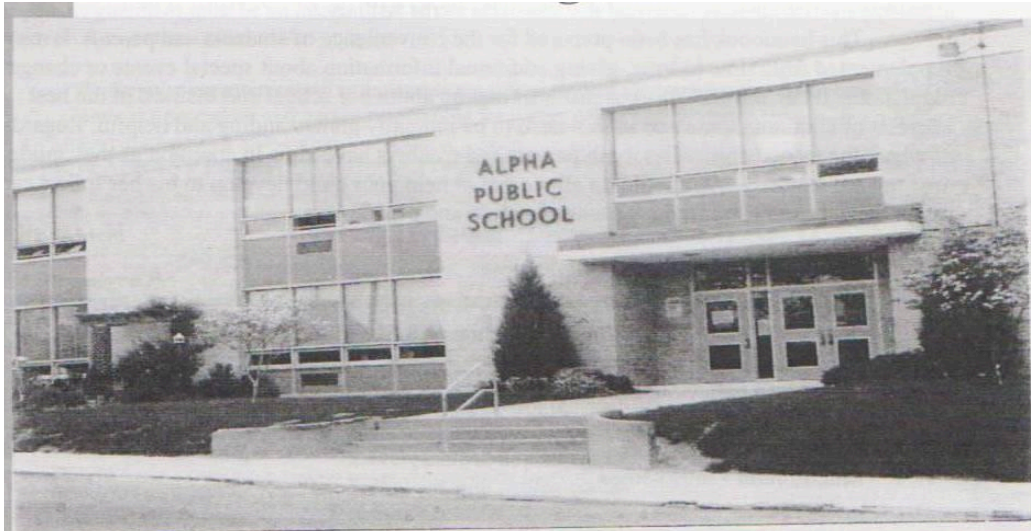




Alpha Public School

“Small School: Big Results!”

School Handbook 2026-2027

Alpha Public School Mission Statement:

The mission of the Alpha Public School is to provide every student with the opportunity to receive a high quality education, in a small, personal, caring, safe and positive environment in which all students at all grade levels achieve the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. In partnership with the parents and the community, a competent and dedicated staff guides students to develop confidence and become productive and contributing members of a constantly changing society.

The Alpha Public School District affirms its responsibility to ensure all students equal educational opportunity and all employees equal employment opportunities regardless of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, and social or emotional status. The Alpha Public School District is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution. In compliance with relevant federal and state civil rights legislation, the system does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age or physical capability in the operation of its educational programs or activities (enrollment, access to programs, physical education, counseling, use of facilities and school sponsored extracurricular activities.) The Alpha Public School District shall maintain an instructional and working environment that is free from harassment of any kind. Administrators and supervisors will make it clear to all staff, pupils and vendors that harassment is prohibited. Any questions regarding Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity should be addressed to Mr. Seth Cohen, Affirmative Action Officer, Alpha School District, 817 North Blvd, Alpha, NJ 08865, 908-454-5000.

Board of Education

Regular School Board meetings are generally held on the third Tuesday of each month.

School Board Work Sessions are generally held on the first Tuesday of each month.

School Hours and Schedule:

Student Arrival – 7:50 to 7:59 AM (Late Bell – 8:00 AM)

Student Dismissal – Grades K-5 / 2:35 PM, Grades 6-8 / 2:40 PM

Shortened Days:

Student Arrival - 7:50 to 7:59 AM (Late Bell – 8:00 AM)

Student Dismissal – Grades K-5 / 12:35 PM, Grades 6-8 / 12:40 PM

*Arrival – Students must be in homeroom by 8:00 AM

Emergency Closing:

In the event of a severe storm resulting in hazardous road conditions or any other emergency, special announcements will be made via our Blackboard Connect Ed messaging service and local radio and television stations that school will be officially closed or delayed for that day.

