

2026 MEA Representative Assembly

Report on 2025 NBI #1: Student Behavior / School Violence Task Force

To ensure strong coordination and momentum of efforts, the RA-directed member task force was created to work in collaboration with a pre-existing task force of MEA staff working on these critical issues.

This task force will continue to work into future years to accomplish needed solutions for students and school employees alike.

Initial focus areas are on research, messaging, best practices, legislative and contractual policy recommendations, training and more. The task force is planning additional meetings for May and June.

Task Force Roster

Members	Staff
Southern Zone	
Bridget Corie, Saline E	Milt Rehberg, 3-AB
David Griffel, Clio E	
Ari Raucher, Ann Arbor E	
Eastern Zone	
Fred McFadden, Pontiac P	Deb Lotan, 7-H
Lisa Grzywacz, Warren Woods E	Heather Palo, 6-E
Lindsay Nielsen, Plymouth Canton E	
Northern Zone	
Erinn Parker, Stephenson E	Melissa Williams, 11-CDE
Jaimie Secord, West Branch-Rose City E	Tonja Hinkston, 12-CE/11-B
Amanda Rinkinen, Baraga E	Mark Hackbarth, 12-B
Western Zone	
Bre Welling, Vicksburg E	Kurt Murray, 9-GH
Cami Ashley, Lakeshore-Stevensville E	
Chandra Fles, Traverse City E	
Headquarters	
Brett Smith, MEA Vice President	Shailee Patel, Leadership & Organizational Development
	Annette Christiansen, Leadership & Organizational Development
	Brenda Ortega, Communications & Public Engagement
	Andy Neumann, Communications & Public Engagement

Questions: Email Shailee Patel at spatel@mea.org.

April 9 Meeting Minutes (DRAFT)

Meeting Attendees (members in blue, staff in red): Brett Smith, Doug Pratt, Lisa Grzywacz, Erinn Parker, Deb Lotan, Shailee Patel, Melissa Williams, David Griffel, Bridget Corie, Kurt Murray, Annette Christiansen, Heather Palo, Ari Raucher, Chandra Fles, Breanna Welling, Jaimie Secord, Brenda Ortega, Milt Rehberg, Lindsay Nielsen, Andy Neumann

- Members unavailable: Fred McFadden, Amanda Rinkinen, Cami Ashley
- Staff unavailable: Tonja Hinkston, Mark Hackbarth, Lisa Robbins

Meeting called to order by VP Smith at 5:31 pm.

Agenda was moved with flexibility by David Griffel (seconded Erinn Parker). Approved.

VP Smith reviewed the task force's creation and charge.

Motion to elect Bridget Corie as chair by David Griffel. No further nominations. Approved by acclamation.

Task force received and discussed presentations from:

- Doug Pratt regarding student behavior and school violence member and public opinion research commissioned by MEA in 2025-26.
- Deb Lotan, Melissa Williams & Annette Christiansen regarding the MEA staff School Violence Task Force, including Leader/Member Training Cadre, related training activities, and plan development concepts.
- Andy Neumann regarding initial public policy research on potential legislative approaches enacted and proposed in other states and here in Michigan.

Discussion was held about next steps, with task force members to submit ideas the meeting prompted for them for further discussion, as well as scheduling availability in May/June for next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 7:10p.

Attachments:

- Overview of MEA-commissioned member & public research
- Presentation on history of activities by staff task force
- Initial research on potential policy solutions (both from other states and Michigan)
- NEA/APA document: Understanding and Addressing Violence Against Educators in Schools



STUDENT BEHAVIOR & SCHOOL VIOLENCE RESEARCH

2025-26

Doug Pratt
Director of Communication & Public Engagement
dpratt@mea.org

With special thanks to Emma White Research



1

Member & Public Research

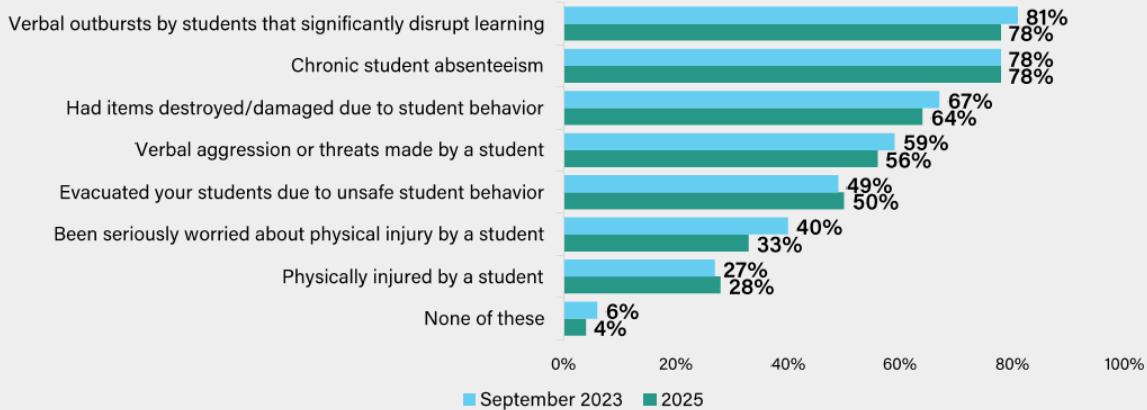
- 1) Aug.-Sept. 2025: **Member** polling on student behavior / school violence issues
 - 1,144 members via online/text survey
 - Update of 2023 data
- 2) Nov. 2025: **Voter** focus groups on public resonance / messaging on these issues
 - Two groups – Detroit and Grand Rapids
- 3) Dec. 2025: **Voter** polling on behavior / violence issues, informed by focus groups
 - 1,100 voters via phone/text survey



2

Most K-12 educators have experienced student outbursts, damaged property, and verbal threats, while over a quarter have been injured by a student. These numbers are mostly in alignment with 2023.

Have you experienced any of the following at your job? Please select all that apply.

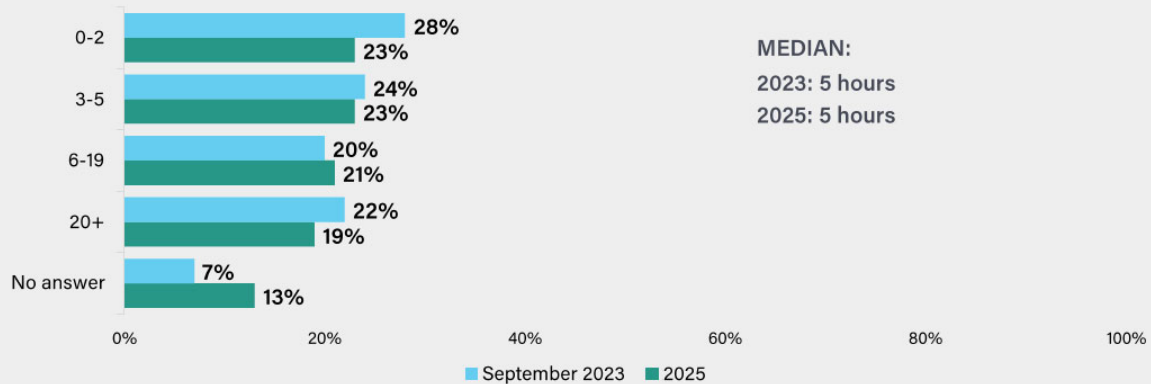


MEA Members – Aug-Sept 2025

3

K-12 educators report losing a median of 5 hours of instruction time each month, a similar number to 2023.

In your best estimate, how many hours of direct instruction time are lost each month due to unsafe student behaviors?



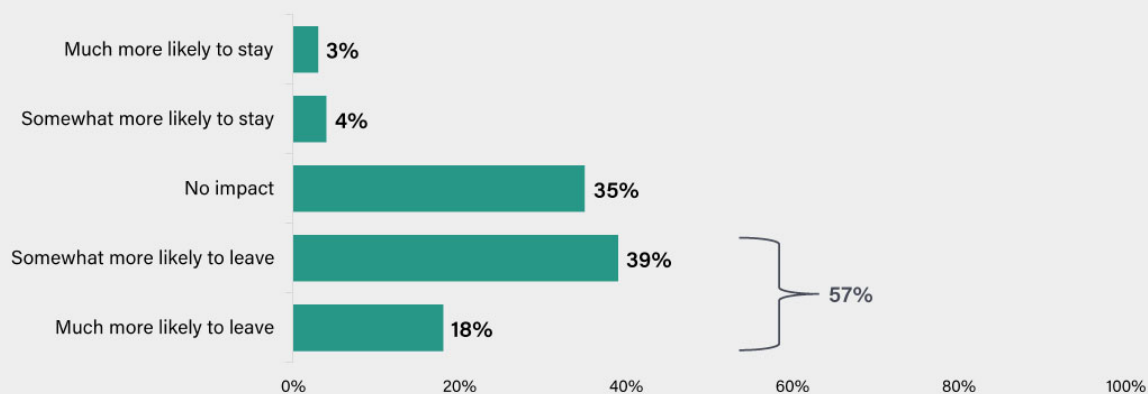
MEA Members – Aug-Sept 2025

4



A majority of K-12 educators say that student behavioral challenges make them at least somewhat more likely to leave education.

