools, on school property, at school-related activities, during virtual instruction, or within the community and impacts or disrupts the learning environment or school operations will not be tolerated. Likewise, any cyberbullying that occurs using PWCS computers, devices, systems, or networks, or on personal devices while using PWCS systems or networks (regardless of location) is strictly prohibited. Such misconduct is a violation of [Regulation 295-1](#), “Computer Systems and Network Services – PWCS Responsible Use and Internet Safety Policy,” and [Regulation 733-1](#), “Bullying of Students.”

Cyberbullying that occurs off school grounds and/or does not involve the use of PWCS computers, devices, systems, or networks may also result in disciplinary action if it causes or is likely to cause a material disruption to the operation of the school(s) or the school division, threatens the safety or mental/physical well-being of students or staff, or threatens the safety of school buildings or school property.

[Report bullying incidents online.](#)

Cell Phones

Students must comply with staff directives or be subject to disciplinary actions if their use of their cell phones disrupts the school’s educational environment.

Cheating and Plagiarism

Students are to neither give nor receive assistance (written, orally, or otherwise) on tests, examinations, final evaluations, or class assignments that are to be graded as the work of a single individual. Cheating includes the giving or receiving of a computer file, program, part of a program, or other computer-based information without specific teacher direction or approval. Cheating encompasses any violation of rules where the violation involves dishonesty.

The parent will be contacted, and the student will receive an intervention or consequence for academic violations. Schools shall incorporate the use of an honor pledge in their efforts to emphasize the importance of honesty.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating. Students are responsible for giving due recognition of sources from which material is quoted, summarized, or paraphrased, as well as to persons from whom assistance has been received. Submitting the intellectual work of another author or student as one’s own, e.g., copy and pasted, copy and pasted with minor adjustments, or without explicit permission from the author, constitutes cheating.

Dishonesty

Students shall not make false accusations against staff or other students and shall not give false information that may be harmful to others or interfere with the duties of staff. Students who make such false reports may be disciplined.

Disobedience/Disrespect

No student shall disregard or disobey any reasonable request made by a school staff member. Any student who directs profanity, threats, or other forms of verbal abuse toward a school staff member shall be subject to OSS and considered for further disciplinary action.

Disruption

No student while on school property, at a school-sponsored activity, or on school buses shall behave in a disorderly manner or in any other way that interrupts or disturbs the orderly operation of the school. Conduct occurring off school grounds that disrupts the school, the educational process, or the rights of the students or staff may also result in corrective action at school.

Drug and Alcohol Possession, Use, and Distribution

Rules addressing student possession, use, and distribution of prohibited substances are outlined in the section titled [Prohibited Substances](#).

Electronic Device Misuse

During the school day or at school-sponsored events and activities, students may not record audio or video footage intended to be, or actually are, used or distributed to cause harm to other students or adults, or which may cause a disruption to the instructional process. Violators are subject to confiscation of the device and/or other corrective action. School division staff do not assume responsibility for the security of communication and/or electronic devices that are brought onto school property. While on school property, at any school-related activities, or while traveling to or from school or any school-related activities, students shall neither take nor display video graphics or still images of a person who is undressed or partially undressed. Students may utilize electronic entertainment devices, including cellphones, while in PWCS vehicles or during transport for PWCS activities or services, provided that these items are not a distraction to the bus driver and/or do not compromise safety. In addition, the use of these devices should not distract from or disrupt activities.

Possession or use of technology capable of skimming/scanning data on credit cards, key FOBs, or other cards/devices that use RFID storage (or similar technology to store data) is prohibited on school property.

Endangering Others

Student conduct that may put others in danger will not be permitted. This includes but is not limited to, violations of fire regulations (e.g., blocking or wedging a corridor door open), making false fire reports, lighting matches, lighting any flame not an approved part of classroom instruction, use of incendiary or explosive materials, and threats or attempts to bomb, burn, or destroy, in any manner, school property or the property of school personnel or students, or allowing access through unauthorized entrances.

Students are strictly prohibited from bypassing safety screening technology by opening exterior doors that are not monitored. Such actions pose a risk to the safety and security of the school environment and are considered a violation of the Code of Behavior.

Failure to Report Violations

To maintain safety and security in our schools, students are responsible for reporting serious violations of the COB to teachers, administrators, other appropriate staff, or the PWCS "Say Something" Anonymous Reporting System. Serious violations include failure to report conduct or behavior which results, or may reasonably be foreseen to result, in injury to the person, health, or welfare of students or staff, or damage to property. Failure to report violations may result in corrective action.

Fighting

Students are responsible for settling confrontations that may arise in a peaceful manner and without the use of violence. When students feel that they are unable to settle disagreements peacefully, they should seek assistance from school personnel, such as a teacher, counselor, principal, social worker, etc. Fighting will result in corrective action,

which may include suspension or further disciplinary action. Students are also subject to corrective action for behavior they may not consider to be serious or threatening (“horseplay,” “playing around,” etc.) when that behavior may cause injury, discomfort, or disruption.

Gambling

Gambling on school property is strictly prohibited. Gambling is defined as the betting of money or valuables on the outcome of a game, contest, or event.

Gang or Gang-Related Activity

Gang activity, recruitment, and expressions of gang membership will not be tolerated. Gang-related actions, speech, gestures, clothing, symbols, or other signs of gang membership or gang activity are prohibited at school and school-related activities. Any student involved in gang-related behavior at school is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including a referral to SMAPD for further disciplinary action.

Group Assault

Group assault in school, at school-related activities, or on the way to and from school is strictly prohibited. Any student who participates in a group assault that results in disruption or disturbance at school or school-related activities is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion. Any two or more students with the intent of doing harm to persons, property, or the school environment may be considered a group under this rule.

Harassment

Repeatedly annoying or attacking a student or group of students, or personnel, creating an intimidating or hostile educational or work environment for any reason. Harassment demeans, threatens, intimidates, or harms an individual or group in such a way as to cause anxiety or fear for safety. Harassment that targets the victim on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions including lactation, age, marital status, veteran status, disability, genetic information, or any other basis by law shall be investigated following procedures outlined in [Regulation 738-1](#), “Resolution of Allegations Against Students of Sexual Misconduct,” [Regulation 738-3](#), “Resolution of Allegations Against Students of Discrimination or Harassment,” or [Regulation 738-4](#), “Nondiscrimination Against Students on the Basis of Disability,” as applicable. Imposition of discipline for conduct that constitutes Title IX Sexual Harassment shall follow the procedures set forth in [Regulation 738-1](#), not the procedures outlined in the Code of Behavior.

[Report discrimination or harassment online.](#)

Hazing

Students shall not engage in behavior that recklessly or intentionally endangers the health or safety of others or inflicts bodily injury on a student in connection with initiation, affiliation, or admission into a club, group, organization, or student body. Violators are subject to disciplinary action, and possible criminal consequences. [Virginia Code § 18.2-56](#) imposes a Class 1 misdemeanor penalty for hazing violations meaning confinement in jail for not more than 12 months and a fine of not more than \$2,500, either or both.

Improper Touching

Improper touching is intentional, unwanted physical contact with a student or staff member that does not fall within the definitions of physical assault or sexual assault under Title IX. (See the definition of Sex-Based Harassment below.) Improper touching may or may not be sexual in nature. Improper touching that occurs on school property or at a school-sponsored activity is prohibited.

Indecent Material

No student shall possess, wear/display, produce, or distribute indecent (vulgar, obscene, profane, patently offensive) materials including, but not limited to, clothing, posters, stickers, written/printed materials, CDs, DVDs, and computer-based materials.

Laser Pointers

Students shall not have laser pointers or other laser devices at school, on school buses, or at school-related activities without the permission of a school administrator or faculty member. Violators are subject to corrective measures and may have the pointer/device confiscated.

Lewd Behavior

Lewd behavior, such as obscene or vulgar conduct or conduct that is offensive to the standards of decency, is strictly prohibited.

Littering

Students shall help maintain a clean and healthful school environment by properly disposing of trash while in the cafeteria, classrooms, hallways, and elsewhere in the school and on school grounds, buses, bus stops, and at school-related activities.

Offenses Off of School Grounds

Actions outside of school that have a detrimental impact on the school building, programs, students, or staff will not be tolerated. The School Board and PWCS staff are committed to maintaining the schools as safe and healthy places in which to learn, free from the impact of violence, weapons, gang activity, substance abuse, and other harmful influences. Students are subject to corrective measures at school, up to and including further disciplinary actions, for offenses that occur in the community or at other locations off of school grounds if those offenses result or may foreseeably result in material disruption to the operation of the school, the educational process, or impact the rights, safety, or welfare of students, staff, or school property. Under Virginia law, a student may be suspended or expelled if found guilty in court for the manufacture, sale, gift, distribution, or possession of drugs, even if the offense is not connected with school. Furthermore, Virginia law provides that a student may be reassigned or placed in an alternative education program (alternative school, evening school, online resources, etc.) upon notice that the student has been charged with certain school-reportable criminal offenses, including offenses relating to weapons, alcohol/drugs, intentional injury to another person, or if convicted or found not innocent of other school-reportable offenses, as set forth in [Regulation 681-1](#), "Nontraditional Education Programs." Conviction or adjudication of certain school-reportable criminal charges may result in reassignment, long-term suspension, or expulsion. Students may also be reassigned, placed in nontraditional education programs, suspended, or expelled when they have committed a serious offense or repeated offenses in violation of School Board policies and regulations.

