

Policy 4218: Dismissal/Suspension/Disciplinary Action

Status: ADOPTED

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CSBA NOTE: The following optional policy and accompanying administrative regulation are for use by districts that have not incorporated the merit system for classified employees pursuant to Education Code 45240-45320. For procedures applicable to districts that have incorporated the merit system, see BP/AR 4218.1 - Dismissal/Suspension/Disciplinary Action (Merit System).

The following optional policy and accompanying administrative regulation are subject to collective bargaining and should be revised in accordance with any applicable collective bargaining agreement. To the extent that this policy is inconsistent with provisions of the collective bargaining agreement, the collective bargaining agreement would prevail, so long as the provision is consistent with law.

The Governing Board expects all employees to perform their jobs satisfactorily, to exhibit professional and appropriate conduct, and serve as positive role models both at school and in the community. A classified employee may be disciplined for unprofessional conduct or unsatisfactory performance in accordance with law or any applicable collective bargaining agreement, Board policy, or administrative regulation.

CSBA NOTE: When disciplining an employee, the district must ensure that all of the surrounding facts and circumstances are considered and analyzed within the parameters of any applicable constitutional or legal framework.

Employee discipline, especially with respect to suspension and dismissal, involves complex legal considerations and districts are advised to consult CSBA's District and County Office of Education Legal Services or district legal counsel, accordingly.

Disciplinary actions shall be based on the particular facts and circumstances involved and the severity of the employee's conduct or performance.

CSBA NOTE: In *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, the U.S. Supreme Court held that the district could not discipline an employee for non-coercive religious conduct while the employee was acting as a private citizen. For more information, see the U.S. Department of Education's May 2023, "Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer and Religious Expression in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools." Also see BP/AR 4030 - Nondiscrimination in Employment and BP 4119.1 - Civil and Legal Rights.

In *Visalia Unified School District v. Public Employment Relations Board (PERB)*, the Fifth District Court of Appeal upheld PERB's determination that service as a union officer constitutes protected activity under the Educational Employment Relations Act for purposes of the employee's complaint of retaliation for union activities and that the district retaliated against the employee. However, the court ultimately held in favor of the district, finding that the district proved it would have terminated the employee for poor performance regardless of the protected union activity. Districts with questions about terminating an officer of an employee organization are encouraged to consult CSBA's District and County Office of Education Legal Services or district legal counsel.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that disciplinary actions are taken in a consistent, nondiscriminatory manner. In addition, an employee shall not be suspended, disciplined, reassigned, transferred, dismissed, or otherwise retaliated against solely for engaging in protected activities, or for acting to protect a student engaged in exercising any free speech or press right authorized by, or for refusing to infringe upon a student's conduct protected pursuant to, Education Code 48907 or 48950.

Disciplinary actions may include, but are not limited to, verbal and written warnings, involuntary reassignment, demotion, suspension or leave without pay, reduction of wages, or dismissal.

A probationary classified employee may be dismissed without cause anytime before the probationary period expires.

CSBA NOTE: Education Code 45113 mandates districts not incorporating the merit system to prescribe, by written rule or regulation, causes and procedures for disciplinary action against permanent classified employees. Also, see the accompanying administrative regulation.

Permanent classified employees shall be subject to disciplinary action only for cause as specified in the accompanying administrative regulation. (Education Code 45113)

Procedures for Serious Disciplinary Proceedings

CSBA NOTE: The following section should be revised to reflect district practice.

In *Skelly v. State Personnel Board*, the California Supreme Court held that permanent public employees have a right to certain due process protections prior to any punitive disciplinary action, such as termination, suspension, or demotion. These procedural rights include notice of the proposed materials upon which the action is based and the right to respond, either orally or in writing, to the individual recommending that discipline be imposed. These procedural rights are designed to protect an employee who may be wrongfully disciplined, without necessitating a full evidentiary hearing before the Governing Board. Therefore, CSBA recommends that the Superintendent or designee appoint a Skelly officer to evaluate whether there are reasonable grounds for believing that the employee engaged in the alleged misconduct and whether the proposed discipline is justified.