How, if at all, do student behavioral challenges impact your likelihood to continue working in education?



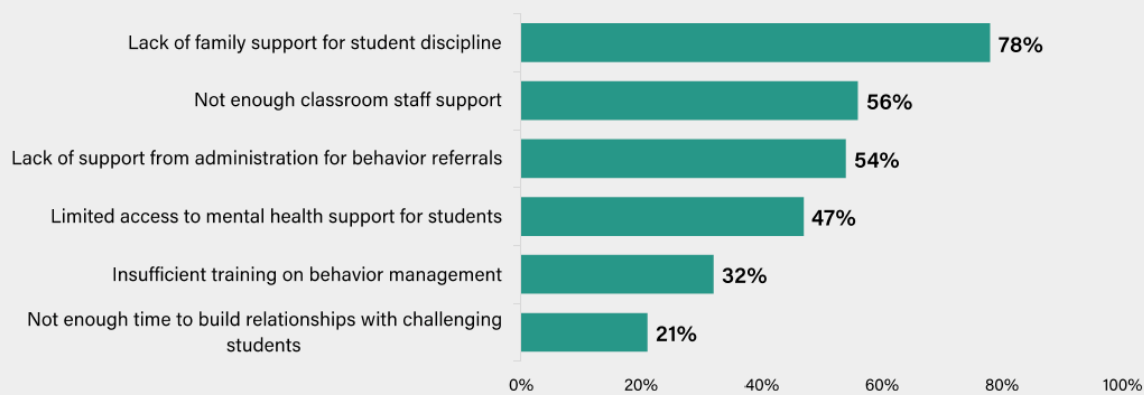
MEA Members – Aug-Sept 2025

5



Most K-12 educators report facing a lack of family support for discipline, lack of classroom staff support, and a lack of support from admin for behavior referrals.

Over the last three years, what barriers have you faced when managing student behavior? Select all that apply.



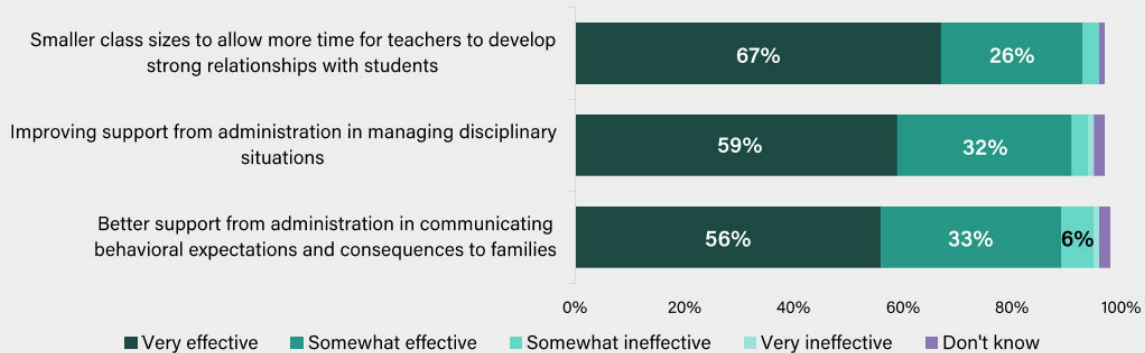
MEA Members – Aug-Sept 2025

6

K-12 educators see smaller class sizes, as well as improvement in admin support for student discipline and communications with families, as the most effective ways to address student behavior challenges.



Next are some potential ideas to address challenges regarding student behavior. For each, please indicate how effective you think each would be: very effective, somewhat effective, somewhat ineffective, or very ineffective.



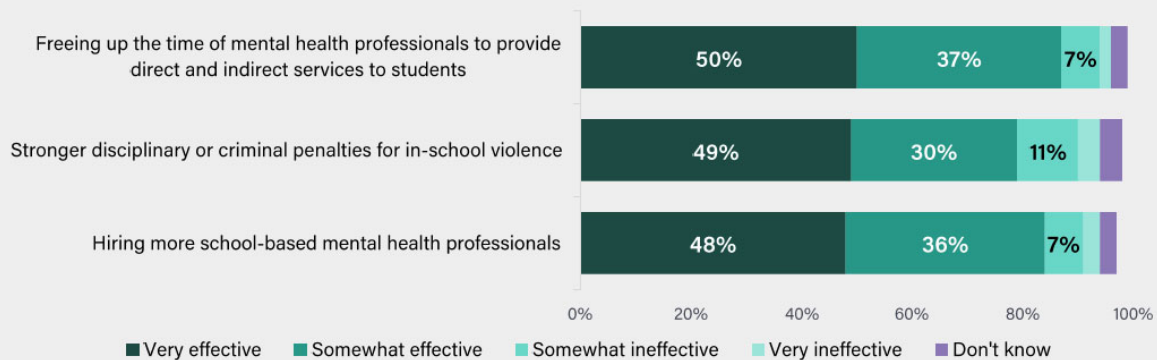
MEA Members – Aug-Sept 2025

7

Around half of educators believe that freeing up time for mental health professionals to service students, stronger disciplinary penalties, and hiring more mental health professionals are very effective in addressing challenges.



Next are some potential ideas to address challenges regarding student behavior. For each, please indicate how effective you think each would be: very effective, somewhat effective, somewhat ineffective, or very ineffective.



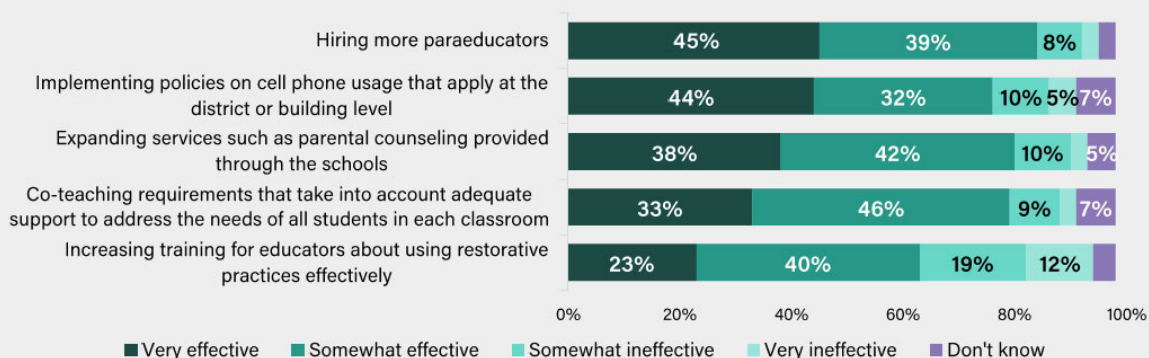
MEA Members – Aug-Sept 2025

8



Hiring more paraeducators and implementing cell phone policies are seen as “very effective” by more than four in ten.

Next are some potential ideas to address challenges regarding student behavior. For each, please indicate how effective you think each would be: very effective, somewhat effective, somewhat ineffective, or very ineffective.



MEA Members – Aug-Sept 2025

9

Voter Focus Groups

- **Learn general views on student behavior & school violence and how non-educators talk about them – inform subsequent polling.**
- **What solutions come to mind without prompting & what’s initial response.**
- **How voters respond to:**
 - **Statistics about educator experience with behavior issues.**
 - **Framing around restorative justice.**

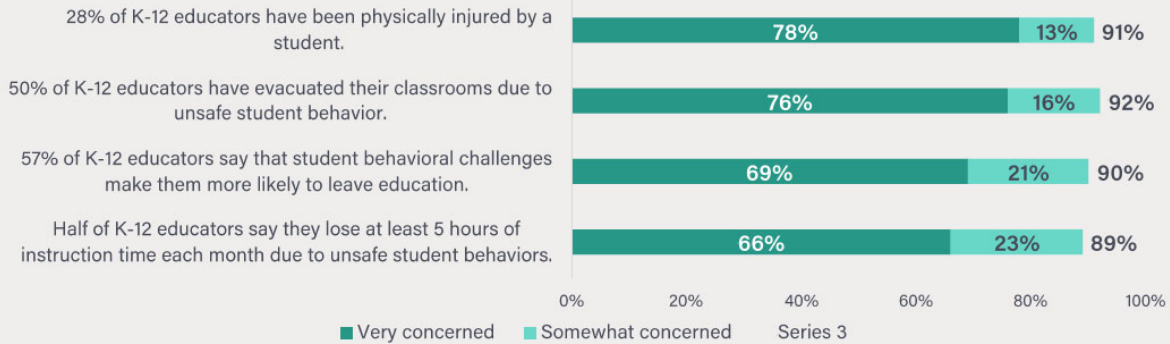


10



Voters are highly concerned about educators' experiences with student behavioral issues when they hear statistics from MEA's latest member survey. Physical injuries and classroom evacuations are the most concerning.