Prohibited Substances

The rules governing those substances prohibited by PWCS are summarized in this section. Please refer to [Regulation 735-1](#), "Prohibited Substances," for all information pertaining to this subject.

In accordance with [Virginia Code § 22.1-277.08](#), the School Board shall, but is not required to, expel any student determined to have brought a controlled substance, imitation controlled substance, or marijuana, as defined in [Virginia Code § 18.2-247](#), onto school property or to a school-sponsored activity. Students who violate the law shall be referred to local authorities for appropriate action in the criminal justice or juvenile delinquency system. However, the principal, School Board, and/or Superintendent or designee (the director of SMAPD or a SMAPD hearing officer) shall have the authority to modify the type of disciplinary action when special circumstances exist based on the facts of a particular situation. Special circumstances include, but are not limited to, the statutory criteria outlined in [Virginia Code § 22.1-277.06](#), as described in [Regulation 745-1](#), "Long-Term Suspension or Expulsion of Students."

The list of prohibited substances and paraphernalia for which a student may be expelled under the rules of PWCS is broader than the list of prohibited substances for which the law mandates expulsion. Even if the prohibited substances or related paraphernalia do not fall within the class of substances prohibited by law, a student shall be subject to expulsion if the student is involved in the possession, use, receipt or attempted receipt, purchase or attempted purchase, or distribution or attempted distribution, of prohibited substances or paraphernalia, unless the principal or Superintendent's designee, (the director of SMAPD or a SMAPD hearing officer) or the School Board finds that special circumstances justify a lesser disciplinary action, or no action at all, based on the facts of a particular situation. In some

cases, there may be a question about whether or not the possession, use, or distribution of a substance or object is a violation. The nature and appearance of the substance or related paraphernalia, its purpose, and how it was used, or intended to be used, shall be considered when making decisions about disciplinary action.

- **Duty to Report Prohibited Substances** – All PWCS employees and students are required to notify the principal, assistant principal, a community resource officer, security personnel, teacher, or other school employee immediately if they have reason to believe that there are, or are likely to be, prohibited substances or related paraphernalia in school, on school grounds, on school buses, at bus stops, on the way to or from school, or at any school-related activity. Students who have such knowledge but fail to report the presence or anticipated presence of prohibited substances or related paraphernalia may themselves be subject to disciplinary action. The principal or the principal's designee shall retain commensurate authority to immediately act within school division policy to ensure student's and staff's safety and welfare. The resources of the school division and local police department shall be available to assist the principal in this action.
- **Consequences of a Prohibited Substance Violation** – Any student accused of committing a prohibited substance violation shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion, as described above. Principals, or their designated representatives, may offer substance abuse offenders and their parents the opportunity to voluntarily participate in the New Horizons Program at the high school level.

A substance abuse suspension shall also result in an immediate suspension for a minimum of 30 calendar days from participation in all school activities (teams, clubs, and all other school-sponsored activities), including practice. Whether suspended from school or not, coaches and/or sponsors, with the approval of the school administration, may suspend students from participation in school-sponsored activities for violations of the rules of the team, club, or activity regarding prohibited substances. This includes violation of rules regarding prohibited substances committed off school grounds and outside the school day. The student may also be subject to disciplinary probation for 90 calendar days during which time principals may require subsequent follow-up with the substance abuse prevention staff.

Profanity

No student shall use vulgar, lewd, patently offensive, or indecent language or gestures.

Retaliation

Retaliation is strictly prohibited and occurs when action is taken against a person for making a report of misconduct or for participating in any investigation into a report of misconduct. Retaliation includes threatening, intimidating, harassing, coercing, or any other conduct that would discourage someone from reporting an offense or participating in an investigation.

Sex-Based Harassment

Sexual-based harassment under Title IX ("Sex-Based Harassment") is misconduct on the basis of sex that meets one of the following conditions:

- A PWCS employee provides or offers to provide aid, benefit, or service to an individual in exchange for the individual's participation in sexual conduct.
- A student or staff member is subjected to unwelcome conduct that is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that the individual is denied equal access to a PWCS educational program or activity.
- Dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking as defined by the U.S. Code and [Regulation 738-1](#).

Title IX is a federal law that prohibits sex-based discrimination, including harassment, in schools. Sex-Based Harassment allegations are addressed under [Regulation 738-1](#), "Resolution of Allegations Against Students of Sexual Misconduct." Conduct of a sexual nature that negatively impacts a student, staff member, or the educational process but does not meet this definition of Sex-Based Harassment may also be subject to discipline under the COB. Students who believe they have been sexually harassed or the targets of mistreatment based on sex or sex-stereotyping are encouraged to report the matter to the school principal or the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Compliance Department at TitleXEquity@pwcs.edu or 571-374-6839.

[Report discrimination or harassment online.](#)

Smoking and Vaping

All PWCS schools are smoke-free environments. Smoking and vaping are not permitted in any PWCS building at any time. Students, regardless of age, are not permitted to smoke or be in possession of tobacco products, nicotine vapor paraphernalia, cigarettes, matches, lighters, or other electronic smoking devices, on school buses, in school buildings, on school property, or at an on-site or off-site school-sponsored activity.

Students involved in the possession or use of tobacco or nicotine vapor products shall receive penalties ranging from Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) to other effective options assigned by the principal as appropriate deterrents for individual students. These options may include OSS, in-school suspension (ISS), detention, school/community projects, and charges filed with local authorities. Educational programs are available at the middle and high school levels to help students better understand the negative health consequences associated with smoking and nicotine use.

Stalking

Stalking is a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for the person's safety or the safety of others or suffer substantial emotional distress. Stalking behavior may include, but is not limited to, making repeated and unwanted contact with the person through phone calls, mail, emails, texts, or social media; following the person; making threats to the victim, either directly or indirectly; and damaging or threatening to damage the person's property.

Supporting Misconduct

Students who, by their presence and/or actions, encourage disruption, fights, or other violations of the COB are subject to disciplinary action. This includes, but is not limited to, bystanders who refuse to move or to follow other directions of school staff during disruptions, fights, etc.

Technology Misuse

Computers, computer networks, and other electronic technology shall be used only for **valid educational purposes and only with the approval of a school staff member**. When using electronic technology in the school, students are required to abide by the COB and adhere to the standards defined by PWCS [Policy 295](#), "Standards for Computer Systems and Network Services," [Regulation 295-1](#), "Computer Systems and Network Services – PWCS Responsible Use and Internet Safety Policy," and [Regulation 295-2](#), "Website Development and Implementation."

These policies and regulations are available online at [PWCS Policies and Regulations](#).

Unacceptable uses of technology include, but are not limited to:

- Violating the privacy rights of others.
- Using, producing, distributing, or receiving profanity, obscenity, or material that bullies, harasses, offends, threatens, or degrades others. This includes cyberbullying, a form of bullying that involves the transmission, receipt, or display of electronic messages or images.
- Producing, transmitting, possessing, and/or sharing images, messages, or other material of a sexual nature using a wireless communication device.
- Copying commercial software in violation of copyright law.
- Using technology for financial gain or commercial or illegal activity.
- Using technology for product advertisement or political endorsement.
- Repost personal communications without the author's prior consent.
- Using technology in violation of other rules and regulations of the COB.
- Use of technology off school property which has a material effect on the operation or general welfare of the school division, impacts the integrity of the educational process, threatens the safety and welfare of students, staff, or school property, occurs when the student is under the school's authority or otherwise invades the rights of students or staff.

Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, loss of technology-use privileges, and penalties under law. Willful irresponsibility may be viewed as malicious and may lead to corrective action or criminal penalties. Deliberate attempts to degrade or disrupt technology system performance will be viewed as criminal activity under applicable state and federal law.

Theft

Taking without permission or attempting to take without permission school property or personal property of others is expressly forbidden. All incidents involving theft or attempted theft of student prescription medications shall be reported to the principal or designee. Violators are subject to disciplinary action at school and may be referred to appropriate authorities for legal action.

Threat

A threat is a concerning communication or behavior that suggests an individual is a danger to the safety of school staff or students, either through violence or other harmful actions. A threat can be conveyed behaviorally, verbally, visually, in writing, electronically, or by any other means. It is deemed a threat whether it is directly observed by or communicated to the intended target, or indirectly observed by or communicated to a third party, and regardless of the target's awareness of the threat. Schools have threat assessment teams tasked with evaluating and addressing behaviors that may jeopardize the safety of school staff or students. PWCS threat assessment procedures are detailed in [Regulation 777-1](#), "Threat Assessment Procedures." While the Threat Assessment process itself is not punitive, threats do breach the Code of Behavior and may lead to disciplinary actions.

Students serving an out-of-school suspension may not be on school property without the written permission of the principal.

In the event the student has a matter before SMAPD considering long-term suspension or further disciplinary action, except to attend a scheduled meeting with a parent and school officials regarding the student's education, the student shall not be on the property or in the buildings of any PWCS school or building, school bus, or school-sponsored event without the specific prior written permission of the SMAPD. Any violation of this provision may lead to the imposition of further sanctions by the school administration or the filing of trespassing charges, or both. Should the student need to access a PWCS school or property during this time, please submit a written request to the school principal or SMAPD.

