



BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of the Superintendent

City Hall, Room #712

Buffalo, New York 14202

Phone (716) 816-3575

Fax (716) 851-3033

To: Board Members
From: Amber M. Dixon, Interim Superintendent
Re: Student Suspension Reductions
Date: February 1, 2012

In our district, too many students are suspended from school on a daily basis. A concern for all grade levels, this is particularly troubling in the elementary grades where hundreds of students are suspended each month. We are committed to doing more to immediately reverse these trends and significantly impact reductions in out-of-school student suspensions. Recently, the school district held four public hearings on student suspension reduction. The purpose of the hearings was to solicit input on changes in the district policies that have, as of yet, yielded insufficient reductions in student suspensions.

Based on the public hearings and stakeholder involvement in work sessions, the *Advisory Board for Suspension Reduction and Attendance Improvement* issued eleven proposals for consideration. After making additional comment, the Advisory Board moved the proposals to our District Code of Conduct Committee. Finally, the Chief Counsel of the school district provided comment on specific proposals. The full document of proposals and comments is attached.

Attached is a summary of my recommendations. The proposals are in order of implementation pursuant to a recommended timeline. The original number of the proposal appears in parentheses and full comments may be found on the attached document. I wish to thank and commend district stakeholders and the public for their participation in this process.

Attachment

- A. Amend Regulation 7310R to **require the use of the Parental Conference in Lieu of Suspension for non-violent misconduct in grades PK-6**. The Regulation will be updated immediately and principals shall be trained by the effective date of February 27, 2012 (Proposal 5). **Language in the Regulation shall also be provided that prohibits short or long term suspensions for PK and K students unless the misconduct causes a serious injury, involves a weapon or illegal substance. Efforts will be made to provide one (1) full time teaching assistant to all Kindergarten classrooms for the 2012-2013 school year.**
- B. Increase student support staff so students have greater access to intervention-rich environments. **The district will immediately hire an additional 4 school social workers for the purpose of creating 8 more schools with full-time social workers.** Additional recommendations in the proposal will be reviewed concurrent with the annual budget process for the school district. (Proposal 3)
- C. **Schools with high rates of suspensions will be designated by the Superintendent of Schools to be in need of a *Corrective Action Plan (CAP)*.** The purpose of the CAP is to support suspension reduction efforts at the school (Proposal 10).
- D. To improve access to elementary alternate instruction for suspended students, **principals will provide morning or afternoon yellow bus service to serve half-day programs effective February 27, 2012.** Parents would continue to be responsible for one-way transportation (Proposal 7). The district will investigate expansion of the current half-day alternate instruction classes to full-time for 2012-2013.
- E. Document prescribed interventions for suspended students so the likelihood of future suspensions is eliminated or reduced. **By March, 2012 principals will be required to attach a standard district document to all suspension letters describing interventions parents may expect for their child upon return from suspension** (Proposal 2).
- F. **For students with disabilities, the school district will complete a quality assurance review of the current Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP) process by March, 2012.** Findings shall be reported to the Board and Superintendent (Proposal 1).
- G. District Counsel has commented that NYS §3214 establishes a principal's authority to suspend students for non-violent offenses such as insubordination or severe disruption of the school environment. The district will continue to be updated by the state education department on any changes in law or regulation regarding such suspensions. The district will also seek guidance from the state education department on implications on enforcement of the Dignity for All Students Act with regard to incident of bullying and non-violent abuse as a result of bullying (Proposal 4).

- H. By May, 2012 the school district will investigate requiring teachers and principals to provide signed assurances of acknowledgement regarding applicable student disciplinary policies and regulations (Proposal 6).
- I. By August, 2012 the school district will provide principals with guidance on the forms of misconduct generally subject to suspension. The guidelines will also include a process for assessing the circumstances of student misconduct as it relates to school or classroom conditions in which the misconduct occurred (Proposal 8).
- J. **By August, 2012 the school district will develop universal guidelines and best practices for in-school suspension rooms.** The guidelines will consider state education law, Commissioner's Regulations, and district policies with regard to the mandated services provided to students in such programs (Proposal 9).
- K. By August, 2012 the school district will update the Parent Compact protocol and documents currently in use to establish consistency with the above proposals and comments provided by stakeholder groups (Proposal 11).