Next, I am going to read you some findings from a recent survey of K-12 educators throughout Michigan. For each, please tell me whether you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, a little concerned, or not at all concerned.



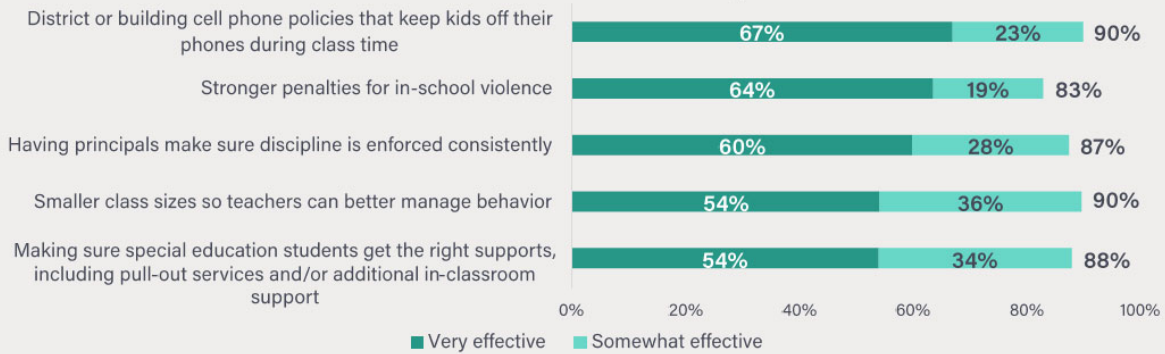
Voters – Dec 2025

11



Majorities say cell phone policies, stronger penalties, consistent enforcement, smaller class sizes, and special ed supports would be very effective.

Next are some potential ideas to address challenges regarding student behavior. For each, please tell me how effective you think each would be: very effective, somewhat effective, somewhat ineffective, or very ineffective.



Voters – Dec 2025

12



Many also see age-appropriate curriculum and more teachers' aides as effective solutions.

Next are some potential ideas to address challenges regarding student behavior. For each, please tell me how effective you think each would be: very effective, somewhat effective, somewhat ineffective, or very ineffective.



Voters – Dec 2025

13



Non-white parents are most likely to see special ed, smaller class sizes, and aides as effective while white parents' priorities match voters overall.

White parents

- Stronger penalties for in-school violence (64% very effective)
- District or building cell phone policies that keep kids off their phones during class time (62%)
- Having principals make sure discipline is enforced consistently (57%)

Non-white parents

- Making sure special education students get the right supports, including pull-out services and/or additional in-classroom support (81% very effective)
- Smaller class sizes so teachers can better manage behavior (79%)
- Hiring more teachers' aides to provide support in the classroom (74%)

Voters – Dec 2025

14

Parents of elementary school children see age-appropriate curriculum as the most effective solution. Across grade levels, public school parents rate smaller class sizes as a top solution.



Public elementary school parents

- Age-appropriate curriculum that emphasizes social skills and play in the youngest grades (60% very effective)
- Stronger penalties for in-school violence (58%)
- Smaller class sizes so teachers can better manage behavior (57%)

Public middle or high school parents

- Stronger penalties for in-school violence (70% very effective)
- Smaller class sizes so teachers can better manage behavior (61%)
- Having principals make sure discipline is enforced consistently (60%)

Voters – Dec 2025

15

Democrats vary from voters overall, rating special ed supports, smaller class sizes, and age-appropriate curriculum as top solutions.



Democrats

- Making sure special education students get the right supports, including pull-out services and/or additional in-classroom support (72% very effective)
- Smaller class sizes so teachers can better manage behavior (70%)
- Age-appropriate curriculum that emphasizes social skills and play in the youngest grades (62%)

Independents

- District or building cell phone policies that keep kids off their phones during class time (70% very effective)
- Stronger penalties for in-school violence (62%)
- Having principals make sure discipline is enforced consistently (56%)

Republicans

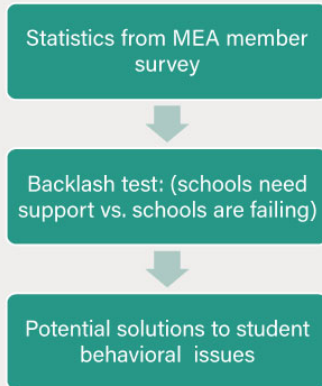
- Stronger penalties for in-school violence (82% very effective)
- Having principals make sure discipline is enforced consistently (74%)
- District or building cell phone policies that keep kids off their phones during class time (71%)

Voters – Dec 2025

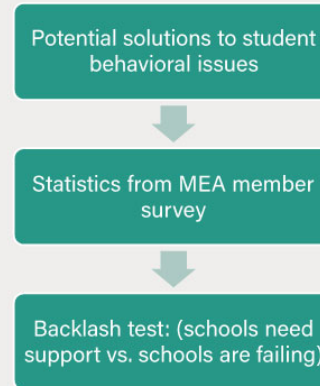
16

We conducted a split sample experiment to explore whether statistics about behavior create a backlash toward teachers and schools, and test whether presenting solutions first can mitigate any potential problems.

Half the sample (Split A, N=550) saw the questions in this order



Half the sample (Split B, N=550) saw the questions in this order

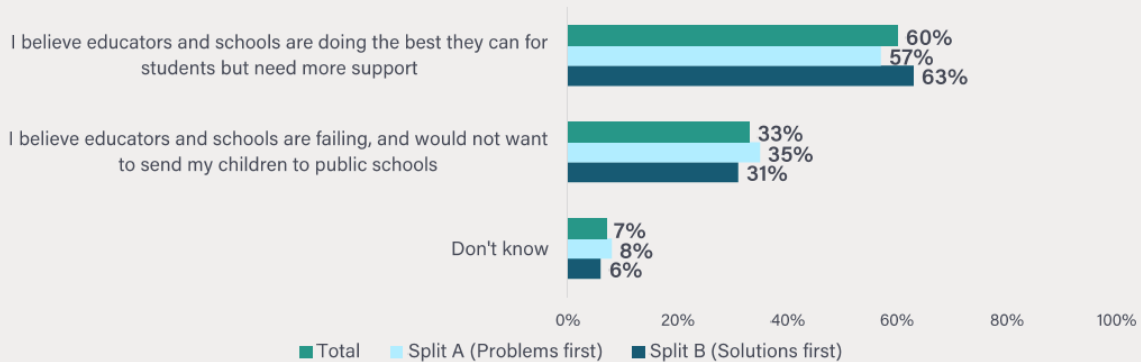


Voters – Dec 2025

17

Voters are slightly more likely to take the pro-school position if they hear the solutions first, though the difference is not statistically significant.

Now, I am going to read two statements. Please tell me which is the closest to your feelings after hearing the data about student behavioral issues.



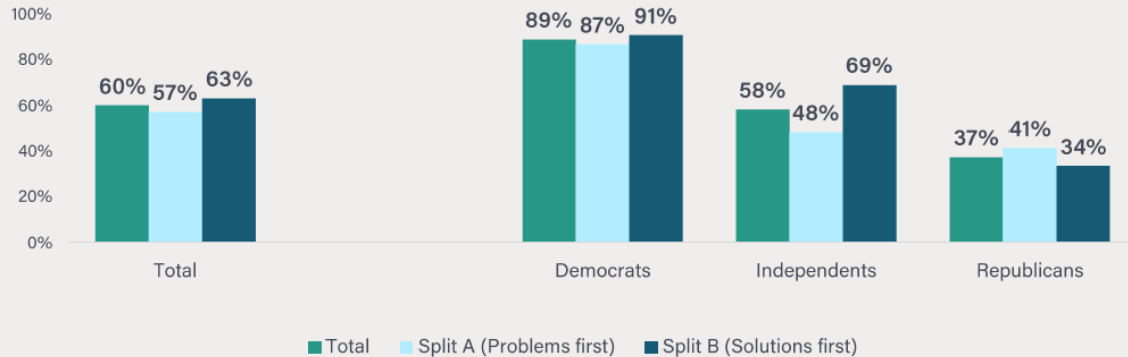
Voters – Dec 2025

18



For independent voters, there is less backlash when solutions are presented first.