Truancy

School attendance is compulsory until age 18 unless the student has been exempted by law, has graduated, or has completed a GED® program. School attendance officers are authorized to enforce attendance requirements and to refer students and/or parents to the courts for legal action, if necessary.

Unauthorized Use of Communication Devices

The possession of communication devices by students on school grounds is a privilege, not a right. Any student who brings a communication device on school property consents to these rules and to the school division's right to confiscate and/or search such devices as provided in these rules. Any expectation of privacy related to the use of student or staff-owned devices is negated by the failure to comply with relevant School Board policies and regulations. Students may possess wireless communication devices including, but not limited to, cell phones, tablets, and e-readers on school grounds provided that these devices are used only at the times and in the manner specified by PWCS regulations, as implemented by school principals and staff. The use of these devices may be prohibited at specific times and locations to maintain the integrity of an academic environment. Any violation of such prohibitions on or off school property may result in disciplinary action. Wireless communication devices may be used on school buses provided that the device does not distract the driver, compromise safety, or violate other school bus rules and regulations. Videotaping, recording, or photographing students or other occupants of any type where such activity invades the privacy of others or is used to harass, embarrass, humiliate, or harm others, or where in the judgment of school staff, is disruptive and/or otherwise diverts the attention from school operations and/or the learning environment and impedes upon the ability to maintain a positive climate and culture is prohibited and may result in disciplinary action. Violators are subject to confiscation of the communication device and/or other corrective action. Searches of communication devices may be conducted if the administrator has a reasonable suspicion that it is being used or has been used for conduct that is criminal or a violation of the COB. School division staff do not assume responsibility for the security of communication and/or electronic devices that are brought onto school property. While on school property, at any school-related activities, or while traveling to and from school or any school-related activities, students shall neither take nor display video graphics or still images of a person who is undressed or partially undressed. Violators may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including further disciplinary action.

Vandalism

No student shall maliciously or willfully damage, deface, or destroy school property, or the personal belongings of others. (This includes graffiti, as well as computer and other electronic vandalism.) Students are responsible for reimbursing the School Board for actual breakage or destruction of property or for the failure to return property owned by or under the control of the School Board. Disciplinary action may be taken against students who commit vandalism or fail to return property owned by or under the control of the School Board. Virginia law authorizes the School Board to take legal action to recover the cost of such damage from the parents of such students.

Violations of School, Sport, Club, and Activity Rule

In addition to the rules and regulations of the COB, students are expected to comply with rules established by their schools and with the rules of the sports, clubs, and activities in which they participate. Violators are subject to disciplinary action as described in the COB. Students may be suspended from participation in sports, clubs, or other school-sponsored activities for violations of the rules of the team or activity, even if the violation occurs off school grounds and outside the school day. This includes, but is not limited to, violations of team training rules related to the use of tobacco, nicotine vapor products, alcohol, and other drugs.

Weapons and Other Prohibited Objects

The rules governing weapons and other objects prohibited by Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS) are outlined in [Regulation 775-1](#), "Weapons and Other Prohibited Objects," and summarized in this section. Weapons and other prohibited items are not permitted on any school property, on school buses, going to or from school, or at any school-related activity, regardless of where that activity takes place. School property means any real property owned or leased by the School Board or any vehicle owned, leased, or operated by or on behalf of the School Board. Students may also be subject to disciplinary action for weapons offenses that occur off school grounds, if the offense results in material disruption to the operation of the school, is planned in school or at school activities, occurs during a school-sponsored activity, threatens the safety and welfare of students, staff, or school property, is otherwise connected to the school, or results in an adjudication of delinquency reportable to the Division Superintendent as required by [§ 16.1-260](#), [16.1-301](#), and [16.1-305.1](#) of the "Virginia Code."

Possession of Firearms and Other Statutory Weapons – Mandatory Expulsion

Principals shall suspend all students who possess weapons detailed below for 10 school days and shall refer the student to SMAPD for further disciplinary action. The student shall be expelled for 365 days unless a SMAPD hearing officer or the School Board determines, upon reviewing the specific facts of the case, that special circumstances warrant no disciplinary action or a different form of discipline or period of expulsion. Special circumstances may include but are not limited to, the factors set forth in subsection C of [§ 22.1-277.06](#) of the "Virginia Code."

- Weapons in violation of the Federal Improving America's School Act of 1994 (Part F-Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994) and [§ 22.1-277.07](#) of the "Virginia Code."
- A firearm, destructive device, firearm muffler, firearm silencer, or pneumatic gun. Weapons in violation of [§ 18.2-308.1](#) of the "Virginia Code."
- A stun weapon.
- Knife, except a pocketknife having a blade of less than 3 inches.
- Any dirk, bowie knife, stiletto knife, ballistic knife, machete, razor, sling bow, spring stick, metal knucks, or blackjack.
- Any flailing instrument consisting of two or more rigid parts connected in such a manner as to allow them to swing freely, which may be known as a nun chahka, nun chuck, nunchaku, shuriken, or fighting chain.
- Any disc, of whatever configuration, having at least two points or pointed blades which is designed to be thrown or propelled and which may be known as a throwing star or oriental dart.
- Any weapon of like kind.

Possession of Other Weapons or Prohibited Objects – Disciplinary Consequences

The principal shall have the discretion to impose appropriate disciplinary sanctions, up to and including a 10-day suspension from school and a referral for further disciplinary action, for the possession of the following items:

- Pocket knives having blades of less than 3 inches
- Box cutters

- Pepper spray
- Ammunition
- Razor blades
- Fireworks
- Slingshots
- Other like items
- Look-alike or toy weapons

Use of Other Weapons or Prohibited Objects – Mandatory Expulsion

The use of weapons or prohibited objects described above or ordinary objects that are not typically considered to be weapons, such as, but not limited to, baseball bats, sharpened pencils, belt buckles, bicycle chains, wallet chains, and scissors, to harm, threaten or intimidate another is strictly prohibited. Principals shall suspend all students who use such weapons or objects to harm, threaten, or intimidate another in violation of this regulation for 10 school days and shall refer the student to SMAPD for further disciplinary action. A student will face expulsion unless the SMAPD hearing officer or the School Board, upon reviewing the specific facts of the case, decides that special circumstances warrant no disciplinary action or an alternative disciplinary action or term of expulsion.

Duty to Report Weapons and Prohibited Objects

All employees and students of PWCS are required to notify the principal, assistant principal, any school resource officer, security personnel, teacher, or school employee immediately if they have reason to believe that there is, or is likely to be, a weapon or prohibited object described in this regulation in school, on school property, on school buses, at bus stops, or at any school-related activity. Students who have such knowledge but fail to report the presence or anticipated presence of a weapon or prohibited object, may themselves be subject to disciplinary action. The principal (or designee) shall retain commensurate authority to immediately act within School Board policy to assure the safety and welfare of students and staff, including requests for assistance to school resources officers and local law enforcement.

School Bus Rules

General

All rules set forth for student behavior in PWCS' policies, regulations, and this COB, apply to student behavior on the school bus and at the bus stop or any other approved PWCS vehicle used to transport students to and from school and/or school-associated events and activities.

[Code of Virginia § 22.1-176](#) permits school boards to provide transportation for pupils but does not require them to do so. PWCS daily bus service will be provided for all in boundary students living more than one mile from the school. Students eligible for transportation may be required to walk up to one mile to reach their regular bus stop. Transportation is not provided for students living within a school's established walking boundary.

Express bus service will be provided for students enrolled in all Specialty Programs. This service is to and from express bus stops only. It is the parent's responsibility to provide transportation to/from express bus stops, which can be two to three miles from the student's residence in many cases.

Wireless communication devices may be used on school buses provided that the device does not distract the driver, compromise safety, or violate the COB and school bus rules and regulations.

Meeting the Bus

State law requires that buses operate on the same routes, as per their schedules, on a daily basis. Parent(s) or their designees are requested to accompany their young child(ren) to and from the bus stop. Families are encouraged to sign up for [Here Comes the Bus](#). This is a helpful tool for tracking school buses.

Students should:

- Ride their assigned bus.
- Arrive at their bus stop at least 5-10 minutes before the regular pickup time.

- Stand away from the road. Do not stand on the travel portion of the roadway while waiting for a bus.
- Maintain proper conduct.
- Respect the property of others.
- Wait until the bus has stopped, then walk to the front door.
- Do not run alongside a moving bus.
- Board the bus in an orderly fashion.

Students riding the bus should:

- Obey instructions of bus driver and bus attendants.
- Be seated immediately.
- Remain seated, facing forward.
- Share seats equally.
- Be courteous.
- Respect property.
- Keep all body parts inside the bus.
- Keep aisles clear.
- Maintain good conduct.

