



District Advisory: Student Altercations (Physical and Verbal)

This advisory is intended to provide guidance to teachers who observe students engaging in a physical or verbal altercation.

District employees are required to enforce student standards of conduct and, when they observe or receive a report of a violation of these standards, to appropriately intervene and/or immediately seek assistance. (Board Policy 5131, Conduct.) School staff are also responsible for the proper supervision of students at all times when students are subject to District rules. (Board Policy 5142, Safety.)

Please do not hesitate to contact your site principal or designee regarding any questions you have about this advisory or specific situations at your school site.

General Guidelines and Appropriate Responses to Student Altercations:

- **Be Responsible and Reasonable.** Teachers should understand that the law protects them from criminal prosecution or criminal penalties during the performance of their duties, for exercising the same degree of physical control a parent would be legally privileged to exercise. However, teachers may not exceed the amount of physical control reasonably necessary to maintain order, protect property, protect the health and safety of students, or maintain proper and appropriate conditions for learning. Ultimately, the question of how, when, or whether a staff member physically intervenes is dependent on whether or not that individual feels it is reasonable and safe to do so. That is a judgment only the individual staff member can make based on the unique circumstances of an incident. Corporal punishment, defined as the willful infliction of, or willfully causing the infliction of physical pain on a student, is strictly prohibited.
- **Be Proactive.** Teachers should never ignore escalating or aggressive student behavior, whether verbal or nonverbal, and should take immediate and appropriate steps to address and de-escalate such behaviors at the earliest point possible. If ignored, small acts of aggression can quickly escalate to more significant and potentially violent aggression. When intervening and/or seeking necessary assistance from administration, time is of the essence.
- **Be Authoritative.** In the event of a physical altercation or escalating aggressive student behaviors, teachers should provide specific verbal directives in a sufficiently loud, neutral voice for students to stop the altercation and for bystanders to leave the area and remain uninvolved in the altercation. When giving directives, use student names, if known.



training in nonviolent crisis intervention (ProACT), which provides strategies to intervene in a way that maintains student safety and dignity and de-escalates the situation while safeguarding their own safety and the safety of other students and staff. They are valuable resources ready to assist you and our students.

- **Follow-up Support.** Support and assist injured students, staff, or bystanders as needed. After the incident, document what happened in a clear, objective way and immediately share such documentation with the site principal. Work collaboratively with the site principal and other staff to develop a plan to address the altercation and next steps (disciplinary or otherwise).
- **Get Trained.** The District provides regular training opportunities for non-violent crisis interventions and the resolution of student conflicts. Please contact your principal if you are interested in participating in this type of training.