

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

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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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## Summary

### Description Of Report

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.<sup>a</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup>

This report seeks to understand

- variations 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;<sup>b</sup>
- and barriers experienced by schools in addressing persistent or severe behaviors.<sup>c</sup>

### Summary Of Findings

Overall, the report finds that student behaviors are negatively affecting teaching, learning, or staff morale in a substantial minority of schools and classrooms. The degree of challenge varies according to whether data are reported by principals (about 10 percent reported major challenges) or teachers (about one third reported frequent classroom disruptions). Principals and teachers reported greater challenges in the primary grades than in higher grades.

Safety concerns have extreme and negative effects on those impacted, though safety overall is a strong concern for a small minority of principals and teachers. The report suggests insufficient

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<sup>a</sup> See, for example, *Student Achievement: Lessons Learned From Kentucky's Relatively Highest- And Lowest-Performing Schools*, pp. 38-42.

<sup>b</sup> The report analyzes statutory provisions of KRS 158.150 in effect in the 2025 school year. In RS 2026, SB 101 amended the statute to require expulsion for students in grades 6-12 who intentionally cause or attempt to cause physical injury to a school district employee.

<sup>c</sup> 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.

attention of local leaders in some schools and districts to addressing dangerous or chronically disruptive behaviors. Statutory requirements related to these behaviors are being unevenly implemented across the state and about 15 percent of educators (both teachers and principals) report lack of administrative support in addressing discipline issues.

KDE can take actions to address concerns identified by educators by increasing guidance related to alternative learning options, especially at the elementary level; assisting local leaders in navigating federal restrictions on disciplinary actions that can be taken for students with disabilities; and proactively identifying those districts and schools that might benefit from programs or supports that promote positive, orderly environments and are available through the department or elsewhere.

## **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 the Kentucky Center for School Safety (KCSS).

The report notes a variety of limitations of the data. For example, entry of behavior event codes is affected by locally defined thresholds for what are considered to be serious behavior events and these vary among districts and schools. In addition, the safe schools data do not clearly indicate the total number and severity of violence or assault against school employees.<sup>d</sup>

## **Prevalence Of Behavior Challenges**

Statewide, 14 percent of students had at least one behavior event reported in the 2024 safe schools data, but behavior events rates varied substantially among districts and schools. Event rates ranged from 2 percent to 37 percent among districts and 0 to 71 percent among schools. Students who were economically disadvantaged, male, black, or had an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) experienced behavior events at higher rates than their peers.

Based on OEA 2025 principal survey data, student behavior presented a major or extreme challenge for staff morale, teaching, or learning in about one tenth of schools and at least a moderate challenge in about one third of schools. Teachers were generally more likely than principals to report behavior challenges, however. On KDE’s 2024 working conditions survey, one third of Kentucky teachers reported that student misconduct frequently disrupts the learning environment. Comments provided to OEA during school site visits or on the OEA survey indicated strong concern from educators in a substantial minority of schools about the detrimental effects on safety, student learning, and educator morale of severely disruptive or

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<sup>d</sup> See Chapter 3, p. 41 for a discussion of this issue.

dangerous students and frustration with perceived barriers to addressing the behavior of these students.

Although middle and high schools generally had more recorded behavior events than elementary schools, elementary principals were more likely than other principals to report major or extreme disruptions from student behavior. Elementary schools faced challenges with students as young as pre-kindergartners who caused 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, while 32 percent of elementary principals reported that individual students caused classrooms to be cleared five or more times.

While the report focuses on challenges that are faced by a substantial minority of schools, it is important to note that the majority of principals and teachers did not report major or extreme challenges from student behavior. Violence or threats were serious concerns and demoralizing for staff and students who experienced them, but school safety overall was a strong concern for a small minority of teachers or principals. In the typical Kentucky school, the behaviors that presented the greatest challenge were attendance-related issues (such as tardiness or skipping class), student apathy/disengagement, and—in high schools—e-cigarettes (vapes) and cell phones.<sup>e</sup>

### **Barriers To Addressing Persistent Or Severe Behavior Challenges**

Principals' most frequently reported barriers in addressing persistent or severe behavior were lack of alternative placements for severely disruptive students (34 percent reported major or extreme challenges), and federal restrictions related to disciplinary procedures for students with disabilities (39 percent reported major or extreme challenges). Other behavior-related challenges included lack of parent support for discipline, and student mental health challenges.

While one or more types of alternative placement settings are available in most high schools, they are less common in middle schools and rare in elementary schools. Site visit interviewees 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.

Related to students with disabilities, the report notes tension between state laws aimed at ensuring that teachers and students are protected from violent or severely disruptive behavior, and federal laws that can restrict the number of disciplinary removals for students with disabilities absent certain procedural steps. These procedural steps can be perceived by principals as impediments to timely removal of severely disruptive or violent students from the regular

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<sup>e</sup> 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.

education setting once they have been identified with a disability; in some cases, federal requirements are perceived as impediments to removal of severely disruptive students entirely. Survey and site visit data indicate strong sentiments of many principals and other school staff related to unintended consequences of federal restrictions on disciplinary actions that can be taken for students with disabilities. These unintended consequences include extreme disruptions to classroom learning and sometimes unsafe conditions caused by behavior of a small minority of students with disabilities.

The report identifies two state-level actions that can be taken to address these barriers:

- identification of promising practices by KDE and KCSS related to school-based instructional settings or alternative programs for students who are experiencing extreme behavioral challenges in the regular classroom, with special attention to elementary schools; and
- KDE actions 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 reiterates the need identified in previous studies for proactive attention by KDE to districts and schools for which data indicate student behavior challenges. For example, in 14 percent of districts behavior event rates, teacher survey data, and student survey data all indicated a much higher degree of behavior-related challenges relative to other districts in the state. OEA site visits interviews conducted in previous studies indicated that district or school leaders may lack a sense of urgency about problems evident in data, absent external feedback. They may also be unaware of available resources or of neighboring districts or schools that have been successful at addressing challenges.

### **Inconsistent Implementation Of Statutes Addressing Persistent Or Severe Behavior**

The General Assembly has directed local boards to address certain persistent or severe behaviors, but statutory provisions are being unevenly implemented across the state.

**Expulsion Or Alternative Placement For Unlawful Weapons And Dangerous Threats.** KRS 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 weapons to school that are unlawful to possess on school property. It also requires local boards to establish consequences up to expulsion for assaults, drug sales, and other offenses. In 2024, a minority of weapon events (including handguns) or threat violations resulted in statutorily-required consequences of expulsion or alternative placement. In addition, a small minority of assaults—even the most dangerous—and cases of drug possession for sale or distribution resulted in expulsion or alternative placement.

In many cases, it may not be clear whether particular behavior events involving weapons or threats meet statutory definitions for required expulsion or alternative placement. The report notes the potential to clarify statutes that direct local boards to develop and implement policies addressing weapons that are unlawful to possess on school property, threats that pose a danger, and recording of violence against staff and students in the student information system.

**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.<sup>f</sup> In the 2025 school year, policies for chronically disruptive students were being implemented in about one-third of schools. Site visit and survey data indicated that principals in some schools with behavior challenges did not feel that they had the practical option to implement chronic disruption policies due to lack of alternative settings or, in some cases, lack of direct district support for implementation.

While local leaders have the statutory responsibility to ensure that the district code of conduct is implemented, educators in a substantial minority of schools reported lack of sufficient administrative support. On the 2025 OEA survey, 15 percent of principals reported being somewhat or extremely satisfied with district support they received in addressing behavior challenges. Likewise, 14 percent of educators on the 2024 KDE working conditions survey reported that principals supported classroom management efforts slightly or not at all well.

The report contains the following seven recommendations:

### **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 for possession on school property and deadly, 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 “deadly 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.**

### **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.**

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<sup>f</sup> 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.”

**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. Special attention should be paid to programs for elementary school students who experience difficulty regulating extreme behavior.**

**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.**

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<sup>1</sup> Kentucky Legislative Research Commission. Office of Education Accountability. *Student Achievement: Lessons Learned From Kentucky's Relatively Highest-And Lowest-Performing Schools*. Research Report no.494, 2024



## Chapter 1

### Introduction And Background

**This report analyzes data on the nature and prevalence of discipline challenges in Kentucky schools and the effects of policies intended to address those challenges.**

This report analyzes “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 the barriers experienced by schools in addressing persistent or severe student behaviors.<sup>a</sup>

**Student behavior is presenting a challenge to teaching and learning in about one third of schools. Teachers are more likely than principals to report frequent disruptions from student misconduct.**

Overall, student behavior is presenting a 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. About one third of teachers report frequent disruptions to classroom learning from student misconduct, compared with about one tenth of principals.

**Principals identified lack of alternative settings—especially at the elementary level—and federal restrictions on disciplinary removals for students with disabilities as top challenges in addressing persistent or severe student behaviors.**

Top challenges reported by principals experiencing persistent or severe student behavior challenges were lack of alternative instructional placements—especially at the elementary level—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 follow the school’s code of conduct.

**Student apathy, attendance issues, and vapes present the greatest challenges in the state as a whole.**

The overwhelming majority of principals and two thirds of educators do not report major or extreme challenges associated with student behavior to student learning. In the typical Kentucky school, student apathy, attendance issues, and vapes present the greatest challenges.

### Description Of The Study

#### Study Request

**In 2024, the Education Assessment and Accountability Review Subcommittee (EAARS) requested that the Office of Education Accountability (OEA) study school discipline data in Kentucky.**

In October, 2024, the Education Assessment and Accountability Review Subcommittee (EAARS) requested that the Office of Education Accountability (OEA) include an analysis of school

<sup>a</sup> 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. These data are compiled by the Kentucky Department of Education into the safe schools data set.

discipline data in its 2025 study agenda. The committee 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**

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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. Per 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.<sup>b</sup>

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);<sup>c</sup>
- educator working conditions survey data, 2024;
- student climate and safety survey data, 2024; and
- student enrollment, demographic, and program eligibility data.

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**In addition, OEA 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.**

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.<sup>d</sup>

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**The report includes data from an OEA 2025 survey of principals in A1 schools.**

Staff also conducted a focus group with KCSS principal mentors who assist principals across the state with challenges related to school safety and discipline. Finally, the report includes data from a 2025 OEA survey of principals in all A1 schools in the commonwealth.<sup>ef</sup>

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<sup>b</sup> All school years will be noted in the report based on the spring semester. For example, 2023-2024 is reported as 2024.

<sup>c</sup> 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.

<sup>d</sup> The 12 site visit schools were 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 than was indicated by behavior event data. In total, OEA interviewed over 100 staff.

<sup>e</sup> 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. 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.

<sup>f</sup> 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. Major findings of the report

## 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 A for a list of all behavior event codes and the number of behavior events recorded in 2024 for each code.

**Table 1.1**  
**Behavior Events Considered Law or Board Violations**

| <b>Law Violations</b>                 | <b>Board Violations</b>               |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 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.<sup>1</sup> 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

based on data provided from the survey of all principals were comparable to findings of the random sample and were thus determined by staff to be generally representative of schools across the state.

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**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 scrutiny from district leaders or the public;<sup>g</sup>
- 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; and
- 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.

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

For these reasons, 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.

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**The report does not include data from district administrators, parents, or advocates of students with disabilities.**

In addition, the report does not include data on disciplinary challenges as understood by district administrators, parents, or advocates of students with disabilities.<sup>h</sup>

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<sup>g</sup> District leaders may be interested in avoiding negative consequences to the school district from state audits that are required by federal law and triggered by discipline data.

<sup>h</sup> 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.

### Local, State, And Federal Policies Relevant To Addressing Persistent Or Severe Behaviors

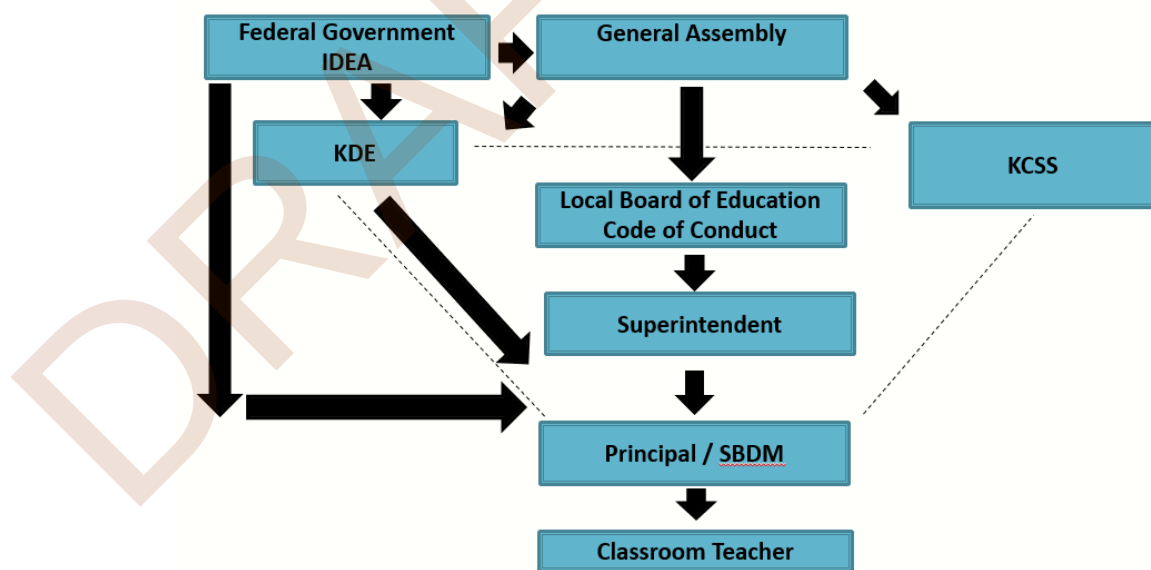
School discipline in the commonwealth is primarily locally controlled, subject to certain state and federal requirements.

Figure 1.A illustrates the relationship between local, state and federal policies as they apply to school discipline. As directed by the General Assembly, school discipline in the commonwealth is controlled primarily by local boards. Local decisions are, however, subject to both state and federal requirements.

KDE and KCSS provide guidance and technical assistance to schools.

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

**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; IDEA = Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; KDE = Kentucky Department of Education; KCSS = Kentucky Center for School Safety; SBDM = school-based decision-making council. Source: Staff analysis of state and federal policies.

As they apply to addressing persistent or severe behaviors, state, federal and local policies can sometimes be in tension with each other.

Related to key findings of the report, it is important to understand the tension that exists between the General Assembly's efforts to address persistent and severe behaviors, the federal government's focus on protecting individual students from disproportionate disciplinary removals, and the authority of local boards to determine each district's code of conduct. Local leaders must juggle sometimes conflicting messages that apply to situations in

which an individual student is exhibiting dangerous or severely disruptive behaviors.

### **Discipline Governed Primarily By District And School Policies**

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**Decisions related to student discipline can vary widely among districts and schools in the commonwealth.**

Decisions related to student discipline in Kentucky can 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.

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**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.”

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**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.

### **Kentucky Statutes Addressing Consequences For Persistent Or Severe Behavior**

The General Assembly directs local boards to adopt policies that require or recommend consequences for certain persistent or severe behaviors.

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**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.<sup>i</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> The report analyzes requirements of the statute that were in effect in the 2025 school year. In RS 2026, SB 101 amended the statute to require expulsion for students in grades 6-12 who intentionally cause or attempt to cause physical injury to a school district employee.



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 individualized education program (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.<sup>j 2</sup>

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**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.

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**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 of these students 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

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<sup>j</sup> 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 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.”



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.

### **Kentucky Department Of Education**

KDE provides guidance and technical support to districts and schools.

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**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.**

**Statewide Student Discipline Guidelines.** By August 31 of each even-numbered year, KDE is required to develop (or update) guidelines, 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).<sup>k</sup>

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.

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**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.

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<sup>k</sup> 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.

## Kentucky Center For School Safety

**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.**

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, 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 2025, KCSS maintained 13 principal mentors to assist with a variety of challenges, including student discipline.**

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.**

**IDEA.** 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.

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

IDEA 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

<sup>1</sup> 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).

include resource rooms, self-contained classrooms, special schools, home or hospital instruction.<sup>m</sup>

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

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The IDEA 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 behaviors or are close together.

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**Students with individualized education programs (IEPs) may be removed to an alternative setting for infractions that involve weapons, illegal drugs, or serious bodily injury.**

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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 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.

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**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 properly implemented and that their behavior was not a manifestation of their disability.**

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In order to remove students from classrooms beyond the thresholds established by IDEA, schools must hold a manifestation 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.<sup>n</sup>

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

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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.

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**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.**

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**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

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<sup>m</sup> 34 CFR Sec. 300.115;

<sup>n</sup> 34 CFR Sec. 300.530

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.<sup>o3</sup> As a potential consequences of KDE 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.

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

**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

<sup>o</sup> 34 CFR Sec. 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), address “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 are large within-district differences in discipline rates between IEP students of each racial/ethnic subgroup from indicator 4b and all other IEP 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

from class or school.<sup>p4</sup> Similarly, decades of research and policy initiatives have been dedicated to understanding and addressing disproportionate exclusionary discipline practices that exist for students from particular demographic groups.<sup>q5</sup> Exclusionary discipline practices can include in-school suspension; removal to alternative programs in the district, or expulsion.

### **Tension Between State Laws Designed To Address Persistent And Severe Behavior And Federal Laws 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.

**Districts or schools believed not to 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.

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<sup>p</sup> 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.

<sup>q</sup> In public schools nationwide, male students and black students are subject to exclusionary discipline practices at disproportionate rates.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/tech/sis/documents/datastandard-behavior.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> 707 KAR 1:002, Section 1 (8).

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Reference for Mills vs. DC

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. “2021-22 Civil Rights Data Collection: A First Look: Students’ Access to Educational Opportunities in U.S. Public Schools.” Jan, 2025. p. 22.

DRAFT

## Chapter 2

### Student Behavior Challenges

**This chapter analyzes behavior events entered into the safe schools data, in combination with teacher, student, and principal survey data to identify the level and nature of behavior-related challenges facing Kentucky districts and schools.**

This chapter summarizes student behavior events entered into the student information system in 2024 at the state, district, and school levels.<sup>a</sup> It combines behavior event data with teacher, student, and principal survey data to identify the proportion of districts and schools for which data consistently indicate challenges and identifies the particular types of behavior events that present the greatest challenge.

#### Statewide Student Behavior Events

**In 2024, 14 percent of students had one or more behavior events. It was less common for students to have three or more behavior events, and rare for students to have three or more law violations (0.5 percent of students).**

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). While 4.5 percent of students had three or more behavior events, only 0.5 percent had three or more law violations.

**Table 2.1**  
**Percentage Of All Students With One Or More**  
**Behavior Events By Type Of Violation, 2024**

| Type Of Violation      | 1 Or More Events | 3 Or More Events | 5 Or More Events | 10 Or More Events | 20 Or More Events |
|------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Law violation          | 5.1%             | 0.5%             | 0.1%             | ---               | ---               |
| Board violation        | 12.0             | 3.6              | 1.8              | 0.5               | 0.1               |
| Law or board violation | 14.3             | 4.5              | 2.3              | 0.6               | 0.1               |

Note: --- 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 in the 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade range but 9<sup>th</sup> grade has the highest behavior event rate overall.**

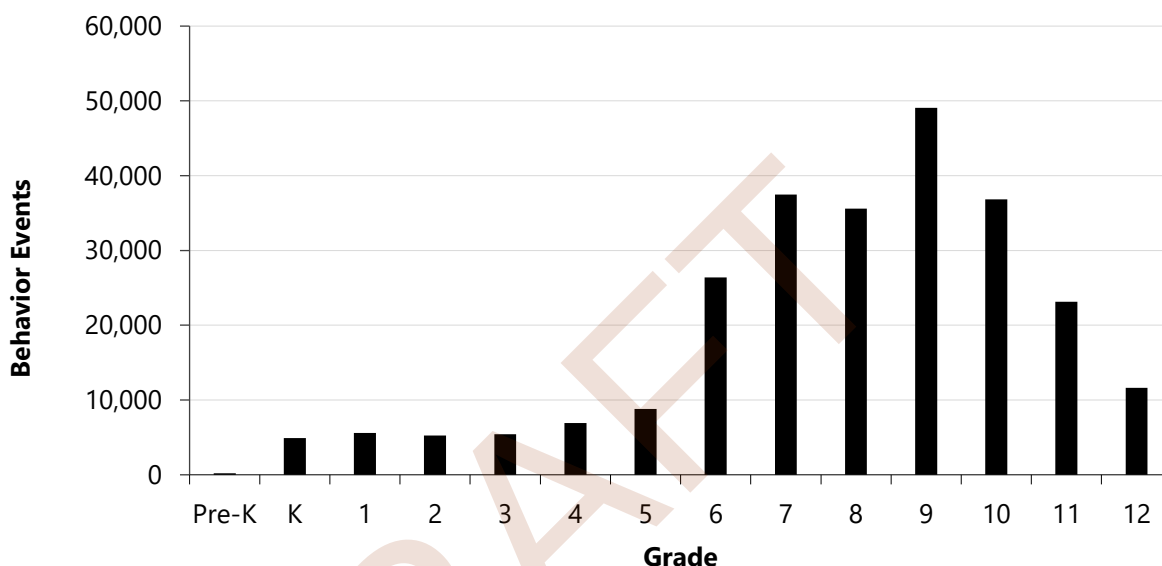
**Grade Level.** As shown in Figure 2.A, the number of behavior events per grade is much higher in the middle and upper grades than elementary grades. While the percentage of students with behavior events is greater overall in the 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades (24

<sup>a</sup> 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.



percent), than in the 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grades (20.8 percent), 9<sup>th</sup> grade has the greatest number of behavior events.

