

to minimize reading time), gathering their perceptions and decisions. Be sure to incorporate any decisions into the document. The final draft should be submitted to the principal for review shortly after the close of that meeting. At this point your responsibility should be complete and the updated handbook is ready for submission to the district personnel and school board for ratification.

OFFICE PROCEDURES

New assistant principals will find they join a team of professionals who work on school discipline when the need arises. This section only focuses on the efficiency and accuracy of the office itself. Whether it is a physical altercation, truancy issue, drug issue, or rumor problem, these situations will enter the office with a perpetrator and victim. It is the discipline office's responsibility to investigate the truth and to curb future behaviors. The most crucial obstacle of most discipline offices is time. Incidents rarely happen accompanied by time to complete all aspects of the investigation in sequence before the next incident comes into the office. *Efficiency* is a key element to the success of the office.

Hopefully, the discipline office will start the school year in a positive direction and be efficient in its process. However, staff will revert to old patterns as the school year continues. You must remain vigilant to the behavioral standards in the handbook and not contribute to unnecessary risks. Compliance and success are contingent upon the accuracy of the data within the system. Analysis and effective arguments for more resources stem from the accuracy of this everyday work.

Some of these foci might be:

- ✦ Accurate data entry into the Student Information System (SIS)
- ✦ Confirmation of due process
- ✦ Balanced approaches and usage of other means of correction
- ✦ Review of tasks that can be completed by the secretarial staff

Most offices pair up clerical staff with an assistant principal to work as a team. However, the calibration of the entire office must be addressed to ensure the highest levels of efficiency. The entire office should know, from the time the student enters the office to the time they leave, which party is responsible for what task and in what order. The assistant principals *must* meet as a group and start with a verbal walk-through of a scenario.

Example: Johnny is sent to the office because he smells of marijuana after having come in from lunch. The teacher also observed Johnny put something in his backpack that looked like a pipe. The teacher contacted the discipline office, and campus security retrieved the student and his belongings.

The assistant principal should list all aspects of the investigation from start to finish. Below is a starting template that should be adjusted with your district's requirements. Dora Dome created a comprehensive process of investigation in the book *Tools for the Trade: Student Discipline Resource Binder* (2020). The disciplinary investigation chapter (Chapter 2) outlines a comprehensive outlook on how to investigate different incidents. It is very important to remember that your district should outline the approved procedures to conduct investigations and that those should supersede any outlined processes in this book. If there are areas that are not outlined, your preferences will take precedent, so this information could be prevalent in those instances. Some general concepts are detailed on the following page:

DISCIPLINE INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES

- ✦ Student signs in to the discipline office and is directed to a seat.
- ✦ Student is instructed to make a statement and this statement is entered into the SIS.
- ✦ Interview and collect statements from all witnesses.

- ✦ Photograph any evidence needed for incident.
- ✦ Conduct informal conference.
 - ◇ Have student provide their version of situation and their evidence.
 - ◇ Inform student of evidence against them.
 - ◇ Inform student of reason for consequence.
- ✦ Parent is contacted by phone and notified of the situation with requests/instructions. (e.g. conference, counseling appointment, pick up student, etc.)
- ✦ [SPED] Case carrier is notified of incident and consequence.
- ✦ Document the interview.
- ✦ Consider application of appropriate Ed code.
- ✦ Consider and/or implement other means of correction.
- ✦ If warranted, determine reasoning for suspension.
- ✦ Create, review, and issue suspension notice.
- ✦ Inform parent, when they arrive, and have student escorted off campus. (see *Dome, Tools for the Trade*)

As you review the procedures, identify the staff member who should complete each item. Additionally, identify the items that can happen simultaneously. For example, the parent can be notified to come to school while student is making a statement. Whatever system is created by sequencing these procedures will result in a more efficient flow of information and a speedier experience.

Next, hold a meeting with the discipline classified staff to review the procedures. Gather their input and suggestions. The goal is to gather the staff perspective on the procedures to gain a more balanced approach. Please note that there will be resistance to change at this stage by some staff.