Now, I am going to read two statements. Please tell me which is the closest to your feelings after hearing the data about student behavioral issues.
(% educators and schools need more support)



Voters – Dec 2025

19



We conducted another split sample experiment to test two ways of framing restorative justice: one frames RJ as an increase in accountability, and the other describes it as an alternative to harsh punishment.

Half the sample (Split A, N=550) received this description

Restorative justice is a process that aims to fix the harm caused by behavior issues and help the student understand the consequences of their actions. An example might be that a student who broke items in a classroom would work out with the teacher that they have to spend time cleaning the classroom or work to replace the items.

Half the sample (Split B, N=550) received this description

Restorative justice is an alternative to harsh punishment that focuses on fixing the harm caused by the behavior. An example might be that a student who broke items in a classroom would work out with the teacher that they have to spend time cleaning the classroom or work to replace the items.

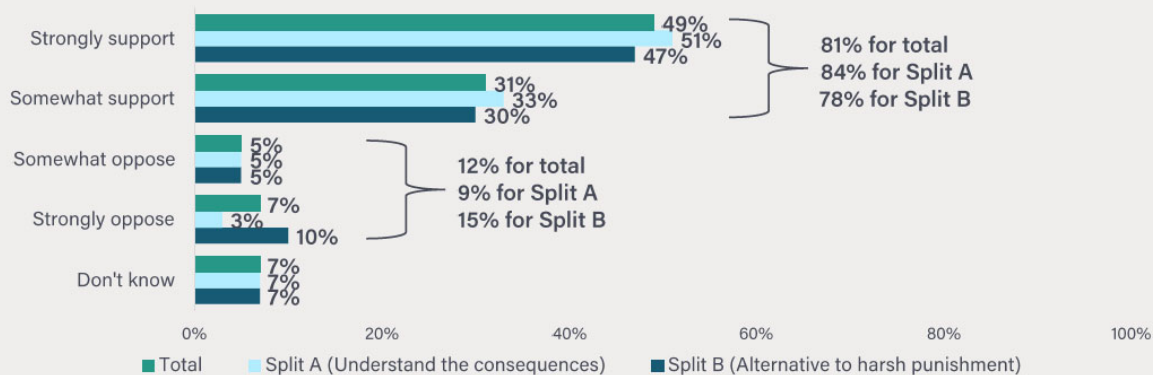
Voters – Dec 2025

20



Voters resonate more with the language that emphasizes understanding the consequences of their actions.

Do you support or oppose Michigan public schools using restorative justice to manage student behavioral issues?



Voters – Dec 2025

21



Conclusions

- Concern for violence against school employees and against other students is still high, but down slightly from 2023.
- The vast majority of educators have experienced verbal outbursts from students, as well as chronic absenteeism.
- Physical violence against educators is reported by over one in four, which is in line with 2023's numbers.
- Most educators report being more likely to leave the field due to impacts of student behavioral problems.
- Educators say a lack of family support for student discipline is the primary barrier faced when dealing with student behavior.
- Other barriers experienced by most educators include a shortage of classroom staff support, and a lack of admin support for behavior referrals.



Emma White Research – Conclusions – MEA Member Data – Aug-Sept 2025

22



The path to improvement

- For all K-12 educators, the most popular idea to address student behavioral challenges is smaller class sizes.
- Other popular ideas include improving admin support for student discipline, as well as for communicating with families.
- K-12 educators also see freeing up the time of mental health professionals to provide services to students as a potentially effective solution.
- Those educators who are at highest risk for leaving the field due to student behavior have similar priorities, though in a different order, with improving admin support rated highest.
- High-risk educators also prioritize wanting stronger disciplinary or criminal penalties for in-school violence.



Emma White Research – Conclusions – MEA Member Data – Aug-Sept 2025

23



Publicize your recent survey data – along with solutions – to generate urgency for solving the problem.

.....

- When communicating about student behavior, we believe you should lead with the solutions (see next slide for specifics), followed by the data points from the survey of your members.
- The most concerning statistics for voters overall are the rate of physical injuries and classroom evacuations. Non-white parents are also significantly concerned by the statements about educators losing instruction time, and Democrats are highly concerned about educators leaving the field because of these issues.



Emma White Research – Recommendations - Voter Data – Dec 2025

24

Campaign for the solutions that tap into voters' desire for accountability.

.....

- We recommend you advocate for the most popular solutions to student behavior by framing them as necessary to ensuring greater accountability for both students and administrators and improving the lack of consistent or effective discipline in school:
 - District or building cell phone policies that keep kids off their phones during class time
 - Having principals make sure discipline is enforced consistently
- Position restorative justice as a more effective approach to discipline. You should describe it as "helping the student understand the consequences of their actions." This framing is stronger for independents and Republicans than the framing that positions it as "an alternative to harsh punishment."



Emma White Research – Recommendations - Voter Data – Dec 2025

25

Include calls for special ed supports, age-appropriate curriculum, and additional staffing.

.....

- Paired with solutions for stronger discipline, communicate on the additional support and staffing that key audiences including parents and your members want to see:
 - Making sure special education students get the right supports, including pull-out services and/or additional in-classroom support
 - Smaller class sizes so teachers can better manage behavior
 - Age-appropriate curriculum that emphasizes social skills and play in the youngest grades
 - Hiring more teachers' aides to provide support in the classroom



Emma White Research – Recommendations - Voter Data – Dec 2025

26

SV Taskforce overview

Where we started, what we've done, where we want to go with a plan

1

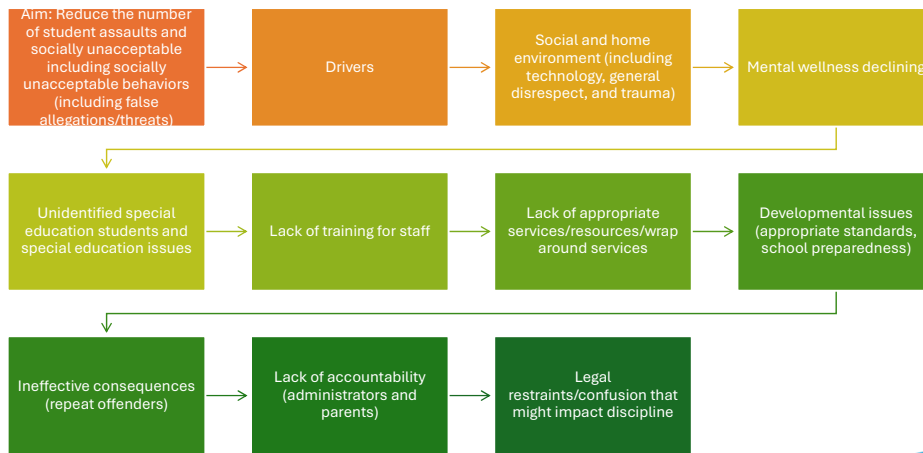
School Violence Cadre

- **Leader Member Training (LMT)**

1. Assault – penalties by law (age/grade)
2. Defending yourself
3. Possible Risks
4. Other Potential Litigation
5. Strategies to protect your rights
6. Special Education issues/law (discipline)
7. Possible contract language
8. SNAP suspension law
9. Surveys/Data
10. Developing a plan

2

SVT Driver Diagram



3

Multiple Core Safety Practices offered with focus driven by results/feedback from SV trainings and conversations with members in the field.

- ❖ **Protecting Yourself and Others from Workplace Violence**
- ❖ **Creating a Learning Environment to Support Appropriate Student Behavior**
- ❖ **Managing Stress and Supporting Your Mental Health in Challenging Times**
- ❖ **Document, Document, Document**
- ❖ **(Almost) Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Special Education Law but Were Afraid to Ask**
- ❖ **SNAP Suspension**

MEA
2024-25 CORE SAFETY PRACTICES

Many educators are struggling with an increase in student verbal and physical assaults against staff. MEA is here to help. We are repeating our 23-24 series of virtual professional development offerings to support members facing these challenges.

