

# The Basic Rules of Seattle Public Schools

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## Seattle School Board

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### Student Rights

Students, as citizens, have certain constitutional rights. The school system cannot unduly infringe on those rights. The schools may, however set some reasonable limits on those rights in order to meet the District's obligation to educate.

• Students have **FREEDOM OF SPEECH** and may express their personal opinions. That freedom does not allow personal attacks, swearing, threats of violence, or interference with other people's rights to express themselves.

• Students have the **RIGHT TO ASSEMBLE** peacefully. Any such gathering, which interferes with the operation of the school or classroom, is inappropriate and prohibited.

• Students have the **RIGHT TO PETITION** appropriate school authorities when they feel that they have been treated unfairly.

• Students have **FREEDOM OF THE PRESS** and may express their personal opinions in writing. They must take full responsibility for the content of their publications by identifying themselves as authors or editors of the publication. They are not allowed to make personal attacks or publish libelous or obscene material.

• Students have the right to **FREEDOM FROM UNREASONABLE SEARCH AND SEIZURE** while at school.\* For the protection of all, however, the following rules apply:

~ General searches of school property, including lockers and desks, may be conducted.

~ Items such as firearms, other weapons, firecrackers, or anything else that might reasonably be a threat to safety or security, or disruptive to the educational process may be seized and removed from a student's possession.

• Students have the right to **EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY**. They shall not be unlawfully discriminated against because of race, creed, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, marital status, physical appearance, or mental, physical or sensory disability.

• Students have the right to **FREEDOM OF RELIGION**. Students are free from being controlled or influenced by any particular religious point of view while they are participating in any school district conducted or sponsored activity, or while students are otherwise subject to school district supervision and control.

\*Washington law (RCW 28A.600.230(3)) prohibits strip searches of students by school administrators and persons acting under their supervision. "Strip search" is defined broadly: "[H]aving a person remove or arrange some or all of his or her clothing so as to permit an inspection of the genitals, buttocks, anus, or undergarments of the person or breasts of a female person." In general, searches of students persons (other than strip searches) or property may be conducted on reasonable suspicion that contraband or other evidence of misconduct is present, so long as the methods used are reasonably related to the objectives of the search and the search is not excessively intrusive in light of the age and sex of the student, the nature of the suspected infraction, and the information upon which the search is based.

### DISTRICT OFFENSES (cont'd.):

- **Inappropriate Touching** – Unwanted or inappropriate touching of the private parts of another person by elementary-age students.
- **Verbal Assault** – Using words that are hurtful, harmful, demeaning, or embarrassing, including words that are crude or vulgar, and name-calling.
- **Toy Guns and Toy Weapons** – Possessing a toy gun (BB-guns and other pellet guns are Dangerous Weapons) or other toy weapon not appearing to be a real gun or weapon, or appearing to be a real gun or weapon, but not used or displayed with malice.
- **False Reporting** – Knowingly reporting or corroborating misbehavior of others that did not occur.

**NOTE:** In addition to the above rules, each school will adopt and distribute to each student rules which will govern a student's conduct in that particular school. When students break those school rules, they will be disciplined. (See Rule-breaking, above).

### What Happens If a Student Breaks a Rule?

Whenever you are accused of breaking a rule, you have the right to explain your side of the story to your teacher, counselor, assistant principal, or principal before you are disciplined. Your parents may also meet with school staff to help identify and solve problems and to consider appropriate penalties. If some other penalty doesn't work, you could be suspended. If the offense was very serious, you could be expelled. If there is an emergency, you could be expelled right away and have a conference later. If there has been a criminal offense, normally, the police will be called.

### What If You Think You Are Being Treated Unfairly?

If the principal or assistant principal proposes to discipline you, and you think the disciplinary action is unfair or inappropriate, you have the right to appeal the discipline imposed on you. The various appeals processes are contained in the **Student Rights and Responsibilities** booklet, which can be obtained from your school, from the Student Discipline Office at 206-252-0820, or on the **Seattle Public Schools' website** at [www.seattleschools.org](http://www.seattleschools.org) (click on **District/Departments/Discipline**). That booklet is also sent out with the first formal Notice of Disciplinary Action. Additional information may also be obtained from the Discipline section of the District's website at [www.seattleschools.org](http://www.seattleschools.org) (click on **District/Departments/Discipline**).

