

Discipline Policy

Two Rivers Approach to Behavior

Two Rivers' approach to discipline is derived from the Responsive Classroom model, which incorporates social learning into the daily program. In particular, children are expected to follow teacher directions and school rules, resolve conflicts without physical contact, be respectful of adults and each other, use appropriate language, and respect the rights and property of others. The goal of Two Rivers' approach to behavior is to set a high standard for kind, appropriate conduct and provide students with clear guidelines of acceptable behavior. Staff members will treat students respectfully in all situations. Children are expected to make appropriate choices that ensure safety and respect for themselves and others. Two Rivers is a learning community where students are expected to support each other academically and socially. Each class works on developing an understanding of community around the idea of mutual respect and encouragement.

Throughout the program, staff will demonstrate to students that they can make choices in social situations and that their behavior has consequences. Two Rivers expects students to become positive members of the school community and to uphold the school's expectations for appropriate behavior. Rules and logical consequences will be clearly communicated to students and consequences for breaking rules will be administered calmly and fairly. While expectations and consequences vary according to the developmental level of the students involved, there is a shared understanding of the overall expectations for student behavior at Two Rivers.

Appropriate behavior makes the learning environment a positive and safe place for everyone. This includes being respectful of all people and property, participating in classes, being responsible, showing consideration for self and others, using appropriate language, and offering help when appropriate.

Behavior that is inappropriate includes: hurtful teasing or name calling, repeated ignoring of staff requests, behavior that prevents others from learning, acts of physical aggression, destruction of property, inappropriate touching of others, possession or intended use of illegal drugs or weapons, physical or verbal threats, and acts of cruelty. These behaviors take away from the positive and safe learning community that Two Rivers strives to maintain.

Student Suspension and Expulsion Policies and Procedures

Two Rivers emphasizes character development and respect for others as evidenced by its adoption of both EL Education and Responsive Classroom. It is hoped that this will minimize the need to suspend or expel students. Suspension is defined as the temporary removal of a student from all classes and school activities for disciplinary reasons. Expulsion is the permanent removal of a student from enrollment at Two Rivers for disciplinary reasons.

An administrator may suspend or expel a student under circumstances in which students willfully cause, attempt to cause, or threaten to cause bodily injury or emotional distress to another person, including behavior that occurs off school grounds. "Bodily injury" means a cut, abrasion, bruise, burn, or disfigurement; physical pain; illness; impairment of the function of a bodily member, organ, or mental faculty; or any other injury to the body, no matter how temporary. "Emotional distress" means mental suffering or distress that requires more than trivial treatment or counseling. The decision to suspend or expel a student shall be made by an administrator, with or without the recommendation of the student's teacher or other school employees.

An administrator will determine the number of days for suspensions based on the severity of the infraction, the age of the student, and previous infractions. Students in grades K through 5 will not be suspended for more

than 5 consecutive school days at a time unless the student is facing expulsion. Students in grade grades 6 through 8 will not be suspended for more than 10 consecutive school days at a time unless the student is facing expulsion. No student will be suspended for more than 20 cumulative days in the school year unless the student is facing expulsion or the Head of School provides written justification to the parent describing why exceeding 20 days is a more appropriate disciplinary action than alternative responses. An exception to the 20-day limit may also be made where the student's conduct necessitated an emergency removal and the Head of School provides a written justification for the emergency removal to the parent. Students in Pre-K will not be expelled under any circumstances. A Pre-K student may only be suspended for up to 3 days if the student willfully caused or attempted to cause bodily injury unless the injury was caused in self-defense; or if the student threatened serious bodily injury to another person unless the threat was made in self-defense.

Two Rivers will provide a plan for continuing the education for any student who is suspended. That plan will ensure that the student continues their studies, receives all assignments during the suspension, can communicate with school staff about the assignments, and has the opportunity to make up any work missed during the suspension if the student cannot complete it during the suspension.

Depending on the situation, a student may receive an in-school suspension or an out-of-school suspension. In-school suspension is defined as temporarily removing a student from the student's regular class schedule as a disciplinary consequence, during which time the student remains on school grounds under the supervision of school personnel who are physically in the same location. Out-of-school suspension is defined as temporary removal of a student from school attendance to another setting for disciplinary reasons, during which time the student is not under the supervision of school personnel, and is not allowed on school grounds. Staff will consider whether behavior can be safely and appropriately handled through school-based disciplinary action before involving law enforcement, except where referrals are required based on mandatory reporting requirements.