School Policies

A. Attendance Policy:

Please notify the school by telephone (908) 454-5000 ext. 1 before 8:00 a.m. when your child is absent from school. The absentee line can be called anytime day or night to leave a message by following the pre-recorded prompts. Please note that homework requests are accepted on the 2nd day of a child's absence. Children are expected to be in school every day it is in session unless the child is ill. A child who has any signs of fever, chills, sore throat, a very runny nose, severe coughing, skin eruptions, earache, or diarrhea should not be sent to school. **If a child was out due to a fever they must be fever free for 24 hrs. with no medication before returning to school.** When a student returns to school following any absence or tardiness, a note from the physician (if pertains) must be sent to the main office explaining the reason. An absence cannot be marked as excused unless a note is received from a physician. (Please see Attendance Procedures for further information.)

The Board of Education, Administration and APS staff recognizes the importance of daily, punctual attendance to a student's academic success. We also recognize that parents/guardians must be an integral part of our efforts and the proposed procedures include parent/guardian involvement at each step. Regular communication with parents regarding student absences/tardies is crucial. The chart below outlines the procedures:

Number of Unexcused Absences/Tardies	Procedure
Each day absent	If a call is not received by parent, an AM call will be made by the school to the parent.
5-8	- Letter from office - Possible meeting with administration -for every 5 unexcused tardy's, a student will receive one absence. This will be recorded per marking period. -Once a student accumulates 6 to 7 unexcused tardy's, the student will receive a detention -On the 8th unexcused tardy, the student will receive two detentions. -More than 8 unexcused tardy's, Administration will use their discretion. (Regulation 5240)
10	- Parent/child meeting with administration and/or I&RS committee during which an action plan will be created - Follow-up with written confirmation
15+	- Parent/child meeting with administration during which an action plan will be reviewed and revised - Follow-up with written confirmation - Legal steps may be taken

***An elementary pupil can be retained at grade level, in accordance with policy No. 5410, when he/she has been absent twenty-five or more school days, whatever the reason, excluding absences for religious holidays and a pupil's suspension from school. Exceptions may be made, at the discretion of administration, for excused absences where a student has demonstrated mastery of grade level requirements.**

Action Plan: An action plan may consist of strategies to be implemented at home to improve attendance and/or consequences. Consequences apply primarily to a tardy situation and will be determined based on the age of the child and the situation, but they may include missing recess, making up time after school, or being denied participation in class trips or after school events.

Returning to School:

1. A note is required from parent/guardian documenting the reason for the student's absence upon their return and should be forwarded to the main office. A note is required from a physician upon student's return after three days of being absent.
2. A note is required from parent/guardian in advance of an early pick-up (except in emergency situations).

What constitutes an excused absence?

Administration and the Board of Education recognizes that from time to time compelling circumstances will require that a pupil be late to school or be absent from school. As stated earlier, when possible, the school requires advance notification of such absences by written request from the student's parent/guardian, which shall state the reason for the absence or tardiness. For unexpected absence or tardiness, a note is required from the parent/guardian explaining the reason(s) upon the student's return in order for the absence or tardy to be considered excused. A note from a physician is needed after three days of being absent.

Justifiable reasons may include:

- Illness
- Un-coverable and/or uncovered weeping skin lesions
- Medical or dental appointments which cannot be scheduled outside of school hours;
- Medical disability;
- Death or critical illness in immediate family;
- Court appearance;
- Observance of religious holiday (based on state approved list)
- Suspension from school
- Such good cause as may be acceptable to the administration or designee.

B. Dress Code:

The purpose of the dress code is to ensure a safe environment for students and one that is conducive to learning. Therefore, any form of dress that may be a distraction for others and interfere with the learning process is not permitted. It is the responsibility of all staff members to be sure that students adhere to the dress code.

Staff members will address a student's inappropriate dress. If necessary, students will be sent to the office. The student may be provided with a change of clothing or a call will be made to parents to bring a change of clothing to school.

