BEFORE THE IOWA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In re Disciplinary Action of L.D., a child,	)	
	)	
Meagan Daye,	)	
	)	DIA # 26DOE0020
Appellants,	)	
	)	State Board Docket 5250
-v-	)	
	)	Final Decision
Prairie City Monroe	)	
Community School District,	)	
	)	
Appellee.	)	

On August 21, 2026, the administrative law judge issued a proposed decision, which affirmed the Appellee's actions in this matter. The time to appeal the proposed decision has passed, and no appeal was filed. The proposed decision is adopted, as written. APPELLEE'S DECISION AFFIRMED.

This is final agency action in a contested case proceeding. Any party that disagrees with the Department's decision may file a petition for judicial review under section 17A.19 of the Iowa Administrative Procedure Act. That provision gives a party who is "aggrieved or adversely affected by agency action" the right to seek judicial review by filing a petition for judicial review in the Iowa District Court for Polk County (home of state government) or in the district court in which the party lives or has its primary office. Any petition for judicial review must be filed within thirty days of this action, or within thirty days of any petition for rehearing being denied or deemed denied.

Dated: October 15, 2026

Iowa State Board of Education, by:

John Robbins, President

CC by certified mail to parties and counsel

IN THE IOWA ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS DIVISION
CENTRAL PANEL BUREAU

In re: Disciplinary Action of L.D., a child, By Meagan Daye, Appellant, v. Prairie City Monroe Community School District, Respondent.	Case No. 26DOE0020 DE Admin Doc. No. 5250 PROPOSED DECISION

Statement of The Case

Appellant Meagan Daye filed an appeal to the State Board of Education ("State Board"), pursuant to Iowa Code section 290.1, of a decision rendered by the Prairie City Monroe (PCM) Community School District Board of Directors ("School District"). After this matter was transmitted to the Administrative Hearings Division, a telephonic hearing was held on August 18, 2026.

Appellant Meagan Daye appeared and represented herself. PCM was present through its attorney Miriam Van Heukelem as well as Aaron Becker, Kristin Souza, and Ryan Van Der Kamp. Objections were sustained to three of Ms. Day's exhibits, although the My 15 email from Becker to Ms. Daye was admitted without objection. PCM's Exhibits 1-10 were all admitted without objection. Daye, Souza, Becker and Van Der Kamp all testified at the hearing. Following the close of evidence and closing arguments, the matter was considered fully submitted.

Issue

Whether the Prairie City Monroe School Board abused its discretion in imposing a long-term suspension on L.D.

Findings of Fact

At the time of the incident that led to this action, L.D. was a tenth-grade student at PCM High School. At around 11:22 a.m. on May 5, 2026, Principal Souza received an automated alert from a sensor that vape had been detected in the boys' locker room. She proceeded to walk toward the locker room when she observed L.D. leaving the locker room area.

Principal Souza then went back to her office and viewed video from that area, confirming that L.D. was the only student that had been in the locker room and that he was walking out of it and through the gym. Two other students who were near the area later told Principal Souza that L.D. was the only one in the locker room and that he is there most days at that same time. A male teacher also walked into the locker room and confirmed that nobody else was in there.

Principal Souza and another teacher, Mr. Teeter, then retrieved L.D. from his biology class and told him that because the vape sensor had gone off while he was in the locker room they would have to

search him. After first claiming that he had nothing on him, L.D. admitted that he had an "anxiety stick" in his waistband, but he denied that it was a vape. He then pulled what appeared to be a vape out of his waistband and handed it to Principal Souza. L.D. claimed he did not know what was in the vape, but that his mother helped him purchase it off Tik Tok.

Principal Souza then called L.D.'s mother and told her that L.D. had been found with a vape. Daye first claimed he had stolen it from her boyfriend and that it contained nicotine. Following this conversation, Principal Souza did a google search for the vape product and discovered that it reportedly contained THC. School resource officer Applegate also discovered a similar result on his google search, finding that the brand "Sluggers" advertised itself as containing THC. Two subsequent field tests administered by the officer confirmed the substance in the vape to be THC.

Via letter to his mother on the following day, Principal Souza stated that based on L.D.'s possession of a vape containing THC, he had violated Board Policy 502.07, which states:

> Violation of this policy by students will result in disciplinary action including suspension or expulsion. Use, purchase or being in possession of tobacco/nicotine products for those under the age of twenty-one, may be reported to the local law enforcement authorities. Possession, use or being under the influence of alcohol and/or of a controlled substance may also be reported to the local law enforcement authorities.

Principal Souza further informed Daye, that L.D. would receive a ten-day out-of-school suspension beginning May 6, 2026, during which time he was not allowed on any school property, including for extracurricular activities. As he was allowed to work on homework during the suspension, he was asked contact the office to set up those homework assignments.

