

Guide to Supporting Student Behavior: Elementary School

Our Approach:

<p>Every student should be cared for, feel a sense of belonging, and be safe at all times.</p>	<p>All community members have a responsibility to contribute to an environment where students are known, are invested in their learning, and are motivated to make positive choices.</p>	<p>We are guided by agreed-upon expectations that serve as a foundation for physical, emotional, social and psychological wellbeing.</p>
--	--	--

We Believe:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All people, and especially children, make mistakes. Mistakes are a part of a healthy childhood and offer us opportunities to learn and grow. Teaching and learning is the foundation of effective discipline. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children learn best when they feel safe, cared for and are connected to the adults that work with them at school.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the elementary school years, children experience rapid developmental growth. They are ever-changing and always have the capacity to learn, grow and do better. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behavior, including misbehavior, can be considered a form of communication and we engage stakeholders (families, teachers, students) in meaningful inquiry about the root causes of misbehavior.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childhood misbehavior may indicate that the child hasn't obtained a key social or emotional skill yet. Some behaviors are associated with neurodiversity. Neurodiversity is an expected feature of diverse and healthy communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When a child's behavior affects others, we help them understand the impact of the behavior, accept responsibility, and repair any relationships that may have been harmed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discipline is best undertaken collaboratively, with students at the center of decisions and processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consequences have a role in imparting learning to a student about behavior. A restorative approach can be supported by the use of logical consequences.

Table 1: Our Shared Beliefs about Supporting Student Behavior

School Rules and Core Values

Our elementary school rules are **Be Safe, Be Kind, Be Responsible**. These rules are common expectations for all students, families and our community, are applicable in all elementary school settings (both on and off campus and online), are applied consistently, and are embedded in our language and culture. Our [SAS Core Values](#) of respect, responsibility, honesty, compassion and fairness also anchor our words and actions.

Behavior Connected to Child Safeguarding:

Children who experience abuse or neglect outside of school may display misbehavior as a result of this harm. In these cases, we are also guided by our [SAS Child Safeguarding handbook](#).



Proactive Practices & Responsive Strategies

A Positive and Proactive School Culture:

SAS invests in a proactive school culture that seeks to support student success. SAS elementary is a [Responsive Classroom](#) school, and we utilize the [Second Step](#) social emotional curriculum (including social emotional skill building, bullying prevention and child protection lessons). Our proactive approach is informed by the [Collaborative for Academic, Social Emotional Learning \(CASEL\) Core Competencies](#). For more information on SAS's work with social and emotional learning [please visit our website here](#).

Responsive Strategies:

Even with an active investment in *proactive practices*, it's expected and developmentally appropriate for children to occasionally misbehave. Addressing most misbehaviors within the classroom setting helps maintain positive relationships between students, teachers, and families. As the school responds to misbehavior we seek to keep our students' ages, developmental stages and neurodiversity firmly in the forefront of our work. The Deans of Student Life, school counselors, school psychologists and/or school administrators may also support, document and communicate about student misbehavior.

Restorative Practices:

When child-on-child harm has occurred, students will typically be guided through a restorative process. Restorative practices support students to:

- reflect on their actions in order to learn from the situation.
- accept responsibility for their actions.
- clarify personal, family and school values.
- repair harm and make amends to those that were affected by their actions.
- return to the community as a positive contributing member.

Levels of Student Behavior: supporting low-level student behavior

Many misbehaviors at the elementary level are low-level, considered a normal part of childhood development, and require only a brief, positive interaction with a caring adult to address. All community members can play a part in supporting low-level misbehavior.

Positive Playgrounds

It is common for some students to find recess time challenging. Recess is a less-structured part of the day in which students are offered opportunities to socialize and interact with others in a free-flowing and physical manner. Low-level playground issues are best managed by the instructional assistants that supervise play. Instructional assistants use a restorative practices approach in supporting students which we call the [Play Plan](#).

Physical Misbehavior: Developmental Expectations

For young children that are still developing impulse control, verbal communication and emotional management skills, some physical misbehavior is bound to happen. As children mature and these skills become further developed, physical misbehavior becomes less expected and more unacceptable. Behavior support strategies start small (minimally intrusive) and increase with the severity of the behavior.