**Figure 2.A**  
**Behavior Events By Grade, 2024**



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

**The relatively lower rates of behavior events of students in pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grades do not necessarily indicate those schools are experiencing low levels of behavior challenges.**

As will be discussed later in this chapter, the relatively lower behavior event rates of students in pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grades do not necessarily indicate that elementary schools are experiencing few behavior challenges. On the 2025 OEA principal survey, 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 formally 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.<sup>b</sup>

**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 2.2 shows the ratio of behavior events for students from different demographic groups had at least one behavior event compared with all other students in the state. Appendix B describes methods for calculating these ratios. Student

<sup>b</sup> Unless they are law violations, behaviors entered in the system are only counted as events if they result in state resolutions such as in-school removal, suspension, or expulsion.



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).<sup>cd</sup>

**Table 2.2**  
**Disproportionality In Behavior Events**  
**By Student Group, 2024**

| <b>Demographic</b>         | <b>Ratio Of Behavior Events<br/>Compared With All Other Students</b> |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 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. Example of method used to calculate ratios = (# of male students with one or more behavior events / # of non-male students).  
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

**Disproportionality in behavior events rates varies among disability types. Students with emotional behavior disorders had behavior events at over five times the rate of students without IEPs.**

Appendix B shows that disproportionality in event rates vary among disability types. Students identified with emotional behavior disorders (EBD) had behavior events at over five times the rate of students without an IEP, whereas students with autism, developmental delays, functional mental disabilities, or speech language disorders are less likely than students without IEPs to have behavior events.<sup>e</sup>

**Student demographic groups with disproportionately high behavior events also have disproportional rates of disciplinary resolutions (consequences).**

Disciplinary consequences are recorded as “resolutions” in the safe schools data. Appendix B provides disproportionality data on two behavior event resolutions: in-school removal or out-of-school suspension. It shows that groups with disproportionately high behavior events also have disproportionately high rates for these resolutions.

**Disproportional rates of behavior violations or disciplinary consequences vary among districts.**

Appendix C shows that disproportionality exists in most districts but the degree of disproportionality ranges broadly.

<sup>c</sup> 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.

<sup>d</sup> 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.

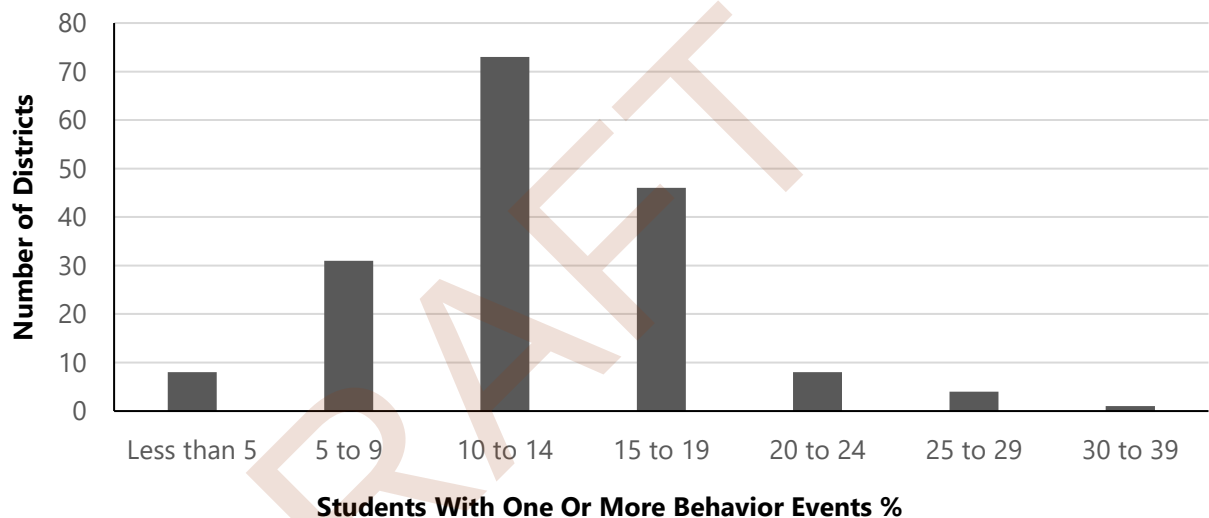
<sup>e</sup> Students with speech language disorders or developmental delays are enrolled primarily in the early grades.

**Behavior Event Rates By District And School**

**Behavior events as a percent of students ranged broadly among districts, from a low of 2 percent to a high of 37 percent.**

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 percent.

**Figure 2.B**  
**Students With One Or More Behavior Events**  
**By District, 2024**

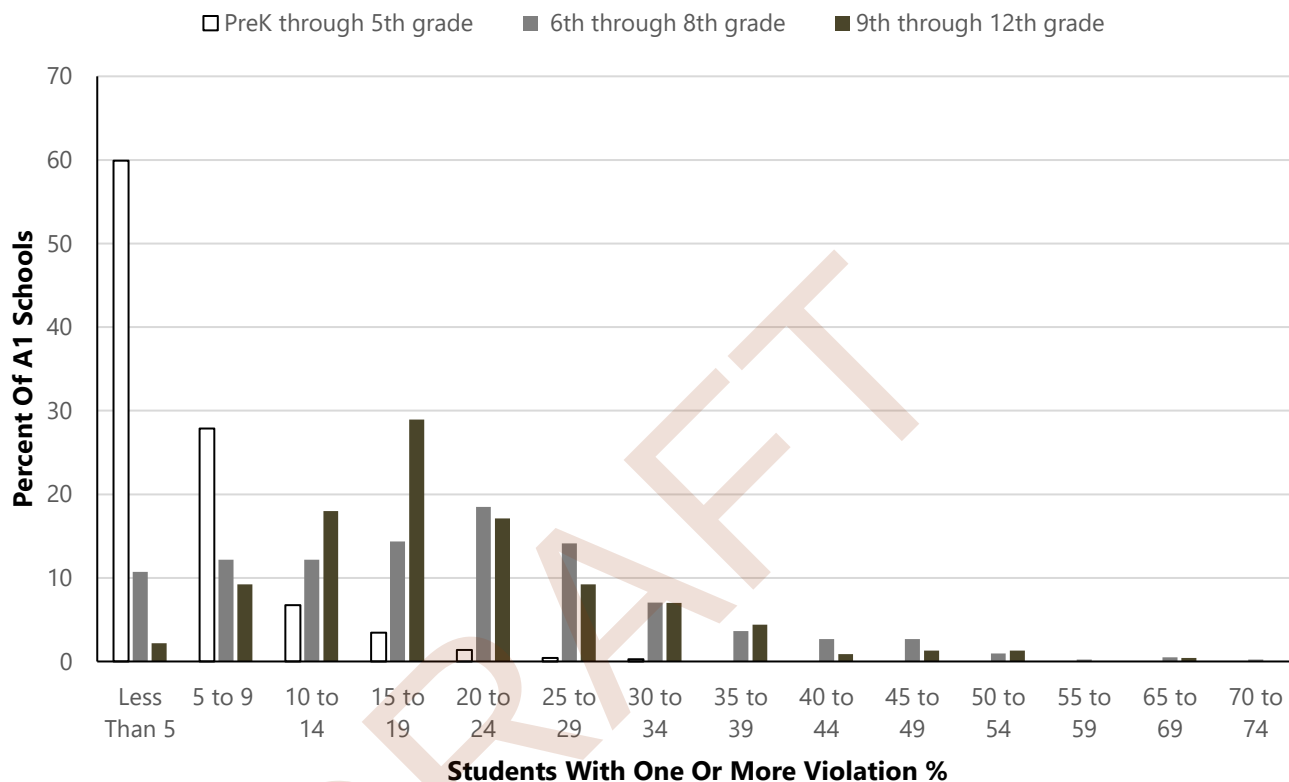


Note: These rates do not include students enrolled in alternative schools or other non-A1 schools.  
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

**School-level behavior event rates ranged from a low of 0 to a high of 71 percent.**

Figure 2.C shows the range in behavior event rates by school level. Behavior event rates range from 0 to 34 percent in schools serving grades kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade students; from 0 to 71 percent in schools serving 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, and 2 to 66 percent. in schools serving 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students.

**Figure 2.C**  
**Percentage Of A1 Schools By School Level And Rate Of Students**  
**With One Or More Behavior Events, 2024**



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

Appendix D 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.

**While behavior event rates are an important indicator of behavior related challenges that may exist in a district or school, they are not always consistent with behavior-related challenges reported by teachers or students.**

### **Degree Of Challenge Indicated By Behavior Event Rate Data Versus Teacher And Student Survey Data**

While behavior event rates provide one important indicator of behavior-related challenges that may exist in a district or school, they are not always consistent with teachers' and students' reports of behavior-related challenges.

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**OEA cautions against the use of behavior rate data alone to determine the relative level of challenge in an individual district or school.**

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Because of discrepancies in some districts and schools between the level of challenge indicated by behavior event rates compared with teacher or student survey data, OEA cautions against use of behavior event rate data alone to determine the relative level of challenge among districts and schools.

---

**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 E, 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.

---

**Behavior event rate data are not always consistent with teacher and student survey data, however. For example, teachers in some higher-event rate districts report relatively low levels of classroom disruptions whereas teachers in some lower-event-rate districts report relatively higher levels of classroom disruption.**

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Appendix E also shows substantial variation, however, among districts with similar behavior event rates in what was reported about behavior on surveys of teachers and students. In some districts with higher behavior rates, for example, teachers reported relatively less than the state average of classroom disruption from student misconduct. Conversely, in some districts with low-event rates, teachers' reports of disruptions from student misconduct far exceed state averages.

### Sources Of Discrepancy

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

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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. In some schools, behavior events may be underreported due to administrators' desire to meet certain thresholds or limitations in staff time available to process the number of behavior events that occur.

## Behavior-related Challenges Indicated By Multiple Sources

**Teacher and student survey data, in combination with event rate data, provide a more robust indication of behavior challenges than do event rate data alone. The report provides data on a variety of indicators for all Kentucky districts.**

Teacher and student survey data, in combination with event rate data, provide a more robust indication of behavior challenges than do event rate data alone. Appendix F provides event rate data and relevant teacher or student survey data for all 171 districts. On each indicator, districts were assigned to one of five categories, from lowest to highest degree of behavior-related challenge. The data clearly indicate a proportion of districts that have a high degree of challenge on multiple indicators, as well as those for which multiple indicators suggest a low level of challenge.

**In 14 percent of districts, three sources of data—behavior event rates, teacher survey data, and student survey data—all indicate much higher levels of behavior-related challenges compared with other districts.**

Appendix G shows that in 14 percent of districts, all three sources of data—student event rate data, teacher survey data, and student survey data—are far above state averages. Appendix G also shows the percentage of schools for which behavior related challenges are indicated by multiple sources of data: 7 percent of elementary schools, 13 percent of middle schools, and 8 percent of high schools.

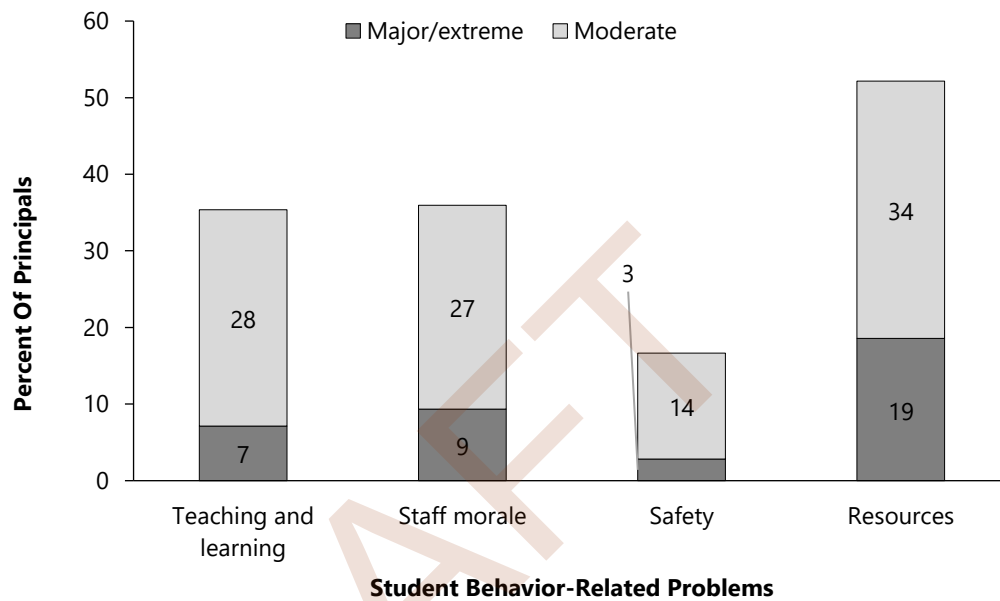
## Principals' Reports Of Behavior-related Challenges, 2025

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.

**Just over one third of principals report at least moderate challenges from student behavior related to teaching and learning or staff morale.**

As shown in Figure 2.D, just over one third of principals report at least moderate challenges from student behavior related to teaching and learning or staff morale. Over half (53 percent) of principals report at least moderate challenges related to school resources, and 17 percent report at least moderate challenges related to safety. The percent of principals reporting major or extreme problems was 19 percent for resources, 9 percent for teacher morale, 7 percent for student behavior and 3 percent for safety.

**Figure 2.D**  
**Percentage Of Kentucky Principals Reporting**  
**Student Behavior-Related Problems, 2025**



Source: OEA survey of A1 principals, 2025.

### **Degree Of Problem By Behavior Category And School Level**

The survey also asked principals to report the level of challenge associated with specific behavior events. The survey provided insight not available in the school schools data, such as degree of challenge associated with particular behaviors as well as challenges reported during site visits but not specifically captured in the safe schools data. Frequency of behavior events reported in safe schools data are shown in Appendix H.

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**Classroom disruptions caused by difficulty 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.**

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Figures 2E, 2F, and 2G show the degree to which particular behaviors were reported by principals as problems. The figures illustrate some challenges that are not evident in the safe school data<sup>f</sup>:

- 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;
- Student apathy/disengagement was reported as at least a moderate problem in most high schools and almost half of middle schools and is among the top problems reported as major or extreme at every school level;
- At the middle and high school levels, vapes and cell phones are among the top challenges; and
- 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.

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**Chapter 4 provides additional detail on elementary school challenges, such as the frequent necessity in some schools of “clearing” classrooms.**

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Chapter 4 provides additional detail on elementary school challenges, including the frequent necessity in some schools of “clearing” classrooms—evacuating staff and students due to the dangerous or disruptive behavior of a single student.

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**While the percentages of educators who express strong concerns about violent events is relatively small, concerns are urgent for those affected.**

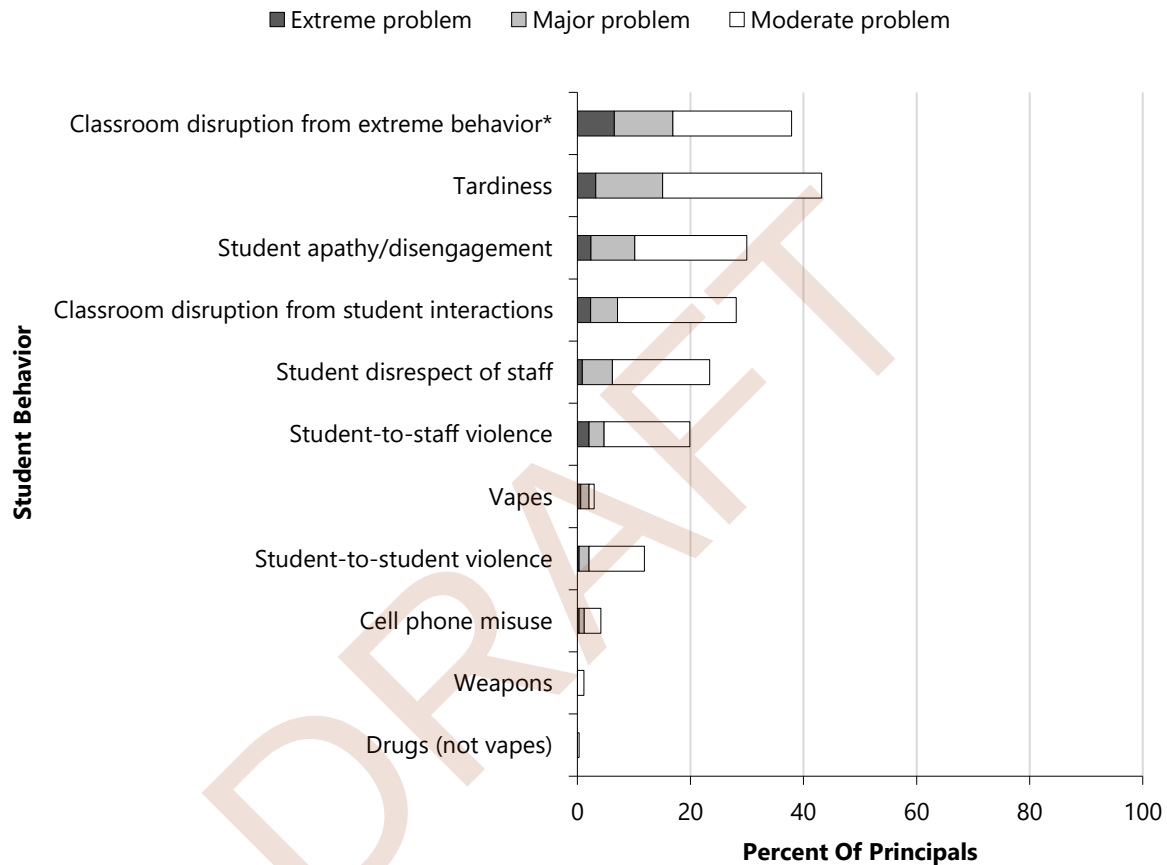
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As will be discussed in Chapter 3, while events involving assaults or violence are relatively less common overall concerns, they can extremely impactful to those who experience them. As one principal noted on the OEA survey, “while the overall numbers (of physically dangerous incidents) seem low, it leaves students and staff feeling unsafe.”

---

<sup>f</sup> OEA surveyed school principals to determine whether the challenges presented by specific behaviors was proportional to their presence in the SSD. The OEA survey included some 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.)

