

# *Gwinnett County Public Schools*

## A PARENT'S GUIDE TO DISCIPLINE HEARINGS



GCPS

**2011 - 2012**

Office of Student Discipline & Behavioral Intervention

# My child has been suspended pending a discipline hearing.....

## *Why?*

Every student is expected to follow rules and regulations of the school system, county, state, and nation. Students are taught about their responsibilities as good citizens many times throughout their school careers. Also, each year you and your child are asked to read and sign the current version of the *Student Conduct Behavior Code*. Student disciplinary hearings are conducted when the school believes a student has violated the *Code* and a long term suspension or expulsion should be considered.

## *How does this begin?*

When a major rule violation occurs involving your child, the principal (or assistant principal) schedules a discipline hearing through the Office of Student Discipline. The principal or assistant principal will attempt to contact you to discuss the incident and make you aware of the date and time of the hearing. Shortly after that, the school will mail a packet of information to you including the following:

- Notice of suspension
- Waiver of your right to attend the hearing
- Map to the Hearing
- A copy of the Student Code of Conduct
- Procedures for conducting the discipline hearing including your rights involving the hearing.

## *Suspension days pending the hearing?*

Your student will be suspended from school until the time of the hearing (normally 7-10 school days) and will not be allowed on any Gwinnett County Public Schools' campuses or allowed to attend any Gwinnett County Public Schools' events. Your student's grades will be frozen at the time of suspension.

## ***What if I don't agree with the initial suspension?***

Georgia state law affords the principal the authority to suspend a student for up to ten school days. If you disagree with the initial suspension pending panel, you should discuss your concerns or perspective with the principal or appropriate area superintendent.

## ***Why a hearing?***

According to state law, the local school principal can only suspend a student for up to ten days. However, some offenses warrant a suspension of longer than ten days. Only the Gwinnett Board of Education (BOE) can issue a suspension of greater than ten days. As such, the hearing scheduled for your child will be heard by a hearing officer (on behalf of the BOE) who will decide the appropriate consequence for the rule violation(s). If your student is found in violation of the rule(s) at the discipline hearing, you will be informed of the length of suspension at that time. Also, after the hearing, you will receive a letter from the Office of Student Discipline informing you of the decision.

## ***Who attends the hearing?***

The principal and/or assistant principal from your child's school will attend the hearing. The school resource officer (SRO) may also attend. Additionally, the school may bring witnesses to testify. It is important that both you and your child attend the hearing so that your child has an opportunity to provide his or her version of the incident. You are allowed to have witnesses come and testify on your child's behalf. You are also allowed to have an attorney if you choose. However, if you do wish to bring an attorney, you must let the Office of Student Discipline know 48 hours prior to the date of the discipline hearing in order for the school system to schedule an attorney to be present on its behalf.

## ***What if I disagree with the decision?***

If you do not agree with the hearing officer's decision, you may appeal to the BOE in writing within 20 calendar days of the hearing. Information regarding your right to appeal will be included in the decision letter.

## ***Consequences?***

Hearing officers have a wide range of consequences available to them such as community service, restitution, the Creating Lasting Family Connections Class, in-school suspension, and additional days of out-of-school suspension. Hearing officers also have the authority to suspend your child up to one year (365 calendar days) and recommend permanent expulsion to the Board of Education.

## ***Permanent Expulsion?***

In the most serious cases, a hearing officer may submit a recommendation to the BOE for permanent expulsion. The BOE would then review the case and determine if permanent expulsion is merited. After a student's third disciplinary hearing, most cases are typically submitted with a recommendation to the BOE for permanent expulsion.

## ***What then?***

If the Board of Education upholds permanent expulsion, after two calendar years from the date of the expulsion, you may request in writing to have your child reenter Gwinnett County Public Schools. The BOE will act on your request.

## ***Further Questions***

If you have further questions, please contact the Office of Student Discipline at **770-513-6607**.