Analysis Of Student Discipline Data In Kentucky Schools And Challenges Associated With Addressing Persistent Or Severe Behaviors

Project Staff

Ben Leo, PhD
Chris Riley
Sabrina J. Smith
Allison M. Stevens
Deborah Nelson, PhD

Deborah Nelson, PhD
Research Division Manager

Bryan Jones
Acting Deputy Director for the Office of Education Accountability

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Foreword

The General Assembly has provided direction to local school districts in addressing student behaviors by documenting dangerous, illegal, or other serious behavior events in the student information system; developing and implementing a district code of acceptable behavior and discipline; and developing local policies that specifically address certain behaviors including unlawful weapon possession, threats that pose a danger, and chronic disruption of classrooms.

This study analyzes behavior events in the student information system, in combination with principal, teacher and student survey data, to identify the prevalence of student behavior-related challenges in Kentucky districts and schools. It also examines the degree to which local districts are implementing statutes that address persistent or severe behaviors and identifies barriers faced by local districts and schools in addressing these behaviors.

The Office of Education Accountability would like to thank staff from the Kentucky Department of Education and the Kentucky Center for School Safety for their assistance with this report.

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Jay D. Hartz
Director

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Summary

National research, as well as research conducted in the commonwealth by the Office of Education Accountability (OEA), has identified school climate and culture, including student behavior and discipline, as critical to the effectiveness of schools and districts. Effective schools proactively build positive relationships with families and students; communicate compelling, high expectations for behavior; provide the supports necessary to meet those expectations; and hold students accountable when those expectations fall short.

Previous OEA reports have described the many actions taken by schools and districts across the commonwealth to create positive school cultures and ensure safe, orderly environments for teaching and learning. OEA has also documented challenges faced by local leaders attempting to build these cultures, including difficulties addressing persistent or severe student behaviors. While principals and other local leaders can take many important steps to address persistent or severe behavior challenges, their efforts can sometimes be impeded by barriers outside of their control. Schools with persistent or severe student behavior challenges have difficulty attracting and retaining teachers and providing classroom environments in which students can be successful. [1]

This report seeks to understand:

- variation in behavior-related challenges experienced by schools in the commonwealth;
- the degree to which persistent, severe, or dangerous behaviors are affecting teaching and learning, staff morale, or school safety;
- the degree to which Kentucky statutes intended to address persistent and severe behaviors, once they occur, are being implemented;
- and barriers experienced by schools in addressing persistent or severe behaviors.[a]

Data

The report combines three sources of data from the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) from the 2024 school year in order to understand the range and prevalence of behavior-related challenges in the commonwealth: "safe schools" student behavior data that districts are statutorily directed to enter into the information system; educator working conditions survey data; and student climate and safety survey data. To further understand the nature and prevalence of student behavior-related challenges, the report includes data from a 2025 OEA principal survey, and OEA site visits to 12 schools across the commonwealth for which data indicated behavioral challenges. In addition, staff conducted interviews with officials from the Kentucky Department of Education and Kentucky Center for School Safety.

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[a] The report focuses on metrics and challenges of traditional (A1) schools and does not specifically address issues that occur in alternative schools, career and technical centers, or while students are being transported.

Summary Of Findings

Overall, the report finds that student behavior is presenting at least moderate challenges to teaching, learning and staff morale in about one third of Kentucky schools and classrooms. The degree to which these challenges are major or extreme depend on whether they are being reported by principals or teachers, but all sources of data suggest that major or extreme challenges exist in at least nine percent of schools.

The General Assembly has directed local boards to require consequences, up to and including expulsion, for dangerous behaviors and to permit principals to develop policies addressing students who chronically disrupt classrooms. Implementation of these statutes varies across the state.

The report identifies two state-level actions that can be taken to address barriers identified by principals in addressing persistent or severe behaviors:

- identification of promising practices related to school-based instructional settings or alternative programs for students who are experiencing difficulties in the regular classroom, leading to behavior that interrupts their learning or the learning of others, with special attention to elementary schools; and

- KDE action to understand the challenges experienced by districts and schools in addressing persistent or severe behaviors for students with disabilities and to develop training and guidance to address these challenges.

In addition, the report notes the potential to clarify statutes that direct local boards to develop and implement policies addressing unlawful weapons, threats that pose a danger, and recording of violence against staff and students in the student information system.

While the report focuses on challenges that are faced by a substantial minority of schools, it is important to note that the overwhelming majority of principals and the majority of teachers do not report major challenges or frequent disruptions from student behavior related to teaching and learning. School safety is a strong concern for a very small minority of principals and teachers.

Prevalence Of Behavior Challenges

Statewide, 14 percent of students had one or more behavior events recorded in the student information system in 2024. Students who were economically disadvantaged, male, black, or have an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) experience behavior events at higher rates than their peers. In addition, behavior-related events are disproportionately high in the middle grades.

The rate of behavior events varies substantially among districts and schools. At the district level, the percentage of students with one or more behavior events ranged from a low of 2 percent to a high of 37 percent. At the school level, behavior event rates ranged from a low of 0 percent to a high of 71 percent.

Principal and teacher survey data suggest that, overall, student behavior is not creating major or extreme challenges to teaching and learning, staff morale, or safety in the majority of schools and classrooms in the commonwealth. In the typical Kentucky school, the behaviors that present the greatest challenge are attendance-related issues (such as tardiness or skipping class), student apathy/disengagement, and—in high schools—e-cigarettes (vapes) and cell phones.[b]

Student behavior is presenting at least moderate challenges to teaching and learning and staff morale in about one third of Kentucky schools and classrooms. Seven percent of Kentucky principals report major challenges to teaching and learning and 9 percent report major challenges for staff morale. One third of Kentucky teachers report that student misconduct frequently disrupts the learning environment. Almost 4 in 10 principals report major or extreme challenges that affect their schools in particular situations, even if those challenges are not great enough to disrupt the entire school.

Concerns about the safety of students or staff, while less common, have at least a moderate presence in 17 percent of schools. A very small minority of principals and teachers report major concerns with school safety, however. Weapons, drugs, and student-to-student violence is a major concern for a very small minority of principals at any level.

Nineteen percent of Kentucky principals report that student behavior presents a major or extreme challenge in the resources required to address them and an additional 34 percent report moderate challenges associated with school resources.

Elementary schools, in particular, are facing challenges with students as young as pre-kindergartners who cause classroom disruptions due to difficulty regulating extreme behavior such as screaming, throwing objects, and overturning furniture. Seventeen percent of elementary principals described these challenges as major or extreme. Seventy-two percent of elementary principals reported incidents in which it was necessary to require a regular classroom teacher and all but the disruptive student(s) to evacuate the classroom, due to this extreme behavior. Thirty-two percent of elementary principals reported that individual students caused classrooms to be cleared five or more times. In these classrooms, student learning, teacher morale, and students' and staffs' sense of safety can be severely impacted. Twenty percent of elementary school principals reported at least moderate challenges with student-to-staff violence; of these, 5 percent reported major or extreme challenges.

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[b] OEA principal survey data indicating challenges with cell phones was based on student behavior in the 2024-2025 school year. HB 208 of RS 2025, which required local boards to ban use of cell phones during instructional time had not yet gone into effect.

Implementation Of Statutory Provisions For Addressing Persistent And Serious Behaviors

Consequences For Dangerous Or Serious Behaviors

158.150(2)(a) requires that local boards establish a policy that requires a 12-month expulsion, or removal to an alternative setting within the district, for students who have been determined by the local board to present dangerous threats to students, faculty, or staff or who bring unlawful weapons to school. It also requires local boards to establish consequences, up to expulsion for assaults, drug sales, and other offenses. Data analyzed for this report show that the minority of weapons and threats violations—including handguns—result in expulsion or alternative placement. It is unclear, however, from the data (with the exception of guns) what proportion of the events analyzed would meet the criteria for expulsion identified in statute.

Recommendation 3.1

If it is the intent of the General Assembly that districts receive direct guidance related to weapons that are considered to be unlawful, it may consider amending KRS 158.150 to require the Kentucky Department of Education to collaborate with the Kentucky Center for School Safety and other relevant organizations to identify "unlawful weapons" that require expulsion as relevant to KRS 158.150. These definitions should be included in the Kentucky Department of Education's model discipline policies.

Recommendation 3.2

If it is the intent of the General Assembly that districts receive direct guidance related to threats that are considered dangerous, it may consider amending KRS 158.150 to require the Kentucky Department of Education to collaborate with the Kentucky Center for School Safety and other relevant organizations to identify conditions under which threats pose a danger and require expulsion or alternative placement. Guidance should be included in KDE discipline guidelines.

The report also shows that the small minority of assaults—even the most dangerous—and cases of drug possession for sale or distribution resulted in expulsion or alternative placement. Currently, data are not being entered into the student information system with sufficient detail to determine the number of assaults against staff versus students.

Recommendation 3. 3.

If it is the intent of the General Assembly that incidents of violence against staff, students, or other groups be specifically identified, it may consider amending KRS 158.444 to specify required groups be identified as victims in safe schools data reporting.

Chronic Disruption

KRS 158.150 requires local school boards to have policies that permit principals to establish procedures for removing chronically disruptive students from classrooms from which they have been removed three times within a 30-day period and place those students in another classroom or an alternative program setting, including a virtual setting.

The report finds that policies and practices for chronically disruptive students are being implemented in about one-third of schools.[c] Schools use a variety of options to remove chronically disruptive students from classrooms. While suspension is used most often, placement in virtual or in-person alternative settings is also common.

Site visit and survey data indicate that principals in some schools with behavior challenges do not feel that they have the practical option to implement chronic disruption policies, in part because of lack of direct district support for implementation. A substantial minority of principals and teachers (about 15 percent) express desire for greater administrative support in ensuring that the district code of conduct is enforced in schools and classrooms. In some schools, lack of alternative placement settings is likely a barrier to implementing this policy.

Challenges Addressing Persistent Or Severe Behaviors

The challenges most commonly cited by principals in addressing persistent or severe behaviors were lack of alternative settings in which students who experience behavioral challenges in the regular classroom can receive instruction and legal restrictions, based in federal law, on the total number of accumulated days (10) that students with disabilities can be subject to disciplinary removals unless it is determined that the behavior that led to the disciplinary action is not a manifestation of their disability.[d] In addition, many principals desired greater flexibility in the options permitted to provide educational or behavioral supports outside the regular classroom without documenting a disciplinary removal. Principals also reported a need for mental health support for students and greater accountability for parents in ensuring their students fall the school's code of conduct.

Lack Of Alternative Settings

A lack of instructional settings as alternatives for students who are struggling to be successful in a traditional classroom was reported as a major or extreme barrier to addressing behavior concerns by 41 percent of elementary school principals, 31 percent of middle school principals, and 14 percent of high school principals. Elementary schools are less likely than middle and high schools to have alternative instructional settings outside of the regular classroom, though many middle schools also lack options. Site visit interviewees noted a need for school-based alternative

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[c] KRS 158.150 (5)(b)(2) identifies a chronically disruptive student as one who is "removed from the same classroom three times within a thirty day period."

[d] Additional disciplinary removals may be permitted pending results of a "manifestation determination" meeting by which the school district must ensure that students have been provided the necessary supports and the behavior that prompted the disciplinary removals was not a manifestation of the child's disability. Reference to this process was not included in the survey question to principals. Based on site visits to 12 schools, OEA believes that principals understand that this process exists.

learning environments that are not designed as punishments but as environments better tailored to a student's needs than the traditional classroom. Such programs might prevent behavior problems rather than being a consequence of them. Many site visit interviewees noted that exclusionary discipline such as suspension does not address the difficulties that students may be experiencing in traditional classrooms that lead to misbehavior.

Recommendation 4.1

The Kentucky Department of Education should collaborate with the Kentucky Center for School Safety and other relevant organizations to identify promising practices in Kentucky schools or nationally related to school-based instructional settings or alternative programs for students who are experiencing difficulties in the regular classroom, leading to behavior that interrupts their learning or the learning of others. Special attention should be paid to programs for elementary school students who experience difficulty regulating extreme behavior.

Flexibility In Options Available To Instruct Students With Disabilities With Persistent Or Severe Behavior Challenges In The Regular Classroom

The report describes concerns of principals related to challenges in addressing the small minority of students with disabilities who have persistent or severe behavior challenges. The report notes that the overwhelming majority of students with disabilities do not have any behavioral events entered into the student information system. Thirty-nine percent of Kentucky principals report major or extreme challenges in addressing persistent or severe student behaviors due to legal restrictions on disciplinary removals for students with disabilities, with almost as many (37 percent) reporting challenges with lack of flexibility in options permitted for instructing or supporting students with disabilities outside of the regular classroom without documenting a disciplinary removal. As described in Chapter 1, these legal restrictions originate in federal law.

Survey and site visit data indicate strong sentiments of many principals and other school staff related to unintended consequences of federal thresholds for disciplinary actions that can be taken for students with disabilities. These include extreme disruptions to classroom learning and sometimes unsafe conditions caused by behavior of a small minority of students with disabilities. While the majority of Kentucky principals reported at least moderate challenges associated with federal law, reports vary across the state, and a little over one fifth of principals report little or no challenge in this area.

From the data collected for this study, it is not possible to isolate the factors contributing to challenges experienced by principals and the extent to which these challenges stem from federal law itself or the way it is being implemented. The report does note, however, that lack of flexibility related to IEP and disciplinary removals is associated within the principal survey data with lack of alternative placement options generally. This may indicate that some schools lack the full continuum of alternative placement options that are required by federal law. Other factors influencing differences among principals' perceptions about options available under the law include orientation against alternative placement in some districts; the degree to which the threat of lawsuits affect different schools or districts; and confusion among some administrators

about what KDE may determine to be compliant with federal law related to disciplinary removals if it carries out a review or audit, as required by the federal government.

Recommended Steps By KDE To Assist Districts And Schools In Understanding Options And Responsibilities Related To Students With Disabilities Experiencing Behavior Challenges

KDE can play an important role in assisting districts and schools to address any challenges they are experiencing related to federal law by taking steps to understand those challenges and developing relevant guidance and training.

Recommendation 4.2

The Kentucky Department of Education should solicit data from educators about challenges they are experiencing under federal law as it relates to addressing persistent or severe behavior of students with disabilities. Data might include focus groups or surveys and should provide options for anonymous submissions. Data collection should address challenges associated with implementation of federal law, including manifestation determination reviews; provision of a continuum of alternative placements; threats of legal action; and any questions about what is strictly required by federal law related to what must be counted as a disciplinary removal and included in data collected to fulfill federal requirements.

Recommendation 4.3

By August 29, 2025, the Kentucky Department of Education should submit findings of its data collection to the Education Assessment and Accountability Review Subcommittee and the Interim Joint Committee on Education. Findings may include any observations of the department related to areas of confusion in the law and any training that should be provided to district or school administrators.

Recommendation 4.4

Based on findings of its data collection and any feedback from the General Assembly, the Kentucky Department of Education should develop guidance documents and training to assist educators in understanding their options and responsibilities under federal law to prevent and address persistent or severe behavior challenges of students with disabilities. Guidance should provide examples of continuum of placement options that are being implemented within the commonwealth as well as examples of disciplinary removals that may be carried out without counting towards the time accumulated towards a change of placement under federal law.

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[1] Kentucky Legislative Research Commission. Office of Education Accountability. *Student Achievement: Lessons Learned From Kentucky's Relatively Highest-And Lowest-Performing Schools.* Research Report no., 2024

Chapter 1

Introduction And Background

The General Assembly requires schools to record data in the student information system for a variety of incidents determined to be dangerous or serious. This report analyzes safe schools data (SSD), in combination with teacher, student, and principal survey data.

Through KRS 158.444, the General Assembly requires schools to record data in the student information system for a variety of incidents determined to be dangerous or serious. This report analyzes this "safe schools data" (SSD), in combination with teacher, student, and principal survey data, to understand the nature and prevalence of student-behavior related challenges in Kentucky schools and districts; the degree to which Kentucky statutes intended to address those challenges are being implemented; and barriers experienced by schools in addressing persistent or severe student behaviors.

Student behavior is presenting at least a moderate challenge in about one third of schools. Principal and teacher reports vary as to the severity of the challenge, but all sources of data indicate major or severe challenges in at least 9 percent of schools.

The study finds that, overall, student behavior is presenting at least a moderate challenge to teaching and learning in about one third of schools. The degree of challenge depends on whether it is reported at the school or classroom level and by principals or teachers, but all sources of data indicate that student behavior presents a major or extreme challenge in at least 9 percent of schools. School safety is not a strong concern with the overwhelming majority of principals or educators.

Most teachers and principals do not report major behavior-related challenges to teaching and learning. Student apathy, attendance issues, and vapes present the greatest challenges overall.

The overwhelming majority of principals and two thirds of educators do not report major challenges associated with student behavior to student learning. In the typical Kentucky school, student apathy, attendance issues, and vapes present much bigger challenges than do dangerous or seriously disruptive activities.

The report identifies state-level actions that can be taken to address concerns reported by principals about the availability of alternative learning settings and difficulties navigating federal law related to disciplinary removals for students with disabilities.

The report identifies actions that can be taken to address the two most pressing challenges reported by principals experiencing student behavior-related challenges: availability of alternative instructional placements and difficulties in navigating federal law related to disciplinary removals for students with disabilities. Principals also reported a need for mental health support for students and greater accountability for parents in ensuring their students fall the school's code of conduct.

Description Of The Study

Study Request

IN 2024 EAARS requested that OEA study school discipline data in Kentucky.

In 2024, EAARS requested that OEA include an analysis of school discipline data in its 2025 study agenda. It requested that the report analyze trends across Kentucky schools and districts; highlight

common behavioral incidents; and report differences in behavior events among student grades and demographic groups. The committee requested that the analysis include relationships between discipline data as reported by schools and challenges reported by Kentucky teachers and students through surveys. In addition, the committee requested specific attention to the data in light of the General Assembly's efforts to address concerns about more persistent or severe behavioral challenges as highlighted in recent legislation.

Organization Of The Report

The remainder of Chapter 1 describes data used for the report. In addition, it summarizes state and federal policies relevant to districts and schools in addressing school discipline challenges identified in this report.

Chapter 2 shows differences among districts, schools, and student groups in challenges related to student behavior; identifies the proportion of districts and schools experiencing major challenges; and identifies student behaviors that represent the greatest challenges statewide.

Chapter 3 analyzes data related to consequences experienced by students with more serious behaviors, such as weapons, threats and assaults, that are specifically addressed in statute. It also reports data on the implementation of statutory provisions related to removing students from classrooms in which they are chronically disruptive and identifies the need for greater attention to chronic disruption by administrators in some districts and schools.

Chapter 4 describes barriers most often identified by Kentucky principals in addressing persistent and severe behavior: lack of alternative placements and restrictions associated with disciplinary removals for students with disabilities. The chapter includes state-level actions that might be taken to address those barriers.

Data Used For The Report

This report analyzed data from the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) including "safe schools" data from the student information system; educator survey data; and student survey data.

The report focuses primarily on the 2023-2024 school year, which is noted as the 2024 school year in the report.[a]

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[a] All school years will be noted in the report based on the spring semester. For example, 2023-2024 is reported as 2024.

The report analyzes data from the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), including:

- state, district, school, and student-level data on behavioral events reported in the student information system and compiled by KDE into the safe schools data set (SSD);[b]
- educator working conditions survey data, 2024;
- student climate and safety survey data, 2024; and
- student enrollment, demographic, and program eligibility data.

In addition, staff conducted interviews with staff from KDE and the Kentucky Center for School Safety (KCSS) and with principals, counselors, teachers, and school resource officers in 12 schools across the commonwealth for which data indicated behavior challenges.

In addition, staff conducted interviews during 2025 with

- officials from KDE and the Kentucky Center for School Safety (KCSS);
- principals, counselors, teachers (including special education teachers) and school resource officers in four elementary, four middle, and four high school site visit schools across the commonwealth. Schools were chosen based on data that indicated behavioral challenges.[c]

Staff also conducted a focus group with KCSS principal mentors who assist principals across the state with challenges related to school safety and discipline.

The report includes data from an OEA 2025 survey of principals in A1 schools. The survey included questions based on barriers identified in site visits schools experiencing behavior challenges.

Finally, the report includes data from a 2025 OEA survey of principals in all A1 schools in the commonwealth.[de] The survey included questions developed from barriers or issues identified by

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[b] As noted in the report and as appropriate for particular analyses, the report includes safe schools data for all students in some cases and for students enrolled in A1 schools only in other cases.

[c] Located in 10 districts; schools were chosen based on high rates of behavior events or, in some cases teacher or student survey data that indicated a much greater degree of behavioral challenge that was indicated by behavior event data. In total, OEA interviewed

[d] An A1 school is a traditional public school under the administrative control of a principal and is eligible to establish a school-based decision-making council. Therefore, the survey results included in this report do not include responses of principals in alternative schools or career and technical centers. These principals were, however, given opportunity to participate in the survey. OEA received a total of 36 responses from principals in Non-A1 schools. Their responses did not differ meaningfully from responses of A1 principals.

[e] Principals of all 1,151 schools were surveyed. Most questions include data from over 50 percent of those principals. To determine whether answers of respondents likely differed from non-respondents, staff also generated a stratified random sample of 185 schools ensuring equal representation of regions in the state. Additional follow-up was provided for schools in the sample, resulting in a response rate of 88 percent. Data in the survey of all principals were compared with data in the random sample. Unless otherwise noted, data provided from the survey of all principals were determined by staff to be generally representative of schools across the state.

staff in site visit schools experiencing behavior challenges or by interviews with KDE or KCSS staff. Appendix A includes survey questions and responses and Appendix B includes a selection of comment submitted by principals on the survey.

Safe Schools Data

KRS 158.444 requires schools to record serious behavior incidents, such as assault or weapons possession, in the student information system, along with any behaviors for which students have been disciplined for serious events.

As required by KRS 158.444, schools must record in the student information system any incident of "violence and assault against school employees and students; possession of guns or other deadly weapons on school property or at school functions; possession or use of alcohol, prescription drugs, or controlled substances on school property or at school functions; and all incidents in which a student has been disciplined by the school for a serious incident."

KDE considers an event serious if it results in a serious consequence, defined by KDE as in-school removal, out-of-school suspension, in-district removal to an alternative school, or expulsion.

Behavior events are divided into those that are violations of the law and those that are violations of board policy. All violations noted in the report are behavior events.

Table 1.1 shows major categories of events recorded in the system, divided into events that violate the law (law violations) and those that are against board policy and result in a serious consequence (board violations). See Appendix C for a list of all behavior event codes.

Table 1.1
Behavior Events Considered Law or Board Violations

Law Violations	Board Violations
Weapons	Disorderly, Disrespectful, Disruptive
Drugs	Attendance, tardiness, Skipping
Tobacco	Fighting
Violence (includes threats, assaults)	Insubordination
Bullying/harassment	Profanity or Vulgarity
Alcohol	

Source: Staff analysis of documents from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Limitations Of The Data

Data collected from OEA site visits to schools indicate that a number of factors may influence the likelihood that behavior events are entered into the information system.

KDE provides districts with standards for data input in the safe schools data.[1] Depending on local decisions as to when board violations merit disciplinary resolutions for which data entry are required, data entry can vary in ways that are beyond KDE's control.

Varying Thresholds For Data Entry. Interview data from OEA site visits to schools across the commonwealth indicate a number of factors that influence the proportion of behavior events that are

Sources of variation in data entry standards include local differences in the behaviors considered to merit serious consequences; administrators' desire to minimize behavior events; and practical limitations to entering events that are very common in some schools, such as vapes or profanity.

entered by administrators into the student information system. These include:

- differences among districts and schools in the standards used to identify behaviors that merit consequences and reporting, if those behaviors are not law violations

- administrators' desire to minimize reported behavior events—even those that are law violations—in order to minimize concern from district leaders who are interested in avoiding negative consequences to the school district stemming from state audits that are required by federal law or other sources of discipline data scrutiny (such as public concern, other federal audits)

- practical limitations, such as staff time, associated with entering data for very common incidents, such as skipping class, possession of vapes, or use of profanity

- inability of behavior event rate data to indicate the magnitude with which some events—especially those that are extremely violent or disruptive—can impact individual classrooms or teacher morale

For these reasons, OEA urges caution in using safe schools data alone to determine the severity of behavior challenges in a school or district.

For this reason, OEA urges caution in drawing conclusions about the relative degree of student behavior challenges in particular districts or schools based on behavior event rate data alone. In making determinations about the proportion of districts and schools that are experiencing major behavior challenges, OEA used data from teacher, student, and principal surveys, in combination with behavior event rate data.

Data analyzed for the report does not provide a comprehensive view of challenges related to discipline for students with disabilities.

Data On Disciplinary Challenges Affecting Schools Does Not Include District Administrators Or Parents/Advocates Of Students With Disabilities. Chapter 4 describes challenges reported by principals statewide and by a variety of site interviewees related to requirements of federal law related to disciplinary removals for students with disabilities. The report does not contain data sufficient to determine the degree to which the source of this challenge is federal law itself relative to the way it is being implemented at the school, district, or state levels. In addition, the report focuses on challenges associated with the law but does not include data collected from parents or advocates of students with disabilities related to the effect of the law on those students.

State And Federal Policies Relevant To
Addressing Persistent Or Severe Behaviors

Decisions related to student discipline vary widely. Although discipline decisions are primarily a matter of local control, they are subject to state and federal requirements.

Decisions related to student discipline in Kentucky vary widely among districts and schools in the commonwealth, shaped by district and school policies and the actions of local leaders in carrying out those policies.

While discipline decisions are primarily a matter of local control, local leaders are required to adhere to some specific state and federal requirements. In addition, local leaders decisions may be influenced by a desire to avoid negative consequences associated with federally-required audits of discipline data.

KDE and KCSS provide guidance and technical assistance to schools.

The Kentucky Department of Education and the Kentucky Center for School Safety (KCSS) are charged with providing guidance or technical assistance to districts and schools on discipline-related matters.

Figure 1.A illustrates these relationships. Relevant policy requirements or supports are described in the following figure.

Figure 1.A
Governance Of School Discipline In Kentucky
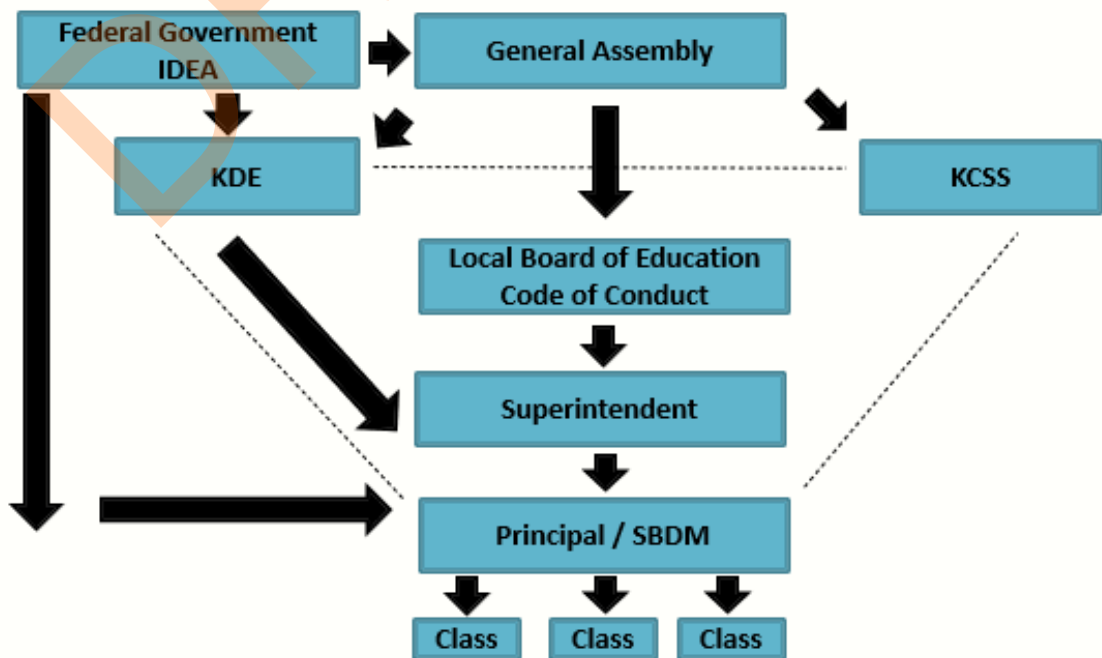
Note: A solid arrow delineates relationships that include authority regarding certain matters of student discipline. Dotted lines indicate relationships that involve technical assistance, guidance, or collaboration.
Source: Staff analysis of state and federal policies.

Discipline Governed Primarily By District And School Policies

KRS 158.148 requires local
boards of education to adopt
codes of acceptable behavior,
for which superintendents are
charged with implementation.

KRS 158.148 requires each local board of education to adopt a code of acceptable behavior that includes the types of behaviors expected from each student and the consequences of failure to obey the standards. Within each district, the superintendent, or designee, is responsible for overall implementation and supervision of the code of conduct which should have the goal of maintaining a "safe learning environment where orderly learning is possible and encouraged."

Within each school, principals
are responsible for
implementing the code of
conduct.

Within each school, the principal is responsible for the administration and implementation of the code of conduct in a way that is applied "uniformly and fairly to each student at the school without partiality or discrimination." Each school council selects and implements appropriate discipline and classroom management techniques required to carry out the code of conduct schoolwide. KRS 158.4416 (3)(b) requires "the school counselor or school-based mental health services provider to facilitate a trauma-informed team to identify and assist students whose learning, behavior, or relationships have been impacted by trauma."

Kentucky Statutes Addressing Consequences For Persistent Or Severe Behavior

KRS 158.150 requires local
boards to adopt policies that
require expulsion or alternative
placement when the board
determines that a student has
brought an unlawful weapon or
made a dangerous threat.

Suspensions And Expulsions. KRS 158.150 mandates that districts adopt policies for mandatory expulsion, for at least 1 year, if a student has been found to have brought an unlawful weapon to schools under its jurisdiction or is determined by the local board through clear and convincing evidence to have made threats that pose a danger to the well-being of students, faculty, or staff of the district. Districts are also permitted to place students in an alternative setting within the district in lieu of expulsion.

When students are expelled, they must be offered appropriate educational services, unless doing so would pose a threat to the safety of students or staff and the child could not be placed in a state-funded agency program. A student with an IEP cannot be suspended or expelled for a behavior that is determined to be a manifestation of their disability if the suspension or expulsion would result in a change of placement, unless not removing the student would result in an injury. [f]

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[f] A change of placement occurs when "the child is removed for more than ten (10) consecutive days during a school year; or the child is subjected to a series of removals that constitute a pattern because the removals accumulate to more than ten (10) school days during a school year and because of other factors, such

Districts are also permitted to suspend or expel students for serious behaviors, such as illegal drug sale and assault. Primary school students may not be suspended unless their presence poses a threat to the safety of staff or students.

Districts are also required to establish policies requiring disciplinary actions, up to and including expulsion from school, for a student who is determined by the board to have possessed illegal drugs for the purpose of sale or distribution at a school under its jurisdiction. The statute delineates additional potential reasons for suspension or expulsion, including willful disobedience, use of profanity, assault, battery, or abuse of other students or staff, and the use or possession of alcohol or drugs. Primary school students must not be suspended unless their presence poses a threat to their safety or that of staff or other students.

Unless immediate suspension is "essential to protect persons or property or to avoid disruption of the ongoing academic process," prior to suspension or expulsion, students' due process rights entitle them to receive oral or written notice of the charges against them, explanation of the evidence of the charges, and an opportunity to present the student's version of the facts related to the case against them.

KRS 158.150 requires local school boards to include policies that permit the immediate removal of violent or threatening students from a classroom. Local codes must also allow the removal of students identified as chronically disruptive and possible placement in alternative settings.

Chronic Classroom Disruptions. KRS 158.150 requires local school boards to incorporate policies into their local codes of behavior and discipline that permit school personnel to immediately remove violent or threatening students from a classroom or transportation system. Local codes of behavior must also permit principals to establish procedures for removing chronically disruptive students from classrooms from which they have been removed three times within a 30-day period. These chronically disruptive students may also be subject to further discipline consistent with the school's code of conduct. Consequences may include suspension or removal from the classroom for the remainder of the school year. Students may be placed in another classroom, or in an alternative program or setting, including a virtual setting.

Guidance, Technical Assistance, And Support

KDE, in collaboration with KCSS, the Interim Joint Committee on Education (IJCE), and other groups is required to provide guidelines and recommendations for developing district codes of conduct each even-numbered year.

Kentucky Department of Education Statewide Student Discipline Guidelines. By August 31 of each even-numbered year, KDE is required to develop (or update) guidelines,

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as the length of each removal , the total amount of time the child is removed, and the proximity of removals to one another." Exceptions can be made if the current placement could "result in an injury to the child, other children, or the educational personnel, in which case an appropriate alternative placement shall be provided."

recommendations, and model policies for use in developing district codes of acceptable behavior and conduct.

The guidelines and recommendations are to be developed in collaboration with the Kentucky Center for School Safety, groups that represent educators, parents, and employers, and the Interim Joint Committee on Education (IJCE).[g]

In addition, KDE, in collaboration with KCSS "shall identify successful strategies currently being used in programs in Kentucky and in other states" and incorporate these into the statewide student discipline guidelines.

Student Discipline Guidelines (2024) focus on safe, orderly environments to enhance learning; multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS); graduated, developmentally-appropriate consequences; and supports and interventions.

KDE provides several forms of support to promote positive student behavior, including guidance documents, best-practice videos, and assistance with Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS).

Technical Assistance. Related to promoting positive student behavior, the KDE website includes guidance documents and best-practice videos. In addition, KDE employs one full-time consultant and has four other staff who are qualified trainers in the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) model recommended by the federal government in improving behavior outcomes, including for students with disabilities. In addition, KDE uses federal preschool IDEA-B grant funding to support 12 regional consultants trained in the PBIS model as it applies to early childhood.

KCSS administers a school safety grant program, promotes interagency efforts to address safety issues, analyzes discipline data, and disseminates best practices for creating safe schools.

Kentucky Center For School Safety. As described in KRS 158.442, KCSS is charged with, among other duties, administering a school safety grant program for local districts as directed by the General Assembly. In addition, KCSS promotes interagency efforts to address discipline and safety issues. KCSS serves a role in researching and evaluating school safety programs throughout the state, analyzing data collected in compliance with KRS 158.444, and disseminating information regarding best practices in creating safe and effective schools.

KCSS offers free safe school assessments to all Kentucky schools, designed to help enhance the learning environment by addressing issues such as discipline.

KCSS offers free, voluntary safe school assessments to all Kentucky schools. The assessment consists of an external assessment team that meets with the school principal, staff,

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[g] The statute specifically mentions the Kentucky Education Association, the Kentucky School Boards Association, the Kentucky Association of School Administrators, the Kentucky Association of Professional Educators, the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents, the Parent-Teachers Association, the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, and the Farm Bureau.

students, and parents in order to gain information about the school environment. The informational, independent assessments are designed to enhance the school's learning environment by examining climate and culture, including student discipline. In addition, in 2025, KCSS maintained 13 principal mentors working with 56 new principal mentees. Mentors assist school principals with a variety of challenges, including student discipline issues.

Federal Policies

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guarantees students with disabilities access to a free and appropriate education that includes appropriate behavioral supports for a student whose behavior might interrupt the learning of the student or other students.

As relevant to issues discussed in this report, the major influence of federal policies on local discipline decisions comes through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which guarantees students with disabilities the right to a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment (LRE) as determined by a student's admission and release committee (ARC) and described in the student's IEP.[h] If it is determined that a student's behavior might interrupt the learning of the student or other students, the student's IEP must contain behavioral supports.

The law also requires that a "continuum of alternative placements" be available to support students with disabilities outside of the regular classroom.

The law also requires that public agencies ensure that, in addition to the general education classroom, a "continuum of alternative placements" be available to support students with IEPs. These can include resource rooms, self-contained classrooms, special schools, home or hospital instruction.[i]

The IDEA protects students with IEPs from being subject to long-term disciplinary removals due to behavior that is a manifestation of their disability.

The IDEA also provides specific protections for students with IEPs to prevent them from being removed from their regular placement for behavior that is related to their disability. Specifically, it protects these students from long-term removals from what has been determined through their IEP to be their appropriate educational placement. Long-term removals are suspensions for more than 10 consecutive school days, or a pattern of short-term disciplinary removals totaling more than 10 school days in a year if those removals are based on similar removals or are close together.

Students with IEPs may be removed to an alternative setting for infractions that involve weapons, illegal drugs, or serious bodily injury.

As an exception to these protections, students may be removed to an interim alternative educational setting (IAES), regardless of disability, for up to 45 days if a behavior infraction involves

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[h] ARCs are comprised of a student's parent, regular education teacher, a special education teacher, a district representative, and other personnel able to provide diagnostic information, such as school psychologist. LRE is assumed to be a general education classroom unless it is demonstrated that, with necessary supports and services, a child's needs cannot be provided in that environment. Necessary supports and services must be detailed in a student's individualized educational program (IEP).