Table 2: Elementary school behavior support strategies for low-level misbehavior may include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive reinforcement of the behavior we expect to see (e.g. publicly valuing, rewarding and praising desired behavior) 	<p>Communication with Families:</p> <p>When schools and families form authentic partnerships, they can build strong connections that reinforce students' social and emotional development.</p> <p>Teachers will connect with parents and caregivers when they become concerned about a student's behavior. Families should expect to receive timely communication from the school, and may be invited to meet and help develop supportive plans to facilitate their child's learning and growth.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal redirection, verbal rule reminder, given a forced/directed choice 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A restorative or problem-solving conversation • Use of the Play Plan (recess/playground) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of consequences, either immediate or deferred (e.g. loss of privilege) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a break (within the student's regular classroom). Taking a short break from learning can be student-initiated or guided/directed by adults. The aim of taking a break is to restore mental focus and emotional control. In this way it should not be viewed as a punitive strategy. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a break (outside of the classroom, e.g. in buddy class or other space). 	

Levels of Student Behavior: Responding to Significant Misbehavior

Despite the presence of proactive practices and behavior support strategies, there may be times when a student's misbehavior is repeated and/or significant in nature. These misbehaviors may include but are not limited to:

- disrupting classroom learning and teaching
- causing harm
- threatening the physical and/or emotional safety of self and others

1. Dysregulated Behavior

When a student is not ready to participate in their regular learning program on a particular day (typically due to dysregulation that does not impact others but blocks the student's access to the academic program) parents may be called to collect them from school. They may be invited to try again the next day.

2. Repeated Misbehavior

When behavior is repeated or persists despite being previously supported, an elevated response may be required. For the benefit of the student as well as the learning community, patterns of misbehavior need to be confronted and behavior change supported. Teachers will provide timely communication to families as patterns of misbehavior emerge, and may also begin to partner with school counselors, learning support faculty and school psychologists.

Table 3: If student misbehavior is repeated, the following consequences can be considered:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent partnership: Communication and/or meeting(s) with the school team. 	<p>Repeated misbehavior:</p> <p>Repeated misbehavior is evidence that a child has not yet learned to manage themselves, and limit their impact on others. Repeated misbehavior may arise from unmet needs and be connected to developmental and/or neurodiverse aspects of a student's profile.</p> <p>Skill-building, as well as appropriate, consistent and certain consequences with additional school and family support are hallmarks of our approach to repeated misbehavior.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended take a break: The student may benefit from being outside the learning space to support self-regulation and problem-solving before returning to class. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-school suspension: The student attends school but completes school work outside of their learning community in a designated location. In-school suspensions are determined by administrators with support from the Dean of Student Life. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modified daily program: In some cases students benefit from a shortened school day to support stamina, regulation and provide time for families to meet with additional external support. Modified programs are created in partnership with parents, counselors, school psychologists and approved by an administrator. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requests for external support: The school team may request additional support from external providers, such as a referral to a developmental pediatrician, occupational therapist, mental health/family counseling, parenting workshop, psychologist, psychiatrist or pediatrician. 	

3. Significant Misbehavior

Significant misbehavior is behavior that causes injury or threatens the physical and/or emotional safety of others, impacting the safe functioning of the school community. The following five points help guide the school when determining whether misbehavior is significant, however all behavior incidents occur in unique contexts and need to be explored on a case-by-case basis.

1. Harm - the level of hurt/damage/distress caused by the misbehavior.
2. Impact - the magnitude of the negative effect the behavior had on individual(s), the class, and/or community.
3. Intentionality - whether the misbehavior was done on purpose, in a planned/calculated manner.
4. Severity - the seriousness or intensity of the misbehavior in terms of our social expectations of conduct.
5. Duration/Frequency - whether the behavior was a single incident, or whether there were multiple actions within the same incident, or many incidents over time.

3.1 Bias-based Incidents

A bias-based incident is a significant misbehavior, given the harm and impact that bias-based incidents cause (even in the absence of intentionality). Restorative practices, education and parent partnerships are a hallmark of the school's typical response. If a bias-based behavior is intentional or repeated (after direct teaching has taken place) consequences will be considered to protect individuals and the community (see table 4).

