



LA TIERRA COMMUNITY SCHOOL-WIDE DISCIPLINE PROTOCOL

One essential mission of La Tierra Community School (LTCS) is to establish a culture of deep care and respect for oneself, one another, the immediate school environment, extended family, and community. This requires self-regulatory skills, problem-solving skills, and value-based approaches that are supported by the whole community involved in the La Tierra student's life. LTCS applies proactive, preventive, and brain-research strategies that foster respect, responsibility, honesty, accountability, courage, compassion, and kindness. Students are empowered in their choices, encouraged to respectfully resolve conflict, and prepared to receive constructive feedback.

While LTCS staff need to prepare students to be academically proficient, it is also our responsibility to focus on fostering healthy levels of social and emotional intelligence. Students need to be able to solve conflict in constructive ways. Research shows that students who feel emotionally and socially safe are more likely to progress well academically.

La Tierra community members are encouraged to behave in accordance with the school behavior expectations and norms, which are consistently modeled by staff and clearly established with students. In a positive manner, teachers define clear and firm limits and state consequences during the LTCS 6-week Grace and Courtesy period where we consistently model, practice, and remind students of the La Tierra school-wide ethics of care expectations.

Here are the LTCS school-wide ethics of care expectations:

- Treat others the way you want to be treated
- Put things away the way you find them
- Speak with kindness
- Practice positive body messages
- Care about others, nature, and school environment
- Before you speak, pause and reflect
- Be responsible for your learning and actions
- If it is not safe, think about it and chose a safe alternative

LTCS CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT & BEHAVIOR

LTCS staff and community members are encouraged, supported, and expected to practice positive classroom management and attend professional development workshops exploring new ways to effectively address common classroom concerns. Keys to successful classroom management include 1) model, practice, and remind, 2) reflect on the overall feel and flow of the classroom environment, and 3) be open to adjust and try new strategies. Teachers are responsible for clearly stating their expectations, classroom routines, traffic flow, and other logistics that will make their classrooms emotionally safe and organized as a learning environment. The focus will be to empower students to make choices that are responsible, self-regulatory, and aligned with the needs of the individual without negatively affecting the group. If a student's actions negatively affect the classroom group, she/he will be advised to go to a safe space where the student can reflect, write, draw, and/or practice appropriate strategies to calm down. If the student needs further assistance, staff will send the student to the school office where other positive strategies will be implemented.

Most behavior challenges happen when the learning environment presents a disorganized flow or when long hours of sitting and rigid instructional practices occur. Every classroom environment consists of many students, each coming in with a unique set of abilities, dispositions, intelligences, and preferred styles of learning. By acknowledging and accommodating these unique learning attributes, behavioral challenges will be kept to a minimum. Also helpful are regular morning meetings where students are encouraged to speak up and to be heard in a manner that supports their needs and the well-being of the overall classroom culture. In addition each teacher models and facilitates a value- and character-based culture by developing age appropriate classroom expectations. These expectations are written and posted in the classroom and communicated to other staff, to the school office, and to parents.

LTCS reviews norms and expectations on a bi-monthly basis and teaching staff share their strategies and success stories during our Friday staff meetings. Some of the examples of preventive classroom strategies are listed below:

- Adopt a six-week Grace and Courtesy period
- Model, demonstrate, explain and state reasons behind why these norms are implemented
- Clearly state your expectations
- Establish large group meetings where you positively practice constructive feedback and solution-oriented approaches
- Implement a variety of seating that accommodate physical needs of students
- Provide a variety of learning material that student can easily access and manipulate
- Create a safe space where student can go and self-regulate
- Create a safe space where student can articulate and constructively problem solve
- Implement peace education meetings with the Director on monthly basis
- Provide leadership opportunities for students that need to be heard
- Support autonomy and foster collectivity
- Nourish kindness by modeling it first in your tone and body language
- Focus on brain-research supported strategies instead of using punitive approach and language

- Review practices and strategies frequently and include student in the process of making the classroom environment responsible, accountable and responsive instead of reactive

LTCS Discipline Protocol Steps:

1. Safe Space

If the student has difficulty to self-regulate and follow usual classrooms routine, a safe space will be designated in each classrooms where the student can go to take time to process, draw, write, and do what is necessary until she/he is ready to join the classroom flow.

2. Office Referral

If the student cannot self-regulate within 15 minutes, she/he will be sent to the school office to have quiet time. In this case parents will be notified by the school administration with an office referral note.

3. Two Office Referrals

If the student receives two office referrals, the school will schedule a director/teacher/parent conference where the situation will be addressed and behavior strategies will be discussed and implemented. The student will have 14 days to correct her/his behavior and parents will be notified about the progress. The team develops a solution-oriented contract.

