

IRVING INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Irving ISD has new plan to deal with discipline



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When it came to addressing student classroom conduct, whether handling disruptions or applauding good behavior, Irving ISD officials knew they could do better.

District leaders had heard the talk among students that infractions were not punished at the same level across campuses.

This summer, a team of teachers, principals and district administrators went back to the drawing board, looking at discipline from ground zero—the classroom.

School board president Ronda Huffstetler said trustees made the issue a priority when they hired Superintendent Dana Bedden two years ago, and he and his staff have worked on it since.

“If you have set rules, you shouldn’t have any discrepancies,” Huffstetler said. “This board believes in discipline, and we are committed to getting where we want to be. I’m not saying that this will solve our discipline problem entirely, but at least we’ll have a consistent plan in place.”

The discipline committee ultimately decided that teachers needed more support and a clear road map. Teachers, in turn, should involve principals earlier if there is a problem so intervention can take place. And all agreed that noticing students’ positive behavior was as important as staying on top of problems.

“The whole goal is to improve the dialogue between the teachers and the administration,” said Jamie MacDougall, the assistant principal at F.M. Gilbert Elementary

School and a committee member. “We’re asking teachers to put kids on our radar a little sooner and make us aware of the situation.”

Follow the Flow Chart

The district’s plan, which was rolled out to the schools before the academic year began, provides an action flow chart, created with feedback from teachers, school district staff and administrators, for how to respond to both positive and negative student behaviors.

MacDougall said the flow map centers around the goal of wanting to keep students in class as much as possible without disrupting instruction for other students. At the same time, she said, officials want teachers to have a process for removing students who are significantly interrupting instruction or threatening class safety.

“When teachers felt that they could go to administration for support and strategies before it escalated to a referral, they were more likely to find solutions that would keep the students in class,” MacDougall said.

The chart also reminds teachers to acknowledge positive behavior through verbal praise, by calling parents or sending a note home or by using an online documentation system.

APQC was instrumental in facilitating a process which established a systemic approach to deal with discipline in Irving ISD. With the help of APQC, administrators and teachers were able to establish a system with the focus of developing a process that allows every campus in the district a consistent way of dealing with discipline, both positive and negative behaviors.

— Melody Paschall
Associate Superintendent of
Academic Services
Irving ISD

“We as educators are used to the idea of providing academic strategies so that students can be successful,” MacDougall said. “By applying this same model to behavior strategies, teachers are able to maximize support and minimize the chance of the student having to be removed from class.”

A Consistent Message

District officials said the plan gives teachers backup, and it puts campus leaders at all schools on notice that discipline infractions must be documented.

Officials said that for too long student discipline in the district of just over 35,000 students wasn’t handled in the same systematic way that academics have been. “We want everyone to hear a consistent message when it comes to behavior,” said Lizzy Kloiber, Irving ISD’s division director of secondary schools. “We want the campuses to have their own identity, but we want everyone to be on the same page.”

She said the committee will continue to meet to address other common student discipline issues, such as dress code, tardies and in-school and out-of-school suspension, and develop strategies to deal with them.

“This is not just a plan, it’s a process,” Kloiber said.

Kloiber said the district also appointed a “dean of students” at each middle school and high school and one for the elementary schools to work with at-risk students. “We didn’t have that intervention before for those frequent-offender students,” she said.

‘Rebuilding Process’

Teacher Elizabeth Doughten-Sutton, the band director at Lady Bird Johnson Middle School, served on the committee. She said she appreciated being part of what she called a “rebuilding process.”

“Classroom management is very important to me, and I did feel that for a while there wasn’t that consistency across the district” she said.

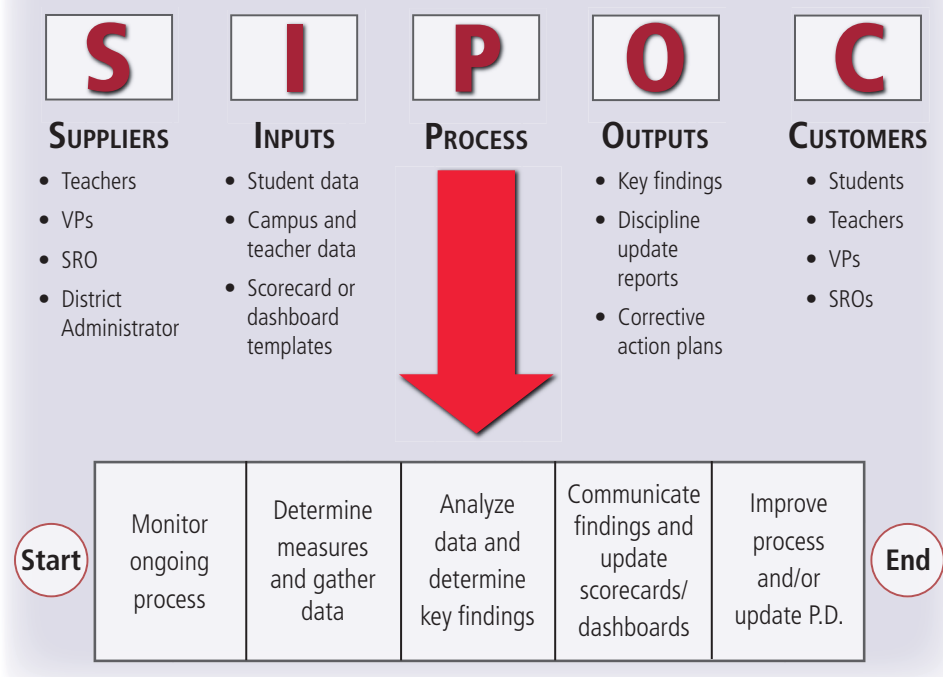
She said the new plan “lets everyone know where they stand.” And, she said, it’s already working.

“I’m enjoying the opportunity to make positive calls home,” she said.

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Monitor Positive Reinforcement & Discipline Process*



* This is only one portion of the full Discipline Process, used here as an example only.