[i] "§ 300.115 Continuum of alternative placements.

weapons, illegal drugs, or serious bodily injury. The "stay put" provision of that law requires that the change of placement not be made when a dispute has been filed on behalf of the student, until the dispute has been resolved.

For a student with an IEP to be subject to disciplinary removals beyond the thresholds set by the IDEA, a manifestation determination meeting must determine that the student's IEP was property implemented and that their behavior was not a manifestation of their disability.

In order to remove students from classrooms beyond the thresholds established by IDEA, schools must hold a manifest determination review that includes the student's parents, a representative of the school district, and relevant IEP team members. If, at the meeting, it is determined that either: 1. the student's IEP was not properly implemented or 2. the conduct that caused the student to be removed was a manifestation of the child's disability, the student must be returned to their regular placement. [j]

"504" plan students who do not qualify for an IEP but have a disability are subject to the same legal protections.

While students with disabilities that do not have an IEP are not covered by protections under the IDEA, case law has established that these students—along with students who are suspected of having a disability—are due the same protections as students with IEPs. Rights of students with disabilities that do not have an IEP are covered under Section 504 of the Americans With Disabilities Act and are often referred to as "504" students.

KDE is required to ensure IDEA law is implemented in the commonwealth. Part of this involves the monitoring and reporting of multiple types of disproportionate discipline data that includes data by racial subgroups. KDE must also conduct reviews or audits of districts with disproportional data.

KDE Implementation of IDEA's Provisions Regarding Disciplinary Removals. KDE is required to ensure implementation of federal law through a variety of measures including resolving discipline-related disputes filed with the state on behalf of students with disabilities; monitoring and reporting data on the percentages of students who experience disciplinary removals, including disproportionality by racial subgroups; and review of the policies, procedures, and practices of school districts with disproportional data. [k2] As a potential consequences of KDE

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[j] § 300.530 Authority of school personnel

[k] 34 CFR § 300.647 addresses significant disproportionality in the identification, placement, and discipline of students with disabilities. It requires states to use a standard methodology to identify disproportionality; review and, if necessary, revise policies, practices and procedures; and implement comprehensive coordinated early intervening services (CCEIS) There are two general sets of data collection requirements. The first set, indicators 4a and 4b from the State Performance Plan (SPP), deals with what are known as significant discrepancies. Significant discrepancies are large differences in the rate at which all students with IEPs, and IEP students in seven racial/ethnic subgroups within a district received out-of-school suspensions or expulsions totaling more than 10 days over the course of a year, relative to the rate of removal of all students with disabilities statewide. KDE is also required to evaluate districts for "significant disproportionality significant disproportionalities, large within-district differences in discipline rates between IEP students of each racial/ethnic subgroup from indicator 4b and all other IEP

actions to monitor disproportionate discipline data, districts that do not address identified deficiencies in policies or practice may be required to redirect some of the federal funds they receive under IDEA to remediate practices that may have led to the disproportional data.

Office of Civil Rights

Some Kentucky districts have also been affected by investigations conducted by the federal Office of Civil Rights.

Some Kentucky districts and schools have also been affected by investigations conducted by the federal Office of Civil Rights (OCR). At the national level, OCR has been involved with investigations of complaints filed against a school or a district alleging discriminatory discipline based on student characteristics such as sex, race, or disability. In the past OCR has also conducted its own investigations based on reviewing data that may indicate discriminatory patterns.

National Concern About Exclusionary Discipline

Federal policies designed to protect the rights of students with disabilities come from decades of concern with the disproportionate rate of discipline for these students, and research on the negative effect of exclusionary discipline.

Federal policies designed to protect the rights of students with disabilities follow decades of concern from the public and of education research documenting disproportionate rates of disciplinary removals and the negative consequences associated with exclusionary disciplinary consequences that remove students from class or school.[13] Similarly decades of research and policy initiatives have been dedicated to understand and addressing exclusionary discipline practices for students from particular demographic groups. [m][4]Exclusionary discipline practices can

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students. Districts are evaluated for significant disproportionalities for each of the following discipline categories:

- Total disciplinary removals
- In-school suspensions of 10 days or less
- In-school suspensions of 10 or more days
- Out-of-school suspensions or expulsions of 10 days or less
- Out-of-school suspensions or expulsions of 10 days or more

[l] For example, in *Mills v. Board of Education of District of Columbia* (1972), the US Supreme Court found that 18,000 students in the District of Columbia were not able to attend school because of their "behavior problems, hyperactivity, epilepsy intellectual disabilities, and physical problems." The court ordered the school district to provide public education to all students with disabilities.

[m] In public schools nationwide, male students and those of color are subject to exclusionary discipline practices, such as suspension or expulsion, at disproportionately high rates. For example, in the 2020-2021 academic year, male students accounted for more than twice as many suspensions and expulsions as female students. Similarly, black students accounted for more suspensions and expulsions than white students, despite comprising a much smaller percentage of the population.

include in-school suspension; removal to alternative programs in the district, or expulsion.

Tension Between Laws Designed To Address Persistent And Severe Behavior And Those Designed to Protect Individual Students

District and school leaders sometime face countervailing pressures to provide consequences for severe behaviors and protect the rights of individual students.

District and school leaders must negotiate sometimes competing pressures among state and federal directives. For example, there is tension between some of Kentucky's statutes that promote consequences for persistent or severe behaviors and federal law that requires districts and schools to protect the rights of individual groups. Local leaders also experience local public pressure related to school discipline. In some cases pressure may be to address serious disciplinary incidents occurring in the schools through consequences to offending students. In other cases, pressure may come from individual parents, lawyers/advocates, or public groups concerned about protecting the rights of individual students or groups against disproportionate impact of exclusionary discipline consequences that remove students from classrooms or schools.

Districts or schools believed to not be protecting the rights of individual students have been subject to lawsuits, disputes, or audits.

The relative amount of pressure related to addressing severe or persistent issues versus protecting the rights of individuals students likely varies among districts and schools. Districts or schools that have been subject to negative consequences due to questions about the rights of individual students may be more likely than others to be influenced by these concerns in carrying out discipline-related decisions. Negative consequences can include lawsuits, frequent and sustained disputes from parents, or federally-mandated audits carried out by KDE.

Adding to the confusion for local leaders is the fact that federal guidance associated with legal protections varies among administrations.

[1] https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/tech/sis/documents/datastandard-behavior.pdf

[2] Office of Special Education and Early Learning Procedures for Calculating Significant Disproportionality. Office of Special Education & Early Learning. Web.; State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) Indicator Support Guide. Navigating through State and Federal Data Requirements. Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Early Learning, 2023, pp. 10-11.

[3] Reference for Mills vs. DC

[4] U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), "Table 233.28.

Percentage of students receiving selected disciplinary actions in public elementary and secondary schools, by type of disciplinary action, disability status, sex, and race/ethnicity: School year 2020-21." *Digest of Education Statistics*, National Center for Education Statistics, 2021. Web.

Chapter 2

Student Behavior Challenges

This chapter summarizes student behavior events entered into the student information system in 2024. Data is aggregated at the state, district, and school levels.

This chapter summarizes student behavior events entered into the student information system in 2024 at the state, district, and school levels for students enrolled in A1 schools.[a] It shows a broad range among districts and schools in the percentage of students with behavior events. The chapter also illustrates some limitations in the use of behavior event data to draw conclusions about the degree of challenge associated with student behavior in individual districts or schools.

The chapter also draws on survey data from teachers, students, and principals, in combination with student discipline event rates to identify the proportion of districts and schools with challenges and types of behaviors presenting challenges.

The chapter draws on teacher, student, and principal survey data, in combination with student discipline event rates, to identify the proportion of districts and schools in which data indicate behavior-related challenges and the types of behaviors that present the greatest challenges statewide.

Statewide Student Behavior Events

Table 2.1 shows state-level rates for the percentage of students who had one or more behavior event recorded in the student information system in 2024.

Table 2.1 shows state-level rates for the percentage of students who had one or more behavior events recorded in the student information system in 2024, which was approximately 14 percent of all students. A greater percentage of students had board violations (12 percent) than law violations (5.1 percent). Students with three or more behavior events were not uncommon (4.5 percent), but relatively rare for law violations (0.5%).[b]

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[a] KDE considers any incident that is a law violation to be an event. Board violations are considered behavior events only if they result in a resolution that KDE defines as serious because it resulted in an expulsion, in-school removal, out-of-school suspension, or in-district removal.

[b] Comparative analyses this chapter are based on the percentage of students with one or more behavior events. Staff also compared districts and schools on metrics of greater magnitude, such as students with law violations or multiple violations. Conclusions about behavior data for student groups, schools, or districts did not differ substantially based on which of these measures were analyzed.

Table 2.1
Percentage Of All Students
With One Or More
Behavior Events
2024

Event Category	1 or more	3 or more	5 or more	10 or more	20 or more
Law Violation	5.1%	0.5%	0.1%	----	----
Board Violation	12.0	3.6	1.8	0.5	0.1
Any Behavior Event	14.3	4.5	2.3	0.6	0.1

---indicates a value greater than 0 but less than 0.1 percent
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Behavior Events By Student Characteristics

The percentage of students with behavior events is greatest overall in the 6th – 8th grades, but 9th grade has the greatest number of behavior events overall.

Grade Level. As shown in Table 2.2 and Figure 2.A, the number of behavior events per grade is much higher in the middle and upper grades than elementary grades. While the percentage of students with behavior events is greatest overall in the 6th-8th grades, 9th grade has the greatest number of behavior events overall (19 percent of all events).

Table 2.2
Percent Of Students In A1 Schools
With One Or More Behavior Event
By Grade Range, 2024

Pre K-5th	6th-8th	9th-12th
4.9%	24%	20.8%

Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Figure 2.A
Behavior Events By Grade
For All School Types
2024 School Year
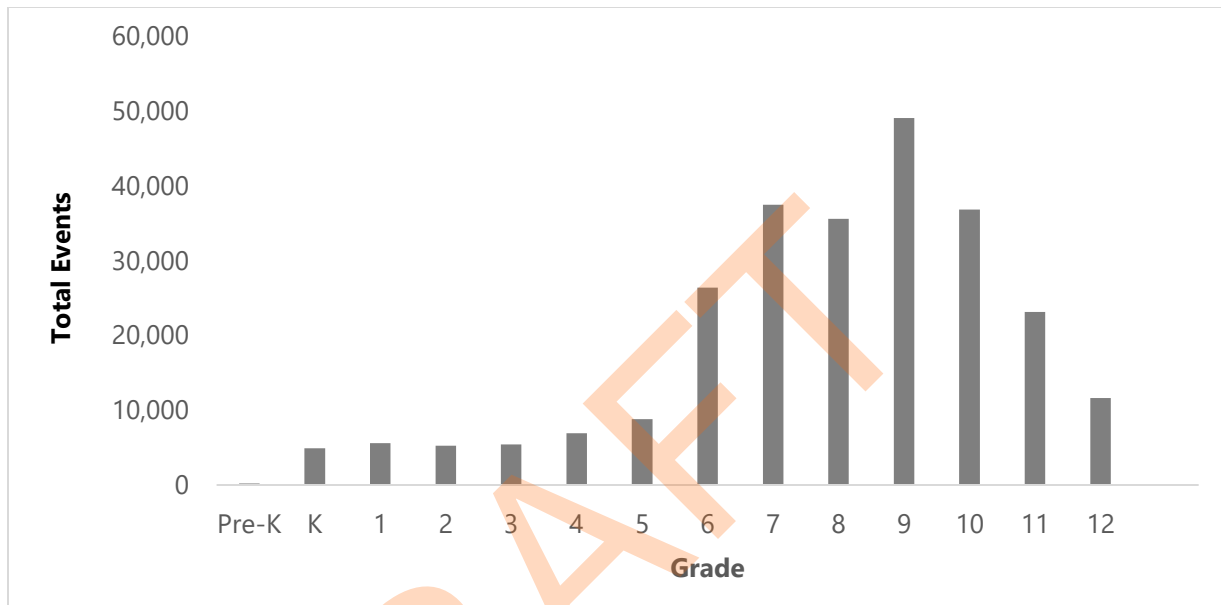
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Student groups that were more likely to have one or more behavior events were those that were black (2.3 times greater), male (1.9), economically disadvantaged (1.6), or eligible for IEPs (1.2).

Demographic Groups. Table 2.3 shows the rate at which students from different demographic groups had at least one behavior event compared with all other students in the state. Student groups that were more likely to have higher rates of behavior events were those that were black (2.3 times greater), male (1.9), economically disadvantaged (1.6), or eligible for IEPs (1.2). [c][d]

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[c] Students are considered economically disadvantaged if they qualify for the federal free or reduced-priced lunch program based on their family income. Students in Kentucky are eligible for IEPs based on identification in one or more of many disability types. Appendix D shows that disproportionality rates vary among disability types. Students identified with emotional behavior disorders (EBD) had behavior events at over 5 times the rate of students without an IEP, whereas students with autism were less likely than students without an IEP to have a behavior event.

[d] Disproportionality for each of the groups discussed in this section is greater when all behavior events are considered, rather than the count of students who experienced each event at least once. For example, when repeat events are included, disproportionality for economically disadvantaged students increases from 1.6 to 2.0.

Table 2.3
Rate Of One Or More Behavior Events
By Demographic Group, Compared With Students Not In
That Group, 2024

Demographic	Ratio Of Behavior Events Compared With Other Students
Male	1.9
Black	2.3
Hispanic	1.0
Economically disadvantaged	1.6
IEP	1.2

Note: Only Students from A1 schools were included in the calculation of each disproportionality score. See Appendix D for methods used to calculate ratios.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education

Disproportional rates of behavior violations or disciplinary consequences vary among districts. Rates of disproportionality in some districts are below state rates, but are much higher in others.

Appendix D provides disproportionality data on disciplinary consequences. Appendix E shows that disproportional rates of behavior violations or disciplinary consequences vary among districts; disproportionality rates in some districts are below state rates, but are much higher in others.

Comparing Behavior-related Challenges In Districts And Schools

This chapter analyzes behavior events in districts and schools relative to student membership.

The number of behavior events for each district and school is reported annually on KDE's school and district report cards. Due to differences in student membership and reporting practices among districts, these numbers alone do not indicate the degree to which student behavior events vary among districts and schools, relative to student membership. This chapter analyzes behavior events in districts and schools relative to student membership.

Because of local differences, discussed in Chapter 1, in the thresholds for entering behavior events into the student information system, OEA urges caution in the use of behavior event rates alone to draw conclusions about the relative degree of challenge associated with student behavior in particular districts or schools.

Because of local differences, discussed in Chapter 1, in the thresholds for entering behavior events into the student information system, OEA urges caution in the use of behavior event rates alone to draw conclusions about the relative degree of challenge associated with student behavior in particular districts or schools. After showing differences among districts and schools in event rate data, the chapter will use teacher and student survey data to identify the number of districts and schools in which multiple sources of data indicate behavioral challenges.

Behavior Event Rates By District

Behavior events as a percent of students ranged broadly among districts, from a low of 2 percent to a high of 37 percent. As behavior event rates in districts and school increase, so, on average, do the percentages of students who are economically disadvantaged or non-white students.

As shown in Figure 2.B, percentages of students with one or more behavior events ranged broadly among districts, from a low of 2 percent to a high of 37. Appendix F shows that, as behavior event rates increase in districts and schools, so, on average, do the percentages of students who are economically disadvantaged and the percentage of students who are not white.

Figure 2.B
Percentage of Students With One or More Behavior Event
By District, 2024
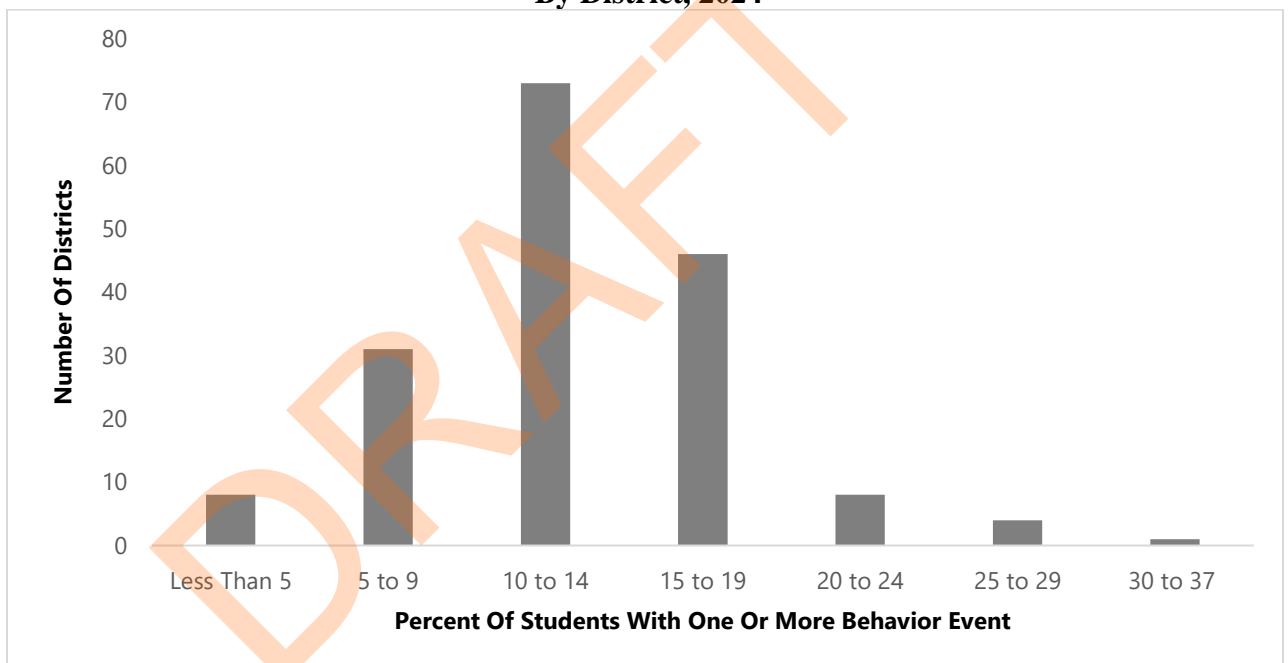
Note: These rates do not include students enrolled in alternative schools or other non-A1 schools.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Behavior Event Rates By School

Behavior event rates ranged from 0 percent to a high of 34 percent in pre-K through 5th grade range.

As shown in Figure 2.C behavior event rates for students in pre-k through 5th range among schools but are mostly under 5 percent. Rates range from a low of 0 percent to a high of 34 percent. Relative to middle and high schools, elementary schools had relatively low percentages of students with a behavior event.

Figure 2.C
Percent Of A1 Schools By Range
Of Pre-kindergarten Through 5th Grade Students
With One Or More Behavior Event, 2024
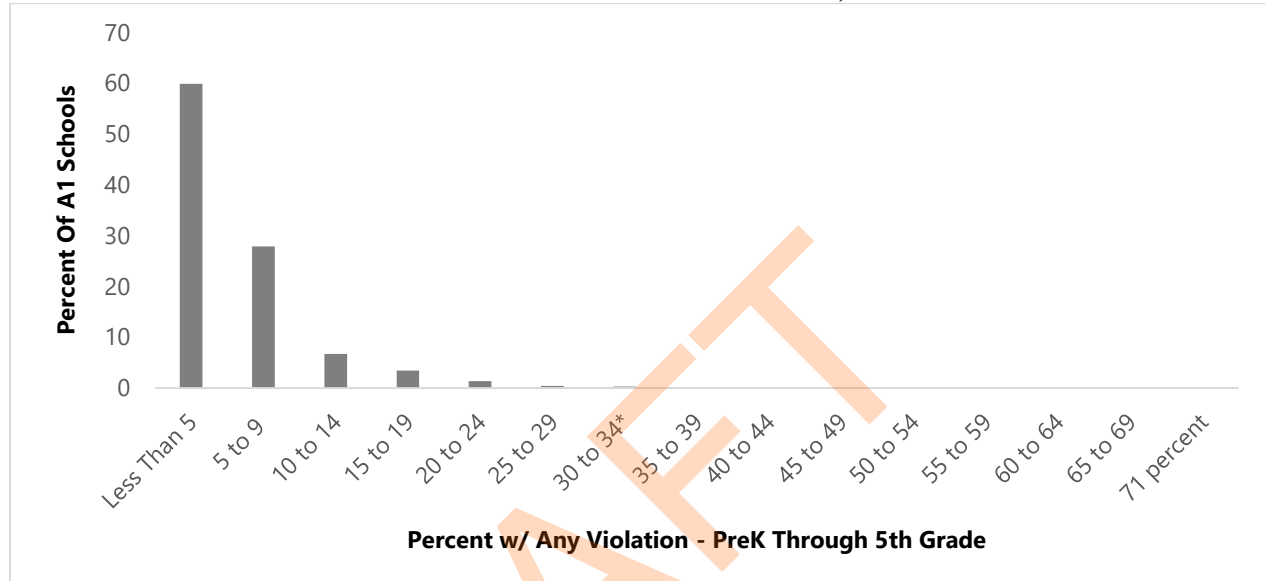
Note: Schools shown in this figure include elementary schools as well as other school configurations enrolling pre-
through 5th grade students. Percentages are calculated based on behavior events and membership of students in
those grades.
*There was one school in the 30 to 34 percent range that is not showing up on the figure.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education

The relatively lower rates of behavior events of students in pre-k through 5th grades do not necessarily indicate those schools are experiencing fewer behavior challenges.

As will be discussed later in this chapter, the relatively lower behavior event rates of students in pre-k through 5th grades do not necessarily indicate that elementary schools are experiencing fewer behavior challenges. Elementary school principals were slightly more likely than other principals to indicate major or extreme behavior challenges in their schools. Because elementary schools are less likely than middle and high schools to remove students from a class or the school as a consequence of a behavior, many behavior challenges may not be indicated in the data.[e]

Schools with 6th through 8th grade students had the broadest range of students with a behavior event, from a low of 0 percent up to 71 percent. Schools with 9th through 12th grade students ranged from 2 percent up to 66 percent of students with at least one behavior event.

As shown in Figure 2.D and 2.E, the range of students with one or more behavior events among schools is much greater through the middle and upper grades. The percentages of 6th through 8th grade students with one or more behavior events ranges among schools from a low of 0 percent to a high of approximately 71 percent. Percentages of 9th through 12th grade with one or more behavior events ranges among schools from 2 percent to 66 percent.

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[e] Unless they are law violations, behaviors entered in the system are only counted as events if they result in a state resolutions such as in-school removal, suspension, or expulsion.

Figure 2.D
Percent Of A1 Schools By Range
Of 6th Through 8th Grade Students
With One Or More Behavior Event, 2024
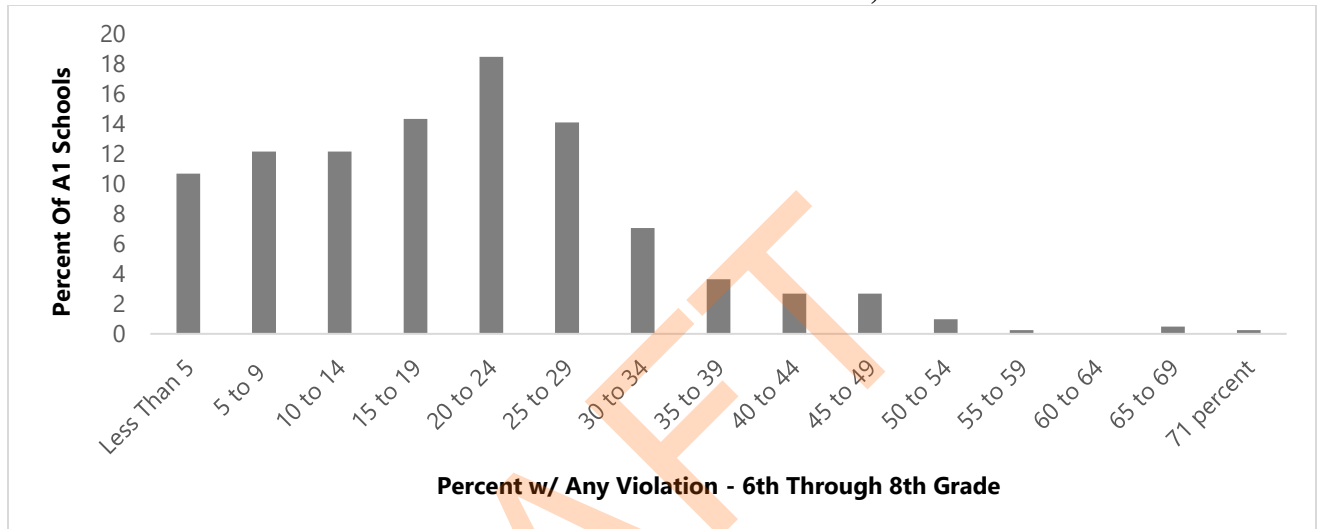
Note: Schools shown in this figure include middle schools as well as other school configurations enrolling 6th through 8th grade students. Percentages are calculated based on behavior events and membership of students in those grades.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education

Figure 2.E
Percent Of A1 Schools By Range
Of 9th Through 12th Grade Students
With One Or More Behavior Event, 2024
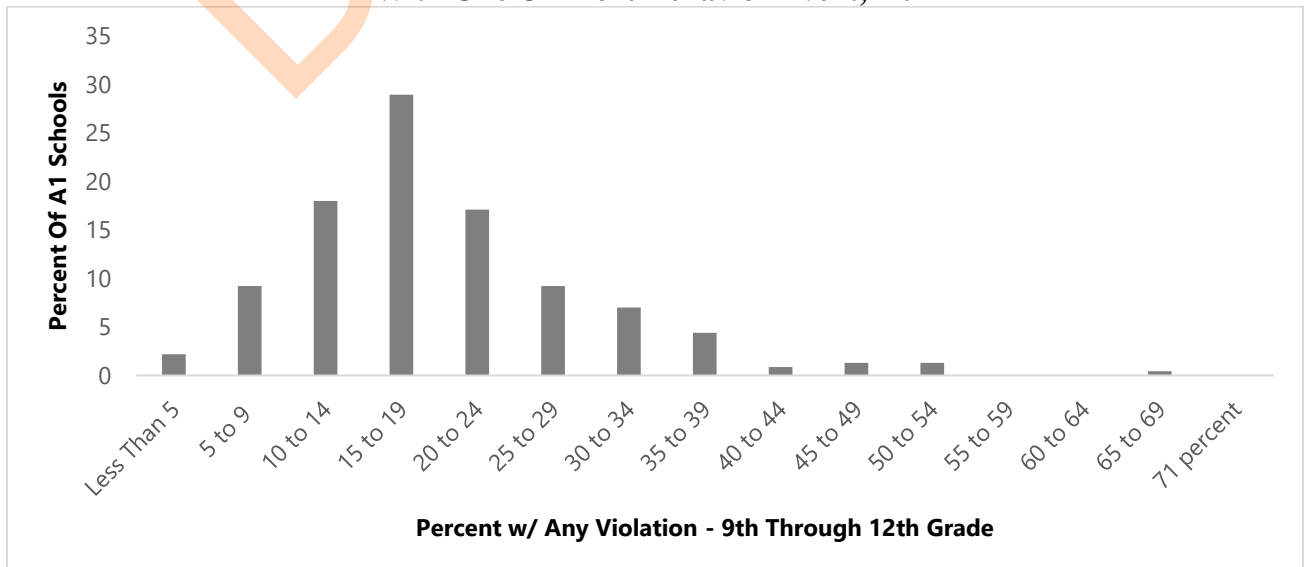
Note: Schools shown in this figure include high schools as well as other school configurations enrolling 9th through 12th grade students. Percentages are calculated based on behavior events and membership of students in those grades.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education

Association Of Behavior Event And Teachers' And Students' Descriptions Of Discipline-Related Challenges

Behavior event rate data is associated with the degree of challenge reported by educators and students from survey data. On average, as district behavior event rates increase, so do the percentages of students and teachers reporting unfavorably on student behavior-related issues.

As shown in Appendix G, the degree of behavioral challenges indicated by behavior event rate data is generally associated with the degree of challenge reported by educators on KDE's biennial educator working conditions survey and by students as reported on KDE's annual climate and safety survey. On average, as district behavior event rates increase so do the percentages of students and teachers reporting unfavorably on student behavior-related issues.

Appendix G also show substantial variation, however, among districts with similar behavior event rates in what is reported about behavior by teachers and students.

Table 2.4 illustrates examples of two districts in which behavior event data contrasts with teacher and student survey data. The examples show that caution should be used in assuming behavior event rates alone reflect the level of behavior challenges experienced by educators and students.

Table 2.4 illustrates examples of two districts in which behavior event data contrasts with teacher and student survey data. District A has high rates of student behavior violations but teachers' reports of student misconduct and students' reports about disrespectful relationships are low relative to others in the state. District B has a low rate of behavior events compared with other districts but high rates of unfavorable survey responses from teachers and students. The cause of the discrepancy in these two districts is not clear from the data. The examples show, however, that caution should be used in assuming that behavior event rates alone reflect behavior challenges experienced by educators and students.

OEA site visit data indicated a number of factors that may explain discrepancies between event rate data and survey data from teachers and students.

As noted in Chapter 1, OEA site visit data indicated a number of factors that may explain discrepancies between event rate data and survey data from teachers and students. For example, schools and districts differ in the thresholds used to determine when a behavior event merits a consequence and reporting in the student information system. Also, the magnitude of certain individual events—such as the classroom clears that are discussed later in this chapter—can have a large impact on teachers and students, beyond what is captured in the data.

Table 2.4
Examples Of Districts With Contrasting Data
From Behavior Events, Teacher Survey, And Student Survey

	Source Of Data Related To Student Behavior Challenges		
	Behavior Events Entered Into Student Information System	Educator Working Conditions Survey	Student Climate And Safety Survey
	Student Behavior Event Rate	Educators' Reporting Student Misconduct Disrupts Learning	Students Reporting Disrespectful Relationships Among Students
District A	High	Low	Low
District B	Low	High	High

Note: As explained in Appendix F, OEA places districts in categories ranging from lowest to low, average, high, and highest based on how far they are from the mean on a particular metrics. As shown in this table, categories were calculated for student event rate data; educators' responses on survey questions; and students' responses on survey questions.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education

Caution In Use of Behavior Event Rate Data Alone To Draw Conclusions About Individual Districts Or Schools

OEA combines student event rate data, teacher survey data, and student survey data to identify the proportion of districts and schools that are experiencing behavior challenges by multiple indicators. These proportions are shown in Appendix G.

For reasons described in Chapter 1 and illustrated in the example provided above, OEA urges caution in use of behavior event rate data alone to draw conclusions about individual districts or schools. In some districts and schools, all three sources of data shown in Table 2.4—student event rate data; teacher survey data' and student survey data—indicate substantial behavior challenges relative to others in the state. Appendix G shows the percentage of districts and schools, by level, in which all three sources of data indicate a higher degree of behavior-related challenges.

Appendix H shows the category, for each Kentucky district, of event rate data and data on individual teacher and student survey data responses.

Appendix H shows the category, for each Kentucky district, of event rate data and data on individual teacher and student survey questions.

Principals' Reports Of Behavior-Related Challenges, 2025

Principals responses to OEA's 2025 student discipline survey suggest that, overall, student behavior is not presenting a major challenge in most schools.

OEA's 2025 survey of A1 school principals asked principals to report the level of challenge related to student behavior in four categories—teaching and learning; staff morale; safety; and school resources. Principals' responses on that survey also indicate that, overall, student behavior is not presenting a major challenge in most schools.

Almost 1 in 10 principals did, however, report major or extreme problems associated with student learning or staff morale. This suggests that at least 100 Kentucky schools are experiencing major or extreme behavior-related challenges.

As shown in Figure 2.F, a minority of principals reported major or extreme problems in any category, and, with the exception of school resources, just over one third of principals reported even moderate problems. Related to student behavior, principals were most likely to report student-behavior related problems associated with school resources and least likely to report problems associated with school safety. Three percent of principals reported major or extreme problems related to school safety and 14 percent reported moderate problems.[f]

**Figure 2.F
Percent Of Kentucky Principals Reporting
Discipline-Related Problems, 2025**
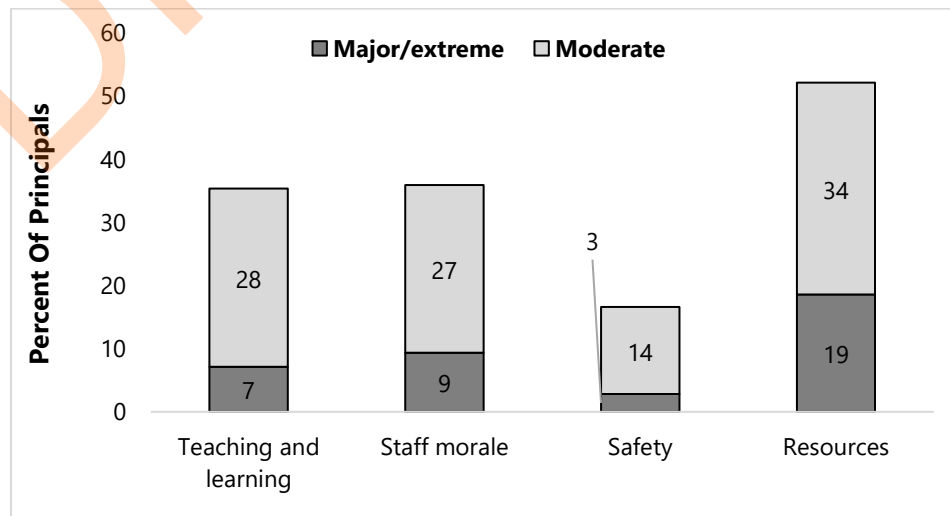
Source: OEA survey of A1 principals, 2025.

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[f] Teacher survey data from 2024 indicate that 82 percent of teachers report that the school environment is "quite" or "extremely" safe, compared with 99 percent of principals.

It should be noted, however, that principals' reports of behavior-related challenges are known to be more positive than teachers' reports. In 2024, one third of educators on KDE's educator working condition survey reported that student misconduct frequently or always disrupts the classroom learning environment. Principals gave favorable answers related to the effects of student misconduct on school learning at more than twice the rate of teachers (30 percent and 69 percent, respectively).

Behavior Events Recorded In Student Information System

Table 2.5 shows the number and proportion of behavior events entered into the student information system in 2024 by category of event and whether those events were law or board violations.

Local board violations accounted for more than 80 percent of total violations in 2024. These included the most common categories of behavior violations which were disorderly, disrespectful, or disruptive behavior (27.3 percent); tardiness and other attendance issues (15.9 percent) and fighting (13.1 percent). Note that personal electronic device violations (cell phones) are contained within the "other" board violation category and were 3 percent of all violations.

Law violations accounted for approximately 19 percent of all violations in 2024, with bullying/harassment and vapes/other tobacco-related violations accounting for the majority of law violations (7 percent and 6.2 percent, respectively).

More serious events such as those involving drugs, assault or violence weapons and alcohol are a small minority of all events. The magnitude of some events is not captured by their rate of occurrence in cases when the events are potentially dangerous for others. For example, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, while events involving assault or violence (6,800) or weapons (995) were a relatively small proportion of all behavior events, the magnitude of their impact is potentially much greater. As one principal noted on the OEA survey, "while the overall numbers (of physically dangerous incidents), seem low it leaves students and staff feeling unsafe."

Table 2.5
Total Local Board And Law Violations
By Violation Type For All Grades And All School Types, 2024

Law Violation Type	Count	Percent of All Violations
Bullying/Harassment	18,055	7.0
Vapes/other tobacco*	16,035	6.2
Drugs	6,817	2.6
Violence (includes threats and assaults)	6,800	2.6
Weapon	995	0.4
Alcohol	485	0.2
Total Law Violations	**49,187**	**19.1**

Board Violation Type	Count	Percent of All Violations
Disorderly, Disrespectful, Disruptive	70,256	27.3
Attendance-Tardiness, Skipping	40,938	15.9
Fighting	33,674	13.1
Other	20,078	7.8
Insubordination	15,849	6.2
No State Violation**	13,899	5.4
Profanity or Vulgarity	13,409	5.21
Total Board Violations	**208,103**	**80.9**

All Violations	**257,290**	**100.0**

*Most tobacco events were vapes. However, vape events are present in the drug violation category as well. Of the nearly 16,000 vapes recorded in Kentucky schools in 2024, most were nicotine vapes (81.6 percent), followed by THC vapes (11.6 percent), and non-nicotine vapes (6.8 percent). Most (65.6 percent) were at the high school level, followed by 31.4 percent at the middle school level and 3.0 percent at the elementary level.
** "No State Violation" is an actual event code used in the Safe Schools data.
Note: Sums may not total due to rounding. Behavior events include all law violations and all board violations that resulted in a serious consequence as determined by KDE. These include expulsions, removal to an alternative program, suspensions, or in school removals.
Source: Staff analysis conducted on data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Appendix I contains additional information about behavior events including differences by grade levels and the location of the behavior events. Appendix C shows the specific types of events included in each of the broad categories shown in Table 2.5.

Appendix I contains additional information about behavior events including differences by grade levels and locations of events, the majority of which (more than 60 percent) happen in the classroom. Appendix C shows the specific types of events included in each of the broad categories shown in the table.

