

These School Districts Stopped Disciplining Students, and Chaos Ensued

Last year, following a rash of student violence in a Minnesota public school district, one teacher made a [startling statement](#):

“[T]eachers feel powerless to discipline. I am not exaggerating. We are told to never under any circumstances touch a student as a behavioral intervention. We have no way to discipline. If a child is running around screaming, we let them run around and scream. If a student throws a chair at the Smart Board we remove the other students and call for help. If a student shouts obscenities, we simply use kind words to remind them to use kind words themselves. I am not kidding.”

Such a laissez-faire policy was the result of the St. Paul Public Schools’ attempts to minimize suspensions. But the St. Paul district was not the only one to attempt such a procedure. Many other districts across the nation did the same in hopes of promoting more racial equity, one of the most prominent being New York Public Schools.

Researcher Max Eden recently considered how such a policy was working for New York Public Schools by examining student and teacher surveys from the last several years. [According to Eden](#), school suspension policies were eased in the 2014-15 school year. As the chart below shows, it was at that time that students began observing increased problems in school fighting, mutual respect, gangs, and drugs and alcohol.



Eden is quick to caution that “concurrency is certainly not causation.” Nevertheless, he does offer the following conclusion:

“[I]f we assume that what’s happened in NYC in the last two years is indicative of what’s been happening across the country, then we have to contend with the possibility that these reforms have harmed millions of America’s most vulnerable students.”

Do you think Eden is correct in his assumption? Is the soft-handed approach to school discipline simply another nail in the coffin of an education system that is ineffective in sending knowledgeable and well-prepared adults into the world?

Image Credit: Eliya bit.ly/1eBd9Ks