The following infractions are not permitted:

- Igniting fire
- Fighting
- Smoking
- Using profanity
- Horseplay
- Eating/drinking
- Spitting
- Using obscene gestures
- Vandalizing
- Throwing objects from the bus
- Creating loud noises
- Having glass objects
- Transporting large objects
- Videotaping, recording, or photography, resulting in harm to others, and disruption or distraction of the driver
- Tampering with equipment
- Having weapons
- Using, possessing, or distributing drugs or other substances and related paraphernalia
- Littering
- Making threats
- Endangering others
- Other violations of the COB

Leaving the Bus

Students must:

- Remain seated until the bus comes to a full stop.
- Leave the bus in an orderly manner; students in the front seats exit first.
- Leave the bus stop area when safety permits as soon as discharged from the bus.
- Not linger around the bus.
- Cross the street, if necessary, to do so, at the front of the bus and at a distance of at least 10 feet in front of the bus.
- Not cross until the driver has signaled that it is safe to do so. Crossing four or more traffic lanes or a divided roadway is prohibited.
- If a disciplinary problem occurs in the afternoon and the problem is such that in the judgment of the driver it is unsafe to proceed, the driver may return to the school to seek immediate disciplinary action and/or assistance. Bus drivers must report any infractions to the school principal/designee.

Changing Buses

Students must submit a written request from the parent to go to another stop other than their regularly scheduled stop on their regularly scheduled bus or to ride an alternate bus. This written request is subject to the approval of the school principal or designee before entering the bus. Bus drivers must receive notification from the school office when approval is given to a student to change to an alternate stop or bus.

No change will be made in the location of bus stops or bus routing without approval by the Transportation Department. No change in the bus assigned may be made without the permission of the school principal and the Transportation Department.

Trespassing

Only authorized persons are permitted aboard a school bus (school property). "It shall be unlawful for any person, whether or not a student, to enter upon or remain upon any school property after having been directed to vacate the property by a person authorized to give such direction" ([Code of Virginia § 18.2-128](#)).

Riding the School Bus is a Privilege*

Should a student be reported to the principal, the principal will be responsible for disciplinary action, which may include the loss of the privilege of bus transportation, until the parent, the bus driver, the principal, and in some instances, a Transportation Department representative can arrive at an understanding that will correct the problem. The parent will be responsible for the transportation of students who have lost school bus transportation privileges.

If you have questions, please refer to [Regulation 431-4](#), "Transportation for Students/Safety on School Buses."

Oral or written threats to harm others or PWCS property, which are planned or made on a school bus, or which are intended to be carried out on a school bus, at a school bus stop, or while going to and coming from school, may result in the loss of transportation for a specific period of time or the remainder of the school year in addition to other disciplinary action.

A school bus video observation system records activities aboard some buses.

Please feel free to contact the school principal or the Transportation Department for help with problems related to the transportation of your child.

*Riding the school bus is a privilege, except as required by law for students with disabilities.

Consequences and Possible Responses to Student Behavior

Responding to Student Behavior

The [Virginia Department of Education](#) (VDOE) provides guidelines for school division response to certain student misconduct. These guidelines are voluntary and PWCS generally follows VDOE guidance. However, in some instances PWCS may impose more serious consequences for certain offenses considered particularly serious. In the categories below, any violation of the Code of Behavior marked with an asterisk (*) indicates that a disciplinary response may exceed the VDOE guidelines. For example, due to the seriousness of the conduct, PWCS considers the following offenses to be of particular concern, and therefore consideration of expulsion (Level 5) is mandatory:

1. The possession, use, or distribution of prohibited substances as set forth in PWCS [Regulation 735-1](#), “Prohibited Substances;”
2. The possession of weapons, as set forth in PWCS [Regulation 775-1](#), “Weapons and Other Prohibited Objects;”
3. Physical assaults, battery, on a school staff member, and
4. Group assaults.

Categories of Behavior Descriptors and Responses

The following lists combine the Categories of Student Behavior Descriptors and the Levels of Administrative Responses to facilitate the equitable, responsive application of student conduct standards. School boards are encouraged to differentiate responses to behavior for elementary and secondary students.

Category A: Behaviors that Impede the Academic Progress (BAP)

Behaviors in this category impede the academic progress of the student or of other students. For elementary students, level one responses are recommended for these behaviors. For secondary students, level one or level two responses are recommended. These behaviors should not involve or be reported to law enforcement.

- Interfering with learning in the classroom (talking, excessive noise, off-task, out of seat, possessing items that distract).
- Interfering with learning outside of the classroom (excessive noise, interrupting a class, etc.).
- Scholastic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism).
- Unexcused tardiness to class (Level 1 at elementary; up to level 2 at secondary).
- Unexcused tardiness to school (Level 1 at elementary; up to level 2 at secondary).

Category B: Behaviors related to School Operations (BSO)

These behaviors interfere with the daily operation of school procedures. Recommended responses to these behaviors for elementary and secondary students range from level one to level three. These behaviors do not require a report to law enforcement.

- Altering an official document or record.
- Giving false information to staff, misrepresentation.
- Refusal to comply with requests of staff in a way that interferes with the operation of the school.
- Failure to be in one’s assigned place on school grounds (Level 1 or 2 only).
- Failure to attend assigned disciplinary setting (detention, in-school suspension, Saturday school).
- Bringing unauthorized persons to school or allowing unauthorized persons to enter the school building.
- Dress Code Violation (Level 1 or 2 only).
- Gambling (games of chance for money or profit).
- Possessing items that are inappropriate for school (examples include toys, literature, electronics).
- Possession of stolen items.
- Unauthorized use of school electronic or other equipment.
- Violation of the Acceptable Use of Technology/internet policy.

- Violation of school board policy regarding the possession or use of portable communication devices.
- Vandalism, graffiti, or other damage to school or personal property.

Category C: Relationship Behaviors (RB)

Behaviors in this category create a negative relationship between two or more members of the school community (no physical harm is done.) For elementary and secondary students, recommended responses to these behaviors range from level one to level three. These behaviors do not require a report to law enforcement.

- Bullying with no physical injury ([Model Policy to Address Bullying in Virginia's Public Schools](#)).
- Cyberbullying ([Model Policy to Address Bullying in Virginia's Public Schools](#)).
- Posting, distributing, displaying, or sharing material or literature that is libelous, including using electronic means to post such material.
- Saying or writing either directly or through electronic communication sexually suggestive comments, innuendos, propositions, or other remarks of a sexual nature.
- Stealing money or property without physical force.
- Speaking to another in an uncivil, discourteous manner.
- Teasing, taunting, engaging in a verbal confrontation, verbally inciting a fight.
- Using profane or vulgar language or gestures (swearing, cursing, hate speech, gang signs or gestures).
- Using slurs based upon the actual or perceived race, ethnicity, color, national origin, citizenship/immigration status, weight, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, or disability.
- Failure to respond to questions or requests by staff.
- Unwanted or inappropriate physical contact.

Category D: Behaviors of a Safety Concern (BSC)

Behaviors in this category create unsafe conditions for students, staff, and/or visitors to the school. The range of recommended responses for elementary and secondary students is noted in parenthesis and should be based on the age and development of the student and the harm caused by the behavior. Behaviors that are felony offenses require a report to law enforcement.

- Alcohol: Possessing or using alcohol (Level 2 to 5).*
- Alcohol: Distributing alcohol to other students (Level 2 to 5).*
- Drugs: Possessing drug paraphernalia (Level 2 to 5).*
- Drugs: Violating school board non-prescription (over the counter) medication policy (Level 2 to 5).*
- Tobacco: Possessing/Using tobacco products, electronic cigarettes, vaping equipment (Level 2 to 5).*
- Bullying Behavior without physical injury that continues after intervention ([Model Policy to Address Bullying in Virginia's Public Schools](#)); bullying that leads to physical injury should be classified as Assault and Battery (Level 2 to 4).
- Cyberbullying that continues after intervention ([Model Policy to Addressing Bullying in Virginia's Public Schools](#)); cyberbullying that relates a threat to the safety of students and staff should be treated with a higher level of intervention and consequences. (Level 3 to 5).
- Bus: Distracting the bus driver (Level 1 to 3).
- Bus: Endangering the safety of others on the bus (Level 1 to 3).
- Harassment: Repeatedly annoying or attacking a student or group of students or personnel creating an intimidating or hostile educational or work environment (Level 1 to 5).*
- Fire alarm: Falsely activating a or other disaster alarm (Level 1 to 3).
- Fire Related: Possessing items that could be used to set or cause a fire or produce large amounts of smoke (Level 1 to 3).
- Engaging in reckless behavior that creates a risk of injury to self or others (Level 1 to 3).
- Fighting that results in no injury as determined by the school administration (Level 1 to 4).*
- Inciting or causing a substantial disturbance to the operation of school or the safety of staff and/or students (Level 1 to 3 for elementary; Level 2 to 5 for secondary).
- Throwing an object that has the potential to cause a disturbance, injury, or property damage (Level 1 to 2 for elementary; up to Level 3 for secondary).
- Shoving, pushing, striking a student with no visible injury (Level 1 to 3).
- Exposing body parts, lewd or indecent public behavior (Level 1 to 3 for elementary; up to 4 for secondary).

- Physical contact of a sexual nature – patting body parts, pinching, tugging clothing (Level 1 to 3 for elementary; up to level 4 for secondary).
- Stalking: As described in the [Code of Virginia § 18.2-60.3](#) (Level 3 to 5).* *Certain stalking behaviors may fall under Title IX.*
- Stealing money or property using physical force (no weapon involved) (Level 1 to 2; up to Level 3 for secondary).
- Leaving school grounds without permission (Level 1 for elementary; up to Level 2 for secondary).
- Trespassing (Level 2 to 3).
- Weapons: Possessing any weapon (other than a firearm) as defined by § 18.2-308.1 (Level 4 to 5).

