

THE IMPACT OF COMBATIVE STUDENTS ON WORKERS' COMPENSATION

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AGENDA

- Impact on Workers' Compensation
- Effect on recruitment and morale
- Strategies
- What to wear/not wear
- Resources for de-escalation training

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

- Combative Students is one of the leading causes of workers' compensation claims in Wisconsin Schools
- Student caused injuries are increasing in frequency and severity
 - Range from 22-48% of reported claims
 - Range from 5-22% of costs

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

- More claims are reported in September & October as students readjust to the school routine
- The average cost is low (\$600-\$1,200); however, the trend is increasing
- Financial impact
- Reputation impact

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

EXAMPLE 1:

- Annual workers' comp. premium \$280,000
- Combative student injury of medical and loss time of \$16,000
- Impact on the controllable mod 0.0288
- \$31,000 additional premium over 3 years

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

EXAMPLE 2

- An elementary school has 13 claims caused by student behavior
 - Total claim costs: \$25,000
 - Additional annual premium: \$5,000
 - Effect on morale
 - Teachers' absence impact on student learning

WORKERS COMPENSATION

EXAMPLE 3:

- 2018 claim costs for combative students:
 - \$38,000
- 2021 claim costs for combative students:
 - \$102,000

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

- Important to report all incidents even if they don't result in medical care
 - “Slapped by student”
 - “Bitten by student”
 - “Scratched by student”
- Behavior Incident Reporting form
- Observe classroom for modification/training opportunities
- Does your staff feel supported?

EFFECT ON RECRUITMENT & RETENTION



- In a survey of 615 Midwestern K-12 teachers, respondents were asked their primary reason for leaving
- Once pay became an ancillary reason, 447 out of 615 listed **student behavior** as their primary reason for leaving

Student behavior is the leading cause for teachers leaving

A recent survey of midwestern teachers provides insight on why they are choosing to abandon the profession.

By Micah Ward July 22, 2022

Among a variety of factors that have contributed to the national teacher shortage crisis, student behavior is the number one reason most teachers are opting out of the profession, according to a survey released by [Chalkboard Review](#) this week.

Teachers have been making their voices heard as they're urging district leaders and legislators to [make changes](#) to help improve teacher satisfaction and retention. The Mineral Wells Independent School District in Texas, for example, is implementing a [four-day school week](#) to help increase competition and attract more teachers.

What has gotten little attention is how student behavior is contributing to the crisis.

Tony Kinnett, co-founder and executive director of Chalkboard Review, set out to understand why so many teachers are leaving the classroom, choosing either to abandon their careers forever or simply switch school districts.

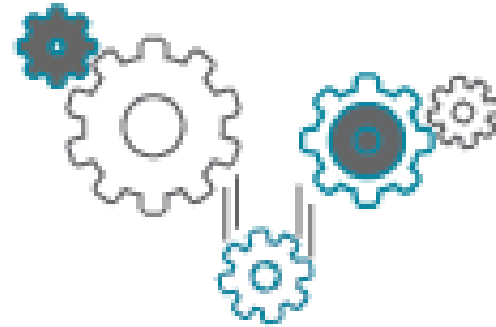
In a survey of 615 midwestern K-12 teachers, respondents were asked their primary reason for leaving. Survey-takers were presented with the following questions:

1. Given the reasons below, what is the largest reason you're leaving your position?
2. If salary were considered an ancillary reason, i.e. "I'm not being paid enough to deal with _____," what would you suggest is the largest reason you're leaving the classroom?
3. Were you a member of a local or national teachers union at some point during the previous academic year?
4. If the present administration could provide evidence that this specific problem is being dealt with satisfactorily, would you return to this classroom?

