

**SCHOOL DISTRICT OF SOUTH ORANGE AND MAPLEWOOD, NJ
PUBLIC BOARD MEETING
October 18, 2021**

RESOLUTION 4215

FOR ACTION

SUBJECT: MORATORIUM ON SUSPENSIONS FOR THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR

WHEREAS, The South Orange-Maplewood School District is committed to equity, diversity and inclusivity; and

WHEREAS, The South Orange-Maplewood School District is committed to providing safe and welcoming spaces for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, language, disability status, gender expression or identity, and sexual orientation; and

WHEREAS, The South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education is in support of and is committed to promoting inclusive, welcoming, safe school environments that promote respect, dignity and equality and;

WHEREAS; The South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education wishes to further the district's commitment to provide a climate and culture that is free from harassment and discrimination, including from unlawful sexual harassment and/or misconduct and all forms of violence, harassment, intimidation and bullying and;

WHEREAS, The South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education is committed to a district-wide implementation of restorative practices, including restorative justice, that helps students and staff resolve conflicts peacefully and respectfully while reducing the use of punitive discipline and decreasing racial disparities in discipline; and

WHEREAS, It is well-established that removal from school through punitive disciplinary responses negatively impacts engagement and connection to school throughout a student's experience; and

WHEREAS, Students' perception of trust and connection to school establish fundamental social emotional skills that form the foundation for academic success; and

WHEREAS, Research has established significant causality between removal from school through punitive disciplinary responses and a reduced likelihood of graduating on time; and

WHEREAS, As students return to full-time in person learning for the first time in over 19 months, they need additional social emotional supports to address a number of pandemic-related mental health and wellness needs; and

WHEREAS, Research shows that Black students are more than twice as likely to be suspended than White students; and

WHEREAS, Research shows that comprehensive implementation of restorative practices reduces overall use of suspensions, and significantly reduces suspensions for Black students; and

WHEREAS, to the extent that the Code and Conduct and this resolution are in conflict, this resolution will supersede the Code of Conduct; and

BE IT RESOLVED That the South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education directs the Superintendent to immediately institute a one-year (SY 2021-22) moratorium on all suspensions/school removals except in isolated and extreme cases where there is credible and significant threat to the well-being of students or staff, subject to the Superintendent's approval; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That the South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education directs the Superintendent to convene a Task Force comprised of identified students, staff and educators to evaluate and assess the current state of PK-12 restorative practices and social emotional supports through regular meetings as well as through the administering of a brief climate and culture survey to students in grades 6-12 in the fall/early winter and again in the spring. The Task Force will use the findings to suggest necessary adjustments and additions to strengthen our current approach to restorative practices. The Superintendent will complete a report with the results of that assessment as well as recommendations to the Board no later than March 31, 2022 and present it at the following general Board meeting.