Insights From OEA Principal Survey Data

OEA surveyed school principals to determine whether the challenges presented by specific behaviors was proportional to their presence in the Safe Schools data.

OEA surveyed school principals to determine whether the challenges presented by specific behaviors was proportional to their presence in the data. In addition to behavior categories present in the data, the OEA survey included questions on

behaviors that are not included as behavior codes in the safe school data but were commonly reported as challenging by principals and teachers in OEA site visit schools—student apathy, and classroom disruptions caused by difficulty of individual students to regulate extreme behavior (such as screaming, throwing objects, overturning furniture.)

Figures 2.G, 2.H, and 2.I show the degree of problem associated with particular behaviors as reported by Kentucky principals.

They show that classroom disruptions caused by difficultly of students to regulate extreme behavior is a top concern of elementary principals;

student apathy/engagement is among the top problems at every school level; and

at the middle and high school levels, challenges associated with vapes and cell phones are much greater than what is indicated in the safe schools data.

Figures 2G, 2H, and 2I show the degree of problem reported by principals in elementary, middle, and high schools. Taken together, these figures illustrate challenges that may not be clear in the safe school data:

- Classroom disruption caused by difficulty of students to regulate extreme behavior such as throwing, overturning furniture, and screaming was the behavior most frequently reported as a major or extreme challenge by elementary school principals. These challenges are described in additional detail in Chapter 4.

- Student apathy/disengagement is among the top problems at every school level.

- At the middle and high school levels, challenges associated with vapes and cell phones are much greater than what is indicated by SSD behavior events.

- Weapons, drugs, and violence is a major concern for a small minority of principals at any level, though elementary school principals are more likely than middle and high school principals to report problems with student-to-staff violence. Twenty percent of elementary school principals reported at least moderate challenges with student-to-staff violence and 5 percent reported major or extreme challenges.

Figure 2.G
Degree Of Problem Posed By Student Behaviors
As Reported By Elementary School Principals, 2025
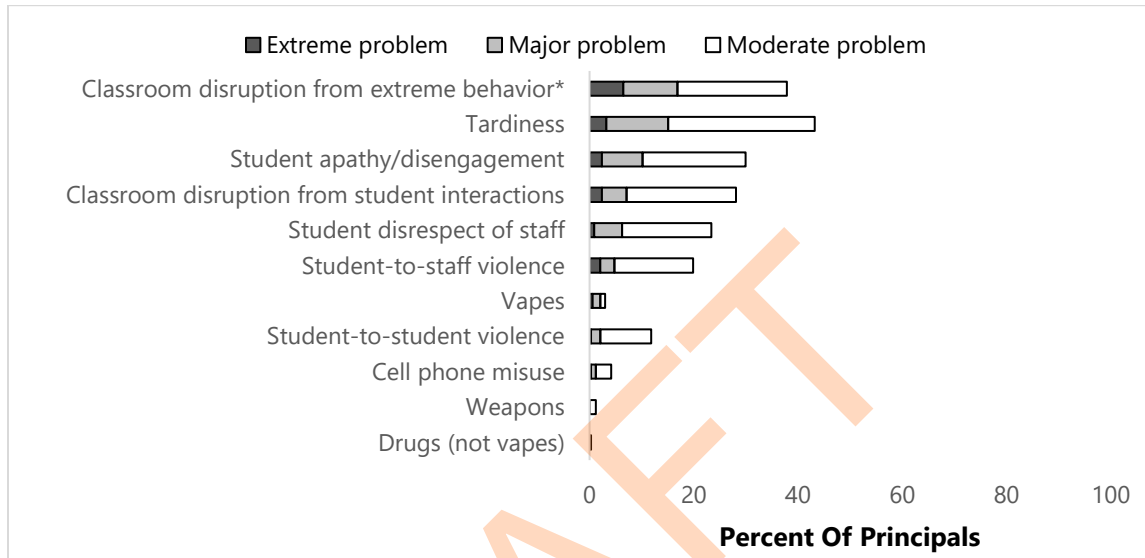
Note: The percentage of principals indicating a minor or little/no problem are not reported in the table. These comprised the majority of responses in most categories.
*Extreme behavior on the survey was cited as throwing objects, overturning furniture, and screaming
Source: OEA survey of A1 principals, 2025.

Figure 2.H
Degree Of Problem Posed By Student Behaviors
As Reported By Middle School Principals, 2025
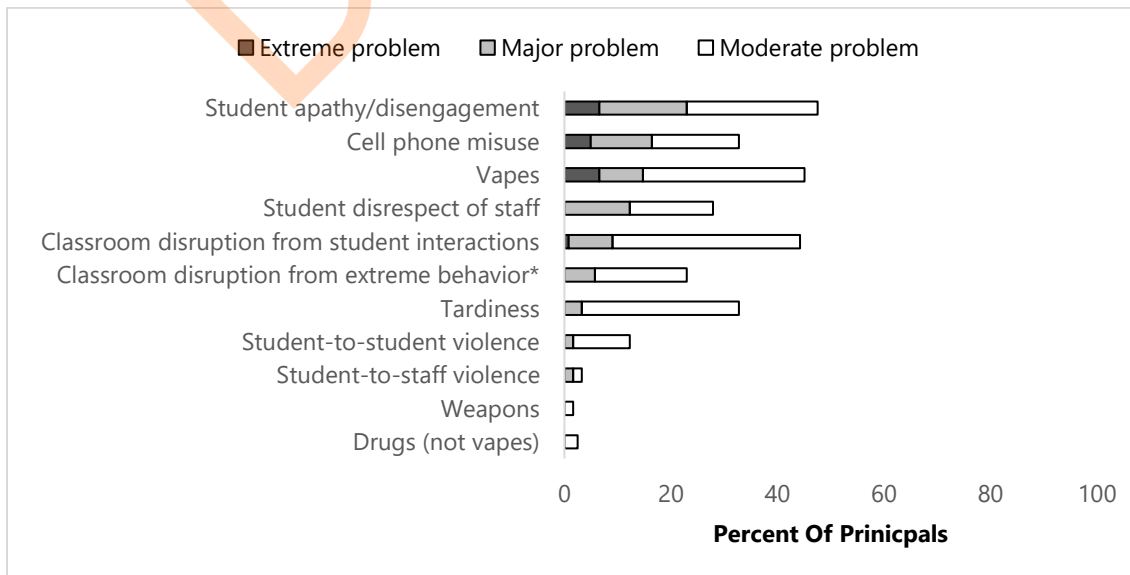
Note: The percentage of principals indicating a minor or little/no problem are not reported in the table. These comprised the majority of responses in most categories.
*Extreme behavior on the survey was cited as throwing objects, overturning furniture, and screaming
Source: OEA survey of A1 principals, 2025.

Figure 2.I
Degree Of Problem Posed By Student Behaviors
As Reported By High School Principals, 2025
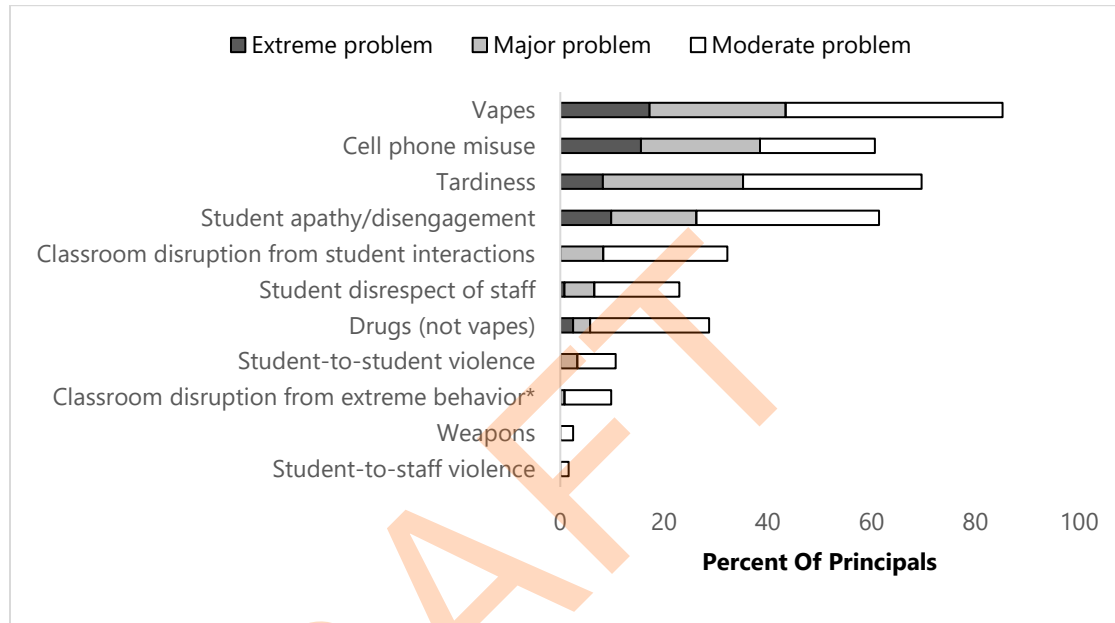
Note: The percentage of principals indicating a minor or little/no problem are not reported in the table. These comprised the majority of responses in most categories. *Extreme behavior on the survey was cited as throwing objects, overturning furniture, and screaming
Source: OEA survey of A1 principals, 2025.

Chapter 3

Consequences For Severe And Persistent Behaviors In Kentucky Schools

Student discipline is primarily locally controlled but the General Assembly requires local boards to adopt policies to address unlawful weapons, dangerous threats, assaults, drugs, and chronically disruptive students.

Although student discipline is primarily a matter of local control in the commonwealth, the General Assembly has given statutory direction to local boards in addressing dangerous or chronically disruptive behaviors. It has required local boards to adopt policies requiring expulsion or alternative placement for unlawful weapons and dangerous threats; adopt policies for assaults and drug possession that may include expulsion; and adopt policies permitting principals to implement procedures for removing students from classrooms in which they have been chronically disruptive. [a]

The minority of weapons, threats, assaults, and prescription drug and controlled substances behavior incidents result in expulsion or alternative placement.

The chapter shows that the minority of weapons and threats violations—including handguns—result in expulsion or alternative placement. It is unclear, however, from the data (with the exception of firearms) what proportion of the events analyzed would meet the criteria for expulsion identified in statute. The chapter also shows that the small minority of assaults—even the most dangerous—and cases of drug possession for sale resulted in expulsion or alternative placement.

About one-third of schools have procedures for removing chronically disruptive students from class; as a consequence for chronic disruption, suspension is most often used, though many other options are common.

Related to chronically disruptive students, the chapter shows that about one third of schools have implemented procedures for removing these students from the class in which they are disruptive. Schools most often suspend students as a result of chronic disruption, though they also use other options, such as placement in an alternative school or in virtual education. In some districts and schools, principals and teachers express frustration with what they feel is lack of administrator support in ensuring that staff are supported in holding students accountable for following the district or school rules.

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[a] As noted in Chapter 1, statute also addresses serious behaviors on transportation systems. Analysis of behaviors on the transportation system were beyond the scope of this report.

Dangerous Or Extreme Behaviors Addressed In Statute

Table 3.1 shows behaviors cited by KRS 158.150 for inclusion in local board policies, along with required or permitted consequences. Local boards are required to adopt policies requiring expulsion when the board determines that a student has brought an unlawful weapon on school property or a student makes a threat that poses a danger. Expulsions are permitted for drugs and assault. The statute also permits students to be placed in an alternative program or setting, including virtual, in lieu of expulsion.

Table 3.1
Expulsions Required Or Permitted In Local Policies Per KRS 158.150*

Resolution	Behavior	Description
Required 12-month expulsion or alternative placement within the district.	Threats	Threats determined by a local board to pose a danger to the well-being of students, faculty, or staff
	Weapons	Weapons determined by a local board to be unlawful on school property
Expulsion permitted but not required.	Drugs	Possessed prescription drugs or controlled substances for the purpose of sale or distribution at a school
	Assault	Physically assaulted or battered or abused educational personnel other students at a school or school function or off school property and the incident is likely to substantially disrupt the educational process

* This table outlines behaviors that are analyzed in this chapter. The statute also permits suspension or expulsion for willful disobedience or defiance of the authority of the teachers or administrators, use of profanity or vulgarity, stealing or destruction or defacing of school property or personal property of students, or other incorrigible bad conduct on school property, as well as off school property at school-sponsored activities.
Source: Staff analysis of Kentucky Revised Statutes.

Bullying, Harassment, and Vapes. Statutes also provides direction for identifying and addressing behaviors related to bullying and nicotine vapor products (vapes) and for educating and supporting affected students. These statutes require that local board policies address both behaviors, but do not require specific consequences for students with those behavior violations. [b] Resolutions for bullying and harassment are reported in Appendix J. Resolutions for vapes, along with some challenges identified by principals related to vapes are in Appendix K.

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[b] KRS 150.148 addresses required procedures for reporting and investigating of bullying and harassment events; for protecting complainants; and informing students, parents, and staff about policies and procedures. KRS 158.149 requires local boards to adopt policies that prohibit the use of tobacco products, alternative nicotine products, and vapor products. Required elements include prevention and cessation efforts for affected students and enforcement of policies, and penalties for violation of the policy.

Methods For Analyzing Consequences

Resolutions are actions taken to address behaviors.

For behavior events entered into the Safe Schools Data (SSD) in the student information system, administrators must enter actions taken to address the behavior. Within the data, these are indicated as "resolutions." Administrators may indicate one of the state resolution codes defined by KDE or describe local action taken. Examples of a local resolution might be loss of privileges or conference with a parent.

Table 3.2 shows statutorily-required consequences to be included in local board policies for unlawful weapons and dangerous threats and additional resolutions.

Table 3.2 shows the KDE-defined state resolution codes, separated into those that meet statutorily-required consequences for inclusion in local board policies for unlawful weapons and dangerous threats, and additional resolutions. Note that Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES) permits a school to remove a student with an IEP to an alternative location for up to 45 days. While this may not meet the statutory requirement for a 12-month removal, it is included as a resolution that meets the statutory definition in that it might represent the maximum allowable time that a student with an IEP can be removed.

Table 3.2
KDE-Defined Resolution Codes In Student Information System

Resolutions Meeting Statutory Requirements For Unlawful Weapons And Dangerous Threats	
Expulsion*	The removal of a student from school for disciplinary reasons that result in withdrawal of the student from the school of attendance. Criteria for expulsion are defined and set by the local board of education. Students may be expelled with or without arrangements made for the provision of educational services.
In-District Removal (INDR)	A removal from the student's regular school to an off-site alternative program or another school for disciplinary purposes with the student continuing to receive educational and IEP services and support. Students must remain under direct supervision of district personnel.
Interim Alternative Educational Settings (IAES)**	IAES removes students with disabilities from their current educational setting to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting under special circumstances, and only for specific reasons, including misconduct involving weapons, illegal drugs or controlled substances, or if their presence poses a risk of harm to the student or others. IAES removals may last for up to 45 school days without regard to whether the behavior was a manifestation of the student's disability. The IAES educational setting is determined by the student's ARC.
Additional Resolutions	
Out-of-School Suspension	A student was removed from the regular classroom and from school for a specified duration of time.
In-School Removal (INSR)	A removal from the student's regular educational classroom or setting for disciplinary purposes and to another program or setting within the same school. May include a specifically designated and staffed detention room or other in-school settings outside of the classroom, such as the principal's office.
Restraint or seclusion	Restraint means a personal restriction that immobilizes or reduces the student's movement. Seclusion means the involuntary confinement of a student, not including classroom timeout, supervised in-school detentions, or out-of-school suspensions.

*Expulsion can be noted with our without services; only 9 of 154 expulsions in 2024 were without services.
**While IAES in theory should result in long-term removal from the school, staff analysis of SSD indicates that 88 percent of IAES events in 2024 had a resolution length of one day. It is not clear from the SSD whether students were ultimately removed to an alternative location for more than one day.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Appendix L shows that most behavior events resulted in in-school removal, with suspension being the next most common. Expulsion is rare with only 154 expelled students in 2024.

As shown in Appendix L, the overwhelming majority of all behavior events (not just those addressed in this chapter) resulted in-school removal (INSR), with suspension being the next most common. Compared with other resolutions, expulsion is rare; only 154 students were expelled in 2024. Appendix M shows how resolution rates vary among districts and schools.

Students often receive multiple resolutions for a single behavior event. This chapter only includes the final resolution to determine if the final disciplinary resolution met statutorily defined resolutions.

Final Resolutions Reported In This Chapter. Students often received multiple resolution codes for a single behavior event. For instance, a student may receive a suspension before being expelled. For analysis in this chapter, only the final resolution was included to determine if resolutions met statutory requirements. This chapter

does not include behavior events recorded in alternative schools or other non-A1 schools.[c]

KDE combines INSR and INDR in reporting resolutions. Only INDR meets statutorily identified resolutions that should be carried out by local boards.

The KDE 2023-2024 Safe Schools Annual Statistical Report and the School Report Card include summary statistics of behavior incidents by resolution and combines in-school removal and in-district removal. In-district removal meets statutory requirements for expulsion but in-school removal does not. By combining INSR and INDR, it is not possible to determine, based on the numbers of resolutions reported, if schools or districts appear to be applying the statutorily-required resolutions of INDR for certain behaviors. In addition, because IAES should, in theory permit a school to remove a student from the school to alternative location in the district, it would be helpful if this resolution were reported.

Table 3.3 shows the final resolutions for all weapons, all threats, all assaults, all prescription drugs and controlled substances, and prescription drugs and controlled substances for distribution.

Table 3.3 shows the final resolutions for all weapons, all threats, all assaults, all prescription drugs and controlled substances, and all prescription drugs and controlled substances for distribution. Resolutions or specific types of events follow in the chapter. Due to sometimes low numbers of students in each resolution type, the resolutions are combined in into categories. [d]

Table 3.3
Resolutions For All Weapons, All Threats, All Assaults
And All Prescription Drugs And Controlled Substances, 2024

Behavior Event Type	Local	INSR*	Suspension	Expelled	INDR	IAES	Total
All weapons	19.7%	12.5%	58.6%	1.6%	5.1%	2.5%	938
All threats	30.8	22.1	43.4	0.8	2.9	0.0	5,687
All assaults	15.6	8.5	66.2	0.9	8.3	0.4	1,580
All prescription drugs and controlled substances	6.8	6.7	75.7	0.7	9.9	0.3	5,160
Prescription drugs and controlled substances for drug distribution	5.0	3.9	74.9	2.3	11.6	2.3	259

*INSR may also include a small number of restraints or seclusions.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Weapons

Weapons were a small fraction of behavior events in 2024 but present a potentially serious risk to others. Weapons violations have increased by 47 percent from 2019 to 2024.

As noted in Chapter 2, weapons were a small fraction (0.4%) of behavior events in 2024, with fewer than 1,000 instances recorded. However, due to the potentially serious risk to students, school

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[c] While only a small number, students attending A4 schools that enroll preschool or other early grade students are also included. A4 schools are district-operated state-funded preschool programs, including blended preschool/Head start.
[d] Due to student privacy concerns, KDE advises against reporting data in categories that contain fewer than 3 students.

personnel, and others, consequences associated with weapons violations merit analysis. In addition, weapons violations have increased substantially in recent years; from 2019 to 2024 weapons violations increased by 47 percent.

Definitions Of Unlawful Weapons

Weapons on school property are prohibited per KRS 158.150. KRS 527.070 includes firearms, other deadly weapons, destructive devices, or booby trap devices as unlawful weapons on school property and KRS 500.080 defines deadly weapons.

KRS 158.150 prohibits "unlawful possession of weapon on school property" as stated in KRS 527.070.

KRS 527.070 includes "any firearm or other deadly weapon, destructive device, or booby trap device" as unlawful possession of a weapon on school property. Deadly weapons are defined in KRS 500.080 as "(a) a weapon of mass destruction; (b) any weapon from which a shot, readily capable of producing death or other serious physical injury, may be discharged; (c) any knife other than an ordinary pocket knife or hunting knife; (d) billy, nightstick, or club; (e) blackjack or slapjack; (f) nunchaku karate sticks; (g) shuriken or death star; or (h) artificial knuckles made from metal, plastic, or other similar hard material."

Statutes clearly identify some weapons, such as firearms, as unlawful but are somewhat ambiguous about knives, which are the majority of weapons cited in behavior events. KRS 500.080 exempts ordinary pocket and hunting knives.

Knives Are The Majority Of Weapon Events But Their Status As Unlawful Weapons Is Unclear. Taken collectively, the Kentucky statutes cited above clearly identify firearms, weapons of mass destruction, and some lesser-known weapons as unlawful weapons but leave some ambiguity about knives, which, as shown below, are the majority of weapons cited in behavior events. KRS 500.080 exempts ordinary pocket and hunting knives, but it is unclear why these would be less dangerous in a school setting than, for example, a small kitchen knife or a hobby knife.

Prevalence Of Weapon Events

Table 3.4 shows the number of events and resolutions for all weapons and by major weapon categories. Knives were the most common weapon, followed by other objects, while firearms were a small percent. See Appendix N for all weapon types.

Table 3.4 shows numbers of events and resolutions for all weapons and by major weapon categories that are referred to by KRS 158.150. As shown in the table, knives were the most common weapon recorded**,** followed by other objects. Firearms, which were primarily handguns, accounting for a small percent. See Appendix N for all weapon types.

Firearms and knives were most common in middle schools (37.8 percent), followed by high schools (32.6 percent), and elementary schools (29.6 percent).

Resolutions For Weapons Events

Overall, less than 10 percent of resolutions for students with weapons were expelled or alternatively placed.

Overall, less than 10 percent of students with weapon events had resolutions that met statutory requirements of expulsion or removal to an alternative setting within the district (INDR or IAES). The most common resolution for any weapon was suspension. Staff analysis indicates that students were suspended for bringing weapons for a median number of three days.

With the exception of firearms, it is unclear from the data which weapons meet the statutorily identified definitions of unlawful weapon.

It is unclear in the data which of the weapons, other than firearms, meet the statutory definitions of an unlawful weapon. While knives are the majority of weapons recorded in weapon events, some of them may meet statutory exemptions because they are common pocket or hunting knives. Most students who brought a large knife were suspended with only 12.1 percent removed through expulsion, INDR, or IAES.[e]

Table 3.4
Resolutions For Weapons And Major Weapon Categories, 2024

Behavior event type	Local	INSR* or suspension	Expelled, INDR, or IAES	Total
Large knife	10.2%	77.7%	12.1%	256
Small knife	23.8	73.4	2.9	244
Firearms	14.8	40.7	44.4	27
Other object	34.8	63.2	1.9	155
All weapons**	19.7	71.1	9.2	938

*INSR may also include a small number of restraints or seclusions.
** Total represents all weapons including weapon categories not shown due to low numbers, including blunt objects (17), destructive devices (2), and multiple weapons (8).
Note: Large knife refers to knives with blade lengths of 2.5 inches or greater. Small knife refers to knives with blade lengths of less than 2.5 inches. Destructive devices include bombs, grenades, etc.
Note: Resolution percentages may not sum due to rounding.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Fewer than half of students with firearms were removed through expulsion, INDR, or IAES in 2024.

Firearms do, however, clearly meet the statutory definition of unlawful weapon. In 2024, less than half of the 27 students who brought in firearms (44.4 percent) were removed through expulsion, INDR, or IAES, as shown in Table 3.5. Local resolutions were indicated for 14.8 percent of firearm events.

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[e] Resolutions coded with local resolutions were primarily conference with the student or parent or a phone call to the parent or guardian for large knives (48.7 percent) and small knives (41.2 percent). Resolutions coded to in-school removal were primarily alternative education or placement for large knives (52.9 percent) and small knives (52.9 percent). Half of the instances of handguns with local resolutions were coded by their schools as referral to superintendent for alternative placement.

Table 3.5
Resolutions For Firearms, 2024

Behavior Event Type	Local	INSR*	Suspension	Expelled	INDR	IAES	Total
Firearms	14.8%	0.0%	40.7%	14.8%	11.1%	18.5%	27

*INSR may also include a small number of restraints or seclusions.
Note: Resolution percentages may not sum due to rounding.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Possible Explanations For Failure To Implement Statutorily-Required Resolutions For Weapons

There is no clear relationship between Kentucky statutory definitions of unlawful weapons and weapons recorded in the student information system.

Local boards may have to consider situations in which expelling a student would violate their rights.

As noted above, there is no clear relationship between Kentucky statutory definitions of unlawful weapons and many of the weapons—especially knives—that are recorded in weapons events that are entered into the student information system.

In addition, in 2023 legislative guidance related to KRS 158.150, KDE noted that in some cases expelling students for weapons possession may cause local boards to "violate the constitutional rights of students."[f][g] Analysis of legal precedent on this issue is beyond the scope of the report. It should be noted, however, that the federal Gun Free Schools Act, which requires that states enact statutes requiring expulsions for firearms, also allows districts to make exceptions if those exceptions are documented in writing.[h] In addition, as noted in Chapter 1, local leaders may face a variety of political pressures against exclusionary discipline policies. Local boards thus face conflicting guidance from state law, federal law, legal precedents, and public pressure.

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[f] The Kentucky Department of Education. "2023 Legislative Guidance- Non-Emergency Bills." *Legislative Guidance.* June 12, 2013. Web.

[g] The Office of Attorney General issued OAG 23-02 offered clarification on expulsion, specifically that penalties may not be disproportionately arbitrary or maliciously enforced. The example given is that there is a difference between an 11th grade student and a 1st grade student threatening violence and that expelling the 1st grader may be arbitrarily disproportionate.

[h] Elementary And Secondary Education Act. The KDE guidance reports that KRS 158.150 may be inconsistent with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA). While Section 8561 of ESSA does require state receiving federal funds to have a state law requiring students who bring a firearm to school to be expelled for at least one year, it also requires state law to "allow the chief administering office of a local education agency to modify such expulsion requirement for a student on a case-by-case basis if such modification is in writing."

Recommendation 3.1

Recommendation 3.1.

If it is the intent of the General Assembly that districts receive direct guidance related to weapons that are considered to be unlawful, it may consider amending KRS 158.150 to require the Kentucky Department of Education to collaborate with the Kentucky Center for School Safety and other relevant organizations to identify "unlawful weapons" that require expulsion as relevant to KRS 158.150. These definitions should be included in the Kentucky Department of Education's model discipline policies.

Threats

Definitions Of Threats

KRS 158.150 requires expulsion for threats that the board determines to pose a danger. This report analyzes six categories of threats.

Per KRS 158.150, threats that require expulsion are those having been "determined through clear and convincing evidence to have made threats that pose a danger to the well-being of students, faculty, or staff of the district." The SSD includes several categories of threatening behavior. This report analyzes resolutions for threatening another student or staff; terroristic threatening; bomb, chemical, biological or nuclear threats; and wanton endangerment.

KRS 158.4412 outlines duties for District School Safety Coordinators, including designating a school safety and security threat assessment team.

Threat Assessments. KRS 158.4412 requires districts to appoint an individual to serve as the district's school safety coordinator. In addition, it requires District School Safety Coordinators designate a school safety and security threat assessment team at each school to identify and respond to students exhibiting behavior that may be a threat to school safety or security. The KCSS 2024 Annual Report explains that the threat assessment procedure includes receiving a report of a possible threat; screening the report; gathering information; organizing and analyzing the information; making an assessment; and developing and implementing case management.[i] The Threat Assessment Referral Form allows schools to determine the level of risk based on imminent and early warning signs, risk factors, precipitating events, and stabilizing factors.[j]

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[i] Kentucky Center for School Safety. "2023-2024 Annual Report." KCSS Annual Report. Kentucky Center for School Safety. 2024. Web.
[j] Kentucky Center for School Safety. "Threat of Harm." Web.

Prevalence Of Threats

Threats were about two percent of all behavior events and threatening another student was the most common type of threat followed by terroristic threatening.

Table 3.6 shows the prevalence and resolutions associated with threats. In 2024, almost 5,700 threatening behaviors were recorded in the SSD, comprising about two percent of all behavior events. Threatening another student was the most common type of threat, followed by terroristic threatening. A larger percentage of threat events occurred at the elementary and middle school levels (38.2 percent and 36.9 percent, respectively) than at the high school level (24.5 percent of all threats).

Resolutions For Threats

Few students were removed through expulsion, INDR, or IAES for threats.

Fewer than three percent of all students who threatened another student or staff were removed from their school through expulsion, INDR, or IAES. These removals were the minority of resolutions even for more extreme forms of threat: fewer than 10 percent of students who made terroristic threats were removed through expulsion, INDR, and IAES, and 11.9 percent of students who made bomb threats were removed.

Suspension was the most common resolution for threats.

Suspension was the most common resolution for threats. Students making threats were suspended for a median of 2 days. For 30.8 percent of threat events, students received a local resolution, such as a call to parent or timeout, rather than a state resolution. [k]

Table 3.6
Resolutions For Threats, 2024

Behavior event type	Local	INSR* or suspension	Expelled, INDR, or IAES	Total
Threatening another student	38.0%	60.4%	1.6%	3,221
Threatening staff	31.2	66.0	2.8	857
Terroristic bomb threat	16.7	71.4	11.9	42
Terroristic threat	16.2	75.5	8.2	1,528
Wanton endangerment	8.1	83.8	8.1	37
Total	30.8	65.5	3.7	5,687

*INSR may also include a small number of restraints or seclusions.
**Total represents all threats including those not shown in this table due to low numbers, including terroristic threats of chemical, biological, or nuclear threats (2).
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

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[k] Resolutions coded with local resolutions were primarily a conference with a student or parent or a phone call to the parent or guardian (39.9 percent) and detention or Friday night or Saturday school (11.4 percent), while resolutions coded to INSR were primarily in-school suspension (31.5 percent), removal from the class (11.1 percent), and alternative education placement (10.9 percent).

It is unclear how many reported threats were a danger to others. School administrators consider the context of the threat and determine there is no danger.

It is unclear from the data presented in Table 3.6 how many of the 5,687 threats reported would be considered a danger to staff or students. During OEA site visits, administrators explained that, while they are required to follow up student threats with assessments, and to enter data into the SSD, most are determined not to be dangerous. In one example, a young student threatened to kill a friend if the friend did not give the student money to buy a snack. In that case, it was determined that the young student was repeating language heard commonly among friends and had no history of violence or intent to hurt their friend.

Threats are disruptive to schools and instruction and require administrator's time and school resources to address, even if the threat is not determined to be credible or dangerous.

Even when a threat assessment determines that a threat is unlikely to result in any action by a student, these threats can be extremely disruptive to the life of schools, taking administrators' time and often disrupting instruction. In the case of a bomb threat, many hours of instructional time may be lost. Threat assessments provide just one example of the ways in which student behavior issues consume school resources.

Recommendation 3.2

Recommendation 3.2.

If it is the intent of the General Assembly that districts receive direct guidance related to threats that are considered dangerous, it may consider amending KRS 158.150 to require the Kentucky Department of Education to collaborate with the Kentucky Center for School Safety and other relevant organizations to identify conditions under which threats pose a danger and require expulsion or alternative placement. Guidance should be included in KDE discipline guidelines.

Assaults

While KRS 158.150 does not require a specific resolution for assaults, it signals its intention that assaults be taken seriously by permitting any consequence up through expulsion.

Prevalence Of Assault

Although first degree assault is the most serious, fourth degree assault was the most common form of assault in 2024.

As shown in Table 3.7, behavior events for assault are recorded in one of four categories. 1st degree assault is most serious. In 2024, 1,580 assaults were recorded in the SSD, with 4th degree assault being the most common. By school level, the most assaults occurred in high schools (38.8 percent), followed by middle schools (34.1 percent), elementary schools (25.6 percent), and preschool (1.5 percent).

While relatively few principals reported on OEA's 2025 survey that physical violence from students was a major or extreme problem against staff (3.1 percent) or students (2.1 percent), assault is a serious safety concern and demoralizing for staff and students who experience it. Staff, including safety officers, in over one third of the 12 schools visited for OEA for this study had recently been assaulted by a student.

Resolutions For Assaults

Most students who committed assault were suspended for a median of 3 days.

Of students who committed any assault, 9.6 percent were removed through expulsion, INDR, or IAES. Suspension was the most common resolution for assault, lasting a median of 3 days.

First degree assault is defined as intentionally causing serious physical injury through use of a deadly weapon, dangerous instrument, or wantonly engaging in conduct which causes a grave risk of death.

First Degree Assault. First degree assault is defined by KDE Data Standards Behavior (Safe Schools Data) Data Entry guidance as intentionally causing serious physical injury through use of a deadly weapon or dangerous instrument or through wantonly engaging in conduct which causes a grave risk of death. Schools are instructed to consult with law enforcement or a board attorney before entering 1st degree assault into the SSD.

KRS 158.150 requires expulsion for threats that pose a danger regardless of any actual injury or violence but has no minimum consequences for assault.

Notably, KRS 158.150 requires expulsion for threats that pose a danger, regardless of any actual injury or violence, but does not have any minimum consequences for students who assault others and cause serious physical injury that is a grave risk of death.

Most students who committed first degree assault were suspended, few were placed in alternative school, and none were expelled.

Seven percent of student who committed 1st degree assault were placed in an alternative school within the district and none were expelled. The most common resolution for 1st degree assault was suspension, for a median of 2.7 days, with 0.6 being the minimum number of days suspended.

Of students who committed 1st degree assault, 28.6 percent received a local resolution, which included lunch detention, having a reassigned cafeteria seat, a parent/guardian conference, bus suspension, and mental health conference.[1]

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[1] Resolutions for all assaults coded with local resolutions were primarily a conference with a student or parent or a phone call to the parent or guardian (32.6 percent) and loss of privileges (16.1 percent), while resolutions coded to INSR were primarily in-school suspension (34.9 percent) and timeout (18.6 percent).

Table 3.7
Resolutions For Assaults, 2024

Behavior event type	Local	INSR* or suspension	Expelled, INDR, or IAES	Total
1st degree	28.6%	64.3%	7.1%	42
2nd degree	8.2	78.1	13.7	73
3rd degree	15.9	66.5	17.7	328
4th degree	15.5	77.3	7.2	1,137
All assaults	15.6	74.7	9.7	1,580

*INSR may also include a small number of restraints or seclusions.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

OEA site visits revealed that violent student behavior caused negative effects on staff mental health; a desire to leave the teaching profession or their school; time spent addressing behaviors instead of teaching; and trauma on students and staff.

Effects Of Assaults On Morale Of Teachers And Staff. The Safe Schools Data cannot capture the effects of assaults and other violent student behavior on teachers, school staff, and students. During OEA site visits, many teachers and SROs expressed concerns about the lack of serious consequences assigned to some of the violent and threatening behavior regularly exhibited by students in the school. This resulted in negative effects on staff's mental health; a desire to leave the teaching profession or their school; time spent away from teaching to address misbehavior; trauma of students who witness fighting and violence; and trauma of teachers and students who experience violence from another student, particularly when the student receives little consequence and is physically present in the classroom of the victim soon after the assault.[m]

Some teachers interviewed for the report felt that school and district administrators went to great lengths to protect students from exclusionary discipline but did not protect teachers from student violence.

OEA researchers heard anecdotes of assailants that receiving minimal consequences, even after assaults that resulted in children and adults requiring medical care. Some teachers also felt that, after they had been assaulted by a student, school or district administrators appeared more concerned with protecting the rights of the student or the interests of the school or district than in acknowledging or addressing the teachers' need for safety.

KRS 158.444 requires KDE to establish and maintain a statewide data collection system that reports all incidence of violence or assaults against employees and students. The Safe Schools Data does not include any victim or witness identifiers and it is not possible to determine if students or staff were the subject of a given behavior.

KRS 158.444 Reporting Requirements For Assaults Against School Employees Or Students. KRS 158.444 requires that the KDE establish and maintain a statewide data collection system by which districts shall report all incidents of violence or assault against school employees and students. The Data Standards Behavior (Safe Schools) Data Entry, which is the guide to entering

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[m] The morale of teachers and students may be affected by a variety of behavior events, in addition to assaults. In A1 and A4 schools in 2024, the Safe Schools Data shows that there were 3,348 cases of bullying; 1,363 cases of harassing communications; 6,350 cases of harassment; 3,219 cases of threatening another student, 857 cases of threatening staff; 1,098 cases of verbal abuse; 3,758 cases of fighting student-to-staff; 42 cases of first degree assault; 73 cases of second degree assault; 328 cases of third degree assault; 1,137 cases of fourth degree assault; and 1,281 cases of abuse of a teacher.

behavior events, instructs schools to use features of the software that allow for identification of four roles in behavior events: offender, participant, witness, and victim. However, the 2024 SSD does not include any victims or witnesses and it is therefore not possible to determine if students or staff were the subject of a given behavior.[n][o] The Data Standards Behavior (Safe Schools) Data Entry guide reports that schools should include the relationship to school of each person involved in a behavior event as current student, school employee, or all people, but this information does not currently appear in the Safe Schools Data.

Recommendation 3.3

Recommendation 3.3.

If it is the intent of the General Assembly that incidents of violence against staff, students, or other groups be specifically identified, it may consider amending KRS 158.444 to specify required groups be identified as victims in safe schools data reporting.