In that same letter, Principal Souza also advised Daye that at a forthcoming Board meeting, L.D. may face further disciplinary actions, up to and including expulsion or long-term suspension. And, that Daye would have an opportunity to attend that hearing, which upon request could be an open hearing.

Then, in a May 12, 2026, letter, Superintendent Becker advised Daye that based on his possession of a vape containing THC and his violation of Board policy, a recommendation would be made to the PCM Board of Directors that L.D. be placed on a long-term suspension through the first semester of the 2026-27 school year. The letter further informed Daye that a hearing was scheduled on this question at the May 18, 2026, Board meeting, the purpose of which was to "to allow the administration to present to the Board the recommendation to suspend your student through the 1st semester of the next school year, and to allow you the opportunity to present a response and/or a defense of your student." Superintendent Becker also enclosed copies of the following evidence, which would be presented to the Board:

- Notes taken by Mr. Teeter and Mrs. Souza
- The notification of a vape event in the boys locker room
- Video footage of L.D. entering and leaving the locker room
- A picture of the vape that was taken from L.D.
- Documentation from Officer Applegate and Monroe PD

- Proposed consent agreement provided to and signed by Ms. Daye and L.D.
- Suspension letter sent to Ms. Daye
- Behavior report for L.D.

He also informed Daye that Superintendent Becker, Principal Souza and school resource officer Applegate may testify at the hearing. And finally, he informed Daye that:

> You and your student have the right to be present and represented by counsel at the hearing, of your own choosing and at your own expense. You will be provided an opportunity to question witnesses called by the Administration and to call witnesses and present evidence on the student's behalf.

Prior to the hearing, in response to Daye's request to exclude the school resource officer as a witness, Superintendent Becker explained in an email to her some hearing procedures, including the following:

> We will also have all witnesses present that were listed in the hearing notice, including the SRO who was involved in the investigation. While you may certainly advocate on behalf of your son, and can challenge the officer's credibility through testimony of your own witnesses or any administration witness, you are not entitled to require us to exclude a relevant fact witness from the hearing. Please know for planning purposes, the board does not typically allow "character" witnesses who do not have relevant knowledge about the specific student conduct violation to testify in expulsion/suspension hearings. It is the job of the board president to make decisions about relevance at the hearing.

At that May 18 meeting, the Board then went into a closed session to conduct the hearing on the recommendation to long-term suspend L.D. from school. Board President Van Der Kamp presided at this hearing, and began by outlining the procedures for the hearing, including that the administration would make an opening statement, present its evidence, and question its witnesses, who Day could then cross-examine. He further explained that the family could then make an opening statement, present evidence, and question their witnesses. Finally, he explained that following the close of evidence, the Board would meet in executive session to vote on the recommendation. Daye had no questions about these procedures.

During that hearing, the Board took testimony from Souza, Becker, SRO Applegate, Ms. Daye, and L.D. At one point in Meagan Daye's testimony, President Van Der Kamp informed her "we got to stay on topic here and the THC" after Daye began to broach topics and complaints irrelevant to the suspension question. Daye, though, was allowed to continue her testimony and asked various questions of the Administration's witnesses.

Following discussion in executive session, the Board unanimously voted in open session to suspend L.D. for the first semester of the next school year. In its subsequent written decision, the Board found that "the greater weight of evidence supports the finding that [L.D.] did engage in possession of an illegal substance." Based on this "serious breach of the school's discipline policy," the Board ordered the following:

1. [L.D.] is to be long term suspended from attendance in the PCM Community School District and any school activities for one semester (the first semester of the 26-27 school year).
2. Upon completion of the long term suspension period, an application for re-admission must be submitted and approved by the administration with a recommendation to the Board prior to re-admission. Written findings and conclusions consistent with the Board's deliberations will be prepared and the President is authorized and directed to execute the Findings of Fact and Conclusion.

In support of this decision, the Board noted that his behavior was "antagonistic to the rights of other students to attain their education and participate in school activities" and was a "threat to the safe and orderly operation of the school." The decision to suspend L.D. for one semester was entirely consistent with how the Board has acted on similar violations in the past. In fact, to the knowledge of the school's witnesses, every violation for possessing controlled substances on school grounds has been met by a recommendation and subsequent decision to suspend that student for one semester.

At the hearing, Daye argued that the suspension was excessive and that she was not provided due process because she was not allowed to call certain witnesses or to present certain evidence.

Conclusions of Law

Iowa Code chapter 279 speaks to the duties, powers, and responsibilities of school boards of directors. In particular, section 279.9 requires boards to adopt rules prohibiting the use of tobacco and the use or possession of alcoholic liquor, wine, or beer or any controlled substance by any student of the schools. It further empowers boards to suspend or expel a student for a violation of a rule described under this section. The PCM School Board has adopted such a rule in Board Policy 502.07, which is mentioned above.