Category E: Behaviors that Endanger Self or Others (BESO)

Behaviors in this category endanger the health, safety, and/or welfare of either the student or others in the school community. Recommended responses for all students range from level one to level five depending upon the age and development of the student and the danger caused by the behavior. The range of recommended responses is noted in parentheses. Behaviors that are felony offenses require a report to law enforcement.

- Assault: Intending to cause physical injury to another person (Level 1 to 3).
- Assault and Battery: Causing physical injury to another person (Level 3 to 5).
- Bomb threat: Making a bomb threat (Level 2 to 5).*
- Drugs: Possessing controlled substances, illegal drugs or synthetic hallucinogens or unauthorized prescription medications (Level 3 to 5).*
- Drugs: Being under the influence of controlled substances, illegal drugs, or synthetic hallucinogens or unauthorized prescription medications (Level 3 to 5).*
- Drugs: Using controlled substances or using illegal drugs or synthetic hallucinogens or unauthorized prescription medications (Level 3 to 5).*
- Fighting: The use of physical violence between students or on another person where there is no injury as determined by the school administration (Level 1 to 4).*
- Fire: Attempting to set, aiding in setting, or setting a fire (Level 2 to 4).
- Gang-Related Behavior: Engaging in threatening or dangerous behavior that is gang-related as defined in [Code of Virginia § 18.2-46.1](#). (Level 1 to 4).
- Hazing: As defined in [Code of Virginia § 18.2-56](#) and noted in [Code of Virginia § 22.1-279.6](#) (Level 5).
- Striking Staff: The use of force against a staff member when no injury is caused (Level 3 to 5).*
- Threatening or instigating violence, injury, or harm to a staff member (Level 2 to 5).*
- Threatening or instigating violence, injury, or harm to another student (Level 2 to 5).*
- Using an object not generally considered to be a weapon to threaten or attempt to injure school personnel (Level 2 to 5).*
- Using an object not generally considered to be a weapon to threaten or attempt to injure a student(s) or others (Level 2 to 5).*

Category F: Persistently Dangerous Behaviors (PDB)

These behaviors are used in calculations to identify a school as persistently dangerous. “The incidents to be used as measures for determining persistently dangerous public schools are those violent crimes and offenses against a person and the possession of drugs with intent to distribute or sell, all designated as felonies in the criminal section of the *Code of Virginia (Title 18.2)*.”^[1] These behaviors merit a report to the superintendent’s office and law enforcement and should be addressed in a manner consistent with a level 5 response:

- Homicide with a firearm or other weapon includes any death resulting from causes other than natural, accidental, or suicide.
- Sexual assault offenses are defined as sexual penetration without consent and includes statutory rape and carnal knowledge of a minor.
- Use of bomb includes any explosive device.
- Assault with a firearm or other weapon includes the intentional causing of bodily harm to an individual.
- Malicious wounding without a weapon includes intentionally causing another person bodily injury, with the intent to maim, disfigure, disable, or kill.
- Aggravated sexual battery includes sexual battery and abuse against a person less than fifteen years of age.
- Actual and attempted robbery.
- Kidnapping/abduction.

- Illegal possession of a handgun, rifle/shotgun, projectile weapon, bomb, or other firearms.
- Illegal possession of controlled drugs and substances with the intent to distribute or sell.

[Code of Virginia § 22.1-277](#) addresses suspensions and expulsions of students generally. Here are the key points:

1. **Sufficient Cause for Suspensions and Expulsions:**

- Students may be suspended or expelled from school for sufficient cause.
- However, sufficient cause for suspensions cannot include only instances of truancy.*

2. **Preschool through Grade Three:**

- For students in preschool through grade three, the following rules apply:
 - **Suspensions:** No student in this age group shall be suspended for more than **three school days** unless:
 - The offense involves physical harm or a credible threat of physical harm to others.
 - The local school board or division superintendent finds that **aggravating circumstances** exist see Suspension or Expulsion of Students in Preschool Through Grade 3 as outlined in [Regulation 744-1](#)).

3. **Expulsions:** Similar rules apply for expulsions from attendance at school.

- There are exceptions provided in subsections C, [Code of Virginia § 22.1-277.07](#), or [Code of Virginia § 22.1-277.08](#).

Additional Information:

- [Code of Virginia § 22.1-276.01](#). As amended by House Bill 1600 approved March 23, 2018, "Long-term suspension" means any disciplinary action whereby a student is not permitted to attend school for *11 to 45 school days*. For data collection, removal from the student's home school for disciplinary reasons constitutes suspension.
- [Code of Virginia § 22.1-276.01](#). "Expulsion" means any disciplinary action imposed by a school board or a committee thereof, as provided in school board policy, whereby a student is not permitted to attend school within the school division and is ineligible for readmission for 365 calendar days after the date of the expulsion.

[1] [Virginia Board of Education's Persistently Dangerous Schools Identification Process and Criteria](#)

Tiered Responses to Student Behavior

Tiered responses to student behavior are part of a comprehensive Multi-Tiered System of Supports framework that includes instructional, preventive, and proactive strategies. When students do not meet behavioral expectations, they receive intervention and supports to address the root causes of the behavior and learn acceptable replacement behaviors. Through the use of restorative practices, students will acquire an understanding of respect for self and others and skills to become good citizens. Interventions and responses that include the use of restorative practices **do not replace consequences** for violations of the Code of Behavior. When a specific student's behavior does not change following an intervention, or the behavior increases in frequency, intensity, or duration, a problem-solving approach identifies alternative interventions and responses.

Level 1 Responses

Level 1 responses are intended to prevent further behavioral issues while keeping the student in school.

Examples of School/Classroom Interventions and Disciplinary Responses:

Level 1 Interventions

- Parent/Guardian Contact.
- Class meeting.
- Confiscation of disruptive communication and entertainment devices.
- Focus on prevention of tobacco and vaping use.
- Re-teaching or modeling of desired behavior.
- Recognize/Reward appropriate behavior.
- Administrator/Student conference and/or Administrator/Student/Teacher conference.
- Written reflection or letter of apology.
- Peer mediation or conflict resolution.
- Behavior progress chart.
- Community service (appropriate to correct the behavior).
- Administrator/Teacher/Parent/Guardian conference.
- Referral to Threat Assessment Team.

Level 1 Disciplinary Responses

- Restitution.
- Seat change.
- Loss of school privileges.
- Confiscation by the administration.
- Detention (before school, at lunch, after school).

Level 2 Responses

Administrative responses and interventions at this level are designed to prevent further behavior issues and keep the student in school. Depending upon the severity of the behavior, short-term removal of the student from the classroom may be appropriate.

In-school suspension (1-2 days) with behavioral instruction and academic support.

Examples of Administrative Interventions and Disciplinary Responses:

Level 2 Interventions

- Student conference.
- Restorative Practices Conference and/or Circle (formal).
- Administrator/Teacher/Counselor/Student conference (includes re-teaching of expected behavior).
- Administrator/Teacher/Parent/Guardian conference.
- Check-In/Check-Out.
- Mentor.

- Mediation or conflict resolution.
- Referral to support services (e.g., School Counselor, Behavior Interventionist, Mentor Program, and Problem-Solving Team (for example, MTSS), Substance Use and Intervention Program).
- Referral to Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Team.
- Referral to Threat Assessment Team.
- Community service (appropriate to correct the behavior).
- Referral for community-based services.

Level 2 Disciplinary Responses

- Schedule change.
- Detention (before school, at lunch, or after school).
- Saturday school.
- Restitution.
- Confiscation.
- Temporary loss of privileges.
- In-school suspension with behavioral interventions and/or restorative practices (one to three days).

Level 3 Responses

Depending upon the severity, chronic nature of the behavior, and/or safety concerns, Level 3 behaviors may result in the student's short-term removal from school.

Examples of Extended Suspension and Disciplinary Responses:

Level 3 Interventions

- Behavior Contract.
- Functional Behavior Assessment and Behavior Intervention Plan.
- Referral to Threat Assessment Team.
- Referral to an appropriate community-based agency, mental health service, substance abuse counseling service, etc.

Level 3 Disciplinary Responses

- In-school suspension with restorative practices (not to exceed five days).
- Revocation of privileges.
- Restitution.
- Referral to alternative education programs.
- Short-term out-of-school suspension (one to three days for elementary students/one to five days for secondary students) with a restorative circle or conference upon return.
- Referral to law enforcement if required by local policy.

Level 4 Responses

Some Level 4 behaviors require a report to the superintendent or superintendent's designee (Student Management and Alternative Programs – SMAPD) as outlined in the Code of Virginia [§ 22.1-279.3:1](#). A referral to SMAPD does not automatically result in a long-term suspension, change of placement or expulsion. After a review of the incident in context, SMAPD may return students to the comprehensive setting with additional supports and/or responses to be implemented.

Level 4 Behavioral Interventions (in addition to those listed in Levels 1-3)

- Parent-Administrator-Teacher-Student behavior contract.
- Referral for community-based services.
- Threat Assessment as indicated by the behavior.

