

IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS



AN ISSUE BRIEF FROM LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD STAFF

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OBJECTIVE

In-school suspension programs provide short-term education and behavior management services for students removed from the classroom for discipline-related issues.

KEY FACTS

- ◆ The Texas Education Code does not outline requirements for in-school suspension (ISS) programs.
- ◆ Approximately 62 percent of students who are disciplined are assigned to ISS programs each school year.
- ◆ Most students who are assigned to the ISS program are assigned for violation of the local student code of conduct.

BUDGETARY IMPACT

School districts may use funding received through the Foundation School Program to fund ISS programs.

STATUTORY REFERENCES

Texas Education Code, Chapter 37

In-school suspension (ISS) is a form of student discipline used in Texas school districts. Typically, ISS requires a student to report to a designated room on the school campus other than the student's assigned classroom. Students are in the ISS classroom as briefly as a single class period or for as long as several days. The ISS classroom is staffed by a monitor who typically supervises and guides students in completing classroom work. The monitor may also be responsible for addressing the behavior that led to the removal from the classroom.

Although not required by state law ISS programs are commonly used in Texas school districts. The Texas Education Code (TEC) Chapter 37 outlines the circumstances under which a student may be removed from the classroom. TEC, Section 37.002 authorizes a principal to place a student in ISS or another disciplinary setting when removed from the classroom. The only other statutory provision regarding ISS is related to students having the opportunity to complete each course in which the student was enrolled at the time of removal. State law does not address elements of ISS program such as student length of stay and staffing.

TEXAS DISTRICT PRACTICES

In 2011, the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) conducted school performance reviews of the student behavior management systems of six Texas school districts. The review team observed that ISS programs vary in how they are operated within a district, and from campus to campus. Some districts reviewed by the LBB lacked clear procedures for operating the ISS program at the campus level. There was a lack of training for the instructor or monitor assigned to the ISS classroom. Through focus groups and interviews with teachers and principals the review team identified some of the challenges facing ISS programs, such as:

- lack of counseling and tutoring,
- lack of certified instructors,
- failure by teachers to send student assignments,
- inadequate communication between ISS instructor and classroom teachers, and
- high numbers of students sent to ISS.

In school year 2010–11, the total number of students disciplined in Texas schools was 954,784. Of this population, 596,422 students (62 percent) were assigned to ISS programs. These students generated over 1.5 million ISS actions, indicating that some students received multiple ISS assignments during the school year.

Texas students are assigned ISS for a variety of behaviors. The most common is violation of the local student code of conduct. Each district's Board of Trustees is required to adopt a student code of conduct addressing grounds on which a student may be removed from the regular classroom.

Fig. 1 shows the most common and other reasons for ISS assignments, the number of students assigned to ISS and the number of incidents for school year 2010–11.

BEST PRACTICES

The Connecticut State Department of Education developed guidelines for ISS and out of school suspension. These guidelines suggest policies for districts to consider when developing effective ISS programs. These policies may include: staffing the ISS setting, including academic credentials and qualifications of instructional and administrative personnel; grouping of students by grade level and academic needs; physical location of the ISS setting; instructional content and assignment of classroom work; and teaching social skills, positive behavior and improved decision making.

A report entitled *Effective In-School Suspension Programs* by Mary Hrabak and Doris Settles identified some key components of ISS programs. The report indicates that successful programs start by setting the stage—students should know what behaviors can lead to ISS. Once in the ISS program, students should be provided interactive supervision to include a 15:1 student/teacher ratio. Some type of behavior counseling should be available to help redirect the inappropriate behavior that caused the student to be placed in ISS. In addition, school-wide consistency and coordination should be a priority to ensure an understanding of the process and the goals of an effective program. Finally, parental involvement should be a component of the ISS program to help redirect inappropriate behavior.

USEFUL REFERENCES

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/site/default.asp (2010) *Guidelines for in-school and out-of-school suspensions*.

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FIG. 1
IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION
NUMBER OF STUDENTS ASSIGNED AND NUMBER OF INCIDENTS
SCHOOL YEAR 2010–11

DISCIPLINARY ACTION REASON	STUDENTS	INCIDENTS
Violated Local Code of Conduct	579,927	1,489,186
Fighting/Mutual Combat	24,606	27,532
Controlled Substance/Drugs	4,874	5,306
Tobacco	3,616	4,035
Serious/Persistent Misconduct	1,733	4,235
Other*	6,287	7,022
Total	621,043	1,537,316

* Excludes the number of students and incidents less than five to comply with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

NOTE: Students represents a duplicate count because students may be assigned to ISS for more than one disciplinary action reason.

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency.