

Corporal Punishment in Schools

Definition

Corporal punishment is the number and rate per 100 students of disciplinary actions by public school districts using physical force with the intention of causing students to experience pain, but not injury.

Data in context

All children need nurturing and supportive environments to succeed academically in school. Proper discipline by teachers and school officials is warranted given that children need boundaries and supervision. While some educators believe that corporal punishment is an effective way to deter students from misbehavior, many believe it leads to harmful consequences.

Research indicates that corporal punishment is not as effective as placing a child in “time out” or removing some of their privileges.¹ Negative consequences of using corporal punishment include impairments in student cognitive functioning, lower performance on school tasks, internal feelings of helplessness, low self-worth and self-esteem, and an increased likelihood of dropping out of school.²

Beyond the context of the school itself, the impact of corporal punishment can be profound. For instance, corporal punishment of children is related to decreased internalization of moral rules, increased aggression, more antisocial behavior, increased criminality, decreased mental health outcomes, increased adult abusive behaviors, and increased risk of being victimized by abusive relationships in adulthood.³ Corporal punishment teaches children that it is acceptable to use physical aggression as a means to get people to change behavior.⁴

Corporal punishment in schools has been legal since 1977, based on the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Ingraham v. Wright*.⁵ However, states are increasingly passing bans on corporal punishment.⁶ Currently 21 states still allow it, and 13 states, including Kentucky, actively use it.⁷

All students have the right to be free from violence and to be treated equally; however, national data shows schools

disproportionately use corporal punishment on certain groups of students including students with disabilities, males, low-income students, and African-American students.⁸ In Kentucky, the rate of use of corporal punishment among low-income students was 0.33 per 100 compared to 0.09 among students with higher incomes.⁹ The use of corporal punishment was lower among Black students (0.08 per 100 students) than among White students (0.25 per 100).¹⁰

Corporal punishment in Kentucky school districts decreased by 53 percent between 2000 and 2007. Out of 175 school districts, 46 used corporal punishment in 2007. School districts that used corporal punishment most frequently were Bell, Clinton, Fulton, and McCreary Counties. Of school districts that allow corporal punishment, Allen, Carter, Clark, and Magoffin County school districts had the lowest rates in 2007 (less than 0.5 per 100 students).

Within the context of the educational setting, school districts and educators can maintain discipline in schools with effective approaches to prevent misbehavior.¹¹ Effective disciplinary systems establish clear guidelines, promote student success, seek student input on policies, and apply consistent enforcement while ensuring the dignity of all students.¹² As school districts evaluate their use of corporal punishment, they can make efforts to stop the practice with students who are particularly vulnerable, such as special education students and students with mental and physical disabilities.¹³

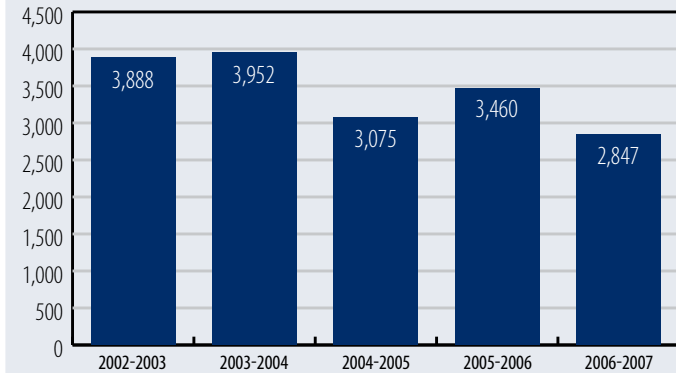
Data Source: Kentucky Department of Education.

Data Note: Students may have been disciplined by corporal punishment more than once throughout the school year. Independent school districts are listed after the school district for the county in which they are located.

Rate Calculation: (number of corporal punishment incidents during school year 2000 * 100) / (number of students during school year 2000) / (number of corporal punishment incidents during school year 2007 * 100) / (number of students during school year 2007)

1 National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (2006). “NAPNAP Position Statement on Corporal Punishment.” *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, vol. 20, no. 6.

Corporal Punishment Incidents in Kentucky, SY 2003-2007



Source: Kentucky Department of Education.