**Figure 2.E**  
**Degree Of Problem Posed By Student Behaviors**  
**As Reported By Elementary School Principals, 2025**



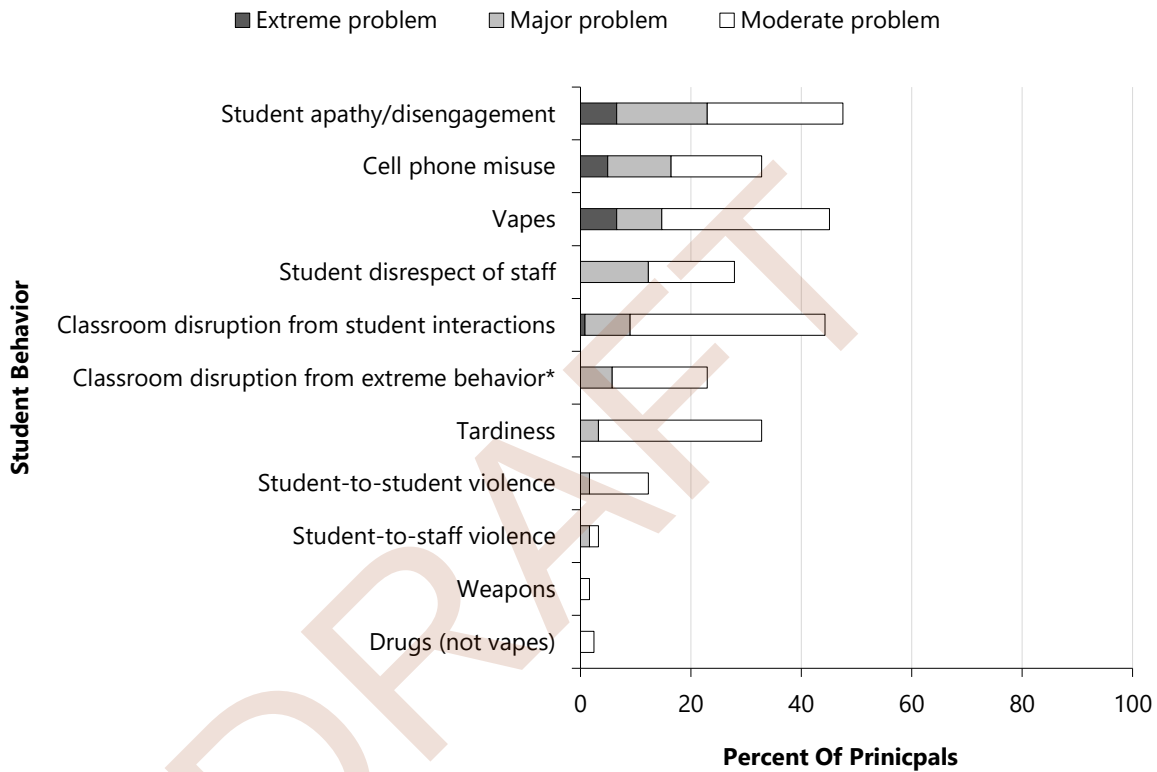
Note: The percentage of principals indicating a minor or little/no problem are not reported in the table. These comprised the majority of responses in most categories.

\*Extreme behavior on the survey was cited as throwing objects, overturning furniture, and screaming.

Source: OEA survey of A1 principals, 2025.



**Figure 2.F**  
**Degree Of Problem Posed By Student Behaviors**  
**As Reported By Middle School Principals, 2025**

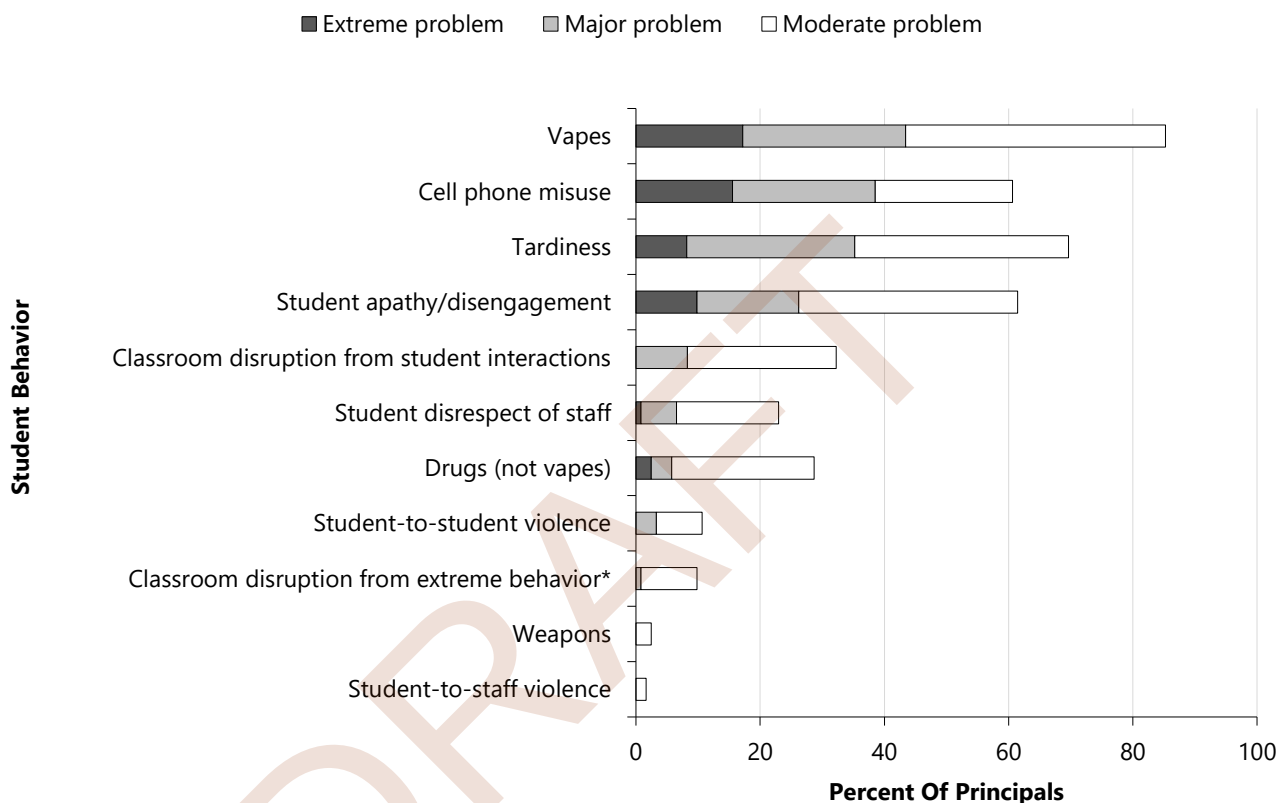


Note: The percentage of principals indicating a minor or little/no problem are not reported in the table. These comprised the majority of responses in most categories.

\*Extreme behavior on the survey was cited as throwing objects, overturning furniture, and screaming

Source: OEA survey of A1 principals, 2025.

**Figure 2.G**  
**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.

\*Extreme behavior on the survey was cited as throwing objects, overturning furniture, and screaming.

Source: OEA survey of A1 principals, 2025.

### Teacher Versus Principal Reports Of Behavior Challenges

**Principals' reports of behavior-related challenges are known to be more positive than teachers' reports. In 2024, over 34 percent of teachers reported that student misconduct frequently or always disrupts the classroom environment, compared with 11 percent of principals.**

Principals' reports of behavior-related challenges are known to be more positive than teachers' reports. On KDE's 2024 working conditions survey, 34 percent of teachers reported that student misconduct frequently or always disrupts the classroom learning environment compared with 11 percent of principals. Teachers in the early grades were more likely to report frequent disruption than other teachers (38 percent for K-3 teachers and 31 percent for all other teachers).

While school safety was a concern to a minority of both principals and teachers, a greater percentage of principals reported favorably on the overall safety of the environment than teachers (99 percent versus 86 percent, respectively).

## Chapter 3

### Consequences For Severe And Persistent Behaviors In Kentucky Schools

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**The General Assembly requires local boards to establish consequences for certain dangerous, serious, or disruptive behaviors.**

Although student discipline is primarily a matter of local control in the commonwealth, the General Assembly has directed local boards to establish consequences for certain dangerous, serious or disruptive behaviors. Local boards must adopt policies that require expulsion or alternative placement for unlawful possession of weapons and dangerous threats; permit expulsion or alternative placement for assaults and drug distribution; and permit principals to implement procedures for removing students from classrooms in which they have been chronically disruptive.<sup>a</sup>

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**OEA's analysis shows a wide variety of consequences assigned to dangerous or serious behaviors; in some cases, consequences are minimal.**

OEA analyzed the resolutions for behavior events that require or permit expulsion or alternative placement. The analysis shows that disciplinary resolutions assigned to dangerous or serious behaviors range broadly, from minor consequences such as lunch detention or parent conference to major consequences such as expulsion or alternative placement.

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**Educators in a substantial minority of schools expressed strong concern about lack of sufficient attention to discipline.**

Data analyzed in this chapter also show that, in a substantial minority of schools, educators are frustrated about what they feel is lack of administrative support in enforcing discipline for dangerous, serious, or disruptive behaviors. Possible explanations for the gap in some schools or districts between statutory guidance regarding these behaviors and local administrators' actions to address them include lack of clarity in some statutes and conflicting direction to local leaders from state law, federal law, and local public pressure.

#### Statutory Requirements For Addressing Dangerous Or Extreme Behaviors

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**Local board policies must require expulsion or alternative placement for students who bring weapons unlawfully to school or make dangerous threats. Policies must also specify consequences up to expulsion or alternative placement for other specified events.**

KRS 158.150 requires local boards to adopt policies requiring 12-month expulsion when the board determines that a student has brought a weapon unlawfully on school property or that a student makes a threat that poses a danger. The statute also permits students to be placed in an alternative program or setting, including virtual, in lieu of expulsion. Local board policies must also address

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<sup>a</sup> Data in this chapter are analyzed based on requirements of KRS 158.150 that were in effect in the 2025 school year. In RS 2026, SB 101 amended the statute to require expulsion for students in grades 6-12 who intentionally cause or attempt to cause physical injury to a school district employee.

other serious dangerous or serious behaviors such as assaults or drug possession with consequences up to or including expulsion or alternative placement.<sup>b</sup>

Table 3.1 shows behaviors that are required or permitted to result in expulsion or alternative placement.<sup>c</sup>

**Table 3.1**  
**Behaviors For Which Expulsion Or Alternative Placement Is Required Or Permitted\***

| <b>Expulsion Or<br/>Alternative Placement</b> | <b>Behavior</b>                 | <b>Description</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Required                                      | Threats                         | Made threats determined by a local board to pose a danger to the well-being of students, faculty, or staff                                                                                                               |
|                                               | Unlawful possession of a weapon | Brought a weapon determined by a local board to be unlawfully possessed on school property                                                                                                                               |
| Permitted                                     | Drugs                           | Possessed prescription drugs or controlled substances for the purpose of sale or distribution at a school                                                                                                                |
|                                               | Assault*                        | Physically assaulted, battered, or abused educational personnel or other students at a school, or a school function, or off school property when the incident is likely to substantially disrupt the educational process |

\* Requirements are reported as effect in the 2025 school year. In RS 2026, SB 101 amended the statute to require expulsion for students in grades 6-12 who intentionally cause or attempt to cause physical injury to a school district employee.

Source: Staff analysis of Kentucky Revised Statutes.

**Statutes address behaviors related to bullying, harassment, and vapes but do not require specific disciplinary consequences for these violations.**

**Bullying, Harassment, And Vapes.** Statutes also provide direction for identifying and addressing behaviors related to bullying, harassment, 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.<sup>d</sup> Resolutions for bullying and harassment are reported in Appendix

<sup>b</sup> Ibid.

<sup>c</sup> Requirements are reported as effect in the 2025 school year. In RS 2026, SB 101 amended the statute to require expulsion for students in grades 6-12 who intentionally cause or attempt to cause physical injury to a school district employee. Table 3.1 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.

<sup>d</sup> 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.

I. Resolutions for vapes, along with some challenges identified by principals related to vapes are in Appendix J.

### **Behavior Event Resolutions Recorded In Safe Schools Data**

Administrators must enter actions taken to address the behavior events entered into the Safe Schools Data (SSD). 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. <sup>e</sup>

**In the safe schools data, events that result in a student being removed from their regular education setting are indicated as expulsion; in-district removal (INDR) or interim alternative education setting (IAES) for students with disabilities.**

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 resolutions that do not meet statutorily-required consequences for those behaviors. <sup>f</sup>

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<sup>e</sup> 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.

<sup>f</sup> Note that an 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**  
**That Meet Statutory Requirements For**  
**Unlawful Possession Of Weapons Or Dangerous Threats**

| <b>Resolutions That Meet Statutory Requirements</b>        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Expulsion*                                                 | Removal of a student from school for disciplinary reasons that result in withdrawal of the student from the school of attendance. Students may be expelled with or without arrangements made for the provision of educational services.                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| In-district removal (INDR)                                 | 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Interim alternative educational setting (IAES)**           | Removal of a student with a disability from their current educational setting to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting due to 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. |
| <b>Resolutions That Do Not Meet Statutory Requirements</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Out-of-school suspension                                   | Removal of a student from the regular classroom and from school for a specified duration of time.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| In-school removal (INSR)                                   | 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 or 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 documents from the Kentucky Department of Education.

**Statewide, expulsion is rare; 154 students were expelled in 2024.**

As shown in Appendix K, the overwhelming majority of all behavior events (not just those addressed in this chapter) result in-school removal (INSR), with suspension being the next most common. Compared with other resolutions, expulsion is rare; 154 students were expelled in 2024.

**KDE reports the number of expulsions associated with events involving weapons and other law violations but does not report the number of students alternatively placed through in-district removal.**

The KDE 2023-2024 Safe Schools Annual Statistical Report and the School Report Card includes resolutions for law violations grouped by weapons, assault/violence, drugs/alcohol/tobacco, bullying/harassment. The analysis reports expulsions associated with those event groups but combines in-school removal (INSR) and in-district removal (INDR) into a single group. In-district removal removes a student from their regular school setting and also meets statutory requirements for events (such as unlawful possession of a weapon) that require expulsion, but in-school removal does not.

**Disaggregation of in-school and in-district removal in the data, and inclusion of data on removal to interim alternative educational settings (IAES), would increase transparency in KDE's reporting of resolutions for law violations.**

Disaggregation of INSR and INDR in the data would provide a better sense of the consequences faced by students following these types of events. In addition, because interim alternative educational settings (IAES) should, in theory permit a school to remove a student from the school to an alternative location in the district, this resolution should be reported.

### **Resolutions Recorded For Dangerous Or Extreme Behavior Events, 2024**

**In 2024, a small minority of events involving weapons, assaults, and prescription drugs or controlled substances resulted in a student's removal from their regular school setting through expulsion or alternative placement. Suspension was the most common resolution.**

Table 3.3 shows the resolutions for events involving weapons, threats, assaults, and prescription drugs or controlled substances in A1 schools in 2024.<sup>8</sup> Resolutions for specific types of those events follow in the chapter. The table shows that, overall, a small minority of resolutions for all events involving weapons, threats, assaults, prescription drugs and controlled substances resulted in removal of a student from their school or regular setting through expulsion, alternative placement through INDR, or IAES. For all event types analyzed, suspension was the most common resolution. Staff analysis indicates that students were suspended for a median of 3 days in most categories and 2 days for threats.

**Table 3.3  
Resolution Percentages  
By Behavior Event, 2024**

| Behavior Event                                                     | Resolution |       |            |           |      |      | Total Events |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------|------------|-----------|------|------|--------------|
|                                                                    | Local      | INSR* | Suspension | Expulsion | INDR | IAES |              |
| Unlawful possession of weapons                                     | 19.7%      | 12.5% | 58.6%      | 1.6%      | 5.1% | 2.5% | 938          |
| Threats                                                            | 30.8       | 22.1  | 43.4       | 0.8       | 2.9  | 0.0  | 5,687        |
| 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          |

Note: INSR = in-school removal; INDR = in-district removal; IAES = interim alternative educational setting.

\*INSR may also include a small number of restraints or seclusions.

\*\* Students were suspended for a median of 3 days for weapons, assault, and drugs or controlled substances and 2 days for threats.

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

<sup>8</sup> This chapter does not include behavior events recorded in alternative schools or other non-A1 schools. 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.

## Events Involving Weapons

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

As noted in Chapter 2, events involving weapons were a small fraction (0.4%) of behavior events in 2024, with fewer than 1,000 instances recorded. Each weapon event, however, poses a potentially serious risk to students, school personnel, and others. Events involving weapons increased by 47 percent from 2019 to 2024.

**KRS 158.150 prohibits students from unlawfully bringing weapons on school property.**

**Definitions Of Unlawful Possession Of A Weapon And Deadly Weapons.** KRS 158.150 prohibits “unlawful possession of a weapon on school property.” KRS 527.070 describes unlawful possession of a weapon on school property as “any firearm or other deadly weapon, destructive device, or booby trap device.” 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 unlawfully possessed on school property and deadly. However, the status of behavior events involving knives, which are the majority of weapon events entered in the data, is less clear. KRS 500.080 exempts ordinary pocket and hunting knives from the definition of deadly weapons, and those knives are not indicated in the data.**

Taken collectively, the Kentucky statutes cited above clearly identify firearms, weapons of mass destruction, and some lesser-known weapons as being unlawfully possessed weapons and deadly; but statutes 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, yet it is unclear why these would be less dangerous in a school setting than, for example, a small kitchen knife or a hobby knife. Safe schools data does not require indication of whether a knife is a hunting knife or a pocket knife .

## Prevalence And Resolution Of Events Involving Weapons.

Table 3.4 shows the number of events and resolutions for major categories of weapon events. As shown in the table, knives were the most common weapon recorded, followed by other objects. Firearms, which were primarily handguns, accounted for a small percent.<sup>h</sup>

<sup>h</sup> 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).



**In 2024, less than 10 percent of students with behavior events involving weapons were expelled or alternatively placed. Almost 20 percent received only local resolutions, such as a parent conference.**

**With the exception of firearms, it is unclear from the data which weapons meet the statutorily identified definitions for unlawfully possessed or deadly weapon.**

Overall, less than 10 percent of students with a weapon event in 2024 had resolutions that met statutory requirements of expulsion or removal to an alternative setting within the district (INDR or IAES). Almost one-fifth of weapon events (19.7 percent) had only a local resolution, such as a parent conference.<sup>i</sup>

It is unclear in the data which of the weapon events recorded in the SSD, other than firearms, meet the statutory definitions for unlawful possession of a weapon or deadly weapon. While knives are the majority of weapons recorded in weapon events, some of these knives 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.

**Table 3.4**  
**Resolution Rate For Weapon Events**  
**By Type Of Weapon, 2024**

| <b>Behavior Event Type</b>                      | <b>Local</b> | <b>INSR* or suspension</b> | <b>Expelled, INDR, or IAES</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| 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          |

\*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.

<sup>i</sup>In incidents involving knives, over 40 percent of local resolutions were for a conference with the student or parent or a phone call to the parent or guardian. Data notes indicate that some students with local resolutions may have been referred to alternative programs, but this resolution was not clearly indicated in the data.

**Fewer than half of students with firearms were removed from their regular school setting through expulsion or alternative placement.**

Firearms do, however, clearly meet the statutory definition of unlawful possession of a deadly weapon. As shown in Table 3.4, above, fewer than half (44.4 percent) of weapons events involving firearms resulted in removals that met statutory requirements for expulsion or alternative placement.

Table 3.5 shows resolutions for firearms in greater detail. Of the 27 behavior events involving firearms in 2024, 14.8 percent resulted in expulsion. The most common resolution was suspension (40.7 percent). Local resolutions were indicated for 14.8 percent of firearm events.

**Table 3.5**  
**Resolution Rate By Behavior Events Involving Firearms, 2024**

| Behavior<br>Event | Resolution |       |            |           |       |       | Total<br>Events |
|-------------------|------------|-------|------------|-----------|-------|-------|-----------------|
|                   | Local      | INSR* | Suspension | Expulsion | INDR  | IAES  |                 |
| Firearms          | 14.8%      | 0.0%  | 40.7%      | 14.8%     | 11.1% | 18.5% | 27              |

Note: INSR = in-school removal; INDR = in-district removal; IAES = interim alternative educational setting. Resolution percentages may not sum due to rounding.

\*INSR may also include a small number of restraints or seclusions.

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

**In determining resolutions for weapons events, local leaders may face conflicting messages from state law, federal law, legal precedents, and public pressure.**

**Possible Explanations For Failure To Implement Statutorily-Required Resolutions For Weapons.** As noted above, it is not clear whether the small and large knives entered into the SSD would be considered unlawful on school property. In addition, in 2023 legislative guidance related to KRS 158.150, KDE noted that, in some cases, expelling students for unlawful possession of a weapon may cause local boards to “violate the constitutional rights of students.”<sup>j k</sup> 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.<sup>l</sup> In

<sup>j</sup> The Kentucky Department of Education. “2023 Legislative Guidance- Non-Emergency Bills.” *Legislative Guidance*. June 12, 2013. Web.