The next step is to collaborate with the principal and other administrators to gather feedback on the decisions you have made. Is there something in the procedures you might have missed? Could there be a

more efficient method of gaining that information (digital statement vs. paper statement, etc.?) This meeting allows decades of experiences to polish the procedures and increase their efficiency.

The resulting list should be a balanced representation of the procedures necessary for the office. The list should not have assistant principals performing secretarial responsibilities or staff performing duties for which they are not credentialed. It should show a flow of intake and output so the student is not in the office for long periods of time. All elements of a good investigation, with documentation, should be outlined to ensure there is no need for redundancy of processes. The situation should just flow.

At this point a formal meeting of all discipline staff (assistant principals, classified personnel, lead campus security, and designees) should be conducted with the purpose of instituting the list. A good suggestion at this stage would be to run common scenarios and talk through the list to ensure that the procedures are universal. For example, run through the list for “student is brought in for being truant.” It should be noted to the team that there will be follow-up meetings to adjust the procedures if new situations arise but that this will be the process at this point. It would be wise to revisit the procedures every eight weeks to gather more experiences, ideas, and adjustment considerations. These revisits remind the staff of expectations and prove that the procedures are a living document. The consistency and follow-up should increase respect among your staff.

Some key benefits will result from this work. The most obvious will be that all members of the office are aware of proper expectations for the office. A rhythm will be created for the office, which will ease some of the stressors in dealing with discipline. The procedures are clear expectations which can be reviewed with your secretary in their annual evaluations demonstrating successes and areas of need. The discipline office should function at the same tempo and efficiency with designees

as it does with the assistant principals. The ultimate result is the best experience as possible for students.

CALIBRATION OF CONSEQUENCES

One key aspect that must be established and maintained is the calibration of discipline consequences. Too often, complaints come in from stakeholders that one assistant principal is “mean” and another is “too soft.” These complaints can be a result of different applications of consequences when students violate Ed code.

Let us refer to the previous scenario with some more information:

Johnny is sent to the office because he smells of marijuana after having come in from lunch. The teacher also observed Johnny put something in his backpack that looked like a pipe. The teacher contacted the discipline office, and campus security retrieved the student and his belongings. The student was subsequently escorted to the discipline office under direct observation. A search of the student's belongings resulted in the discovery of a pipe with marijuana residue, a lighter, and a small container of marijuana.

There are some discipline offices where Johnny's entire future would hinge on who Johnny saw in that office.

Assistant Principal Alpha Consequences

- + Two-day, in-school suspension
- + Referral to professional drug program
- + Completion of drug prevention assignment
- + Parent conference with future consequences

Assistant Principal Beta Consequences

- + Parent conference with future consequences
- + Three days off-school suspension
- + Behavior contract noting expulsion for next offense

The conversations of compassion, justice, and reputation are irrelevant for this book. The thing to notice is the lack of calibration when stating the consequences. Although each situation is nuanced, the use of consequences and “Other Means of Correction” should be as close as possible regardless of the administrator. Taking a couple minutes to review a set of consequences with the other admin will assist with calibrating. Empowering discipline staff to request a reconsideration will alert the AP there might be something misaligned. Frequent scenario reviews in administrative meetings should align the overall mindset of the team. The discipline office should strive to apply discipline with as much equity as possible. This communicates fairness and stability for the school site.

BEHAVIOR SUPPORT ROOM/ON-CAMPUS DETENTION

The history of On-Campus Detention (OCD) has been a unique exploration in behavior modification. The existence of this room varies among the states, and its use varies among districts and schools. The best approach from the start is to explore the purpose and traditions of this room to assist the office in their work. Overall, this room holds a multitude of purposes at one time. The administration team should collaborate prior to the start of the school year to determine the specific programs, activities, and staffing within these walls.

On-Campus Detention has been used as a holding pen for students based on a large variety of reasons. Those students who annoy or aggravate staff. Students who are waiting for parents to pick them up because they have been issued a suspension notice. Students who hide and shirk their responsibilities as they walk around the campus. The student who had continually refused to engage in learning and stayed on their phone for days at a time. Also, the student who has engaged in a verbal argument with a teacher. These students are the continual clientele in OCD.