The following specific items of attire will be expressly forbidden:

1. Any clothing which exposes the anatomy, such as those listed below:
 - Anything deemed "too tight fitting" or see through clothing
 - Low slung pants which expose undergarments or anatomy
 - Short tops
 - Clothing that may expose undergarments or anatomy
2. Bare feet
3. Trouser/slacks with studs or accessories, or other accessories such as wrist/ankle bands with spikes, waist chains, or similar fad items that have little or no dress utility.
4. Clothing which can be construed as advertising or promoting alcohol, drugs, weapons or violence, or which is obscene or inappropriate, or would be disruptive to school activities.
5. Cleated footwear/black soled sneakers or other footwear that would damage or mark floors and walls are not to be worn.
6. Thin rubber flip flops and slides are not safe on stairs and should not be worn.
7. Bandanas or hats of any kind.
8. Any attire that can be construed as gang related.
9. No strapless shirts.

The following items of attire are permitted with the noted clarifications:

1. Footwear at school and school events will be limited to shoes or sneakers that have backing. Heels on footwear may be no higher than two inches. Shoes will be worn at all times. Enclosed toe and heel footwear is highly recommended.
Note: Students will not be allowed to play outside at recess, break time, or for gym (inside or outside) unless they are wearing sneakers, or flat, rubber-soled, closed toe shoes with a backing.
2. Shorts and similar types of clothing must be longer than finger-tip length when the arms are fully extended to the sides (gym/exercise type shorts are not permitted)
3. Clothing such as skirts and dresses should be approximately knee length.

Physical Education Dress Code (grades 5-8)

1. APS Dress Code policy applies to physical education class
2. T-Shirt (**No cut off shirts or tank tops)
3. Shorts, wind pants or sweat pants (**No spandex shorts. Shorts need to be finger-tip length)
4. Sneakers (**No slip ons)

C. Electronic Portable Communication Devices (EPCD) Policy:

“Electronic Portable Communication Devices” are defined to include portable two-way telecommunication devices, including but not limited to cellular telephones, walkie-talkies, iphones, ipods, ipads, Nooks, Kindles, MP3 players, personal digital assistants, smart and apple watches and other hand-held computing devices (when such device is being used as a communication device). This definition will also include any new technology developed for similar purposes. Excluded from this definition is any device with communication capabilities that has been approved for instructional purposes.

To avoid disruption of the instructional process, except as provided below, students shall not display, use, activate, or permit “EPCD” to be activated in the school building during the instructional day. The instructional day includes, but is not limited to, study halls, lunch break, class changes, and any other structure or non-structured instructional activity that occurs during the normal school day. **Students are responsible to ensure that their devices are turned off and out of sight. Students in grades 6-8 must store these devices in their locker.**

“EPCD” may be used during the school day only if use of the device is provided in the student’s IEP, or permission is received from the student’s teacher and approved by administration.

“EPCD” may be activated, displayed, or used before or after the end of the instructional day or at after-school activities, provided they do not interfere with any after-school activity and their use conforms to directives of the school administration and/or the staff member overseeing such activity. Evidence of unlawful or disruptive use will result in disciplinary action.

Students shall be mindful of the disruptive effect to others when making or receiving calls on an “EPCD” during an after-school activity (indoor or outdoor sports events, club meeting, etc.) and endeavor to use reasonable efforts to minimize inconvenience and discourtesy to others.

“EPCD” may be carried on a Board of Education owned/leased school bus or vehicle school bus or vehicle while students are being transported to and/or from school or a school sponsored activity, including field trips. While “Electronic Portable Communication Devices” may be transported, they must be concealed in a backpack, pocketbook, or other container. **The use, activation, or display of any such “EPCD” on a school bus is prohibited without consent of the staff member in charge of the experience.** Evidence of unlawful or unauthorized use will result in disciplinary action.

