

Code of Conduct

Our code of conduct emphasizes grace and courtesy. Expectations for behavior at school are no different than expectations for behavior in our homes or the social community – respect and care for each other, our environment, and ourselves. It is the practice of good manners. The belief of Branch Line School is that letting student do as he likes when he has not yet developed any powers of control betrays the idea of freedom. Thus, our approach to conduct nurtures the development of self-discipline, effecting positive behavior change through a prepared environment that is a unique interaction between the teacher, other students, and the physical space. Self-discipline is a personal goal that a student usually achieves. However, we recognize that a student will make mistakes and that this is part of learning. As adults who are responsible for guiding the student, we have developed a Code of Conduct that reflects the positive culture of our school and is clear, consistent, and equitable to support the whole community during an incident.

Discipline is based on:

- respect for the community and the student,
- knowledge and understanding of the developmental needs and characteristics of the student,
- the needs of the group, and
- the understanding that appropriate behavior is not only taught, but modeled.

To that end, The Branch Line School Code of Conduct defines a respectful process that:

- supports the student community, the student, the teacher, the parent, and
- helps the student to learn to socialize and take responsibility for actions as part of personal growth.

Honesty

Honesty in all matters is the basic expectation at Branch Line School. Trust, an outgrowth of honesty, is essential to relationships that hold our community together. In the face of social pressures, truthfulness can sometimes be difficult to maintain; however, honesty is the quality that we value the most in our students.

Kindness

We expect that all Branch Line School students will treat others with consideration both inside and outside the classroom. Students' treatment of each other must be respectful at all times, whether or not an adult is present. Branch Line School encourages students, faculty, and parents to accept, tolerate, and welcome differences.

Discipline

An integral approach to conduct is one of self-discipline. We understand that students test limits as they grow and they sometimes make mistakes. Our discipline system is based on the philosophy that if a student is honest in admitting mistakes, his straightforwardness is the first step in accepting responsibility for the mistake, learning from the experience, and not repeating it.

Every student at Branch Line School has a right to learn and thrive in a school atmosphere that is conducive to academic achievement and social growth. Any behavior that threatens to disrupt the learning process or pose a danger to others is unacceptable.

In the event a student is unable to comply with classroom rules and appropriate behavior, the Code of Conduct discipline guidelines at the end of this document that will provide standards of how particular offenses will be handled.

Special Needs Students and Discipline

Students with disabilities have the same responsibilities and rights as other students and may be disciplined for the same behavioral offenses. However, certain Code of Conduct proceedings must be altered if the student being considered for suspension or expulsion is a special needs student.

Sexual Harassment

If a student feels that he or she is being harassed because of his/her gender or sexual orientation, the student should speak immediately to his/her instructor, the Civil Rights Coordinator, or another trusted adult in the school community.

Grievance Procedure: The Board of Education prefers that all grievances be

resolved as close to their source as possible. All members of the school community and all outside parties involved in a dispute are encouraged to deal directly with the other parties involved. Any grievance should only move to a higher level of authority after direct communication between those initially involved has failed to produce a resolution.

The Board further holds that any party with a valid grievance should have the opportunity to find satisfaction in the resolution of their grievance. All members of the school community will be expected to make all reasonable efforts to reach a solution that is acceptable to all parties involved. Any party bringing a grievance to administration will be made aware of all requirements for filing a grievance, as well as all avenues for resolving a grievance.

Categories of Behavior

In the event a student is unable to honor classroom ethics and appropriate behavior, the following Categories of Behavior outline how particular offenses will be handled. The leadership team, along with the classroom instructor and potentially other professionals, will determine the level of response that applies to a situation based on the number of previous incidents, type of behavior, and the severity of the incident. Sanctions will be age-appropriate and consistent with the objectives of the school's approach to discipline. The number of incidents for a student does not carry forward to the next year. Days of suspension are accumulated for the period of one school year only.

If a parent desires to appeal the resolution of a Category B or C discipline sanction, then he or she is to bring this to the attention of the leadership team. If this appeal does not result in an agreeable resolution, then the parent may meet with the Board of Education for further appeal of the sanction.

