What does expulsion mean?
Under Florida Law, expulsion from school means the withholding of educational services (schooling) for a specified period of time. The total withholding of services extends to every school in the District, including adult education, General Education Diploma (GED), and all other programs, activities, and campuses.

Who has the authority to expel my child?
The principal of a school can recommend that a student be expelled. This recommendation is reviewed by the Superintendent or designee, who may then recommend expulsion of the student to the School Board. Only the five-member elected School Board has the legal authority to expel a student from the school district.

At first the school only suspended my child. Why is the school now asking for expulsion?
The school principal has the authority to suspend a student according to District policy, and may need a day or more to gather all the facts necessary to reach a decision as to whether expulsion should be recommended.

Where are the rules that my child is expected to follow published?
Each student receives a copy of the Student Code of Conduct at the beginning of the school year (in the planner for secondary students). The code sets forth “Rules of Student Conduct” and organizes disciplinary infractions into Level I, II, and III categories. Level III infractions, which are considered to be serious breaches of conduct, or a pattern of continuous Level II discipline referrals, may lead to a recommendation for expulsion of a student.

What is meant by "zero tolerance"?
Florida Statute 1006.13 specifies that certain offenses, such as the possession of a weapon or firearm, call for automatic recommendation for expulsion, to the exclusion of any other less stringent recommendation.

Where are my rights and the rights of my child published?
The Student Code of Conduct also lists the "Student Rights and Responsibilities," and the "Appeal Procedures" that are available to both students and parents.

How will I be notified that my child is being recommended for expulsion?
The school principal may contact you in person or by telephone. The school will send you a copy of the written recommendation for expulsion, which is sent to the Superintendent.

Who conducts the Superintendent's hearing?
Expulsion appeals are heard by an independent hearing officer designated by the Superintendent.

Where is the hearing conducted?
Appeal hearings are held in the main administration building (three-story building) in Land O’ Lakes, just off Gator Lane (to the right as you head toward Land O’ Lakes High School).

Can my child return to school until the hearing takes place?
The Superintendent or designee may ban a student from campus during formal appeal if he/she believes the student’s presence on campus would be a continuing danger or disruption. In such cases, the appeal shall be expedited.

Can my child make up class work while waiting for the hearing?
Yes.

How will I get the class work?
You may make arrangements through the principal's office at your child's school.

Who will be present at the hearing?
The hearing officer, a representative from the Office of Student Support Programs and Services, and one or more administrators from the school will be present. There may be times when other personnel are present. An interpreter will be provided as needed.

What takes place at the hearing?
After the rules of the hearing are explained to all participants, the principal or assistant principal explains the situation and behavior which led to the recommendation for expulsion, including:

- The date, time of day, and location of the incident;
- For drugs, the name and quantity of the drug;
- For knives, a description, photograph or copy of the knife;
- For profanity, obscenity, sexual misconduct or harassment, exactly what was said or done;
- For notes, such as threats, either the actual note or a copy of the note;
- Who else was involved, and whether there were witnesses;
- Any statements which might have been made by the student;
- Any actions taken with the parents;
- Previous discipline referrals;
- Attendance information, including incidents of skipping class or school;
- Academic record that includes grades earned to date.

The hearing officer then asks the student to explain his or her behavior, including whether the student agrees with the account given by the school, whether there were extenuating circumstances, and any other information the student has to offer.

The parent is then asked to speak to the situation. The parent will be able to ask questions, present evidence, and make recommendations.

Can I bring a witness statement?
Yes. You may bring witness statements from persons who have direct involvement in the situation, that is, who were present at the time or who have direct knowledge of the situation. You may also bring the witnesses, if desired. The hearing officer has the authority to decide when it is appropriate to hear their statements.

Do I need to have an attorney or legal counsel?
While you may bring an attorney or other legal counsel, it is not necessary. The hearing is not a legal proceeding, and further rights to appeal are afforded to the student and parent.

While the hearing is not conducted as a legal proceeding, it is a formal hearing. As such, rules regarding when a person speaks and what type of behavior is allowed will be determined and enforced by the hearing officer.
Evidentiary rules are not part of the process. The District's civility policy is strictly enforced.

**How should I dress for the hearing?**
This is a formal hearing. Therefore, business attire is expected. Any student who attends must be in compliance with the dress code. If a student appears and is in violation of the dress code, the hearing will not proceed.

**How should I prepare for the hearing, and what should I bring?**
Be as familiar as possible with the circumstances of the situation. Prepare notes if needed. Bring appropriate records and documents, witness statements, or any other material that might support your child’s account or any other factors that should be considered.

**What does the hearing officer take into account at the hearing?**
The evidence presented will be weighed by the hearing officer and will have the most influence on the hearing officer’s decision. Unlike a criminal case, the charges against a student do not need to be proven “beyond the shadow of a doubt.” The hearing officer considers testimony and evidence in the context of "what a reasonable person would believe."

In making a decision, consideration is given to the student’s:

- Age and grade level;
- Academic record;
- Discipline record;
- Attendance record.

Other factors may be considered as needed.

**What are the possible outcomes?**
The most severe outcome will be to uphold the recommendation for expulsion without educational services. However, the hearing officer may decide on other remedies, including, but not limited to:

- Shortening the length of expulsion;
- Expulsion with educational services;
- Placing the student at one of the alternative schools or programs;
- Transfer of the student to another school;
- Withdraw the recommendation and return the student to the original school;
- Revocation of school choice placement.

**What if I don't agree with the results of the Superintendent's hearing?**
You have the right to request an appeal hearing directly before the School Board. This must be done in writing within 3 days after receiving the Superintendent or designee’s decision at the conclusion of the hearing.

If not appealed as described above, this decision is binding and not subject to further appeal, negotiation, or amendment by any party.

**What takes place at the hearing before the School Board?**
A representative from the Office for Student Support Programs and Services will present the facts of the case and explain the reasons for the decision. The student’s academic, discipline and attendance history will also be reviewed. You and your child will be allowed to present your side of the case, plus present any witnesses or evidence. School personnel will be present. The decision of the School Board is final.

**NOTE:** This brochure is intended to provide general information regarding expulsions. It is not intended to represent every detail or possible situation.