The Alpha Board of Education will assume no responsibility in any circumstance for the loss/damage/destruction or theft of “EPCD” or for any communication bill associated with the authorized or unauthorized use of said devices. Students will be responsible for locating such lost/stolen items.

According to Alpha Board of Education “EPCD” Policy, students are not permitted to use these devices while school is in session. Cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off while school is in session. At no time shall cellular phones and other electronic devices be used in bathrooms, locker rooms or in other areas designated by the administration.

A student violating this policy shall be disciplined as follows:

1. First Offense– the cellular phone or other electronic device will be confiscated and returned to the student at the end of the instructional day. Parent or guardian will be contacted.
2. Second Offense– the cellular phone or other electronic device will be confiscated and returned to the student's parent or guardian.
3. Third Offense– the cellular phone or other electronic device will be confiscated and returned to the student's parent or guardian, and the student will serve a detention.
4. Subsequent Offenses– the cellular phone or other electronic device will be confiscated and returned to the student's parent or guardian, and the student will no longer be able to bring the phone to school. In addition, the student will serve an in-school suspension, out-of school suspension, and/ or detention as determined by the school administrator.

D. Homework:

Homework should be an extension or practice of what was learned in school. Students are expected to complete and hand in homework. Homework should be designed so that parents can serve as a resource for their child. Students who miss school because of an excused absence will be given the opportunity to complete homework assignments and get full-credit if work is completed satisfactorily and within a reasonable amount of time. Students who miss school work because of unexcused absences may be given the opportunity to complete comparable homework assignments for either partial or full-credit.

One of the questions most frequently asked by parents is, "How much homework should my child have each night?" As children move through elementary school, there will be some variation in the amount of work assigned. Some students require less time than others to complete the same assignment. If your child appears to be spending too much time on homework, please contact your child's teacher. Teachers will share their rules and expectations related to homework during the first week of school.

GRADING SCALE:

<u>Report Card Grade</u>	<u>Numerical Value</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>
A	90-100 Excellent	The pupil consistently demonstrates outstanding ability in the comprehension and interpretation of the subject.
B	80-89 Above Average	The pupil has acquired a comprehensive knowledge of the subject and demonstrates marked ability to interpret it.
C	70-79 Average	The pupil shows acceptable understanding of the content of the subject.
D	60-69	The pupil lacks understanding in some important areas of the subject.
F	Below 60 Failing	

A grade of incomplete should be given if extensive make-up work is still needed to determine the report card grade. Due dates for progress reports and issuance of report cards are on a separate list.

Honor roll criteria: Honor roll runs from Grade 3 through Grade 8

- **Grades 3 through 5 Criteria**

Honor Roll = minimum 3.5 grade point average OF ALL MAJOR ACADEMIC SUBJECTS and B or higher in all special subjects (excluding health).

Major subjects: Language Arts – Math – Science – Social Studies

Special subjects: Art – Music – Gym – Spanish- Technology

Health – will be graded as pass/fail and will not count towards Honor Roll

- **Grades 6 through 8 Criteria**

Honor Roll = minimum 3.5 grade point average OF ALL MAJOR ACADEMIC SUBJECTS and B or higher in all special subjects (excluding health).

Major subjects: Language Arts – Math – Science – Social Studies

Special subjects: Art – Music – Gym – Spanish- Technology

Health – will be graded as pass/fail and will not count towards Honor Roll

Grades 6-8 Math is weighted according to the instructional level as follows:

SCALE

A = 4 PTS B = 3 PTS C = 2 PTS D = 1 PT

HONORS SCALE (7-Pre Alg/8-Alg)

A = 5 PTS B = 4 PTS C = 3 PTS D = 2 PTS

HIGH SCHOOL ALG COURSE SCALE

A = 6 PTS B = 5 PTS C = 4 PTS D = 3 PTS

Parent-Teacher Conferences:

Scheduling of parent-teacher conferences will occur at least once per school year, usually before the winter recess. At this time, teachers and parents both may request conferences. In addition, parents wishing to have a conference with a teacher at any time during the school year may do so by contacting the school office or by contacting the teacher directly.

