



PAT-PPS Contract Language on Student Discipline Needs To Change

November 3, 2022

Dear PPS Community,

Tuesday afternoon, [as we met to bargain with our educators' union](#), we recognized an important, shared underlying understanding: **the discipline section of our contract needs to change.**

Black, Native American, and other students of color are referred out of class significantly more often. Students receiving special education services also bear the burden of disproportionate discipline. This “discipline” is far from the root of the term “discipline”: to instruct, train, and educate.

Because that instruction is a collective and shared responsibility, we’ve worked with our educators, staff, school leaders, Board, parents, and students to update our student conduct and [discipline policy](#). The policy now reflects our commitment to restorative justice and trauma-informed practices. The policy includes evidence-based and trauma-informed directives aimed at building relational trust and repairing harm. We want educators and students to feel safe and supported, and to be working together to build positive learning spaces.

To build a new system of discipline, though, we need to look at each student and each incident individually. That’s why we proposed to eliminate mandatory minimum suspensions from our contract with our educators’ union. The Association’s initial proposal did not include that core principle of our initial proposal. We need to eliminate mandatory minimum suspensions.

Under their initial proposal, the grounds for excluding students would remain highly subjective. Rather than terms that would decrease how long or how often students are excluded, their proposal would create an “intervention space” in each school. We believe the creation of such a space would not only make it far easier to exclude a student, but also increase the stigma associated with that exclusion.

Student exclusion is student exclusion, whether that means leaving class or the building.

You can read our initial proposal [here](#), and the Portland Association of Teachers’s initial proposal [here](#).

Their proposal indicates a commitment to restorative justice, and a desire for practices that are trauma-informed and culturally-responsive. On this, we can certainly agree. We’re hopeful we can build on this alignment to develop a proposal that works for everyone – our students, our educators, and our system.

Forward, together.

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