<sup>k</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> grade student and a 1<sup>st</sup> grade student threatening violence and that expelling the 1<sup>st</sup> grader may be arbitrarily disproportionate.

<sup>l</sup> 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

addition, as noted in Chapter 1, local leaders may face a variety of political pressures against exclusionary discipline policies. Local boards thus face conflicting messages from state law, federal law, legal precedents, and public pressure.

### Recommendation 3.1

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**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 for possession on school property and deadly, 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 “deadly 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

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**KRS 158.150 requires expulsion or alternative placement for threats that the board determines to pose a danger.**

KRS 158.150 requires expulsion or alternative placement for threats that are “determined through clear and convincing evidence to “pose a danger to the well-being of students, faculty, or staff of the district.” Threatening behavior recorded in SSD include threatening another student or staff; terroristic threatening; bomb, chemical, biological or nuclear threats; and wanton endangerment.

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**Each school must have a safety and security threat assessment team to identify and respond to students exhibiting behavior that may pose a threat.**

**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.<sup>mno12</sup>

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**Threats were about 2 percent of all behavior events. Threatening another student was the most common type of threat followed by terroristic threatening.**

**Prevalence And Resolution Of Threats.** Table 3.6 shows the prevalence and resolutions of threats in 2024. Almost 5,700 threatening behaviors were recorded in the SSD, comprising about

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expulsion requirement for a student on a case-by-case basis if such modification is in writing.”

<sup>m</sup> 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. 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.

<sup>n</sup> Kentucky Center for School Safety. “2023-2024 Annual Report.” KCSS Annual Report. Kentucky Center for School Safety. 2024. Web.

<sup>o</sup> Kentucky Center for School Safety. “Threat of Harm.” Web.

2 percent of all behavior events. Threatening another student was the most common type of threat, followed by terroristic threatening.<sup>p</sup>

**A small minority of threats, including bomb or terroristic threats, resulted in expulsion or alternative placement.**

Fewer than 3 percent of all students who threatened another student or staff were removed from their school through expulsion, INDR, or IAES. These types of school removals were the minority of resolutions even for more extreme forms of threat such as terroristic threats (8.2 percent) and bomb threats (11.9 percent). 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.<sup>q</sup>

**Table 3.6**  
**Resolution Rate By Type Of Threat, 2024**

| Threat Event                | Resolution |                  |                       | Total Events |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
|                             | Local      | INSR*/Suspension | Expulsion, INDR, IAES |              |
| 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           |
| All threats**               | 30.8%      | 65.5%            | 3.7%                  | 5,687        |

Note: INSR = in-school removal; INDR = in-district removal; IAES = interim alternative educational setting. Resolution percentages may not sum due to rounding.

\*INSR may also include a small number of restraints or seclusions.

\*\*Includes 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.

**It is unclear how many reported threats were considered by administrators to pose a 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

<sup>p</sup> 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).

<sup>q</sup> 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).

repeating language heard commonly among friends and had no history of violence or intent to hurt their friend.

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**Threats are disruptive to schools and instruction and require administrators' 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.**

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**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.

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**In 2024, 1,580 assaults were recorded in the SSD.**

**Prevalence And Resolution Of Assaults.** In 2024, 1,580 assaults were recorded in the SSD. The greatest proportion of assaults were at the high school level (38.8 percent), followed by middle schools (34.1 percent), elementary schools (25.6 percent), and preschool (1.5 percent).

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**Less than 10 percent of students who committed an assault were removed from their schools through expulsion or alternative placement.**

Table 3.7 shows that, of students who committed any assault, 9.6 percent were removed from their school or regular setting through expulsion, INDR, or IAES.

**Table 3.7**  
**Resolution Rate By Degree Of Assault, 2024**

| Assault Event          | Resolution |                 |                       | Total Events |
|------------------------|------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------|
|                        | Local      | INSR/Suspension | Expulsion, INDR, IAES |              |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> degree | 28.6%      | 64.3%           | 7.1%                  | 42           |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> degree | 8.2        | 78.1            | 13.7                  | 73           |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> degree | 15.9       | 66.5            | 17.7                  | 328          |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> degree | 15.5       | 77.3            | 7.2                   | 1,137        |
| All assaults           | 15.6 %     | 74.7%           | 9.7%                  | 1,580        |

Note: INSR = in-school removal; INDR = in-district removal; IAES = interim alternative educational setting. Resolution percentages may not sum due to rounding. As described in KDE's data standards, 1<sup>st</sup>-degree assault causes serious physical injury with a deadly weapon, dangerous instrument or wanton conduct; 2<sup>nd</sup>-degree assault causes serious physical injury; 3<sup>rd</sup>-degree assault causes or intends to cause physical injury against school employees, volunteers, social workers, or first responders; and 4<sup>th</sup>-degree assault causes physical injury.

\*INSR may also include a small number of restraints or seclusions.

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

**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.**

**In 2024, seven percent of students who committed first-degree assault were placed in an alternative school and none were expelled. Suspension was the most common resolution for first-degree assault.**

**First-Degree Assault.** First-degree assault is defined by KDE 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 first-degree assault into the SSD.

Seven percent of students who committed first-degree assault were placed in an alternative school and none were expelled. The most common resolution for first-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 first-degree assault, 28.6 percent received a local resolution, which included a lunch detention, a reassigned cafeteria seat, a parent/guardian conference, a bus suspension, and a mental health conference.<sup>r</sup>

**Difficulty Holding Elementary Students Accountable For Assault.** As shown in Chapter 2, elementary school principals were more likely than middle or high school principals to report challenges associated with student-to-staff violence. Several survey respondents explained that they have difficulty holding students who repeatedly violently assault staff accountable except

<sup>r</sup> 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).

by pursuing action through the criminal justice system, but they are unable to do this for children under 12.<sup>s</sup> As one explained,

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.

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**Staff interviewed in site visit schools noted many negative effects of violent student behavior on instructional quality and on staff mental health and turnover.**

### **Effects Of Assaults On Morale Of Teachers And Staff.**

Although the total number of assaults in the SSD is relatively low compared to other behavior events, OEA site visit data and survey comments suggest that each instance of assault can have strong, negative effects on teachers, school staff, and students. OEA visited 12 schools for which data indicated disciplinary challenges. Staff, including safety officers, in over one-third of site visit schools had recently been assaulted by a student.<sup>t</sup>

During OEA site visit interviews, 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.

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**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 heard anecdotes of incidents in which a student who assaulted another student or staff received minimal consequences, even in cases when the victim required 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.

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<sup>s</sup> There is no minimum age for pressing charges in Kentucky, but several principals indicated that they are not permitted to press charges for children under 12.

<sup>t</sup> As noted in Chapter 1, OEA chose site visit schools based in part on data that indicated the presence of disciplinary challenges.



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The Safe Schools Data does not include any victim or witness identifiers, so it is not possible to determine if students or staff were the victim of specific behaviors.

**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 instructs schools to use features of the software that allow for identification of four roles in behavior events: offender, participant, witness, and victim.<sup>u</sup> However, the 2024 SSD does not include any victims or witnesses; therefore, it is not possible to determine if students or staff were the subject of specific behaviors (such as first-degree assault). Instead, the system includes codes for broad behavior event categories that involve staff.<sup>v</sup> Collectively, these broad behavior categories do not clearly indicate the total number or severity of violence or assault against school employees.<sup>w</sup>

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### 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.**

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Just over one tenth of students with prescription drugs or controlled substance events were removed from their regular school settings through expulsion or alternative placement. Marijuana or THC vapes comprised the overwhelming majority of drug or controlled substance events.

### Prescription Drugs And Controlled Substances

Table 3.8 shows the numbers of and resolutions for behavior events involving prescription drugs and controlled substances, most of which occurred at the high school level.<sup>xy</sup> The

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<sup>u</sup> In addition, KDE guidance states that victim is required for Civil Rights Data Collection for harassment events.

<sup>v</sup> In 2024, incidents of behavior event codes that specifically mention staff include threatening staff, fighting student-to-staff, 3rd-degree assault, and abuse of a teacher. See Appendix A for more details.

<sup>w</sup> For example KDE's definition in its behavior data standards for 3<sup>rd</sup> degree assault is "recklessly, with a deadly weapon or dangerous instrument, OR intentionally causes or attempts to cause physical injury to all first responders, social workers, and all school employees and volunteers". That event category therefore does not distinguish whether an assault actually occurred or its severity. Abuse of a teacher is defined as "intentional verbal, mental or physical abuse of a teacher or administrator" and therefore does not clearly indicate the nature of the abuse. Finally, KDE does not define "fighting student to staff." It is locally defined.

<sup>x</sup> Of behavior events for prescription drugs and controlled substances, 74.2 percent were at the high school level, followed by middle school (25.1 percent), and elementary schools (0.7 percent).

<sup>y</sup> 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,



overwhelming majority of these events involved marijuana or THC vapes. Just over one tenth (10.8) of all prescription drug or controlled substance events resulted in removal from the regular school setting through expulsion or alternative placement.

**Table 3.8**  
**Resolution Rate By Prescription Drug Or Controlled Substance, 2024**

| Prescription<br>Drugs Or Controlled<br>Substance Event | Resolution |                  |                       | Total<br>Events |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
|                                                        | Local      | INSR*/Suspension | Expulsion, INDR, IAES |                 |
| 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<br>controlled substances**  | 6.8        | 82.4             | 10.8                  | 5,160           |

Note: INSR = in-school removal; INDR = in-district removal; IAES = interim alternative educational setting. Resolution percentages may not sum due to rounding.

\*INSR may also include a small number of restraints or seclusions

\*\*Includes 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.

**Sixteen percent of behavior events involving drug distribution resulted in expulsion or alternative placement.**

**Resolutions For Drug Distribution.** The majority of the events shown in Table 3.8 were for drug possession (62.7 percent) or drug use (32.4 percent) while 5 percent were for drug distribution. Staff analysis indicates that proportion of resolutions for cases involving distribution were similar to those for all events. Students were, however, more likely to be expelled or placed in alternative settings for drug distribution than for all drug events; in cases involving drug distribution, 16.2 percent of students were expelled or placed in an alternative setting compared with 10.8 percent of students for all drug-related events.

### **Event And Resolution Rates Of Students With And Without IEPs**

**Students with IEPs are more likely than non-IEP students to have weapon, threat, and assault events.**

As shown in Appendix L, 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. In the case of threats and assaults, IEP students are one-half and one-third as likely as likely as non-IEP students,

amphetamines, methamphetamine, cocaine/crack, heroin (opioids), and steroids (anabolic).

respectively, to be removed from the school setting through expulsion, INDR, or IAES.<sup>z</sup>

## **Implementation Of Chronic Disruption Policies, Practices, And Procedures**

### **Chronic Disruption Legislation**

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

Through HB 538 of the 2023 regular session, the General Assembly amended KRS 158.150 to address chronically disruptive students. It 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. Principals have the authority to remove a chronically disruptive student for the remainder of the school and provide instruction in a variety of settings including 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**

**In 2025, about one-third of principals reported implementing chronic disruption policies, procedures, or practices.**

The OEA Principal survey found that 35.6 percent of responding principals had policies, procedures, or practices in place specifically 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.<sup>aa</sup>

**Principals most commonly reported identifying between one and five students as chronically disruptive in 2025.**

### **Numbers of Students Identified As Chronically Disruptive.**

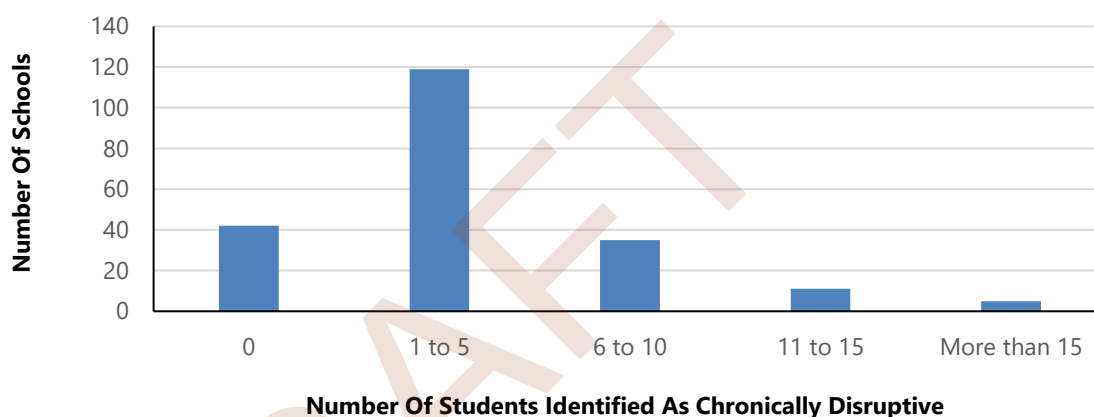
Figure 3.A shows that principals most commonly identified between one and five students as chronically disruptive in 2025. In about one-fifth of schools no students were identified. Principals in

<sup>z</sup> Resolutions for weapons and drug events are similar for IEP and non-IEP students.

<sup>aa</sup> 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 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.

five schools reported identifying more than 15 students as chronically disruptive and one reported that 42 students were identified.

**Figure 3.A**  
**Students Identified As Chronically Disruptive**  
**By Schools Implementing Chronic Disruption Policies, 2025**



Note: The category “more than 15” includes up to 42 students.

Source: OEA 2025 principal survey.

**The most common action taken for chronically disruptive students was out-of-school suspension.**

Of the principals implementing chronic disruption policies, most (55.7 percent) reported that they took disciplinary action on chronically disruptive students at least 75 percent of the time. Eight percent of principals 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. The most common were out-of-school suspension for more than 1 day but less than 1 week (65.7 percent); in-school suspension for more than 1 day but less than 1 week (54.3 percent); and in-person alternative learning program or classroom located in the school for more than 1 day but less than 1 week (21.8 percent).

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

| <b>Option</b>                                                                          | <b>N/A –<br/>Option<br/>Not<br/>Used</b> | <b>1 Day<br/>Or Less</b> | <b>More Than<br/>1 Day,<br/>Less Than<br/>1 Week</b> | <b>Between<br/>1 Week<br/>To<br/>1 Month</b> | <b>More Than<br/>1 Month,<br/>Less Than<br/>3 Months</b> | <b>3 Months<br/>Or More</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 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**

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 identifies key barriers to addressing persistent and severe behaviors as lack of alternative settings and legal restrictions on disciplinary removals for students with disabilities. These challenges also affect implementation of chronic disruption policies.**

**Legal Restrictions And Lack Of Alternative Settings.** Chapter 4 describes barriers to addressing persistent and severe behaviors generally—lack of alternative placements and legal restrictions associated with disciplinary removals for students with IEPs. Site visit principals also identified these factors as 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, chronically disruptive students with IEPs have legal protections on the amount of time they can be removed from the regular classroom.

**Principals and teachers in most OEA site visit schools were unaware of legislation permitting options to address chronically disruptive students.**

**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 address 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 Persistent Or Severe Student Behavior In Some Schools**

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**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.**

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.<sup>3</sup>

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.

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**Educators in 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.**

Educators interviewed during site visits noted the consequences to staff and students when persistent or severe behavior challenges go unaddressed. 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. Both teachers and principals in site visit schools noted that administrators may feel more accountable for protecting students from exclusionary discipline than for ensuring that teachers and the majority of students could operate in an orderly environment.

**District Support Of Schools In Addressing Behavior Challenges**

**Fifty-seven percent of principals reported being very or extremely satisfied with district support 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.<sup>bb</sup> Survey comments described proactive attempts by district administrators to understand or respond to discipline concerns and to provide support through resources such as clear discipline guidelines; professional development for staff; staffing to support management of extreme behavior challenges; and various programs to teach expectations, track incidents, and intervene with students experiencing challenges.

**Fifteen percent of principals reported being somewhat or extremely dissatisfied with the support they receive from district administrators.**

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.<sup>cc</sup>

**District restrictions on alternative placement or suspension can present a challenge in principals' perceived ability to address persistent or severe behaviors.**

**Lack Of Support For Alternative Placement Or Suspension.** In particular, principals expressed dissatisfaction with lack of district administrative support in permitting alternative placement or suspension for students with persistent or severe behaviors. District discouragement was identified as a major or extreme challenge by 19 percent of principals in the case of alternative placement and by 12 percent of principals in the case of suspension.

Related to alternative placement one principal 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

<sup>bb</sup> Forty percent of principals reported to a "moderate" extent and 13 percent reported "to little or no extent."

<sup>cc</sup> The remainder were somewhat satisfied.

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.

An elementary school principal suggested that district discouragement of suspension made it difficult to hold students accountable for extreme behaviors into the future:

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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**Administrators in high - incidence schools may limit use of exclusionary discipline, even when it is permitted by the district code of conduct. In high-incidence site visit schools, educators expressed concern that students were unaccountable to school staff or adults generally.**

Educators in several site visit schools noted that district administrators did not take school or neighborhood context into account in interpreting rates of exclusionary discipline. According to staff, their schools were located in neighborhoods in which violent conflicts among students occurred outside of school leading to higher numbers of fights and assaults inside the school than was common in other schools within the district. Although the district code of conduct permitted suspension or alternative placement for violent incidents, district staff might pressure school administrators to limit use of exclusionary discipline in order to stay below certain thresholds. For this reason, consequences for violent or severely disruptive behavior could sometimes be minimal. School resource officers and staff in these schools expressed distress at the relative lack of consequences for students who engaged in violent or severely disruptive behavior and feared that it led some students to feel unaccountable to school staff or adults generally for their behavior.

### **Principal Support Of Teachers In Addressing Behavior Challenges**

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**The majority of teachers reported favorably on principals' support of classroom management efforts.**

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. Sixty-two percent of teachers reported that principals were quite or extremely effective at developing school rules to facilitate student learning and 65 percent reported that principals supported teachers' classroom management efforts quite or extremely well.



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**Fourteen percent of teachers reported unfavorably on principals' effectiveness at developing school rules and supporting classroom management efforts.**

A substantial minority of teachers indicated lack of sufficient support, however: 14 percent of teachers reported that principals were only slightly or not at all effective at developing school rules and 14 percent reported that principals supported teachers' classroom management efforts slightly or not at all well.

### **Frustration Of Teachers In Site Visit Schools With Lack Of Consequences For Persistent Or Severe Behaviors.**

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**During OEA site visits to schools for which data indicated disciplinary challenges, new and veteran teachers expressed frustration with a lack of consequences for students with repeatedly disruptive or disrespectful behavior.**

During OEA site visits to schools for which data indicated disciplinary challenges, 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. In some cases, policies outlining consequences for severely disruptive behavior were in place and not implemented. In others, school policies 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.<sup>dd</sup>

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**Most newer teachers in site visit schools received little systematic support for classroom management.**

School policies requiring multiple redirects for extremely disruptive behavior were especially challenging for new or otherwise struggling classroom teachers. Most newer educators interviewed in site visit schools reported 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.

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<sup>dd</sup> 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.



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

**Data presented in this chapter indicate misalignment among administrators and teachers on matters of school discipline in a substantial minority of schools.**

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."

**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.**

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 KDE 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.<sup>4</sup>

**This study reinforces the need for attention to data that indicate challenges with school climate, culture, and student behavior in some districts and schools, and the need for making relevant resources available.**

Data analyzed 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.

<sup>1</sup> Kentucky Center for School Safety. "2023-2024 Annual Report." KCSS Annual Report. Kentucky Center for School Safety. 2024. Web.

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<sup>2</sup> Kentucky Center for School Safety. “Threat of Harm.” Web.

<sup>3</sup> 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, pp.38-42.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. pp 101-103

DRAFT

## Chapter 4

### Challenges Addressing Persistent Or Severe Behavior

**This chapter reports challenges identified by principals in addressing persistent or severe behaviors. It focuses on those identified as major or extreme by over one-third of survey respondents.**

This chapter reports challenges identified by principals in addressing persistent or severe behaviors. Data come from OEA's 2025 principal survey and site visits to schools with behavior-related challenges. The chapter focuses, especially, on challenges described as major or extreme by more than one-third of Kentucky principals:

- Lack of alternative settings, especially at the elementary level
- Federal restrictions in disciplining students with disabilities and providing instruction in alternative settings

Principals who identified these challenges often underscored tension between the small number of students with extreme behavior challenges and the many teachers and students negatively impacted by violent or disruptive behavior.