SUMMER & FALL SESSIONS

PROTECTING YOURSELF AND OTHERS FROM WORKPLACE VIOLENCE
September 10, 2024: 4:30-6:30 p.m.
In this session, participants will be presented with an overview of student assault and how to defend themselves. We will discuss strategies to protect your rights with a focus on both legal and contractual options available to you. We will address the special education rules and laws that impact how student assault is addressed if the student qualifies for special education services. In subsequent sessions, we will delve more deeply into some of these topics.

CREATING A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT TO SUPPORT APPROPRIATE STUDENT BEHAVIOR
September 19, 2024: 4:30-5:30 p.m.
Whether transporting students, serving them in the cafeteria, or working with them in an instructional role, our work with students requires decisions about how to manage their movement and interaction in order to support appropriate behavior. We will discuss ideas and strategies that will help to cultivate appropriate behavior in a variety of settings.

MANAGING STRESS AND SUPPORTING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH IN CHALLENGING TIMES
October 17, 2024: 4:30-5:30 p.m.
Being an educator is a stressful job. Rhonda Jones, MESSA will lead you in learning some techniques that you can utilize now and in the future, to help you feel more balanced and healthy so that you can be present with your family and friends.

DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT
November 12, 2024: 4:30-5:30 p.m.
The importance of good record keeping cannot be overstated. Whether documenting student behavior to support the creation or compliance of a behavior plan, or filing out an incident report after an incident occurs, there are proper ways to document events. In this session, participants will discuss the importance of documenting all incidents and how to avoid the pitfalls of poor documentation/reporting that could negatively impact your ability to have positive outcomes.

(ALMOST) EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION LAW BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK
November 21, 2024: 4:30-5:30 p.m.
Unfortunately, sometimes districts will hide behind our lack of knowledge regarding federal and state special education laws to limit their responsibility to address student behavior. In this session, we will discuss special education rules and laws as they apply to student behavior including but not limited to compliance issues, manifestation meetings, IEPs, 504s, behavior plans, and rules around suspension, and exclusion and restraint. You will become more confident in your ability to ask the right questions and advocate for the rights you and your students are entitled to.

SNAP SUSPENSION
December 10, 2024: 4:30-5:30 p.m.
Administrators are not the only ones empowered by law to remove an unruly student from class. A teacher is authorized to immediately cause the removal and suspension of a student from a class, subject or activity for up to one school day when the student's behavior interferes with the teacher's ability to effectively teach or manage the class, subject or activity. In this session, participants will learn how to utilize SNAP suspension to address disruptive students.

Looking Ahead

- Winter Offerings:
- De-escalation Strategies
- Post-incident Best Practices
- Communication Infrastructure
- How to Leverage Policies & Law
- Managing Stress & Supporting Your Mental Health in Challenging Times

REGISTER NOW

<https://mea.wa.edu/11EzP>

For questions, please contact Annette Christiansen at achristiansen@mea.org

4

Student Violence Taskforce Staff Plan

Phase 1

Education for Legislators

Develop Strategic Partners

Datamining

Create Talking Points

Educate "Us" on Legislative Process

Develop Mini Conference

5

Phase 2

- Round 1
- Identify Key Legislators
 - Who are our allies and who will most likely stand in our way?
 - Who is most interested in this topic?
- Create Legislative Wishlist
 - Protective Educator Law
- Identify Funding Issues
- Identify who our strategic external partners are
- Round 2
- Speak to Legislators

6

Phase 3



**FINALIZE/PRIORITIZE
LEGISLATION**



**TIMELINE FOR
LEGISLATION**



LOBBY DAY



**SOCIAL/REG. MEDIA
CAMPAIGN**

7

Collaborative Constituents

Tanner-better allocation of funding	Communications Department - Thomas Morgan <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Messaging• MEA Voice• MEA Survey	SBSIT - Craig Culver	Lobbyists <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leg. Councils
ESP Bill of Rights	Legal	MEA-R	MESSA

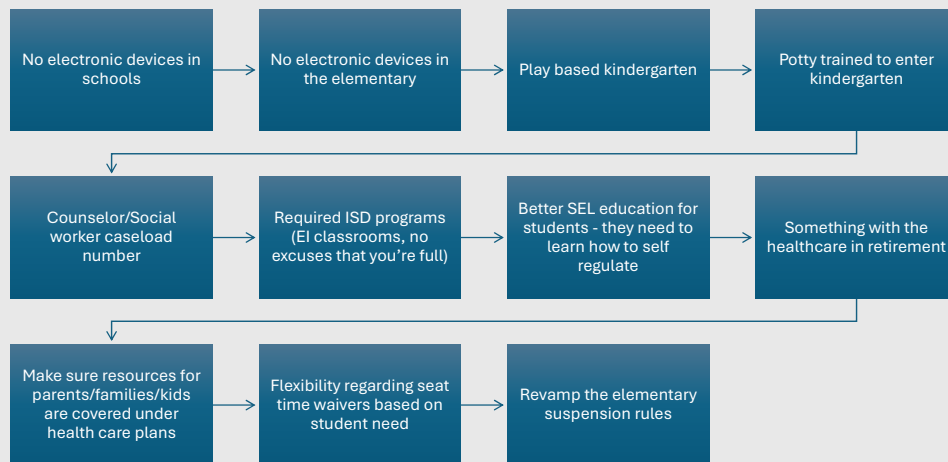
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Legislators

- Matt Bierlein-R
- Karl Bohnak - R
- Ed McBroom-R
- Darrin Camilleri - D
- Amos O'Neal-D
- Matt Koleszar (Education and Workforce Committee)-D
- Regina Weiss (Education and Workforce Committee)--D
- Erin Byrnes (Education and Workforce Committee) - D
- Dayna Polehanki-D

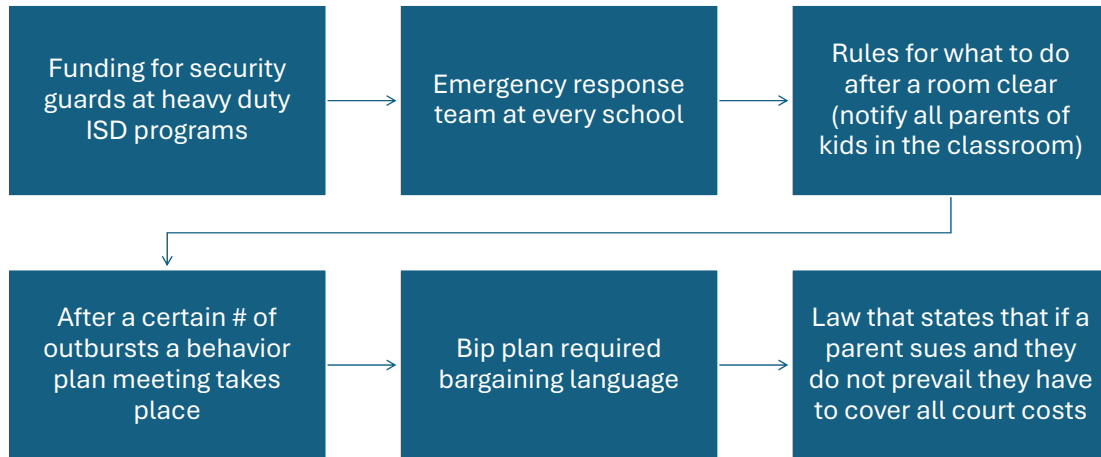
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Legislative Wishlist



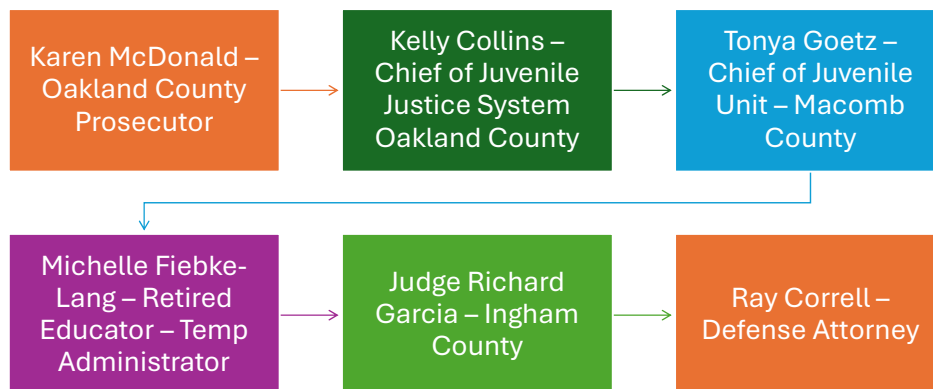
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Legislative Wishlist cont.