Prescription Drugs And Controlled Substances

As reported by principals, drugs do not appear to be a major problem in most schools.

As reported by principals, drugs do not appear to be a major problem in most schools. The OEA Principal Survey revealed that 1.2 percent of principals reported that drugs (other than vapes) were a major or extreme problem.

Prevalence Of Prescription Drugs And Controlled Substances

Nearly all instances of controlled substances were marijuana or THC vapes.

Table 3.8 shows numbers of and resolutions for prescription drugs and controlled substances. Nearly all instances of controlled substances were marijuana or THC vapes. Most behavior events for prescription drugs and controlled substances were at the high school level (74.2 percent), followed by middle school (25.1 percent), with very few in elementary schools (0.7 percent).[p]

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[n] In addition, KDE guidance states that victim is required for Civil Rights Data Collection for harassment events.

[o] The Safe Schools Data does not currently contain any victim information but OEA staff was able to analyze incidents where more than one behavior event were recorded and determined that five cases of assault involved a teacher. Three cases of 3rd degree assault and two cases of 4th degree assault were also coded as fighting student-to-staff or abuse of a teacher.

[p] Prescription drugs includes drugs entered into the Safe Schools Data as prescription drugs. Controlled substances include drugs entered into the Safe Schools Data as marijuana, THC vapes, synthetic drugs, hallucinogens, amphetamines, methamphetamine, cocaine/crack, heroin (opioids), and steroids (anabolic).

Resolutions For Prescription Drugs And Controlled Substances

Students with marijuana and THC vapes were primarily suspended.

Table 3.8 shows resolutions for prescription drugs and controlled substances. Students with marijuana and THC vapes were primarily suspended. Suspensions were for a median of 3 days.[q] Prescription drugs accounted for a very small percent of drugs for which no students were expelled or removed through IAES but more than half were suspended. Suspension was the most common resolution for students who brought for synthetic drugs and other controlled substances.[r] The resolutions for all of these events are shown as a group and also for those events that involved drug distribution.

KRS 158.150 specifies that schools may expel for the sale or distribution of prescription drugs or controlled substances. Only 5.0 percent of the events involving prescription drugs and controlled substances were drug distribution and most resulted in suspension.

Resolutions For Drug Distribution. KRS 158.150 specifies schools may expel for the sale or distribution of prescription drugs or controlled substances. Of the total events involving prescription drugs and controlled substances, only 5.0 percent were for drug distribution; most were for drug possession (62.7 percent) or drug use (32.4 percent). The following analysis includes resolutions for all instances of drug, use, possession, and distribution.

Table 3.8 shows the resolutions for the distribution of prescription drugs and controlled substances. Of the cases of drug distribution, most resulted in suspension, followed by INDR removal, local resolutions, INSR, IAES removal, and expulsion.

Table 3.8
Resolutions For Prescription Drugs And Controlled Substances, 2024

Behavior event type	Local	INSR* or suspension	Expelled, INDR, or IAES	Total
Prescription drugs	17.6%	76.5%	5.9%	68
THC vape	5.7	80.9	13.4	1,846
Marijuana	7.5	83.2	9.3	2,956
Synthetic drug	3.5	86.1	10.4	259
All prescription drugs and controlled substances**	6.8	82.4	10.8	5,160
Prescription drugs and controlled substances for distribution	5.0	78.8	16.2	259

*INSR may also include a small number of restraints or seclusions
**Total represents all prescription drugs and controlled substances including those not shown in this table due to low numbers, including hallucinogens (23), amphetamines (3), methamphetamine (2), cocaine/crack (1), heroin (opioids) (1), and steroids (anabolic) (1).
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

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[q] Students with marijuana were suspended a median of 3.0 days while students with THC vapes were suspended a median of 3.1 days.
[r] Other controlled substances include hallucinogens, amphetamines, methamphetamine, cocaine/crack, heroin (opioids), and steroids (anabolic).

Event And Resolution Rates Of Students With And Without IEPs

As noted in Chapter 2, students with IEPs are only 1.2 times more likely than non-IEP students to experience behavior events. As shown in Appendix O, however, students with IEPs are two times more likely than non-IEP students to have weapon events and about three times more likely than non-IEP students to have threat or assault events. Resolutions for weapons are similar for IEP and non-IEP students. For Threats and assaults, IEP students are one-half and one-third as likely as likely as non-IEP students, respectively, to be removed from the school setting through expulsion, INDR, or IAES.

Implementation Of Chronic Disruption Policies, Practices, And Procedures

Chronic Disruption Legislation.

KRS 158.150 allows principals to remove chronically disruptive students from their classroom, and may place chronically disruptive students in an alternative setting, including virtual.

Through HB of the 2023 regular session, the General Assembly amended KRS 158.150 to include provisions addressing chronically disruptive students. As described in Chapter 1, the legislation gave principals the authority to identify and remove a student from a classroom in which the student had been chronically disruptive as evidenced by being removed three times within a 30-day period. The legislation gave principals the authority to remove the student for the remainder of the school and provide instruction in a variety of settings in virtual. While the statute does not require principals to implement the policy, it requires local boards to include the policy in its code of acceptable behavior and discipline.

Implementation

The OEA principal survey found that one-third of responding principals had policies, procedures, or practices for chronically disruptive students. Of those, nearly half reported their school systematically identifies chronically disruptive students.

The OEA Principal survey found that 35.6 percent of responding principals had policies, procedures, or practices specifically in place for students who have been removed from the same classroom three times within a 30-day period. Of the principals reporting implementation, just under half reported that their school systematically identifies chronically disruptive students while just over half reported that they were able to identify these students, though they were not systematically tracked. [s]

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[s] OEA did not identify any standard and commonly used method to identify chronically disruptive students. Safe Schools data does not provide a method for schools to identify chronically disruptive students, such as a flag. While there is an IC code for disruptive behavior, OEA site visits revealed this was often a catchall code for misbehavior and not all instances of disruptive behavior are

Of principals who reported their schools have chronic disruptive policies, just over half identified between 1 and 5 students as chronically disruptive in 2025 and about one fifth did not identify any students..

Numbers of Students Identified As Chronically Disruptive. As shown in Figure 3.A, principal in implementing schools, just over half reported identifying between 1 and 5 students as chronically disruptive in 2025, while about one fifth reported identifying no chronically disruptive students. Principals in five schools reported identifying more than 15 students with one reporting that 42 students were identified as chronically disruptive.

Figure 3.A
Approximate Number of Students
Identified As Chronically Disruptive
By Schools Implementing Chronic Disruption Policies, 2025
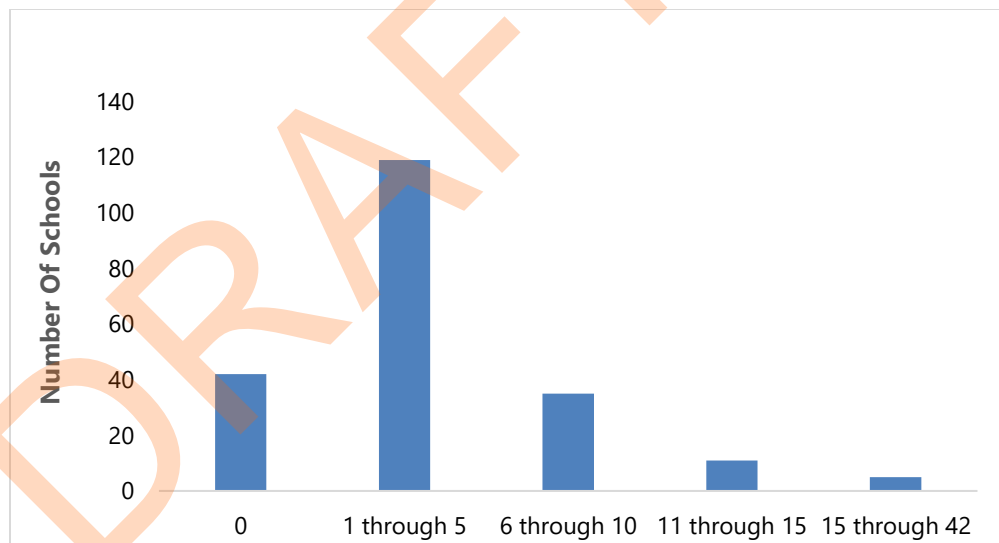
Source: OEA 2025 principal survey

Most principals reported taking disciplinary action for chronically disruptive students at least 75 percent of the time and the most common was out-of-school suspension for more than one day and less than one week.

Most principals (55.7 percent) reported that they took disciplinary action on chronically disruptive students at least 75 percent of the time, with the remaining principals reporting varying, less consistent action for chronically disruptive students, including 8 percent that reported taking no action on students identified as chronically disruptive.

Disciplinary Actions. Disciplinary actions reported by principals to address chronically disruptive students are shown in Table 3.9.

entered into IC. In addition, many codes could represent behaviors that disrupt a classroom, such as disorderly conduct. While the SSD shows that most instances of behavior violations occur in the classroom, the SSD does not specify particular classrooms. Lastly, KRS 158.150 does not specify if the 30-day limit refers to calendar days or school days.

The most common were out-of-school suspension for more than one day but less than one week (65.7 percent); in-school suspension for more than one day but less than one week (54.3 percent); and in-person alternative learning program or classroom located in the school for more than one day but less than one week (21.8 percent).

Table 3.9
School-Level Disciplinary Options For Chronically Disruptive Students, 2025

Option	N/A our school did not use this option	1 day or less	More than 1 day, less than 1 week	Between 1 week and 1 month	More than 1 moth and less than 3 months	3 months or more
Reassigned to a different teacher in the school	58.1%	9.3%	10.5%	4.1%	7.6%	14.0%
Placed in an in-person alternative learning program or classroom located in the school	46.5	12.4	21.8	15.9	8.8	5.9
Placed in an in-person alternative learning program located in the district	54.6	1.1	5.2	13.2	16.7	17.2
Placed in an in-person virtual learning program located in the school	82.8	1.2	4.1	4.1	6.5	4.7
Placed in a virtual learning program at the student's residence	70.6	2.4	1.8	4.7	10.6	14.7
In-school suspension	13.9	20.2	54.3	18.5	4.6	1.7
Out-of-school suspension	8.1	20.3	65.7	17.4	2.3	0.6
Other	76.5	5.9	11.8	0.0	0.0	5.9

Note: Principals could report more than one type of consequence and duration.
Source: OEA 2025 Principal Survey.

Barriers To Implementation

Chapter 4 describes barriers to addressing persistent and severe behaviors generally, which also present challenges to implementing chronic disruption policies.

Though most of the 12 schools visited by OEA for this study were experiencing behavioral challenges, none were implementing procedures for removing chronically disruptive students. Chapter 4 will describe barriers to addressing persistent and severe behaviors generally—lack of alternative placements, and legal restrictions associated with disciplinary removals for students with IEPs. These barriers also present challenges to implementation of chronic disruption policies. For example, one site visit principal noted that the school and district lacked sufficient alternative placement options to remove the many students who would qualify as chronically disruptive in the school. In addition, as Chapter 4 will describe, chronically disruptive students with IEPs have legal

protections on the amount of time they can be removed from the regular classroom.

Lack Of Communication From District Leaders Related To Chronic Disruption. Principals and teachers in most site visit schools were unaware of legislation permitting options to chronic disruption. None of the principals interviewed for the study reported communication from district staff related to implementation of the policy. While KRS 158.150 is a permissive statute that does not require implementation of policies related to chronically disruptive students, it is notable that district staff had not discussed the potential to implement the policy with the principals in site visit schools.

Survey responses also indicated lack of interest or support in some districts for implementation of the policy. One respondent noted, "my district has diminished and minimized that law to the extent that we must call an assistant superintendent to discuss students that we believe to be chronically (disruptive). I believe there are many administrators in the district that do not even know about the law."

Administrative Support For Addressing Student Behavior

KRS 158.150 outlines the responsibility of superintendents and principals to implement the policies and procedures necessary to ensure orderly and safe environments in schools and classrooms. In previous research, OEA has described coordinated action by district administrators, school administrators, teachers, and other school staff in promoting orderly and positive environments and the association of these positive environments with student achievement. [1]

Data analyzed for this report indicate that while most principals and teachers are satisfied with actions taken to promote positive student behavior in their districts or schools, a substantial minority feel inadequately supported.

District Support Of Schools In Addressing Behavior Challenges

On OEA's 2025 principal survey, the majority of principals (57 percent) reported being very or extremely satisfied with the support they received from district staff related to behavioral or discipline challenges at the school and 48 percent reported that district administrators attempted to understand the full range of challenges faced at the school to a great extent.

Principals and teachers in most site visit schools were unaware of legislation permitting options for chronically disruptive students. Though all site visit schools were experiencing behavior challenges, none of the of the 12 site visit principals had received any communication from district administrators about chronic disruption.

KRS 158.150 holds superintendents and principals responsible for implementing policies and procedures to ensure orderly and safe school environments. However, a substantial minority of principals and teachers do not feel that their leaders understand and address their challenges .

A substantial minority of principals reported dissatisfaction with the role of district staff in supporting principals to address behavioral challenges, however. Fifteen percent of principals reported that they were somewhat or extremely dissatisfied (10 percent and 5 percent respectively) with the support they received and 13 percent reported that district staff made little or no attempt to understand behavior challenges at the school.[t]

Principal Support Of School Discipline And Teachers

On the 2024 KDE teacher working conditions survey, the majority of teachers reported favorably on questions relevant to principals' implementation of the school code of conduct. About two thirds of teachers reported that principals were quite or extremely effective at developing school rules to facilitate student learning (42 percent and 22 percent, respectively) and about two thirds reported that principals supported teachers' classroom management efforts quite or extremely well (39 percent and 28 percent, respectively).

In contrast, 14 percent of teachers reported that principals were only slightly or not at all effective at developing school rules (10 percent and 4 percent respectively) and 13 percent reported that principals supported teachers' classroom management efforts slightly or not at all well.

Administrator And Staff Tension Over Consequences For Student Misconduct In Some Schools

OEA site visits and the OEA principal survey found that district administrators or district restrictions could impede use of alternative placements for severely or persistently disruptive students.

Frustration Of School Staff With Lack of District Support. Staff in many site visit schools expressed frustration at the reluctance of district administrators to assist the school with alternative placements for severely or persistently disruptive students. On the OEA principal survey, 19 percent of principals identified district restrictions against alternative school placement as a major or severe barrier to addressing behavior challenges.

OEA site visits revealed that a small number of extremely disruptive students could require a large proportion of administrative resources and create unsafe situations for others.

Principals, administrative staff, SROs, and teachers in many site visit schools noted that a small number of extremely disruptive students consumed a large proportion of administrative resources and sometimes created unsafe situations for other students and staff. This was especially true for a few site visit schools located in neighborhoods in which violent conflicts among students were common outside of school. As a result of these conflicts, the schools experienced much higher numbers of fights and assaults

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[t] The remainder were somewhat satisfied.

inside the school than was common in other district schools and also a higher number of students who, according to the districts' code of conduct, could be suspended or placed in alternative schools. School staff noted pressure from district administrators against exclusionary discipline such as suspension or alternative placement due to the high numbers of events in the school that would qualify students for these resolutions. School resource officers and staff in these schools expressed distress at the relative lack of consequences for these chronically disruptive students who they felt were unaccountable to school staff or adults generally for their behavior.

On the OEA survey, the principal of a different school noted,

"district climate and culture are not as responsive or supportive of consistent interruptions by students due to persistent behavior issues or outside of school criminal activities. Alternative placement in our district requires in-school criminal activity or significant bodily injury during an assault situation. It really is not appropriate for all students who commit crimes outside of school to be permitted to attend A1 schools, nor is it appropriate that bodily dismemberment is the only physical injury that results in alternative placement. We are in need of out-of-school suspension options (such as online learning options) to remove students when necessary for consistency in the learning environment for all students."

Similarly, another principal noted,

"We have to justify every suspension we make- children grow up with very few consequences. Making a kill list, bringing knives to school, and threats of violence, etc. We just can't give the consequences these things deserve. If we do, we are questioned and told to lower the numbers. I believe this leads to worse behavior in middle and high school because these children were not disciplined in elementary school."

Managing dangerous or disruptive students can consume school administrators' time and resources.

Frustration Of Teachers With Lack Of Principal Support. In most site visit schools, new or otherwise struggling classroom teachers received relatively little systematic support from principals related to classroom management. In some cases, administrative staff were consumed with managing extremely dangerous or disruptive students and simply lacked time and resources to support teachers with more routine classroom management challenges. In addition, school policies in many site

visit schools specifically directed that, with the exception of physically dangerous behaviors, classroom disruptions be subject to a series of teacher actions to "redirect" student behavior before administrative assistance would be provided. [u]

During OEA site visits, new and veteran teachers expressed frustration with a lack of consequences for students with repeatedly disruptive or disrespectful behavior.

In most site visit schools, both new and veteran teachers expressed frustration about the relative lack of consequence to students for repeat instances of disruptive or disrespectful behavior. Students may be pulled out of a classroom for a severely disruptive or disrespectful behavior event but sent back to the class in a matter of minutes, often with a snack or even, in one school, a popular energy drink.

Many teachers interviewed for this study felt that administrators' actions to enforce district or school discipline policies were more focused on protecting students from exclusionary discipline than on ensuring that teachers and the majority of students could operate in an orderly environment.

Source of Misalignment Of District Administrators, School Administrators, And Teachers Not Clear But Should Be Addressed

Principal and teacher survey data indicate misalignment among administrators and between administrators and teachers on matters of school discipline in a substantial minority of schools. OEA did not interview district administrators for this study. It may be that district administrators have difficulties resolving schools' needs to remove severely disruptive students with state or federal (and sometimes local board) pressure on the school district to reduce exclusionary discipline or budget constraints in providing alternative placements. As noted by one principal on the 2025 OEA principal survey, "district administrators are limited by IEP/504 red tape and available district placement options."

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[u] One school policy reviewed by OEA required that students commit five (nonviolent) classroom infractions before being sent out of the classroom and three office referrals before receiving in school suspension and entered as a behavior event. In this school, a student might, for example curse at a teacher, throw papers across the room, or commit other behaviors that undermined classroom order fifteen times before being entered as a behavior event in the student information system and receiving a meaningful consequence. Other schools required a ratio of positive to negative comments before a student could be removed. These systems, which were designed to reduce exclusionary discipline and encourage teaching of correct behavior, proved especially difficult for inexperienced teachers who were less able to manage disruptive behavior and felt that lack of consequence for frequent misconduct of a small minority of students could influence others in the class to disregard the school rules.

In previous studies, OEA has noted that school culture, climate, and student behavior is a cornerstone of effective and efficient schools and merits proactive attention by state leaders when data indicate challenges such as teachers feeling unsupported by school leaders.

The tensions among district administrators, school administrators, and teachers related to student discipline are understandable; yet, if unresolved, these tensions may undermine other district and school improvement efforts. In previous studies, OEA has noted that school culture, climate and student behavior is a cornerstone of effective and efficient schools and merits proactive attention by state leaders when data indicate challenges. Data analyzed in previous reports also show that climate, culture, and behavior related data indicate concerns in many schools identified for Comprehensive Support And Improvement (CSI) through federal law requiring state-directed intervention in the lowest-performing schools. [2]

This study reinforces the need for attention to data that indicates challenges with school climate, culture, and student behavior in some districts and schools, and the need for making relevant resources available to districts and schools, such as the KCSS safe schools' assessments.

Data collected for this study reinforce the necessity in some districts and schools of drawing attention to data indicating challenges with school climate, culture, and student behavior and making relevant resources available to districts and schools. Chapter 1 identified a number of resources available through KDE and KCSS that might be made available to districts or schools for which data indicate a need. One such resource is the KCSS safe school assessments that provides an independent, external assessment team to meet with a variety of school stakeholders to gain information about the school's learning environment by examining climate and culture, including student discipline.

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[1] Kentucky Legislative Research Commission. Office of Education Accountability. *Student Achievement: Lessons Learned From Kentucky's Relatively Highest-And Lowest-Performing Schools.* Research Report no., 2024

[2] Ibid. pp 101-103

Chapter 4

Options Or Supports Needed
To Address Behavior Challenges

This chapter identifies barriers faced by principals in promoting positive student behavior and addressing persistent or severe behavior when it occurs.

This chapter summarizes additional options or supports desired by principals related to promoting positive student behavior and barriers faced by principals in addressing persistent or severe behavior challenges. Data come from OEA's 2025 principal survey and site visits to schools with behavior-related challenges.

Promoting Positive Behavior

To promote positive student behavior, principals reported a need for mental health supports; flexibility in options permitted to instruct or support students with disabilities outside of the regular classroom; parent support for student discipline; and instructional options for students far below grade level.

The OEA 2025 principal survey asked principals to identify additional options or supports that would assist them in promoting positive behavior. Options on the survey were developed based on those identified in site visit schools and others known to be available in the state. Of the thirteen options provided, the ones identified as highly or extremely needed by the greatest percentage of principals were mental health supports (41 percent), flexibility in options permitted to instruct or support students with disabilities who have behavioral challenges in the regular classroom (39 percent), parent support for students to adhere to the code of conduct (39 percent), and instructional options for students far below grade level (28 percent).[a]

Respondents who selected "other" options needed were most likely to indicate a need for additional staffing.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to select "other" as an option and to specify those options. Of the 49 respondents who specific in comments what other options were needed, the largest category (about one third) of comments related to various types of staffing support, such as behavioral specialists or counselors. While a small number of principals took the time to indicate a need for additional staffing in the comments section, it is possible that

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[a] Related to flexibility for IEP and 504 students, the percentage of principals identifying this as highly/extremely needed was 41 percent at the elementary level, 40 percent at the middle school level, and 36 percent at the high school level. KDE has noted that the question as phrased was incomplete in that federal law does not restrict disciplinary removals unconditionally. If, following a manifestation determination meeting, it is demonstrated that all supports specified in the IEP have been provided and the behavior that triggered the removal is not a manifestation of the disability, then additional disciplinary removals are permitted. Site visit data indicated that principals understand that additional removals are possible, in theory, following a manifestation determination meeting.

many more respondents would have indicated a need, given the option.[b]

Principals were also asked to identify the top three options or supports their school needed more of to promote positive student behavior. As shown in appendix A (Question 20), "Flexibility in options permitted for moving IEP or 504 students to different physical locations for instruction or support, without documenting a disciplinary removal" was most frequently identified as a top three need (51 percent). As one of the top three needs, this was followed by parent support for students to follow rules (32 percent), instructional options for students below grade level (29 percent), and mental health supports (28 percent).

Site visit interviewees noted a need for school-based alternative learning programs designed to assist students struggling in the regular classroom to be successful.

Site visit interviewees also noted a need for school-based alternative learning environments that are not designed as punishments but as environments better tailored to a student's needs than the traditional classroom. Such programs might prevent behavior problems rather than being a consequence of them. Interviewees noted that student misbehavior often stems from misalignment of instruction in the regular classroom with students' academic needs or interests and that exclusionary discipline such as suspension does not address this misalignment and, in such cases, may not improve behavior.

Survey respondents made similar comments. One noted, "we need a true alternative learning center for students who just need a different learning environment. our current alt learning center is primarily for students with major behavior offenses." Another noted a need for "more alternative learning options at the middle school level other than a program for physically threatening students/criminal behavior." One site visit middle school principal described the case of a formerly disruptive student who requested to be permitted to learn online after returning from an extended suspension. The student was quickly able to accumulate additional credits and went on to be successful at the high school.

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[b] Questions 18 and 19 in Appendix A show options provided and the number of respondents who answered "other" for each question which was 105 for question 18 and 86 for question 19.
Principals were asked to specify their answers and gave 49 responses. Of those, the greatest category (16) related to staffing. These included more behavior specialists, staffing support for autism, funding for school counselors, more favorable staffing allocations generally and a full-time SRO.

Challenges Addressing Persistent And Severe Behaviors

OEA's principal survey also asked principals to identify the challenges they faced addressing persistent or severe behaviors once those behaviors had occurred.

Top challenges reported by principals in addressing persistent or severe behaviors once they occurred were federal restrictions on disciplinary removals for students with disabilities; flexibility permitted in options permitted as a disciplinary removal for those students; and lack of alternative settings for students who experience behavior challenges in the regular classroom to receive instruction.

Figure 4.A shows the percentage of principals statewide that identified each option as a challenge. The barriers identified as major or extreme by the greatest number of principals were

- legal restrictions associated with the amount of time that permitted for disciplinary removals was a major or extreme challenge (39 percent);
- lack of flexibility in options permitted for instruction or support of students with disabilities, without documenting a disciplinary removal (37 percent); and
- lack of alternative settings in which students who experience behavioral challenges in the regular classroom can receive instruction (34 percent).

As reported in Chapter 1, the legal restrictions associated with the amount of time that is permitted for disciplinary removals of students with disabilities, without holding a manifestation determination review, is based on federal law through the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

OEA agrees with KDE that the questions on the survey related to disciplinary removals should have contained additional information to make them accurate reflections of federal law. OEA does not believe such inclusion would have changed principals' responses.

In discussing findings of the report, KDE staff noted that survey questions related to disciplinary removals of IEP students should have contained additional information to make them accurate reflections of federal law. OEA agrees with this feedback but does not believe that inclusion of the additional information would have changed the way in which principals answered the question.[c]

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[c] Specifically, questions that include "flexibility in options permitted for moving IEP or 504 students to different physical locations for instruction or support, without documenting a disciplinary removal" should have read "without documenting a disciplinary removal that counts towards a change of placement." In addition, questions that reference "legal restrictions on the total number of accumulated days (10) that students with IEPs or 504 plans can be subject to disciplinary removals" should also have referenced the ability to remove students beyond those days if necessary conditions are met following a manifestation determination review meeting.

Figure 4.A
Principal Reports Of Challenges To Addressing
Persistent Or Severe Behaviors Once They Have Occurred, 2025
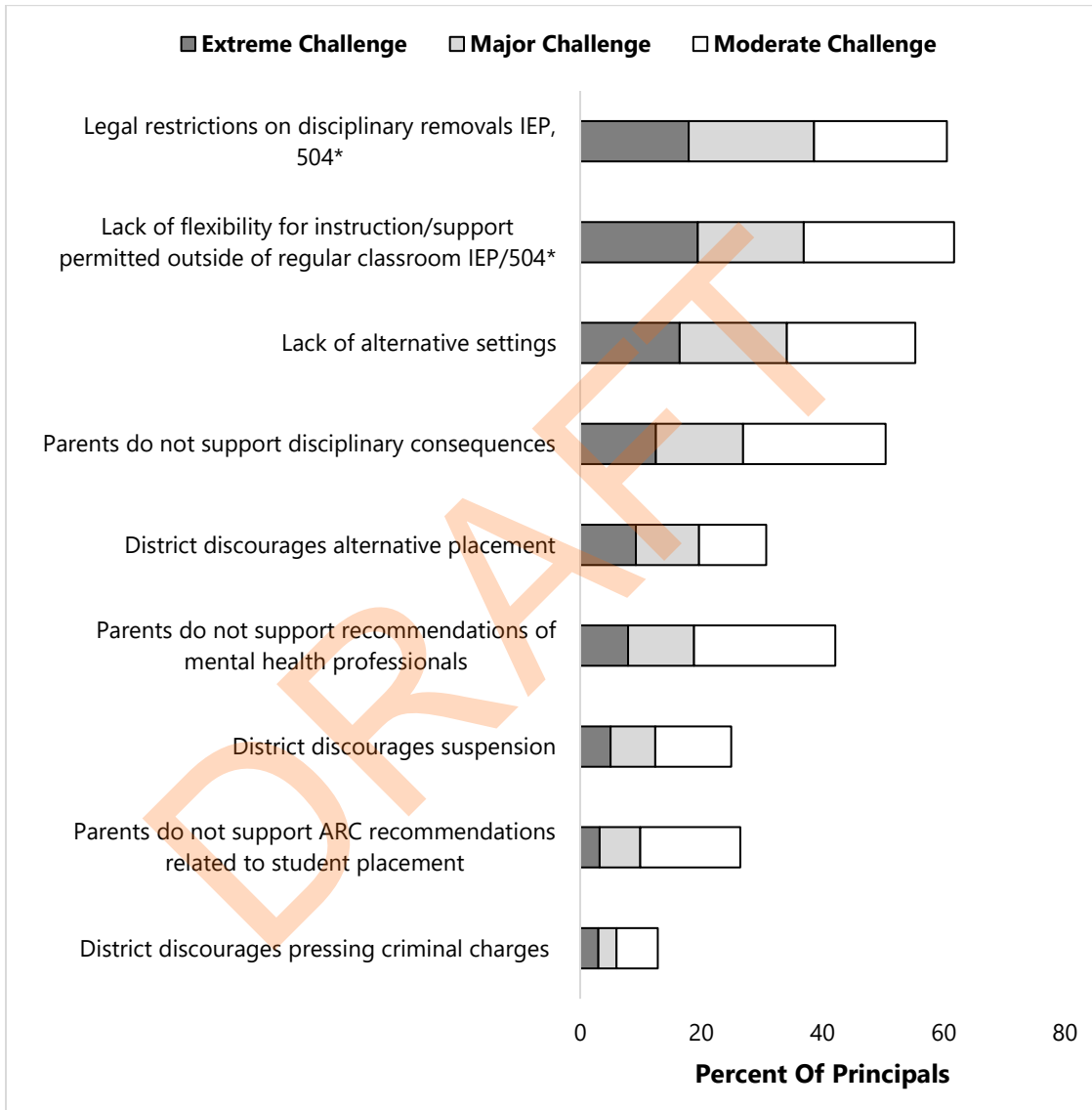
*As explained in Chapter 1, further disciplinary removals may be permitted under federal law following the findings of a manifestation determination meeting. The survey did not include that caveat but OEA site visit interviews indicates that administrators and counselors are well aware that a manifestation determination meeting may be held.
Source: OEA Survey of A1 Principals, 2025

Notably, a far greater percentage of principals identified major or extreme challenges on issues identified in Figure 4.A than identified major or extreme challenges overall in the school, as described in data shown in Chapter 2. This implies that individual situations that present extreme or major challenges are not enough to cause principals to characterize their schools as having major or extreme challenges. One principal addressed this directly in the

comment section, explaining "my responses were often "moderate" because that is the impact as a whole for our school. However the classrooms who do contain our most disruptive students the impact is "major" for student learning in those classrooms.

Notification Of Criminal Activity

Twenty-one percent of high school principals and 17 percent of middle school principals reported instances in the last three years in which they were not properly notified of criminal behavior of a student enrolled in their school. Failure to communicate was reported most often for court designated workers or for parents or former principals of students who were newly enrolled.

Related to addressing barriers, principals were also asked whether they were being properly notified of criminal behavior of students enrolled in their school as required by KRS 610.345. Twenty-one percent of high school principals, 17 percent of middle school principals, and 3 percent of elementary school principals reported instances in the last three years in which they had failed to be notified. Of principals who were not notified, most reported failure to be notified by the court or court-designated worker (78 percent) or by a parent, previous school, or other party when the student transferred into their school from another school (74 percent). One respondent noted that foster children, in particular, were most often the students for whom previous violations had not been reported. Another noted that police do not always use the option available to them to notify the school when they make a report involving a student.
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Alternative Settings

Statewide Availability Of Specific Types Of Alternative Learning Environments

Table 4.1 shows the percentage of principals across the commonwealth reporting the existence of specific types of alternative learning environments with sufficient slots for students. For each type of alternative learning setting, high school principals were most likely to report existence and sufficient availability of alternative instructional settings and elementary principals were least likely.

Table 4.1
Percent Of Principals Reporting Availability Of Alternative Instructional Settings With
Sufficient Placement Slots
By School Level, 2025

	Elementary	Middle	High
Emotional or behavioral disorder resource room in district	18%	28%	40%
Emotional or behavioral disorder resource room in school	28	44	49
Full time virtual program in district	25	52	55
In-person alternative learning program in district	22	40	52
In-person alternative learning program in another district	5	11	13
In-person alternative learning program in school	10	25	50
Short-term virtual at home	17	26	52
Short-term virtual at school	8	12	50
In school suspension (INSR) with full-time certified staff	17	57	78

Note: See Appendix A, question 21 for the complete survey data for all schools. The table does not include information for the 67 respondents whose schools that included multiple grade levels.
Source: OEA survey of A1 principals, 2025.

Elementary school principals were almost three times as likely as high school principals to report major or extreme challenges associated with lack of alternative learning settings (41 percent and 14 percent, respectively) .

Figure 4.B shows that challenges associated with lack of alternative instructional settings are greatest at the elementary level. Forty-one percent of elementary principals report major or extreme challenges, compared with 31 percent of middle school principals and 14 percent of high school principals. In addition, more than one fifth (21 percent) of elementary principals report extreme challenges, which is almost twice the percentage of middle school principals (11 percent) and over four times the percentage of high school principals that report extreme challenges (5 percent).

Figure 4.B
Major Or Extreme Challenges Addressing Persistent Or Severe Behavior
Due To Lack Of Alternative Instructional Settings, By Level, 2025
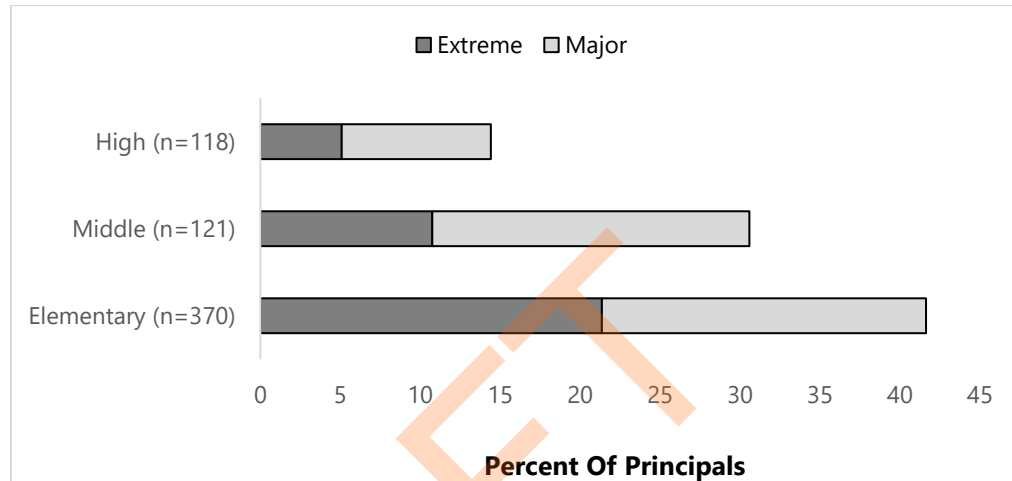
Note: The figure does not include data from principals in schools that combine multiple levels, such as K-8 or K-12 schools.
Source: OEA survey of A1 principals, 2025.

Survey respondents also noted limitations in availability of alternative settings in small schools or districts.

Elementary School Students With Challenges Regulating Extreme Behavior

Both site visit data and survey data indicate that elementary schools are facing extreme behavioral challenges with individual students. These challenges, which usually involve a relatively small number of students, are affecting entire classrooms and are sometimes destabilizing to entire schools.

Elementary schools are much more likely than middle or high schools to experience challenges from students who have difficulty regulating extreme behavior such as throwing objects, overturning furniture, and sustained screaming.

As shown in Figure 4.C, elementary schools are much more likely than middle or high schools to experience major or extreme challenges associated with classroom disruptions caused by difficulty of students to regulate extreme behavior such as throwing objects; overturning furniture; and sustained screaming. Thirty eight percent of elementary school principals reported at least moderate problems associated with these students and 17 percent reported major or extreme problems. While less common in middle school, 6 percent reported that this behavior was a major problem.

Figure 4.C
Percent Of Principals Reporting Problems With Classroom
Disruption Caused By Extreme Behavior Such As Screaming,
Throwing Objects, And Overturning Furniture
By Level, 2025
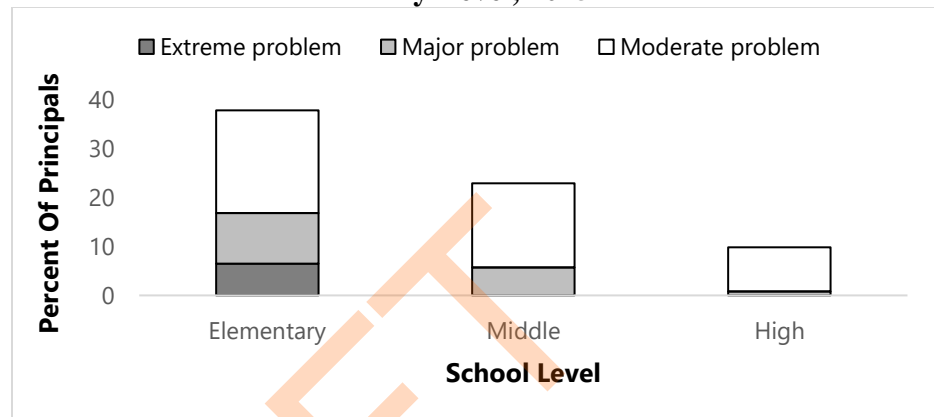
Source: OEA survey of A1 principals, 2025.

