

SOLUTIONS **NOT** SUSPENSIONS

Michigan parents, youth, advocates and agencies are calling for more sensible school discipline policies that will truly promote academic achievement, lifelong learning and safe schools. We hope you will endorse our Solutions Not Suspensions Pledge for so many reasons:

1) Michigan schools suspend and expel students in large numbers. Michigan ranks 5th in the country for highest rates of student suspensions, with students of color, students with disabilities, and students in foster care being suspended at significantly higher rates.

2) Alternative solutions work. Research has shown that the most effective approaches to decreasing school violence are social skills training, academic restructuring, and behavioral interventions. Moreover, it has been shown that implementing positive, evidence-based school discipline practices, such as School-wide Positive Behavior Support and Restorative Justice, increases academic success and decreases office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions.

3) Punishment doesn't work. Research has shown that punishing problem behavior is associated with increases in aggression, vandalism, truancy, and dropping out, as well as lower school achievement scores.

4) Punishment makes communities more dangerous. Both the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention found that students with out-of-school suspensions and expulsions are more likely to commit crimes.

5) Every dropout costs society an estimated \$250,000 over the student's lifetime in lost income. Research shows that students who are expelled are more likely to drop out of school and/or get arrested. The cost to society of students dropping out of school is significant, especially in Michigan where 26% of all students are not graduating. This rate is even higher for students of color, where 43% of African American students, 37% of Latino students, and 38% of American Indian students are not graduating.

6) Informal guidance is ineffective. Michigan law does not currently require schools to work to reduce suspensions and expulsions and informal guidance by the State Board of Education, while a step in the right direction, has been largely ignored.

Thus, we ask you to endorse the following statement calling for an end to non-mandatory school expulsions in the state of Michigan. Please add your names, individual and/or organization, as supporting the All Kids in School Coalition and join us as we explore together ways to establish a strong voice for excellent and caring public education for all children.

Solutions Not Suspensions Pledge

We, the undersigned, call on Michigan legislators to roll back Michigan's overly broad School Discipline Code to align with federal law. We further call on Michigan school districts, schools and law enforcement to place a moratorium on non-mandatory expulsions and school exclusion and invest in resources for educational staff to implement positive approaches to discipline.

The ultimate goal of this moratorium is to improve student achievement, increase school safety, decrease school dropout and ultimately, foster a nurturing, supportive and engaging school community for all where students and teachers engage in meaningful dialogue. School exclusions are actually counterproductive and should only be used when absolutely necessary, according to the American Psychological Association. In fact, research shows many negative impacts, including:

- Lowered academic achievement
- Increased probability of future student misbehavior
- Increased likelihood that a student will drop out
- Increased likelihood that a student will encounter the justice system
- Lowered school completion rates

Michigan lost 251,410 days of student instruction in 2010 due to school exclusion policies. We are in a crisis situation with school discipline. With this in mind, we call on Michigan Legislators to roll back Michigan's school discipline code to align with federal law and ensure an education is provided to all students. Further, we call on districts, schools and law enforcement to:

1. Prioritize keeping students in school;
2. Provide supports to teachers, administrators and other educational staff to address discipline challenges in a way that supports student learning, while also ensuring a safe and orderly teaching and learning environment;
3. Put in place a moratorium on non-mandatory expulsions such as persistent disobedience, truancy, verbal assault and playground fights;
4. Consider the "weapons exceptions" seriously in each weapons case, as outlined in state law;
5. Provide a comparable education that provides positive behavior supports to students subjected to mandatory expulsion;
6. Adopt best practices in discipline, such as restorative practices, school-wide positive behavior supports, and other positive approaches, that support students' learning time and do not discriminate based on gender, race or disability status;
7. Safeguard against an increase in and work to reduce reliance on other punitive discipline practices such as long-term suspensions, school-based arrests or placements in alternative schools; and
8. Engage parents, students, teachers and community members in the development and implementation of best practices in school discipline.

During the period of time the moratorium is in place, there should be monitoring of each strategy outlined above, including making data and evaluation available to the public.

Please join us by endorsing the Solutions Not Suspensions Pledge calling for an end to non-mandatory school expulsions in the state of Michigan.

The Pledge: <http://tinyurl.com/solpledge>
Sign here: <http://tinyurl.com/signsolpledge>
Endorsers: <http://tinyurl.com/solendorsers>