11

Panel Discussion at SWS & Breakout



12

Potential Policy Research – Student Behavior / School Violence

By Andy Neumann, MEA Lobbyist, April 2026

The following reviews potential legislative solutions to enhance protections for school employees, including enacted or proposed legislation in other states, as well as Michigan specific concepts:

- Alabama
- Arkansas
- Illinois
- Kentucky
- Maine
- Texas
- West Virginia
- Wisconsin

States with Enacted or Proposed Student Assault Protections/Legislation

Alabama:

Alabama has enacted strict policies, such as the 2024 "Teachers' Bill of Rights" (SB157), allowing educators to remove students who exhibit disruptive behavior, including, but not limited to, disorderly conduct, willful disobedience, and threats, aimed at tackling post-pandemic classroom disruptions and improving safety.

Key Aspects of Disruptive Behavior in Alabama Schools:

- **Definition:** Disruptive conduct is defined as actions that intentionally interrupt, disturb, or interfere with teaching or school order.
- **Examples:** Common examples include fighting, using offensive language/gestures, excessive noise, and constant disruptions like getting up without permission or defying teachers.
- **Teacher Authority:** The "Teachers' Bill of Rights" allows teachers to remove students who:
 - Disrupt the learning process.
 - Threaten, abuse, or intimidate staff/students.
 - Willfully disobey employees.

- **Consequences & Trends:** These policies are part of a trend to empower educators and address rising classroom management issues. Concerns have been raised that such measures can disproportionately impact students with disabilities and students of color, potentially feeding the school-to-prison pipeline.
- **School Threats:** Specific legislation (House Bill 7) is targeting terroristic threats with severe penalties, including potential one-year suspensions and parental restitution of up to \$10,000.

For specific school situations, it is recommended to review the [Alabama Code Title 13A, Section 13A-11-7 on Disorderly Conduct](#) for legal definitions.

Arkansas:

Passed the Teacher and Student Protection Act of 2025, which prohibits students who have been removed for violent/abusive behavior from being placed back in the same classroom.

Act 565 addresses the removal of a student from the classroom by a teacher and provides clear definitions for terms and concepts crucial to understanding its application.

Stakeholders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with these definitions to avoid misinterpretation.

1. "Appropriate interim learning environment" means an appropriate learning environment that is used for a period of time not to exceed ten (10) days.
2. "Appropriate learning environment" means a setting within a public school or public school district that provides a similar structure to the following without limitation: A classroom; or; In-school suspension.
3. "Violent or abusive behavior" means without limitation: Using threatening language; Throwing an item that risks or causes: Harm to another individual; Injury to another individual; or Damage to property; Physically abusing a teacher or another student; or Any other similar action that presents a physical danger or a threat of physical danger to a teacher or another student.

Act 565 introduces new requirements to existing obligations for schools when a student is removed from the classroom by a teacher for “unruly, disruptive, violent, or abusive behavior that seriously interferes”, or behavior that repeatedly interferes, with teaching and learning in the classroom. Requirements after removal include:

1. Placing the student into an appropriate learning environment or in-school suspension;

2. Returning the student to the classroom only after a conference is held to determine the cause(s) of the behavior(s) and possible solutions; or
3. Taking other appropriate action consistent with district policy. If the student is removed due to “violent or abusive behavior against a teacher or another student”, the student shall be placed in an appropriate interim learning environment until the conference required under (2) above is held, not to exceed ten (10) days.

The conference required under (2) above shall include: The principal or designee, The teacher, The school counselor, The parent(s) or guardian(s), and The student, if appropriate.

If it is determined during the conference that the student was removed due to violent behavior, attendees shall determine if a behavioral threat assessment is necessary for the student. After the conference is conducted, the student shall NOT be returned to the classroom with the teacher or student against whom the violent or abusive behavior was directed.

If a student is removed from a classroom due to violent or abusive behavior three (3) or more times during one (1) school year, the student shall be: Placed in an appropriate interim learning environment for the remainder of the school year; or Disciplined according to district policy.

Act 565: Considerations for Students with Disabilities

Requirements for Students with Disabilities. If the student receives special education services under IDEA or is protected under Section 504, a Manifestation Determination Review (MDR) takes the place of the conference required by state law. This review considers whether the student’s behavior is a direct result of his or her disability. The school must ensure good faith effort to allow parents the opportunity to participate in the MDR process and relevant members of the IEP or 504 team must be present. The required IEP/504 members may be different than the required members of Act 565.

The MDR considers whether the student’s behavior is a direct result of their disability. The school must allow parents the opportunity to participate in the MDR process.

Illinois:

An Illinois House Democrat has introduced legislation, **HB 4090**, that would make it a felony to threaten teachers, principals, or other school staff with bodily harm, sexual assault, or restraint. This proposal, introduced in August 2025, seeks to treat threats against educators with the same severity as threats against public officials.

Kentucky:

The Governor of Kentucky just signed legislation to classify battery against public-facing workers, including teachers, as a Level 6 felony.

Senate Bill 101 (SB 101), which mandates the expulsion of students in grades 6–12 for at least one year if they cause physical harm to school staff. The bill, which applies to incidents on campus or during school functions, passed both chambers and is headed to the governor.

- **Expulsion Mandate:** Students who physically injure school employees face a minimum 12-month expulsion, with a potential return pathway after 6 months.
- **Context:** Proponents, including Senator Matt Nunn, cited over 5,000 reported assaults on Kentucky educators annually.
- **Other Protective Measures:** Lawmakers have also discussed providing \$1 million in liability insurance for teachers.

Louisiana:

Proposed 2026 legislation aims to expel students who attack teachers and creates a "shield" for educators.

Louisiana students found guilty of intentionally injuring public school teachers or staffers would be automatically expelled under a proposed law that advocates say will expand protections for educators.

[House Bill 283](#) requires that students found guilty of assaulting school employees either on or off campus be expelled for at least two semesters and placed in an alternative educational setting while undergoing anger management classes. The “Teacher’s Shield Act” also would ban expelled students from attending the school where the employee they attacked works.

Under existing state law, students who are suspended for assaulting a school employee can be placed back in the school where the incident happened if the district does not have an alternative school to send the student to.

The new law also clarifies that employees, who can take up to a year of sick leave if they are injured in an assault while on the job, can use that time for medical and psychological treatment and physical rehabilitation.

Maine:

Maine teachers have enhanced authority to remove disruptive students and receive protection against dangerous behavior under updated state laws. Key protections include the ability to remove students who refuse to leave, mandated individual response plans for safety, and protection of sick leave if injured by a student.

Key details of Maine teacher protection laws include:

- **Removal Authority:** Teachers can forcibly remove students who refuse to leave a classroom, aiming to mitigate threats like being bitten or assaulted.
- **Safety Plans:** Schools are required to create individual behavior plans for students exhibiting dangerous behavior and provide staff training.
- **Injury Protections:** Per [Title 20-A, §6555](#) and associated regulations, school districts cannot penalize employees' sick time if they are absent due to injuries from dangerous student behavior.
- **Misconduct Reporting:** New legislation is designed to strengthen the vetting of school staff, requiring disclosure of past investigations into misconduct.

Texas:

Approved a "Teacher's Bill of Rights" that includes mandatory out-of-school suspensions for students as young as third grade who commit violent acts.

Texas provides student assault protections for teachers through laws allowing immediate removal of violent students, mandatory disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) placement for assault, and protection for reasonable self-defense. Key measures include the Safe Schools Act, which bars students from returning to a teacher's classroom without their consent if they committed an assault.

Key Texas Student Assault Protections (2025-2026):

- **Mandatory Removal/No Return Policy:** Under the Safe Schools Act (Tex. Educ. Code), a student who assaults a teacher cannot be returned to that teacher's classroom without the teacher's consent, even if no DAEP placement occurred.
- **Immediate Classroom Removal:** Teachers can immediately remove students who engage in behavior that is unruly, disruptive, abusive, or involves bullying.

- Use of Force Protection: Texas Education Code §22.0512 prevents employees from being discharged or suspended for using reasonable, justifiable force against a student for self-defense.
- HB 6 (2025-2026 Updates): New legislation expands authority for teachers to remove students for behaviors that hinder instruction or constitute bullying, with increased flexibility in discipline.
- Disciplinary Action (DAEP): Assaulting a teacher generally triggers mandatory placement in a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP).

West Virginia:

West Virginia student behavior is primarily governed by [WVBE Policy 4373](#) (Safe and Supportive Schools), which mandates safe learning environments, and the recently passed SB 199 in 2025, which permits teachers to immediately remove students for violent or disruptive behavior. The policies prioritize behavior intervention plans and alternatives to suspension, including potential placement in alternative learning centers for persistent issues.

