



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SCHOOL CULTURE AND CHRONIC BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

School culture is the set of core values that shapes patterns of behavior, attitudes, and expectations in a school. For educators it can be associated with morale, job satisfaction, and effectiveness, as well as to student learning, achievement, and school safety. The culture in a school can support or limit student learning. Engaged students rarely cause discipline problems.

If we want to develop all children into healthy and productive citizens, we must also develop their essential social, emotional, and intellectual skills. This means we need to address some of the more critical issues many educators in our public schools face: chronic discipline issues with students with behavior issues that cannot be easily addressed in a classroom setting, with an unsupportive school climate.

Our state and local policies must consider a very tiered approach to student discipline. Good policies should be grounded on a plan developed by educators in the district, on a school by school basis, if needed. A one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to work. For more concrete suggestions, [visit our website](#) and [view our Backgrounder](#) for ideas and strategies for schools and districts.

Schools and districts must develop, implement, and regularly evaluate a schoolwide disciplinary plan to ensure that it employs research-based strategies that have been shown to reduce the number of disciplinary referrals. Expectations for behavior and consequences for misbehavior should be clearly defined, easily understood, and well publicized to faculty, staff, students, and parents. Parents/guardians must be partners in reinforcing positive behaviors at school.

Suspensions, alternative school placements, and expulsions should not be a first step in student discipline. However, it must be included as an option and deterrent to chronic behavior issues. There are also some behaviors that may warrant more severe punishment. The underlying principle: all students and educators should feel safe in their classrooms. All districts should look to enhance their behavioral programs, including mental health, bullying, and suicide prevention programming, and systems.

Clarksville-Montgomery County School System (CMCSS) has implemented an innovative and more comprehensive effort to address some of these issues, which could be a model for other districts in the state. It has been a long-term initiative of Professional Educators of Tennessee to address the growing behavior problems in all of our schools, assist social workers, and identify support for parents. More importantly, we don't want to lose our best and most highly qualified educators due to the stress of the environment with increased behavioral problems and disciplinary action.

SUMMARY

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JC Bowman is the Executive Director of Professional Educators of Tennessee, a non-partisan teacher association headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee. Permission to reprint in whole or in part is hereby granted, provided that the author and the association are properly cited. For more information on this subject or any education issue please contact Professional Educators of Tennessee. To schedule an interview please contact [Audrey Shores, Director of Communications](#), at 1-800-471-4867 ext. 102.