CATEGORY A: BEHAVIOR THAT IS INSUBORDINATE OR DISRUPTS ORDER WITHIN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Examples

1. Repeated or severe disrespect toward staff members; or peers; destruction of school property; refusal to follow directions resulting in disruption of school

activities or unsafe conditions;

2. Abusive or profane language; gambling;

3. Setting off false alarms;

4. Unauthorized departure from class, school floor, school events, or school building/property;

5. Forgery of any sort, including parental signatures, cheating, plagiarism or copying of anyone else's work.

6. Harassment or discrimination based on any category protected by law. (If harassment or discrimination is reported, initiate Non-Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Policy Steps.)

7. Bullying. Bullying is taken very seriously and will not be tolerated.

Incident/Response Level

First

1. Teacher conducts questioning process to find out the facts and leads the student to a resolution that includes responsible action by the student.

2. Teacher advises the parent.

3. Teacher documents situation, files Incident Report with leadership team.

4. Teacher follows up with student within one week to help student evaluate resolution and updates the Incident Report.

Second

1. Leadership team member conducts the questioning process to find out the facts

and presents findings to all involved in the situation. Documents Incident Report.

2. Leadership team member meets with the student, teacher, and other students involved to discuss and implement the resolution which may include an after-school study or community service component.

3. Parent notified of the incident and plan for resolution via telephone, or, if warranted, in a meeting with the student and member of leadership team.

4. Leadership team member follows up with student within one week to confirm resolution with a discussion regarding a self-evaluation. Incident Report updated.

Third

1. Leadership team member conducts the questioning process to find out the facts and presents findings to all involved in the situation. Documents Incident Report.

2. Leadership team member immediately notifies the parent of the incident and may request a meeting at the school. Parent is advised of the student's rights.

3. Sanctions will be age-appropriate and consistent with the objectives of the school's approach to discipline as stated earlier in this Code. In some situations the consequences may include a one to three day in-school suspension (or an out-of-school suspension depending on severity of offense) where the student will perform academic and/or community service work in a supervised setting. The student is required to write or narrate (depending on developmental level) his/her reflections about the experience. All school related social privileges will be revoked during this period.

4. A Discipline Support Team may be convened at the discretion of the leadership team.

5. Suspension noted in student's file. Incident Report updated.

CATEGORY B: UNWANTED, THREATENING, OR HURTFUL BEHAVIOR OR

PHYSICAL CONTACT

Examples

- Fighting; shoving; kicking; hitting; poking; spitting; biting; assault
- Physical intimidation;
- Making threatening comments orally or in writing;
- Unwanted physical contact; using an implement in any way that makes another student or staff member feel threatened.

Incident/Response Level

First

1. Leadership team member conducts questioning process with all involved to find out the facts and parent(s) are immediately notified of the incident and may be requested to attend a meeting at the school.
2. Leadership team member meets with the student, parent and teacher and informs the student of the offense, evidence, and of the presence of any witnesses; documents Incident Report. Parent is advised of the student's rights.
3. Sanctions will be age appropriate and consistent with the objectives of the school's approach to discipline as stated earlier in this Code. In some situations the consequences may include a one to three day in-school suspension (or an out-of-school suspension depending on severity of offense) where the student will perform academic and/or community service work in a supervised setting. The student is required to write or narrate reflections about his/her experience. All social privileges will be revoked during this period. Leadership team member may request to meet with parent (s) and student prior to student's return to class to review behavioral expectations for the student.
4. A Discipline Support Team may be established to create a Discipline Action

Plan.

5. Failure to comply with the specifics of the Discipline Action Plan may result in a suspension.

6. Suspension noted in student's file. Incident Report updated.

Second

1. Leadership team member conducts questioning process to find out the facts and parent (s) immediately notified of the incident and requested to pick up student.

2. Leadership team member meets with the student, parent and teacher and informs the student verbally and in writing of the offense, evidence, and of the accounts of any witnesses. The student may present his or her response to others' accounts of the incident. Leadership team member documents Incident Report.

