

## MEMO

To: Interested Parties  
From: Emma White and Griffin Johnson  
Re: MEA member experience of disruptive student behavior  
Date: October 24, 2023

K-12 educators in Michigan are experiencing disruptive student behavior affecting classroom instruction time, according to our recent survey.<sup>1</sup> Large majorities of educators report verbal outbursts and chronic absenteeism in their classrooms, but more serious challenges are also widespread, including majorities who have experienced damaged property and verbal threats, and over a quarter who have been injured by students. On average, educators report a loss of 12 hours of instruction a month due to unsafe student behavior.

### **1. Most K-12 educators have experienced student outbursts, damaged property, and verbal threats, while over a quarter have been injured by a student.**

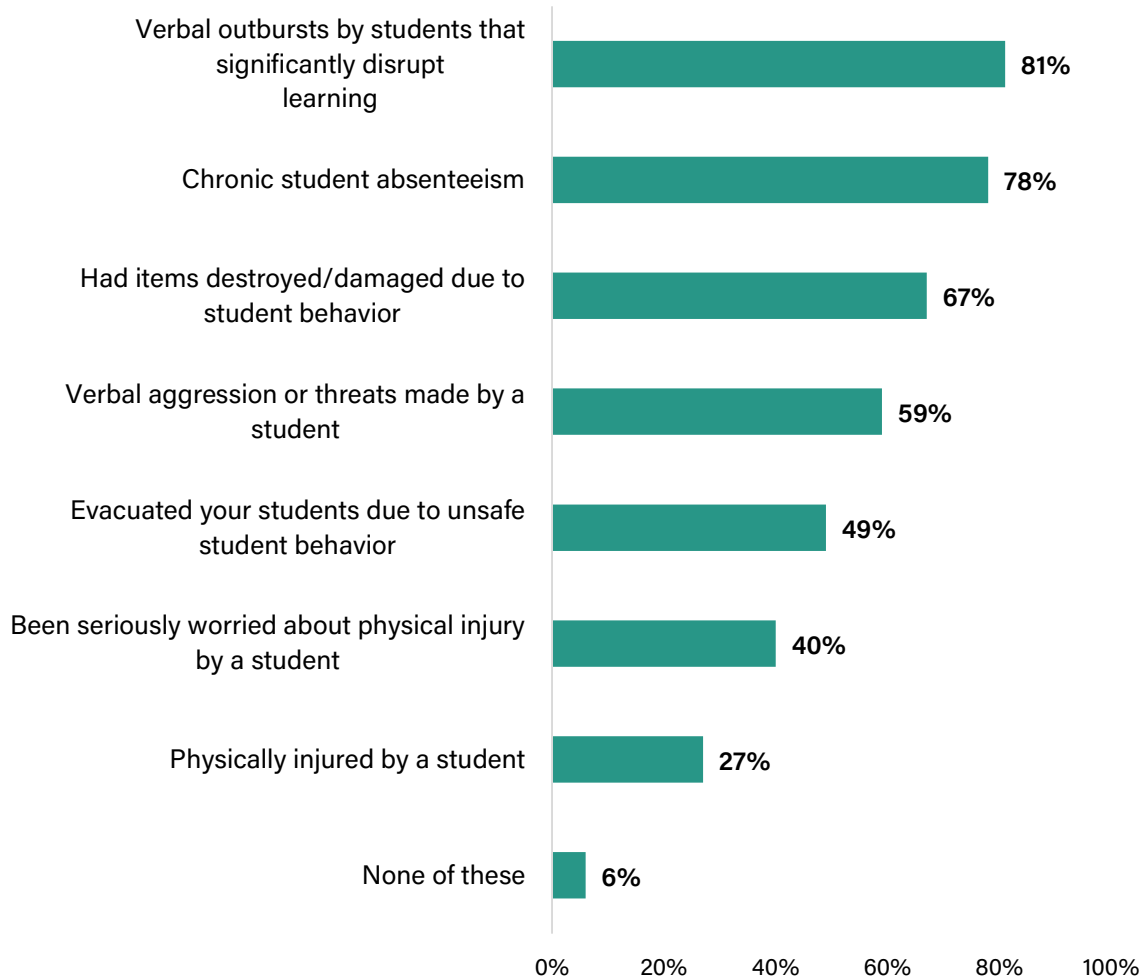
As illustrated by Figure 1, majorities of educators have experienced highly disruptive student behavior, including verbal outbursts (81% have experienced), chronic student absenteeism (78%), destruction of property (67%), and verbal aggression or threats made by a student (59%). Half of educators (49%) have had to evacuate students due to unsafe student behavior. More than a quarter (27%) have been physically injured by a student while 40% have been seriously worried about physical injury. Only six percent have experienced none of these.

---

<sup>1</sup> N=3,002 K-12 school employees represented by MEA, conducted online via email and text invitations from September 20-27, 2023. Margin of sampling error for a random sample survey of this size is plus or minus 1.8 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

**Figure 1**

**Have you experienced any of the following at your job? Please select all that apply (% experienced)**



Experience of these behaviors cut across geographic lines. For example, 86% of big city educators have experienced verbal outbursts by students that significantly disrupt learning, along with 84% in small cities, 78% in the suburbs, and 81% in rural areas. Meanwhile, 39% of big city educators report having experienced physical injury, along with 29% of those in small cities, 27% in suburban locations and 24% in rural areas.

Educators working in the elementary grades (K-6) are more likely to experience nearly all of these behaviors: 88% have experienced verbal outbursts, 80% property destruction, 68% have evacuated students due to unsafe behavior, 67% experienced verbal threats, 37% have been injured by a student and 49% have seriously worried about it. Middle and

high school educators, on the other hand, are more likely to experience chronic absenteeism. Women are more likely than men to have experienced each of these behaviors. Among Education Support Professionals, a group which includes instructional aides/paraprofessionals, almost two in five (39%) have been injured.

## **2. Educators report losing significant instructional time to unsafe student behavior.**

Four in ten educators say they lose more than five hours of direct instructional time a month to unsafe student behavior: 14% say they lose between six and ten hours, 14% between 11 and 20 hours, and 13% more than twenty hours. The mean number of hours reported lost per month is 12, while the median is just under 5.

Elementary educators report more hours lost per month, with a mean of 15, while Education Support Professionals report an average loss of 22 hours a month of direct instructional time – equal to roughly a quarter of the available hours.