Progress Notices/Report Cards:

Approximately half-way through each marking period, progress notices will be issued informing all parents and guardians of a child's progress. Four report cards will be issued each year for grades 1-8. Kindergarten receives report cards for marking periods 2 thru 4. The exact dates of distribution will be determined each school year.

E. Homework Requests for Illness and Family Emergency:

Parents may request homework beginning the second day of an illness. If you know that your child will be out for at least two days, you may request it on the second day. In your request please include if homework is to be sent to the office at the end of the day or home with another student. Students will be given two days for each day absent in which to make-up work.

F. Homework Requests for Vacations:

Students can never truly make-up for the time missed in the classroom. Therefore, when parents take children on vacation during the school year, it is not reasonable to expect that they will be able to complete all the missed work while away. Teachers may assign grade level work to keep skills up to date. This, however, is at the teacher's discretion. Any work assigned would be due upon return.

When students return, teachers will decide what work needs to be completed to catch up with the class and work with the student to make a plan to complete it. The same time allowances would also be determined by the teacher.

G. Cafeteria Rules and Procedures

Breakfast and lunch are offered daily. Lunch tickets are sold in multiples (price noted on monthly menu) and preferred to be purchased on the first day of each week. Students may charge lunch, but payment is expected the following day. If the bill is in arrears in excess of \$20.00 the student will continue to receive lunch or breakfast and the district must contact the student's parent or guardian with a first notice of the debt. The parent or guardian has 10 school days to pay the amount due. If the parent or guardian does not make a full payment by the end of the 10 school days, a second notice must be provided to the parent stating that their bill is in arrears. If full payment is not made within one week from the date of the second notice, a nutritionally balanced alternative breakfast or lunch will be served to the student on the eighth calendar day. If payment is still not received then a request will be issued to meet with the Chief School Administrator or designee to resolve the matter.

H. Discipline Procedures:

An integral part of every student's education is learning to be a responsible citizen. It is necessary for students to respect the rights and property of others and to conduct themselves in a responsible manner at all times. Although the majority of our students are well-behaved and take great pride in Alpha Public School, a minimum number of regulations regarding student behavior will be strictly enforced. Any disciplinary action taken by the school is intended to assist the student in focusing on academic learning and positive social interactions. As always parent support and cooperation is vital to the success of any measures taken by the school. Discipline is enforced under BOE Policy #4150, #5600. Please see school website to access all board policies and regulations. Behavior charts are appended to this handbook.

Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying: Pupils must respect the rights of other pupils. Harassment, bullying or discrimination of any kind against any member of the school community will not be tolerated, and violations will result in disciplinary action. The Alpha Board of Education Policies and Regulations are in keeping with the anti-bullying law (N.J.S.A. 18A:37-13-19).

Severe or chronic interpersonal conflicts and bullying often have an adverse impact on the educational success of the students involved and those who witness the event(s). If the situation is assessed as a conflict (interpersonal differences between two individuals), all individuals involved will meet with the administrator or designee. Students who choose to continue the conflict may be subject to disciplinary action.

Reporting: All incidents of bullying are to be reported to administration, guidance, or a staff member.

Classroom Disruption: Students are expected to abide by established classroom rules as set forth by the teacher. Actions which interrupt the school routine will be dealt with by the classroom teacher as the need arises. Examples of such actions include but are not limited to: chronic tardiness, disorderly conduct, vulgar language, class clowning, littering, gum chewing, misuse of materials, harassment, and disrespect. Classroom discipline will be handled by the classroom teacher.

Disrespect to Adult Staff: Students are to be respectful to all adult staff members at all times. Insubordination (disrespect) to staff members will result in immediate removal of the student from the area and assignment to detention or, in the case of repeat incidences, more serious consequences.