Bias-based incidents are discriminatory or disparaging acts or statements pertaining to another's race, ethnicity, cultural identity, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic status, ability, physical appearance, or other characteristics.

3.2 Bullying

Bullying behavior is a significant misbehavior. Behavior that intentionally harms other students may be characterized as bullying, when certain criteria are met (see definition below).

“Bullying is a form of aggressive behavior in which someone intentionally and repeatedly causes another person injury or discomfort. Bullying can take the form of physical contact, words, or more subtle actions.

The bullied individual typically has trouble defending him or herself and does nothing to “cause” the bullying.

Cyberbullying is verbally threatening or harassing behavior conducted through such electronic technology as cell phones, email, social media, or text messaging¹.”

When an elementary school student is involved in a significant misbehavior, bullying or bias-based incident, the school works with the student to teach them about the impact their words and/or actions have on others, and support them in repairing harm and restoring relationships. In response to some incidents, more serious consequences may be introduced (see table 4). In all instances, parents are asked to partner with the school.

Table 4: Examples of consequences to significant, bias-based and/or bullying incidents:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">● In-school suspension: Immediate removal from their class, however the student remains at school. They will conduct their learning outside of their class community.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Out-of-school suspension: Out-of-school suspensions are decided by administrators with support from the Dean of Student Life. The amount of time out of school is determined by the administrator, but should always be for the shortest period of time to support behavior change.● Re-entry meeting: When a student returns from suspension a meeting occurs with parent(s)/caregivers, student, and the school-based team. The purpose of the meeting is to create a plan for supporting the student’s return to their learning community and to sustain positive behavior. Re-entry meetings are led by an administrator.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Behavior agreement: Establishment of a behavior agreement with the student, parents and school.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Requirements for external support: The school team may require additional support from external providers, such as a referral to a developmental pediatrician, occupational therapist, mental health/family counseling, parenting workshop, psychologist or psychiatrist. In the case that families choose not to follow the school’s requirements, this may affect their child’s re-enrollment as it may indicate a withdrawal from the parent/school partnership by the family.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Conditional re-enrollment: The school’s administrators, in conjunction with the Admissions Department, may set conditions for the home-school partnership for the upcoming semester/year.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Supported transition: A family could be supported to transition out of the SAS community in the case that a different learning environment or school may better suit the student’s needs. This process is led by an administrator and a broad school team may partner with families to assist in this way.● Expulsion: A case may arise where a threat to safety, or breach in conduct is so significant that a student will be required to leave school and not return. A thorough investigation is completed with parents informed throughout the process. Expulsions occur by decision of the principal and superintendent.

¹American Psychological Society, Adapted from APA Dictionary of Psychology <https://www.apa.org/topics/bullying>

4. Bus Misbehavior:

The school bus service is an important, yet optional convenience for many families. Appropriate conduct on the bus service that aligns with our on-campus expectations is essential for students and families to access bus services. As part of accessing bus services, families agree to conduct ** More information on buses can be found [online here](#).

Table 5: When bus misbehavior is repeated or significant the school <i>may</i> :
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partner with parents: The school or the bus office will communicate the problem and problem-solve.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assigning designated seating: The school will assign seating strategically in order to reduce stimuli and minimize impact on other students.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with students: Faculty and parents may provide the student time to reflect on behavior and make positive changes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bus suspension: Students may need to take a break from bus services (typically for 1-5 days).
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Immediate bus suspension: Significant misbehavior may result in an immediate exit from bus services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ongoing suspension of bus services: Repeated bus suspensions or a significant bus incident may result in the student no longer being able to utilize bus services for a significant period of time (e.g. semester, academic year, ongoing basis). Longer suspensions from the bus service will be through partnership between parents and school administration.

5. Eagle Athletics and Activities (EAA) Misbehavior:

Our EAA program is considered an important part of our school program and regarded as an extension of the school day. Our behavioral expectations are the same for students attending EAA as for during the regular school day. In the case that misbehavior occurs during the EAA program, the Deans of Student Life will partner with the EAA office to support student behavior change. There are occasions when a significant, repeated or bias-based incident will result in the student being removed from the EAA activity.