



ACPS Equity Policy Audit Report:

A Policies: Foundations and Basic Commitments

J Policies: Students (Discipline and Conduct)

School Board Committee Meeting

October 26, 2021



ACPS Equity Audit

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A Policies – Foundations and Basic Commitments

AC Nondiscrimination

Equity Analysis

- This policy sets nondiscrimination as the goal when equity should be established as the aim of the school board. The policy could go beyond
- This policy includes an extensive list of categories that should be protected, but does not specifically list protections for students, staff, and families based on their immigration status, limited economic resources or housing status.
- The policy also leaves out families from the listed stakeholders for this nondiscrimination policy

Equity Recommendations

- Revise the name of the policy to reflect the full ACPS School Board commitment to racial and educational equity (Title)
 - o Ex: “Nondiscrimination, Educational Equity and Racial Equity”
- Add adopted definitions of equity related terminology
 - o Examples from 2025 Strategic Plan
 - Racial Equity: When race does not determine quality of life, opportunities and outcomes.
 - Educational Equity: Educational disparities based on race, economics and other dimensions of difference are reduced and eliminated. Positive school outcomes are distributed equitably proportionally across all demographic and identity groups. Negative outcomes and disproportionality are reduced for all groups
 - Educational Excellence: We keep the bar high in all we do. We educate students for life and for reflective citizenship. We empower students and employees in the preservation of their identity and culture. Substance, depth and critical thinking are more important than compliance or test scores.
- Add affirmative language reflecting ACPS’s vision and commitment to educational equity and racial equity, for all stakeholders including families and those with limited economic resources, students and families without homes, and those with undocumented immigrant status
 - o Ex: “The Alexandria City School Board is committed to nondiscrimination, *racial equity, and educational equity*. This commitment prevails in all of its policies and practices concerning staff, students, *families*, educational programs, services, and individuals or entities with whom the Board does business with regard to age, race... *economic resources, housing status, or immigrant status*”
- Add language explaining the cross-referenced accountability measures that support this commitment, specifically new JB, GB, GBA/JFA, GB-R/GBA-R/JFHA-R policies



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AE School Division Goals and Objectives

Equity Analysis

- This policy expresses a goal of equality of educational opportunity which is misaligned with the current ACPS approach focusing on educational equity.
- This policy focuses much on the characteristics of individual students and much less attention on the structural school division characteristics that create inequity in education.

Equity Recommendations

- Revise “equality” of education to include and define educational and racial equity in education as the goal of the school division. (1st par.)
- Reframe the conversation about students’ differences to value diversity of perspectives and backgrounds. (1st par.)
- Revise language to indicate school division goal of differentiate instruction based on student needs not personal development and potential (1st par.)
 - o Ex: Use language reflecting a “growth mindset”
- Add language to broaden the goal of student experience beyond future education and employment to focus on . (2nd par.)
 - o Ex: Language related to being a good citizen (relating to civic engagement), civility, compassion, cultural awareness etc.
- Add language to section describing school environment to reflect the value of culture and emphasizing school division actions (3rd par.)
 - o Ex: “the school division will *work to create culturally sustaining environments that are free from bias and discrimination, safe, nurturing, supportive, responsive and conducive to learning*”



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AD Educational Philosophy of the Alexandria City Public Schools

Equity Analysis

- The policy reflects equality as a goal instead of educational equity.
- This policy does not focus on the central equity concept that students have different challenges and need different supports to excel.
- The policy does not use language that is inclusive of all gender identities.
- The policy does not include the value of family and community for educational success.

Equity Recommendations

- Add language that is consistent with the 2025 strategic plan to reflect the current educational philosophy of ACPS. (1st par.)
 - o Ex: *"The ACPS School Board believes that schools should be welcoming, empowering, equity-focused, innovative and results-driven."*
 - o Ex: *Culturally sustaining curriculum and pedagogies*
- Revise the term "appropriate" term to include a broader conception of education (2nd par.)
 - o Ex: provide *culturally sustaining* leadership...
 - o Ex: assure that *every student is prepared for a diverse workplace and world*
- Add language that elaborates on how the school board treats communities equitably (2nd par.)
 - o Ex: *Values, respects, and collaborates with diverse families and communities*
- Add language that reflects that funding will be used to meet the needs of students and families (2nd par.)
 - o Ex: *assess the needs of students and families and equitably allocate funds to meet those needs.*



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AF Comprehensive Plan

Equity Analysis

- Although this language is largely statutory, the policy could be improved by incorporating aspects of the strategic plan related to equity.
- The process of creating the comprehensive plan could highlight community and student involvement.
- The equity goal of the plan could be further outlined.