EFFECT ON RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

- **Student Mental Health**




- COVID anxiety
- Uncertainty
- Change of Routine



- **Special Needs Students**

- Preparing next school
- Take time to understand transferring student's needs

STRATEGIES

-  Train all staff
-  Additional, more comprehensive training for Special Education Staff
-  Report all incidents

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

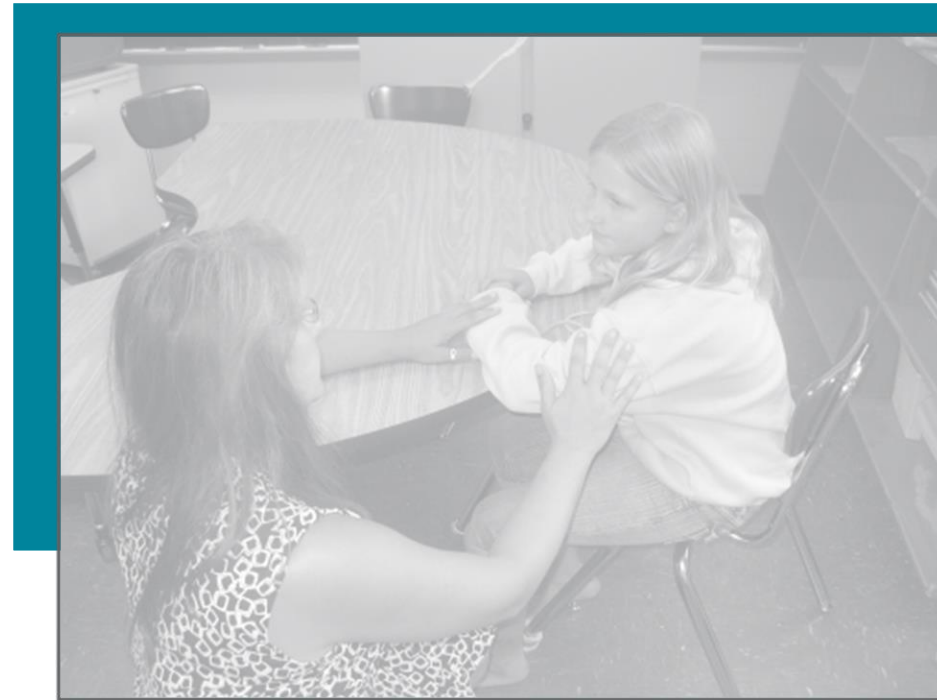
- Anyone in your school who deals with students must understand that how we communicate with a disruptive, combative or aggressive student can be the difference between a safe non-violent discussion and a dangerous physical confrontation.



UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

Always attempt to project a calm image to your students.

- **Remaining calm** in both your physical actions and verbal discussions with students is critical – it just may defuse a violent situation.
- **Be aware of your voice** — don't speak too loud or too fast. Control your facial gestures.



UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

Pause and think before reacting to a combative student's actions.

- If the student uses inappropriate language or begins calling you names, **don't react aggressively**; this may only serve to escalate the student's aggression.



UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

Use breakaway safety lanyards if your employees wear their identification badges around their neck.

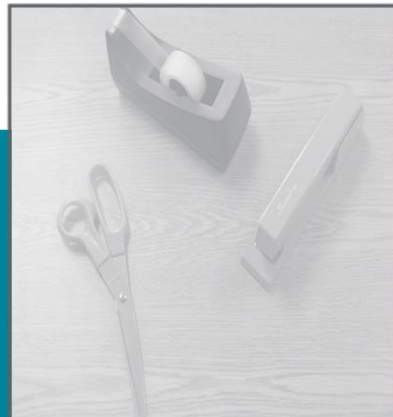
- Easily open if the lanyard is caught or pulled by a combative student.
- **Avoid wearing dangling jewelry, earrings, necklaces, etc.**
- An aggressive student may grab a necklace and try to choke you with it.



UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

Remove any objects from the immediate area that could be used as weapons against you.

- Don't provide aggressive students easy access to weapons such as scissors, staplers, letter openers, paper weights, etc.



UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

Never allow your staff members to bring household chemicals and cleaners from home in to the school.



- These hazardous substances could cause significant injury if a student were to spray them in a teacher's eyes.
- Your school should only purchase non-hazardous chemicals and cleaners.

UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

During any type of confrontation, provide the student adequate personal space.

- At a minimum, **18"-3'** should be maintained between the teacher and an aggressive student.



UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

If a student's behavior suddenly becomes physical, provide the student adequate personal space.

