



Unit 4: Understanding the U.S. School System

Students' Guide

LESSON 4: School Discipline

Content Objectives

- Students familiarize themselves with the disciplinary processes at U.S. schools.
- Students brainstorm ways to cultivate community support for migrant and refugee learners in the case that they are being disciplined.

Rights Objectives

- Students brainstorm ways to secure the right to due process during disciplinary action.
- Students analyze the interaction between migration status and school discipline.

Language Objectives

- Students continue to build their language skills around rights.
- Students practice reading, writing, and speaking in English.

KEY VOCABULARY:

Nouns	Verbs
Discipline	To be suspended
Detention	To be expelled
Suspension	To re-enroll
Expulsion	To appeal
A hearing	To be violent towards
Evidence	To advocate

*These lessons contain some basic information about U.S. law. This information is **not legal advice** and is not a replacement for legal advice from a trained attorney. All information is current as of the date it was produced (April 2016).*

LESSON ACTIVITIES:

PART A) Talking About Types of School Discipline

Students will split up into three groups and explore one of three topics: detention, suspension, or expulsion. Complete the activity for your group. Afterwards, the class will come back together and discuss each kind of discipline as a whole group.

Group One: Detention

Read together: Detention is when a student has to go to a room and do work or sit quietly instead of going to lunch or going home after school. A student can be given detention for many reasons, including the following:

- He/she did not go to class.
- He/she was late to class many times.
- He/she broke a school rule.

In your group, draw a picture of a student who received detention, and get ready to tell the student's story to the other students. Tell the story so that the other students will understand what detention is and how it works.

Group Two: Suspension

Read together: Suspension is when a student is not allowed to come to school for a time between one day and two weeks. A student can be suspended for many reasons, including the following:

- He/she did not go to class many times.
- He/she broke a more serious school rule.
- He/she committed a crime at school, like stealing, drinking alcohol, or doing drugs.

If a student is going to be suspended for more than 10 days, he or she is entitled to an informal hearing. This is when the student has a chance to defend him or herself before being suspended.

In your group, draw a picture of a student who was suspended, and get ready to tell the student's story to the other students. Tell the story so that the other students will understand what suspension is and how it works.

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Group Three: Expulsion

Read together: Expulsion is when a student is kicked out of school permanently and not allowed to re-enroll. A student can be expelled for many reasons, including the following:

- He/she broke an important school rule or many school rules.
- He/she committed a crime at school, like stealing, drinking alcohol, or selling drugs.
- He/she brought a weapon to school.
- He/she was violent towards another student or a teacher.

If a student is going to be expelled, he or she is entitled to a hearing. This is when the student has a chance to defend him or herself before being expelled.

In your group, draw a picture of a student who was expelled, and get ready to tell the student's story to the other students. Tell the story so that the other students will understand what suspension is and how it works.

PART B) Advocating for Students' Rights When Discipline Is Not Fair

- What situations do you know of where a student was treated unfairly by a school during disciplinary action? What did the adults in his or her life do to help the student? What more could they have done?
- What particular challenges do migrant and refugee children face due to the disciplinary processes at U.S. schools?
- It can be very hard to know how to interact with a school when your child or a child you know is facing disciplinary action. Which people in your community can help you during this process?
- Students who believe they have been treated unfairly during a disciplinary hearing sometimes have a **right to appeal**. Who in your community or school could help you advocate for your child?

PART C) Reflections

As a class, discuss your answers to the following questions, considering your experiences and the lesson activities:

- What is the most interesting or important thing you learned about school discipline during the lesson?
- What questions or concerns about U.S. schools would you like to raise with your children, a teacher, a school staff member, or another adult, such as a fellow parent, in light of the lesson?
- How would you bring up a question or concern you have about school discipline your child? A teacher? A fellow parent?

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