Comprehensive Plan

- Add components of the strategic plan to the policy. (1st par.)
 - o Ex: The ACPS School Board utilizes Systemic Alignment; Instructional Excellence; Student Accessibility and Support; Strategic Resource Allocation; and Family and Community Engagement to accomplish the comprehensive plan.
- Add language specifying the process for staff and community involvement (1st par.)
- Add language specifying that the goal of the comprehensive plan is create equitable outcomes for all students



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J Policies- Discipline

JFC & JFC-R: Student Conduct

Equity Analysis

- This policy was last updated in 2015, beyond the district's five-year policy review schedule
- JFC-R was last updated in 2020, and includes reference to an addendum that addresses COVID-19
- Although policy JFC is for and about students, it's length and contents may or may not be written in a way that is easy for students and families to comprehend.
- Policy JFC requires that school based behavior plans be submitted from principals to the Superintendent each school year which acknowledges the district's awareness that each school community may have its own needs, goals, and initiatives as it relates to student conduct.
- Policy JFC clearly articulates a series of behaviors for which a student may ultimately be suspended or permanently expelled.
- This policy misses a series of opportunities to codify, introduce, include, encourage, or reinforce the district's commitments to SEL, restorative justice, reflection and mindfulness as behavior management techniques.
- JFC-R begins with a reference to the "2020-2021 Student Code of Conduct Addendum" which addresses guidelines related to COVID-19.

Equity Recommendations

- In alignment with the district's commitment to PBIS, consider creating a checklist of norms or expectations for each school's behavior plan including but not limited to school-wide values, rules, consequences, incentives, and rewards.
- Consider adding language to address technological breaches of the student code of conduct in the subsection labeled "Students are subject to corrective action for..."
- Consider adding a link or hyperlink to the "2020-2021 Student Code of Conduct Addendum" within JFC-R.



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JFCA: Teacher Removal of Students from Class

Equity Analysis

- This policy was last updated in January 2015, beyond the five year policy review period.
- Policy JFCA begins with a commitment to the district's Positive Behavior Intervention Supports in an effort to deescalate disruptive behaviors. This introduction aligns with the district's commitment to a more equitable behavior management plan.
- Although mentioned in the final section entitled "Other Provisions," this policy does not explicitly address or center a time-bound commitment to the student's continued learning.
- This policy does not include temporal or time-bound language that specifies whether the teacher removal of a student from class is temporary or permanent and designates principals to ultimately determine the duration of the student's removal. Time-bound language may be important for schools or teachers who use a moment of hallway "reflection time," or similar mindfulness strategies, as daily behavior management techniques. The "Requirements for Incident Reports" may add another obstacle for these teachers and educators.
- Although this policy is an attempt to address students whose behavior becomes disruptive to the learning of others, this policy does not define "disruptive behavior" itself. Instead, disruptive behavior is defined as "a violation of School Board regulations governing student conduct that interrupts or obstructs the learning environment." This reference is circuitous and sends readers to multiple sources for full understanding.
- One of five options for the "alternative assignment and instruction of removed students" includes suspension/expulsion. The option to expel or suspend, connected to the loosely defined infraction "disruptive behavior," may yield variable results and disproportionately impact students who are deemed challenging or high-risk.

Equity Recommendations

- In order to define *disruptive behavior*, consider providing a link or hyperlink that connects to the "School Board regulations governing student conduct," or insert the language itself after "disruptive behavior is defined as..."
- For extended removals or roster withdrawals, the "Requirements for Incident Reports" are sufficient but may be most equitable if sequentially positioned after, and including, written notification to student and parent/guardians.
- For teachers and schools who temporarily use hallway space for mindfulness and reflection, consider using a time range to differentiate between momentary "cool offs" in the hallway and long term classroom removals.
- Consider a time-bound commitment to the continued learning of the student in "Procedures for the Student's Return to Class." (ex. In the case of extended removals, the principal shall



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determine, after consultation with the teacher, the duration of the student's removal from class within ___ days.)

- After defining *disruptive behavior* and differentiating expectations for temporary and long-term removals, evaluate the option to suspend or expel the student on the "Guidelines for Alternative Assignment and Instruction of Removed Students."



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JFCB: Sportsmanship, Ethics and Integrity

Equity Analysis

- This policy seeks to encourage amicable relationships among peers for students *and* adults throughout competitive experiences.
- Policy JFCB fails to define *sportsmanship* and identify related behaviors.

Equity Recommendations

- Add language that more clearly defines *sportsmanship*.
- Consider adding a provision that clearly defines the role of a coach or adult who witnesses unsportsmanlike conduct among students, fans, or other adults.