- Closing in or trying to restrain the student usually ends badly and will only escalate unsafe behavior.
- **When talking to a student, don't hover over them.**
- Lower yourself to the student's level; this may mean leaning on a filing cabinet or sitting on the edge of a table or desk to project a calm image.



UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

Don't startle a student with rapid or sudden body movements.



- Whether you are speaking or listening to the student, attempt to slow down all of your movements.
- Keep yourself calm by breathing slowly, speaking slowly, moving your eyes slowly, and blinking less frequently — this portrays a level of calm.
- **Never startle a disruptive student from behind.**

UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

Do not be within arm's reach of a potentially violent or aggressive student.

- Position yourself out of the student's reach — out of the 'line of fire.'
- Whenever possible, **avoid face-to-face, eye-to-eye, toe-to-toe interaction** with a potentially violent or aggressive student.



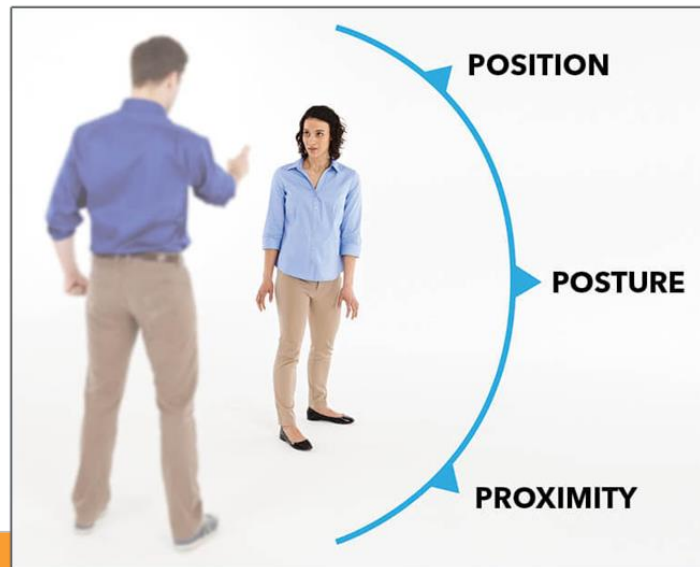
UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

Attempt to take a 'supportive stance' towards the aggressive student.

Ensure that you are at least one leg length away, off to the side, and at angle to the student.

Angle your body away from the combative student's dominant hand.