Fighting: Students are to act responsibly at all times. Posing physical danger to themselves, to another student, or a staff member will not be tolerated. A student citing “self defense” is not an allowable excuse for fighting. Incidences of fighting will be referred to administration. The police may be involved. Consequences will be applied with consideration given to the student's grade level and can range from administrative conference to school suspension.

Leaving School Building/Grounds: Students will remain in the school building or on school property during the school day. Students leaving the building or grounds of their own volition will be referred to administration and/or the police. Consequences will be applied with consideration given to student's grade level and can range from administrative conference to school suspension.

Class Cutting/Tuancy: Students are not entitled to any illegal or unexcused absences from school or class. Students who cut class or are truant will be referred to administration. Police may be involved. Students who are truant are expected to make-up all missed work in a timely manner at the discretion of the teacher, and consequences will be implemented. Consequences will be applied with consideration given to the student's grade level and can range from administrative conference to school suspension.

Weapons/Explosives/Alcohol/Drugs: A student is forbidden to possess, consume, sell or distribute cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, alcohol products, or any substance considered a drug. Also possession or intent to distribute weapons, and/or explosives is forbidden. All circumstances should be sent to the office. Violation of this rule will result in suspension and/or expulsion. This matter will be handled as prescribed in the U.S. and N.J. Statutes and Regulations as well as out of school suspension or expulsion. Police may be involved.

Failure to Report/Disorderliness to Detention: Students not reporting for a scheduled detention will be required to make-up that detention and will be given an additional detention for failure to comply.
Second offense for either will result in an in-school suspension.

Vandalism and Stealing: The Board of Education views vandalism against school property by pupils as reprehensible. The Board believes that pupils should respect property and take pride in their school. School administration has ultimate discretion in identifying the vandals and the assigning of school disciplinary consequences. The Board will hold the pupil or his/her parents/guardians financially liable for the damage caused.

Students are expected to respect the rights of others. Under no circumstances should any student take from another anything which does not belong to him/her. Consequences will be applied with consideration given to student's grade level and can range from administrative conference to school suspension.

Behavior – Assemblies/Playground/Field Trips/School Events: Students who are suspended from school for behavior infractions risk being excluded from field trips and activities. If necessary, alternative educational experiences will be provided. The same rules apply that are in effect during the regular school day at events sponsored by the school or are connected in any way. Children who do not attend school during the day are not permitted to attend the event in the evening or whenever it may be held, except under extenuating circumstances which requires administrative approval. ***Students must be accompanied to school performances by a parent or guardian.***

Ladder of Discipline

All consequences will be scaled to incident, grade level and conditions by teaching staff and administration

DISCIPLINARY OFFENSE	CONSEQUENCES
<u>Disrespect-</u> <i>Respect is an entitlement</i> ● Talking back ● Making inappropriate sounds ● Calling out ● Negative Comments ● Disrespecting others' property ● Name calling ● Not being prepared for class	<u>Step 1</u> ● Use verbal and non-verbal cues for refocusing off-task behavior ● Stop sign as a reminder/warning ● Point out correct/expected behavior <u>Step 2</u> ● Have student fill out “Action Plan” and/or reflect on behavior (can be done as restorative practice during a lunch/recess detention) ● Loss of reward ● Hold a class meeting to discuss with group, when appropriate to group situation <u>Step 3 (Habitual behavior)</u> ● Contact parent and discuss ● Keep student after school for detention ● Have child write a note home ● Have the child phone parent with a teacher present. Teacher speaks on phone with parent after child speaks to parent <u>Step 4</u> ● Have children visit another classroom for time out (pre-arrange with colleague) ● Establish communication log with parent ● Hold a parent conference ● Establish behavior contract <u>Step 5</u> ● Send student to office ● Fill out incident/referral form