These behaviors may require "clearing" of entire classrooms for safety reasons. When classrooms are cleared, all of the students except the disruptive student(s) are removed from the class until specially trained school staff can come to remove the disruptive student.

Almost one third of elementary schools reported having a student that required the school to "clear" the student's classroom at least five times due to extreme behavior of the student. Seven percent of middle schools and 2 percent of high schools reported such students.

As shown in Figure 4.D, the overwhelming majority of elementary principals (73 percent) report at least one classroom clear, compared with 48 percent at the middle school level and 32 percent at the high school level. Elementary schools, however, are much more likely than middle or high schools to have a student that required 5 or more classroom clears (32 percent versus 7 and 2 percent, respectively).

Figure 4.D
Percent Of Principals Reporting
Students That Required Classrooms To Be Cleared
By School Level, 2025
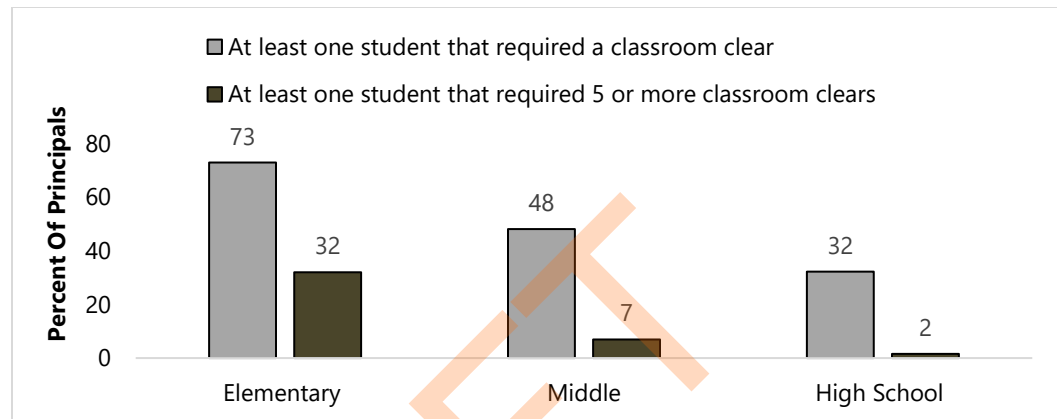
Source: OEA survey of A1 principals, 2025.

Site visit interviewees and survey respondents reported great distress of teachers and other students resulting from repeated necessity of clearing a classroom because of the extreme or dangerous behavior of a student in the classroom.

Site visit teachers reported that they and the other students in the class are extremely upset by the sustained presence of students in the classroom that are potentially dangerous and require classrooms to be cleared. In one case, a veteran teacher highly valued in the school reported her desire to retire early. This teacher had been advised to remove all material from the bulletin boards that she loved to create for her class and to remove any objects from her desk—such as family photos— that the disruptive student might believe were valuable to her; these well-loved objects would be tempting to the students as objects of destruction. After each classroom clear, a counselor would visit the classroom to address the trauma experienced by the other students. Administrative staff in this school reported five students in one school year who could destabilize a classroom and reported that both the principal and the administrator spent over 90 percent of their time on these students. During the OEA site visit, the assistant principal had to leave because a student had run out of the classroom and was hiding under a table in the cafeteria, screaming. At this school, and others OEA also heard about challenges with students that "elope" from the classroom, running out of the school when possible and, in the case of one student, heading towards the nearest busy intersection.

Site visit interviewees reported greatest difficulty in regulating behavior from the youngest students, as early as prekindergarten.

Site visit interviews indicate that these extreme challenges are primarily affecting students in prekindergarten through second grades who enter school unprepared for the classroom environment. As one principal survey respondent noted, "Every year, we have at least five students who struggle significantly with adjusting to school. These students may hit, kick, bite, spit, throw

chairs, or throw school supplies. Their behaviors disrupt the learning environment for everyone, cause stress for staff, and prevent other students from feeling safe and learning effectively. Because a minimum of 6–10 weeks of data collection is required before qualifying for special education services, the student, staff, and peers all struggle during this time without adequate supports in place." See Appendix B for additional survey comments related to these types of challenges at the elementary level.

Interviewees expressed bewilderment at increases in the number of extremely disruptive students over time. They speculated as possible causes the effects of certain drugs taken by mothers while pregnant; isolation of students during their early years due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and young children spending excessive amounts of time on electronic devices, to the exclusion of other activities. In one school, a disruptive student would not stop screaming until the student's mother came to the school and placed her cell phone in the student's hands.

Principal survey data indicates that staff in elementary schools are more likely to face violent physical interactions with students than those at other school levels.

Finally, staff in elementary school are more likely to face violent physical interactions with students than staff in middle and high schools. At the elementary level, 5 percent of principals report major or extreme challenges associated with student-to-staff violence and 20 percent of principals report at least moderate challenges. In contrast, 4 percent of middle school principals and 2 percent of high school principals report at least moderate challenges with student-to-staff violence.

Several survey respondents explained that they have difficulty holding students who repeatedly violently assault staff accountable except by pursuing action through the criminal justice system, but this is not practiced for children under 12. One survey respondent noted,

Survey respondents reported challenges in holding students younger than twelve accountable for violent behavior.

"The district does not discourage pressing charges, however, our court-designated worker will tell our police officers they cannot press charges on students who are younger than 12. We've had SEVERAL violent students who the only way the parents will help is when they are forced through the court. We are a small town/county, and this is a huge problem."

Another explained,

"There is a critical lack of criminal consequences—either for the child or the parent—and insufficient state-provided mental health support for students under the age of 12 who repeatedly assault or

threaten staff, even after multiple redirections and re-educational interventions. This gap leaves schools with limited tools to ensure the safety and well-being of both students and staff."

Because consequences are limited and alternative settings in elementary students are lacking, students who assault a teacher may be back in the regular classroom setting soon after the assault.

The need for school-based alternative placements is greatest at the elementary level.

While the need for alternative placements exist at every school level, the need at the elementary school is especially great due to the lack of existing options and lack of knowledge about the types of programs that would assist students with these extreme behaviors. Officials at the Kentucky Center for School Safety indicated that many principals report a desire to leave a school or the profession due to these challenges.

Some districts have begun attempts to develop school-level alternative programs that would assist the early grade students in becoming prepared to learn in the regular classroom. These programs, while deemed to be necessary, are also costly. [1]

Kentucky Department of Education Student Discipline Guidelines

As noted in Chapter 1, KRS 158.148 requires KDE, in collaboration with KCSS, to "identify successful strategies currently being used in programs in Kentucky and in other states and shall incorporate those strategies into the statewide student discipline guidelines."

Site visit and survey data described in this chapter indicate a desire—especially among middle and elementary school staff—for access to alternative programs appropriate to the challenges faced by students in their schools. Elementary schools, in particular, face extreme challenges related to student behavior and a lack of alternative program options appropriate for the elementary grades.

Recommendation 4.1

The Kentucky Department of Education should collaborate with the Kentucky Center for School Safety and other relevant organizations to identify promising practices in Kentucky schools or nationally related to school-based instructional settings or alternative programs for students who are experiencing difficulties in the regular classroom, leading to behavior that interrupts their learning or the learning of others. Special attention should be paid to programs for elementary school students who experience difficulty regulating extreme behavior.

One possible use of school safety grants administered by the KCSS is to support alternative programs.

Perceived Challenges Associated With Federal Law In Addressing Persistent Or Severe Behaviors Of Students With Disabilities

Data collected for this study suggest unintended consequences associated with federal law limiting disciplinary removals for students with disabilities, though it is unclear how much of the challenge is in the law itself versus its implementation.

This section will first describe some unintended consequences of federal restrictions in disciplinary removals for students with IEPs, as perceived by survey respondents and site visit interviewees. As reported earlier in this chapter, almost 4 in 10 Kentucky principals reported major or extreme challenges associated with federal law in addressing persistent or severe behaviors of students with disabilities.

The degree of challenge associated with federal law and its implementation varies among schools in the commonwealth, however. This section will describe some factors that may influence the apparent variation among schools in the degree of challenge and conclude with recommendations for actions that the Kentucky Department of Education might take to assist schools and districts experiencing challenges.

Overwhelming Majority Of Students With IEPs Have No Behavior Events

The overwhelming majority of students with disabilities do not have behavior events, but a small minority of students with disabilities account for a disproportionate number of more extreme behavior events.

While this section will describe some extreme challenges experienced by principals and other school staff related to some students with disabilities it is important to note that the overwhelming majority of students with IEPs (82 percent) do not have any behavior events recorded in the student information system.[d] As shown in Appendix D, a disproportionate number of

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[d] This report did not analyze discipline data for students with 504 plans .

behavior events recorded for students with disabilities are associated with a subset of those students, especially students with emotional or behavioral disorders. It is also important to note, however, that data shown in Appendix N indicate that students with disabilities are disproportionately represented in serious behavior events such as weapons possession, threats, and assaults.

Unintended Consequences Reported For Federal Protections For Students With Disabilities Related To Disciplinary Removals

Legal protections for students with disabilities are intended as a safeguard against removing students from classrooms due to behaviors that can be addressed through interventions and supports. OEA staff have observed many positive examples of actions taken to understand and address behavioral challenges of students with disabilities.

Legal protections for students with disabilities are intended as a safeguard against removal of students from regular education classes for behavior problems that could and should be addressed through proactive interventions and supports by educators. In OEA site visits to schools in recent years, staff have observed many positive examples of actions taken to understand and address behavioral challenges of students with disabilities and assist them to be successful in the regular classroom.[e]

However, in connection with this study, as well as previous studies, OEA has heard comments from many educators about unintended consequences associated with protections afforded by the IDEA for the small minority of students with IEPs whose behavior is severely and persistently disruptive.

Federal law permits disciplinary removal of students with disabilities to an alternative setting, regardless of their disabilities, for weapons, drugs and serious bodily injury.

Note that federal law does permit removal of students with disabilities from their regular placement following incidents related to weapons, drugs, or serious bodily injury through (IAES) for up to 45 days. [f2]. In addition, a hearing officer may rule that there is a risk of physical harm and remove the student to an IAES for up to 45 days.

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[e] For example, staff heard about a severely disruptive student whose behavior improved drastically when a team at the school attempted to understand what he was experiencing at home. As part of this process, one of the teachers purchased mattress so that the boy would not be sleeping on the floor.

[f] Special Circumstance 1: Unilateral removals by school personnel based on these specific violations: o Carries a weapon to or possesses a weapon at school, school premises or a school function under the jurisdiction of the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) or a local education agency (LEA); Knowingly possesses or uses illegal drugs or sells or solicits the sale of a controlled substance while at school, on school premises or at a school function under the jurisdiction of the KDE or an LEA; or o Has inflicted serious bodily injury upon another person while at school, on school premises or at a school function under the jurisdiction of the KDE or an LEA. • Special Circumstance 2: Removal by a state-appointed impartial due process hearing officer if the hearing officer determines that maintaining the child in the current placement is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or others."

As will be discussed later in this chapter, this provision does not always appear to be offering the protection that some educators seek. In addition, the "stay put" provision of federal law related to IAES requires that, should a dispute be raised in a formal due process proceeding about a change of placement or IEP, the student will remain in the current placement until the dispute is resolved. [g]

Principals report difficulty meeting federal requirements necessary to allow schools to carry out disciplinary removals for students with disabilities who violate the code of conduct when those removals exceed federal thresholds. In these cases, a manifestation determination review must demonstrate that a child's behavior is not a manifestation of their disability.

Disciplinary Removals Minimized Due To Perceived Difficulty Meeting Conditions Necessary To Permit Disciplinary Removals In Excess Of Federal Thresholds. As described in Chapter 1, when the disciplinary removals for a student with a disability cross the threshold that constitutes a change in placement, they can only be removed from a classroom for a disciplinary removal pending the results of a manifestation determination meeting. Many site visit principals and counselors reported that it is very difficult to prove that a behavior is not a manifestation of a child's disability. Few site visit schools reported holding these meetings.

As an example of the frustration or confusion experienced by principals with this aspect of the law, one survey respondent explained,

"It is almost impossible to discipline these students because laws require an ARC to be held to do a change of placement for these students, and before a change of placement can be considered, we have to prove that the behavior was not a "manifestation of their disability." We can also only suspend these students for up to 10 days a year, and this includes in school suspension. Many of these students realize that we are powerless, so their behavior just keeps escalating because there are little to no consequences. Parents are also beginning to catch on and view IEPs as a "get out of jail free card." They often request evaluations for their children to avoid

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[g] KDE staff note that The "stay put" provision under 34 CFR § 300.518 ensures that during any due process hearing, the child remains in their current educational placement unless the parent and school agree otherwise.
Simplified Example: A school proposes moving a student with ADHD from a general education classroom to a more restrictive setting due to behavioral issues. The parent disagrees and files a due process complaint. Under the "stay put" provision, the student remains in the general education classroom with current supports until the dispute is resolved. This prevents sudden changes that could negatively impact the student and ensures continuity of services.
This provision acts as a legal pause button, maintaining stability for the student while legal or administrative disputes are addressed.

negative consequences. Even if the child doesn't qualify for an IEP, they often qualify for a 504 plan."

KDE staff explained to OEA that the statement in this quote shows a misunderstanding of the federal law related to change of placement generally. KDE staff stated that ARCs may recommend a change of placement for a student, regardless of whether behavior challenges in the current placement are a manifestation of the disability. [3] [h]

Related to disciplinary decisions, however, this quote illustrates that some principals feel they will be unsuccessful in demonstrating through a manifestation determination meeting that a student may face disciplinary consequences similar to other students who break the code of conduct and therefore seek to stay safely beneath the threshold of disciplinary removals that constitutes a change of placement for students with IEPs. Principals and teachers in site visit schools reported that, for this reason, disciplinary removals for students with disabilities may be minimized.

Lack Of Consequences For Seriously Disruptive Behavior. Teachers and administrators in most site visit schools noted that, due to federal restrictions in disciplinary removals for students with disabilities, it can be difficult to hold students accountable for their behavior. Many behaviors that do not meet the conditions for IAES can still be severely disruptive to the class and potentially dangerous. Teachers in site visit schools noted that when these behaviors are permitted in class they can also set a precedent for what is allowable in the class that can negatively influence the behavior of other students in the class.

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[h] KDE staff noted, in particular, that this statement demonstrates a misunderstanding between the difference, under IDEA, of an ARC decision for educational placement based on a continuum of placements as outlined in 707 KAR 1:350, Section 1 and a "change of placement because of disciplinary removals" as defined in 707 KAR 1:002, Section 1 (8). These are two completely different placement decisions.

There is also a misunderstanding in this statement about 10 days "We can only suspend these students for up to 10 days a year, and this includes in school suspension." This statement fails to consider the IDEA requirements around manifestation determination, what defines a change of placement because of disciplinary removals, and the three guard rails included in the Federal Register regarding in school suspension.

This comment from a principal survey respondent illustrates the concern about the consequences to schools of protections that exist for severely disruptive students who have IEPs:

"(For) students that are classified with an IEP that are extreme safety concerns in the classroom , (we) have very few options to keep other students safe. We have three students that account for almost 40 percent of our entire school discipline that have created an unsafe environment for other students and staff causing multiple injuries. These students are all classified special education either developmentally delayed or emotional behavioral disorder. We are told by Special Education that they are all to be in the general ed as much as possible."

Time And Paperwork Required To Remove Severely And Persistently Disruptive Students. Educators interviewed at most schools expressed frustration at the amount of time and paperwork necessary to attempt to move a severely and persistently disruptive child from the regular education classroom.[i] One principal respondent explained,

"Students with IEP's or 504's should be removed from the general education classroom if they are causing daily issues with behavior and threatening the safety of others. With the threat of advocates, lawsuits, and other legal issues, the school has to collect data and show that they are following the IEP for far too long, causing trauma in other students and reducing parental trust in the school when their child comes home telling them about what happened at school that day."

Another principal noted that, due to sometimes extreme challenges associated with addressing the extreme behavior of some students with IEPs, fewer students should be identified:

"I think it needs to be harder to get an IEP period. Not every student who misbehaves has a disability. Just like not every

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[i] In order to be able to remove students for greater than an accumulated 10 days, schools must hold a manifestation determination meeting and demonstrate that they have collected sufficient data to understand and address students' behavioral challenges. This may include multiple attempts to implement and document new behavioral strategies if the previous strategies have been ineffective. Ultimately, however, schools must also be able to demonstrate that a student's continuing behavior is not a manifestation of their disability. This can be extremely difficult to demonstrate for a child whose disability is a behavior disorder. Further, even if the ARC team determines that a school has the right to move the placement of a disruptive child, the placement of the child cannot be moved without the approval of the parent.

Interviewees reported that it can take many months to complete the documentation necessary to change the placement of a student from the regular classroom even if that student is routinely violent and extremely disruptive.

student who doesn't do well in school has a disability. If we can't make that happen, then we need to make it easier to give these students consequences without breaking the law. I also think that violent students should be sent to an alternative location regardless of disability. The overall safety of students and staff members should trump a student's rights under IDEA."

Interviewees in two site visit schools explained that it had taken many months to complete the process necessary to remove a severely disruptive and dangerous student form their school and that during that time, teachers and other students were at risk.

Some interviewees noted that federal protections for students with disabilities prevented those students from understanding the consequences that they will face in the adult world for extreme behaviors.

Unaccountable Behavior. In addition to creating problems for students in the classrooms of severely or persistently disruptive IEP students, some educators opined that the federal protections can put students with disabilities at a disadvantage to the extent that they are deprived of the opportunity to learn about the relationship between the behaviors they are exhibiting and the consequences they will one day face in society as adults exhibiting these behaviors.

In multiple site visit schools, educators reported instances in which a child with an IEP informed staff that they would be protected by the "10-day rule" against any consequences for committing a behavior infraction. Educators opined that parents of IEP students with persistent or severe behaviors may also believe that a student should not be subject to consequences—even for criminal behaviors—due to their disability. For example, one middle school principal explained in a survey response that when criminal charges are filed against a student who has repeatedly assaulted students or staff, "if the student has an IEP, often the parents will sue us later claiming that we didn't do everything on the child's IEP prior to them biting a teacher or assaulting another student." Another principal respondent explained that "Students and families often feel that the disability is a pass to physically assault staff."

Factors Influencing Differences Among Schools In Perceived Restrictions In Federal Law Related To Disciplinary Removals

More than one fifth of principals report little or no challenge with the law.

As shown in Table 4.2 while the majority of principals (61 percent) reported at least moderate challenges associated with federal law related to disciplinary removals, 21 percent of principals reported little or no challenge.

Table 4.2
Percent Of Principals Reporting Challenges Presented By
Legal Restrictions On Disciplinary Removals
For Students With IEP Or 504 Plans

Little Or No Challenge	Minor Challenge	Moderate Challenge	Major Challenge	Extreme Challenge
21%	18%	22%	21%	18%

Source: OEA survey of A1 principals, 2025.

It may be that schools reporting little or no challenge do not have students with dangerous and seriously disruptive behavior challenges. It may also be that implementation of federal law varies among districts and schools.

Possible explanations for the difference in challenges perceived by principals with legal restrictions include differences among schools in the enrollment of students with disabilities who have persistent or severe behavior challenges and differences among districts of schools in implementation of those aspects of federal law designed to appropriately address these types of challenges.

This section will describe factors that may influence differences among schools in implementation of the law. Data collected for this report were insufficient to determine the degree to which various factors may be influencing the level of challenge experienced in individual schools, however.

KDE staff noted variation among districts in the continuum of alternative placements required by federal law. Principals reporting sufficient availability of alternative placements for all students were much less likely to report challenges associated with federal law.

Continuum Of Alternative Placements. In discussing findings of this report, KDE staff noted great variation among districts in implementation of the law and failure in some districts to provide the continuum of alternative placements that would ensure students with persistent or severe behaviors are appropriately served. [4] This report did not collect data on the range of services that would constitute a continuum of placements but did collect data on availability of alternative placements for all students (not specifically for students with disabilities).[j] Staff analysis indicates that principals who reported sufficient availability of alternative placements generally (about one third of all principals), were much less likely than all principals to report major or extreme challenges associated with lack of flexibility in options permitted for students with IEPs (13 percent versus 37 percent, respectively).

Twenty percent of principals reported major or extreme challenges associated with their districts' discouragement of alternative placement of students with persistent or severe behavioral challenges, even when alternative placement exists.

District Orientation Against Alternative Placement.
Some site visit interviewees reported that district administration strongly discouraged placement of students in alternative programs, even when the programs existed and the behavior of the a student should have qualified them for the program. As shown earlier in Figure 4.B, 20 percent of principals reported that district discouragement of alternative program placement presented a

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[j] Question 21 in Appendix A does report principals' assessment of the availability of emotional or behavioral disorder resource rooms.

major or extreme barrier to addressing persistent or severe challenges. Staff analysis indicates that principals who reported this challenge were also much more likely than all principals to report lack of flexibility in disciplinary removals permitted for students with disabilities (75 percent versus 37 percent, respectively). The cause of some districts' orientation against alternative placements across the state is not clear, but site visit interviewees in several districts stated that they believed district administrators were influenced by a desire to reduce disciplinary removals reported at the district level.

Districts are not always acting on their authority to remove students with disabilities from schools when they have inflicted serious bodily injury.

Similarly, data reported in Appendix N show that districts are not always acting on their authority to remove students with disabilities from a school setting through IAES, which permits removal for serious bodily injury. For example, of the 558 students with IEPs who were recorded with an assault, only 4 percent were removed from the school through IAES or other means.

Site visit interviewees and some survey comments indicated that fear of legal challenges prevents districts or schools from attempting to change a child's placement, even when it is legally justified. It is unclear the degree to which this challenge applies across the state. Compared with other states, Kentucky's rates of disputes are very low.

Legal Challenges Experienced By Districts. Educators in at least one third of site visit schools stated that decisions about disciplinary removals or placement decisions for students with disabilities were influenced by fear of legal action by parents who disagreed with the decisions. Even if the actions are justified under the law, fighting legal challenges is time-consuming and expensive for districts. It is unclear from the data collected for this report the degree to which fear of legal action influences administrators' decisions across the state. Federal data indicate that, relative to other states, Kentucky has an extremely low rate of disputes. [k5]

KDE staff note that principals in some schools may fail to understand their options under the law.

Failure By Administrators To Understand The Law. KDE staff noted that principals' perceptions of the time, resources, and limitations of manifestation determination review meetings showed that they are not sufficiently familiar with federal law. In addition, staff noted what they believe to be incorrect perceptions among principals that educational placements can only be changed by an ARC if it determines that disciplinary removals were not manifestations of a child's disability. [6]

Confusion Among Some Administrators About What KDE Considers Appropriate For Disciplinary Removals. In the process of carrying out its duties to implement federal law through dispute resolutions, reviews of district policies and practices, or consolidated audits, KDE staff make many individual decisions as

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[k] According to the Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution In Special Education, the national average of disputes was 79 per 10,000 students in 2024; in that year Kentucky had only 11 per 10,000 students.

to whether schools or districts are in compliance and whether particular instances in which a student is removed from the regular classroom constitute a disciplinary removal.

Interviews conducted for this study indicate that district and school administrators take great pains to avoid activities that they believe will lead KDE to find them out of compliance. Administrators' understanding of noncompliant activities may come from previous experience with a KDE audit or review but also from informal communication among district staff related to situations in which districts across the state have been found to be out of compliance. In this way, information can travel informally and may lead district or school staff to misunderstand the options available to them. Educators interviewed for this study expressed a desire for greater clarity about the conditions under which behavioral supports or instruction could be provided to students with disabilities outside the regular classroom without the instruction or support counting as a disciplinary removal or otherwise found to be noncompliant.

Educators also reported a desire to understand issues such as how mentoring programs or the Positive Approach to Student Success (PASS) program for students with emotional and behavioral difficulties must be implemented in order not to be considered a disciplinary removal by KDE; why KDE's data collection for at least one federally required data point considers placement in district alternative programs to be a disciplinary removal, even when recommended by an ARC; and under what conditions lunch detention for a student with a disability who violates the student code of conduct is a violation of federal law.

Recommended Steps By KDE To Assist Districts And Schools In Understanding Options And Responsibilities Related To Students With Disabilities Experiencing Behavior Challenges

The previous section described a variety of factors that may explain differences among principals in the state in perceived flexibility related to disciplinary removals for students with disabilities. KDE can play an important role in assisting districts and schools to address the challenges reported in this chapter by taking steps to understand those challenges and developing relevant guidance and training.

Recommendation 4.2

The Kentucky Department of Education should solicit data from educators about challenges they are experiencing under federal law as it relates to addressing persistent or severe behavior of students with disabilities. Data might include focus groups or surveys and should provide options for anonymous submissions. Data collection should address challenges associated with implementation of federal law, including manifestation determination reviews; provision of a continuum of alternative placements; threats of legal action; and any questions about what is strictly required by federal law related to what must be counted as a disciplinary removal and included in data collected to fulfill federal requirements.

Recommendation 4.3

By August 29, 2026, the Kentucky Department of Education should submit findings of its data collection to the Education Assessment and Accountability Review Subcommittee and the Interim Joint Committee on Education. Findings may include any observations of the department related to areas of confusion in the law and any training that should be provided to district or school administrators.

Recommendation 4.4

Based on findings of its data collection and any feedback from the General Assembly, the Kentucky Department of Education should develop guidance documents and training to assist educators in understanding their options and responsibilities under federal law to prevent and address persistent or severe behavior challenges of students with disabilities. Guidance should provide examples of continuum of placement options that are being implemented within the commonwealth as well as examples of disciplinary removals that may be carried out without counting towards the time accumulated towards a change of placement under federal law.

Federal law describes instances in which a disciplinary removal can be provided but not counted against the time calculated to determine that a change of placement has occurred:

"following a disciplinary incident, a child can receive instruction at an alternative location without the time spent at that alternative location being considered a disciplinary removal if the child (1) is afforded the opportunity to continue to appropriately participate in the general curriculum; (2) continues to receive the services specified on the child's IEP; and (3) continues to participate with non disabled children to the extent they would have in the child's current placement." [7]

KDE staff note that compliance under the IDEA can only be determined in relation to the unique needs of an individual child. OEA acknowledges this to be the case. Yet, in the absence of broad guidance, local districts and schools may be hesitant to put beneficial options in place.

In discussing findings of this study, KDE staff noted that compliance under the IDEA can only be determined in relation to the unique needs of an individual child. OEA acknowledges this to be the case. Yet, in the absence of broad guidance and criteria that will apply in KDE reviews, dispute resolutions, or audits, local districts and schools may be hesitant to put in place options that may be beneficial to students with disabilities or other students in their classrooms because of a false belief that those options risk findings of noncompliance.

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[1] Jon Akers, executive director, Kentucky Center for School Safety. Interview. March 20, 2025.
[2] www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Documents/IAES%20_Instruction.pdf
[3] Gretta Hylton, associate commissioner, Office of Special Education and Early Learning, Kentucky Department of Education. Interview. Oct. 24, 2025.
[4] Ibid.
[5] National & State DR Data Dashboard | CADRE
[6] Gretta Hylton, associate commissioner, Office of Special Education and Early Learning, Kentucky Department of Education. Interview. Oct. 24, 2025.
[7] U.S. Dept. of Education. Office Of Special Education And Rehabilitative Services. "Questions And Answers: Addressing The Needs of Children With Disabilities And IDEA's Discipline Services. July 19, 2022.p.11

Appendix A

Survey Responses From OEA 2025 Principal Survey

The following data were extracted directly from SurveyMonkey software. Some questions allowed respondents to skip successive questions that did not apply to their school. In those cases, total responses will be lower. Open-ended response questions were coded to themes by the software and shown under the questions. Response categories with at least 5 respondents are included.

Note that some schools answered the survey more than once. OEA eliminated repeat responses. The survey data reported in in the chapters may include slightly different counts in questions which were answered multiple times by a single school.

Survey Introduction

Introduction

The Education Assessment and Accountability Review Subcommittee (EAARS) of the General Assembly has directed the Office of Education Accountability (OEA) to study school discipline data in Kentucky. As part of this study, OEA is conducting a statewide survey of principals of A1 schools.

This survey will take about 20 minutes to complete; additional time may be taken for those who wish to submit optional comments. Please submit your answers by June 23, 2025, or as soon as possible.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONDENT ANSWERS WILL BE KEPT STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL AND WILL NOT BE SHARED WITH YOUR DISTRICT OFFICE OR ANY INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS. The final report will summarize aggregate responses and will not identify any individual respondent, school, or district. The survey will ask for your district and school name only so that the report can group schools for analysis (for example, higher or lower poverty).

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Deborah Nelson at the Office of Education Accountability by calling (502) 564-8167 or by e-mailing deborah.nelson@kylegislature.gov.

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete the survey! Your responses will help inform the General Assembly about school discipline issues in Kentucky.

Questions 1-7 were information about survey respondents and their schools.

Q8 For each category, please indicate the degree to which student behavior poses a problem for your school.

	LITTLE OR NO PROBLEM	MINOR PROBLEM	MODERATE PROBLEM	MAJOR PROBLEM	EXTREME PROBLEM	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Teaching and learning	24.63% 167	39.53% 268	28.61% 194	5.90% 40	1.33% 9	678	2.20
Safety	48.52% 328	34.32% 232	14.05% 95	2.81% 19	0.30% 2	676	1.72
Staff morale	29.78% 201	33.19% 224	27.26% 184	7.70% 52	2.07% 14	675	2.19
Demand on school resources, such as staff time or positions, necessary to address problems	16.32% 111	30.88% 210	33.24% 226	14.41% 98	5.15% 35	680	2.61

Q9 Please indicate the degree to which each behavior category poses a problem in your school.

	LITTLE OR NO PROBLEM	MINOR PROBLEM	MODERATE PROBLEM	MAJOR PROBLEM	EXTREME PROBLEM	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Weapons	95.03% 631	3.46% 23	1.51% 10	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	664	1.06
Physical violence student-to-student (includes assault, fighting, and physical aggression)	46.39% 308	42.47% 282	9.04% 60	1.96% 13	0.15% 1	664	1.67
Physical violence student-to-staff (includes assault, fighting, and physical aggression)	71.95% 477	15.69% 104	9.20% 61	2.11% 14	1.06% 7	663	1.45
Drugs (other than vapes)	79.85% 527	13.79% 91	5.15% 34	0.76% 5	0.45% 3	660	1.28
Vapes	51.13% 338	19.06% 126	16.34% 108	8.17% 54	5.30% 35	661	1.97
Tardiness	19.28% 128	32.98% 219	31.17% 207	13.10% 87	3.46% 23	664	2.48
Classroom disruptions caused by interactions among students	24.89% 165	41.93% 278	25.19% 167	6.64% 44	1.36% 9	663	2.18
Classroom disruptions caused by difficulty of individual students to regulate extreme behavior (such as screaming, throwing objects, overturning furniture)	39.76% 264	31.33% 208	18.22% 121	7.23% 48	3.46% 23	664	2.03
Student disengagement or apathy	22.88% 151	37.12% 245	24.09% 159	11.21% 74	4.70% 31	660	2.38
Student inappropriate use of cell phones	52.64% 349	24.13% 160	10.11% 67	8.14% 54	4.98% 33	663	1.89
Student disrespect of staff	36.60% 243	39.01% 259	16.57% 110	6.93% 46	0.90% 6	664	1.97
Other (please specify in comments)	84.57% 148	5.14% 9	6.29% 11	1.71% 3	2.29% 4	175	1.32

Q10 Please indicate the TOP THREE behavior categories that present the greatest problem in your school (this question requires a response of no more than three).

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Weapons	0.00%	0
Physical violence student-to-student (includes assault, fighting, and physical aggression)	12.33%	82
Physical violence student-to-staff (includes assault, fighting, and physical aggression)	9.92%	66
Drugs (other than vapes)	1.50%	10
Vapes	27.07%	180
Tardiness	41.05%	273
Classroom disruptions caused by interactions among students	51.73%	344
Classroom disruptions caused by difficulty of individual students to regulate extreme behavior (such as screaming, throwing objects, overturning furniture)	37.44%	249
Student disengagement or apathy	50.68%	337
Student inappropriate use of cell phones	21.65%	144
Student disrespect of staff	29.32%	195
Other (please specify in comments)	4.21%	28
Total Respondents: 665		

Q11 Were there any instances in your school in which a student caused a classroom to be cleared due to their behavior in that classroom in the 2024-2025 school year?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	58.80%	391
No	41.20%	274
TOTAL		665

Q12 Approximately how many students caused a classroom to be cleared due to their behavior in that classroom at least once in the 2024-2025 school year? (This answer should be an unduplicated count of the total number of students who caused you to clear a classroom).

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0	0.51%	2
1	24.17%	95
2	32.57%	128
3	17.30%	68
4	8.91%	35
5	6.62%	26
6	3.56%	14
7	1.02%	4
8	1.27%	5
9	1.27%	5
10	1.02%	4
11	0.00%	0
12	0.51%	2
24	0.25%	1
25	0.25%	1
28	0.25%	1
32	0.25%	1
50	0.25%	1

Q13 Did you have any students who caused a classroom to be cleared more than five times?

ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
Number of students with 5 to 10 incidents	2	292	124
Number of students with 11 to 20 incidents	1	91	84
Number of students with 21 to 40 incidents	0	28	71
Number of students with more than 40 incidents	0	7	61
Total Respondents: 128			

Q14 Please indicate the approximate number of students that caused a classroom to be cleared by the number of incidents they caused. (Answer any that apply).

ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
Number of students with 5 to 10 incidents	2	295	127
Number of students with 11 to 20 incidents	1	91	85
Number of students with 21 to 40 incidents	0	28	72
Number of students with more than 40 incidents	0	7	62

Q15 Please use this space if you wish to add any additional information about challenges experienced in your school related to clearing a classroom.

15 themes have been applied to 34 out of 36 responses		% Of Total Tags	# Tagged
Special Education Services		13%	6
Classroom Safety and Management		10%	5
Special Needs Behavioral Support		10%	5

Q16 Have there been any instances in the last 3 years in which you learned of criminal activity of a student enrolled in your school about which you had not been notified in the expected time frame?

Answered: 663   Skipped: 55

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	9.65%	64
No, not to my knowledge	90.35%	599
If yes, please explain why or how you believe this happened:	0.00%	0
TOTAL		663

Q17 Please indicate any failure in the last 3 years to notify you in the expected time frame about criminal activity of a student enrolled in your school (check all that apply).

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Failure to be notified (by parent, guardian, principal of previous school or other party) when a student transferred to my school from another school	72.88%	43
Failure to be notified by the court or court-designated worker about a student enrolled in my school	79.66%	47
Failure to be notified immediately by a school or local board employee about a student enrolled in my school	22.03%	13
Other (please specify)	8.47%	5
Total Respondents: 59		

Q18 Please indicate the degree to which your school needs MORE of the following options or supports to promote positive student behavior.

	NOT NECESSARY; OUR CURRENT LEVEL OF OPTIONS OR SUPPORT IS SATISFACTORY	NOT NECESSARY; WE DO NOT HAVE THIS OPTION OR SUPPORT AND DO NOT NEED IT	MORE OF THIS OPTION OR SUPPORT IS SOMEWHAT NEEDED	MORE OF THIS OPTION OR SUPPORT IS HIGHLY NEEDED	MORE OF THIS OPTION OR SUPPORT IS EXTREMELY NEEDED	TOTAL
Instructional placement options for students far below grade level	28.44% 184	4.17% 27	39.26% 254	21.48% 139	6.65% 43	647
Classes that are engaging for students who are less interested in traditional academic classes (examples might include career and technical or elective classes)	34.88% 226	16.05% 104	29.94% 194	14.20% 92	4.94% 32	648
Flexibility in options permitted for moving IEP or 504 students to different physical locations for instruction or support, without documenting a disciplinary removal	23.81% 155	6.14% 40	30.88% 201	19.82% 129	19.35% 126	651
Consistency of teachers in implementing current behavioral management system or school code of conduct	39.35% 255	11.73% 76	34.88% 226	10.96% 71	3.09% 20	648
Meaningful positive incentives for students to adhere to the school's code of conduct	39.97% 259	10.03% 65	32.10% 208	14.81% 96	3.09% 20	648
Meaningful negative consequences for students whose behavior presents persistent or severe challenges	29.38% 191	10.15% 66	31.38% 204	19.85% 129	9.23% 60	650
Parent support for students to follow the school's code of conduct	21.69% 141	7.54% 49	31.38% 204	23.85% 155	15.54% 101	650
Mental health supports	23.11% 150	5.86% 38	29.28% 190	24.50% 159	17.26% 112	649
Other (please specify)	65.71% 69	5.71% 6	10.48% 11	3.81% 4	14.29% 15	105

Q19 Please indicate the degree to which your school needs MORE of the following training or support to promote positive student behavior.