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JFCHA -Electronic Cigarettes (also GBECA)

Equity Analysis/Recommendation

- Equity committee recommended that the policy be deleted with the content being merged with Policy JFCH/GBEC

JFCH/GBEC: Tobacco Products and Nicotine Vapor Products

Equity Analysis:

- When compared to the alcohol and other drug policy and regulation (one of the strongest in terms of support and prevention), this policy focuses more on punishment and does not articulate a clear goal and rationale for school intervention.
- This policy also does not include efforts to track incidence rates by demographic group to guide where support efforts should be increased.

Equity Recommendations

- This policy should reference a regulation that mirrors language from the alcohol and other drug policy/regulation (**JFCF-R/JFCI-R**) or provide more clear cross reference to the alcohol and other drug policy if those policies govern use of tobacco/nicotine products.
- The policy could include a preamble with clear goals related to prevention and support.
- The policy could also include language that reflects a goal of zero tobacco or nicotine use and articulate efforts to track data and prevention and support efforts that will be used to get to that goal.



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JFCE: Gang Activity or Association

Equity Analysis

- This policy was last updated in 2014, beyond the five-year policy review cycle.
- In its current form, policy JFCE's attempt to address gang association may include language that ambiguously defines the words *gang* or *gang association*. This room for interpretation could have an adverse effect on students or student groups who may incur a violation.
- This policy does not include language that outlines consequences for a group of three or more students on *or* off campus, during *or* beyond regular school hours, who demonstrate similarly identified behaviors through a technological device. This exclusion may be a missed opportunity to address cyberbullying and trolling.
- This policy outlines a partnership between the Superintendent and local law enforcement for the sole purpose of "listing known gang clothing, jewelry, emblems, badges, signs, gestures, handshakes and symbols."

Equity Recommendations

- Consider updating the definition of a *criminal gang* as "any group of three or more persons" with specifically identified ill-intentions.
- Consider updating the definition of *criminal gang activity* as a list of specifically identified actions that may not be subject to interpretation.
- Consider adding temporal language in the last paragraph about in-service training. (ex. The District shall provide "annual" professional development to facilitate staff identification of students at-risk...)



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JFCF/JFCI & JFCF-R/JFCI-R: Alcohol and Other Drugs in Schools

Equity Analysis

- While not explicitly stated, this policy implies a “zero tolerance” approach to disciplining students who violate it by encouraging suspension and expulsion as first options.
- Policy JFCF and its regulation are undergirded by statutory language that may or may not contrast with the district’s commitment to a more equitable behavior plan for students.
- School board discretion is important, but subjective, and should not be required in order to intervene or prevent expulsion and suspension.

Equity Recommendations

- Where applicable, add “knowingly” or “wittingly” after “a student who is” “a student shall” or “a student shall not” (ex. Par I.A)
- Either in this policy or its regulation, consider implementing a mandatory district-run restorative justice program in order to replace or reduce carceral outcomes.
- Either in this policy or its regulation, consider adding mandatory counseling or intervention for any student who violates policy JFCF.
- Change “parents” to “guardians” or “families” where applicable
- Remove expulsion as the first consequence
- Define “special circumstances” in the regulations
- Section 2 Students with Disabilities, add language to clarify that consequences for students with disability “may not be” in excess of any student without a disability for the same offense

Equity Recommendations (Regulation)

- Add “knowingly” or “wittingly” after “A student shall not...” (Section III.A.)
- Add “distribute” to section III.A.2.
- In Section IV.D regarding services and records maintenance, consider implementing a data reporting expectation from the school district’s designee, or relevant department head, that tracks how many students were impacted by this policy, received counseling, suspension, alternative school, expulsion, arrest, intervention, etc.
- Add GAE: Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting



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JFG: Search and Seizure

Equity Analysis

- The policy doesn't indicate whether or not the district collects data on the incidence of searches/seizures, the types, the demographics of the students involved, the outcomes, the impact on discipline/suspension/expulsion rates, etc.? Policy doesn't indicate that if data is collected, how is it being analyzed and by whom? Doesn't indicate whether such incidences are captured in incident reports. Doesn't mention policies about unannounced, random searches?
- Doesn't indicate a process for making this data publicly available
- Although the policy places limits on the use of strip searches, this intrusive policy is problematic for the way that it is based on sex and not gender

Equity Recommendations

- For clarity, the "reasonableness" standard should be explained. Furthermore, this reasonable suspicion while not strictly required, may be a useful standard for searches across the board (consent search, school computer, automobile, or lockers etc.) in order to avoid arbitrary targeting of certain students.
- For strip searches, the policy should
 - o Prohibit the use of these kind of searches altogether or
 - o Refine language to reflect understanding of gender and sex (cross reference with new transgender policy)
- The policy should ensure that data on searches is publicly available
- The policy should detail the ways that schools will make sure students and parents/caregivers are made aware of these procedures
- The policy should also reflect the most recent procedures outlined in the MOU with Alexandria Policy Department