The Superintendent or designee shall develop disciplinary procedures for use when dismissal, suspension, demotion, involuntary reassignment, or other serious disciplinary action is contemplated against an employee. The procedures for such discipline shall include an opportunity for an employee for whom any such disciplinary action is recommended to meet with, or respond in writing to, a designated district official ("Skelly officer") who will determine whether the recommended discipline should proceed further or be modified or withdrawn.

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Education Code 45113 and 45116, a permanent classified employee must be given notice of any disciplinary action against the employee, including a time period during which the employee may request a Board hearing on the charges. See the section "Initiation and Notification of Charges" in the accompanying administrative regulation.

Pursuant to Education Code 45113, the Board may delegate its authority to determine whether sufficient cause exists for disciplinary action against classified employees, excluding peace officers as defined in Penal Code 830.32, to an impartial third-party hearing officer. Hearings conducted by the Board or a hearing officer are not subject to the procedures used by the Office of Administrative Hearings pursuant to Government Code 11500-11529. Districts that refer all disciplinary matters to a third-party hearing officer rather than holding Board hearings should revise the remainder of this section accordingly.

Education Code 45113 requires the Board to delegate its authority to an administrative law judge in cases involving allegations of egregious misconduct with a minor. Egregious misconduct is defined as immoral conduct leading to an allegation of a sex offense pursuant to Education Code 44010, a controlled substance offense pursuant to Education Code 44011, or child abuse or neglect pursuant to Penal Code 11165.2-11165.6.

After meeting with the employee or considering the employee's written response, if the Skelly officer determines that the recommended discipline should proceed, the Superintendent or designee shall send the employee a notice of the recommended disciplinary action, a statement of charges, and the results of the Skelly review process. The notice shall include a statement advising the employee of the right to request a Board hearing on the matter. (Education Code 45113, 45116)

If the employee fails to request a hearing within the time specified in the notice, the employee is deemed to have waived the right to do so, and the Board may order the recommended disciplinary action into effect immediately.

If a timely request is submitted, a hearing shall be conducted by the Board or by a third-party hearing officer, in accordance with law. (Education Code 45113, 45312)

CSBA NOTE: Education Code 45113 prohibits a district from suspending without pay, suspending or demoting with a reduction in pay, or dismissing a permanent classified employee who timely requests a hearing pending discipline, unless excepted by law. To the extent Education Code 45113 conflicts with any collective bargaining agreement the district entered into before January 1, 2023, the new requirements described above would not apply until the expiration or renewal of the agreement. See the section "Employment Status Pending a Disciplinary Hearing" in the accompanying administrative regulation.

A classified employee who timely requests a hearing may only be suspended, demoted, or dismissed pending the outcome of the hearing in accordance with Education Code 45113 and as specified in the accompanying administrative regulation.

The hearing shall be held at the earliest convenient date, taking into consideration the established schedule of the Board and the availability of legal counsel and witnesses. The employee shall be notified of the time and place of the hearing.

The hearing shall be held in closed session unless the employee requests that the matter be heard in an open session meeting. (Government Code 54957)

The employee shall be entitled to appear personally, produce evidence, and be represented by legal counsel.

The Board may use the services of its legal counsel in ruling upon procedural questions, objections to evidence, and issues of law. The Board may review and consider the records of any prior personnel action proceedings against the employee in which disciplinary action was ultimately sustained, and any records contained in the employee's personnel files and introduced into evidence at the hearing. The Board shall not be bound by rules of evidence used in California courts. Informality in any such hearing shall not invalidate any order or decision made by the Board.

At any time before a matter is submitted to the Board for decision, the Superintendent or designee may, with the consent of the Board, serve on the employee and file with the Board an amended or supplemental recommendation of disciplinary action. If the amended or supplemental recommendation includes new causes or allegations, the employee shall be afforded a reasonable opportunity to prepare a defense. Any new causes or allegations shall be deemed controverted and any objections to the amended or supplemental causes or allegations may be made orally at the hearing and shall be noted on the record.