Level 4 Disciplinary Responses

- Referral to law enforcement for behaviors that may constitute a felony or that are required by local policy.

- Schedule change.
- Long-term revocation of privileges.
- Restitution via written contract.
- Short-term out-of-school suspension (for preschool to grade three students one to three days, four to ten days for fourth- to sixth-grade students, or five to ten days for seventh- to twelfth-grade students).
- Recommendation for a long-term suspension as determined by local policy or by Code (11 to 45 days as defined in [§ 22.1-276.01](#)).

Level 5 responses

Level 5 responses are reserved for those behaviors that require a referral to SMAPD. For preschool to grade three students, any suspension beyond three days must meet the criteria for aggravating circumstances and be approved by the Superintendent's designee (level associate). A referral to the superintendent's designee or SMAPD may not automatically result in an expulsion, alternative placement, school reassignment, or long-term suspension. Appropriate behavioral interventions and instructional supports should accompany any removals from the student's regular school setting by the superintendent or designee.

Required School-based Administrative Responses to Level 5 Behaviors:

- Threat Assessment as indicated by the behavior.
- Referral to law enforcement for behaviors that may constitute a felony or that are required by local policy.
- Referral to SMAPD for further disciplinary action.
- **Long-term suspension (11-45 days) as defined in the [Code of Virginia § 22.1-276.01](#).**
- Alternative placement.
- Expulsion.

Suspensions and Expulsions

[Code of Virginia § 22.1-277](#) addresses suspensions and expulsions of students generally. Here are the key points:

1. **Sufficient Cause for Suspensions and Expulsions:**
 - Students may be suspended or expelled from school for sufficient cause.
 - However, sufficient cause for suspensions cannot include only instances of truancy.*
2. **Preschool through Grade Three:**
 - For students in preschool through grade three, the following rules apply:
 - **Suspensions:** No student in this age group shall be suspended for more than **three school days** unless:
 - The offense involves physical harm or a credible threat of physical harm to others.
 - The local school board or division superintendent finds that **aggravating circumstances** exist, see Suspension or Expulsion of Students in Preschool through Grade 3 as outlined in [Regulation 744-1](#).
 - **Expulsions:** Similar rules apply for expulsions from attendance at school.
3. **Exceptions:**
 - There are exceptions provided in subsections C, [Code of Virginia § 22.1-277.07](#), or [Code of Virginia § 22.1-277.08](#).

These interventions and responses aim to teach appropriate and alternative behavior so students can learn and demonstrate safe and respectful behavior. The examples above are not all-inclusive nor required to be exhaustive. In every case, the staff should consider revisions to plans supporting students with special needs (response to intervention, child study, IEP, or 504).

[1] [Virginia Board of Education's Persistently Dangerous Schools Identification Process and Criteria](#)

School Conference

Whenever students or parents feel that the best interests of the individual or the group have been disregarded, a conference with the teacher, sponsor, coach, counselor, or other school personnel should be arranged. If a routine agreement cannot be reached among student(s) and school personnel, then the student has the right to:

- Arrange a meeting with the principal or the designated assistant principal to discuss such conditions or decisions judged by the student(s) to be detrimental.
- Request a conference of the parent, student, and principal if not satisfied with initial meetings.

See “Appeals of Student Matters” as summarized and set forth in [Regulation 731-1](#), “Appeal of Student Matters.”

Teacher Removal of Students from Class

Teachers may remove disruptive students from class in accordance with School Board [Policy 702](#), “Teacher Removal of Students from Class,” as stated below.

The Virginia Code ([§ 22.1-276.2](#)) provides for the initial authority of a teacher to remove a student from class for disruptive behavior. Further, the Virginia Code defines disruptive behavior as a “violation of school board regulations governing student conduct that interrupts or obstructs the learning environment.”

Search and Seizure

Students will be held responsible for items that they have at school or at school-related activities. Student desks and lockers are the property of the school, and school officials reserve the right to search them. Lockers or desks may be searched to repossess school property or to locate materials that are not permitted in school. Students, their belongings, and items under their control (including cars) may be searched under certain circumstances as described in [Regulation 737-1](#), “Search and Seizures.” The student’s individual right to privacy and freedom from unreasonable search and seizure is balanced by the school’s responsibility to protect the health, safety, and welfare of all persons

within the school community. Should illegal materials be found during a search, law enforcement officials will be notified. If a student refuses to be searched when the administration has reasonable suspicion that the student possesses or has under their control prohibited items as defined in the regulation, parents and/or authorities will be contacted, and the students may be subject to disciplinary action.

Self-Defense

Whether a student has acted in self-defense may be considered when making a disciplinary decision. The criteria that define when an incident would be considered an act of self-defense must include the following conditions to support such a claim:

- Be without fault in provoking or bringing on the fight or incident.
- Have reasonably feared, under the circumstances, as they appeared to the student, that there was imminent danger or harm.
- Have used no more force than was reasonably necessary to protect themselves from imminent danger or harm.
- No other readily accessible option to de-escalate or eliminate the danger or harm.
- Retaliation or willfully participating in a fight is not considered self-defense. Students are to disengage and seek assistance from school staff as soon as the threat of immediate danger or harm has subsided.

Procedures for consideration of a self-defense claim when determining appropriate administrative responses shall include an opportunity for the student to present their version of what occurred, as well as a review of facts involving school personnel and others as appropriate, including other students and staff who may have witnessed the incident or may have observed previous interactions between the students involved. In some instances, interactions between students may be investigated beyond a single incident to examine patterns of interaction, past threats, and bullying.

Weapons or harmful objects of any kind are strictly prohibited on school property for the purpose of self-defense. Self-defense is not a valid defense for the possession or use of a weapon on school property or at any school-sponsored activity. Possession of a weapon on school property or at a school-sponsored activity would be a violation of [Regulation 775-1](#), "Weapons and Other Prohibited Objects."

Use of Seclusion and Restraint

The [Code of Virginia § 22.1-279.1:1](#) requires that the State Board of Education adopt regulations on the use of seclusion and restraint in Virginia primary and secondary schools. The "Regulations Governing the Use of Seclusion and Restraint" ([8VAC20-750-5 et seq.](#)):

- Define what constitutes seclusion and physical restraint, as well as mechanical restraints, pharmacological restraints, and aversive stimuli;
- Ban the use of mechanical restraints, pharmacological restraints, and aversive stimuli;
- Describe the conditions under which it is permissible for a student to be restrained or secluded;
- Provide for notification and reporting to parents, for debriefing with staff and the student following incidents, and for follow-up when a student has been restrained or secluded more than twice during the course of a school year;
- Provide for reporting to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE);
- Require local school divisions to adopt policies and procedures regarding the use of seclusion and restraint; and
- Require that all school personnel be trained in techniques for avoiding the use of seclusion and restraint and that school personnel who work with students who are likely to be restrained or secluded must receive additional training on safe methods for restraining or secluding a student.

PWCS [Regulation 746-1](#) outlines the expectation for all school staff to complete training focused on positive behavior support, conflict prevention, de-escalation, and crisis response.

Disciplinary Policies, Regulations, and Procedures

Notice of Disciplinary Policies and Regulations

Students and parents are also responsible for reading and becoming familiar with the following policies and regulations placing them on notice of PWCS' disciplinary programs and procedures:

- [Policy 681](#) and [Regulation 681-1](#), "Nontraditional Education Programs"
- [Policy 702](#), "Teacher Removal of Students from Class"
- [Policy 715](#), "Notice of Student's School Status Required as Condition of Enrollment," and [Regulation 715-5](#), "Disclosure of Child's Disciplinary and Criminal History Prior to Enrollment"
- [Policy 730](#), "Student Conduct and Responsibilities," and [Regulation 730-1](#), "Conduct"
- [Policy 731](#) and [Regulation 731-1](#), "Appeal of Student Matters"
- [Policy 735](#) and [Regulation 735-1](#), "Prohibited Substances"
- [Policy 743](#) and [Regulation 743-1](#), "Student Discipline"
- [Policy 744](#) and [Regulation 744-1](#), "Short-Term Suspension of Students"
- [Policy 745](#), "Long-Term Suspension or Expulsion of Students, Readmissions, and Exclusion/Admission," [Regulation 745-1](#), "Long-Term Suspension or Expulsion of Students," [Regulation 745-2](#), "Discipline of Students with Disabilities," [Regulation 745-3](#), "Discipline of Summer School Students," [Regulation 745-4](#), "School Board Disciplinary Committee Procedures for Student Expulsion Appeal Hearings," [Regulation 745-5](#), "Readmissions and Exclusions/Admissions," and [Regulation 745-6](#), "Long-Term Suspension and Expulsion Appeals to the School Board"
- [Policy 747](#) and [Regulation 747-1](#), "Student Management and Alternative Programs Department"
- [Policy 775](#) and [Regulation 775-1](#), "Weapons and Other Prohibited Objects"
- [Exclusionary Discipline](#)

Exclusionary Discipline

General Provisions Related to All Suspensions

Due Process

A principal, assistant principal, or principal's designee may suspend a student from school for misconduct which includes, but is not limited to, violations of the COB. Before being excluded from school for disciplinary purposes, students have a right to adequate and meaningful due process, established in accordance with the rules and principles as outlined in [Regulation 747-1](#), "Student Management and Alternative Programs department (SMAPD)."