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JGD/JGE & JGD-R/JGE-R: Suspension & Expulsion

Equity Analysis

- The policy focuses on the punitive aspect of what happens as a response to student behavior and although MTSS, PBIS, and restorative practices are mentioned, this information is not found in the policy but in the student code of conduct, requiring extra steps.
- Alternative approaches to suspension are not mandated (except in limited circumstances) so their use is left up to the discretion of school officials.
- The ways that students enter into alternative pathways instead of suspension are not specified.
- The focus on prevention and support could be made stronger.
- Pronouns throughout use he/she instead of gender neutral they/them or just "the student"
- The appeal process is technical, so the Board may want to outline procedures to make sure parents and students are made aware of these procedures in their native languages.
- The reporting processes for school offenses focuses on reports to law enforcement, but families and communities should also have access to disaggregated reports of not only offenses, but the responses taken.

Equity Recommendations

- In the preamble, the policy could set a clear articulable goal for student behavior, ex, The ACPS School Board:
 - o is committed to being responsive to students' social, emotional, and academic needs and/or
 - o is committed to eliminating the disproportionality rate of suspensions by school and student group" or other language from the strategic plan or something similar
- A fuller explanation of the alternatives to suspension and expulsion including MTSS, SEL, PBIS, Peer mediation, counseling and Restorative Practices could be added as a section.
 - o This section could also detail when these alternatives will be pursued (like with students in pre-k-3rd grade)
 - o Could include identification of at-risk students
 - Ex: Colorado: Each school district shall adopt policies to identify students who are at risk of suspension or expulsion from school. Students identified may include those who are truant, who have been or are likely to be declared habitually truant, or who are likely to be declared habitually disruptive. The school district shall provide students who are identified as at risk of suspension or expulsion with a plan to provide the necessary support services to help them avoid expulsion. CRS §22-33-202
 - o Could require use of certain considerations before suspension:



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- Ex: Colorado (1.2) Each school district is encouraged to consider each of the following factors before suspending or expelling a student pursuant to a provision of subsection (1) of this section: (a) The age of the student; (b) The disciplinary history of the student; (c) Whether the student has a disability; (d) The seriousness of the violation committed by the student; (e) Whether the violation committed by the student threatened the safety of any student or staff member; and (f) Whether a lesser intervention would properly address the violation committed by the student.
- Could set restorative practices as the default and include the creation of a restorative plan
 - Ex: Colorado: the general assembly supports and encourages the use of restorative justice as a school's first consideration to remediate offenses such as interpersonal conflicts, bullying, verbal and physical conflicts, theft, damage to property, class disruption, harassment and internet harassment, and attendance issues. C.R.S. § 22-32-144
 - Ex: Greenbush School District: MN
 - When any student is referred by any staff member for violation of school rules the following Restorative Plan will be followed: An offending student is given the opportunity to participate in a restorative process as a means of making things right for victims and the school community. Restorative approaches can be used either in place of traditional discipline (detention, suspension, expulsion...) or as a reentry tool upon reentry from traditional discipline practices.
- The policy could clarify which appeals end with the superintendent, and which can be considered by the school board.
- A process for students to review their placement in alternative schools should also be outlined.
- Disparities that arise in the course of reporting should be made publicly available and plans to ameliorate those disparities should be addressed in the policy, preferably in conjunction with families and the community.



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JGDA: Disciplining Student with Disabilities

Equity Analysis

- Although many of these regulations are found in federal statute, ACPS still may want to bolster reporting and look for disparities in the number of students with disabilities that receive discipline.
- For manifestation hearings and disciplinary processes, the policy does not explain how students and parents should be made aware of the processes.

Equity Recommendations

- Include language requiring the tracking of disaggregated data in the number of students with disabilities receiving exclusionary discipline and/or a manifestation determination.
- Ensure language detailing how parents/caregivers will be informed of these processes when their student is involved in these programs.
- Also indicate any other rights during the hearings (participate in the IEP team/bring representation to manifestation or disciplinary hearings et.)



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JGDB: Discipline of Students with Disabilities for Infliction of Serious Bodily Injury

Equity Analysis

- The policy only outlines punitive responses for these students
- The same early intervention, alternatives to suspension/removal and support that is available for students without disabilities

Equity Recommendations

- The policy could outline some of the specific interventions that can be used to prevent or remediate violent behavior with students with certain disabilities.
- The policy can outline what services will be provided when the student is removed to the alternative education program.