*Sometimes, problems in school can be helped by counseling on health, emotional, or legal concerns. While the Seattle Public Schools can provide some assistance, its resources are limited. A number of community agencies offering such assistance are listed in the Seattle telephone directories, or you may call the Community Information Line at 206-461-3200 or 211.*

### DISTRICT OFFENSES (cont'd.):

- **Disobedience** – Flagrantly, purposefully, or repeatedly failing to comply with or follow the instructions of teachers and other school staff.
- **Hazing** – Initiating students into a school, group, grade level, or office through persecuting, harassing, or coercive behaviors that cause or are likely to cause social or emotional harm.
- **Gambling** – Playing cards, dice, or games of chance for money or other things of value.
- **Misrepresentation** – Forging a parent's, guardian's, or any other person's signatures on any letter to the school or on any school document. Changing grades or attendance records on official District forms, including attendance reporting sheets and grade books, for any student without authorization of a school official. Providing a false name when asked to identify oneself to a school authority. Providing false information to school personnel, or impersonating another person verbally or in writing to provide false or misleading information regarding a student's attendance or absence from school.
- **Plagiarism** – Cheating or copying the work of other persons or turning in another person's papers, projects, computer programs, etc., as your own.
- **Using or Possessing Tobacco Products** – Using or possessing any tobacco products by any students in or on public school property, on school buses, and at school-sponsored activities.
- **Careless Burning** – Setting afire matches, lighters, or a portion of a single sheet of paper momentarily in a classroom, restroom, hallway, or other school location and immediately extinguishing the flame, whether in play or through carelessness.
- **Misuse of Computers** – Inappropriately using school computers.
- **Graffiti** – Knowingly writing, painting, drawing, scratching, or otherwise marking any inscription, figure, or mark of any type of any District-owned or staff property, unless the student has obtained the permission of a school official or staff person.
- **Bullying, Intimidation, and Harassment** – Engaging in intentional written, verbal, electronic, or physical bullying, intimidating, or harassing conduct that: is for the purpose of embarrassing or denigrating another person; physically harms a student or damages the student's property; is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment; has the effect of substantially interfering with the student's education; or has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school. There is no requirement that the student actually possesses the characteristic that is the basis for the bullying, intimidation, or harassment. This includes: "pansting," another person; (engaged in as teasing by elementary-age students); conducting electronic bullying, intimidation, and harassment, including cyberbullying, on school grounds, during school activities, on school buses, or during the school day.
- **Sexual Harassment** – Deliberately harassing another person for sexual reasons or in a sexualized manner, with unwanted attention, touching, or verbal comments such that the person is uncomfortable, intimidated, or threatened by the behavior.
- **Inappropriate Sexual Conduct** – Engaging in inappropriate mutual sexualized conduct that is not conducive to the learning environment of a school.

**NOTICE TO STUDENTS AND PARENTS REQUIRED BY FEDERAL DRUG-ABUSE PREVENTION ACT**  
The Seattle Public Schools prohibits the unlawful possession or distribution of illicit drugs and alcohol by students on school premises or as part of school activities. Compliance with this rule is mandatory; students who disregard this prohibition will be long-term suspended or expelled. The possession and use of illegal drugs and the unlawful possession and use of alcohol are wrong and harmful to health and education. The District officer, or can assist in arranging access to, drug and alcohol counseling, rehabilitation, and re-entry program. For further information, contact your school's principal or counselor.

### EQUITY AND COMPLIANCE POLICY

Seattle Public Schools provides Equal Educational Opportunity and Employment Opportunity without regard to race, creed, color, religion, age, ancestry, national origin, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, marital status, families with children, honorably discharged veteran or military status, physical appearance, or mental, physical or sensory disability.

The District complies with all applicable, state and federal laws and regulations to include, but not limited to, Title IX, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, RCW 49.60 "The Law Against Discrimination," and covers, but is not limited to, all District programs, courses, activities, including extra-curricular activities, services, access to facilities, etc.

The Title IX Officer and 504 Coordinator with the overall responsibility for monitoring, auditing, and ensuring compliance with this policy is: Manager, Office of Equity and Compliance, P.O. Box 34165, Mail Stop 33-157, Seattle, WA 98124-1165. Phone: (206) 252-0024. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against in any of the District's educational or employment activities can file an internal discrimination complaint with the District's Office of Equity and Compliance.

## To All Students:

This brochure is intended to tell you about some of the responsibilities which you must assume, the rights which you share with all others, and the general rules you must follow so that you can take full advantage of your educational opportunity without experiencing major discipline problems. Under state law, this information must be given to you at the beginning of every school year.

In the Seattle Public Schools, discipline requires orderly behavior, appropriate to the situation. This is necessary to create and maintain a climate in which learning can take place. An important part of your education is to learn appropriate behavior, learn the consequences of inappropriate behavior, develop self-control and self-discipline, and to take responsibility for your own actions.