The chapter also identifies steps that might be taken by the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and the Kentucky Center for School Safety (KCSS) to assist district and school leaders in addressing these challenges.

### Preventing Behavior Problems

#### Options Or Supports To Promote 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.**

Principals were also asked to identify options or supports that would help to prevent behavior problems. Those 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).<sup>ab</sup> See survey questions in Appendix M for data on other options or supports—such as professional development, or mentoring—desired by some principals.

### School-Based Alternative Learning Classrooms

Survey and site visit comments often underscored the potential of alternative learning classrooms within a school, not only to address behavior problems, but to prevent them from occurring. Educators noted that student misconduct often stems from a misalignment of instruction in their regular classroom with students' academic needs or interests or their ability to accommodate to the organizational structure of the traditional classroom. For example, as will be described later in this chapter, educators have described extreme challenges of some early grade students in accommodating to a traditional classroom setting.

### Challenges In Addressing Persistent And Severe Behaviors

**Top challenges reported by principals in addressing persistent or severe behaviors once they occurred were lack of alternative learning settings and federal restrictions on disciplinary removals and instructional settings for students with disabilities.**

Figure 4.A shows challenges identified by principals in their ability to address persistent or severe behavior, once it has occurred. The remainder of the chapter will discuss challenges identified by over one-third of principals as major or extreme<sup>c</sup>, including

- lack of alternative settings in which students who experience behavioral challenges in the regular classroom can receive instruction (34 percent);

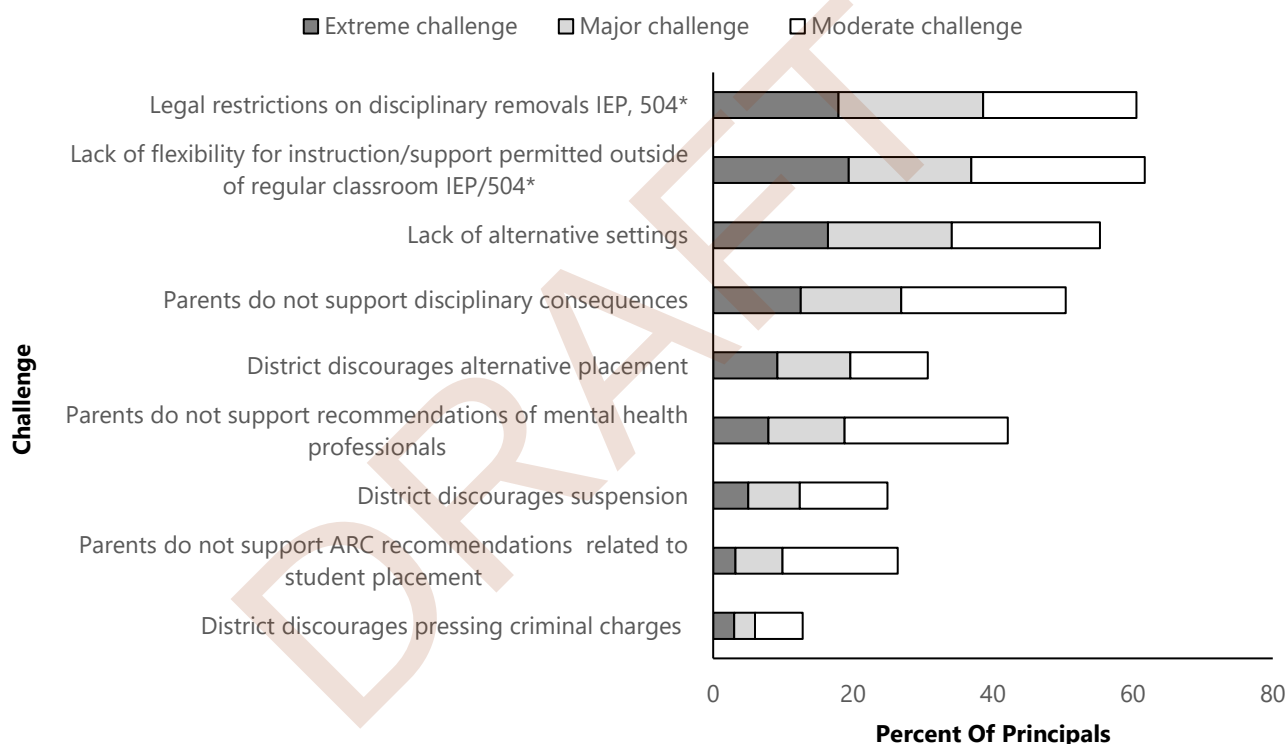
<sup>a</sup> Respondents were also given the opportunity to select “other” as an option and to specify those options. Of the 49 respondents who specified in comments what other options were needed, the largest category (about one-third) of comments related to various types of staffing support, such as behavioral specialists or counselors.

<sup>b</sup> When asked to identify the top three additional supports needed, 51 percent of principals chose “flexibility in options permitted for moving IEP or 504 students to different physical locations for instruction or support, without documenting a disciplinary removal” as one of their top three needs, making it the most frequently identified as a top three need.

<sup>c</sup> 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, in the classrooms that do contain our most disruptive students, the impact is “major” for student learning.

- legal restrictions associated with the amount of time permitted for disciplinary removals for students with disabilities (39 percent);<sup>d</sup> and
- lack of flexibility in options permitted for instruction or support of students with disabilities, without documenting a disciplinary removal (37 percent).

**Figure 4.A**  
**Challenges Faced By Principals In Addressing**  
**Persistent Or Severe Behaviors, 2025**



\*See Chapter 1 for complete explanation of federal law related to limitations on disciplinary removals and lack of flexibility for instructional settings.  
Source: OEA Survey of A1 Principals, 2025.

### Notification Of Criminal Activity

**Twenty-one percent of high school principals and 17 percent of middle school principals reported instances in the last 3 years in which they were not properly notified of criminal behavior of a student enrolled in their school.**

In addition to the factors listed in Figure 4.A, principals were asked whether they have been properly notified of criminal activity

<sup>d</sup> As described in Chapter 1, the legal restrictions associated with the amount of time (10 days) 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).

of students enrolled in their school, as is required by KRS 610.345. A substantial minority of high school and middle school principals (21 percent and 17 percent, respectively) reported instances in the last 3 years in which they were not properly notified.<sup>e</sup> 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.

### Alternative Instructional Settings

**Challenges associated with lack of alternative instructional settings were greater at the middle and elementary levels than the high school level.**

Figure 4.B shows that challenges associated with lack of alternative instructional settings are much greater at the elementary and middle school level than at the high school 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.<sup>f</sup>

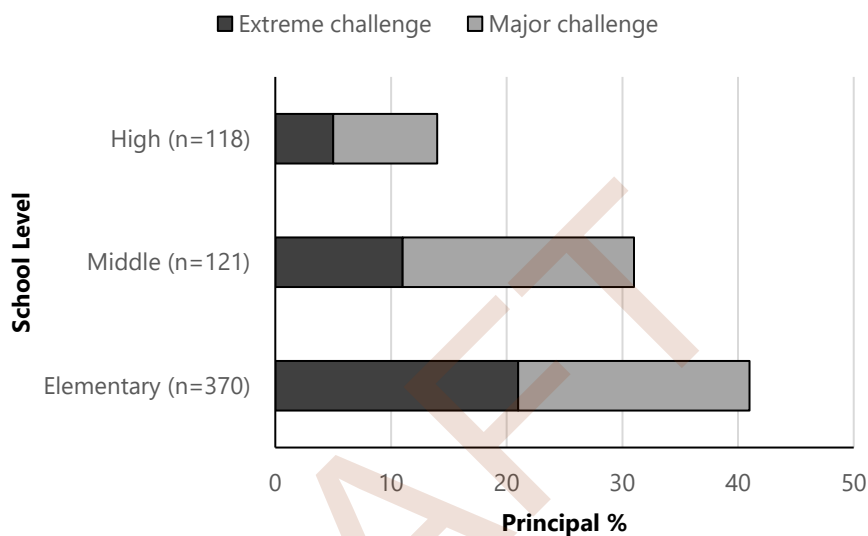
**Relative to middle and high schools, elementary schools have the greatest lack of alternative learning settings and are more likely to report students with extreme behavior challenges.**

In addition, elementary school principals were almost twice as likely as middle school principals and over four times as likely as high school principals to report extreme challenges. (21 percent, 11 percent, and 5 percent, respectively). As will be shown by data later in the chapter, extreme challenges at the elementary level reflect both the relative absence of alternative learning settings at the elementary level and the presence of students with extreme behavior challenges in many schools.

<sup>e</sup> While less common at the elementary level, 3 percent of principals reported this failure.

<sup>f</sup> It is likely that many of the middle and high school students with the most extreme behavior challenges are enrolled in alternative programs outside of A1 schools.

**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.

**Every type of alternative settings is more likely to be available at the high school level than at the elementary or middle school level.**

**Availability By Type Of Alternative Setting.** Table 4.1 shows the percentage of principals reporting the existence of specific types of alternative learning environments with sufficient availability 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. School-based alternative learning settings were reported for a small percentage of elementary and middle schools.

**Fully staffed in-school suspension is available in the majority of high schools, more than half of middle schools, and a small minority of elementary schools.**

Fully staffed in-school suspension is available in the majority of high schools, more than half of middle schools, and a small minority of elementary schools.

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

| Alternative Learning Setting                               | Principal % |        |      |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------|------|
|                                                            | 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 M, question 21 for the complete survey data for all schools. The table does not include information for the 67 respondents whose schools included multiple grade levels.

Source: OEA survey of A1 principals, 2025.

**District Size And Alternative Settings.** As shown in Appendix N, the availability of alternative settings did not vary substantially by district size, with the exception of emotional or behavioral disorder (EBD) resource rooms. Principals in the smallest districts were more than twice as likely as those in the largest districts to report lack of EBD resource rooms. However, principals in the largest districts were three times more likely than those in the smallest districts to report that EBD rooms existed, but the slots were insufficient to meet their need. In addition, principals in the largest districts were at least twice as likely as those in other districts to report major or extreme challenges caused by discouragement from district administrators related to alternative placement.

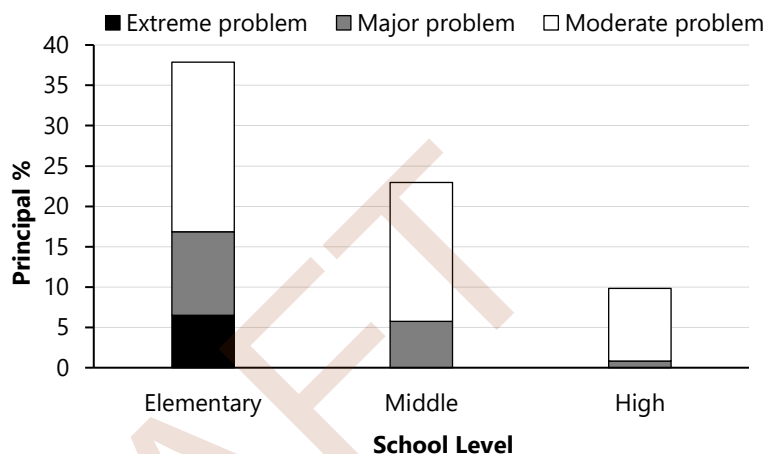
### Disruptions From Extreme Behavior

**Elementary schools are much more likely than middle or high schools to have 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 type of behavior was a major problem.



**Figure 4.C**  
**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.

**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.

Interviewees noted increases in the number of these extremely disruptive young students over time. As possible causes, they speculated 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.

In several site visit elementary schools, 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.

### Clearing Classrooms

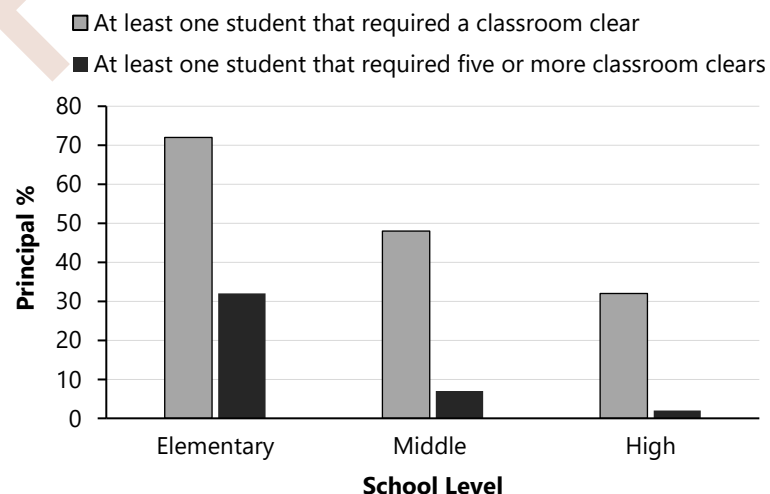
**Schools may have to “clear” an entire classroom of staff and other students when an individual student in the classroom is exhibiting extreme behavior.**

Schools may “clear” an entire classroom for safety reasons when an individual student within the classroom has extreme difficulty regulating their behavior. 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.

**Classroom clears are much more common in elementary schools compared with middle or high schools. Almost one-third of elementary schools reported having a student that required the school to clear the student’s classroom five or more times.**

As shown in Figure 4.D, the overwhelming majority of elementary principals (73 percent) reported 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, were much more likely than middle or high schools to have a student that required five 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 from the presence of students with sustained extreme or dangerous behavior.**

Site visit teachers reported distress from the sustained presence of extremely disruptive, potentially dangerous students who required frequent classroom clears. In one case, a veteran teacher reported her desire to retire early. She had been advised to remove all material from the bulletin boards that she loved to create for her

class and to remove any objects —such as family photos— that the disruptive student might believe were valuable to her as these objects made tempting targets. Appendix N contains survey comments describing the effect of classroom clears on students and staff.

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**Classroom clears demand large amounts of administrator time and impact students and staff across the school.**

Classroom clears impact students and staff beyond the individual classrooms affected due, in part, to the great demand they place on administrative and other staff. In one site visit school, a counselor would visit the classroom after each classroom clear to address the trauma experienced by the other students. Administrative staff in this school, which reported five students in one school year who could destabilize a classroom, spent over 90 percent of their time addressing behavior of these students. 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.

### **Need For Guidance On Alternative Instructional Settings**

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**The need for guidance related to school-based alternative placements is greatest at the elementary level.**

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. While the need for alternative placements exists 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 extreme challenges adjusting to the classroom environment.

According to officials at the Kentucky Center for School Safety, some districts have begun to implement school-based alternative classrooms to assist the early grade students in becoming prepared to learn in the regular classroom. These programs, while deemed to be necessary, are also costly, and do not exist in most elementary schools.<sup>1</sup> One possible use of school safety grants administered by the KCSS is to support alternative programs.

**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 incorporate those strategies into the statewide student discipline guidelines.”

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**Recommendation 4.1****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. Special attention should be paid to programs for elementary school students who experience difficulty regulating extreme behavior.**

### **Federal Law Governing Disciplinary Removals For Students With Disabilities**

**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.**

As described in Chapter 1, legal protections for students with disabilities are intended as a safeguard against removal of students from regular education classes for behaviors that could be addressed through proactive interventions and supports. During site visits conducted in recent years, OEA has 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.<sup>8</sup>

**Legal protections can also have unintended, negative consequences when the protections limit principals' abilities to address violent or severely disruptive behavior. Over one-third of Kentucky principals report major or extreme challenges associated with federal law.**

In connection with this study and previous studies, however, OEA has also heard comments from many educators about the unintended negative consequences of legal safeguards as they apply to the small minority of students with IEPs whose behavior is violent or severely disruptive. Data shown earlier in Figure 4.A suggest that these unintended consequences are perceived as major or extreme problems by over one-third of Kentucky principals. Survey respondent comments in Appendix N illustrate many of the challenges described in this chapter.

### **Unintended Consequences Of Legal Protections**

Site visit and survey data indicate widespread concern about the unintended, negative consequences of federal law. Comments addressed effects on students and staff affected by violent or severely disruptive behavior of a small number of students with

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<sup>8</sup> 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.

disabilities. Educators also noted potential negative consequences on the social development of students with disabilities who may not learn the likely consequences extreme behaviors will bring in the world outside of school.

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**Principals may cease to discipline students with disabilities once they have accumulated a certain number of disciplinary removals. Students with extremely disruptive or violent behavior may remain in their classrooms or, if removed, be returned quickly.**

### **Disruption From Dangerous Or Severely Disruptive Students.**

When students with IEPs accumulate a certain number of disciplinary removals, principals may minimize further removals in order to stay below federal thresholds for disciplinary removals (10 days, unless a manifest determination review finds that the student's behavior is not a manifestation of their disability.) In these cases, students may remain in classrooms or be removed for only a few minutes even when their behavior is violent or severely disruptive.

Many principals perceive limited options to address these serious behaviors once disciplinary removals have accumulated. As one survey respondent explained,

(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 are told by Special Education that they are all to be in the general ed as much as possible.

As noted in Chapter 1, federal law provides options for removal through IAES, regardless of disability, under certain conditions. However, some violent, threatening, or severely disruptive behavior does not meet those conditions.<sup>h</sup>

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<sup>h</sup> 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. KDE staff note that the "stay put" provision under 34 CFR sec. 300.518 ensures that during any due process hearing, the child remains in their current educational placement unless the parent and school agree otherwise.

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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.

### **Potentially Negative Effects On Some Students With**

**Disabilities.** Comments from site visit educators and principal survey respondents also indicated potential unintended negative consequences of federal legal protections on students with disabilities themselves. Educators opined that students with disabilities who are violent or extremely disruptive and remain in the regular classroom or school may be deprived of the opportunity to learn about the relationship between the behaviors they are exhibiting and the consequences they will 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 explained that parents of IEP students with persistent or severe behaviors may also believe that a student with an IEP has a free pass for misconduct and should not be subject to consequences—even for criminal behaviors—due to their disability. As one survey respondent noted

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.

### **Challenging Aspects of Federal Law**

Site visit and survey data highlight two aspects of federal law that present challenges to ensuring that students and staff are protected from violent or extremely disruptive behavior of students with disabilities:

- Difficulty demonstrating that violent or disruptive behavior is not a manifestation of their disability
- Confusion about the physical locations in which students with disabilities can receive instruction or intervention outside of the regular classroom, without recording a disciplinary removal

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Site visit principals and counselors reported that it is very difficult to prove that a student's behavior is not a manifestation of their disability.

**Manifestation Determination Reviews.** Many site visit principals and counselors reported difficulty meeting the federal requirements that are necessary to remove a student from the regular classroom once disciplinary removals that constitute a change of placement have exceeded 10 days. They expressed frustration at the amount

of time and paperwork necessary to support a manifestation determination review that might allow for additional removals of severely and persistently disruptive students from the regular education classroom.<sup>i</sup> It can be difficult to prove that a behavior is not a manifestation of a child's disability. Few site visit schools reported holding these meetings.<sup>j</sup>

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**When principals fear passing federal thresholds for disciplinary removals, they may cease removing students from a classroom, even if the district code of conduct permits removal.**

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**Federal guidance indicates that, if certain conditions are met, students can be removed to an alternative setting without time in that setting counting towards federal thresholds that constitute a change in placement.**

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Because they lack confidence in the manifestation determination review process, principals may seek to stay safely beneath the threshold of disciplinary removals that constitute a change of placement for students with disabilities by ceasing to remove a student from the classroom, even in the face of extremely disruptive or dangerous behavior

**Instructional Settings Permitted Without Documenting A Disciplinary Removal.** Federal guidance describes instances in which a disciplinary removal can be provided but not counted against the 10-day threshold for disciplinary removals that constitutes a change of placement under federal law:

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.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> 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.

<sup>j</sup> KDE staff explained to OEA that local administrators may fail to understand federal law related to changing the educational placement of a student with an IEP. 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. ARC decisions for educational placement based on a continuum of placements are outlined in 707 KAR 1:350, Section 1 and a "change of placement because of disciplinary removals" is defined in 707 KAR 1:002, Section 1 (8).