2 Ibid.

3 Gershoff, E. (2002). “Corporal Punishment by Parents and Associated Child Behaviors and Experiences: A Meta-Analytic and Theoretical Review.” *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 128, no. 4.

4 Greydanus, D., Pratt, H., Spates, C., Blake-Dreher, A., Greydanus-Gearhart, M., and Patel, D. (2003). “Corporal Punishment in Schools: Position Paper for the Society for Adolescent Medicine.” *Journal of Adolescent Health*, vol. 32.

5 McClure, T. E. & May, D. C. (2008). “Dealing with Misbehavior at Schools in Kentucky: Theoretical and Contextual Predictors of Use of Corporal Punishment.” *Youth & Society*, vol. 38, no. 3.

6 American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2008). *Corporal Punishment in Schools*. Available at <http://www.aacp.org>. Accessed August 2008.

7 Center for Effective Discipline website. *U.S.: Statistics on Corporal Punishment and Paddling by State and Race*. Discipline at School (NCACPS). Available at <http://www.stophitting.com>. Accessed October 2008.

8 Human Rights Watch and American Civil Liberties Union (2008). *A Violent Education: Corporal Punishment of Children in US Public Schools*. Available at: <http://www.hrw.org>. Accessed October 2008.

9 Data obtained from Kentucky Department of Education, August 2008, processed by Kentucky Population Research at the University of Louisville Urban Studies Institute.

10 Ibid.

11 Center for Effective Discipline website. *School Corporal Punishment Alternatives*. Available at <http://www.stophitting.com>. Accessed October 2008.

12 Ibid.

13 Human Rights Watch and American Civil Liberties Union (2008). *A Violent Education: Corporal Punishment of Children in US Public Schools*. Available at: <http://www.hrw.org>. Accessed October 2008.

Corporal punishment (number & rate per 100 students)