Students will be disciplined if they break the rules while at school, on school grounds, on District-sponsored transportation, or at any school-sponsored event. Students will also be disciplined if they break the rules in any other setting having a real and substantial relationship to the operation of the District, including, but not limited to, the preservation of the health and safety of students and employees and the preservation of an educational process which is conducive to learning. Disciplinary action can include such things as losing the privilege of attending District-sponsored activities, losing the privilege of riding District-sponsored transportation, or suspension or expulsion.

This brochure does not cover all of the legal details and considerations, such as specific procedures related to special education students, or the appeal processes that are available to you if you feel that discipline is being wrongly or unfairly applied. Full and detailed information is in the Student Rights and Responsibilities booklet, which can be obtained from your school, from the Student Discipline Office at 206-252-0820, or in the Parents section of the District's website at [www.seattleschools.org](http://www.seattleschools.org). That booklet is also sent out with the first formal Notice of Disciplinary Action.

## STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Make a determined effort to learn.
- Attend all classes every day on time, ready to work, and with the necessary learning materials, books, pencils, etc.
- Respect the rights of other people.
- Refrain from expressing personal prejudices against any individual or group.
- Follow the instructions of teachers and other school staff.
- Know and obey the rules of the District and individual school.
- Accept reasonable disciplinary actions for breaking school or District rules.
- Identify yourself if asked to by school staff.
- Dress appropriately for school in ways that will not cause safety or health problems, or disruptions.
- Respect the property of other people and of the school.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Students who damage or vandalize property belonging to the Seattle Public Schools, a contractor of the District, an employee, or another student are required to make restitution for such damage. Failure to do so may result in the withholding of a student's grades, transcript, or diploma.

## CODE OF PROHIBITED CONDUCT

### EXCEPTIONAL MISCONDUCT:

Students will be disciplined, and normally will also be referred to the police to face criminal charges, if they commit any of the exceptional misconduct on the list below while in school, on school grounds, on District-sponsored transportation, or at any school-sponsored event. Students will also be disciplined and referred to the police if they engage in this exceptional misconduct in any other setting having a real and substantial relationship to the operation of the District, including, but not limited to, the preservation of the health and safety of students and employees and the preservation of an educational process which is conducive to learning. Disciplinary action can include such things as losing the privilege of attending District-sponsored activities, or losing the privilege of using District-sponsored transportation, or suspension, or expulsion.

The School Board has determined that these behaviors amount to "exceptional misconduct" warranting suspension for the first offense, provided that disciplinarians and hearing officers may grant exceptions in cases involving extenuating or exceptional circumstances, or after considering the background of the individual student.

- Selling Illegal Drugs, and Controlled Substances
- Selling Alcoholic Beverages
- Distributing Illegal Drugs and Controlled Substances
- Distributing Alcoholic Beverages
- Possessing or Using Illegal Drugs and Controlled Substances
- Possessing or Using Alcoholic Beverages
- Assault – Being physically violent, using unwarranted force, or demonstrating the deliberate and immediate intent to be physically violent toward another person, including domestic violence.
- Sexual Assault – Sexually assaulting or taking indecent liberties with another person (includes "pansing" behavior by other than elementary-age students).
- Extortion, Blackmail, Coercion – Obtaining money, property or other consideration by violence or threat of violence, or forcing someone to do something against his or her will by force or threat of violence.

• Arranging Fights – Deliberately arranging a fight or willingly participating in such an arranged fight that creates a substantial risk of serious physical injury to the participants.

• Fighting – Engaging in or provoking mutual physical contact involving anger or hostility.

• Threats of Violence – Communicating credible, focused threats of violence or harm to an individual or group of individuals, directly or indirectly, whether by physical, verbal, written, telephone, or electronic actions, which cause the other person to believe his or her life, safety, or property is in danger, or which cause a listener to believe that another person's life, safety, or property is in danger.

• Hazing – Initiating or harassing another student with meaningless, difficult, dangerous, or humiliating tasks through unsafe or illegal behaviors that cause, or are likely to cause, physical injury or endangerment.

• Firearm – Mandatory One-Year Expulsion – Carrying a firearm onto, or possessing a firearm on, school property, school-provided transportation, areas of facilities being used exclusively as school district property, or at school-sponsored events or activities.

### EXCEPTIONAL MISCONDUCT (cont'd.):

• Dangerous Weapons – Carrying a dangerous weapon onto, or possessing a dangerous weapon on, school property, school-provided transportation, areas of facilities being used exclusively as school district property, or at school-sponsored events or activities.