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**Educators report confusion about the types of instructional settings that could occur outside of a traditional classroom while not constituting a change of placement.**

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Interview data suggest confusion among educators about the types of instructional settings that meet the conditions above and permit instruction to occur outside of a traditional classroom while not counting towards time that constitutes a change of placement. For example, educators desired to understand 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.

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**Confusion stems, in part, by uncertainty about settings that might be identified as noncompliant by KDE staff who implement federal law.**

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Confusion about the law appears to stem, in part, from lack of clarity about the types of settings that could be found noncompliant by KDE staff.<sup>k</sup> 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 to whether schools or districts are in compliance and whether a particular instance in which a student is removed from the regular classroom constitutes a disciplinary removal.

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**Administrators avoid activities they believe will lead KDE to find them out of compliance during federally-required audits or reviews.**

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Administrators' understanding of noncompliant activities may come from previous experience with a KDE audit or review but also from informal communication among district staff across the state about instances in which districts have been found to be out of compliance. This informal communication may lead district or school staff to misunderstand the options available to them and to avoid activities that might be permissible because they fear that KDE will find them noncompliant. In situations lacking clear guidance, administrators also report vulnerability to threats of legal action from parents or advocates. Fighting legal challenges is time-consuming and expensive for districts<sup>l3</sup>

In addition to greater clarity about instructional settings, educators desired clarity in whether KDE's implementation of federal law is based strictly on federal law versus federal guidance (which does

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<sup>k</sup> 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 that individual cases differ. 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.

<sup>l</sup> 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. 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.



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**Educators also desire clarity about how KDE's data collection for federally required indicators count placement in settings not specifically indicated as disciplinary removals under federal law.**

not have the force of law) or additional KDE priorities. For example, 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. In addition, KDE has determined that lunch detention for a student with a disability who violates the student code of conduct is a disciplinary removal, though that placement is not clearly stated in federal law.

### **Potential For KDE To Clarify Federal Law And Administrators' Options**

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**KDE staff noted variation in local administrators' understanding and implementation of federal law and failure, in some cases, to provide a full continuum of alternative placements outside of the regular classroom.**

In discussing findings of this report, KDE staff noted that problems reported by principals may reflect failure at the local level to understand or fully to implement the law.<sup>m</sup> For example, 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.<sup>4</sup> In addition, KDE staff also noted great variation among districts in implementation of federal law and failure in some districts to provide the continuum of alternative placements beyond the traditional classroom that would ensure students with persistent or severe behaviors are appropriately served. OEA did not collect data on the full continuum of alternative placements available in schools and districts, which would include pull-out services, self-contained classrooms for students with disabilities, special day schools, and residential facilities.<sup>n 5</sup>

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.

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<sup>m</sup> Related to legal restrictions on disciplinary removals, twenty-one percent of principals reported little or challenge and 18 percent reported minor challenge. Differences among principals in challenges associated with federal law may reflect differences among schools in the enrollment of students with disabilities who have persistent or severe behavior challenges or differences in understanding or implementation of the law in their districts.

<sup>n</sup> Staff analysis indicates of the alternative options included in the survey shows 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).

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**Recommendation 4.2****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**

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**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**

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**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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<sup>1</sup> Jon Akers, executive director, Kentucky Center for School Safety. Interview. March 20, 2025.

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<sup>2</sup> 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

<sup>3</sup> [National & State DR Data Dashboard | CADRE](#)

<sup>4</sup> Gretta Hylton, associate commissioner, Office of Special Education and Early Learning, Kentucky Department of Education. Interview. Oct. 24, 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

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## Appendix A

### State Event Codes 2024 Safe Schools Data

Table A.1 shows the number of individual state event codes entered in the safe schools data in 2024. Each event code is also shown as a percent of all events.

**Table A.1**  
**State Event Codes As A Percent Of All Events**  
**Safe Schools Data, 2024**

| State Event Code Mapping             | Count  | Percent Of All Events | Category                              | Type Of Violation |
|--------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| A01: Alcohol distribution            | 41     | 0.0                   | Alcohol                               | Law               |
| A02: Alcohol possession              | 201    | 0.1                   | Alcohol                               | Law               |
| A03: Alcohol use                     | 243    | 0.1                   | Alcohol                               | Law               |
| D01: Drug distribution               | 345    | 0.1                   | Drug                                  | Law               |
| D02: Drug possession                 | 4,249  | 1.7                   | Drug                                  | Law               |
| D03: Drug use                        | 2,223  | 0.9                   | Drug                                  | Law               |
| H01: Bullying                        | 3,643  | 1.4                   | Harassment/Bullying                   | Law               |
| H02: Harassing communications        | 1,433  | 0.6                   | Harassment/Bullying                   | Law               |
| H03: Harassment                      | 7,191  | 2.8                   | Harassment/Bullying                   | Law               |
| H05: Threatening another student     | 3,529  | 1.4                   | Harassment/Bullying                   | Law               |
| H06: Threatening staff               | 1,067  | 0.4                   | Harassment/Bullying                   | Law               |
| H07: Verbal abuse                    | 1,192  | 0.5                   | Harassment/Bullying                   | Law               |
| N01: Academic cheating/plagiarism    | 589    | 0.2                   | Other                                 | Board             |
| N02: Attendance policy               | 243    | 0.1                   | Attendance, tardiness, skipping       | Board             |
| N03: Burglary                        | 19     | 0.0                   | Other                                 | Board             |
| N04: Bus rule                        | 1,056  | 0.4                   | Other                                 | Board             |
| N05: Dangerous instrument possession | 331    | 0.1                   | Other                                 | Board             |
| N06: Destruction of property         | 1,010  | 0.4                   | Other                                 | Board             |
| N07: Disorderly conduct              | 6,066  | 2.4                   | Disorderly, disrespectful, disruptive | Board             |
| N08: Disrespectful behavior          | 24,205 | 9.4                   | Disorderly, disrespectful, disruptive | Board             |
| N09: Disruptive behavior             | 39,985 | 15.5                  | Disorderly, disrespectful, disruptive | Board             |
| N10: Dress code incident             | 2,030  | 0.8                   | Other                                 | Board             |
| N11: Drug paraphernalia              | 219    | 0.1                   | Other                                 | Board             |
| N12: Failure to attend detention     | 1,396  | 0.5                   | Attendance, tardiness, skipping       | Board             |
| N13: Fighting - student to other     | 1,279  | 0.5                   | Fighting                              | Board             |
| N14: Fighting - student to staff     | 5,050  | 2.0                   | Fighting                              | Board             |
| N15: Fighting - student to student   | 27,345 | 10.6                  | Fighting                              | Board             |
| N16: Forgery                         | 95     | 0.0                   | Other                                 | Board             |
| N17: Fraud                           | 20     | 0.0                   | Other                                 | Board             |
| N18: Gambling                        | 187    | 0.1                   | Other                                 | Board             |
| N19: Insubordination                 | 15,849 | 6.2                   | Other                                 | Board             |
| N20: Leaving campus                  | 1,711  | 0.7                   | Attendance, tardiness, skipping       | Board             |
| N21: Loitering                       | 173    | 0.1                   | Other                                 | Board             |
| N23: Out of area                     | 2,387  | 0.9                   | Other                                 | Board             |
| N24: Possession of stolen property   | 61     | 0.0                   | Other                                 | Board             |
| N25: Profanity or vulgarity          | 13,409 | 5.2                   | Other                                 | Board             |
| N26: Self-Endangerment               | 413    | 0.2                   | Other                                 | Board             |
| N27: Skipping class                  | 24,581 | 9.6                   | Attendance, tardiness, skipping       | Board             |

| State Event Code Mapping        | Count          | Percent Of All Events | Category                        | Type Of Violation |
|---------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| N28: Skipping school            | 789            | 0.3                   | Attendance, tardiness, skipping | Board             |
| N29: Tardy to class             | 12,202         | 4.7                   | Attendance, tardiness, skipping | Board             |
| N30: Theft/Stealing             | 1,716          | 0.7                   | Other                           | Board             |
| N31: Trespassing                | 75             | 0.0                   | Other                           | Board             |
| N32: Truancy                    | 16             | 0.0                   | Attendance, tardiness, skipping | Board             |
| N33: Vandalism                  | 1,021          | 0.4                   | Other                           | Board             |
| N34: of district acceptable     | 870            | 0.3                   | Other                           | Board             |
| N35: of personal electronic     | 7,806          | 3.0                   | Other                           | Board             |
| N99: No state                   | 13,899         | 5.4                   | No state                        | Board             |
| T01: Tobacco distribution       | 621            | 0.2                   | Tobacco                         | Law               |
| T02: Tobacco possession         | 8,613          | 3.4                   | Tobacco                         | Law               |
| T03: Tobacco use                | 6,801          | 2.6                   | Tobacco                         | Law               |
| V01: 1st degree assault         | 49             | 0.0                   | Assault/Violence                | Law               |
| V02: 2nd degree assault         | 79             | 0.0                   | Assault/Violence                | Law               |
| V03: 3rd degree assault         | 373            | 0.1                   | Assault/Violence                | Law               |
| V04: 4th degree assault         | 1,222          | 0.5                   | Assault/Violence                | Law               |
| V05: Abuse of a teacher         | 1,428          | 0.6                   | Assault/Violence                | Law               |
| V06: Arson                      | 32             | 0.0                   | Assault/Violence                | Law               |
| V07: Criminal abuse             | 3              | 0.0                   | Assault/Violence                | Law               |
| V10: Menacing                   | 615            | 0.2                   | Assault/Violence                | Law               |
| V11: Rape                       | ----           | 0.0                   | Assault/Violence                | Law               |
| V12: Robbery/Theft              | 286            | 0.1                   | Assault/Violence                | Law               |
| V13: Sexual assault             | 137            | 0.1                   | Assault/Violence                | Law               |
| V14: Sexual offense (non-touch) | 759            | 0.3                   | Assault/Violence                | Law               |
| V15: Terroristic - bomb         | 45             | 0.0                   | Assault/Violence                | Law               |
| V16: Terroristic threat         | 1,717          | 0.7                   | Assault/Violence                | Law               |
| V17: Terroristic-chem/bio/nuc   |                | 0.0                   | Assault/Violence                | Law               |
| V18: Wanton endangerment        | 41             | 0.0                   | Assault/Violence                | Law               |
| V19: Hazing 1st degree          | 6              | 0.0                   | Assault/Violence                | Law               |
| V20: Hazing 2nd degree          | 5              | 0.0                   | Assault/Violence                | Law               |
| W01: Weapon possession          | 976            | 0.4                   | Weapon                          | Law               |
| W02: Weapon distribution        | 8              | 0.0                   | Weapon                          | Law               |
| W03: Weapon use                 | 11             | 0.0                   | Weapon                          | Law               |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>257,290</b> | <b>100.0</b>          |                                 |                   |

Note: --- indicates more than 0 and less than 3.

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

## Appendix B

### Disproportionality In Rates Of Disciplinary Consequences

This appendix shows differences among student demographic groups and student disability types in the rate at which students were removed from the classroom through in-school removal (INSR) or were given out-of-school suspension (OSS) at least once in the 2024 school year.

Disproportionality is calculated as a “risk ratio”, 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.

For example, the risk ratio for the suspension of economically disadvantaged (ED) students would be calculated as

$$\frac{(\# \text{ of ED students suspended one or more times} / \# \text{ of ED students})}{(\# \text{ of non-ED students suspended one or more times} / \# \text{ of non-ED students})}$$

Risk ratios of greater than one indicate that students are disciplined at disproportionately higher rates than their peers, whereas risk ratios of less than one indicate disproportionately lower rates.

Table B.1 shows that male, Black, and ED students statewide were disproportionately suspended and removed in school and students with IEPs were disproportionately suspended.

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. Hispanic students were removed at an approximately proportionate rate, and suspended at disproportionately low rates.

**Table B.1**  
**Disproportionality Of In-School Removal**  
**And Out-Of-School Suspension**  
**By Demographic Group, 2024**

| Demographic Group          | Disproportionality |            |
|----------------------------|--------------------|------------|
|                            | In-School Removal  | Suspension |
| Male                       | 1.88               | 1.85       |
| Black                      | 2.51               | 2.84       |
| Hispanic                   | 1.04               | 0.85       |
| IEP                        | 1.04               | 1.50       |
| Economically disadvantaged | 1.55               | 2.05       |

Note: Includes only students from A1 schools. Scores are calculated based on the number of students in each group to experience the specified event at least once.

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

As shown in Table B.2, discipline rates of IEP students vary among disability types. Students with emotional behavioral disorders experienced almost 5 times the rate of behavior events, more than eight times the rate of suspension, and almost 4 times the rate of in-school removal as students without IEPs. In contrast, students with Autism, developmental delays, functional-mental disabilities, multiple disabilities, and speech language disorders had lower rates across all categories.

**Table B.2**  
**Disproportionality Of In-School Removal,**  
**Out-Of-School Suspension, And Behavior Events**  
**By IEP Type, 2024**

| Disability                    | Population | Disproportionality |            |                 |
|-------------------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|-----------------|
|                               |            | In-School Removal  | Suspension | Behavior Events |
| Autism                        | 12,204     | 0.46               | 0.89       | 0.76            |
| Deaf/Blind                    | *          | *                  | *          | *               |
| Developmentally delayed       | 11,686     | 0.42               | 0.71       | 0.65            |
| Emotional-Behavioral disorder | 2,852      | 3.92               | 8.31       | 4.88            |
| Functional mental disability  | 2,290      | 0.23               | 0.79       | 0.57            |
| Hearing impaired              | 191        | 2.02               | 3.05       | 2.49            |
| Mild mental disorder          | 10,682     | 1.64               | 2.31       | 1.82            |
| Multiple disabilities         | 1,183      | 0.62               | 1.09       | 0.85            |
| Orthopedically impaired       | 34         | 2.76               | 5.88       | 3.87            |
| Specific learning disability  | 19,637     | 1.36               | 1.60       | 1.45            |
| Traumatic brain injury        | *          | *                  | *          | *               |
| Visually impaired             | 112        | 3.35               | 4.55       | 3.92            |
| Speech language disorder      | 26,968     | 0.26               | 0.29       | 0.31            |
| Other health impaired         | 16,933     | 2.20               | 3.01       | 2.32            |

Notes: Includes only students from A1 schools. Cells with “\*” have had information removed because they had fewer than 30 total students or fewer than 10 of the specified discipline events. Scores for those students classified as hearing impaired, orthopedically impaired, or visually impaired should be interpreted with caution due to their small populations.

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



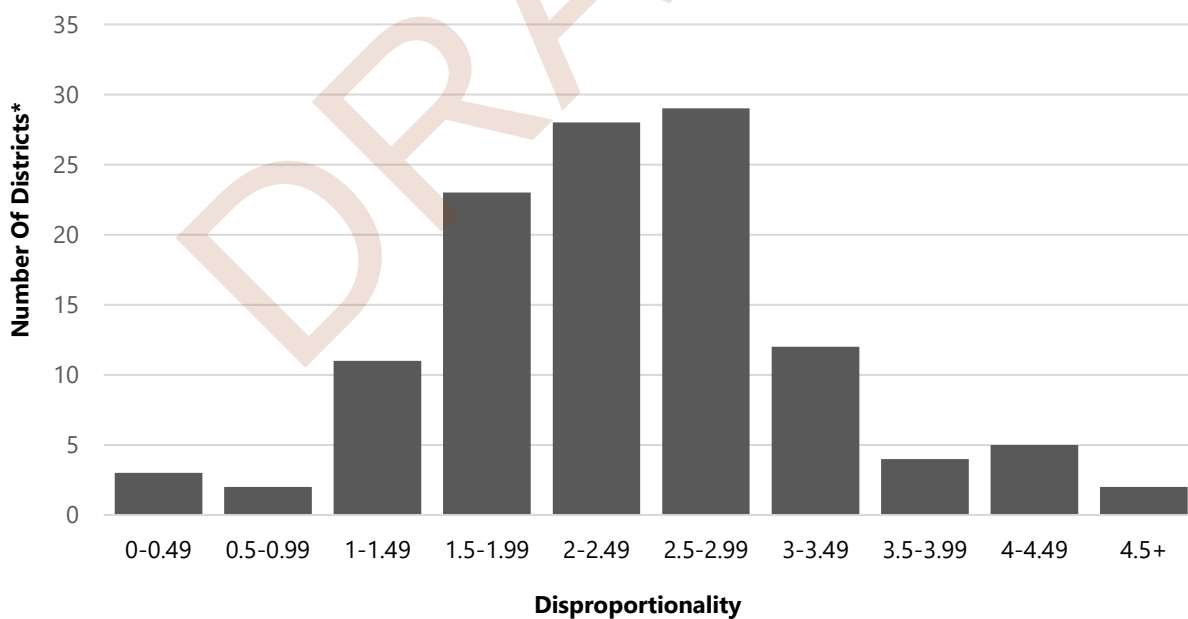
## Appendix C

### Variation Among Districts In Disproportionality

Disproportionality is observed across the state, but the degree of disproportionality varies considerably among school districts.

For example, while the state rate of disproportionality for out-of-school suspensions for economically disadvantaged students (ED) is 2.05, Figure C.A shows that districts range from little or no disproportionality to a rate far exceeding the state average in others. In five school districts (those under a value of 1), ED students were suspended at disproportionately low rates, whereas 23 districts suspended ED students at more than three times the rate of non-ED students.

**Figure C.A**  
**Disproportionality In**  
**Out-Of-School Suspensions For Economically Disadvantaged Students**  
**By School District, 2024**



\*Includes only the 119 districts that suspended at least 10 ED and non-ED students in the 2024 school year.  
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education

Table C.1 shows a broad range in the distribution of districts for disproportional in-school removal (INSR) or out-of-school suspension (OSS) for various demographic groups. In a small number of districts, the demographic groups analyzed were less likely to receive INSR or OSS than other students; disproportionately low rates were most common for Hispanic or IEP students. In a small number of districts, some groups were disciplined at three times the rate of other students. This was most common for ED, male, or Black students. Disproportionality scores were more likely to be high when both the population and count of discipline events for the demographic group in question were relatively low.

**Table C.1**  
**Count Of Districts By Disproportionality Of INSR Or OSS**  
**By Demographic Group, 2024**

| <b>Demographic<br/>By Event</b> | <b>Number Of<br/>Districts*</b> | <b>0-<br/>0.49</b> | <b>0.5-<br/>0.99</b> | <b>1-<br/>1.49</b> | <b>1.5-<br/>1.99</b> | <b>2-<br/>2.49</b> | <b>2.5-<br/>2.99</b> | <b>3-<br/>3.49</b> | <b>3.5-<br/>3.99</b> | <b>4-<br/>4.49</b> | <b>4.5+</b> |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| <b>Black</b>                    |                                 |                    |                      |                    |                      |                    |                      |                    |                      |                    |             |
| INSR                            | 60                              | 0                  | 2                    | 6                  | 25                   | 18                 | 6                    | 3                  | 0                    | 0                  | 0           |
| OSS                             | 43                              | 0                  | 1                    | 3                  | 20                   | 8                  | 8                    | 1                  | 1                    | 1                  | 0           |
| <b>ED</b>                       |                                 |                    |                      |                    |                      |                    |                      |                    |                      |                    |             |
| INSR                            | 131                             | 3                  | 6                    | 22                 | 65                   | 29                 | 5                    | 0                  | 0                    | 1                  | 0           |
| OSS                             | 119                             | 3                  | 2                    | 11                 | 23                   | 28                 | 29                   | 12                 | 4                    | 5                  | 2           |
| <b>Hispanic</b>                 |                                 |                    |                      |                    |                      |                    |                      |                    |                      |                    |             |
| INSR                            | 69                              | 1                  | 39                   | 26                 | 3                    | 0                  | 0                    | 0                  | 0                    | 0                  | 0           |
| OSS                             | 48                              | 2                  | 26                   | 18                 | 2                    | 0                  | 0                    | 0                  | 0                    | 0                  | 0           |
| <b>IEP</b>                      |                                 |                    |                      |                    |                      |                    |                      |                    |                      |                    |             |
| INSR                            | 132                             | 1                  | 55                   | 60                 | 11                   | 2                  | 2                    | 1                  | 0                    | 0                  | 0           |
| OSS                             | 136                             | 0                  | 12                   | 52                 | 54                   | 12                 | 0                    | 5                  | 0                    | 0                  | 1           |
| <b>Male</b>                     |                                 |                    |                      |                    |                      |                    |                      |                    |                      |                    |             |
| 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: INSR = in-school removal; INDR = in-district removal. Only A1 school students are included in the calculation of districts' disproportionality scores.