Following the hearing or, if the employee has not requested a hearing, after reviewing the Superintendent or designee's recommendation for disciplinary action, the Board shall affirm, modify, or reject the recommended disciplinary action. The decision of the Board shall be in writing and shall contain findings of fact and the disciplinary action approved, if any. The decision of the Board shall be final.

Within 10 working days of the Board's final decision, a copy of the decision shall be delivered to the employee and/or designated representative personally or by registered mail.

Except for an allegation of egregious misconduct in which a minor is involved, the Board may delegate the authority to determine whether sufficient cause exists for disciplinary action to an impartial third-party hearing officer. When a matter is heard by a third-party hearing officer, the Board shall review the determination and adopt or reject the recommended decision. (Education Code 45113)

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Education Code 44990, an administrative law judge in a suspension or dismissal hearing is required to preserve the integrity of the truth-finding function by balancing the right of a classified employee against the need to protect a minor witness.

When any matter involves an allegation of egregious misconduct as defined in Education Code 44932 and involves a witness who is a minor, the matter shall be referred to an administrative law judge to determine whether sufficient cause exists for disciplinary action against the employee. In such cases, the ruling of the administrative law judge shall be binding on the district and the employee. (Education Code 45113)

Compulsory Leave of Absence

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Education Code 44940, 44940.5 and 45304, the district is required to place an employee charged with a "mandatory leave of absence offense" on a compulsory leave of absence; see the accompanying administrative regulation.

Upon being informed that a classified employee has been charged with a mandatory leave of absence offense, the Superintendent or designee shall immediately place the employee on a compulsory leave of absence. (Education Code 44940, 44940.5, 45304)

Policy Reference Disclaimer: These references are not intended to be part of the policy itself, nor do they indicate the basis or authority for the board to enact this policy. Instead, they are provided as additional resources for those interested in the subject matter of the policy.

State References

CA Constitution Article 1, Section 1

Ed. Code 35161

Ed. Code 44009

Ed. Code 44010

Ed. Code 44011

Ed. Code 44940

Ed. Code 44940.5

Description

[Inalienable rights](#)

[Board delegation of any powers or duties](#)

[Conviction of specified crimes](#)

[Sex offense; definitions](#)

[Controlled substance offense](#)

[Compulsory leave of absence for certificated persons](#)

[Procedures when employees are placed on compulsory leave of absence](#)

Ed. Code 45101	Definitions; disciplinary action and cause
Ed. Code 45109	Fixing of duties
Ed. Code 45113	Notification of charges; classified employees
Ed. Code 45116	Notice of disciplinary action
Ed. Code 45123	Employment after conviction of controlled substance offense
Ed. Code 45302	Demotion and removal from permanent classified service
Ed. Code 45303	Additional cause for suspension or dismissal of employee charged with mandatory or optional leave of absence offense
Ed. Code 45304	Compulsory leave of absence for classified persons
Gov. Code 12954	Employment discrimination; cannabis use
Veh. Code 1808.8	School bus drivers; dismissal for safety-related cause

Federal References

42 USC 12101-12213
 U.S. Constitution, First Amendment

Description

[Americans with Disabilities Act](#)
[Free exercise, free speech, and establishment clauses](#)

Management Resources References

Court Decision
 Court Decision
 Court Decision
 Court Decision
 Court Decision
 U.S. Department of Education Publication
 Website
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[Visalia Unified School District v. Public Employment Relations Board \(2024\) 98 Cal.App.5th 844](#)
[Kennedy v. Bremerton \(2022\) 142 S.Ct. 2407](#)
[California School Employees v. Livingston Union School District \(2007\) 149 Cal. App. 4th 391](#)
[CSEA v. Foothill Community College District \(1975\) 52 Cal. App. 3rd 150](#)
[Skelly v. California Personnel Board \(1975\) 15 Cal.3d 194](#)
[Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer and Religious Expression in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, May 2023](#)
[Office of the Attorney General](#)
[Office of Administrative Hearings](#)
[Department of General Services, About Teacher Dismissal Case Type](#)
[CSBA District and County Office of Education Legal Services](#)
[U.S. Department of Education](#)
[CSBA](#)

Cross References

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