# Superintendent’s Memo #099-19


**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education**

DATE: April 26, 2019

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction

## SUBJECT: Model Guidance for Positive, Preventive Code of Conduct Policy and Alternatives to Suspension

The Virginia Board of Education is required, through [*Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.6](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter14/section22.1-279.6/), to establish guidelines and develop model policies for codes of student conduct to aid local school boards in the implementation of such policies. In January of 2019, the Board approved the newly revised *Model Guidance for Positive, Preventive Code of Student Conduct Policy and Alternatives to Suspension,* which is now available on the Virginia Department of Education, [Student Conduct and Discipline webpage](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_conduct/index.shtml). The documentis a blueprint for local school boards and provides multiple resources to assist school divisions in the revision of local policies regarding student discipline.

The *Model Guidance* document represents a significant shift in focus to a positive, preventive approach to student discipline that promotes a positive school climate and supports equity, fairness, and continuous improvement.  It recognizes the need for tiered instructional interventions and behavioral supports when students engage in misbehavior and combines student code of conduct policy guidance with guidelines for alternatives to suspension. It also addresses equity in student conduct policy and practice, and provides school boards with suggestions for ensuring equity in student discipline matters.

The Guidelines are intended specifically to aid school boards in revising and implementing student conduct policies as the *Code of Virginia* requires. Local school boards are required to adopt and revise regulations on codes of student conduct that are consistent with, but may be more stringent than, these Guidelines.

Training is being developed to support its implementation and will include trauma informed practices, threat assessment, and suicide prevention strategies. If you need assistance or further resources for the *Model Guidance* document, please contact Rebecca Kahila via email at Rebecca.Kahila@doe.virginia.gov, or by telephone at (804) 225-4654, or Bobby Kipper at Bobby.Kipper@doe.virginia.gov, or by telephone at (804) 225-4653.

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