



CASSOPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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August 15, 2023

Dear Ranger Families,

The purpose of this letter is to help answer questions that have arisen regarding student safety, behavior concerns, and discipline issues. First, I want you to know that Cassopolis will try to be as open as possible regarding significant threats and safety issues. Our hope is that sharing with the community is the best way to not only be transparent, but to help reduce the anxiety of students and families, as well as limit misinformation being shared.

With that said, there are a number of state and federal laws we are required to follow. This includes the federal [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#), also known as [FERPA](#). This law restricts individual student information that may be shared outside of that student's family. We understand that not being able to share the consequences for someone who has harmed your child can be extremely frustrating to families. Please understand that schools legally cannot share this information. Please know that we take all of these situations seriously, and do give consequences for misbehavior, as well as putting procedures in place to ensure the safety and well being of all students. The consequences that are given can vary greatly depending on the severity of the issue, the child's age, and discipline history. We do our best to implement Restorative Practices along with consequences. Consequences may range from a conversation with an adult up to out of school suspensions or expulsion. We work hard to limit out of school suspensions, as these can be rewarding for many students and only increase the likelihood of the behavior reoccurring. If at all possible, we will utilize in-school suspensions (ISS) and/or keep students after school, rather than give out of school suspensions. At each building, ISS may look a little different due to staffing, but in all cases, students have structured days and no access to grade level peers.

Prior to making a decision to either suspend or expel a student, state law ([MCL 380.1310d](#)) requires schools to consider 7 factors (see attached). There are very few exceptions that would allow a district to immediately suspend or expel a student. This law was enacted in 2016 as a response to zero tolerance policies which were determined not to be in the best interest of students. Students who are suspended or expelled are less likely to graduate and more likely to be arrested in the future. States across the nation have revised their laws regarding suspension and expulsion to better protect childrens' futures.

While we cannot share consequences given to students, we can share some of the policies and procedures that we follow to ensure student safety and help us determine appropriate consequences and restorative actions. For any threat, the school administration will pull a team together to complete a threat assessment. The threat assessment includes an investigation, interviews, as well as meeting as a team. Once an appropriate threat level is determined, a plan of action is developed to ensure the safety of all students and staff, including a plan to help the child deal with the root of the behavior.

Cassopolis Public Schools will continue to work in the best interest of students, staff, and families. If you have specific concerns please reach out to your school's principal. We will attempt to be as transparent as possible. We truly appreciate your support and understanding when dealing with these difficult situations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Ritzler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" and last name "Ritzler" clearly distinguishable.

John Ritzler, Ph.D.
Superintendent

7 Factors to Consider



Before Resorting to Suspension or Expulsion

Under Michigan's New Restorative Justice Law

1

Student's Age

How old is the student in question? Does this influence the level of intervention necessary to address this behavior?

2

Disciplinary History

What is this student's disciplinary history? Does this influence the level of intervention necessary to address this behavior?

3

Disability

Does the student in question have a disability? Does this influence the level of intervention necessary to address this behavior?

4

Seriousness of Behavior

What was the seriousness of this student's behavior? Does this influence the level of intervention necessary to address this behavior?

5

Safety Risk

Did the student pose a safety risk to others? Does this influence the level of intervention necessary to address this behavior?

6

Use of Restorative Practices

Have restorative practices already been used as a means of intervention in this student's disciplinary history? Does this influence the level of intervention necessary to address this behavior?

7

Level of Intervention

Would a lesser intervention than suspension or expulsion appropriately address this behavior in question?

[MICHIGANVIRTUAL.ORG/SEL](https://michiganvirtual.org/sel)