	NOT NECESSARY; OUR CURRENT LEVEL OF TRAINING OR SUPPORT IS SATISFACTORY	NOT NECESSARY; WE DO NOT HAVE THIS TRAINING OR SUPPORT AND DO NOT NEED IT	MORE OF THIS OPTION OR SUPPORT IS SOMEWHAT NEEDED	MORE OF THIS OPTION OR SUPPORT IS HIGHLY NEEDED	MORE OF THIS OPTION OR SUPPORT IS EXTREMELY NEEDED	TOTAL
Mentoring and support for teachers specifically for classroom management issues	31.29% 204	5.21% 34	45.09% 294	15.03% 98	3.37% 22	652
Mentoring and support for administrators specifically for school discipline issues	42.70% 278	8.76% 57	35.64% 232	9.98% 65	2.92% 19	651
Professional development and support for instructional strategies that engage students	27.76% 181	3.83% 25	46.63% 304	17.48% 114	4.29% 28	652
Professional development and support for implementing positive behavioral management systems (PBIS)	37.54% 244	9.23% 60	40.77% 265	10.77% 70	1.69% 11	650
Professional development and support for providing trauma-informed care	32.10% 208	6.48% 42	43.06% 279	14.20% 92	4.17% 27	648
Other (please specify)	74.42% 64	2.33% 2	17.44% 15	2.33% 2	3.49% 3	86

Q20 Please indicate the TOP THREE options or supports your school needs MORE of to promote positive student behavior (this question requires a response of no more than three).

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Mentoring and support for teachers specifically for classroom management issues	27.57%	177
Mentoring and support for administrators specifically for school discipline issues	5.30%	34
Professional development and support for instructional strategies that engage students	23.68%	152
Instructional placement options for students far below grade level	29.28%	188
Classes that are engaging for students who are less interested in traditional academic classes (examples might include career and technical or elective classes)	15.42%	99
Flexibility in options permitted for moving IEP or 504 students to different physical locations for instruction or support, without documenting a disciplinary removal	50.78%	326
Professional development and support for implementing positive behavioral management systems (PBIS)	10.75%	69
Professional development and support for providing trauma-informed care	14.64%	94
Consistency of teachers in implementing current behavioral management system or school code of conduct	15.11%	97
Meaningful positive incentives for students to adhere to the school's code of conduct	14.02%	90
Meaningful negative consequences for students whose behavior presents persistent or severe challenges	23.83%	153
Parent support for students to adhere to the school's code of conduct	31.31%	201
Mental health supports	27.73%	178
Other (please specify)	1.40%	9
Total Respondents: 642		

Q21 Please indicate the status of options available to your school as learning environments for students who experience behavioral challenges in the regular classroom.

	AVAILABLE WITH SUFFICIENT STUDENT PLACEMENT SLOTS	AVAILABLE BUT INSUFFICIENT STUDENT PLACEMENT SLOTS	NOT AVAILABLE AND NOT NECESSARY	NOT AVAILABLE AND SOMEWHAT NEEDED	NOT AVAILABLE AND GREATLY NEEDED	DON'T KNOW OR NOT SURE	TOTAL
Alternative learning program located in the district	32.77% 214	29.10% 190	7.35% 48	7.96% 52	18.07% 118	4.75% 31	653
Emotional or behavioral resource room located in district	25.11% 164	18.99% 124	12.40% 81	12.10% 79	18.38% 120	13.02% 85	653
Full-time virtual option offered by district	36.75% 240	13.78% 90	22.36% 146	9.34% 61	10.57% 69	7.20% 47	653
Emotional or behavioral resource room located at the school	36.53% 240	13.55% 89	11.42% 75	18.26% 120	18.26% 120	1.98% 13	657
Alternative learning program or classroom located at the school	21.92% 144	10.50% 69	23.44% 154	21.46% 141	20.40% 134	2.28% 15	657
Short-term virtual learning at student's residence	25.69% 167	9.38% 61	28.92% 188	15.08% 98	11.38% 74	9.54% 62	650
In school suspension classroom with specifically designated, full-time certified staff	37.75% 248	9.13% 60	11.11% 73	20.09% 132	20.85% 137	1.07% 7	657
Short-term virtual learning classroom at the school	17.26% 112	6.32% 41	38.21% 248	20.65% 134	10.17% 66	7.40% 48	649
Alternative learning program located in another district	8.22% 53	4.96% 32	41.09% 265	4.65% 30	6.67% 43	34.42% 222	645

Q22 Please use this space to offer additional explanation related to learning environments needed in your school as alternatives to the regular classroom.

24 themes have been applied to 72 out of 89 responses	% Of Total Tags	# Tagged
Behavioral Intervention...	9%	9
Mental Health Support	8%	8
Behavioral Intervention...	7%	7
Virtual Learning Management	7%	7

Q23 To what extent do each of the following factors present a challenge to your school's ability to address persistent or severe behavior issues?

	LITTLE OR NO CHALLENGE	MINOR CHALLENGE	MODERATE CHALLENGE	MAJOR CHALLENGE	EXTREME CHALLENGE	DON'T KNOW OR NOT SURE	TOTAL
Lack of flexibility in options permitted to provide educational or behavioral support for students with IEPs or 504 plans at locations outside of the regular classroom, without documenting a disciplinary removal	19.59% 124	17.38% 110	24.80% 157	17.54% 111	19.43% 123	1.26% 8	633
Legal restrictions on the total number of accumulated days (10) that students with IEPs or 504 plans can be subject to disciplinary removals	21.17% 134	17.69% 112	21.96% 139	20.70% 131	17.85% 113	0.63% 4	633
Lack of alternative settings in which students who experience behavioral challenges in the regular classroom can receive instruction	21.17% 134	21.96% 139	21.96% 139	17.69% 112	16.43% 104	0.79% 5	633
Lack of parent support for disciplinary consequences when students violate the code of conduct	20.70% 131	27.01% 171	23.54% 149	14.38% 91	12.48% 79	1.90% 12	633
District discourages placement of students in alternative learning programs, even when behavioral challenges are persistent or severe (regardless of IEP or 504 status)	48.97% 310	16.90% 107	11.06% 70	10.43% 66	9.16% 58	3.48% 22	633
Refusal of parents to support mental health professionals' recommendations related to mental health treatments	29.95% 189	26.15% 165	23.30% 147	10.94% 69	7.92% 50	1.74% 11	631
District discourages in- or out-of-school suspensions for students who violate the code of conduct (regardless of IEP or 504 status)	56.49% 357	16.46% 104	12.50% 79	7.44% 47	5.06% 32	2.06% 13	632
Refusal of parents to support ARC recommendations related to student placement	44.94% 284	26.11% 165	16.46% 104	6.65% 42	3.16% 20	2.69% 17	632
District discourages pressing of criminal charges against students for serious criminal behavior (for example assault, drug sales, or terroristic threatening)	67.88% 429	11.55% 73	6.80% 43	3.01% 19	3.01% 19	7.75% 49	632

Q24 Does your school have any policies, procedures, or practices in place specifically for students who have been removed from the same classroom three times within a 30-day period?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	35.06%	217
No	64.94%	402
TOTAL		619

Q25 Which of the following best describes your school's use of data to identify chronically disruptive students?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Our school can identify chronically disruptive students as needed, but does not systematically identify chronically disruptive students	52.97%	116
Our school systematically identifies chronically disruptive students (please explain)	47.03%	103
TOTAL		219

Q26 Approximately how many students were specifically identified as chronically disruptive in your school in the 2024-2025 school year?

Please see OEA compiled data for this question in Chapter 3.

Q27 Of the students who were identified as chronically disruptive, for about what proportion did your school take disciplinary action?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
75 to 100 percent	55.61%	119
50 to 74 percent	7.94%	17
25 to 49 percent	2.80%	6
24 percent or less	11.68%	25
None	3.27%	7
N/A; we did not identify any chronically disruptive students	18.69%	40
TOTAL		214

Q28 Please indicate which disciplinary options your school took for chronically disruptive students and for how long (check all that apply).

	N/A OUR SCHOOL DID NOT USE THIS OPTION	1 DAY OR LESS	MORE THAN 1 DAY, LESS THAN 1 WEEK	BETWEEN 1 WEEK AND 1 MONTH	MORE THAN 1 MONTH AND LESS THAN 3 MONTHS	3 MONTHS OR MORE	TOTAL RESPONDENTS
Reassigned to a different teacher in the school	59.04% 98	9.64% 16	9.64% 16	3.61% 6	7.83% 13	13.86% 23	166
Placed in an in-person alternative learning program or classroom located in the school	46.95% 77	12.80% 21	21.95% 36	15.24% 25	9.15% 15	5.49% 9	164
Placed in an in-person alternative learning program located in the district	55.36% 93	1.19% 2	4.76% 8	13.69% 23	16.07% 27	17.26% 29	168
Placed in an in-person virtual learning program located in the school	82.21% 134	1.23% 2	4.29% 7	4.29% 7	6.75% 11	4.91% 8	163
Placed in a virtual learning program at student's residence	70.12% 115	2.44% 4	1.83% 3	4.88% 8	10.98% 18	14.63% 24	164
In-school suspension	14.37% 24	20.96% 35	53.29% 89	19.16% 32	4.79% 8	1.20% 2	167
Out-of-school suspension	8.43% 14	19.88% 33	66.27% 110	17.47% 29	2.41% 4	0.60% 1	166
Other (please specify)	76.47% 13	5.88% 1	11.76% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5.88% 1	17

Q29 To what extent do you believe that district administrators attempt to understand the full range of behavioral or disciplinary challenges you face at your school?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
To a great extent	47.56%	293
To a moderate extent	39.77%	245
To little or no extent	12.66%	78
TOTAL		616

Q30 To what extent are you satisfied with the support you receive from district staff in addressing behavioral or disciplinary challenges at your school?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Extremely satisfied	25.32%	156
Very satisfied	31.33%	193
Somewhat satisfied	28.25%	174
Somewhat unsatisfied	10.39%	64
Extremely unsatisfied	4.71%	29
TOTAL		616

Q31 Please use this space to describe any support provided by your district that you have found particularly effective related to behavior or discipline.

29 themes have been applied to 119 out of 126 responses	% Of Total Tags	# Tagged
Alternative Student Placement	13%	21
Behavioral Support Limitations	7%	11
Behavioral Intervention...	6%	10
Behavioral Consultation...	6%	10

Administrative Responsiveness		6%	9
Disciplinary Policy Equity		5%	8
Mental Health Services		4%	7
Special Education Support		4%	6
Behavior Management		4%	6
Serious Incident Response		4%	6
District-Level Support		4%	6
Staff and Leadership Support		3%	5
Disciplinary Approaches		3%	5
School Administration...		3%	5
Administrative Decision-Making		3%	5

Q32 Please use this space to add any additional comments about behavioral or disciplinary challenges you face in your school that affect teaching or learning.

28 themes have been applied to **96** out of **112** responses

		% Of Total Tags	# Tagged
Classroom Disruptive Behavior		12%	17
Parental Accountability an...		9%	12
IEP Behavioral Constraints		8%	11
Alternative School Placement		6%	9
Staffing Challenges		6%	9
Student Behavior Management		5%	7
Student Behavioral Variation		4%	6
Suspension Policy Limitations		4%	6
Student Emotional Regulation		4%	5
Mobile Device Distraction		4%	5
Behavioral Intervention...		4%	5

Q33 Please use this space to add any additional comments about behavioral or disciplinary challenges you face in your school that affect the safety of students or staff.

20 themes have been applied to 63 out of 83 responses		% Of Total Tags	# Tagged
Aggression and Violence Incidents		10%	8
Special Needs Behavioral Issues		9%	7
Mental Health Support		9%	7
Student Rights and Discipline		8%	6
Special Education Discipline		6%	5

Q34 Please use this space to describe any strategies used in your school that you have found particularly effective to address behavior or discipline.

30 themes have been applied to 96 out of 101 responses		% Of Total Tags	# Tagged
PBIS Implementation		16%	25
Behavioral Intervention...		9%	15
Relationship-Based Management		7%	11
Mental Health Services		6%	9

Student Incentive Programs		5%	8
Restorative Discipline...		5%	8
Consistent School Expectations		4%	7
Disciplinary Actions		4%	7
Classroom Discipline...		4%	6
Alternative Educational...		4%	6
Family and Parent Engagement		4%	6
Comprehensive Student Support		3%	5
Points-Based Behavior Tracking		3%	5

Q35 Please use this space to describe any support provided by outside agencies that you have found particularly helpful to address behavior or discipline.

21 themes have been applied to 54 out of 70 responses

		% Of Total Tags	# Tagged
School-Based Mental Health...		14%	10
Law Enforcement Collaboration		8%	6
Mental Health Provider Quality		8%	6
External Counseling Partnerships		7%	5

Q36 Please use this space to identify any challenges you are facing related to behavior or discipline that might be addressed by modifying current Kentucky law or introducing new laws.

		% Of Total Tags	# Tagged
Parental Accountability		16%	15
Special Education Discipline Policies		8%	8
Disruptive Student Management		8%	8
Student Discipline Policies		8%	8
Cell Phone Policy		5%	5
Student Placement in Special...		5%	5

Q37 Please use this space to add any other comments related to school discipline issues in your school or in Kentucky.

Appendix B

Principal Survey Comments

Following are a selection of individual responses provided in the comments section on individual questions on the survey. Responses have been altered only in the few cases when a specific school or district was cited.

Responses to the open-ended questions are grouped by category by the software and reported in Appendix B.

Classroom clears

- Behavior incidents continue to climb every year and with inappropriate resources (FRC, Counselors, teacher trainings) people are becoming disenchanted with the profession. (classroom clears)
- Each time the room was cleared, students and staff had to refocus, if possible, and try to get back on track and continue learning while feeling safe. However, this is a hard task for several and despite the work to reunify or reenter - it's a hard feeling and emotion to get over when desks and chairs are thrown towards staff and students, and they make contact. I feel that a policy that requires schools and districts to notify families of the room clears would be helpful so that all stakeholders are aware of what's going on in the classrooms. (classroom clears)
- most of the students requiring room clears have an IEP. However with the reduction in self-contained supports and services at the Elementary Level, many of our students are not getting an appropriate amount of support in the general educatio enviornment and all day resource is not conducive or in the best interest of the students. (classroom clears)
- It can trigger other students when they have to witness severe student behavior and see adults enter the classroom to help with the situation. This also impacts students learning with the whole class losing instruction and focus when having to move rooms and/or tolerate severe behaviors. (classroom clears)
- Our building is over capacity and out of space. When a classroom has to be cleared they have to take a walk, go outside if weather permits, or enter another room which interrupts that classrooms well. (classroom clears)
- Helping other students cope with this trauma after the student returns to class, explaining to parents of other students (classroom clears)
- Clearing classrooms disrupts instruction for not only the child who is having the behavior issue, but also every other student in the classroom, as well as the teacher. It often makes the other students nervous/anxious/afraid. These unexpected disruptions can also escalate other students with issues of their own to overcome such as students with autism and those who thrive on routine.
- Having to clear a room is disruptive and dangerous for all students, not just the student causing the disruption. Learning comes to a halt, regardless of how much the teacher tries to re-engage students in their normal routine.
- Last year we faced extreme behaviors from students. We had rooms leveled and cleared, assault of staff members which required SCM trained staff to intervene and often this

occurred in multiple places at the same time. We had one fully autistic student who hit, kicked, smacked, bit, etc. We had two extremely defiant students who would leave classrooms often and curse out staff . We also had one that would poop and lunge it at staff. It was a horrible year for behaviors. We have few options at the elementary level that the middle and high school do have.

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Need to protect of individual

- Students should not have to sit in a classroom where one specific student might "explode" at any moment. We are creating trauma for those students.
- Required districts to implement the existing laws   Any laws that require districts to take a harder stance on severe behaviors and chronic minor behaviors would be helpful. It is non-sensible to me that we would ever clear your classroom and disrupt 29 students because of students behavior instead of removing the single student.
- I think it needs to be harder to get an IEP period. Not every student who misbehaves has a disability. Just like not every student who doesn't do well in school has a disability. If we can't make that happen, then we need to make it easier to give these students consequences without breaking the law. I also think that violent students should be sent to an alternative location regardless of disability. The overall safety of students and staff members should trump a student's rights under IDEA.
- Students with IEP's or 504's should be removed from the general education classroom if they are causing daily issues with behavior and threatening the safety of others. With the threat of advocates, lawsuits, and other legal issues, the school has to collect data and show that they are following the IEP, collecting data, etc. for far too long, causing trauma in other students and reducing parental trust in the school when their child comes home telling them about what happened at school that day.   Districts should also create virtual or alternative education settings for lower level grades as well. Currently our alternative school starts in 6th grade but has incredibly limited space. This year, there were three sixth grade students who needed to be placed in alternative school due to repeated issues. Unfortunately due to space, these students had to stay placed at the school level where they disrupted and caused further issues in an ISS setting.
- The past several years there has been such a push for individual liberties of certain students like students with IEPs, gender questioning, etc that teachers fear or are not allowed to teach the general population. No matter what the reason for classroom disruptions, the general population deserves a great education. Because of the push for individual liberties in classrooms and all the regulations behind it, the general population suffers when the learning of self or others is disrupted due to a special interest group. I know those students need advocates, but when teachers can't teach, something needs to be done for the sake of the whole school.
- It is very disheartening when we are spending 90% of our time with less than 5% of our population. Then we make decisions based on the well-being of ONE student in a classroom, when 20 others have been impacted without having done anything wrong. ALL students should be given the opportunity to learn, but it seems a small faction are trying to ruin this for the rest; particularly in my school. They need help, much of which we cannot offer at the school, but lack of parental support or alternative learning options is hindering not just those who need support but those who are impacted by those students' negative behavior.

Success stories—positive examples from schools and districts

- We participate in a Pathways behavior program that has promoted life changing positive behavior in students with extreme behavior disorders that qualify for the program through and IEP. The path it takes to receive these services takes weeks to months, sometimes years. If we had could replicate this program for general ed/intervention, it could potentially prevent an IEP and give students what they need more quickly with highly trained staff.
- I think they absolutely attempt to understand but even they are limited by IEP/504 red tape and available district placement options. (district admin attempts to understand discipline challenges)
- Our DPP is exceptional and very supportive.
- Our district staff is very supportive and will always try to provide support to the needs of our students in every situation. I have experienced nothing but support from the district staff when it comes to discipline issues. We are blessed to have a good school administrative staff that is proactive in resolving most of our discipline issues.
- A Behavior Consultant was hired this year and she was incredibly helpful to us.
- The district's behavior intervention training and clear discipline guidelines have been very effective in helping me manage the classroom and support student growth.
- Our school SRO will charge students when needed. That is very helpful when you have parents who are not supportive of the school or believe their child can do no wrong.
- Our district has clear policies and procedures (Code of Conduct for students), we get professional development in PBIS and Trauma Informed Care. We offer this training to teachers as well. We also receive training on how to evaluate our own discipline data to pinpoint problem areas and brainstorm solutions to those. There is also a pretty big emphasis on preventing problem behavior through engaging instruction.
- The district provided temporary one-on-one support for a Kindergarten student in referral for an IEP while we waited for her official accommodations to be adopted. This was a game changer in her behavior!
- Our district has employed behavior interventionists to focus on elementary, middle, and high school level students. We have one behavior interventionist who focuses on each grade level category, but they can all three be counted on to problem solve with each other. They have been instrumental in supporting our students with highest level of behavioral needs this year and greatly appreciated.
- We have implemented PBIS rewards to incentivize positive behavior and that has been effective. We have also implemented our own homemade digital Hall pass system using Google sheets that has prevented students from being able to utilize hallway time during class for misbehavior as well as a digital tardy system that we designed ourselves. We also have a classroom in fraction system. That helps us monitor classroom disruption, and keep parents informed. These strategies have really helped improve behavior over the last two or three years.
- We use a Minor's Spreadsheet to track behavior. Teachers add minor behaviors onto to the document. Admin monitors daily. When a student receives 3 minors in a 20 day period, an official referral is recorded and all teachers, parents, and the student are included on the communication. We began using this system two years ago. Classroom removals dropped by over 70%, suspensions were significantly reduced, and parent support increased because communication was regular and transparent.
- We teach good behavior using CHAMPs, we utilize PBIS and incentivize good behavior, Check and Connect has been useful for a tier 2 intervention, but it doesn't work for all

students. We also have the WhyTry Program as a tier 2 intervention. If a student ends up suspended or in ISD, we have specific interventions that we can give them based on what put them there. They have to complete this assignment before working on their other assignments, and our ISD teacher will meet with them about their responses to this assignment. Our FRYSC and guidance counselors also run groups for students with different needs: anger management, peer relationships, etc.

- At the beginning of the year I challenged the students to a no fight challenge and rewarded the school each time we went 9 weeks without a fight. They received two rewards this year. I hope next year we make it to three. We reduced fighting from 23 incidents to 6 incidents. My behavior improved this year by 40% because I met with students constantly and explained my expectations. I also made sure I was fair.

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Lack of support from district or otherwise in removals or discipline

- Our district has an alternative school for grades 6-12; however, that doesn't help elementary schools with repeat behaviors. Also, the alternative school has so few spots available that it doesn't adequately support the middle and high schools. (I worked in one of our high schools for 19 years, and there was never enough room for the students who needed that option.)

- Frustration with offering alternative placement support for middle and high school behavioral students and not at the elementary level . Community Mental health supports are not offered for children under 12 years of age. Community health support can't be found for primary students. There are too many disruptions from a small number of students . There are no solutions when district doesn't place students . Example:special education 5th grader who pees pants, cries, barks like dog, cusses like sailor during instruction on the daily should not have protected rights because of the of the iep when others' rights to learning is disrupted. Everyone has rights and the balance needs to be the equity. We need to find a better solution for ALL students .

- The district does not discourage pressing charges, however, our CDW will tell our police officers they cannot press charges on students who are younger than 12. We've had SEVERAL violent students who the only way the parents will help is when they are forced through the court. We are a small town/county, and this is a huge problem.

- The special education district staff does not seem to understand the instructional implications some of these students are causing for other students in the class over a long period of time.

- Our direct supervisors and support to high schools are very in tune with principal needs and supports; however, district climate and culture are not as responsive or supportive of consistent interruptions by students due to persistent behavior issues or outside of school criminal activities. Alternative placement in our district requires in-school criminal activity or significant bodily injury during an assault situation. it really is not appropriate for all students who commit crimes outside of school to be permitted to attend A1 schools, nor is it appropriate that bodily dismemberment is the only physical injury that results in alternative placement. We are in need of out-of-school suspension options (such as online learning options) to remove students when necessary for consistency in the learning environment for all students.

- I don't believe my district intentionally does not support my school and behavioral issues. Like all of us, we don't know what to do about the extreme behaviors we are seeing in our

schools now. We do not have alternative programs or placements for students in elementary school. We have a highly structured program in our school, but this does not meet the level of need for our students. Their severe behaviors, and the volume of students, makes the job more like putting out fires than actually being helpful to those students.

• Parents' behavior online or in person is defeating for teachers.   We have to justify every suspension we make- children grow up with very few consequences. Making a kill list, bringing knives to school, and threats of violence, etc. We just can't give the consequences these things deserve. If we do, we are questioned and told to lower the numbers. I believe this leads to worse behavior in middle and high school because these children were not disciplined in elementary school.

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Challenges – mental health, IEP, parents, need for alternative environments

• Need consequences for parents with students who are habitual truants or late for school.
• This is an issue with with our Special Education population. Students and families often feel that the disability is a pass to physically assault staff.
• We serve a handful of students who are behind same age peers with executive functioning due to a diagnosis of Autism or an emotional behavior disorder. Intellectually these students are performing at or above the same level as peers. The problem lies when the normal operations of the general education setting staffed with one teacher and up to 29 students does not allow for the small group/individual support these students need to successfully navigate the academic day. The result is escalated behavior that sometimes requires evacuation of all other students in the room, impacting the learning for all. Other times, it requires intense deescalation one-on-one with a staff member that can last for hours, preventing that staff member from completing normal job duties. (classroom disruption)
• We need more support for students who are being served with a disability for Autism and Social Emotional. These students are spending the majority of their day in a general classroom setting with major disruptions to the whole learning environment. This is especially the case for students with Autism.
• We have observed students actually get worse with mental health services. Esp students on government assistance. The worse the diagnosis the more the agency can bill for services. The help is not about students getting positive supports but rather keeping them "sick" to make more money off the system.
• We are an elementary school with 972 students. We get allocated one principal, one AP, and 1.5 counselors. I have to purchase or trade in .5 position to have 2 full counselors to serve our school. We are bigger than all but one middle school and they are allocated more admin and counselor support bc that's "the allocation formula".
• There are currently no criminal repercussions for children under the age of 12 who engage in repeated, severe behaviors such as assaults, threats, or other criminal acts. Additionally, there is a significant lack of adequate mental health support and facilities for students in this age group, leaving schools and families with limited options for intervention and care.
• The training is, and has been, there. This is not a teacher probelm. This is a societial issue that needs to be addressed or we're going to have less and less people enter, or stay, in the profession.
• Online learning options for students who should not be placed in A1 school settings due to criminal activity outside of school or behaviors that consistently violate school code of

conduct and cause great interruption to the learning environment but do not qualify for alternative placement under current criteria.

- We do not have a room for EBD students or an alternative classroom. Middle and high school do, but it is only for placement for their students so I was unsure what to answer on the questions that asked more about district resources. They do have these things but not available to our students.
- Disciplinary options are limited to in-school suspension or out of school suspension. There needs to be short-term and long term virtual learning options for students who are repeat behavioral offenders and/or violent.
- Need additional staffing to make these options available and successful in a school. Do not put more requirements on the teachers, staff, and admin. Do not take planning times away for teachers to cover these support classrooms/learning environments.
- While our district has some of the alternative supports available at 6-12 levels we do not have the same options K-5. We are very limited on our options for consequences. When some of our students are the most frequently out of control.
- We do not have "extra" staff that can teach and monitor students that removed from the classroom. Whether they have an IEP or not, it really throws a kink in the day. Students in the regular classroom are the ones paying the price. We need to be able to remove all students at ANY point they are disrupting others. We need parents to be held accountable when students are out of control. I can suspend students, but if the parents aren't supporting the school, the students will prefer that. I would love a room or place in the district to send kids that aren't ready to learn, for whatever their reason might be. Some have other needs that aren't being met at home, and it carries over into their school day, putting unrealistic pressure on our teachers and students that are ready to learn.
- I think you are on the right track. The majority of our most severe behavior issues come from students who have IEPs, specifically students who are considered Emotional Behavior Disorder (EBD). It is almost impossible to discipline these students because laws require an ARC to be held to do a change of placement for these students, and before a change of placement can be considered, we have to prove that the behavior was not a "manifestation of their disability." We can also only suspend these students for up to 10 days a year, and this includes in school suspension. Many of these students realize that we are powerless, so their behavior just keeps escalating because there are little to no consequences. Parents are also beginning to catch on and view IEPs as a "get out of jail free card." They often request evaluations for their children to avoid negative consequences. Even if the child doesn't qualify for an IEP, they often qualify for a 504 plan. I have had multiple parents claim that I can't suspend their child because they have an IEP or 504. These students are grossly overidentified too. Not every child with a behavior problem has a disability. Sometimes, they just don't ever experience any consequences for their behavior, so they continue to misbehave. We need to quit "fixing" that by making it nearly impossible to discipline them. I feel sorry for these students because when they are adults, nobody cares about their IEP or 504 plan. We are setting them up for failure for life beyond school. They aren't being that successful in school either because most of these students are also below grade level in both reading and math.
- We have students who would benefit from an alternate school, virtual option, or at home learning; these are not offered at the elementary level.
- Lack of parental support is a major issue. It is always the schools fault and parents take to social media to stir up negativity about the school, teachers, and administrators when in

reality the issues all stem from poor home life and a lack of parenting. Parents are also hiring special education advocates and lawyers to go after teachers and administrators.

- Trauma students are becoming an increasingly larger percentage of the student body. Many students have a level of need that the school is not able to adequately assist them with; however, our day treatment center (in-district) does not have enough seats at times for all, either.
- Parents are not held accountable for the damage that their students bring to the classroom setting or their peers. In the elementary setting often times parents don't take discipline events, seriously as compared to middle school and high school because in middle school and high school behavior events can also lead to adjudication and they don't in elementary.
- The issue is ALWAYS with our special education department because the students who are chronically disruptive are our students with disabilities. There is no appropriate coaching, placement, or support because the disability is taking precedent over all other learning in the classroom
- The student to staff physical aggression has only gotten worse over the last four years with staff morale plummeting. Extreme behavior situations are becoming so common that they are no longer being looked at as extreme but the new normal.
- Every year, we have at least five students who struggle significantly with adjusting to school. These students may hit, kick, bite, spit, throw chairs, or throw school supplies. Their behaviors disrupt the learning environment for everyone, cause stress for staff, and prevent other students from feeling safe and learning effectively. Because a minimum of 6–10 weeks of data collection is required before qualifying for special education services, the student, staff, and peers all struggle during this time without adequate supports in place.
- There is a critical lack of criminal consequences—either for the child or the parent—and insufficient state-provided mental health support for students under the age of 12 who repeatedly assault or threaten staff, even after multiple redirections and re-educational interventions. This gap leaves schools with limited tools to ensure the safety and well-being of both students and staff.
- Students that are classified with an IEP that are extreme safety concerns in the classroom have very few options to keep other students safe. Suspensions are not the answer and we are limited to using in school suspension or alternative placements. We have 3 students that account for almost 40% of our entire school discipline that have created an unsafe environment for other students and staff causing multiple injuries. These students are all 3 classified special education either DD or EBD. We are told by Special Education that they are all to be in the general ed as much as possible.
- I believe there is a difference in regular school discipline and the level of violence we are seeing in a select few of our students. We try to work plans for students who are violent, create BIPs, implement IEPs, etc, but the students are so disregulated thay they cannot follow a plan. It takes mulitple calls to social services, or calling the police before real change happens. We've seen some of our kids "get better", meaning their behaviors become less violent. Still, the mental toll it takes on our staff and students who witness and experience the violence until then is irreversible.
- We have created our own MTSS system and I've connected with seven counties Maryhurst Bluegrass counseling associates to provide support to our students in the building. We also have partnered with volunteers of America restorative justice initiative to help some families. The problem is is that after a child reaches so many discipline events sometimes parents unengage with the school and processes. Many parents do not want anyone in their business or to know what their child might need or for anybody to know that they might not

be following the best guidance from the school professionals. It makes it very difficult to move. Students forward.

- We have great therapist that offer in-school counseling through Communicare, but there are just not enough of them to meet the need. I feel like our judges are cracking down on problem behavior when it escalates to charges. However, if the student has an IEP, often the parents will sue us later claiming that we didn't do everything on the child's IEP prior to them biting a teacher or assaulting another student.

- That is the problem; there are no outside agencies for small rural districts. (mental health)

- I think it needs to be harder to get an IEP period. Not every student who misbehaves has a disability. Just like not every student who doesn't do well in school has a disability. If we can't make that happen, then we need to make it easier to give these students consequences without breaking the law. I also think that violent students should be sent to an alternative location regardless of disability. The overall safety of students and staff members should trump a student's rights under IDEA.

- Special education laws are a huge barrier to keeping students and staff safe. Administrators everywhere are so afraid they or their district will be sued, or we are breaking a law. The only thing we are told when we have continuing student behaviors is to move to Tier 2, then Tier 3, then move to the referral process for special education, which completely ties our hands. Sometimes the problem is a discipline problem, not a disability. Sometimes they need discipline, not a label. Sometimes the parents need to be responsible for the way their student acts at school. D

- Students with IEP's or 504's should be removed from the general education classroom if they are causing daily issues with behavior and threatening the safety of others. With the threat of advocates, lawsuits, and other legal issues, the school has to collect data and show that they are following the IEP, collecting data, etc. for far too long, causing trauma in other students and reducing parental trust in the school when their child comes home telling them about what happened at school that day.   Districts should also create virtual or alternative education settings for lower level grades as well. Currently our alternative school starts in 6th grade but has incredibly limited space. This year, there were three sixth grade students who needed to be placed in alternative school due to repeated issues. Unfortunately due to space, these students had to stay placed at the school level where they disrupted and caused further issues in an ISS setting.

- One significant challenge we face is the lack of accountability for parents who repeatedly refuse to seek or allow necessary support services for their child. In cases where students become repeat offenders—engaging in criminal behavior or severe disruptions—there should be legal mechanisms to hold parents accountable. Consideration should be given to policies or legislation that impose consequences on parents who neglect their responsibility to intervene, especially when their child's behavior poses a continued risk to others and impedes the learning environment.

- I would like to have the option of placing students that are habitually disruptive on a virtual plan. When we have tried restorative practices and continue to keep getting the behavior over and over it is time to think about the other students.   I specifically had a student that was sent to the office everyday for being disruptive. We tried parent conferences, In school suspension and the student even spent 3 months in an alternative placement. When he returned we continued with the same disruptions.

- Every school district (or a consortium of smaller independent districts) should be required to have an alternative school where students can be placed who are dangerous, unsafe, regularly disruptive, etc. They should also be required to have a vocational school option for

all students where they can learn the trades like electric, plumbing, carpentry, welding, and auto mechanic work. This will motivate those students who are not interested in "regular" school and offer true career training and opportunities for them.

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Chronic disruption implementation, including district not addressing

- • Have more resources to implement the new law of classroom disruptions being removed to place them even if temporary during the day.
- • When I brought up KRS 158.150 in a district admin meeting, it was met with lots of awkward glances as though that was something they had hoped we weren't aware of. They said it wasn't available to students with IEPs, so they haven't really pushed that out. It seems counterintuitive to be learning/teaching process.
- • Current law allows options for removal with 3 incidences in 30 days, but the district has no policies or resources in place to support this.
- • We were pleased to hear about the change to the law that would allow us to use stronger disciplinary action for chronically destructive students however, my district has diminished and minimized that law to the extent that we must call an assistant superintendent to discuss students that we believe to be chronically absent I believe there are many administrators in district that do not even know about the law.
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Anything about vapes, cell phones

- • Vaping is a problem in our state.I would like to see this addressed with added resources for our schools. School discipline, in my opinion, went downhill in our state when these FAIR teams were established. Major discipline issues should have stiffer punishments/consequences. I believe the FAIR teams were established with good intent, and for minor situations are great. However, if a student is a major behavior problem, or commits a crime, having them report to a court/judge used to have a greater impact on making our schools safer. I have been an administrator going on a decade. Thank you for seeking feedback.
- • THC is on the increase. Easy to get, easy to hide, and the companies are making it harder on us to find because they mask the smell with fruit scents and are making them smaller.
- • Vaping is a major issue. I had police come to school on several different occasions and they could do nothing because the vaping is unregulated by the state government. Vaping is my biggest problem at the school bar none. We have Delta 9,THC, and who knows what else in these things. I have suspended where I could but really usually just take the vapes and throw them away.
- • Prior to last school year this would have been considered a major problem. I am not sure what has caused the decrease. I believe the students are becoming better at concealing the vapes and avoiding the detectors.
- • Moderate problem due to cell phone use. However, locking cell phones up in school will not solve the problem. (student apathy)
- • Ability to coordinate fight timing, as well as video and share with access to social media during the day keeps conflicts stirring. (cell phones)
- • The new cell phone law was a big help in this area
- • We implemented a strict cell phone policy last year, which is consistently enforced by all staff. It has made a significant improvement in the school culture.

