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MEMORANDUM

TO: School District Superintendents
Charter School Leaders
School Principals and Administrators

FROM: Anastasios Kamoutsas

CC: Florida Public School Teachers

DATE: July 14, 2025

SUBJECT: Teachers' Bill of Rights and Requirements for School Principals

In Florida, all students have a right to learn in a student-centered learning environment where Florida's state academic standards are the foundation for learning. As teachers return from summer break, this memo serves as a reminder of teachers' rights, specifically regarding student discipline in the classroom.

The 2023 Legislature passed, and Governor DeSantis signed into law, House Bill 1035, effective July 1, 2023, which established the Teachers' Bill of Rights in Chapter 1015, Florida Statutes (F.S.). This law provides Florida teachers with a clear set of rights in their profession and classroom.

Section (s.) 1015.05, F.S., Right to control the classroom, allows teachers to:

- Establish classroom rules of conduct.
- Establish and implement consequences, which are designed to change behavior, for infractions of classroom rules of conduct.
- Have disobedient, disrespectful, violent, abusive, uncontrollable or disruptive students removed from the classroom for behavior management intervention.
- Have violent, abusive, uncontrollable or disruptive students directed to appropriate school or district school board personnel for information and assistance.
- Assist in enforcing school rules on school property, during school-sponsored transportation and during school-sponsored activities.
- Request and receive information relating to the disposition of any referrals to administration for a violation of classroom rules of conduct or school rules.
- Request and receive immediate assistance in classroom management if a student becomes uncontrollable or in the case of an emergency.
- Request and receive training and other assistance to improve his or her skills in classroom management, violence prevention, conflict resolution and related areas.
- Press charges if there is a reason to believe that a crime has been committed on school property, during school-sponsored transportation or during school-sponsored activities.

In cases in which a teacher faces litigation or professional practices sanctions for an action taken pursuant to this law, there is a rebuttable presumption that a teacher was taking necessary action to restore or maintain the safety or educational atmosphere of his or her classroom.

For students with disabilities whose behavior impedes their learning or the learning of others, the individual educational plan (IEP) team must identify, review and document supports to address those behaviors as part of the IEP. School personnel may consider any unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis when determining whether a change in placement, consistent with the requirements and procedures, is appropriate for a student with a disability who violates the student code of conduct, as established in Rule 6A-6.03312, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.).

It is important to note that school principals play an essential role in upholding the teachers' rights and have their own responsibility to safeguard the learning environment. To support and protect teachers' rights, it is imperative that school principals adhere to the following legal obligations established in s. 1003.32, F.S., without exception:

- When a teacher refers a student to the principal's office for behavioral issues, the principal must determine whether the student violated the student code of conduct.
 - If the principal finds that no violation occurred, no disciplinary action may be taken against the student.
 - If the principal determines that the student's behavior warrants more serious disciplinary action than recommended by the teacher, the principal may impose a more serious consequence.
- The principal shall notify the teacher of any decision regarding discipline, or lack thereof, and interventions provided to a student to address the behavior. If the principal deviates in any way from the teacher's recommendation, the principal must provide the reasons for any such deviation in writing to the teacher.

As school leaders, principals are responsible for upholding the ethical and safety standards required by state law and the Florida Educational Leadership Standards outlined in Rule 6A-5.080, F.A.C.

- Act ethically and hold themselves and staff accountable to the Florida Code of Ethics and Principles of Professional Conduct as established in Rule 6A-10.081, F.A.C., by protecting student well-being and fostering a safe, respectful school environment.
- Ensure compliance with all school safety requirements, as outlined in s. 1001.54, F.S., s. 1006.09, F.S., and Rule 6A-1.0017, F.A.C.

School principals are reminded that these are not optional practices. They are requirements under the law, designed to uphold the authority of teachers in the classroom and to ensure a respectful, orderly learning environment for student academic achievement. Failure to comply with these provisions is a violation of Florida law. As Commissioner, I will exercise my full authority to ensure school principals uphold teachers' rights and that superintendents and charter school leaders prioritize this within their districts.

As a reminder, when a concern pertaining to teacher empowerment is not resolved at the school or district level, teachers may request a Special Magistrate. The Special Magistrate will determine the facts, consider information provided by the school district, and submit a recommended decision to the State Board of Education (SBE) within 30 days after receipt of the request by the teacher. The SBE must approve or reject the recommended decision at its next regularly scheduled meeting occurring more than seven calendar days and no more than 30 days after transmittal. For more information, please visit <https://www.fl DOE.org/schools/k-12-public-schools/special-magistrate/>.

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The Department will continue to monitor adherence to these statutory requirements and will follow up with any district or charter school where non-compliance is reported. Thank you for your attention to this important reminder and for your continued leadership in supporting Florida's teachers. I am looking forward to the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year and assisting districts and charter schools with promoting my two priorities of school safety and student achievement.

AK/pob