

Discipline-Related State-Wide Legislative Changes Beginning 2002 and Current

It is important to note that during the 2002 Georgia Legislative session a new law, Senate Bill 291, was passed that requires local Boards of Education to include in their student Codes of Conduct rules governing student conduct and safety on public school buses, including prohibitions against physical violence, bullying, physical or verbal assault, battery, disrespectful conduct, unruly behavior, use of electronic devices on the school bus, including but not limited to cell phones; pagers; radios, tape or compact disc players, use of lights, mirrors, flash cameras, or other reflective devices that might interfere with the operation of the school bus. The law also requires a meeting of the parent and school administrator to form a school bus behavior contract if a student is found guilty of bullying or physical assault or battery on a school bus.

Additionally, there are now more stringent consequences for students accused of physical violence against a teacher, school bus driver, or other school official or employee. Any student alleged to have caused physical harm to an employee must be suspended and referred to a hearing before a Tribunal. The Tribunal is a discipline hearing panel made up of three certificated individuals who will determine fact and intent and submit its findings and recommendations for consequences to the local board of education. The law requires referral to juvenile court and expulsion of a student found to have committed physical violence that results in physical harm to a teacher, school bus driver, or other employee. In some cases such students may be allowed to attend an alternative school.

Lastly, the new law requires school systems to expel or suspend students found to have intentionally made physical contact of an insulting or provoking nature with a school employee.

In order to get details specific to the Fulton County Schools, it is important that you read the *Student Code of Conduct & Discipline Handbook* that will be provided to each student, parent, and classroom as they enter school. Look specifically at Substantive Rules 4, 5, and 18 and Procedural Rules 8 and 11 to see the changes noted above.