• Small Folding Knives – Carrying onto or possessing a small folding knife with a blade length of 2 1/2" or less and with a blade width of 1/2" or less on school property, school-provided transportation, areas of facilities being used exclusively as school district property, or at school-sponsored events or activities.

• Fireworks, Explosives, Chemicals, and Incendiary Devices – Carrying an uncommon firearm, explosive, chemical, or incendiary device onto, or possessing any of the foregoing on, school property, school-provided transportation, areas of facilities being used exclusively as school district property, or at school-sponsored events or activities.

• Toys Used As Weapons – Possessing and using with malice (in a threatening manner) objects that appear to be capable of causing bodily harm such that a person believes his or her safety is in danger, including toys that appear to be weapons regardless of size.

• Robbery – Taking another's property by force or threat of force.

• Theft – Stealing school district property or the property of a staff member, student, or school visitor.

• Burglary – Forced entry or remaining unlawfully in a District building or room in the building for the purpose of taking property.

• Possession of Stolen Property – Knowingly receiving, retaining, possessing, concealing, or disposing of stolen property.

• Malicious Mischief – Intentionally causing damage to any school property, staff property, or school buses. Also, writing, painting, drawing, or otherwise marking graffiti on any school property, staff property, or school bus that is so extensive that the cost of removing it exceeds \$100.

• Intimidation of School Authorities – Interfering, or attempting to interfere, with the discharge of the official duties of District personnel by using direct, deliberate, or focused threats, force, or violence, such that the staff person believes his or her safety or the well-being of his or her property is in danger.

• Interference with School Authorities – Interfering with the discharge of the official duties of District staff by using force or violence that is non-deliberate and not focused on the staff person, such as attempting to continue a fight when a staff person is trying to stop the fight and inadvertently striking that person, disobeying the orders of school officials to leave school property or disperse as instructed, heckling or harassing school authorities engaged in any lawful task, function, process, or procedure of the school district such

that it interferes with their ability to maintain order or complete their lawful duties, including use of abusive or foul language directed at a school district employee and use of any electronic means that has the purpose of embarrassing, denigrating, or demeaning school staff, or hindering the investigation of an incident by school staff by deliberately lying about, or encouraging others to lie deliberately about, the facts of the incident.

• Malicious Harassment – Maliciously and intentionally committing one of the following acts because of a perception of that person's race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual

### EXCEPTIONAL MISCONDUCT (cont'd.):

orientation, gender identification, or mental, physical, or sensory handicap; Causing physical injury to the victim or another person, or causing physical damage to or destruction of the property of the victim or another person, or threatening a specific person or group of persons such that the persons, or members of the specific group of persons, are in reasonable fear of harm to themselves or their property, including their right to an education or their safety at school.

• Gang/Hate Group Activity – Belonging to an organized gang, hate group, or similar organization or group and knowingly engaging in gang/hate group activity on a school grounds or during school activities or functions.

• Trespass – Entering or remaining unlawfully in a school building or on any part of school grounds or school property for any purpose excluding theft of property.

• Computer Trespass, Tampering, and Misuse – Intentionally violating a school's or the District's computer system or database.

• Arson – Intentionally setting a fire or causing an explosion.

• False Alarm – Activating a fire alarm or calling 911 for other than the intended purpose of the alarm.

• False Threats – Falsely reporting any type of bomb or person with a firearm in any school building or structure, on school grounds, on District-provided transportation, or at a school-sponsored function.

• False Reporting – Knowingly and maliciously falsely reporting or falsely corroborating misbehavior of others that did not occur, including spreading a false rumor maliciously at school, on school grounds, on school-provided transportation, or at a school-sponsored function.

• Lewd Conduct – Engaging in inappropriate sexual or social behavior, such as sexual acts, either singly or consensually with another person, including sexual intercourse, oral sex, sexual touching, indecent exposure, or voyeurism.

• Other Exceptional Misconduct – Engaging in any other activity that would constitute a felony or gross misdemeanor under city, state, or federal law.

### DISTRICT OFFENSES:

In addition to Exceptional Misconduct, students are not allowed to engage in other behaviors which disrupt or interfere with the educational process. Students will be disciplined for participation in any of the following behaviors in school, on school grounds, on District-sponsored transportation, or at any school-sponsored event. Students will also be disciplined for such behavior in any other setting having a real and substantial relationship to the operation of the District, including, but not limited to, the preservation of the health and safety of students and employees and the preservation of an educational process which is conducive to learning.

• Disruptive Conduct – Flagrantly and substantially interfering with teaching or learning in the classroom, school activities, or extracurricular activities.

• Rule-breaking – Breaking a specific, published school rule. This includes breaking school bus rules.

(Continued on reverse side.)