Students have the right to be informed of the reasons for the suspension and offered the opportunity to tell their side of the story before being suspended. If the student's presence poses a continuing danger to persons or property, or presents an ongoing threat of disruption, however, the student may be removed from school immediately and the notice, explanation of facts, and opportunity to present the student's version of events shall be given as soon as practicable. Whenever a suspension is imposed, the principal/designee will make all reasonable efforts to contact the parent(s) to advise them of the suspension and to make appropriate arrangements for the student to be returned to the student's home. Students and families also have the right to receive notice of the suspension in writing, including conditions imposed on the student during the suspension and their right to appeal.

Continuing Education During Suspensions

The student's school shall continue to provide educational services throughout the term of any short-term suspension and, if the student has been referred to SMAPD for consideration of further disciplinary action until a decision to long-term suspend, reassign, or expel the student has been finally issued by SMAPD or the School Board. During this period, it is the responsibility of the student to obtain and complete all assignments missed from the school. These assignments must be completed within a time frame established by the school. However, the principal may also provide other assignments or make-up options that would be more effective in changing the behavior of the student. If a final decision is made to long-term suspend, reassign, or expel a student, the student and parents will be provided specific information on eligibility for alternative educational services.

Presence on School Property Prohibited During the Term of the Suspension

Students who are suspended from school are prohibited from school property (including school buses) and school-related activities for the duration of their suspension and may be arrested for trespassing. Unless the student has written permission from school officials to be on school property, on a school bus, or at a school-sponsored event, students whose disciplinary cases are pending a long-term suspension or expulsion decision (with the exception of disciplinary hearings) are prohibited from school property, school buses, and school-sponsored activities. Students who are suspended from school shall also be suspended from participation in all school activities (teams, clubs, and all other school-sponsored activities) including practice. In cases where the parent or adult student notifies the principal at the time of the suspension that there will be an appeal, the student shall be allowed to attend school until the case is heard and a final decision has been rendered unless the principal considers that the presence of the student creates a present and continuing threat to the health, safety, and/or welfare of persons or property in the school or may pose a disruption to the educational process.

Authority to Modify Disciplinary Decisions

At each level of the procedure for all disciplinary appeals, the appeal may be granted or denied, and the related consequences (corrective measures) may be increased, decreased, or allowed to remain the same. If, in the appeal of a long-term suspension, the School Board determines that expulsion may be appropriate, the student shall be notified by SMAPD of the right to request a due process hearing before a committee of the School Board. If the student does not request such a hearing or a hearing is requested, and the student fails to appear, a committee of the School Board will render a decision based on the written record. In the event that the decision of the School Board committee is not unanimous, the student may submit a written appeal to the full School Board.

Suspension or Expulsion of Students in Preschool Through Grade Three

Except for certain drug or weapons offenses identified in Virginia Code, no student in preschool through grade three shall be suspended for more than three school days or expelled from attendance at school unless:

1. The offense involves physical harm or credible threat of physical harm to others; or
2. The School Board, the Superintendent or designee finds that aggravating circumstances exist.

A student in preschool through grade three may be suspended or expelled from school upon the school division's receipt of a report pursuant to [Code of Virginia § 16.1-305.1](#) of an adjudication of delinquency or a conviction for an offense listed in subsection G of [Code of Virginia § 16.1-260](#).

Suspension of Students Grade Four and Above

Short-Term Suspension

A short-term suspension is a disciplinary action after which a student may not attend school for up to 10 school days as outlined in [Regulation 744-1](#), "Short-Term Suspension of Students." The student and parent may appeal a short-term suspension decision to the principal within three school days of notice of suspension. The parent/guardian shall be notified in writing of the status of the principal's decision within five school days of having received the written appeal. Students whose short-term suspension is under appeal may attend school until the appeal is decided unless they pose a safety risk or present a threat of ongoing disruption.

If the Principal's decision is appealed, a written request appealing the decision must be received by the appropriate Level Associate Superintendent within three business days of the parent(s)/guardian(s) having been notified of the principal's decision. The written appeal must include the student's account of the incident and the reason for believing the suspension is unjustified. The Level Associate Superintendent or designee shall provide a written decision within five business days of receipt of the appeal. The decision of the level associate superintendent or designee shall be final.

For more serious offenses, a principal or designee may impose a 10-day suspension in conjunction with a referral to SMAPD for consideration of further discipline, e.g., a long-term suspension, reassignment, or expulsion. Any appeal of a 10-day suspension imposed in conjunction with a referral to SMAPD for consideration of further disciplinary action shall be decided by the SMAPD hearing officer following the due process hearing described in the section titled Long-Term Suspension below.

Long-Term Suspension

A long-term suspension is a disciplinary action after which a student may not attend school for more than 10 school days but less than 365 calendar days. A student shall not be suspended for more than 45 school days; however, unless:

1. The offense is one described in Code of Virginia [§ 22.1-277.07](#) or [§ 22.1-277.08](#) or involves serious bodily injury; or
2. The School Board or Superintendent or designee finds that aggravating circumstances exist as defined by the VDOE.

Before a long-term suspension is imposed, the student shall have the right to a due process hearing conducted by the Student Management and Alternative Programs Department pursuant to those procedures explained in Regulation 745-1, "Long-Term Suspension or Expulsion of Students," and [Regulation 747-1](#), "Student Management and Alternative Programs Department (SMAPD)." Any further appeal shall be in accordance with [Regulation 731-1](#), "Appeal of Student Matters," [Regulation 745-6](#), "Long-Term Suspension and Expulsion Appeals to the School Board," and [Regulation 745-2](#), "Discipline of Students with Disabilities." Long-Term Suspension or Expulsion of Students," and [Regulation 747-1](#), "Student Management and Alternative Programs Department (SMAPD)." Any further appeal shall be in accordance with [Regulation 731-1](#), "Appeal of Student Matters," [Regulation 745-6](#), "Long-Term Suspension and Expulsion Appeals to the School Board," and [Regulation 745-2](#), "Discipline of Students with Disabilities."

Parents and students may appeal Long-Term Suspension decisions following procedures set forth in [Regulation 745-6](#), "Long-Term Suspension and Expulsion Appeals to the School Board," which are summarized here. A parent or student may file a written appeal within four business days of the date of the SMAPD decision letter. The written appeal must be submitted to SMAPD and must include the student's account of the incident, the reason for believing the suspension is unjustified, and any additional evidence the student or parent wishes to have considered. The SMAPD hearing officer may submit a written statement in response to the parent's appeal. The appeal will be decided by the School Board Disciplinary Committee (SBDC), a panel of three School Board members. The SBDC shall review the written appeal of the SMAPD hearing officer's decision in closed session. The SBDC may uphold, deny, or amend the decision of the SMAPD hearing officer or may determine that other disciplinary action is merited, including expulsion. The SBDC's decision shall be final unless the decision is not unanimous, in which case the student may, within five business days of the SBDC's decision, notify SMAPD in writing that the student intends to appeal the SBDC's decision to the full School Board. The School Board shall review the appeal based solely on the administrative record presented to the SBDC and shall render a decision within 30 calendar days of receipt of the appeal.

Expulsion Procedures

Expulsion is a disciplinary action in which a student is not permitted to attend any PWCS school for 365 calendar days after the date of expulsion. The School Board may, however, permit or require any student who has been expelled from school to attend an alternative educational program during the term of the expulsion.

The rules governing expulsion, readmission, and exclusion are summarized in this section. Please refer to [Regulation 745-1](#), "Long-Term Suspension or Expulsion of Students," [Regulation 745-5](#), "Readmissions and Exclusions/Admissions," [Regulation 745-6](#), "Long-Term Suspension and Expulsion Appeals to the School Board," and [Regulation 747-1](#), "Student Management and Alternative Programs Department (SMAPD)," for all information pertaining to this subject. Please refer to [Regulation 745-2](#), "Discipline of Students with Disabilities," for information regarding the expulsion of students receiving special education services. Certain limitations apply to the expulsion of students in preschool through grade three. Please see the section titled Suspension or Expulsion of Students in Preschool Through Grade Three for more information.

The School Board may expel students for sufficient cause. A student may be expelled and denied the right to attend any PWCS school when:

- The student is a potential or continuing danger to the health, welfare, or safety of others; or
- The student's conduct is disruptive to the educational mission or the orderly operation of the school; or
- The student has engaged in conduct that violates the school division's policies and regulations or the COB, or that threatens the safety or security of the school or is otherwise connected to the school; or
- The student has obtained an accumulation of offenses for which expulsion is merited; or
- The student has been adjudicated delinquent or convicted following a report pursuant to Virginia Code [§ 16.1-305.1](#) for an offense listed in subsection G of Code of Virginia [§ 16.1-260](#); or

- Other circumstances demonstrate that the expulsion of the student is in the best interest of the local school or the school division.

PWCS considers the following offenses to be of particular concern, and consideration of expulsion is mandatory:

- The possession, use, or distribution of prohibited substances as set forth in [Regulation 735-1](#), “Prohibited Substances;”
- The possession of weapons, as set forth in [Regulation 775-1](#), “Weapons and Other Prohibited Objects;”
- Physical assaults, battery, on a school staff member, and
- Group assaults.