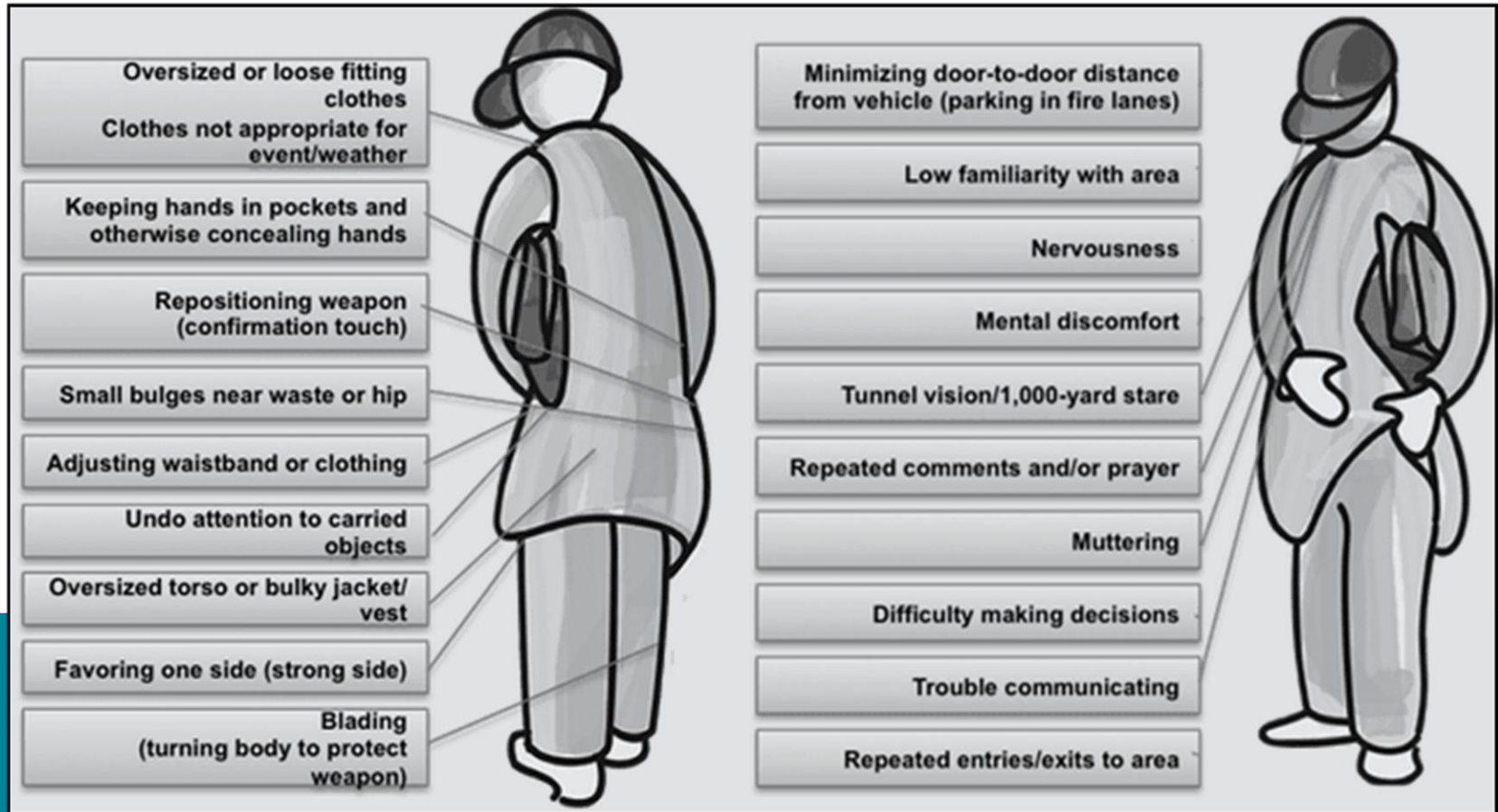
Maintain a safe distance between the students and yourself.



BREAKING UP A FIGHT AT SCHOOL



KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR



KNOW YOUR SCHOOL / BUILDING

Practice Active Supervision for a Safer Environment

Familiarize yourself with the layout of your school - inside and out. All schools have numerous blind corners, long hallways, segregated classrooms and isolated areas (such as boiler rooms, custodial closets, theatre prop rooms and locker rooms).



DURING THE PHYSICAL ALTERCATION

Dismiss the audience.

- Inform the onlookers that they must immediately leave the area. Call **students by name and specifically tell them** where they have to go.
 - *For example, saying "Mike, go back to your class now!" is more effective than simply saying "Everyone get out of here now!"*
- **Make mental notes of the onlookers' names** – you may need to talk to them later once things have settled down.



TIPS FOR BREAKING UP A FIGHT

1. Give specific commands.

Most fights can be stopped by a **loud, stern voice**.

2. Evaluate the situation.

- a. How many students are involved?
- b. How big are they?
- c. Is there anyone around who can assist you?
- d. Are weapons present?

3. Identify yourself; call students by name.

4. Defer to rules, not personal authority.

5. Stay away from the middle.

6. Avoid physical force, if possible.

TIPS FOR BREAKING UP A FIGHT (CONTINUED)

7. **Remove your glasses** before going into a fight.
8. **Separate** the aggressor and the victim.
9. **Neutralize participants** - change location & dismiss audience.
10. **Send** another student for help.
11. **Obtain** identification.
12. **Get medical attention** if necessary.
13. **Provide protection and support** for victims; provide counseling.
14. **Report incident**; debrief relevant teachers; describe the incident in writing; notify parents.

RESOURCES FOR DE-ESCALATION TRAINING

- Waisman Center
 - Waisman.wisc.edu
 - Managing Threatening Confrontations
- DHS
- CESA
- Your Insurance Agent & Company Loss Control Specialists

QUESTIONS?



THANK YOU!