The suspension or expulsion shall become effective immediately unless otherwise stated by the school administrator. When a student is suspended, a parent is required to pick the child up from the school. At times, parents will need to pick a suspended child up before the school day is complete.

After three suspensions from school within the same school year, expulsion will be seriously considered. Students for whom suspension or expulsion is being considered will be told that this is a possibility and given an opportunity to present his/her side of the story before a final decision regarding suspension or expulsion is made.

Prior to issuing the suspension, the school administrator will meet with the student, notify the student of what he/she is accused of doing and the information that the school has to believe that the student engaged in such behavior, and give the student an opportunity to present his/her side of the story or explanation for his/her behavior. After this meeting, the school administrator will issue written notice to the parent detailing the length of and reason for the suspension.

For students facing suspension of more than 5 days, including expulsion, the school administrator will meet with the student, notify the student of what he/she is accused of doing and the information that the school has to believe that the student engaged in such behavior, and give the student an opportunity to present his/her side of the story or explanation for his/her behavior. If necessary, the school administrator will conduct an investigation into the circumstances of the student's behavior and any explanation provided by the student. At the school administrator's discretion, the student may be suspended pending the results of this investigation and recommendation for further disciplinary action from the school administrator. School staff will make an

attempt to complete the investigation within 3 school days, but in some cases, the investigation will require additional time.

After the meeting with the student and any investigation, the school administrator will issue written notice to the parent with a recommendation for long term suspension or expulsion and the reason for this recommendation. This notice will explain the information that is being relied on as a basis for the recommendation. Within 5 school days of the recommendation for long term suspension or expulsion, a hearing will be held to make a final determination about the disciplinary action proposed. The student will be suspended pending the results of the hearing. At the hearing, the school administrator, or designee will present the information relied on to support the recommended disciplinary action; the student will be given an opportunity to fully respond to that information; the student may be represented by an attorney; and the student may present any information that he/she wants considered.

In most cases, the Executive Director will act as the impartial decision maker at this hearing. In cases where the Executive Director cannot serve as the impartial decision maker, an impartial decision maker will be appointed by the Executive Director to hear all of the information presented and make a final decision about the proposed disciplinary action. Within two school days after the hearing, the decision maker will notify the parent in writing of the final determination and reason for that determination.

Behavior Policy for Students with Special Needs

Students with special needs may have individual behavior guidelines and policies. To maintain the safety of all students and staff, however, acts of physical aggression of any kind are not permitted at Two Rivers and will be addressed with consequences specific to the student that commits them. For students who have an IEP, out-of-school suspensions will be handled in accordance with the provisions set forth by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004.

Students with a disability are subject to disciplinary action just as other students are, as long as repeated disciplinary actions do not establish a pattern of removing the student from a classroom setting that denies the student a FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education). Exclusion from class for more than ten school days in an academic year would constitute a change in placement under IDEA. As such, the IEP team must convene a manifestation determination review to determine whether the behavior was a manifestation of, or caused by, the student's disability, and if so, ensure that the student's IEP contains appropriate supports to assist the child in being successful.

At the time of a suspension that would constitute a change in placement under IDEA, the parent will be notified in writing (typically as part of the suspension letter) that a manifestation determination meeting is required, and will be provided with a copy of their Procedural Safeguards Notice. Two Rivers will work with the parent to schedule the manifestation determination meeting within 10 days of the suspension. Team members in attendance at the meeting will include the parent, special education teacher, general education teacher, Director of Student Support, and any other school team members or individuals invited by the parent who can assist in making the manifestation determination. Following the meeting, parents will be notified in writing about the outcome of the Manifestation Determination, and provided with a copy of any changes to their child's IEP and/or Behavioral Intervention plan. For more information, contact the Director of Student Support, Laura Lorenzen (llorenzen@tworiverspcs.org).

Grievance Policy

Parent Complaints and Grievances

To address a concern or seek resolution of a problem at Two Rivers, we encourage you to first address the person most immediately involved in the issue with which you are concerned. If after this step your concern is not addressed to your satisfaction, you may inform the Principal, Assistant Principal, Dean, or, if the concern involves a student with disabilities, you may inform the Director of Student Support. Your concern will be responded to within a reasonable period of time, usually 5 business days. If you have gone through the parental complaint and grievance procedure listed above without reconciliation of your complaint, you may make a formal complaint in writing following the procedures below. The process above is not required before a formal complaint can be submitted.

