



SCHOOL SAFETY POSITION PAPER

ISSUE DEFINED

Parents have the expectation when they send their kids to school that they will encounter orderly classrooms where the focus is on teaching academic subjects that students need to learn to be fully functioning adults.

To achieve this primary goal of schools means students are safe from violence, bullying and harassment, and the influence of substance use and teachers are able to teach without being disciplinarians.

Significant school budgets and resources are spent on addressing student behaviors.

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE

When order and safety is not maintained within a school:

- children cannot learn in a chaotic environment,
- teachers are unable to teach effectively when they are more focused on dealing with behavior issues, resulting in teacher burnout and departures,
- students who fall further behind in their studies end up with low self-esteem that often result in disciplinary and absenteeism issues.

The numbers showing Delaware's declining student proficiency in reading and math are the result.

The 2022 Nation's Report Card indicates that [Delaware performs fourth from the bottom](#) when compared with all 50 states. The time spent dealing with behavioral issues and focusing on non-academic topics is having an enormous impact on the amount of learning that is taking place in our schools.

This impact is even greater for minority students and students with special needs. They are experiencing the lowest scores on state mandated testing. In fact we have 25 schools in Delaware - most of which are in the city of Wilmington - where there is a single digit proficiency score on either the math or ELA state assessment.

School safety is one of the keys to improved student and school outcomes. Emotional and physical safety in school leads to improved academic performance.

THE CASE FOR CHANGE

In 2015, President Barack Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act, requiring each state to collect and report data on discipline and school districts to formulate alternatives to suspensions and expulsions. [READ MORE](#)

The Obama Administration changed the “no excuses discipline” to consider a students' disabilities and background when determining the appropriate level of discipline. They argued that “zero tolerance” discipline policies disproportionately target Black and Latino students for minor infractions. [READ MORE](#)

Since this policy change was implemented, the level of discipline concerns and violence in schools has increased. [READ MORE](#)

In the place of suspensions, detentions, and other punishment, the new discipline used in schools is sometimes called “restorative justice practices”. These new policies have allowed for more disruption in the classroom and caused one student’s misbehavior to disrupt the rest of the class. We are reaping the consequences of this policy today.

In some Delaware schools, students are afraid to go to school, afraid to walk in the hallways between classes, and afraid of being bullied or assaulted. Their teachers and principals are also experiencing extreme stress and considering leaving the profession due to the violence and disrespect occurring in their classrooms. [READ MORE](#)

POLICIES WE SUPPORT

In a Nutshell: Provide a safe and orderly classroom where teachers teach, and students learn and thrive.

- Every school has effective security measures in place in the case of violent activity occurring on school grounds or school-sponsored events. This includes a single point of access and adequate fencing.
- Improve mental health resources, discipline and accountability in the classroom.
- Offer tutoring and mentoring to help kids who are struggling to keep up.
- Build strong relationships with parents at schools so safety issues affecting a student's performance are addressed openly and quickly with positive, effective interventions.

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