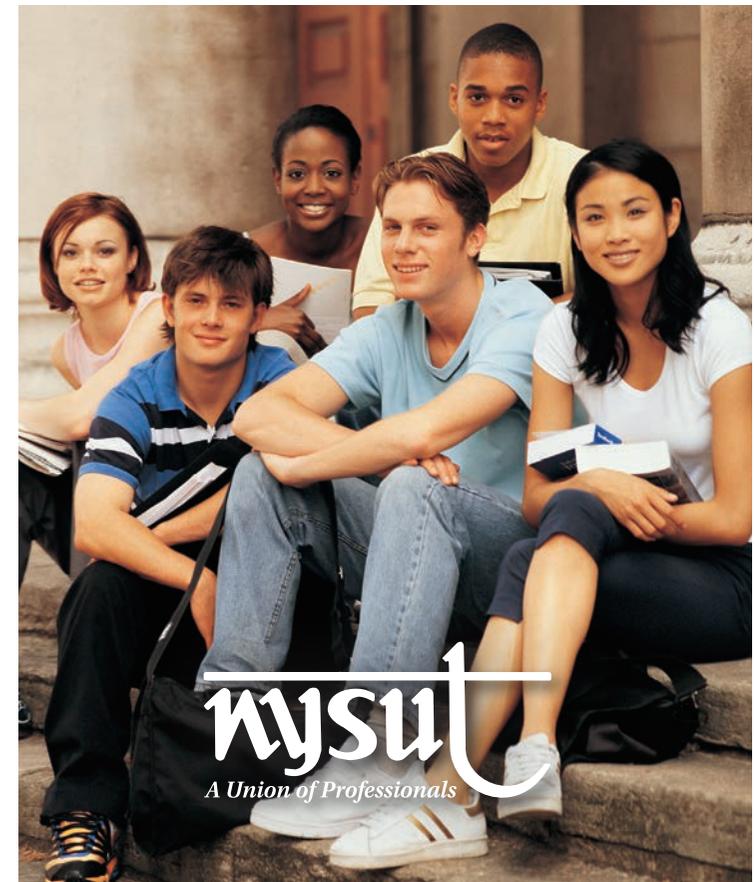


FOR PARENTS

Understanding School Discipline Practices



Project SAVE

In New York state, the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education Act (Project SAVE) of 2000 affords parents and teachers and other school professionals greater opportunities to be involved in the development of school district policies and procedures concerning safe schools.

Highlights include:

- Schools must adopt a local code of conduct.
- Teachers can remove disruptive students from the classroom for violating the code of conduct.
- Students will not be able to return to the classroom until the principal makes a final determination about the case.
- Conference days for staff training must include school violence prevention programs, and teachers must have such training for certification.
- K-12 instruction must include a civility, citizenship and character education component in the course of instruction.

Things parents should know about their children's school and its rules.

1. Code of conduct for academics.
2. Code of conduct for athletics and other extracurricular activities.
3. The school's discipline procedure.
4. Policies on campus access and attendance for students and campus access for parents.
5. When to expect feedback from the school — report cards, mid-term updates, school nights, conference opportunities.

Community involvement activities that can help:

- Community youth centers supported by churches, civic groups and local governments offer facilities and programs for students outside school hours.
 - Sports programs.
 - Arts and crafts programs.
 - Counseling, health services and drug abuse information and help.
- Cooperation with business groups can provide students with after-school jobs and help develop marketable skills.
- Child service programs provide opportunities for students to do community work in nursery schools or to serve as tutors.

Activities and opportunities like these provide constructive alternatives for young people and reduce the chances for discipline problems.

Don't forget the students.

They are affected by their environment, but how they react depends on them. Each student is responsible for his or her own actions. As adults we can help by setting a responsible example.



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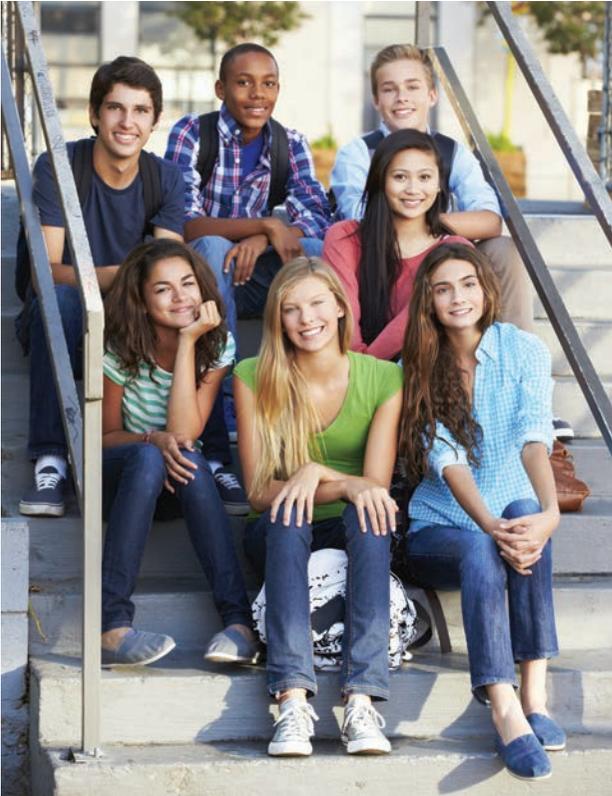


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No doubt about it. Discipline is one of the biggest challenges facing schools today.



Everyone is involved, not just the schools — parents, students and the entire community.

What do we mean by the school discipline problem?

We are talking about student behavior that disrupts the learning environment. It shows itself in many ways and can involve anything from being too noisy to the destruction of school property. But one thing is for sure: Discipline problems make it hard for schools to do their main job — educate young people.

Why is discipline such an important problem right now?

Discipline problems have always occurred in schools; but as society changes, more demands are put on young people. This can lead to stress, frustration, anger — and problems.

Factors outside the school and home

The community and environment have profound effects on each child. Some important factors:

- Recreational activities
- Employment opportunities
- Urban vs. rural
- Cultural setting
- Economic conditions
- Community value system

Each generation of students faces a different society, and being a young person is not getting any easier.

Schools are doing their best to give today's students the kind of education they need and deserve. But experiences away from school help form attitudes and behavior patterns. The discipline problem extends beyond the school grounds to the entire community. The problem affects all of us and the answer must come from all of us.

Here's what schools are doing:

- Providing trained counselors and advisers for students.
- Giving teachers extra training.
- Including civility, citizenship and character education in the curriculum.
- Establishing a clearly defined code of behavior for all students.
- Making course offerings as interesting as possible.
- Restructuring programs and entire schools.

But schools need help, especially from parents, the most powerful influence on a child's development.

Here's what parents can do to reduce discipline problems for their children:

- Set realistic goals with your child; don't expect too much, or too little.
- Be consistent and realistic about rules.
- Reward good behavior, don't just punish the bad. Remember, too much reward or punishment can cause problems.
- Take an interest in all aspects of your child's life, in and out of school.