\* Includes only the districts where 10 students in both the demographic group and all other students received at least one INSR or OSS.

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

## Appendix D

### District And School Behavior Event Rates And Student Demographic Characteristics

Staff grouped districts and schools based on the percentage of students with a behavior event recorded in the Safe Schools data.<sup>a</sup> 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.

Data in this appendix show that districts and schools with higher percentages of students with a behavior event also had higher rates of students considered economically disadvantaged based on eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) and higher rates of nonwhite students.

**Table D.1**  
**District Behavior Event Rate Category And Student Demographic Characteristics, 2024**

| <b>Behavior Event Rate Category</b> | <b>District Count</b> | <b>A1 School Count</b> | <b>Total Membership</b> | <b>Minimum Event Rate</b> | <b>Maximum Event Rate</b> | <b>Average Percent Nonwhite</b> | <b>Average Percent Economically Disadvantaged</b> |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Highest                             | 19                    | 220                    | 130,976                 | 18.6                      | 36.6                      | 56.0                            | 66.4                                              |
| High                                | 38                    | 214                    | 108,218                 | 14.7                      | 18.1                      | 20.7                            | 63.0                                              |
| Average                             | 51                    | 377                    | 208,803                 | 11.1                      | 14.6                      | 25.2                            | 61.1                                              |
| Low                                 | 39                    | 260                    | 133,192                 | 7.6                       | 11.0                      | 16.8                            | 55.4                                              |
| Lowest                              | 24                    | 80                     | 33,340                  | 2.3                       | 7.4                       | 6.9                             | 59.8                                              |
| Total                               | 171                   | 1,151                  | 614,529                 | 2.3                       | 36.6                      | 28.2                            | 61.3                                              |

Notes: The analysis includes only students from A1 schools. Rates are calculated as a percentage of district membership.  
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

<sup>a</sup> 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.

**Table D.2**  
**Schools With Kindergarten To 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Students**  
**By Event Rate Category And Student Characteristics, 2024**

| <b>Event Rate Category</b> | <b>A1 School Count</b> | <b>Minimum Event Rate</b> | <b>Maximum Event Rate</b> | <b>Average Percent Nonwhite</b> | <b>Average Percent Economically Disadvantaged</b> |
|----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 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                                              |
| Total                      | 728                    | 0.0                       | 33.8                      | 28.8                            | 67.1                                              |

Note: The table includes A1 schools with any students in PreK to 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

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

**Table D.3**  
**Schools With 6<sup>th</sup> To 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students**  
**By Event Rate Category And Student Characteristics, 2024**

| <b>Event Rate Category</b> | <b>A1 School Count</b> | <b>Minimum Event Rate</b> | <b>Maximum Event Rate</b> | <b>Average Percent Nonwhite</b> | <b>Average Percent Economically Disadvantaged</b> |
|----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 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                                              |
| Total                      | 411                    | 0.0                       | 70.8                      | 27.8                            | 66.1                                              |

Note: The table includes A1 schools with any students in 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade

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

**Table D.4**  
**Schools With 9<sup>th</sup> To 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Students**  
**By Event Rate Category And Student Characteristics, 2024**

| <b>Event Rate Category</b> | <b>A1 School Count</b> | <b>Minimum<br/>Event<br/>Rate</b> | <b>Maximum<br/>Event<br/>Rate</b> | <b>Average<br/>Percent<br/>Nonwhite</b> | <b>Average<br/>Percent<br/>Economically<br/>Disadvantaged</b> |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 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                                                          |
| Total                      | 228                    | 2                                 | 66                                | 29.2                                    | 58.2                                                          |

Note: The table includes A1 schools with any students in 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade.  
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

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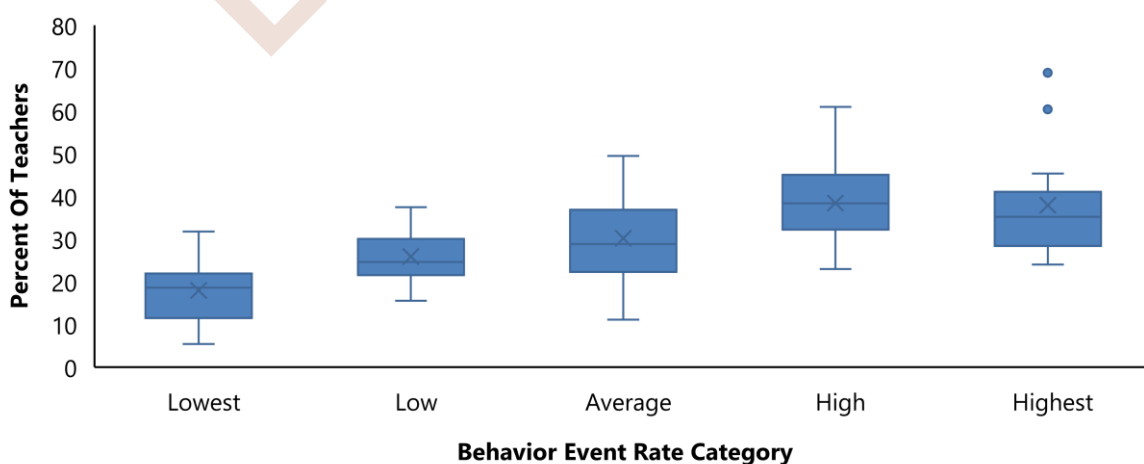
## Appendix E

### Association Of District Behavior Event Rates And Teacher And Student Survey Data

Data in this appendix show teacher and student answers to behavior-related survey questions for five categories of district behavior event rates, ranging from lowest to highest. Event rate categories were calculated using methods described in Appendix D. Responses are taken from the teacher working conditions survey that is administered by KDE every two years. For each district behavior event rate category, the range of district survey data responses are shown; data for half of districts fall within the shaded area, with the remaining distributed equally along the lines that fall above (upper quartile) and below (lower quartile) the shaded areas.

Figure E.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. 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.

**Figure E.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.

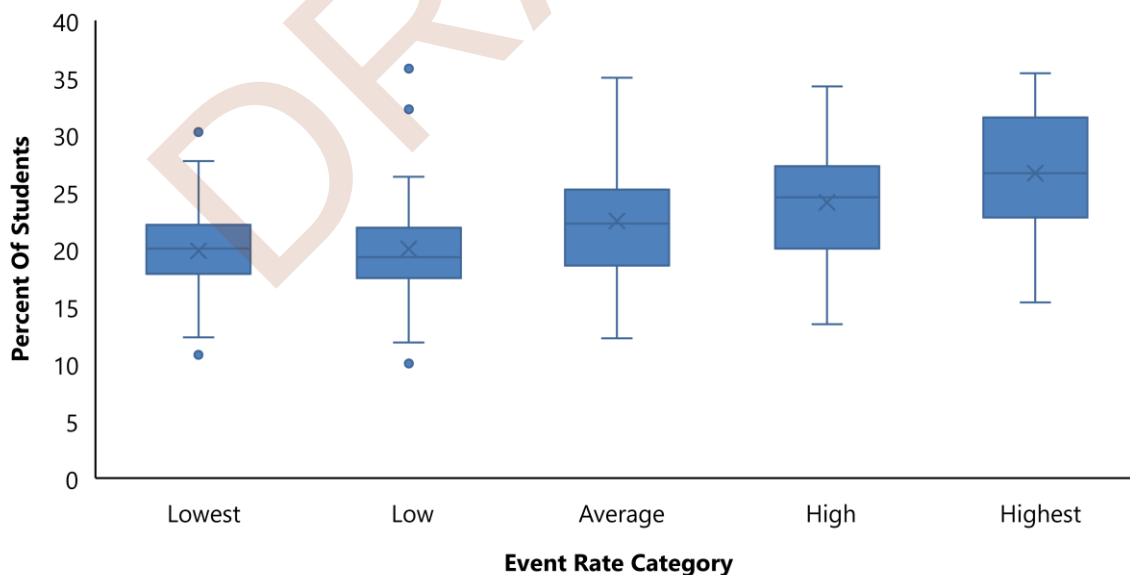
The figure also shows that the degree of behavior challenge as reported by teachers can sometimes differ greatly from what is suggested by student behavior event rates. For example, in

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 E.B shows similar trends with student survey data. On average, unfavorable response rates increase with event rate category, but in some low event rate districts, students report unfavorably on whether their peers respect each other's differences at rates that far exceed the state average.

**Figure E.B**  
**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.



## Appendix F

### Behavior Event Rate, Teacher And Student Survey Data By District

This appendix shows data for each Kentucky district on a variety of behavior-related indicators

- Behavior event rates
- Teachers' unfavorable survey responses related to student misconduct
- Teachers' unfavorable survey responses related to respectful relationships
- Students' unfavorable survey responses related to the fairness of school rules
- Students' unfavorable survey responses related to students' respect for each other

District data for each indicator are grouped into five categories, ranging from lowest to highest degree of behavior-related challenge

Table F.1 describes the teacher and student survey questions reported for each district in Table F.2 .

| <b>Table F.1</b><br><b>Behavior-related Teacher Or Student Survey Questions. School Year 2024*</b>     |         |                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----------------------------------------------|
| 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.

**Table F.2**  
**Category Of Behavior-Related Challenge**  
**Behavior Event Rates And Teacher Or Student Survey Questions**  
**School Year 2024**

| District            | Event Rate |          | Teacher Survey<br>Unfavorable Responses<br>Category |                             | Student Survey<br>Unfavorable Responses<br>Category |                              |
|---------------------|------------|----------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
|                     | Percent    | Category | Student<br>Misconduct                               | Respectful<br>Relationships | Students                                            |                              |
|                     |            |          |                                                     |                             | respect each<br>other                               | The school<br>rules are fair |
| Adair County        | 14.9       | High     | High                                                | Highest                     | Highest                                             | Highest                      |
| Allen County        | 12.1       | Average  | Highest                                             | Highest                     | High                                                | High                         |
| Anchorage ISD       | 2.3        | Lowest   | Lowest                                              | Lowest                      | Lowest                                              | Low                          |
| Anderson County     | 13.2       | Average  | Highest                                             | Highest                     | High                                                | Low                          |
| Ashland ISD         | 11.5       | Average  | High                                                | High                        | Low                                                 | Low                          |
| Augusta ISD         | 17.0       | High     | Lowest                                              | Low                         | Lowest                                              | Average                      |
| Ballard County      | 21.6       | Highest  | Low                                                 | Average                     | Highest                                             | Highest                      |
| Barbourville ISD    | 5.9        | Lowest   | Low                                                 | Low                         | Low                                                 | Low                          |
| Bardstown ISD       | 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 ISD       | 3.6        | Lowest   | Lowest                                              | Lowest                      | Average                                             | Low                          |
| Bell County         | 13.5       | Average  | Average                                             | Average                     | Low                                                 | Low                          |
| Bellevue ISD        | 15.5       | High     | High                                                | Highest                     | Highest                                             | Highest                      |
| Berea ISD           | 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 ISD   | 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 ISD          | 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 ISD  | 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                          |
| Casey County        | 14.0       | Average  | Average                                             | High                        | Average                                             | Average                      |

| District             | Event Rate |          | Teacher Survey<br>Unfavorable Responses<br>Category |                             | Student Survey<br>Unfavorable Responses<br>Category |                              |
|----------------------|------------|----------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
|                      | Percent    | Category | Student<br>Misconduct                               | Respectful<br>Relationships | Students<br>respect each<br>other                   | The school<br>rules are fair |
|                      |            |          |                                                     |                             |                                                     |                              |
| Caverna ISD          | 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 ISD       | 7.4        | Lowest   | Lowest                                              | Average                     | High                                                | Average                      |
| Corbin ISD           | 7.7        | Low      | Lowest                                              | Low                         | Low                                                 | Average                      |
| Covington ISD        | 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 ISD         | 15.8       | High     | High                                                | High                        | High                                                | Highest                      |
| Daviess County       | 13.5       | Average  | High                                                | Average                     | Average                                             | Low                          |
| Dawson Springs ISD   | 18.1       | High     | Low                                                 | Lowest                      | Lowest                                              | Average                      |
| Dayton ISD           | 18.6       | Highest  | High                                                | Highest                     | High                                                | Highest                      |
| East Bernstadt ISD   | 3.2        | Lowest   | Low                                                 | Average                     | Lowest                                              | Lowest                       |
| Edmonson County      | 9.8        | Low      | Low                                                 | Lowest                      | Low                                                 | Lowest                       |
| Elizabethtown ISD    | 15.2       | High     | High                                                | High                        | High                                                | High                         |
| Elliott County       | 13.0       | Average  | High                                                | High                        | Highest                                             | Highest                      |
| Eminence ISD         | 11.1       | Average  | Lowest                                              | Lowest                      | High                                                | Highest                      |
| Erlanger-Elsmere ISD | 9.7        | Low      | Average                                             | Average                     | Low                                                 | Average                      |
| Estill County        | 17.2       | High     | Highest                                             | High                        | High                                                | Average                      |
| Fairview ISD         | 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 ISD      | 3.4        | Lowest   | Lowest                                              | Low                         | Lowest                                              | Lowest                       |
| Frankfort ISD        | 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 ISD           | 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 ISD          | 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          | Event Rate |          | Teacher Survey<br>Unfavorable Responses<br>Category |                             | Student Survey<br>Unfavorable Responses<br>Category |                              |
|-------------------|------------|----------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
|                   | Percent    | Category | Student<br>Misconduct                               | Respectful<br>Relationships | Students<br>respect each<br>other                   | The school<br>rules are fair |
|                   |            |          |                                                     |                             |                                                     |                              |
| 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 ISD        | 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 ISD        | 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 ISD       | 3.2        | Lowest   | Lowest                                              | Lowest                      | Lowest                                              | Low                          |
| Jefferson County  | 20.4       | Highest  | High                                                | High                        | Average                                             | High                         |
| Jenkins ISD       | 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 ISD        | 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                          |
| Marshall County   | 9.2        | Low      | Average                                             | Low                         | Low                                                 | Lowest                       |

| District                 | Event Rate |          | Teacher Survey<br>Unfavorable Responses<br>Category |                             | Student Survey<br>Unfavorable Responses<br>Category |                              |
|--------------------------|------------|----------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
|                          | Percent    | Category | Student<br>Misconduct                               | Respectful<br>Relationships | Students<br>respect each<br>other                   | The school<br>rules are fair |
|                          |            |          |                                                     |                             |                                                     |                              |
| Martin County            | 10.4       | Low      | Low                                                 | Low                         | Low                                                 | Low                          |
| Mason County             | 17.3       | High     | High                                                | Low                         | High                                                | Low                          |
| Mayfield ISD             | 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 ISD          | 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 ISD               | 10.4       | Low      | Low                                                 | Lowest                      | Lowest                                              | Lowest                       |
| Nelson County            | 25.5       | Highest  | Low                                                 | Low                         | Average                                             | High                         |
| Newport ISD              | 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 ISD            | 19.0       | Highest  | High                                                | Average                     | Low                                                 | Average                      |
| Owsley County            | 11.8       | Average  | Low                                                 | Highest                     | Highest                                             | Average                      |
| Paducah ISD              | 28.7       | Highest  | Highest                                             | Highest                     | Highest                                             | Highest                      |
| Paintsville ISD          | 2.9        | Lowest   | Lowest                                              | Low                         | Low                                                 | High                         |
| Paris ISD                | 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 ISD            | 5.6        | Lowest   | Lowest                                              | Lowest                      | Low                                                 | Average                      |
| Pineville ISD            | 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 ISD | 5.0        | Lowest   | Lowest                                              | Low                         | Highest                                             | High                         |
| Robertson County         | 9.0        | Low      | Low                                                 | High                        | High                                                | Average                      |

| District          | Event Rate |          | Teacher Survey<br>Unfavorable Responses<br>Category |                             | Student Survey<br>Unfavorable Responses<br>Category |                              |
|-------------------|------------|----------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
|                   | Percent    | Category | Student<br>Misconduct                               | Respectful<br>Relationships | Students<br>respect each<br>other                   | The school<br>rules are fair |
|                   |            |          |                                                     |                             |                                                     |                              |
| 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 ISD       | 10.7       | Low      | Lowest                                              | Low                         | High                                                | Low                          |
| Russellville ISD  | 29.1       | Highest  | Highest                                             | Highest                     | Highest                                             | Highest                      |
| Science Hill ISD  | 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 ISD      | 20.2       | Highest  | Average                                             | High                        | Low                                                 | Low                          |
| Southgate ISD     | 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 ISD | 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 ISD  | 15.5       | High     | N/A                                                 | N/A                         | Low                                                 | Average                      |
| Williamstown ISD  | 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                          |

Note: N/A indicates insufficient number of responses for reporting. ISD = Independent School District.

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

## Appendix G

### Districts And Schools With Behavior-related Challenges By Multiple Indicators

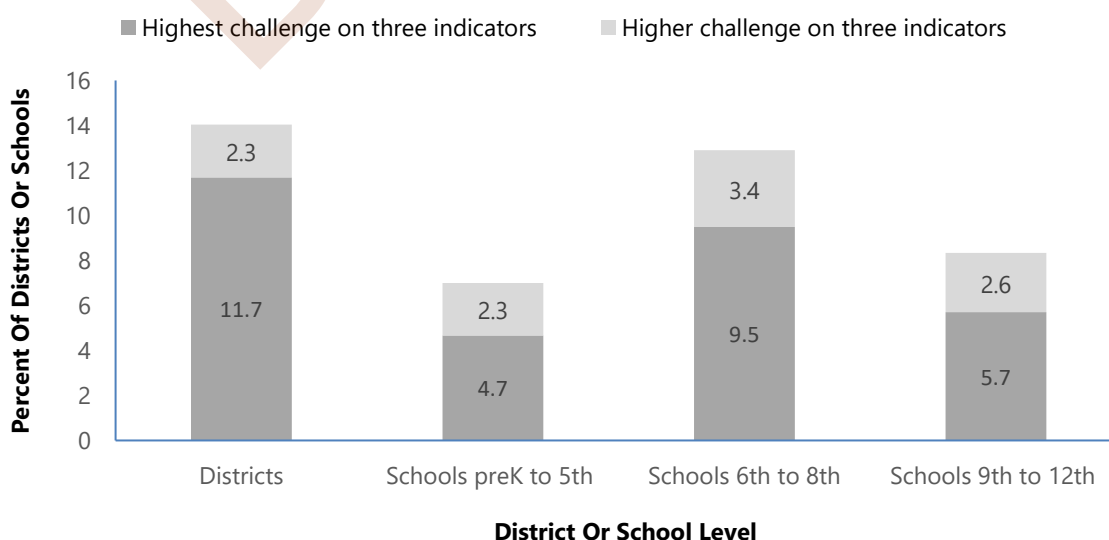
Staff used behavior event rate data; teacher survey data and student survey data to identify the percentage of districts and schools for which data indicated much greater behavior challenges relative to others in the state in 2024. Teacher survey data included questions related to the frequency with 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.A 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.A**  
**Percent Of Districts And Schools**  
**With Behavior Related Challenges By Three Indicators**



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

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## Appendix H

### Law And Board Violation Events By Grade Level And Location

Table H.1 shows the law and board violation categories for Preschool to 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. The most common category of law violation events for these students was bullying and harassment. The most common category of board violation events was disorderly, disruptive, or disrespectful behavior.

**Table H.1**  
**Law And Board Violation Events**  
**Preschool To 5<sup>th</sup> Grade, 2024**

| <b>Law Violation Category</b>            | <b>Count</b> | <b>Percent of All Violations</b> |
|------------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|
| 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                            |
| <b>Board Violation Category</b>          | <b>Count</b> | <b>Percent of All Violations</b> |
| 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 to 5th Grade       | 37,127       | 100.00                           |

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

As shown in Table H.2, the most common category of law violation events for 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade was harassment and bullying. The most common category of board violation events was disruption, disorderly conduct, or disrespectful behavior.

**Table H.2**  
**Law And Board Violation Events**  
**6<sup>th</sup> Grade To 8<sup>th</sup> Grade, 2024**

| <b>Law Violation Category</b>                             | <b>Count</b> | <b>Percent of All Violations</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|
| 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                             |
| <b>Board Violation Category</b>                           | <b>Count</b> | <b>Percent of All Violations</b> |
| 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 – 6 <sup>th</sup> to 8 <sup>th</sup> grade | 99,478       | 100.0                            |

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

As shown by Table H.3, the most common category of law violation events for students in 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades was vapes/other tobacco. The most common category of board violation events was attendance, tardiness, and skipping class.