- I would guess that greater than 9 of 10 behavior challenges in school begin with students using cell phones. Cell phones need to be banned altogether for students in school. They are not needed for classroom learning, so they should not be in school.
- Vaping is the largest problem faced in schools. Or at least my school. The kids get them and then sell or trade at school. If we catch them we discipline them but these students are sneaky. Once caught they really don't have serious consequences because you can't prosecute like you do with "traditional illegal drugs."
- Vape shops are too accessible to minors along with the THC devices. Social Media is destroying our youth! They are dangerous to students who do not recognize the difference between a virtual stranger and a neighbor same age friend. There is an underworld that is intriguing to our curious children and once exposed to them it becomes very difficult to disengage. Parents are working and don't understand technology as well and seem to be unable to manage this for their children, or they use technology as babysitters with no supervision. Many of the difficult behaviors in school can be followed back to phone usage. Sexting, Devious Licks, Challenges like "slap a teacher" or "burn a chromebook", Cyberbullying, connecting with vape/drug dealers, Suicide Packs, Threats toward the school.
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Extreme behavior challenges in elementary schools

- Kindergarten students come into the classroom with many, many disruptive behaviors. Throwing chairs, biting, kicking, hitting
- The transition from Early Childhood (Pre-K) to kindergarten is a challenge. We are experiencing more incoming kindergarteners with behavior challenges and little support from either early childhood centers or parents.
- incoming Kindergarteners who are not ready for K according to screening and diagnostics, that have not had an evaluation are placed in regular education classrooms with no support and it is often extremely disruptive to all students and a disservice to all students.
- The issue is the lack of support and high level of needs for our youngest students in grades K-2. These students are coming in with no PK, high needs in social emotional areas, and many are Autistic or not appropriately diagnosed with learning disabilities. We have several students who come in with medical diagnosis of Autism but the school cannot recognize these and must perform their own testing. This is a hindrance to the student receiving intervention right away and quite frankly seems ridiculous that a medical professional can diagnose a child but we don't accept it.
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General Statements about behavior challenges

- while the numbers overall seem low, it leaves students and staff feeling unsafe
- 3-5 specific students with multiple events, sometimes weekly
- This is directly connected to student apathy. Parents aren't parenting or are working jobs where they are not home to make sure their child gets up for school.
- Even a little disruption is really unacceptable for all of the students. There are a lot of students who don't want or need the disruption.
- This is a daily issue. While we have some resources to help with this, it is hard fo students and staff to work in this type of environment. (classroom disruption)

- Disorderly Conduct: Horseplaying, Continuously blurting out in class, not listening to directives when student behavior is corrected, lack of self-regulation but not to the level of throwing things across the room, it is more mainstream of students not respecting or listening to adults when they are corrected and the behavior continues till the entire learning environment is disrupted. Students just do not believe they have to follow the rules
- Violent behavior should never be tolerated. We discipline at the school level with suspensions but students return to school and repeat behavior. Staff have to be severely injured to have a student placed in an alternative setting. Any student with more than one physically violent incident such as a fight should lose their privilege of in-person school for a period of time.
- Students have changed, there are more behavior now than there has ever been in the last 25 years. If we do not figure out more options for students who are causing these disruptions to the learning environment we will never make the academic gains needed for our students to be able to compete in this ever changing world economy. We will continue to lose teachers because we do not have options as administrators even when we want to support classroom management. When a teacher has exhausted all of their options their admin has given them and when the administrator has exhausted all of their options that district has provided to them what else are we to do. This is not getting any better.I do believe we need an alternative school as the mainstream disruptive behavior we see stems mostly from wanting attention from peers. The need for attention is so wide spread that no matter what deterrents/rewards we put in place the student will continue to act out to meet their attention needs. Class sizes also impact this. You cannot have a class of 28/29 6th graders in it and expect one adult to monitor all the behavior that is happening, simultaneously providing frequent specific targeted academic feedback, and provide tier 2 interventions, and follow all of our students individual 504 and IEP needs.
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Appendix C

All Violations By State Event Code
2024 Safe Schools Data

The table below shows the overall count and percentage of total violations for each of the state event codes present in the Safe Schools data in 2024. These counts represent behavior events recorded from all school types.

The table also indicates the summary category for each event code and whether that event code represent a board or law violation.

State Event Code Mapping	Freq.	Percent of Total Violations	Category	Law or Board
A01: Alcohol Distribution	41	0.0	Alcohol	Law Violation
A02: Alcohol Possession	201	0.1	Alcohol	Law Violation
A03: Alcohol Use	243	0.1	Alcohol	Law Violation
D01: Drug Distribution	345	0.1	Drug	Law Violation
D02: Drug Possession	4,249	1.7	Drug	Law Violation
D03: Drug Use	2,223	0.9	Drug	Law Violation
H01: Bullying	3,643	1.4	Harassment/Bullying	Law Violation
H02: Harassing Communications	1,433	0.6	Harassment/Bullying	Law Violation
H03: Harassment	7,191	2.8	Harassment/Bullying	Law Violation
H05: Threatening another Student	3,529	1.4	Harassment/Bullying	Law Violation
H06: Threatening Staff	1,067	0.4	Harassment/Bullying	Law Violation
H07: Verbal Abuse	1,192	0.5	Harassment/Bullying	Law Violation
N01: Academic Cheating/Plagiarism	589	0.2	Other	Board Violation
N02: Attendance Policy Violation	243	0.1	Attendance, Tardies, Skipping	Board Violation
N03: Burglary	19	0.0	Other	Board Violation
N04: Bus Rule Violation	1,056	0.4	Other	Board Violation
N05: Dangerous Instrument Possession	331	0.1	Other	Board Violation
N06: Destruction of Property	1,010	0.4	Other	Board Violation
N07: Disorderly Conduct	6,066	2.4	Disorderly, Disrespectful, Disruptive	Board Violation
N08: Disrespectful Behavior	24,205	9.4	Disorderly, Disrespectful, Disruptive	Board Violation
N09: Disruptive Behavior	39,985	15.5	Disorderly, Disrespectful, Disruptive	Board Violation

State Event Code Mapping	Freq.	Percent of Total Violations	Category	Law or Board
N10: Dress Code Incident	2,030	0.8	Other	Board Violation
N11: Drug Paraphernalia Violation	219	0.1	Other	Board Violation
N12: Failure to Attend Detention	1,396	0.5	Attendance, Tardies, Skipping	Board Violation
N13: Fighting - Student to Other (phy..	1,279	0.5	Fighting	Board Violation
N14: Fighting - Student to Staff (phy..	5,050	2.0	Fighting	Board Violation
N15: Fighting - Student to Student (p..	27,345	10.6	Fighting	Board Violation
N16: Forgery	95	0.0	Other	Board Violation
N17: Fraud	20	0.0	Other	Board Violation
N18: Gambling	187	0.1	Other	Board Violation
N19: Insubordination	15,849	6.2	Other	Board Violation
N20: Leaving Campus	1,711	0.7	Attendance, Tardies, Skipping	Board Violation
N21: Loitering	173	0.1	Other	Board Violation
N23: Out of Area Violation	2,387	0.9	Other	Board Violation
N24: Possession of Stolen Property	61	0.0	Other	Board Violation
N25: Profanity or Vulgarity	13,409	5.2	Other	Board Violation
N26: Self-Endangerment	413	0.2	Other	Board Violation
N27: Skipping Class	24,581	9.6	Attendance, Tardies, Skipping	Board Violation
N28: Skipping School	789	0.3	Attendance, Tardies, Skipping	Board Violation
N29: Tardy to Class	12,202	4.7	Attendance, Tardies, Skipping	Board Violation
N30: Theft/Stealing	1,716	0.7	Other	Board Violation
N31: Trespassing	75	0.0	Other	Board Violation
N32: Truancy	16	0.0	Attendance, Tardies, Skipping	Board Violation
N33: Vandalism	1,021	0.4	Other	Board Violation
N34: Violation of District Acceptable..	870	0.3	Other	Board Violation
N35: Violation of Personal Electronic..	7,806	3.0	Other	Board Violation
N99: No State Violation	13,899	5.4	No State Violation	Board Violation
T01: Tobacco Distribution	621	0.2	Tobacco	Law Violation
T02: Tobacco Possession	8,613	3.4	Tobacco	Law Violation
T03: Tobacco Use	6,801	2.6	Tobacco	Law Violation
V01: 1st Degree Assault	49	0.0	Assault/Violence	Law Violation
V02: 2nd Degree Assault	79	0.0	Assault/Violence	Law Violation
V03: 3rd Degree Assault	373	0.1	Assault/Violence	Law Violation
V04: 4th Degree Assault	1,222	0.5	Assault/Violence	Law Violation
V05: Abuse of a Teacher	1,428	0.6	Assault/Violence	Law Violation
V06: Arson	32	0.0	Assault/Violence	Law Violation

State Event Code Mapping	Freq.	Percent of Total Violations	Category	Law or Board
V07: Criminal Abuse	3	0.0	Assault/Violence	Law Violation
V10: Menacing	615	0.2	Assault/Violence	Law Violation
V11: Rape	----	0.0	Assault/Violence	Law Violation
V12: Robbery/Theft	286	0.1	Assault/Violence	Law Violation
V13: Sexual Assault	137	0.1	Assault/Violence	Law Violation
V14: Sexual Offense (non-touch)	759	0.3	Assault/Violence	Law Violation
V15: Terroristic - Bomb	45	0.0	Assault/Violence	Law Violation
V16: Terroristic Threat	1,717	0.7	Assault/Violence	Law Violation
V17: Terroristic-Chem/Bio/Nuc		0.0	Assault/Violence	Law Violation
V18: Wanton Endangerment	41	0.0	Assault/Violence	Law Violation
V19: Hazing 1st Degree	6	0.0	Assault/Violence	Law Violation
V20: Hazing 2nd Degree	5	0.0	Assault/Violence	Law Violation
W01: Weapon Possession	976	0.4	Weapon	Law Violation
W02: Weapon Distribution	8	0.0	Weapon	Law Violation
W03: Weapon Use	11	0.0	Weapon	Law Violation
Total	**257,290**	**100.0**	**All Violations**	

Note: --- indicates more than 0 and less than 3.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Appendix D

Disproportionality In Rates Of Disciplinary Consequences

This appendix discusses disproportionality in terms of the rate at which students from certain demographic groups were removed from the classroom or suspended from school at least once in the 2024 school year.

Risk ratios are calculated by dividing the percentage of students in the demographic group of interest who experienced the specified discipline event at least once by the percentage of all other students who experienced the same discipline event at least once. These individual values are known as risk rates. An example of how the disproportionality score for the suspension of FRPL students would be calculated is provided below.

(# of FRPL students suspended one or more times / # of FRPL students)

/

(# of non-FRPL students suspended one or more times / # of non-FRPL students)

In this section, risk ratios are discussed at both the state and district levels, for students in A1 schools only. For the state-level risk ratios, all students in A1 schools are considered. However, for a school district to be included in a district-level analysis, there must be at least 30 students in both the primary and comparison group, and at least 10 students in each group must have experienced the specified discipline event. If a district fails to meet either criterion for the primary group, risk ratios are not calculated for that district. If a district fails to meet either criterion for the comparison group, then the state-level risk rate for the comparison group is used for the calculation of that district's risk ratio.

Disproportionality Trends

The rate at which students experienced these discipline events, at least once, is not distributed proportionately across demographic groups. **Table 1** displays the state-level disproportionality scores for male, Black, Hispanic, and free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL)- qualified students, as well as those with individualized education plans (IEPs), for in-school removals (INSRs) and out-of-school suspensions (OSSs).

Table D.1
State Level Disproportionality In-School Removal
Or Out-of-School Suspension
2023-2024

Demographic	INSR Disproportionality	OSS Disproportionality
Male	1.88	1.85
Black	2.51	2.84
Hispanic	1.04	0.85
IEP	1.04	1.50
FRPL	1.55	2.05

Note: Only Students from A1 schools were included in the calculation of each disproportionality score.
*Scores are calculated based on the number of students in each group to experience the specified event at least once.
**INSR stands for In-school Removal, OSS stands for Out-of-school suspension.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education and the Kentucky Center for Safe Schools.
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Disproportionality was the highest for Black students. Relative to all other students, they were 2.5 times more likely to be removed from a classroom and 2.8 times more likely to be suspended from school. Male, and free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) qualified students were also removed and suspended at disproportionately high rates relative to all other students. Other demographic groups experienced these discipline events at rates that were more proportional. For example, Hispanic students were removed at an approximately proportionate rate, and suspended at disproportionately low rates.

It is important to note that disproportionality for students with IEPs varies substantially among subgroups, with several groups experiencing disproportionately low rates of suspensions and removals. For example, as shown in Table D.2, disproportionality for either event is far greater than the state rate for all IEP students for those students with emotional behavioral disorders. However, students with Autism, developmental delays, functional-mental disabilities, multiple disabilities, and speech language disorders experience each of these three discipline events at disproportionately low levels.

Table D.2
Disproportionality Scores by IEP Type
2023-2024

	Population	INSR Disproportionality	OSS Disproportionality	Violation Disproportionality
Autism	12204	0.46	0.89	0.76
Deaf Blind	*	*	*	*
Developmentally Delayed	11686	0.42	0.71	0.65
Emotional-Behavioral Disability	2852	3.92	8.31	4.88
Functional Mental Disability	2290	0.23	0.79	0.57
Hearing Impaired	191	2.02	3.05	2.49
Mild Mental Disorder	10682	1.64	2.31	1.82
Multiple Disabilities	1183	0.62	1.09	0.85
Orthopedically Impairment	34	2.76	5.88	3.87
Specific Learning Disability	19637	1.36	1.60	1.45
Traumatic Brain Injury	*	*	*	*
Visually Impaired	112	3.35	4.55	3.92
Speech Language Disorder	26968	0.26	0.29	0.31
Other Health Impaired	16933	2.20	3.01	2.32

Note: Only Students from A1 schools were included in the calculation of each disproportionality score.
*Scores are calculated based on the number of students in each group to experience the specified event at least once.
Note: INSR stands for In-school Removal and OSS stands for Out-of-school suspension.
Note: The comparison group for each risk ratio calculation for this table is all students without IEPs
Note: Cells with "*" have had information removed because they had fewer than 30 total students or fewer than 10 of the specified discipline events.
Note: Scores for those students classified as Hearing Impaired, Orthopedically Impaired, or Visually Impaired should be interpreted with caution. While these groups meet the minimum thresholds for reporting, their populations are relatively small and thus prone to more extreme values.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education and the Kentucky Center for Safe Schools.

Appendix E

Variation In District Disproportionality

Disproportionality is observed across the state, but also varies considerably across school districts. For example, the state rate of disproportionality for out-of-school suspensions for economically disadvantaged students is 2.05, but this value varies substantially among districts. Of the 119 qualified school districts, five suspended economically disadvantaged students at disproportionately low rates, and 23 suspended them at more than three times the rate of non-economically disadvantaged students.

Figure E.A
Disproportionality for Economically Disadvantaged
In Out-of-School Suspensions
By School District, 2024
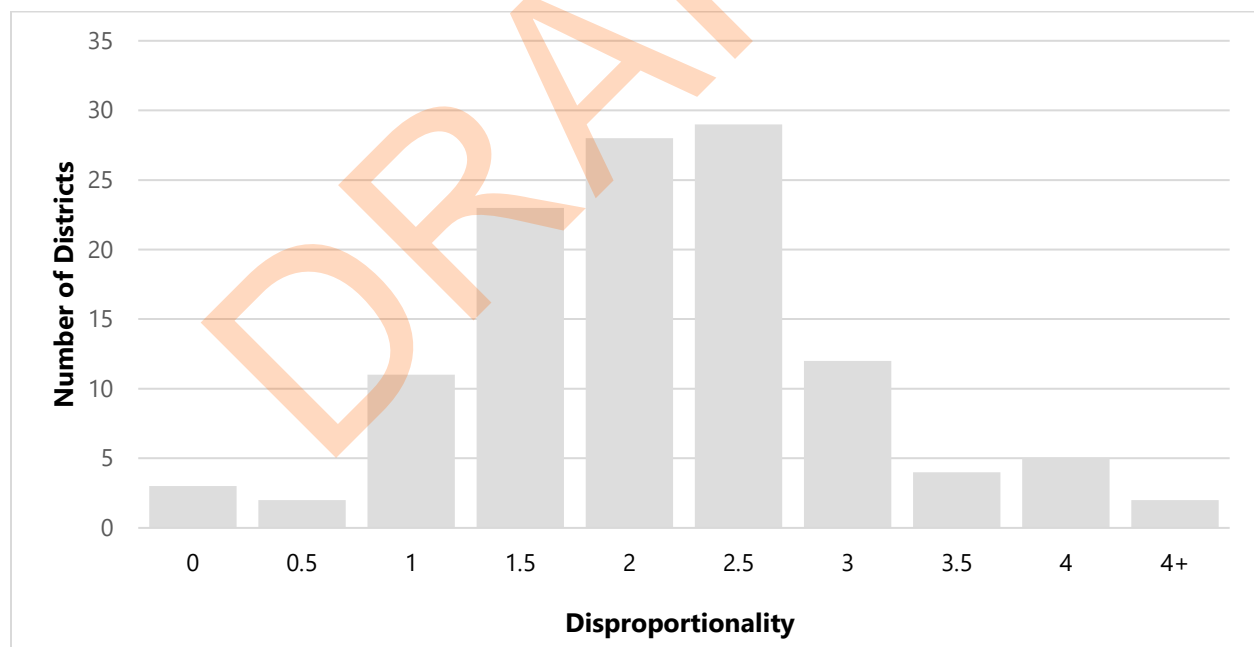
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education and the Kentucky Center for Safe Schools.

Disproportionality scores may also appear more extreme when both the population and count of discipline events for the demographic group in question are relatively low. For example, of the ten school districts with the highest level of disproportionality for the removal of black students, four were either at or above the minimum threshold of ten black students removed by a single student. Furthermore, in each of these four districts, black students made up less than two percent of the student population.

Table E.1
Count of Districts by Disproportionality Level and Type, 2024

Category	Event	N	0	0.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4+
Black	INSR	60	0	2	6	25	18	6	3	0	0	0
	OSS	43	0	1	3	20	8	8	1	1	1	0
Economically disadvantaged	INSR	131	3	6	22	65	29	5	0	0	1	0
	OSS	119	3	2	11	23	28	29	12	4	5	2
Hispanic	INSR	69	1	39	26	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
	OSS	48	2	26	18	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
IEP	INSR	132	1	55	60	11	2	2	1	0	0	0
	OSS	136	0	12	52	54	12	0	5	0	0	1
Male	INSR	138	0	0	8	47	54	22	7	0	0	0
	OSS	138	0	0	10	49	38	22	10	5	3	1

Note**:** The numbers in columns 0 through 4+ are the number of school districts with a disproportionality score for the specified category equal to or greater than the value in the column header, but less than the value in the subsequent column header.
Note: Only A1 school students are included in the calculation of districts' disproportionality scores.
Note: INSR stands for In-school Removal and OSS stands for Out-of-school suspension.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education and the Kentucky Center for Safe Schools.

Appendix F

District- And School-level Variation In Violation Rates And Demographic Characteristics

The following analysis includes 2024 Safe Schools data only for A1 schools. Table F.1 groups school districts based on the percentage of students per district with a behavior violation recorded in the Safe Schools data.[a] The denominator for each school district was total membership per district for A1 schools.

Table F.1 shows that overall, districts with higher percentages of students with a behavior violation also had higher rates of students considered economically disadvantaged based on eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) and those districts had higher rates of nonwhite students.

The overall range for percentage of students with at least one violation per district was 2.3 percent up to more than 36 percent. Districts in the Highest category for one or more violation also had the highest rate of students with 3 or more behavior violations at 8.5 percent, which is nearly double the rate for those districts in the next highest category for one or more violations.

Table F.1
Districts Grouped By Category Of
Percentage Of Students With A Behavior Event, 2024

Percentage of Students One or More Category	District Count	A1 School Count	2024 A1 Schools Membership	Min of Percent One Or More	Max of Percent One Or More	Percent Three Or More	Average Percent Nonwhite	Average Percent FRPL
Highest	19	220	130,976	18.6	36.6	8.5	56.0	66.4
High	38	214	108,218	14.7	18.1	4.3	20.7	63.0
Average	51	377	208,803	11.1	14.6	3.1	25.2	61.1
Low	39	260	133,192	7.6	11.0	2.0	16.8	55.4
Lowest	24	80	33,340	2.3	7.4	0.6	6.9	59.8
Districts (A1 Schools Only)	171	1,151	614,529	2.3	36.6	3.4	28.2	61.3

Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

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[a] The groups for percentage of students with one or more violation were categorized based on standard scores. Districts or schools in the Highest category had rates of students with a violation that were 1 standard deviation or more above the mean. Districts and schools in the High category had rates that were one-third up to 0.9999 standard deviations above the mean. Districts and schools in the Average category had rates that ranged from 0.3332 standard deviations above the mean, down to -0.3332 standard deviations below the mean. Districts or schools in the Low category had rates that were one-third of a standard deviation below the mean, down to -0.9999 standard deviations below the mean. Districts or schools in the Lowest category had rates of students with one or more violation that were 1 or more standard deviations below the mean.

Percentage Of Students w/ At Least One Violation – By School Level

This section groups A1 schools by percentage of students with at least one violation by level.[b] As shown in Tables F.2 through F.4, schools with the highest percentages of students with a violation had higher rates of students eligible for FRPL and higher rates of nonwhite students.

The range for percentage of students with a violation was largest 6th through 8th grade students, followed by schools with 9th through 12th grade students, and then those schools with PreK through 5th grade students. Most of the schools at each of these levels were in the Average and Low categories for percentage of students with a violation.

Table F.2
Schools 9th Through 12th Grades Grouped By Category Of
Percentage Of Students With A Behavior Event, 2024

Percentage Of Students w/ Violation Category	A1 Schools w/ 9th through 12th Grades	Min of Percent Of Students w/ Violation	Max of Percent Of Students w/ Violation	Average Percent Nonwhite	Average Percent FRPL
Highest	34	30	66	52.4	66.2
High	35	23	30	32.6	62.8
Average	68	16	23	22.0	55.3
Low	62	10	16	24.1	55.4
Lowest	29	2	10	24.8	55.6
A1 Schools - 9th -12th Grade	228	2	66	29.2	58.2

Note: This table includes data only for 9th through 12th grade students from A1 schools.
Note: School counts represent the count of A1 schools with any students in 9th through 12th grade.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

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[b] Due to variance in grade configuration of some schools, OEA did not group schools based on the common elementary, middle, high school labels. There are some middle schools for example that are 5th grade through 8th grade. For this report those 5th grade students are included in the PreK through 5th Grade grouping, and not in a "middle school" category. The groupings used for this analysis are PreK through 5th grade, 6th through 8th grade, and 9th through 12th grade.

Table F.3
Schools 6th Through 8th Grades Grouped By Category Of
Percentage Of Students With A Behavior Event, 2024

Percent Of Students w/ Violation Category	A1 Schools w/ 6th Through 8th Grade	Min of Percent Of Students w/ Violation	Max of Percent Of Students w/ Violation	Average Percent Nonwhite	Average FRPL Percent
Highest	53	32.8	70.8	53.9	73.7
High	88	24.1	32.3	29.3	64.2
Average	114	16.0	24.0	20.3	63.9
Low	81	7.7	15.7	18.5	67.7
Lowest	75	0.0	7.4	12.3	64.5
A1 Schools - Grades 6th through 8th	411	0.0	70.8	27.8	66.1

Note: This table includes data only for 6th through 8th grade students from A1 schools.
Note: School counts represent the count of A1 schools with any students in 6th through 12th grade
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Table F.4
Schools Prekindergarten Through 5th Grades Grouped By Category Of
Percentage Of Students With A Behavior Event, 2024

Percent Of Students w/ Violation Category	A1 Schools w/ PreK through 5th Grade	Min of Percent Of Students w/ Violation	Max of Percent Of Students w/ Violation	Average Percent Nonwhite	Average FRPL Percent
Highest	85	9.9	33.8	49.7	76.0
High	95	6.6	9.7	31.7	70.7
Average	200	3.4	6.5	30.6	67.7
Low	328	0.2	3.4	22.6	63.1
Lowest	20	0.0	0.2	8.6	74.1
A1 Schools - PreK through 5th	728	0.0	33.8	28.8	67.1

Note: This table includes data only for PreK through 5th grade students from A1 schools.
Note: School counts represent the count of A1 schools with any students in PreK through 5th grade.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Appendix G

Association Of Behavior Events And Survey Data
From Teachers And Students

In this report, OEA divides districts and schools into five behavior event rate categories, ranging from lowest, to low, average, high and highest. [a] Note that these categories are based on where district data stand in relation to each other. Appendix H shows the values associated with each category and questions.

Figure G.A summarizes data, for each behavior event category, in the percentage of teachers in 2024 who reported that student misconduct frequently or always disrupts the learning environment. Responses are taken from the teacher working conditions survey that is administered by KDE every two years.

The figure shows that, as student behavior event rates increases from lowest to highest the median (center line) of teachers' reporting frequent disruptions increase, as do most teachers' responses (the shaded area), within that category. This suggests that, on average, behavior event rates are associated with the degree of disruption from student misconduct.

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[a] Highest and lowest behavior event rate districts or schools are very far (1 standard deviation) above or below the mean behavior event rate while those that are low or high are between 0.33 and 1 standard deviation above or below the mean. Those that are average fall within 0.33 standard deviations above or below the mean.

Figure G.A
Percentage Of Teachers With Unfavorable Responses About How Often
Student Misconduct Disrupts The Learning Environment
By District Event Rate Category, 2024
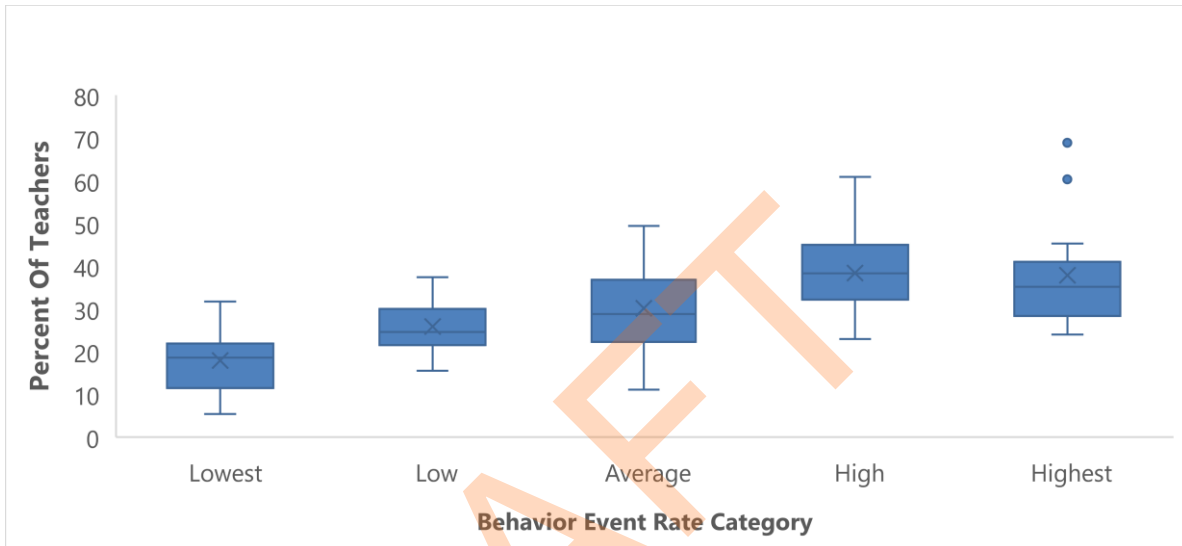
Note: Responses were considered unfavorable of teachers answered "frequently" or "all the time"
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

The figure also shows that the degree of behavior challenge as reported by teachers can sometimes differ greatly from what is suggested by student behavior event rates. For example, in one low behavior event rate district, 37 percent of teachers reported that student misconduct frequently disrupts learning; this is the average response for teachers in the highest event rate category. It is possible that administrators in that district used higher thresholds to enter data into the student information system, thus underreporting the level of behavioral challenge.

Conversely, in one highest behavior event rate district, only 24 percent of teachers reported frequent disruptions. In that highest-behavior event rate district, teachers' were less likely to report frequent misconduct than most in the low event rate category. It is possible that administrators in that district are aggressive about recording student misbehavior in the system this overrepresenting the level of challenge relative to other districts.

Figure G.B
Percentage Of Teachers With Unfavorable Responses About Whether
Relationships Between Teachers And Students Are Respectful
By District Behavior Event Rate Category, 2024
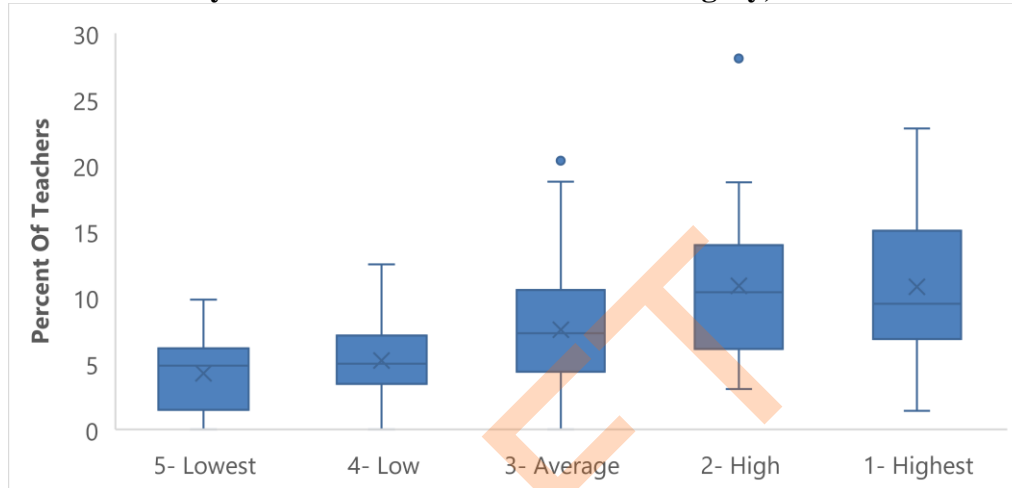
Note: Responses of "slightly respectful" or "not at all respectful" were considered unfavorable.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Figure G.C
Percentage Of Students with Unfavorable Responses About
Whether The School Rules Are Fair
By District Behavior Event Rate Category, 2024
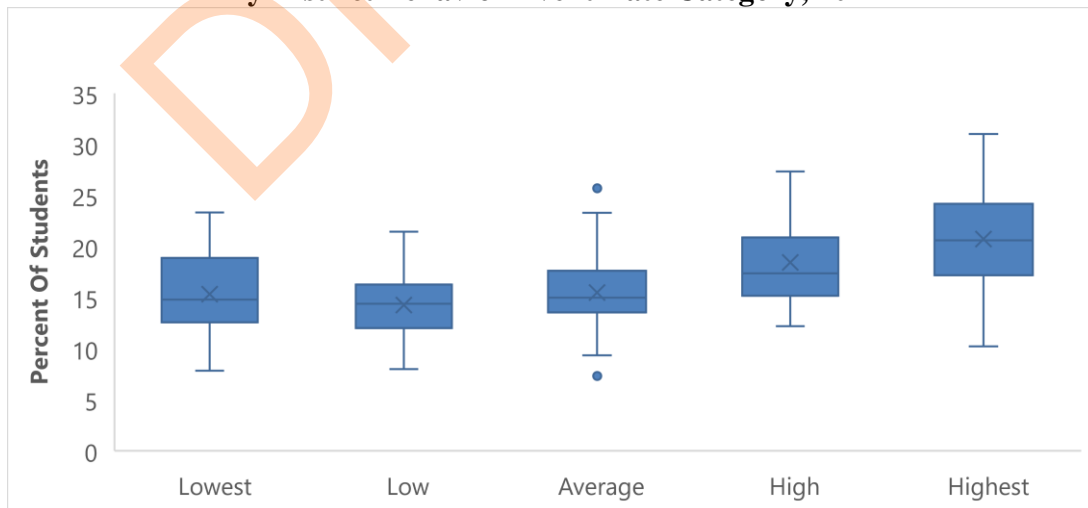
Note: Responses of "disagree" or "strongly disagree" were considered unfavorable.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Figure G.D
Percentage Of Student With Unfavorable Responses
About Whether Students Respect Each Other's Differences
By District Behavior Event Rate Category, 2024
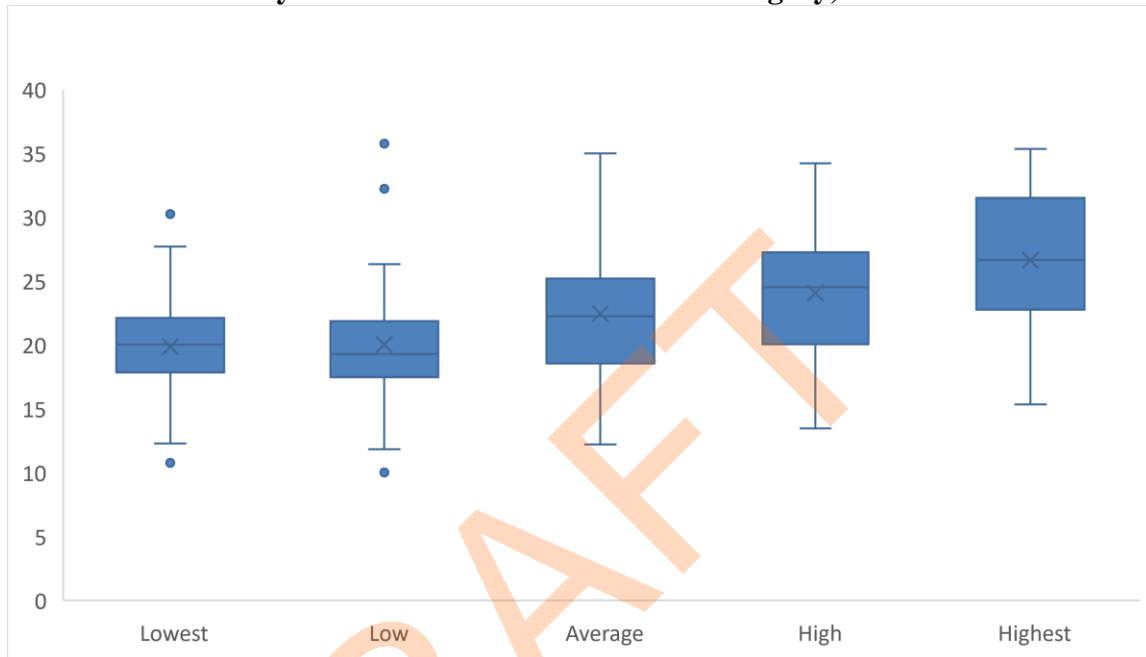
Note: Responses of "disagree" or "strongly disagree" were considered unfavorable.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Combining Event Rate, Teacher, And Student Survey Data

Staff used behavior event rate data; teacher survey data and student survey data to identify the percentage of districts and schools for which data indicated much greater behavior challenges relative to others in the state in 2024. Teacher survey data included questions related to the frequency with which student misconduct disrupts instruction and the degree of respectful relationships between teachers and students. Student survey data included students' reports about whether the school rules are fair and the degree to which student respect each other's differences.

In each data source, districts and schools that had data at least one standard deviation above the mean for all districts or schools (by level), were identified as the "highest" category and those with data that was over one third of standard deviation above the mean were identified in the "high" category.

Figure G.E shows the percentage of districts and schools in which all three sources of data were "highest" and those with all three sources of data were at least "high."

In 2024, at least 14 percent of districts, seven percent of elementary schools, 12.9 percent of middle schools, and 8.3 percent of high schools had three sources of data indicating that they had behavior-related challenge, relative to their peers.

Figure G.E
Percent Of Districts
And Schools By Level
That Were Higher Or Highest
In All Three Data Sources
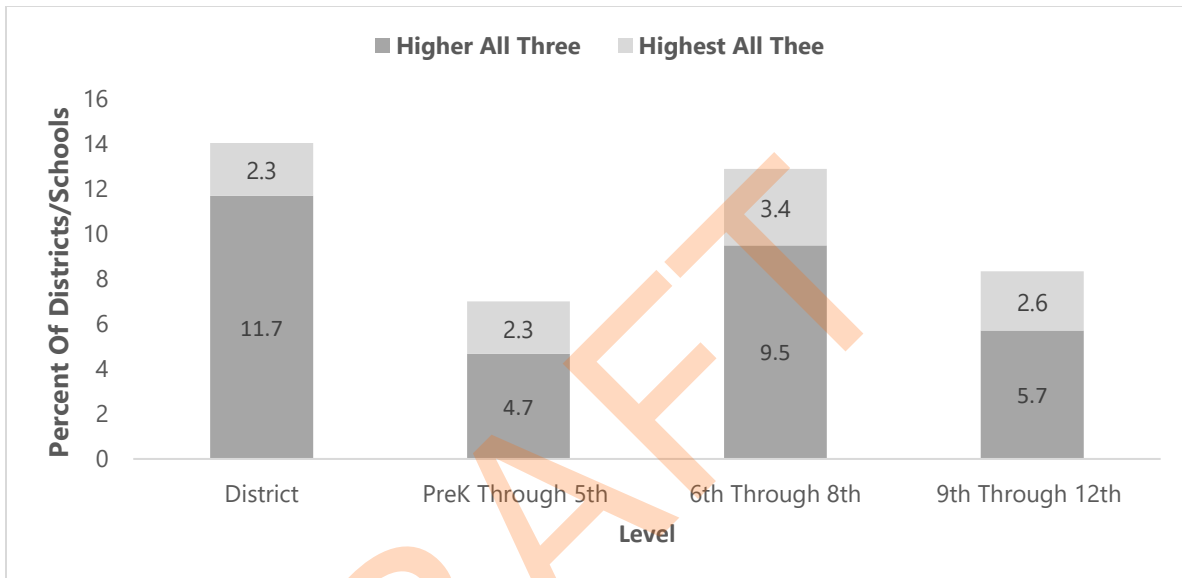
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Appendix H

Behavior Event, Teacher And Student Survey Data- All Districts

The tables below pertain to district level rates for percentage of students with a behavior event (violation) and unfavorable response rates for select teacher and student survey questions.

The table below lists the questions from the teacher and student surveys that were included in this analysis. Also included in the table are what the unfavorable response choices were for those taking the surveys.

Table H.1
Detail For Unfavorable Responses
For Teacher And Student Survey
2024 School Year

Question	Survey	Unfavorable Responses
How often does student misconduct disrupt the learning environment at your school?	Teacher	Frequently or Almost all the time
How respectful are the relationships between teachers and students?	Teacher	Slightly Respectful or Not at all respectful
Students from this school respect each other's differences (gender, culture, race, religion, ability).	Student	Disagree or Strongly disagree
The school rules are fair.	Student	Disagree or Strongly disagree

Source: Questions from 2024 Impact Teacher Survey and 2024 School Climate Survey of students for 2024.