Formal Complaints

If you wish to make a formal complaint, you must do so in writing to the Principal or the Director of Student Support. All complaints will be adequately, reliably, and objectively investigated, and any evidence or witnesses presented by the person(s) making the complaint will be considered. Your concern will be responded to in writing within a reasonable period of time, usually 10-15 business days, although every effort will be made to resolve the issue as quickly as possible. There are some investigations that may take more than 10-15 business days.

The response will summarize the concern(s) raised and the course and outcome of the investigation, and will identify an appropriate resolution. If after this point the matter is still not resolved, you may contact the Executive Director within 5 business days, who will consider all information presented and respond in writing, summarizing the outcome of the appeal, within 10 business days. If your concern is still not resolved, you must contact the President of the Board of Trustees in writing within 5 business days. The President of the Board of Trustees, or his/her designee, will consider all information presented and respond in writing to your grievance, summarizing the outcome of the appeal, within 30 calendar days of receiving your written grievance.

Posting a complaint on a Two Rivers listserv will not be considered a formal submission. These grievance procedures apply to any concerns that may arise, including but not limited to concerns about discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, or otherwise. All information presented and discovered during the course of an investigation will remain confidential. Two Rivers will not retaliate against any person who raises a concern using the procedures outlined above or otherwise participates in the investigation of such concerns. If, during the course of the investigation, it is determined that corrective or remedial action is necessary, such action will be taken in a prompt and reasonable manner.

Contact information for the individuals to whom formal grievances are to be made are as follows:

Clara Botstein
Chair, Board of Trustees
board@tworiverspcs.org
202-546-4477

Jessica Wodatch
Executive Director
jwodatch@tworiverspcs.org

202-546-4477

Maggie Bello
MS Principal
mbello@tworiverspcs.org
202-543-8477

Laura Lorenzen
Director of Student Support
llorenzen@tworiverspcs.org
202-546-4477

Caroline Mwendwa-Baker
4th Street ES Principal
cbaker@tworiverspcs.org
202-546-4477

Chelsie Jones
Young ES Principal
cjones@tworiverspcs.org
202-388-1360

Attendance Policy

Student Attendance and Excuse Notes

Two Rivers demonstrates a relentless commitment to on-time attendance for all students. By law, student attendance is mandatory, and a parent responsibility. Per DC municipal regulations, students are legally expected to be in school for the entire school day unless the absence is excused. Listed below are Two Rivers' categories for valid excuses:

- Illness or other medical cause experienced by the student;
- Exclusion, by direction of the authorities of the District of Columbia, due to quarantine, contagious disease, infection, infestation, or other condition requiring separation from others;
- Death in the student's immediate family;
- Necessity for a student to attend judiciary or administrative proceedings;
- Observance of a religious holiday;
- Lawful suspension or exclusion from school by school authorities;
- Temporary closing of facilities or suspension of classes due to severe weather, official activities, holidays, malfunctioning equipment, unsafe or unsanitary conditions, or other condition(s) or emergency requiring a school closing or suspension of classes;
- Failure of the District of Columbia to provide transportation in cases where the District of Columbia has a legal responsibility for the transportation of the student;
- Medical or dental appointments for the student;
- Absences to allow students to visit their parent or a legal guardian, who is in the military; immediately before, during, or after deployment; and
- An emergency or other circumstances approved by an educational institution through conversation with the principal.

Regular attendance is imperative to ensure that students are learning and part of the community. Please keep in mind that when your child is late for school it directly affects his or her day and that of the whole class. Two Rivers accounts for the attendance of each student on a daily basis, so we ask that you call the school before 8:15am if your child will not be in school that day and send a note to the front desk via letter or email upon his or her return. If your child will be arriving late or departing early, parents must send a note to alert the school.