**Table H.3**  
**Law And Board Violation Events**  
**9<sup>th</sup> Grade To 12<sup>th</sup> Grade, 2024**

| <b>Law Violation Category</b>            | <b>Count</b> | <b>Percent of All Violations</b> |
|------------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|
| 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                             |
| <b>Board Violation Category</b>          | <b>Count</b> | <b>Percent of All Violations</b> |
| 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 to 12th grades      | 120,685      | 100.0                            |

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

Table H.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 H. 4**  
**Events By Location**  
**All School Types, 2024**

| <b>Event Location</b> | <b>Violation Count</b> | <b>Percent Of All Violations</b> |
|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Classroom             | 155,175                | 60.31                            |
| Hallway/Stairwell     | 41,273                 | 16.04                            |
| Restroom              | 13,524                 | 5.26                             |
| Cafeteria             | 11,061                 | 4.30                             |
| 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 from the Kentucky Department of Education.

## Appendix I

### Bullying and Harassment Resolutions

**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. Safe Schools Data has five codes for bullying and harassment: bullying; harassing communications; harassment; threatening another student; threatening staff; and verbal abuse.

**Resolutions For Bullying And Harassment.** Table I.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.<sup>a</sup>

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.

**Table I.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.

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).

<sup>a</sup> 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).

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## Appendix J

### 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.<sup>a</sup>

#### 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 6<sup>th</sup>.

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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<sup>a</sup> 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).

Some administrators in site visit schools report that when they suspect a vape has THC in it, they send it to a laboratory to determine whether it is a THC or nicotine vape before they cite a student with a drug violation. This is a costly and time-consuming process.

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## Appendix K

### State- Level Resolutions By Event Type

This appendix shows total resolutions by board and law violation events, as well as the most common behavior events for each resolution type in A1schools in 2024. Unlike the resolution data reported in Chapter 3, data in this appendix count all 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 K.1 shows that board violations accounted for 84 percent of total resolutions in 2024 and in-school suspension were the most common resolution overall, accounting for nearly 72 percent of all resolutions. The table 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 K.1**  
**All Resolution Types**  
**By Law Or Board Violation, 2024**

| Resolution Type          | Total Resolutions | Percent Of Resolutions | Board Violations      |                        | Law Violations        |                        |
|--------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
|                          |                   |                        | Number Of Resolutions | Percent Of Resolutions | Number Of Resolutions | Percent Of Resolutions |
| In-school removal        | 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 from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Tables K.2 through K.5 show major categories of violation types, within board and law violations, for each resolution type.

**Table K.2**  
**In-district Removal**  
**By Event Type, 2024**

| <b>Violation Type</b>                 | <b>Number Of<br/>INDR<br/>Resolutions</b> | <b>Percent Of<br/>INDR<br/>Resolutions</b> |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 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                                          |
| Total                                 | 3,557                                     | 100                                        |

Note: Totals may not sum due to rounding. INDR = in-district removal.

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

**Table K.3**  
**In-school Removal**  
**By Violation Type, 2024**

| <b>Violation Type</b>                 | <b>Number Of<br/>INSR<br/>Resolutions</b> | <b>Percent Of<br/>INSR<br/>Resolutions</b> |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 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                                        |
| Total                                 | 186,140                                   | 100                                        |

Note: totals may not sum due to rounding. INSR= in-school removal.

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

**Table K.4**  
**Out-Of-School Suspensions**  
**By Event Type, 2024**

| <b>Violation Type</b>                 | <b>Number Of<br/>OSS<br/>Resolutions</b> | <b>Percent Of<br/>OSS<br/>Resolutions</b> |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 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                                         |
| Total                                 | 70,031                                   | 100                                       |

Note: totals may not sum due to rounding. OSS = out-of-school suspension  
Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

**Table K.5**  
**Expelled With Services**  
**By Violation Type, 2024**

| <b>Violation Type</b>                 | <b>Number Of<br/>Expulsions</b> | <b>Percent<br/>Of<br/>Expulsions</b> |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 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                                 | 5                               | 4                                    |
| 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 from the Kentucky Department of Education.

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## Appendix L

### Weapon, Threat, Assault, And Drug Event And Resolution Rates By IEP Status

This appendix analyzes disproportionality of behaviors by IEP status and the resolutions for students with and without IEPs. Disproportionality is calculated using methods described in Appendix B.

Table L.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, but a disproportionately high percentage of the population with IEPs engages in these behaviors. For example, students with IEPs had weapons events involving firearms at 3.5 times the rate of non-IEP student, but firearm events recorded for IEP students comprised less than half (40.7 percent) of all firearm events.

**Table L.1**  
**Percent Of Weapon, Threat, Assault, And Drug Events**  
**And Disproportionality, IEP and Non-IEP Students, 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 1<sup>st</sup> degree assault

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

Tables L.2 and L.3 show the resolutions by IEP status for select behaviors. In general, students with IEPs received more local resolutions and fewer in-school removals, suspensions, and removals through expulsion, INDR, or IAES that did non-IEP students. 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 L.2**  
**Weapon, Threat, Assault, And Drug Resolutions For Students With IEPs, 2024**

| <b>Behavior Event</b>                                         | <b>Local</b> | <b>INSR* or suspension</b> | <b>Expelled, INDR, or IAES</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| 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 L.3**  
**Weapon, Threat, Assault, And Drug Resolutions For Students Without IEPs, 2024**

| <b>Behavior Event</b>                                         | <b>Local</b> | <b>INSR* or suspension</b> | <b>Expelled, INDR, or IAES</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| 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.

## Appendix M

### Select Survey Responses From OEA 2025 Principal Survey

Question 18: Please indicate the degree to which your school needs MORE of the following options or supports to promote positive student behavior

| Option Or Support                                                                                                                                                      | Not Necessary;<br>Our Current<br>Level Of<br>Training Or<br>Support Is<br>Satisfactory | Not Necessary;<br>We Do Not<br>Have This<br>Option Or<br>Support And<br>Do Not Need It | More Of This<br>Option Or<br>Support Is<br>Somewhat<br>Needed | More Of<br>This<br>Option Or<br>Support Is<br>Highly<br>Needed | More Of<br>This<br>Option Or<br>Support Is<br>Extremely<br>Needed |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Instructional placement options for students far below grade level                                                                                                     | 28%                                                                                    | 4%                                                                                     | 39%                                                           | 21%                                                            | 7%                                                                |
| Classes that are engaging for students who are less interested in traditional academic classes (examples might include career and technical or elective classes)       | 35                                                                                     | 16                                                                                     | 30                                                            | 14                                                             | 5                                                                 |
| Flexibility in options permitted for moving IEP or 504 students to different physical locations for instruction or support, without documenting a disciplinary removal | 24                                                                                     | 6                                                                                      | 31                                                            | 20                                                             | 19                                                                |
| Consistency of teachers in implementing current behavioral management system or school code of conduct                                                                 | 39                                                                                     | 12                                                                                     | 35                                                            | 11                                                             | 3                                                                 |
| Meaningful positive incentives for students to adhere to the school's code of conduct                                                                                  | 40                                                                                     | 10                                                                                     | 32                                                            | 15                                                             | 3                                                                 |
| Meaningful negative consequences for students whose behavior presents persistent or severe challenges                                                                  | 29                                                                                     | 10                                                                                     | 31                                                            | 20                                                             | 9                                                                 |
| Parent support for students to follow the school's code of conduct                                                                                                     | 22                                                                                     | 8                                                                                      | 31                                                            | 24                                                             | 16                                                                |
| Mental health supports                                                                                                                                                 | 23                                                                                     | 6                                                                                      | 29                                                            | 25                                                             | 17                                                                |
| Others (please specify)                                                                                                                                                | 66                                                                                     | 6                                                                                      | 10                                                            | 4                                                              | 14                                                                |

Note: Sums may not total due to rounding. In some cases, percentages reported for certain questions may differ slightly from those reported in the body of the report. For these analyzes, OEA removed schools with duplicate answers or, in some cases, grade figurations that combine school levels.

Source: OEA 2025 Principal Survey

Question 19: Please indicate the degree to which your school needs MORE of the following training or support to promote positive student behavior.

| <b>Option Or Support</b>                                                                            | <b>Not Necessary;<br/>Our Current<br/>Level Of<br/>Training Or<br/>Support Is<br/>Satisfactory</b> | <b>Not Necessary;<br/>We Do Not<br/>Have This<br/>Training Or<br/>Support and<br/>Do Not Need It</b> | <b>More Of<br/>This<br/>Option Or<br/>Support Is<br/>Somewhat<br/>Needed</b> | <b>More Of<br/>This<br/>Option Or<br/>Support Is<br/>Highly<br/>Needed</b> | <b>More Of This<br/>Option Or<br/>Support Is<br/>Extremely<br/>Needed</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mentoring and support for teachers specifically for classroom management issues                     | 31%                                                                                                | 5%                                                                                                   | 45%                                                                          | 15%                                                                        | 3%                                                                        |
| Mentoring and support for administrators specifically for school discipline issues                  | 43                                                                                                 | 9                                                                                                    | 36                                                                           | 10                                                                         | 3                                                                         |
| Professional development and support for instructional strategies that engage students              | 28                                                                                                 | 4                                                                                                    | 47                                                                           | 17                                                                         | 4                                                                         |
| Professional development and support for implementing positive behavioral management systems (PBIS) | 38                                                                                                 | 9                                                                                                    | 41                                                                           | 11                                                                         | 2                                                                         |
| Professional development and support for providing trauma-informed care                             | 32                                                                                                 | 6                                                                                                    | 43                                                                           | 14                                                                         | 4                                                                         |
| Others (please specify)                                                                             | 74                                                                                                 | 2                                                                                                    | 17                                                                           | 2                                                                          | 3                                                                         |

Note: Sums may not total due to rounding. In some cases, percentages reported for certain questions may differ slightly from those reported in the body of the report. For these analyzes, OEA removed schools with duplicate answers or, in some cases, grade figurations that combine school levels.

Source: OEA 2025 Principal Survey



Question 20: 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                                                                                        | 28%       |
| Mentoring and support for administrators specifically for school discipline issues                                                                                     | 5         |
| Professional development and support for instructional strategies that engage students                                                                                 | 24        |
| Instructional placement options for students far below grade level                                                                                                     | 29        |
| Classes that are engaging for students who are less interested in traditional academic classes (examples might include career and technical or elective classes)       | 15        |
| Flexibility in options permitted for moving IEP or 504 students to different physical locations for instruction or support, without documenting a disciplinary removal | 51        |
| Professional development and support for implementing positive behavioral management systems (PBIS)                                                                    | 11        |
| Professional development and support for providing trauma-informed care                                                                                                | 15        |
| Consistency of teachers in implementing current behavioral management system or school code of conduct                                                                 | 15        |
| Meaningful positive incentives for students to adhere to the school's code of conduct                                                                                  | 14        |
| Meaningful negative consequences for students whose behavior presents persistent or severe challenges                                                                  | 24        |
| Parent support for students to adhere to the school's code of conduct                                                                                                  | 31        |
| Mental health supports                                                                                                                                                 | 28        |
| Other (please specify)                                                                                                                                                 | 1         |

Note: Sums may not total due to rounding. In some cases, percentages reported for certain questions may differ slightly from those reported in the body of the report. For these analyzes, OEA removed schools with duplicate answers or, in some cases, grade figurations that combine school levels.

Source: OEA 2025 Principal Survey

Question 21: Please indicate the status of options available to your school as learning environments for students who experience behavioral challenges in the regular classroom.

| <b>Option Or Support</b>                                                               | <b>Available With Sufficient Student Placement Slots</b> | <b>Available But Insufficient Student Placement Slots</b> | <b>Not Available And Not Necessary</b> | <b>Not Available And Somewhat Needed</b> | <b>Not Available And Greatly Needed</b> | <b>Don't Know Or Not Sure</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Alternative learning program located in the district                                   | 33%                                                      | 29%                                                       | 7%                                     | 8%                                       | 18%                                     | 5%                            |
| Emotional or behavioral resource room located in district                              | 25                                                       | 19                                                        | 12                                     | 12                                       | 18                                      | 13                            |
| Full-time virtual option offered by district                                           | 37                                                       | 14                                                        | 22                                     | 9                                        | 11                                      | 7                             |
| Emotional or behavioral resource room located at the school                            | 37                                                       | 14                                                        | 11                                     | 18                                       | 18                                      | 2                             |
| Alternative learning program or classroom located at the school                        | 22                                                       | 11                                                        | 23                                     | 21                                       | 20                                      | 2                             |
| Short-term virtual learning at student's residence                                     | 26                                                       | 9                                                         | 29                                     | 15                                       | 11                                      | 10                            |
| In school suspension classroom with specifically designated, full-time certified staff | 38                                                       | 9                                                         | 11                                     | 20                                       | 21                                      | 1                             |
| Short-term virtual learning classroom at the school                                    | 17                                                       | 6                                                         | 38                                     | 21                                       | 10                                      | 7                             |
| Alternative learning program located in another district                               | 8                                                        | 5                                                         | 41                                     | 5                                        | 7                                       | 34                            |

Note: Sums may not total due to rounding. In some cases, percentages reported for certain questions may differ slightly from those reported in the body of the report. For these analyzes, OEA removed schools with duplicate answers or, in some cases, grade figurations that combine school levels.

Source: OEA 2025 Principal Survey

## Appendix N

### Availability Of Alternative Settings By District Size

As shown in Table N.1, below, the percentage of principals reporting a lack of particular alternative instructional settings did not vary consistently by district size in most cases.<sup>a</sup> Principals in the smallest districts were, however, more than twice as likely as those in the largest districts to report a lack of emotional or behavioral disorder (EBD) resource rooms at the school or district level (38 percent of principals in districts with fewer than 1,000 students and 15 percent of principals in districts with 10,000 or more students).

Table N.1 also shows, however, that principals in the largest districts were three times more likely than those in the smallest districts to report that EBD rooms existed, but the slots available were insufficient to meet the need. As shown in the table, the percentage of principals who reported that options were available with insufficient slots generally increased with district size for most settings.

The option most often reported by principals as not available and needed was an in-school suspension room with full-time, designated staff. In districts of all sizes, about one third or more of principals reported this need.

#### General Availability Of Alternative Instructional Settings

As shown in Table N.2, principals in the largest districts (10,000 or more) were generally more likely than those in other districts to report that lack of alternative settings presented a major or extreme challenge in addressing persistent or severe behaviors. Table N.3 shows that 38 percent of principals in the largest districts reported that the district discouraged alternative placements and that this presented a major or extreme challenge in addressing persistent or severe behaviors; this was two or three times more than the percentage of principals reporting major or extreme challenges in other districts.

Challenges presented by lack of alternative settings were, however, consistently reported by elementary school principals in districts of all sizes. In each district size category, at least one third of elementary school principals identified lack of alternative settings as a major or extreme challenge.

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<sup>a</sup> Data include only those who indicated that the option was not available, and somewhat or greatly needed. It does not include respondents who indicated that the option was not available and not necessary.

**Table N.1**  
**Percentage Of A1 Principals Reporting Unavailable Or Insufficient Slots**  
**By Alternative Placement Options And District Membership, 2025**

| District Membership | EBD Room In School Or District |              | Alternative Program In School, District, Or Other District |              | Short-Term Virtual In School Or At Home |              | Full-Time Virtual In District |              | In-School Suspension With Full-Time, Designated Staff |              | Total Number Of Respondents |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|
|                     | Not Available                  | Insufficient | Not Available                                              | Insufficient | Not Available                           | Insufficient | Not Available                 | Insufficient | Not Available                                         | Insufficient |                             |
| 1-999               | 38%                            | 11%          | 4%                                                         | 13%          | 13%                                     | 4%           | 7%                            | 4%           | 31%                                                   | 11%          | 45                          |
| 1,000-2,499         | 32                             | 14           | 11                                                         | 20           | 23                                      | 7            | 22                            | 7            | 35                                                    | 8            | 167                         |
| 2,500-4,999         | 20                             | 23           | 2                                                          | 37           | 17                                      | 10           | 17                            | 10           | 46                                                    | 10           | 185                         |
| 5,000-9,999         | 11                             | 25           | 7                                                          | 39           | 12                                      | 11           | 23                            | 12           | 37                                                    | 7            | 75                          |
| 10,000+             | 15                             | 33           | 4                                                          | 37           | 19                                      | 12           | 16                            | 22           | 34                                                    | 9            | 201                         |
| All                 | 22                             | 23           | 6                                                          | 31           | 18                                      | 9            | 18                            | 13           | 38                                                    | 9            | 673                         |

Note: The "Not Available" column includes all responses that indicated either "Not Available and Somewhat Needed" or "Not Available and Greatly Needed" for all options included in that column. The "Insufficient" column includes all responses that indicated "Available, but Insufficient" to at least one of the alternative placement options included in that column. The table does not report answers by school level. For each alternative placement setting, greatest need was reported at the elementary level.

Source: Staff Analysis of OEA 2025 Principal Survey.

**Table N.2**  
**Percentage Of A1 Principals Reporting That Lack Of Alternative Instructional Options Presents A Major Or Extreme Challenge In Addressing Persistent Or Severe Behaviors By School Level And District Membership, 2025**

| <b>District Membership</b> | <b>Elementary</b> | <b>Middle</b> | <b>High</b> |
|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1-999                      | 33%               | 22%           | 8%          |
| 1,000-2,499                | 37                | 33            | 3           |
| 2,500-4,999                | 33                | 25            | 22          |
| 5,000-9,999                | 39                | 7             | 0           |
| 10,000+                    | 45                | 33            | 23          |

Source: Staff Analysis of 2025 OEA Principal Survey.

**Table N.3**  
**Percentage Of A1 Principals Reporting A Major Or Extreme Challenge In Addressing Persistent Or Severe Behavior From District Discouraging Placement Of Students In Alternative Setting, By District Membership, 2025**

| <b>District Membership</b> | <b>Major Or Extreme Challenge</b> |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1-999                      | 12%                               |
| 1,000-2,499                | 18                                |
| 2,500-4,999                | 14                                |
| 5,000-9,999                | 12                                |
| 10,000+                    | 38                                |

Source: Staff Analysis of 2025 OEA Principal Survey.

DRAFT

## Appendix O

### Principal Survey Comments

Following are a selection of individual responses provided in the comments section on individual questions on the survey. They represent the categories of comments most frequently provided by principals:

- classroom clears;
- extreme behavior challenges in elementary schools;
- need for alternative settings; and
- discipline or behavior-related challenges associated with IEP students

Responses have been altered only in the few cases when a specific school or district was cited.

#### Classroom Clears

- Behavior incidents continue to climb every year and with inappropriate resources (FRC, Counselors, teacher trainings) people are becoming disenchanted with the profession.
- 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.
- 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 education environment and all day resource is not conducive or in the best interest of the students.
- 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.
- 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.
- Helping other students cope with this trauma after the student returns to class, explaining to parents of other students
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 de-escalation one-on-one with a staff member that can last for hours, preventing that staff member from completing normal job duties. (classroom disruption)
- 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.
- 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

### **Extreme Behavior Challenges In Elementary Schools**

- 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. Kindergarten students come into the classroom with many, many disruptive behaviors. Throwing chairs, biting, kicking, hitting
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

### **Need For Alternative Placement**

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 many, 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 .
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

- 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.
- 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.
- We have students who would benefit from an alternate school, virtual option, or at home learning; these are not offered at the elementary level.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 every day 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.

- Many elementary schools do not have the space to open multiple special classrooms so often there are students with emotional/behavioral needs in the special class with students who are cognitively low functioning and/or medically fragile which presents a safety concern.
- 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.

### **Discipline Or Behavior-related Challenges Associated With IEP Students**

- 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 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.
- 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.

- 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 .
- I think (district staff) absolutely attempt to understand but even they are limited by IEP/504 red tape and available district placement options.
- 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.
- This is an issue with our Special Education population. Students and families often feel that the disability is a pass to physically assault staff.
- 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.
- 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. .
- 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.
- 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
- 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.

- 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.
- 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 dysregulated that they cannot follow a plan. It takes multiple 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.