Key Aspects of WV Student Behavior Policy:

- Teacher Authority (SB 199): Teachers can remove students who are disruptive, dangerous, or impede the learning process. The law provides for rapid intervention, particularly at the elementary level.
- Disciplinary Process:
 - Elementary (K-5): If a student's behavior continues, a two-week behavior plan is required.
 - Middle/High School: Three strikes of serious misbehavior can lead to removal to an alternative learning environment.
- Mandated Interventions: Policies focus on using counselors, social workers, and psychologists to address the root causes of behavior, such as anger control, conflict resolution, and coping skills.
- Prohibited Behavior: Policies cover bullying, harassment, intimidation, and fighting, with requirements for schools to establish safe, orderly environments.

The West Virginia Department of Education requires local county boards to implement these state-level policies to ensure a safe learning environment.

Wisconsin:

Introduced a "Teacher Bill of Rights" aiming to increase control over classroom safety.

The "Teacher Bill of Rights" (AB 614) aimed to empower educators by allowing them to remove students from classrooms if they disrupt class for more than 10 minutes, notifying parents of such incidents, and protecting teachers from termination for enforcing these rules. Supported by Wisconsin Republicans to address student behavior and school safety, this legislation (as discussed in this [WSAW article](#)) would require behavioral intervention plans for repeat offenders.

This bill directly addressed these concerns by:

- **Strengthening Teachers' Authority:** Clarifying and reinforcing when teachers may remove disruptive or violent students to protect classroom safety and ensure instruction can continue.
- **Creating Clear Classroom Re-Entry Plans:** Requiring clear procedures so students are not automatically returned to a classroom without a plan to address the underlying behavior.
- **Mandating Parental Notification:** Ensuring parents are notified when a student is removed from class or witnesses a serious incident.
- **Empowering Parents:** Providing a limited enforcement mechanism for parents if school districts fail to comply with these transparency standards.
- **Protection from Retaliation:** The bill protects teachers from being fired for maintaining classroom order, setting rules, or calling 911 for emergencies.
- **Behavioral Intervention:** Students repeatedly removed must have a behavior intervention plan in place before returning to the classroom.
- **Records Retention:** Districts must maintain records of student behavioral incidents.

Debate and Context:

- **Support:** Proponents argue this is necessary for maintaining safe and orderly classrooms, as shown in this [opinion piece](#) in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, noting that managing student behavior is a top stressor for teachers, especially with increased reports of physical violence against them.
- **Opposition:** Critics express concerns that the bill could disproportionately affect students with disabilities, contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline, and lead to over-reporting of behavioral incidents.

Status: Governor Evers vetoed

Governor Evers stated, I am vetoing Assembly Bill 614 in its entirety. This bill creates statutory definitions for a variety of student behaviors applied with respect to the removal of students from class due to disruption or violence, and including consideration as to whether the behavior relates to a special education student's individualized education program. I am vetoing this bill in its entirety because I object to the Wisconsin State Legislature encroaching upon the daily decision making of schools and school district boards and creating a new unfunded mandate for school districts.

Regarding potential and existing Michigan legislation

In Michigan there has been some conversations of adding school employees to a current law regarding, assaulting, resisting, or obstructing a first responder – [MCL 750.81d](#), which is a serious felony, not a misdemeanor. It applies to anyone who harms or interferes with an officer performing their duties. Penalties range from a 2-year felony for basic resistance to 20 years for causing death.

Key Aspects of Michigan Law (MCL 750.81d & MCL 750.479):

- Definition: The law covers assaulting, battering, resisting, obstructing, or endangering any person known to be a police officer or emergency responder performing their duties.
- "Obstruct" Defined: Includes physical interference, threats of force, or failure to comply with a lawful command.
- Felony Charges: Almost all instances of resisting or assaulting an officer are charged as felonies.

Penalties Based on Severity:

- No Injury: Up to 2 years in prison and/or a \$2,000 fine.
- Bodily Injury Requiring Medical Attention: Up to 4 years in prison and/or a \$5,000 fine.
- Serious Impairment of Body Function: Up to 15 years in prison and/or a \$10,000 fine.
- Death: Up to 20 years in prison.

Also in Michigan, there is PA 271 of 2023, that significantly stiffened penalties for assaulting nurses and medical professionals as a possible place to add educators to. Assisting a nurse now carries up to 93 days in jail and a \$1,000 fine, while felony assault with a weapon can result in up to 4 years in prison and \$4,000 in fines.

Key aspects of Michigan's laws regarding assaulting nurses include:

- **Enhanced Penalties:** Assaults on health professionals (including nurses) while performing their duties are subject to heightened fines and potential jail time.
- **Misdemeanor (Simple Assault):** Up to 93 days in jail and a \$1,000 fine (previously \$500).
- **Aggravated Assault (Serious Injury):** Up to one year in jail and a \$2,000 fine.
- **Felony (With a Weapon):** Up to four years in prison and a \$4,000 fine.
- **Mandatory Signage:** Hospitals and health facilities must post signs indicating that assaulting staff is a crime with enhanced penalties.
- **Patient Exemption:** The enhanced penalties under these new laws do not apply if the assault is committed by a patient receiving care from the victim. However, such actions are still subject to existing criminal charges.
- **Protection Scope:** The law protects nurses, medical professionals, and volunteers

Copies of both laws are attached as Appendices.

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Understanding and Addressing Violence Against Educators in Schools

The American Psychological Association (APA) and National Education Association (NEA) share deep and growing concerns about violence against educators. Occurrences of physical and verbal aggression and violence against educators can have a lasting impact on the safety of school communities and the well-being of educators and students. Both organizations continue to elevate the issue and, in response to the growing needs of students and educators, have developed resources and publications to address concerns about verbal and physical violence, educator retention, school climate, and educator and student safety and well-being.

This document synthesizes findings from two national surveys conducted by the **APA's Task Force on Violence Against Educators and School Personnel** and educator safety information from the NEA. It also includes joint NEA-APA recommendations and resources to address violence.

The APA Task Force collaborated with NEA and other national organizations¹ to survey teachers, administrators, school psychologists, social workers, counselors, and other staff regarding their experiences with school violence before, during, and after COVID-19. Nearly 15,000 participants took part in the 2020–2021 academic year survey and nearly 12,000 participated in the 2022 survey, with participants hailing from all 50 states and Puerto Rico. The NEA resources—drawn from educator interviews, NEA member surveys, and **NEA's School Gun Violence Prevention and Response Guide**² released in 2024—highlight educator perspectives on school safety, school culture, educator safety, advocacy, and educator well-being. They include research and strategies to support the creation of safe, supportive, welcoming schools.

Three themes emerged from a review of APA's and NEA's research and resources:

1. How to keep educators safe;
2. Methods to provide positive behavior supports and create safe school cultures; and
3. Understanding the relationship between school violence and educator well-being and retention.

¹APA's Task Force on Violence Against Educators and School Personnel also collaborated with the American Federation of Teachers, the National Association of School Psychologists, the National Association of Social Workers, and the School Social Work Association of America.

²NEA partnered with the Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund to produce the guide.

WHY THIS TOPIC IS CRITICAL

Educators are instrumental to the academic, social, and emotional development of students. Their safety and well-being have important implications for the overall school community. Educators have expressed concerns in the following areas.

Frequency of Violence Against Educators

Violence against educators and school personnel was prevalent in the APA Task Force survey data. For example, most surveyed teachers (80 percent), school psychologists and social workers (63 percent), administrators (64 percent), and school staff (65 percent) reported they experienced at least one incident of verbal or threatening violence from students during the 2021–2022 academic year. Rates of physical violence were lower but still substantial: teachers (56 percent); school psychologists, social workers, and counselors (56 percent); administrators (43 percent); and staff (53 percent) reported at least one incident of physical violence from students (McMahon, Worrell, et al., 2024).

Although the pandemic helped to fuel many acts of disruptive and violent behavior toward educators, violence and aggression toward educators had already been significant before COVID-19 (Walker, 2021). National data from the APA Task Force on Classroom Violence Against Teachers (Espelage et al., 2013) survey from 2010 indicated that 80 percent of teachers surveyed reported experiencing some form of violence or aggression, with the majority experiencing violence from students (94 percent) followed by parents (37 percent) and colleagues (21 percent) (McMahon et al., 2014).

More than 50 percent of those working in K-12 schools and institutions of higher education reported being concerned with student behavior and mental health.

50%

In an NEA 2024 survey of 3,655 educators, more than 50 percent of those working in K-12 schools and institutions of higher education reported being concerned with student behavior and mental health (SSRS, 2024).