3. Sanctions will be age-appropriate and consistent with the objectives of the school's approach to discipline as stated earlier in this Code. Depending on the severity of the offense, the consequences may include a one to three day in-school suspension, an out-of-school suspension where the student will perform academic and/or community service work in a supervised setting, or a long-term out-of-school suspension (up to ten days). The student is required to write or narrate reflections about his/her experience. All social privileges will be revoked during this period. Leadership team member(s) may request to meet with parent (s) and student prior to student's return to class to review behavioral expectations for the student.

4. Suspension noted in student's file. Incident Report updated.

5. If the offence violates the law, the leadership team will contact the appropriate authorities.

CATEGORY C: ILLEGAL ACTS

Leadership team member may contact the appropriate authorities immediately depending on the nature or severity of the dangerous behavior.

Examples

- Assault that physically threatens the safety of or harms an individual;
- Arson; Theft; Vandalism, i.e. defacing or destruction of school property or any act that creates an unsafe school environment;
- Possession or use of tobacco products including cigarettes, drugs, or alcohol (real or look-alike) in school building, on school property, at school sponsored events, or on school-arranged transportation;
- Selling or transferring tobacco products, drugs, or alcohol – real or look-alike;
- Using or possessing a weapon that could potentially cause physical harm to individual/s.

Response

Note: In accordance with state and federal law, any student who commits arson, criminal sexual conduct, or possesses a dangerous weapon must be expelled (unless the object was not knowingly in the student's possession, was not intended for use as a weapon, or was brought to school with the permission of the Leadership team).

1. Leadership team member conducts questioning process to find out the facts and parent (s) immediately notified of the incident and requested to meet at the school.
2. Leadership team member meets with the student, parent and teacher and informs the student verbally and in writing of the offense, evidence, and of the accounts of any witnesses. The student may present his or her response to others'

accounts of the incident. Parent is advised of the student's rights.

3. If, after consideration of the situation and facts, the Leadership team member determines that the student has committed the offense, then the student is released to the parent and advised of the right to respond further within a reasonable time not to exceed 10 days. The student is suspended during this period of time.

4. After this suspension period and hearing additional evidence presented by student, the Leadership team member has discretion to suspend or refer the situation to the Director and Board of Trustees for possible expulsion.

5. Leadership team member documents incident, process of investigation, and findings.

In the event the consequence is a suspension (1 – 10 days), the following terms apply:

Leadership team member may request to meet with parent (s) and student prior to student's return to class to review behavioral expectations for the student.

- Parent and student sign commitment to written Discipline Action Plan.
- Student plan requires a specific number of regular sessions with Leadership team member and Discipline Support Team.
- Failure to comply with the specifics of the Discipline Action Plan or repetition of the behavior will result in further suspensions or expulsion.

6. Suspension/expulsion noted in student's file.

“The Questioning Process” of Branch Line School's Code of Conduct

In the Code of Conduct under Categories A, B, and C, there is an expression, “questioning process”, that refers to the discussion that the adults have with a student or students who have been involved in a situation that requires a resolution and, potentially, a disciplinary action. To clarify what actually happens in these meetings with the students, please refer to the Conflict Resolution

Guidelines and Conflict Resolution Process.

The Conflict Resolution process references Branch Line School Code of Conduct. In working with the student to identify an issue and solve a problem it must be stated that we do this in a confidential way with the student (students) and the teacher with communications to the parent/s. Many times a class dynamic will be handled by the teacher in a community meeting with students who work together to resolve the problem. The administration becomes a part of the supportive disciplinary process only as defined by the Code of Conduct.

Conflict Resolution Guidelines

The teacher, or the teacher and the leadership team, will lead a guided conversation with the intent to discover the facts, as well as the student's motivation, feelings, and beliefs about what happened in the situation. The adults will demonstrate that they care about the student and are concerned about this situation. They will model the respect that they expect the student to show to others, both peers and adults. Recognizing that the student has certain age-appropriate behaviors expected on his/her part; these concepts will be applied appropriately. This process shall be used either informally outside the Code of Conduct or shall be applied at the appropriate Response Level in conjunction with the Code.

Goal: To encourage the student to communicate the events that occurred in a proper sequence and to accept responsibility for his/her own actions within the group. He/she will also participate in development, acceptance, and implementation of the resolutions.