Iowa Code § 282.4 provides a school district board of directors with discretion to discipline any student from school for a violation of the school district's regulations or rules. Specifically, Section 282.4 provides:

> The board may by a majority vote, expel any student from school for a violation of the regulations or rules established by the board, or when the presence of the student is detrimental to the best interests of the school. The board may confer upon any teacher, principal, or superintendent the power temporarily to suspend a student, notice of suspension being at once given in writing to the president of the board.

When a student is suspended or expelled by the school district, the student may be readmitted only by the school district or in the manner prescribed by school district. Iowa Code § 282.5.

Pursuant to Iowa Code section 290.1, an affected pupil or the parent or guardian of an affected minor pupil who is aggrieved by a decision or order of the board of directors of a school corporation may appeal the decision or order to the state board of education. Any decision rendered must be "just and equitable." Iowa Code § 290.3. The State Board has now transmitted this matter to the Administrative Hearings Division.

An agency's authority to review a school district's decision is only as broad as that vested in it by statute or regulation. *Sioux City Community School Dist. v. Iowa Dept. of Educ.*, 659 N.W.2d 563, 568 (Iowa 2003). "[W]here a statute provides for a review of a school district's discretionary action, the review, by necessary implication, is limited to determining whether the school district abused its discretion." *Id.* To constitute an abuse of discretion, the action must be unreasonable or lack rationality under the attendant circumstances. *In re J.L.L.,* 414 N.W.2d 133, 135 (Iowa 1987).

In applying the abuse of discretion standard, the Board must look to whether a reasonable person could have found sufficient evidence to come to the same conclusion as reached by the school district. *See Sioux City, 659* at 569 (*citing* Iowa Code § 17A.19(10)(f)(1)). The reviewing body may not substitute its own judgment for that of the Board. *Id.*

I first address, and reject, Daye's argument that she and L.D. were not provided due process at the Board hearing. The hallmarks of due process in an administrative hearing include adequate notice of the charges or claims, a fair and impartial decision-maker, the right to present evidence and call witnesses, the right to confront opposing evidence, and a written decision based on the administrative record. *See e.g. Goldberg v. Kelly,* 397 U.S. 254, 268 (1970).

All of those considerations are present here. In particular, Daye received notice of the hearing, which included an explanation of the procedures of that hearing. She was allowed to present all *relevant* evidence, she was able to call any witness that had *relevant* information, and she was able to cross-examine the Administration's witnesses. She was never told that she could not call her own witnesses, nor did the Board prohibit any witness from testifying. Superintendent Becker simply cautioned Day prior to the hearing that the Board may exclude *irrelevant* witnesses. This is an entirely appropriate statement. And finally, Daye received a written decision explaining the decision, the legal authority under which the Board acted, and the Board's rationale for that decision.

Furthermore, upon review of the record, I conclude the Board did not abuse its discretion or otherwise commit any error in its decision to impose a long-term suspension on L.D. First, the record fully supports a finding that L.D. knowingly possessed a vape containing THC while in the locker room of the high school during the middle of the school day. This clearly violated District policy prohibiting the possession or use of controlled substances. It also likely constituted a crime. The semester-long suspension is entirely consistent with past Board practice for similar violations. The long-term suspension supports a need for deterrence, and it appropriately recognizes the severity of this infraction and the impact it had, and may continue to have, on the educational environment at the PCM High School. In all respects, the decision to suspend L.D. is reasonable and rational under the circumstances.

Order

The Board's decision to impose a long-term suspension on L.D. is hereby AFFIRMED (found to be correct).

cc: Meagan Daye, Appellant, Meagan.daye@gmail.com (By Email)
Mirian Van Heukelem, Respondent's Counsel (via AEDMS)
Thomas Mayes, Rebecca Griglione, DOE (By AEDMS)

Appeal Rights

7—2506.27(17A) Appeals and review.
2506.27(1) Appeal by party. Any adversely affected party may appeal a proposed decision to the agency within 30 days after the decision is issued.
2506.27(2) Review. The agency may initiate review of a proposed decision on its own motion at any time within 30 days following the issuance of such a decision.
2506.27(3) Notice of appeal. An appeal of a proposed decision is initiated by filing a timely notice of appeal with the agency. The notice of appeal is to be signed by the appealing party or a representative of that party and contain a certificate of service. The notice will specify: a. The parties initiating the appeal; b. The proposed decision or order appealed from; c. The specific findings or conclusions to which exception is taken and any other exceptions to the decision or order; d. The relief sought; and e. The grounds for relief.

Case Title: IN RE: DISCIPLINARY ACTION OF L.D., A CHILD, BY MEAGAN DAYE, APPELLANT V. PRAIRIE CITY MONROE COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT (5250)

Case Number: 26DOE0020

Type: Proposed Decision

IT IS SO ORDERED.



David Lindgren, Administrative Law Judge