If a student is recommended for expulsion by SMAPD, the parent(s) and student may appeal the disciplinary recommendation of the SMAPD hearing officer to the SBDC following procedures set forth in [Regulation 745-6](#), “Long-Term Suspension and Expulsion Appeals to the School Board.” Any decision by SMAPD to place the student in an alternative education program upon readmission may also be appealed. However, any other placement decision by SMAPD is final and may not be appealed. A written request for a hearing before the SBDC must be received by SMAPD within four business days of the date of the decision letter.

The student and parent will have the right to present the student’s version of the incident and the reasons they believe the expulsion recommendation is in error during a live 45-minute hearing before the SBDC. The student may be represented by an attorney. If the decision of the SBDC is not unanimous, the student and parent may file a written appeal for the matter to be decided by the full School Board within four business days of the SBDC decision. The School Board will consider the matter in closed session based only upon the record presented to the SBDC and will reach a decision within 30 calendar days of the appeal. The decision of the School Board shall be final. The procedures, timeline, and appeal process for the readmission to school of students who have previously been expelled from PWCS are set forth in [Regulation 745-5](#), “Readmissions and Exclusions/Admissions.” For those cases that are appealed, the School Board shall conduct a review of the record in closed session and vote on the readmission decision in open session. Only those documents submitted to SMAPD for consideration for readmission shall be considered by the School Board. No additional documents, other than the letter of appeal, shall be submitted for consideration. The student and parent(s) shall be notified in writing of the School Board’s decision.

Exclusions from School

PWCS is authorized to deny admission to its schools to students who have been placed in a nontraditional educational program or expelled or suspended from attendance at school by another school division or private school, or for whom admission has been withdrawn from any school the student was previously enrolled following a SMAPD admission hearing. This process is set forth in [Regulation 745-5](#), “Readmissions and Exclusions/Admissions.”

Students and parents have the right to appeal the SMAPD decision to the School Board within four business days of the date of the SMAPD decision letter. The School Board shall meet in closed session to conduct a review of the documentation considered in the SMAPD admission hearing and the parent’s letter of appeal. The student and parent(s) shall be notified in writing of the School Board’s decision. The School Board may require an excluded student to attend a nontraditional education program provided by the School Board for the term of any exclusion from a base school.

Reassignment/placement by SMAPD for certain criminal offenses

Under Code of Virginia [§ 22.1-209.1:2](#) or [§ 22.1-277.2:1](#), PWCS is authorized to reassign or place students in alternative programs if the student has been charged or convicted of certain criminal offenses following the procedures set forth in [Regulation 681-1](#), “Nontraditional Education Programs.” A student and parent may appeal the SMAPD decision to the School Board within four business days of the date of the SMAPD decision.

Appeals of Student Matters

One of the goals of site-based leadership is to resolve issues at the school level whenever possible. In addition to the right to appeal suspension and expulsion decisions explained above, PWCS provides students and parents the right to appeal the following student matters:

- Academic appeals.

- Appeal of a decision involving a complaint of discrimination or harassment.
- Eligibility appeals - cocurricular and extracurricular programs.
- Graduation appeals.
- Interscholastic activities and competition appeals.
- Music performance participation and academic/grade-related issues appeals (middle and high school).
- Placement in a nontraditional education program.
- Readmission to traditional school for non-elective placements.
- School transfers.

Please refer to [Regulation 731-1](#), "Appeal of Student Matters," for timelines and appeal procedures.

Appendix

Bullying Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is bullying?

A: Bullying is any aggressive and unwanted behavior that is intended to harm, intimidate, or humiliate the victim; involves a real or perceived power imbalance between the aggressor or aggressors and victim; and is repeated over time or causes severe emotional trauma. Bullying includes cyberbullying. Bullying does not include ordinary teasing, horseplay, argument, or peer conflict.

Q: What is ordinary teasing, horseplay, argument, or peer conflict?

A: Ordinary teasing, horseplay, argument, or peer conflict are behaviors that fall outside the definition of bullying. Ordinary teasing refers to playful or light-hearted remarks between peers. Similarly, horseplay involves playful physical activity, often without malicious intent. Argument refers to disagreements or verbal disputes, which can occur naturally among individuals. Lastly, peer conflict arises when peers have disagreements or clashes but do not engage in harmful behavior toward each other. In summary, while bullying involves harmful intent and repetition, ordinary teasing, horseplay, argument, and peer conflict do not fall under the category of bullying.

Q: What is cyberbullying?

A: Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that involves sending, receiving, or displaying electronic messages and/or images. Cyberbullying can include any threats by one student toward another, typically through emails, texts, or websites (e.g., blogs, social media sites). Electronic communications that support deliberate, hostile, and hurtful messages intended to harm others are also examples of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying can include such things as sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images, posting sensitive, private information about another person, pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad, and using defamatory online personal polling websites.

Cyberbullying using the PWCS internet, PWCS computers, or other wireless communication devices in schools, on school property, or at school-related activities will not be tolerated. Cyberbullying that occurs off school grounds and/or does not involve the use of the PWCS internet or computers may also result in disciplinary action if it causes, or is likely to cause, a material disruption to the operation of the school or the school division, threatens the safety or mental/physical well-being of students or staff or threatens the safety of school buildings or school property.

Q: What behaviors are considered to be bullying behaviors?

A: Some examples of bullying behaviors may include purposely excluding others, taunts, threats, gestures, insults, gossip, humiliation, teasing, cyberbullying, physical aggression, stealing or destroying property, or cursing or laughing at someone. Bullying takes many forms. For example: Sometimes, bullying is people making other people feel left out; other times, bullying may involve hitting, teasing, or threatening to hurt someone. Stealing or damaging someone's lunch or books could be bullying, too; so is laughing at people because they wear glasses or different kinds of clothes, or because they aren't good at sports. Using the internet or computers to harm people is another form of bullying.

Q: What if the bully is threatening and intimidating a student? What can school officials do to help keep the students safe?

A: Any student who is being threatened or intimidated (or who is aware that another student is being threatened or intimidated) is strongly encouraged to report the misconduct to a school administrator, counselor, or a trusted school staff member. The allegations will be promptly investigated and reported to the school's Threat Assessment Team, which, among other things, will take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of students and of the school environment.

Q: How can I report bullying?

A: Any student can report bullying by talking to an administrator or a trusted school staff member or by completing the Bullying Complaint Form. Any school staff member who receives a report of bullying must tell the school administration. Students or parents can [report bullying incidents online](#).

Q: What should I do if the bullying continues?

A: Report this to a school administrator or a trusted school staff member immediately. It is also important to tell your parent(s) that the bullying is continuing. Administrators will take disciplinary action if the student accused of bullying attempts to get back at the victim for reporting the bullying behavior.

PWCS [Regulation 733-1](#), "Bullying of Students," provides detailed information about PWCS' rules concerning and response to bullying.

Out of School Suspension Discipline Flow Chart

Step 1: Out of School Suspensions

- 1-10 days of Out of School Suspension (OSS) for most disciplinary incidents. Notice and a right to be heard must be provided to the student before the suspension is initiated, absent exigent circumstances.

Possible Outcomes

- **No Further Disciplinary Action Referral** – Student returns to school after 1-10 days of OSS.
- **Further Disciplinary Action Referral** – Student serves 10 days OSS and is referred to the Student Management and Alternative Programs Department (SMAPD) for consideration of Further Disciplinary Action (FDA).

Step 2: Consideration of Further Disciplinary Action

- Further Disciplinary Action (FDA) is a referral to the Student Management and Alternative Programs Department (SMAPD) for consideration of long-term suspension, reassignment, or expulsion. Notice of a 10-day suspension and a referral must be provided.
- For any student who is suspected of having a disability, under evaluation, or who has a Section 504 plan, or an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), a Manifestation Determination Review (MDR) must be conducted during the first 10 days of the suspension and before the SMAPD hearing.

Hearing Information

- A must be scheduled to be held no later than day 11 of the suspension.
- Notification from SMAPD of the hearing date and time will be sent to the parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Receipt of the packet from SMAPD 48 hours before the hearing, along with a Zoom link if the hearing will be held virtually, will be sent to parent(s)/guardian(s).
- The student, parent(s)/guardian(s), and the school meet with a hearing officer to conduct a disciplinary hearing.

Educational Process

- The student completes work through Canvas or at site indicated until SMAPD hearing and decision are made.
- If the student is receiving special education services, the IEP team must convene to propose education services during the removal.

Possible Outcomes*

- **End of Suspension** – The student returns to student to their base school or program attended prior to the FDA referral.
- **Reassignment**
- **Long-Term Suspension (LTS) for 11-45 Days** – The hearing officer decides the term of suspension and assigns the student to a nontraditional education program.
- **Long-Term Suspension (LTS) for 46-365 Days** – Upon a finding of aggravated circumstances, the hearing officer may impose longer suspension. The hearing officer decides the term of suspension and assigns the student to a nontraditional education program.

- **Expulsion (365 Days)** – The School Board expels the student and assigns the student to a nontraditional education program. If the student receives special education services, the School Board will allow the IEP team to determine placement that is offered outside the grounds of any PWCS school.

* Note: If the student receives special education services and the hearing officer sets restrictions on the student's access to PWCS grounds, the IEP team will then determine a placement consistent with those restrictions.