In general, Two Rivers requests families consult the school calendar when scheduling appointments or vacations, and whenever possible, please do not schedule anything that conflicts with the school day. Extended absences for reasons other than illness or emergency require prior consultation and approval from the Principal. Absences for vacations will not be excused. If a student is absent for six or more consecutive days due to illness, a parent or guardian must present a medical excuse from the Doctor to the front desk via letter or email. City laws require Two Rivers to abide by strict regulations around attendance. Excuse notes must be turned in within five days. Please see the front desk if you wish to drop off a medical excuse from the Doctor. If you wish to email a medical excuse, please use one of the following email addresses, depending on which school/campus your child attends:

YOUNG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
youngattendance@tworiverspcs.org

4TH STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
4ESattendance@tworiverspcs.org

4TH STREET MIDDLE SCHOOL
4MSattendance@tworiverspcs.org

Two Rivers is held accountable by the DC PCSB for attendance for all our students, including preschool and prekindergarten. When our attendance suffers, our tier status may be impacted.

In order for students to be released early from school, parents or guardians must submit a note to the front desk and an authorized pick-up adult must be present to sign out the student. With or without a note, Two Rivers will not release students independently at anytime for any reason.

By law, Two Rivers must contact CFSA immediately in the case of 10 unexcused absences at any point in the school year for students age 5-13. Two Rivers must also contact Court Social Services (CSS) and the Office of the Attorney General for students age 14 - 17 who accumulate 15 unexcused absences at any point in the school year. In order to participate in extracurricular school sponsored events, a student must be present for the entire school day, or arrive late with a valid excuse note from a parent. In the middle school, participation in after school activities is at the discretion of middle school staff based on regarding grade based eligibility and discipline.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Two Rivers affirms the right of all students, families, and staff regardless of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, veteran status, genetic information, or other status protected by federal, state, or local law or any other basis prohibited by applicable law, to be treated with respect and to be protected from intimidation, discrimination, physical harm, and/or harassment in its educational programs and activities.

TRANSGENDERED STUDENTS

Transgender students are protected in DC schools under city law; the DC Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination in educational institutions based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family responsibilities, political affiliation, and disability. Students at Two Rivers have been and will continue to be able to use the bathroom that matches their gender identity and be called by the name and pronoun that matches their gender identity.

UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

Two Rivers serves all students who are residents of the District of Columbia, including students who are undocumented. DC protects and serves all residents, regardless of their immigration status. Please note that all children in the United States have the right to a free public education, regardless of their race, ethnic background, religion, sex, language, family's income level, or immigration status.

Questions or concerns related to our non-discrimination/non-harassment policies should be addressed to:

Caroline Mwendwa-Baker
4th Street Principal
cbaker@tworiverspcs.org
202-546-4477

Maggie Bello
Middle School Principal
mbello@tworiverspcs.org
202-543-8477

Chelsie Jones
Young ES Principal
cjones@tworiverspcs.org
202-388-1360

For questions or concerns related to elementary or middle school students with disabilities, please contact:

Laura Lorenzen
Director of Student Support
llorenzen@tworiverspcs.org
202-546-4477

FERPA Notice

Student Records

Two Rivers maintains a comprehensive, computerized database of student information. This information is entered and reviewed for accuracy and disseminated in accordance with applicable laws. Access to this database will be restricted to school staff. Hard copies of confidential student records will be similarly maintained in a locked file cabinet. We ask that parents make the school aware of any changes that may occur during the school year such as a change of address or phone number. These changes should be made in writing with the front desk staff or via attendance e-mail. Requests for information will be processed within two business days.

Release of Information

A parent/guardian has the right to review the student's educational records unless the custodian of the educational records has received a copy of a court order to the contrary. By law; if both parents are recorded on child's birth certificate, both parents have legal birth rights to access student academic and medical records; unless a court order is on file stating otherwise. Educational records may contain personally identifying data, progress reports, courses taken, standardized achievement test scores, attendance data, aptitude tests, psychological tests, health data, family background information, observations, and reports of serious or recurrent behavior problems. In order for the school to release any information to a third party we must first receive written permission from the parent and guardian.

Withdrawal From School/Transfer of Records

If a family wishes to withdraw a student from Two Rivers, they must submit a student Transfer and Withdrawal form to the office formally announcing the family's intent to leave the school and indicating the last day of attendance at Two Rivers. Upon request of the parent, the Registrar will prepare the student's records to be emailed, faxed or mailed to the new school.

Open Meetings Policy

When and where does the Board meet?

The Board meets regularly throughout the school year at Two Rivers, usually from 6 to 8 pm. There are 10 Board meetings that are open to the public. Information about Board meetings is available in the school's main office and online at www.tworiverspcs.org > community > information for parents and families. Minutes from Board meetings are available in the front office.