Demanding Work Conditions

Findings from a 2023 Rand study, funded in part by the NEA, suggested that among educators, adverse working conditions—including feelings of insecurity at work and excessive workloads—posed significant psychological and physical safety concerns that have negatively impacted educator retention (Steiner, Woo, & Doan, 2023).

Whereas the majority of educators surveyed listed school safety as a top concern, more than 45 percent cited large classes and caseloads, job-related stress, and burnout as areas of workplace concern (SSRS, 2024).

Troubling Levels of Staff Turnover and Shortage

One-quarter of teachers intended to transfer schools, and 43 percent reported intentions to quit the teaching profession based on experiences with violence and concerns about school climate (McMahon, Swenski, et al., 2024).

43 percent reported intentions to quit the teaching profession based on experiences with violence and concerns about school climate.

43%

Staff turnover has implications for student learning, educator morale, and general school functioning. According to a 2024 NEA member survey, 49 percent of respondents reported that unfulfilled job openings leading to more work for remaining staff was a big concern (SSRS, 2024).

EDUCATOR SAFETY: THE NATURE OF EDUCATOR VIOLENCE

Addressing school violence and safety should include the entire school ecology. Educator demographics, community factors, and school characteristics—like urbanicity and school climate—play roles in teacher susceptibility to direct acts of violence (McMahon, Worrell, et al., 2024). These safety concerns are not limited to violence committed by students; the APA Task Force’s research demonstrated that colleagues, parents, and administrators are also aggressors against educators. For example, after COVID-19, one-quarter of teachers reported physical violence from a parent, colleague, or administrator (McMahon, Worrell, et al., 2024).

The 2024 NEA survey also indicated that 56 percent of educators surveyed were concerned with a lack of respect from parents and/or the public (SSRS, 2024). Ninety percent of teachers and 85 percent of education support professionals (ESPs)³ working in pre-K-12 education believed that making schools safe for students and staff should be a high or top priority for an education association or union, according to NEA survey data.

After COVID-19,
25 percent of
teachers reported
physical violence
from a parent,
colleague, or
administrator.

25%

Recommendations for Improving Educator Safety

- ➡ Provide ongoing training and support to educators and school leaders on school safety and prevention strategies, including de-escalation, trauma-informed practices, restorative justice approaches, social-emotional learning, behavior management, and cultural competency.
- ➡ Co-develop policies with educators, students, and families to establish shared understanding and commitment to addressing responses to violence in developmentally and culturally appropriate ways.
- ➡ Provide research-based prevention resources to meet all students’ academic, social, and mental health needs.
- ➡ Limit or eliminate the use of zero-tolerance responses and implement alternative strategies, such as conflict resolution, mediation, and trauma-informed approaches.
- ➡ Prioritize policies that advocate for funding and resources for educator training in violence prevention and response and positive behavior support strategies.
- ➡ Advocate for organizing and collective bargaining efforts that expand options for employee assistance programs and additional benefits to help address physical and psychological injury risks within the school environment.
- ➡ Support the creation and work of locally developed violence-prevention committees that include administrators, educators, families, and, where developmentally appropriate, students, and ensure that existing health and safety committees incorporate violence prevention within their work.

³Education support professionals (ESPs) represent school support staff across nine career families: clerical services; custodial and maintenance; food services; health and student services; paraeducators; security workers; skilled trades; technical services; and transportation services.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS AND SAFE SCHOOL CULTURE

School culture is foundational to creating safe school environments. By addressing student physical and mental health needs and implementing strategies to support a safe school culture, schools can help deter school violence. NEA members reported that educators had serious concerns about school climate-related issues, such as student behavior and lack of respect from parents (GBAO, 2022). Research by the APA Task Force on Violence against Educators and School Personnel highlighted the relationship between school climate and student behavioral issues (Reddy et al., 2024). “Physical violence against teachers was predicted by two out of the four measures of school climate, specifically student climate problems and student behavioral problems” (Reddy et al., 2024, p. 5).

“Physical violence against teachers was predicted by 2 out of the 4 measures of school climate, specifically student climate problems and student behavioral problems.”

To effectively implement transformative support services, schools need to not only guarantee monetary investments but also employ efforts to ensure equity and community buy-in (Walker, 2022). Incident-focused strategies are unlikely to “move the needle” in creating safe and healthy environments. Practices should support safe school culture, social and emotional well-being, restorative discipline, and mental health; be developmentally appropriate; and consider student and community cultural factors (CASEL, 2025).

Recommendations for Promoting Safe School Cultures

- ➡ Support policies and practices promoting and fostering a school environment that champions diversity among students and educators and welcomes and supports all.
- ➡ Provide training and support for educators and school leaders that cover how to work with diverse populations and foster positive relationships with students and between students and their peers.
- ➡ Implement student support services that focus on building resilience, positive relationships, and emotional regulation.
- ➡ Enhance collaboration between school community interest holders—including, but not limited to, students, educators, and families—to develop meaningful relationships through activities such as clubs, sports, civic opportunities, and community-building circles in classrooms.
- ➡ Advocate for organizing and bargaining efforts that support racial and social justice, diversity, and cultural representation training and resources.

EDUCATOR WELL-BEING AND RETENTION

Acts of violence against educators are detrimental to the school environment and educator health and well-being. Many educators are feeling overwhelmed and burned out, lacking school or district support and resources to address the issue of violence. In 2022, at a U.S. Congress briefing organized by the APA Task Force on Violence Against Educators and School Personnel, a special education teacher explained that she decided to leave the profession after being punched in the face by a student. “I didn’t quit because of the overwhelming obstacles or even aggression from students,” she said. “I left because my administrators didn’t have the resources, and elected officials failed to give us the funding my students and my team needed to keep us all safe. They see the blood, they see the struggles, and they walk away.” (Walker, 2022)

“I left because my administrators didn’t have the resources, and elected officials failed to give us the funding my students and my team needed to keep us all safe. They see the blood, they see the struggles, and they walk away.”

In a 2022 NEA survey, 61 percent of respondents reported feeling burnout from the general stress of the COVID-19 pandemic (GBAO, 2022). Similar to pandemic rates, the APA Task Force found educators and school staff experienced high rates of work-related anxiety and stress after COVID-19 restrictions in 2022, with 68 percent of teachers; 70 percent of school staff; 65 percent of school psychologists, social workers, and counselors; and 39 percent of administrators reporting experiencing stress and anxiety (McMahon, Worrell et al., 2024). More than half of teachers reported wanting to quit their jobs (McMahon, Swenski, et al., 2024). Violence directed against educators led to work-related stress and anxiety and contributed to intentions to transfer or quit (McMahon, Swenski, et al., 2024). Schools and districts should provide support, training, and resources to educators and school personnel to improve mental health and well-being.

Recommendations for Addressing Educator Well-Being and Retention

- ➡ Provide adequate staffing across school roles, especially special education and emergent multilingual learner supports.
- ➡ Provide training that incorporates self-care, coping skills, and mentoring.
- ➡ Facilitate staff team-building activities to strengthen collaboration and support.
- ➡ Fund educator health and wellness initiatives.
- ➡ Provide leadership training to identify stress, staff needs, and feedback mechanisms to address needs.
- ➡ Create policies and training that are informed by ongoing feedback and data from educators to ensure that interest holders have regular input and that their needs are being addressed.



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www.apa.org/education-career/k12/violence-educators

ABOUT THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

The APA Task Force on Violence Against Educators and School Personnel—chaired by Susan D. McMahon (DePaul University), with members Eric M. Anderman (The Ohio State University), Ron Avi Astor (UCLA Luskin), Dorothy L. Espelage (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), Andrew Martinez (Center for Justice Innovation, NYC), Linda A. Reddy (Rutgers University), and Frank C. Worrell, PhD (University of California, Berkeley)—was essential in the development of this work. The Task Force is supported by APA's portfolio on Child and Adolescent Learning and Well-Being. APA is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States.

For more information, please contact Nicole Barnes, senior director, child and adolescent learning and well-being, at nbarnes@apa.org.



www.nea.org/healthy-schools

ABOUT THE NEA HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAM

When unaddressed, health and safety issues undermine the health of students and educators, weaken student learning outcomes, exacerbate educator shortages, and burden school budgets. That's why the NEA established the Health and Safety Program—to bring focus, support, energy, and an equity lens to resolving new and long-standing health and safety problems in Pre-K-12 education settings, institutions of higher education, and other public employee worksites. The Program focuses on environmental and occupational health, school health, mental health, and violence prevention and response.

You can contact the NEA Health and Safety Program at healthandsafetyprogram@nea.org.

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