The following table lists the minimum and maximum percentages/rates for each of these metrics by category from lowest to highest. The overall ranges for each metric can be determined by taking the minimum from the lowest category and the maximum of the highest category. For example, the range for districts for the percentage of students with a behavior event was 2.3 percent up to 36.6 percent.

Table H.2
Ranges For Categories
For Percent Of Students With A Violation
And For Unfavorable Response Rates For
Select Teacher And Student Survey Questions
2024 School Year

Metric	Lowest		Low		Average		High		Highest	
	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max
Percent w/ A Violation	2.3	7.4	7.6	11.0	11.1	14.6	14.7	18.1	18.6	36.6
Percent Unfavorable Student Misconduct (n=167)	0.0	17.2	18.1	25.2	25.9	33.7	33.9	41.4	43.0	68.8
Percent Unfavorable Respectful Relationships (n=167)	0.0	1.9	2.2	5.6	5.7	8.8	9.2	12.5	12.9	28.3
Percent Unfavorable Respect Differences	10.0	17.0	17.1	20.6	20.6	23.9	24.1	27.6	27.7	35.8
Percent Unfavorable School Rules	7.3	12.0	12.2	14.9	15.0	17.7	18.2	20.8	21.0	31.0

Note: Four districts had individual questions for which answers were not reportable due to low response rates. These districts were not included in this calculation.
Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

The table that begins on the next page lists the categories for each of these metrics by district. Please reference the table above for the ranges for each category for each metric.

Table H.3
Categories For Percentage Of Students With A Behavior Event
And For Unfavorable Response Rates For Select Teacher And Student Survey Questions
2024 School Year

District	Percent of Students w/ Violation	Percent of Students w/ Violation Category	Student Misconduct Disruption - Unfavorable Category	Respectful Relationships - Unfavorable Category	Students respect each other's differences - Unfavorable Category	The school rules are fair. Unfavorable Category
Adair County	14.9	High	High	Highest	Highest	Highest
Allen County	12.1	Average	Highest	Highest	High	High
Anchorage Independent	2.3	Lowest	Lowest	Lowest	Lowest	Low
Anderson County	13.2	Average	Highest	Highest	High	Low
Ashland Independent	11.5	Average	High	High	Low	Low
Augusta Independent	17.0	High	Lowest	Low	Lowest	Average
Ballard County	21.6	Highest	Low	Average	Highest	Highest
Barbourville Independent	5.9	Lowest	Low	Low	Low	Low
Bardstown Independent	9.8	Low	Low	Low	Average	High
Barren County	13.7	Average	Average	Average	Low	Low
Bath County	21.5	Highest	Average	High	High	High
Beechwood Independent	3.6	Lowest	Lowest	Lowest	Average	Low
Bell County	13.5	Average	Average	Average	Low	Low
Bellevue Independent	15.5	High	High	Highest	Highest	Highest
Berea Independent	14.9	High	Average	High	High	Average
Boone County	9.7	Low	Average	Average	Low	Low
Bourbon County	13.9	Average	Low	Low	Average	Average
Bowling Green Independent	11.8	Average	Average	Average	Low	Lowest
Boyd County	9.8	Low	Average	Low	Low	Low
Boyle County	6.6	Lowest	Low	Low	Low	Lowest
Bracken County	13.0	Average	Low	High	High	Average
Breathitt County	17.5	High	Average	Average	Low	Average
Breckinridge County	10.2	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Bullitt County	14.7	High	High	Average	Average	High
Burgin Independent	4.7	Lowest	Lowest	Average	Highest	Highest
Butler County	11.7	Average	Average	Average	Average	Low
Caldwell County	23.8	Highest	Average	Low	Highest	Highest
Calloway County	12.6	Average	Average	Low	Low	Lowest
Campbell County	14.6	Average	Highest	High	Lowest	Low
Campbellsville Independent	11.1	Average	Average	Average	High	Low
Carlisle County	7.1	Lowest	Lowest	Lowest	High	High
Carroll County	15.0	High	Highest	Average	Highest	Highest
Carter County	12.8	Average	Low	Low	Lowest	Low

District	Percent of Students w/ Violation	Percent of Students w/ Violation Category	Student Misconduct Disruption - Unfavorable Category	Respectful Relationships - Unfavorable Category	Students respect each other's differences - Unfavorable Category	The school rules are fair. Unfavorable Category
Casey County	14.0	Average	Average	High	Average	Average
Caverna Independent	18.1	High	Highest	Highest	High	Highest
Christian County	29.2	Highest	High	Average	High	Average
Clark County	15.7	High	Highest	High	Low	Average
Clay County	7.7	Low	Low	Average	Lowest	Lowest
Clinton County	18.1	High	Highest	Highest	High	High
Cloverport Independent	7.4	Lowest	Lowest	Average	High	Average
Corbin Independent	7.7	Low	Lowest	Low	Low	Average
Covington Independent	22.8	Highest	Highest	Highest	High	High
Crittenden County	17.9	High	Average	Highest	Highest	Highest
Cumberland County	11.1	Average	Average	High	Low	Lowest
Danville Independent	15.8	High	High	High	High	Highest
Daviess County	13.5	Average	High	Average	Average	Low
Dawson Springs Independent	18.1	High	Low	Lowest	Lowest	Average
Dayton Independent	18.6	Highest	High	Highest	High	Highest
East Bernstadt Independent	3.2	Lowest	Low	Average	Lowest	Lowest
Edmonson County	9.8	Low	Low	Lowest	Low	Lowest
Elizabethtown Independent	15.2	High	High	High	High	High
Elliott County	13.0	Average	High	High	Highest	Highest
Eminence Independent	11.1	Average	Lowest	Lowest	High	Highest
Erlanger-Elsmere Independent	9.7	Low	Average	Average	Low	Average
Estill County	17.2	High	Highest	High	High	Average
Fairview Independent	10.9	Low	Lowest	Lowest	Average	Low
Fayette County	14.4	Average	Average	Average	Low	Low
Fleming County	9.2	Low	Low	Low	Lowest	Lowest
Floyd County	6.9	Lowest	Average	Average	Average	Average
Fort Thomas Independent	3.4	Lowest	Lowest	Low	Lowest	Lowest
Frankfort Independent	13.3	Average	Highest	Highest	High	High
Franklin County	16.8	High	High	High	Average	Low
Fulton County	16.4	High	Highest	Average	Highest	Highest
Fulton Independent	36.6	Highest	#N/A	#N/A	High	Highest
Gallatin County	14.9	High	High	Highest	High	High
Garrard County	13.7	Average	High	Average	Low	Low
Glasgow Independent	16.3	High	High	Highest	Low	Low
Grant County	15.7	High	Highest	Highest	High	High
Graves County	10.1	Low	Average	Average	Low	Low
Grayson County	9.1	Low	Low	Low	Average	Average

District	Percent of Students w/ Violation	Percent of Students w/ Violation Category	Student Misconduct Disruption - Unfavorable Category	Respectful Relationships - Unfavorable Category	Students respect each other's differences - Unfavorable Category	The school rules are fair. Unfavorable Category
Green County	13.3	Average	Low	Low	Highest	Average
Greenup County	12.0	Average	Average	Low	Average	Average
Hancock County	12.1	Average	Low	Low	High	High
Hardin County	17.0	High	Average	Average	Average	Average
Harlan County	9.8	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Harlan Independent	11.8	Average	Low	Average	Highest	Low
Harrison County	11.8	Average	Low	Low	Average	Average
Hart County	9.0	Low	Low	Low	Low	Lowest
Hazard Independent	4.9	Lowest	Lowest	Lowest	Average	Low
Henderson County	21.0	Highest	High	Average	Lowest	Lowest
Henry County	14.4	Average	Low	Lowest	Average	High
Hickman County	15.0	High	Average	Low	Average	Average
Hopkins County	15.4	High	Low	Low	Low	Low
Jackson County	13.7	Average	Low	Low	Low	Low
Jackson Independent	3.2	Lowest	Lowest	Lowest	Lowest	Low
Jefferson County	20.4	Highest	High	High	Average	High
Jenkins Independent	11.6	Average	Low	Lowest	Highest	Highest
Jessamine County	11.5	Average	Average	Low	High	Average
Johnson County	5.5	Lowest	Low	Lowest	Lowest	Lowest
Kenton County	11.1	Average	Highest	High	Lowest	Low
Knott County	10.4	Low	High	Average	Low	Average
Knox County	14.5	Average	Low	Average	Low	Low
LaRue County	14.1	Average	High	Average	Highest	Average
Laurel County	13.1	Average	Average	Average	Lowest	Lowest
Lawrence County	11.4	Average	Low	Low	Lowest	Lowest
Lee County	13.8	Average	#N/A	#N/A	Average	High
Leslie County	8.7	Low	Low	Lowest	Low	Low
Letcher County	6.8	Lowest	Low	Lowest	Low	Low
Lewis County	9.4	Low	Low	Average	Low	Low
Lincoln County	15.0	High	High	High	High	High
Livingston County	18.7	Highest	High	High	High	High
Logan County	14.1	Average	Lowest	Low	Average	High
Ludlow Independent	10.9	Low	Low	Low	Lowest	Low
Lyon County	18.7	Highest	Low	Lowest	High	Average
Madison County	11.9	Average	High	Average	High	Average
Magoffin County	2.8	Lowest	Low	Low	Low	Low
Marion County	16.2	High	Average	Average	Low	Low

District	Percent of Students w/ Violation	Percent of Students w/ Violation Category	Student Misconduct Disruption - Unfavorable Category	Respectful Relationships - Unfavorable Category	Students respect each other's differences - Unfavorable Category	The school rules are fair. Unfavorable Category
Marshall County	9.2	Low	Average	Low	Low	Lowest
Martin County	10.4	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Mason County	17.3	High	High	Low	High	Low
Mayfield Independent	8.3	Low	Average	Average	Low	Average
McCracken County	14.7	High	Average	Low	Low	Low
McCreary County	14.3	Average	Highest	Highest	Low	Low
McLean County	12.6	Average	Lowest	Low	High	Highest
Meade County	10.6	Low	Average	Low	Average	Average
Menifee County	15.2	High	Highest	High	Highest	Highest
Mercer County	13.0	Average	Highest	Average	Highest	Average
Metcalfe County	19.1	Highest	Average	Highest	Highest	Highest
Middlesboro Independent	5.8	Lowest	Average	High	Low	Average
Monroe County	9.0	Low	Lowest	Lowest	Lowest	Lowest
Montgomery County	16.3	High	High	Average	Average	High
Morgan County	13.3	Average	Average	Average	Low	Lowest
Muhlenberg County	9.8	Low	High	Average	Average	Average
Murray Independent	10.4	Low	Low	Lowest	Lowest	Lowest
Nelson County	25.5	Highest	Low	Low	Average	High
Newport Independent	23.2	Highest	Highest	Highest	Highest	Highest
Nicholas County	12.0	Average	High	Average	Highest	Average
Ohio County	14.7	High	Low	Low	Lowest	Low
Oldham County	10.2	Low	Low	Low	High	Average
Owen County	15.0	High	High	Highest	High	High
Owensboro Independent	19.0	Highest	High	Average	Low	Average
Owsley County	11.8	Average	Low	Highest	Highest	Average
Paducah Independent	28.7	Highest	Highest	Highest	Highest	Highest
Paintsville Independent	2.9	Lowest	Lowest	Low	Low	High
Paris Independent	18.9	Highest	Highest	High	High	Highest
Pendleton County	14.5	Average	Highest	High	Average	Average
Perry County	6.1	Lowest	Low	Average	Low	Low
Pike County	9.3	Low	Lowest	Low	Lowest	Lowest
Pikeville Independent	5.6	Lowest	Lowest	Lowest	Low	Average
Pineville Independent	4.6	Lowest	#N/A	#N/A	Low	Average
Powell County	16.6	High	Average	High	Average	Low
Pulaski County	11.4	Average	Average	Low	Lowest	Lowest
Raceland-Worthington Independent	5.0	Lowest	Lowest	Low	Highest	High
Robertson County	9.0	Low	Low	High	High	Average

District	Percent of Students w/ Violation	Percent of Students w/ Violation Category	Student Misconduct Disruption - Unfavorable Category	Respectful Relationships - Unfavorable Category	Students respect each other's differences - Unfavorable Category	The school rules are fair. Unfavorable Category
Rockcastle County	10.9	Low	High	Average	Lowest	Lowest
Rowan County	13.1	Average	High	Highest	Average	High
Russell County	14.8	High	Low	High	Low	Average
Russell Independent	10.7	Low	Lowest	Low	High	Low
Russellville Independent	29.1	Highest	Highest	Highest	Highest	Highest
Science Hill Independent	5.4	Lowest	Average	Average	Average	Highest
Scott County	10.6	Low	High	Average	Average	Average
Shelby County	10.6	Low	High	Average	High	Highest
Simpson County	16.0	High	Average	Low	High	Average
Somerset Independent	20.2	Highest	Average	High	Low	Low
Southgate Independent	4.7	Lowest	Average	Lowest	Average	High
Spencer County	10.5	Low	Low	Low	Average	Low
Taylor County	9.7	Low	High	Average	Highest	High
Todd County	14.1	Average	Lowest	Lowest	Highest	Average
Trigg County	17.0	High	Average	Low	Highest	Highest
Trimble County	9.0	Low	Average	Low	Highest	Highest
Union County	14.5	Average	Highest	High	Average	Low
Walton-Verona Independent	8.2	Low	Average	Low	Low	Low
Warren County	11.6	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
Washington County	7.6	Low	Low	Low	Low	Average
Wayne County	16.8	High	Highest	Highest	High	High
Webster County	15.5	High	Average	Low	Average	Average
Whitley County	11.0	Low	Lowest	Low	Lowest	Lowest
Williamsburg Independent	15.5	High	#N/A	#N/A	Low	Average
Williamstown Independent	10.7	Low	Average	Low	Low	Low
Wolfe County	3.9	Lowest	Lowest	Low	Low	Lowest
Woodford County	12.5	Average	Low	Lowest	Low	Low

Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Appendix I

Law And Board Violation Categories By Grade Level And Location

The tables below list the count of behavior events for law and board violation categories by grade level.

Table I.1 shows these behavior event counts for 9th through 12th grade students. The most common law violation for students in these grades was for vapes/other tobacco related behavior events. The most common board violation for these students involved behavior events associated with attendance, tardiness, and skipping class.

Table I.1
Law And Board Violations
9th Grade Through 12th Grade
2024 School Year

Law Violation Category	Count	Percent of All Violations
Vapes/other tobacco*	10,347	8.6
Drug	5,068	4.2
Harassment/Bullying	5,009	4.2
Violence (includes threats and assaults)	2,305	1.9
Alcohol	336	0.3
Weapon	291	0.2
Total Law Violations	**23,356**	**19.4**

Board Violation Category	Count	Percent of All Violations
Attendance, Tardiness, Skipping	36,419	30.2
Disorderly, Disrespectful, Disruptive	22,294	18.5
Other	12,103	10.0
Fighting	8,935	7.4
Insubordination	8,015	6.6
Profanity/Vulgarity	5,519	4.6
No State Violation	4,044	3.4
Total Board Violations	**97,329**	**80.6**

All Violations - 9th through 12th Grades	**120,685**	**100.0**

Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Table I.2 shows the same information, but for students in 6th through 8th grade. The most common law violation for these students were behavior events associated with harassment and bullying. The most common board violation events for these students were behavior events associated with disruption, disorderly conduct, or disrespectful behavior.

Table I.2
Law And Board Violations
6th Grade Through 8th Grade
2024 School Year

Law Violation Category	Count	Percent of All Violations
Harassment/Bullying	8,590	8.6
Vapes/other tobacco*	5,149	5.2
Violence (includes threats and assaults)	2,735	2.7
Drug	1,694	1.7
Weapon	398	0.4
Alcohol	138	0.1
Total Law Violations	**18,704**	**18.8**

Board Violation Category	Count	Percent of All Violations
Disorderly, Disrespectful, Disruptive	35,600	35.8
Fighting	14,565	14.6
Insubordination	6,846	6.9
Profanity/Vulgarity	6,679	6.7
Other	6,464	6.5
No State Violation	6,268	6.3
Attendance, Tardiness, Skipping	4,352	4.4
Total Board Violations	**80,774**	**81.2**

All Violations - Grades 6th through 8th	99,478	100.0

Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Table I.3 shows the law and board violation categories for Preschool through 5th grade students. The most common law violation events for these students were associated with bullying and harassment. The most common board violation events for these students were associated with disorderly conduct, disruptive behavior, and disrespectful behavior related behavior events.

Table I.3
Law And Board Violations
Preschool Through 5th Grade
2024 School Year

Law Violation Category	Count	Percent of All Violations
Harassment/Bullying	4,456	12.00
Violence (includes threats and assaults)	1,760	4.74
Vapes/other tobacco*	539	1.45
Weapon	306	0.82
Drug	55	0.15
Alcohol	11	0.03
Total Law Violations	**7,127**	**19.20**

Board Violation Category	Count	Percent of All Violations
Disorderly, Disrespectful, Disruptive	12,362	33.30
Fighting	10,174	27.40
No State Violation	3,587	9.66
Other	1,511	4.07
Profanity/Vulgarity	1,211	3.26
Insubordination	988	2.66
Attendance, Tardiness, Skipping	167	0.45
Total Board Violations	**30,000**	**80.80**

All Violations - PreK through 5th Grade	**37,127**	**100.00**

Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Table I.4 shows a breakdown of the behavior events by location. More than 60 percent of behavior events in 2024 were coded to the classroom.

Table I. 4
Violations By Location
All School Types
2024 School Year

Event Location	Violation Count	Percent Of All Violations
Classroom	155,175	60.31
Hallway/Stairwell	41,273	16.04
Restroom	13,524	5.26
Cafeteria	11,061	4.3
Bus	8,780	3.41
Campus Grounds	7,359	2.86
Gymnasium	7,238	2.81
Other	4,222	1.64
Playground	3,761	1.46
Office	2,352	0.91
Off-Campus	1,639	0.64
Athletic Field	562	0.22
Field Trip	344	0.13

Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Appendix J

Bullying and Harassment

Statutory Definitions. KRS 158.148 defines bullying as any unwanted verbal, physical, or social behavior among students that involves a real or perceived power imbalance and is repeated or has the potential to be repeated either on school premises, on school-sponsored transportation, or at a school-sponsored event and that disrupts the education process. KRS 525.070 defines harassment when someone has intent to intimidate, harass, annoy, or alarm another person through various actions. See Appendix X for the full definition. The Safe Schools Data has five codes for bullying and harassment: bullying; harassing communications; harassment; threating another student; threatening staff; and verbal abuse.

Resolutions For Bullying And Harassment. Table J.1 shows resolutions for bullying and harassment. Very few students were removed through expulsion or INDR for bullying or harassing behavior, while 27.9 percent received suspension.[a]

Students were expelled at slightly higher rates for threatening another student or staff than other types of bullying or harassment, while the highest removal rate was 7.4 percent at the high school level for threatening staff.

Nearly half of bullying and harassment incidents occurred at the middle school level (47.9 percent), followed by elementary school (26.6 percent), and high school (25.3 percent).

Table J.1
Resolutions For Bullying And Harassment
SY 2024

Behavior event type	Local	INSR*	Suspension	Expelled	INDR	Total
Bullying	48.5%	36.1%	14.4%	0.0%	1.0%	3,348
Harassing communications	32.9	39.1	25.8	0.0	2.2	1,363
Harassment	33.0	34.2	31.0	0.0	1.7	6,352
Threatening another student	38.0	29.2	31.2	0.2	1.4	3,221
Threatening staff	31.2	18.6	47.5	0.5	2.3	857
Verbal abuse	36.7	34.0	28.2	0.0	1.1	1,098
All bullying and harassment	37.3	33.2	27.9	0.1	1.5	16,239

*INSR may also include a small number of restraints or seclusions.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

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[a] Resolutions coded with local resolutions for bullying and harassment were primarily a conference with a student or parent or a phone call to the parent or guardian (43.9 percent) and detention or Friday night or Saturday night school (13.6 percent). Resolutions coded as INSR were primarily in-school suspension (33.6 percent) and alternative education placement (20.6 percent).

Appendix K

Vapes

Prevalence Of Vapes. Nicotine, THC, and non-nicotine vapes were the largest category of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco in Kentucky schools in SY 2024. Of the nearly 16,000 vapes recorded in Kentucky schools in 2024, most were nicotine vapes (81.6 percent), followed by THC vapes (11.6 percent), and non-nicotine vapes (6.8 percent). Most (65.6 percent) were at the high school level, followed by 31.4 percent at the middle school level and 3.0 percent at the elementary level.

Resolutions For Vapes.

Few students with nicotine vapes were removed through expulsion (0.0 percent), INDR (0.7 percent), or IAES (0.0 percent), and 21.0 percent were suspended for an average of 2.0 days, with a median of 1.9 days and a maximum of 10.3 days. Most students with THC vapes were suspended (73.9 percent), while 13.4 percent were removed through expulsion (1.0 percent), INDR (12.2 percent), and IAES (0.2 percent). Average suspensions for THC vapes were 4.0 days, with a median of 3.1 days and a maximum of 20.5 days.[a]

Challenges Reported By Principals

On the OEA Principal Survey, 13.3 percent of principals reported that vapes were a major or extreme problem at their school and 27.4 percent of principals reported that vapes were among the top three behavior categories that present the greatest problem at their school, ranked 6th.

Administrators and teachers in site visit schools reported that the large number of students with vapes can easily overwhelm a school's ability to document behavior events in order to discipline students. In addition, while schools have installed vape detection devices and are taking other measures, such as closing some bathrooms, to better be able to monitor the school for vapes, students are very good at avoiding vape detection and are motivated to do so because of the addictive nature of nicotine.

Students reportedly have easy access to vapes, often through local retail sellers. One principal reported that students are able to purchase vapes in a retail store close to the school. In some cases, parents do not take precautionary measures to prevent children from accessing parents' vapes. In other cases, parents admit to providing their children with vapes.

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[a] Resolutions coded with local resolutions for nicotine vapes were primarily detention, Friday night school, or Saturday school (36.9 percent) and conference with the student or parent or a phone call to the parent or guardian (20.7 percent). Resolutions coded with INSR for nicotine vapes were primarily in-school suspension (36.4 percent). Resolutions coded with local resolutions for THC vapes were primarily conference with parent or student or a phone call to the parent or guardian (31.9 percent) and resolutions coded to ISR were primarily alternative education placement and in-school suspension (31.4 percent).

When administrators suspect that a vape has THC in it, they must send it to a laboratory to determine whether it is a THC or nicotine vape before they can cite a student with a drug violation. This is a costly and time-consuming process.

Appendix L

State- Level Resolutions By Violation Type

This appendix provides data on state-level resolutions. Unlike the resolution data reported in Chapter 3, it counts all of the resolution events associated with an individual incident. For example, if a student is suspended for a particular event and then placed in in-school suspension upon returning to school, both events are counted.

Table L.1 shows the total counts of the following resolutions types: in-school removal, out-of-school suspension, in-district removal, and expulsions with and without services. The table also provides a breakdown of whether the resolution was associated with a board or law violation. These resolution counts represent the counts of these resolutions from all school types for the 2024 school year.

The table shows that board violations accounted for 84 percent of total resolutions in 2024 (219,179 out of 259, 943) and that in-school suspension were the most common resolution overall, accounting for nearly 72 percent of all resolutions- (186, 140 out of 259,943). Of those in-school suspensions, the overwhelming majority (nearly 90 percent) were for board violations.

Table L.1 also shows that the proportion of law violations relative to board violations increases with the severity of the resolution. For example, 11 percent of in-school suspensions were for law violations, compared with about 80 percent of expulsions.

Table L.1
All Resolution Types
By Law Or Board Violation

Resolution Type	Total Resolutions	Percent of Resolutions	Involving Board Violation	Board Violation Percent of Resolutions	Involving Law Violation	Law Violation Percent of Resolutions
In-school Suspension	186,140	71.61	166,462	89.43	19,678	10.57
Out-of-school Suspension	70,031	26.94	50,642	72.31	19,389	27.69
In-district Removal	3,557	1.37	2,032	57.13	1,525	42.87
Expelled - w/ services	195	0.08	40	20.51	155	79.49
Expelled - No Services	20	0.01	3	15.00	17	85.00
Total	259,943	100.00	219,179	84.32	40,764	15.68

Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Tables L.2 through L. 6 show major categories of violation types, within board and law violations, for each resolution type. For example, Table 2 shows the violation types for the 3,557 in-district removal resolutions in 2024. It shows that 20 percent of in-district removals were for disorderly, disrespectful, of disruptive behavior events and 20 percent were for drug-related events.

Table L.2
In District Removal
By Event Type

Violation Type	IDR by Violation Type	Percent
Disorderly, Disrespectful, Disruptive	727	20%
Drug	721	20
Fighting	457	13
Other	337	10
No State Violation	318	9
Assault/Violence	299	8
Harassment/Bullying	270	8
Attendance, Tardies, Skipping	193	5
Tobacco	135	4
Alcohol	52	2
Weapon	48	1
Grand Total	3557	100

Note: Totals may not sum due to rounding.
Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Table L.3
In-school Removal
By Violation Type

Violation Type	ISS by Violation Type	Percent
Disorderly, Disrespectful, Disruptive	60,288	32%
Other	43,786	24
Attendance, Tardies, Skipping	39,208	21
Fighting	13,072	7
No State Violation	10,108	5
Tobacco	9,478	5
Harassment/Bullying	6,686	4
Drug	1,681	1
Assault/Violence	1,498	1
Weapon	175	0.1
Alcohol	160	0.1
Grand Total	186,140	100

Note: totals may not sum due to rounding.
Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of
Education.

Table L.4
Out Of School Suspensions
By Event Type

Violation Type	OSS by Violation Type	Percent
Fighting	21,741	31%
Disorderly, Disrespectful, Disruptive	12,552	18
Other	9,018	13
Drug	5,677	8
Harassment/Bullying	5,199	7
Assault/Violence	3,907	6
Attendance, Tardies, Skipping	3,739	5
No State Violation	3,592	5
Tobacco	3,546	5
Weapon	665	1
Alcohol	395	1
Grand Total	70,031	100

Note: totals may not sum due to rounding.
Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of
Education.

Table L.5
Expelled With Services
By Violation Type

Violation Type	Expelled w/ Services By Violation Type	Percent
Assault/Violence	64	33%
Drug	56	29
Weapon	15	8
No State Violation	14	7
Harassment/Bullying	11	6
Disorderly, Disrespectful, Disruptive	10	5
Fighting	10	5
Tobacco*	7	4
Other	8	4
Grand Total	195	100

*Some of these may have been THC vapes which should have been recorded to drugs.
Note: totals may not sum due to rounding.
Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Appendix M

Variations In Resolutions Among Districts And Schools

Resolutions For A1 Schools

This appendix provides an analysis of resolution types for A1 schools at the district and school levels. Table L.1 shows that in-school removals were the most common resolution type for students in A1 schools, with 10.7 percent of the A1 school population have at least one in-school removal during the 2024 school year. Out-of-school suspensions occurred in all 171 districts in 2024, and 94 percent of A1 schools had at least one student with an out-of-school suspension in 2024.

Table M.1
Resolution And Student Counts
By Resolution Type
With District And A1 School Counts
2024 School Year

Resolution Type	District Count	A1 School Count	Resolutions	Student Count	Percent of A1 Schools Population
In-School Removal	163	948	182,664	65,874	10.719
Out-of-School Suspension	171	1,083	63,946	36,702	5.972
In-District Removal	48	184	3,448	2,645	0.430
Expulsion w/ Services	60	83	145	145	0.024
Expulsion No Services	7	7	9	9	0.001

Source: Staff analysis of data provide by the Kentucky Department of Education.

District Groupings For Out-Of-School Suspensions And In-School Removals

For this section, districts were grouped by the percentage of students with an out-of-school suspension, as shown in Table L. 2. The range for the percentage of students with an out-of-school suspension for districts was 0.1 percent up to 22.8 percent for districts for the 2024 school year.

Table L.3 shows districts grouped by the percentage of students with an in-school removal. The range for districts for percentage of students with an in-school removal was zero to 28.5 percent.

**Table M.2
Districts Grouped By
Percentage Of Students
With An Out-Of-School Suspension
2024 School Year**

Percent w/ OSS Category	A1 School Count	2024 A1 Schools Membership	Min of Percent w/ OSS	Max of Percent w/ OSS
Highest	213	126,269	8.9	22.8
High	146	61,979	6.7	8.8
Average	451	252,115	4.4	6.6
Low	228	116,552	2.1	4.3
Lowest	113	57,614	0.1	2.0
Total	1,151	614,529	0.1	22.8

Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky
Department of Education.

**Table M.3
Districts Grouped By
Percentage Of Students
With An In-School Removal
2024 School Year**

Percent w/ ISS Category	A1 School Count	2024 A1 Schools Membership	Min of Percent w/ ISS	Max of Percent w/ ISS
Highest	236	142,947	14.7	28.5
High	284	153,604	10.9	14.5
Average	364	198,176	7.4	10.8
Low	159	74,407	3.7	6.9
Lowest	108	45,395	0.0	3.3
Total	1,151	614,529	0.0	28.5

Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky
Department of Education.

A1 School Groupings For Out-Of-School Suspensions And In-School Removals

A1 schools were also grouped by the percentage of students with an out-of-school suspension as shown in Table L.4. The range for out-of-school suspension rates for schools was zero to nearly 46 percent of students in 2024. Schools in the highest category for out-of-school suspension rates also had higher percentages of students receiving an in-district removal or an in-school removal.

Table M.4
A1 Schools Grouped By
Percentage Of Students
With An Out-Of-School Suspension
2024 School Year

Percent w/ OSS Category	A1 School Count	2024 A1 School Membership	Min of Percent OSS	Max of Percent OSS	Percent IDR	Percent ISS	Expelled No Services	Expelled w/ Services
Highest	137	89,867	11.11	45.82	0.85	24.55	1	30
High	151	107,598	7.20	11.09	0.62	15.99	5	58
Average	287	155,064	3.17	7.10	0.58	10.16		47
Low	507	233,298	0.13	3.14	0.09	4.18	2	10
Lowest (None)	69	28,702	0.00	0.00	0.39	3.82	1	
Total A1 Schools	1,151	614,529	0.00	45.82	0.43	10.72	9	145

Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Table L.5 shows A1 schools grouped by in-school removal rates. The range for in-school removal rates for schools was zero to 69.5 percent in 2024. Schools in the group with the highest rates of in-school removals also had higher rates of students receiving in-district removals, in-school removals, expulsions with services, and expulsions without services.

Table M.5
A1 Schools Grouped By
Percentage Of Students
With An In-School Removal
2024 School Year

Percent w/ ISS Category	A1 School Count	2024 A1 School Membership	Min of Percent ISS	Max of Percent ISS	Percent IDR	Percent OSS	Expelled No Services	Expelled w/ Services
Highest	190	129,810	19.16	69.53	0.93	12.46	4	56
High	153	113,208	12.27	19.08	0.70	6.98	2	35
Average	178	99,260	5.15	12.05	0.27	5.05	1	31
Low	427	194,604	0.10	5.06	0.19	2.75	1	12
Lowest (None)	203	77,647	0.00	0.00	0.01	2.93	1	11
Total A1 Schools	1,151	614,529	0.00	69.53	0.43	5.97	9	145

Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Appendix N

Resolutions For All Weapons

Table N.1 shows resolutions for all weapons for A1 schools.

Table N.1
Resolutions For All Weapons, 2024

Behavior Event Type	Local	INSR* or suspension	Expelled, INDR, or IAES	Total
Large knife	10.2%	77.7%	12.1%	256
Small knife	23.8	73.4	2.9	244
Firearm*	14.8	40.7	44.4	27
Pellet/BB/air Gun or stun Gun/taser Gun	6.5	68.8	24.7	77
Replica/toy Gun	31.1	63.3	5.6	90
Substance used as a weapon or noxious substance	12.9	77.4	9.7	62
Other object	34.8	63.2	1.9	155
Total**	185	667	86	938

--- represents totals of less than three but more than zero.
*INSR may also include a small number of restraints or seclusions.
**Total represents all weapons including weapon categories not shown due to low numbers, including blunt objects (17), destructive devices (2), and multiple weapons (8).
Note: Large knife refers to knives with blade lengths of 2.5 inches or greater. Small knife refers to knives with blade lengths of less than 2.5 inches. Destructive devices include bombs, grenades, etc.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Appendix O

Weapons, Threats, Assaults, And Drugs By IEP Status

Weapons, Threats, Assaults, And Drugs

Chapter 3 focused on behaviors for which KRS 158.150 requires expulsion, weapons and threats, and permitted expulsion, assaults and prescription drugs and controlled substances. This appendix analyzes disproportionality of behaviors by IEP status and the resolutions for students with and without IEPs. Disproportionality is calculated by dividing the percentage of students in the demographic group of interest who engaged in each behavior by the percentage of the alternative group of students who engaged in each behavior. An example of how the disproportionality score for IEP students who bring firearms to school is shown below.

(# of IEP students with firearms / # IEP students)
/
(# of non-IEP students with firearms / # non-IEP students)

Table O.1 shows the percent of each behavior committed by students with IEPs and non-IEP students and the percent of the population that engaged in each behavior. Most students who engage in these behaviors do not have IEPs, although a higher percentage of the population with IEPs engages in these behaviors, as shown by the disproportionality column. For example, students with IEPs brought 3.5 times more firearms to school relative to their overall population size compared to non-IEP students, but comprised less than half (40.7 percent) of all firearm events.

Table O.1
Disproportionality Of Behavior Events
SY 2024

Behavior event	Percent of Events		Percent of Population with Behavior Event		Disproportionality
	IEP	Non-IEP	IEP	Non-IEP	
Firearms	40.7%	59.3%	0.01%	0.00%**	3.5
All weapons	29.0	71.0	0.26	0.13	2.1
All threats	37.8	62.2	2.06	0.67	3.1
1st degree assault	42.9	57.1	0.02	0.00**	3.8
2nd degree assault	35.6	64.4	0.02	0.01	2.8
3rd degree assault	46.0	54.0	0.14	0.03	4.3
4th degree assault	31.9	68.1	0.35	0.15	2.4
All assaults	35.3	64.7	0.54	0.19	2.8
All drugs	18.5	81.5	0.91	0.79	1.2
All drug sales	16.2	83.8	0.04	0.04	1.0

Note: Only A1 and A4 students were included.
*INSR may also include a small number of restraints or seclusions.
**Percent of non-IEP population with behavior event is 0.003 for firearms and 0.005 for 1st degree assault
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Tables O.2 and O.3 show the resolutions by IEP status for select behaviors. In general, exceptional child students received more local resolutions and fewer in-school removals, suspensions, and removals through expulsion, INDR, or IAES. For example, for assaults as a group, 4.1 percent of students with IEPs were removed from the school setting through expulsion, INDR, or IAES, compared with 12.7 percent of students without IEPs..

Table O.2
Resolutions By IEP Status – IEP Students
SY 2024

Behavior Event	Local	INSR* or suspension	Expelled, INDR, or IAES	Total
Firearms	---	---	45.5%	11
All weapons	25.0%	65.1%	9.9	272
All threats	34.5	63.3	2.3	2,150
1st degree assault	38.9	61.1	0.0	18
2nd degree assault	11.5	73.1	15.4	26
3rd degree assault	15.9	80.1	4.0	151
4th degree assault	20.1	76.3	3.6	363
All assaults	19.2	76.7	4.1	558
All prescription drugs and controlled substances	11.9	78.0	10.1	954
All prescription drugs and controlled substances distribution	---	---	23.8	42

Note: Only A1 and A4 students were included.
*INSR may also include a small number of restraints or seclusions.
--- indicates numbers have been redacted due to a low count.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Table O.3
Resolutions By IEP Status – Non-IEP Students
SY 2024

Behavior Event	Local	INSR* or suspension	Expelled, INDR, or IAES	Total
Firearms	---	---	43.8%	16
All weapons	17.6%	73.6%	8.9	666
All threats	28.6	66.9	4.5	3,537
1st degree assault	20.8	66.7	12.5	24
2nd degree assault	6.4	80.9	12.8	47
3rd degree assault	15.8	54.8	29.4	177
4th degree assault	13.3	77.8	8.9	774
All assaults	13.6	73.7	12.7	1,022
All prescription drugs and controlled substances	5.6	83.4	11.0	4,206
All prescription drugs and controlled substances distribution	5.1	80.2	14.7	217

Note: Only A1 and A4 students were included.
*INSR may also include a small number of restraints or seclusions.
--- indicates numbers have been redacted due to a low count.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Table O.4 shows that students without IEPs were suspended for slightly longer than students with IEPs for all weapons, all threats, all assaults, and all prescription drugs and controlled substances.

Table O.4
Suspension Length In Days
SY 2024

Behavior event	Students With IEPS		Students Without IEPs	
	Median	Minimum	Median	Minimum
All weapons	2.3	0.0	3.0	0.3
All threats	2.0	0.1	2.6	0.1
All assaults	3.0	0.2	3.6	0.2
All prescription drugs and controlled substances	3.0	0.2	3.0	0.0

Note: Only A1 and A4 students were included.
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.