The student's responsibilities are to:

- Participate in a conversation following a conflict; (Brainstorming, Discussion, Rephrasing)
- Share his/her own perception of what occurred;
- Respectfully listen to others share their side of the incident;
- Respond to any missing or conflicting information; and to
- Help develop a resolution with the group.

Conflict Resolution Process

1. Gather all involved persons together. The teacher (with the administration, when appropriate) will mediate a conversation with all involved.
2. Each student and adult involved will share his/her observations or view of the incident.
3. The adult will listen for the real message as to what occurred, rephrasing when necessary.
4. The adult will help the group reach a decision as to which events occurred and in what order.
5. The group will talk and develop an appropriate resolution, making sure that all parties involved feel supported.
6. The exact resolution will be determined for each incident.
7. Implementation of the resolutions will be facilitated and supported by the adults.

Refusal by the student to do work and to comply with specific classroom rules may be cause for implementation of this conflict resolution process as well as other conflicts that may occur between the student and the teachers, school personnel, or other students. As in all situations at the school or at school-related activities outside the school grounds, the safety of all people is the first area of concern to be addressed when there is a conflict. The faculty and administration's first priority is to restore the balance in the classroom community and then begin the process of conflict resolution

Harassment of Students

Harassment of students is prohibited, and will not be tolerated. This includes inappropriate conduct by other students as well as any other person in the school environment, including employees, Board members, parents, guests, contractors, vendors and volunteers. It is the policy of the School to provide a safe and

nurturing educational environment for all of its students. This policy applies to all activities on school property and to all school sponsored activities whether on or off school property.

Harassment is defined as inappropriate conduct that is repeated enough, or serious enough, to negatively impact a student's educational, physical or emotional well-being. This would include harassment based on any of the legally protected characteristics, such as sex, race, color, national origin, religion, height, weight, marital status or disability. This policy, however, is not limited to these legal categories and includes any harassment that would negatively impact students.

Harassment through any means, including electronically transmitted methods (e.g., internet, telephone or cell phone, personal digital assistant (PDA), computer or wireless hand held device), may be subject to School disciplinary procedures. Such behavior is considered harassment whether it takes place on or off school property, at any school-sponsored function, or in a school vehicle if it is considered to have a negative impact on the school environment.

Any student who believes s/he has been or is the victim of harassment should immediately report the situation to the teacher, the leadership team member or assistant leadership team member, or if the complaint relates to the leadership team member, may report it directly to the Superintendent. Complaints will be investigated in accordance with administrative guidelines.

Every student should, and every staff member must report any situation that they believe to be improper harassment of a student. Reports may be made to those identified above.

If the investigation finds harassment occurred it will result in prompt and appropriate remedial action. This may include up to expulsion for students, up to discharge for employee, exclusion for parents, guests, volunteers and contractors, and removal from any officer position and/or a request to resign for Board Members.

Retaliation against any person for complaining about harassment, or participating in a harassment investigation, is prohibited. Suspected retaliation should be reported in the same manner as **harassment**.

Intentionally false harassment reports, made to get someone in trouble, are also prohibited. Retaliation and intentionally false reports may result in disciplinary action as indicated above.

The following definitions are provided for guidance only. If a student or other individual believes there has been harassment, regardless of whether it fits a particular definition, s/he should report it and allow the administration to determine the appropriate course of action.

Sexual Harassment, may include, but is not limited to:

- A. verbal harassment or abuse;
- B. pressure for sexual activity;
- C. repeated remarks with sexual or demeaning implications;
- D. unwelcome touching;
- E. sexual jokes, posters, cartoons, etc.;
- F. suggesting or demanding sexual involvement, accompanied by implied or explicit threats concerning one's grades, safety;
- G. a pattern of conduct, which can be subtle in nature, that has sexual overtones and is intended to create or has the effect of creating discomfort and/or humiliation to another;
- H. remarks speculating about a person's sexual activities or sexual history, or remarks about one's own sexual activities or sexual history;
- I. Sexting

Confidentiality

Every reasonable effort will be made to maintain confidentiality during the investigation process. However, a proper investigation will, in some circumstances, require the disclosure of names and allegations.