<u>Disruptive Behavior</u> • Tardiness and non-excused absences • Not following rules • Excessive talking • Calling out • Wandering around the room • Fooling around / horseplay • Argumentative • Inappropriate attire • Dress code violation	<u>Step 1</u> • Use verbal and non-verbal cues for refocusing off-task behavior • Stop sign as a reminder/warning • Point out correct/expected behavior <u>Step 2</u> • Have student fill out “Action Plan” and/or reflect on behavior (can be done as restorative practice during a lunch/recess detention) • Loss of reward • Hold a class meeting to discuss with group, when appropriate to group situation <u>Step 3</u> • Contact parent and discuss • Keep student after school for detention • Have child write a note home • Have child phone parent with teacher present. Teacher speaks on phone with parent after child speaks to parent <u>Step 4</u> • Have children visit another classroom for time out (pre-arrange with colleague) • Establish communication log with parent • Hold a parent conference • Establish behavior contract <u>Step 5</u> • Send student to office • Fill out incident/referral form
<u>Defiance</u> • Oppositional; resists verbally or nonverbally • Covert behavior • Profanity • Stealing • Refusal to do class work • Not handling in homework • Not bringing back required signed	<u>Step 1</u> • Use verbal and non-verbal cues for refocusing off-task behavior • Stop sign as a reminder/warning • Point out correct/expected behavior <u>Step 2</u> • Have student fill out “Action Plan” and/or reflect on behavior (can be done as restorative practice

documents (agenda books, assignments, permission slips, etc.)	during a lunch/recess detention) • Loss of reward • Hold a class meeting to discuss with group, when appropriate to group situation <u>Step 3</u> • Contact parent and discuss • Keep student after school for detention • Have child write a note home • Have child phone parent with teacher present. Teacher speaks on phone with parent after child speaks to parent <u>Step 4</u> • Have children visit another classroom for time out (pre-arrange with colleague) • Establish communication log with parent • Hold a parent conference • Establish behavior contract <u>Step 5</u> • Send student to office • Fill out incident/referral form
<u>Aggression</u> • Rages, threatens, or intimidates others • Can be verbally or physically abusive to people or objects • Bullying • Staff / child assault • Throwing objects / furniture • Breaking items • Sets up problems for others • Hitting, kicking, punching, biting • Vandalism, arson, weapons--policy violation • Impulsive behavior / meltdown • Walking out of school	<u>Step 1</u> • Use verbal and non-verbal cues for refocusing off-task behavior • Stop sign as a reminder/warning • Point out correct/expected behavior <u>Step 2</u> • Have student fill out “Action Plan” and/or reflect on behavior (can be done as restorative practice during a lunch/recess detention) • Loss of reward • Hold a class meeting to discuss with group, when appropriate to group situation <u>Step 3</u> • Contact parent and discuss • Keep student after school for detention • Have child write a note home • Have child phone parent with teacher present. Teacher speaks on phone with parent after child speaks to parent

	<u>Step 4</u> • Have children visit another classroom for time out (pre-arrange with colleague) • Establish communication log with parent • Hold a parent conference • Establish behavior contract <u>Step 5</u> • Send student to office • Fill out incident/referral form
Severe Interpersonal Relations • Severe bullying • Severe harassment based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or religion	<u>Step 1</u> • Use verbal and non-verbal cues for refocusing off-task behavior • Stop sign as a reminder/warning • Point out correct/expected behavior <u>Step 2</u> • Have student fill out “Action Plan” and/or reflect on behavior • Loss of reward • Hold a class meeting to discuss with group, when appropriate to group situation <u>Step 3</u> • Contact parent and discuss • Keep student after school for detention • Have child write a note home • Have child phone parent with teacher present. Teacher speaks on phone with parent after child speaks to parent <u>Step 4</u> • Have children visit another classroom for time out (pre-arrange with colleague) • Establish communication log with parent • Hold a parent conference • Establish behavior contract <u>Step 5</u> • Send student to office • Fill out incident/referral form