4. In-School Suspension

If the situation doesn't improve within 14 days, the school administration will make an executive decision whether to implement in-school suspension. In-school suspension varies from ½ day to 1 full day. The student is not counted as absent but is required to work in the office and complete her/his assigned work.

Behaviors that may warrant in-school suspension are:

- Repeatedly leaving the classroom and/or school grounds without permission
- Exhibiting physically aggressive behavior toward other students and/or staff
- Bullying
- Using foul language toward other students and/or staff
- Forgery
- Plagiarism
- Improper use of school computers and/or technology
- Failure to comply with safety norms
- Causing intentional damage to school property
- Not actively seeking solutions to improve behavior

5. Off-Campus Suspension

Unfortunately, in some cases repeated offensive behavior may cause deep distress to the school community. When that happens the school will act appropriately according to the state educational code and take steps to assure the safety of the student and the school community. The school administration may suspend the student for up to five days. When suspension occurs the student will not be readmitted until a meeting takes place with the governing board, administration, and parent to discuss necessary steps to assure that the returning student will abide by the LTCS school-wide discipline protocol.

6. School Expulsion

After suspension has occurred, repeated offenses and failure to change inappropriate behavior will result in school expulsion. The governing board and school administration will notify parents and provide detailed documentation of why such a step was taken.

LTCS CARES AND CONTINUOUSLY WORKS ON FINDING NEW AND HELPFUL STRATEGIES TO HELP STUDENTS TOWARD THEIR HEALTHY SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

In addition to the LTCS Discipline Protocol steps, possible alternatives might be used to help students toward self-regulation and healthy social resiliency:

- Frequent parent/teacher meetings
- Specific individual behavior plans
- Visit to another classroom to observe peer behavior and problem-solving skills
- Designated work in the garden to alleviate frustration and improve focus
- Individual and/or group counseling
- Designated time with the School Director
- Community service
- Written reflection piece

LTCS is committed to creating an emotionally and socially safe community where administration and teaching staff use alternative and positively-oriented approaches to discipline. LTCS understands that consistent positive role modeling and clear expectation protocols foster a healthy classroom climate and discipline

LA TIERRA COMMUNITY SCHOOL CHARACTER TRAITS & DESIGN PRINCIPLES

COURAGE

The Primacy of Self-Discovery

Learning happens best with emotion, challenge, and the requisite support. People discover their abilities, values, passions, and responsibilities in situations that offer adventure and the unexpected. In Expeditionary Learning schools, students undertake tasks that require perseverance, fitness, craftsmanship, imagination, self-discipline, and significant achievement. A teacher's primary task is to help students overcome their fears and discover they can do more than they think they can.

Success and Failure

All students need to be successful if they are to build the confidence and capacity to take risks and meet increasingly difficult challenges. But it is also important for students to learn from their failures, to persevere when things are hard, and to learn to turn disabilities into opportunities.

CREATIVITY

The Having of Wonderful Ideas

Teaching in Expeditionary Learning schools fosters curiosity about the world by creating learning situations that provide something important to think about, time to experiment, and time to make sense of what is observed.

RESPONSIBILITY

The Responsibility for Learning

Learning is both a personal process of discovery and a social activity. Everyone learns both individually and as part of a group. Every aspect of an Expeditionary Learning school encourages both children and adults to become increasingly responsible for directing their own personal and collective learning.

INTEGRITY

Collaboration and Competition

Individual development and group development are integrated so that the value of friendship, trust, and group action is clear. Students are encouraged to compete, not against each other, but with their own personal best and with rigorous standards of excellence.

RESPECT

Diversity and Inclusion

Both diversity and inclusion increase the richness of ideas, creative power, problem-solving ability, and respect for others. In Expeditionary Learning schools, students investigate and value their different histories and talents as well as those of other communities and cultures. Schools and learning groups are heterogeneous.

The Natural World

A direct and respectful relationship with the natural world refreshes the human spirit and teaches the important ideas of recurring cycles and cause and effect. Students learn to become stewards of the earth and of future generations.

COMPASSION

Service and Compassion

We are crew, not passengers. Students and teachers are strengthened by acts of consequential service to others, and one of an Expeditionary Learning school's primary functions is to prepare students with the attitudes and skills to learn from and be of service.

Empathy and Caring

Learning is fostered best in communities where students' and teachers' ideas are respected and where there is mutual trust. Learning groups are small in Expeditionary Learning schools, with a caring adult looking after the progress and acting as an advocate for each child. Older students mentor younger ones, and students feel physically and emotionally safe.