



Student Progressive Discipline:

What You Need to Know

We understand that this might be a difficult time for you, your family or caregiver. Here is some additional information about suspensions and expulsions, supports that are available during and after progressive discipline actions, and details about how we can work together to ensure that your child finds success upon their return to school.

As your child's first educator, we value the relationship that we have with parents, families and caregivers. We believe that parents, families, caregivers, and schools must **work together** to support students to learn and grow into confident, responsible and contributing global citizens. We believe that every child has the right to learn in a safe, positive and inclusive environment. This is at the heart of our work to advance student achievement and well-being.

We have a **Caring and Safe Schools Policy** that outlines our commitment to creating and sustaining caring and safe school climates. This policy is based on the Education Act and Ontario Code of Conduct. The policy is available on our website at www.yrdsb.ca or you can request a copy through your school.

What is progressive discipline?

We use a progressive discipline approach when inappropriate behaviour occurs. This means we consider a range of interventions, supports and consequences to determine the most appropriate response to each situation to help students learn from their choices. This approach also builds in strategies that promote positive student behaviour.

The range of responses may include:

- individual or group counselling
- withdrawal of privileges
- withdrawal from class
- alternative to suspension
- detention
- restitution for damages
- peer mediation
- restorative practices such as informal or formal conferences
- efforts to reintegrate students who have been formally excluded through suspension or expulsion
- suspension or expulsion

What factors will be considered?

There are a number of factors that are considered when deciding the appropriate response to inappropriate student behaviour. **Mitigating factors** are individual characteristics and/or circumstances which may affect the severity of discipline when a suspension or expulsion is being considered.

Before suspending a student, principals must consider the following factors:

- the student's ability to control their behaviour
- the student's ability to understand the consequences of their behaviour
- whether the student's continuing presence in a school creates an unacceptable risk of safety to others
- the student's history
- whether a progressive discipline approach has been used with the student
- whether the activity was related to any harassment of the student because of their race, ethnic origin, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation or to any other harassment
- how the suspension or expulsion would affect the student's ongoing education
- the age of the student
- in the case of a student for whom an individual education plan has been developed:
 - whether the behaviour was a manifestation of a disability identified in the student's individual education plan
 - whether appropriate individualized accommodation has been provided
 - whether the suspension or expulsion is likely to result in an aggravation or worsening of the student's behaviour or conduct

What is a suspension?

A student who is suspended from a school is not permitted to be on Board property or participate in school-related activities or events including, but not limited to, all school buildings, grounds, transportation, field trips, except for the purposes of attending the Alternative Classroom and Counselling for Expelled and Suspended Students (ACCESS) for students serving a long-term suspension (6 or more days). A suspension shall be for no less than one school day and no more than 20 school days.

What activities can lead to suspension?

Where a grade 4-12 student has committed one or more of the infractions outlined below where the infraction has a negative impact on the school climate, whether on or off school property, or during a school-related activity or event, the principals shall consider suspension as part of a progressive discipline approach:

- uttering a threat to inflict serious bodily harm on another person
- possessing alcohol, cannabis (unless the student is authorized to use cannabis for medical purposes), or illegal drugs
- being under the influence of alcohol or cannabis (unless the student is authorized to use cannabis for medical purposes)
- swearing at a teacher or at another person in a position of authority
- committing an act of vandalism that causes extensive damage to school or Board property or to property located on school/Board premises
- bullying or cyberbullying
- possessing cannabis, unless the pupil is a medical cannabis user
- habitual neglect of duty (with Superintendent of Education approval only)
- opposition to authority
- any act considered by the principal to be injurious to the moral tone of the school
- any act considered by the principal to be injurious to the physical or mental well-being of members of the school community
- any act considered by the principal to be contrary to the Board or school code of conduct

If a student in junior kindergarten to Grade 3 has engaged in any of the activities listed above, the principal will not consider a suspension.

What is an expulsion?

A student who is expelled is removed from all schools in the Board and given the opportunity to continue their education through the Alternative Classroom and Counselling for Expelled and Suspended Students (ACCESS).

If the principal recommends a student for expulsion, you will be given additional information about this process, including mediation and the expulsion hearing and appeals processes. You can also view the Caring and Safe Schools policy available on the Board website for more information.

What activities can lead to a mandatory suspension or expulsion?

Where a student* has committed one or more of the infractions outlined below where the infraction has a negative impact on the school climate, whether on or off school property, or during a school-related activity or event, the principal will suspend the student and shall consider expulsion:

- possessing a weapon or replica weapon, including possessing a firearm
- using a weapon to cause or to threaten bodily harm to another person
- committing physical assault on another person that causes bodily harm requiring treatment by a medical practitioner
- committing sexual assault
- trafficking in weapons or illegal drugs
- committing robbery
- giving alcohol to a minor
- giving cannabis to a minor
- bullying or cyberbullying if:
 - the pupil has previously been suspended for engaging in bullying and/or cyberbullying (between grades 4 to 12)
 - the pupil's continuing presence in the school creates an unacceptable risk to the safety of another person
- any infraction outlined in Board Procedure #668.1 Student Suspension that is motivated by bias, prejudice or hate based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other similar factor
- a pattern of behaviour that is so refractory that the student's presence is injurious to the effective learning and/or working environment of others
- the student has demonstrated through a pattern of behaviour such as, but not limited to neglect of duty, truancy or opposition to authority that they have not prospered by the instruction available to them and that they are persistently resistant to making the changes in behaviour which would enable them to prosper

* If a student in junior kindergarten to Grade 3 engages in any of the activities listed above, the principal will conduct an investigation regarding the allegations to determine if the student should be suspended.

Can a suspension be appealed?

Yes. To appeal the suspension, you must give written notice of your intention to appeal the suspension to your school's superintendent. This notice must be given within 10 school days of the start of the suspension and include the reason for the appeal.

The school's superintendent will review the request and consider whether to uphold, modify or expunge the suspension. If the suspension is upheld and you still wish to appeal, you must provide notice in writing to your school's superintendent, your school principal and the Superintendent of Education, responsible for Caring and Safe Schools.

Appeals are heard by the Student Discipline Committee. This is a committee of the Board of Trustees that hears suspension appeals and expulsion hearings.

For more information about the appeals process, please contact the Caring and Safe Schools Office (905) 884-3434 Ext. 312.

What happens when a student returns from a suspension?

We want to ensure that students who have been suspended transition back to school successfully. If a student has been suspended for more than five days, the principal will hold a re-entry meeting with school and board staff, the student, parent, or caregiver where possible. Community agencies may be included as appropriate.

This re-entry meeting intends to:

- Make the student's transition back to school easier
- Identify any extra academic or other supports to promote positive behaviour that the student may need when returning to school

Still have questions?

- Please contact the Caring and Safe Schools Office (905) 884-3434 Ext. 312
- Review the Board's Caring and Safe Schools Policy at www.yrdsb.ca or request a copy through your school office
- Learn more about the Board's programs and supports to help create a caring and safe environment at www.yrdsb.ca
- Visit the Ontario Ministry of Education website at www.ontario.ca/education