

## Letter from the Board of Education and Superintendent

Over the past year we have made positive changes in the way we address student behavior. We have dramatically decreased the number of students being suspended for minor offenses and thus increased both daily attendance and improved chronic absenteeism through the use of in school suspension as a disciplinary option.

At the same time, in visiting schools and talking with parents, teachers, administrators, and students, I recognize there is a need to increase the focus on respect in our schools. This will be partially accomplished through our districtwide initiative, "Expect Respect." Monthly, schools will focus on character traits and practice positive interactions with others. Through school-wide lessons, activities, and assemblies, students will begin to build stronger relationships that will foster a safe and civil school environment. Likewise, we will work to clarify and strengthen expectations and consequences in order to reduce behavior that thwarts productive school culture. This includes fighting and bullying. Students who make positive choices must be recognized for their choices and students who continue to make poor choices must understand they cannot disrupt the learning environment for others. You will notice in this year's Student Code of Conduct a higher set of expectations and related consequences regarding the use of profanity to adults, acts of aggression, including fighting, battery, and bullying. In order for our schools to be the institutions of higher learning that we aspire for them to be, we must ensure that staff, students, and parents feel safe and respected at school.

The revised 2018-2019 Student Code of Conduct included a student bill of rights. To this end, we signaled the belief that students should also "Expect Respect." Unfortunately, on some of those same school visits referenced above, or through conversations with students, parents, and administrators, I have noticed that some adults have forgotten that respect is mutual. Just as the adults in our district deserve respect, so do our students. Just as students will be disciplined appropriately for disrespecting adults, adults directing that behavior towards students is unacceptable. We must understand terminology from adults such as "shut up," "get out," or other language otherwise deemed as inappropriate, is not acceptable in our district and will be addressed through disciplinary action as well. This includes yelling and screaming at students to express frustration.

Expecting respect will be a universal theme in our district and evidenced through our core values. We must lead by example, teach and reteach students the value of making positive choices and help them understand there are consequences when behavior is not appropriate. Through the "Expect Respect," initiative, anti-bullying lessons will be combined with life skills lessons. Through weekly sessions, guidance counselors, social workers, school culture facilitators and/or teachers will actively engage students in lessons developed by the Pacer's National Bullying Prevention Center and the life skills curriculum, *Overcoming Obstacles*, which aligns with the American School Counselor Association National Standards for Students in the areas of academic, career, personal, and social development. *Overcoming Obstacles* further assists students with communication, decision making, and goal setting.

We are committed to the process of students learning and growing through their mistakes. The District will work hard to maintain the right balance between the two. In order to ensure that balance, however, we have instituted a new point system to help you and your student easily understand the cumulative consequences of infractions under the Student Code of Conduct.

Infractions are grouped into four levels:

Level 1: Minor (1 point)

Level 2: Moderate (2 points)

Level 3: Major (3 points)

Level 4: Severe (Referral to Hearing Officer)

You will learn about the infractions that fall into each of these categories through your review of the Student Code of Conduct. The detail in the Code of Conduct is to ensure consistency among administrators with administering discipline for infractions. If a student reaches 16 or more points, in any combination, during one school year, that student may be referred to the Hearing Officer for possible placement in an alternative school or program.

We ask families to partner with the school and District staff to create a positive school culture. Therefore, after you review the Code with your student and engage them around any concerns they may have, please sign the “Parent and Student Statement of Receipt” and have your child return it to school. If you have questions you want answered before signing, please take this time to engage with your student’s teachers and school staff. This is a great way to begin to build the important line of communication between you and your student’s school. Please keep a copy for your records once signed. Principals, teachers, and staff will also sign their own statement of receipt.

Thank you for entrusting your child to us and thank you for your continued support of Detroit Public Schools Community District.

Dr. Nikolai P. Vitti  
Superintendent  
Detroit Public Schools Community District

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