	SY 2000		SY 2007			SY 2000		SY 2007			SY 2000		SY 2007						
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate		Number	Rate	Number	Rate		Number	Rate	Number	Rate					
Kentucky	5,328	0.8	2,847	0.5	Clay Co.	0	*	0	*	Johnson Co.	191	5.1	44	1.2	Nelson Co.	0	*	0	*
Adair Co.	0	*	0	*	Clinton Co.	154	10.6	88	5.5	Paintsville Ind.	24	3.1	0	*	Bardstown Ind.	0	*	0	*
Allen Co.	2	*	16	0.5	Crittenden Co.	0	*	11	0.9	Kenton Co.	0	*	0	*	Nicholas Co.	0	*	0	*
Anderson Co.	0	*	0	*	Cumberland Co.	51	4.4	0	*	Beechwood Ind.	0	*	0	*	Ohio Co.	0	*	0	*
Ballard Co.	0	*	0	*	Daviess Co.	0	*	0	*	Covington Ind.	1	*	0	*	Oldham Co.	0	*	0	*
Barren Co.	0	*	0	*	Owensboro Ind.	0	*	0	*	Erlanger-Elsmere Ind.	0	*	0	*	Owen Co.	0	*	0	*
Caverna Ind.	0	*	0	*	Edmonson Co.	18	1.0	0	*	Ludlow Ind.	0	*	0	*	Owsley Co.	0	*	47	6.0
Glasgow Ind.	0	*	0	*	Elliott Co.	32	2.6	40	3.5	Knott Co.	52	1.7	4	*	Pendleton Co.	0	*	0	*
Bath Co.	21	1.1	166	8.5	Estill Co.	0	*	0	*	Knox Co.	0	*	0	*	Perry Co.	237	5.1	80	1.9
Bell Co.	422	13.8	352	11.7	Fayette Co.	0	*	0	*	Barbourville Ind.	0	*	0	*	Hazard Ind.	198	19.5	7	0.8
Middlesboro Ind.	0	*	0	*	Fleming Co.	36	1.5	39	1.7	LaRue Co.	18	0.8	0	*	Pike Co.	315	3.0	372	3.9
Pineville Ind.	0	*	0	*	Floyd Co.	279	3.9	185	3.0	Laurel Co.	0	*	0	*	Pikeville Ind.	0	*	0	*
Boone Co.	0	*	0	*	Franklin Co.	0	*	0	*	East Bernstadt Ind.	0	*	0	*	Powell Co.	0	*	0	*
Walton Verona Ind.	0	*	0	*	Frankfort Ind.	0	*	0	*	Lawrence Co.	103	3.7	4	*	Pulaski Co.	111	1.5	92	1.2
Bourbon Co.	0	*	0	*	Fulton Co.	183	21.7	33	5.2	Lee Co.	0	*	0	*	Science Hill Ind.	5	*	0	*
Paris Ind.	0	*	0	*	Fulton Ind.	35	7.1	20	4.8	Leslie Co.	0	*	0	*	Somerset Ind.	0	*	0	*
Boyd Co.	0	*	0	*	Gallatin Co.	0	*	0	*	Letcher Co.	0	*	0	*	Robertson Co.	2	*	0	*
Ashland Ind.	0	*	0	*	Garrard Co.	0	*	0	*	Jenkins Ind.	0	*	0	*	Rockcastle Co.	1	*	4	*
Fairview Ind.	0	*	3	*	Grant Co.	0	*	0	*	Lewis Co.	39	1.6	25	1.0	Rowan Co.	0	*	0	*
Boyle Co.	0	*	0	*	Williamstown Ind.	0	*	0	*	Lincoln Co.	123	3.1	106	2.6	Russell Co.	24	0.9	0	*
Danville Ind.	0	*	0	*	Graves Co.	35	0.8	0	*	Livingston Co.	0	*	0	*	Scott Co.	0	*	0	*
Bracken Co.	0	*	0	*	Mayfield Ind.	2	*	46	3.2	Logan Co.	2	*	1	*	Shelby Co.	0	*	0	*
Augusta Ind.	0	*	0	*	Grayson Co.	47	1.2	30	0.7	Russellville Ind.	20	1.5	0	*	Simpson Co.	0	*	0	*
Breathitt Co.	30	1.3	21	1.0	Green Co.	0	*	0	*	Lyon Co.	0	*	0	*	Spencer Co.	0	*	0	*
Jackson Ind.	0	*	0	*	Greenup Co.	110	3.4	44	1.5	McCracken Co.	0	*	0	*	Taylor Co.	0	*	0	*
Breckinridge Co.	111	4.1	83	3.1	Raceland Ind.	10	1.0	15	1.5	Paducah Ind.	0	*	0	*	Campbellsville Ind.	24	1.9	0	*
Cloverport Ind.	0	*	0	*	Russell Ind.	0	*	0	*	McCreary Co.	759	22.7	458	14.7	Todd Co.	18	0.9	0	*
Bullitt Co.	0	*	0	*	Hancock Co.	1	*	0	*	McLean Co.	0	*	0	*	Trigg Co.	273	13.9	0	*
Butler Co.	28	1.3	30	1.4	Hardin Co.	0	*	0	*	Madison Co.	0	*	0	*	Trimble Co.	0	*	0	*
Caldwell Co.	63	3.1	54	2.8	Elizabethtown Ind.	0	*	0	*	Berea Ind.	0	*	0	*	Union Co.	0	*	0	*
Calloway Co.	0	*	0	*	West Point Ind.	5	*	0	*	Magoffin Co.	3	*	11	0.5	Warren Co.	86	0.8	0	*
Murray Ind.	0	*	0	*	Harlan Co.	449	8.7	116	2.7	Marion Co.	0	*	0	*	Bowling Green Ind.	0	*	0	*
Campbell Co.	0	*	0	*	Harlan Ind.	0	*	0	*	Marshall Co.	3	*	0	*	Washington Co.	0	*	0	*
Bellevue Ind.	0	*	0	*	Harrison Co.	0	*	0	*	Martin Co.	22	0.9	18	0.8	Wayne Co.	15	0.6	2	*
Dayton Ind.	0	*	0	*	Hart Co.	72	3.2	0	*	Mason Co.	0	*	0	*	Monticello Ind.	48	5.6	51	6.3
Fort Thomas Ind.	0	*	0	*	Henderson Co.	0	*	0	*	Meade Co.	0	*	0	*	Webster Co.	29	0.0	0	*
Newport Ind.	0	*	0	*	Henry Co.	0	*	0	*	Menifee Co.	0	*	0	*	Providence Ind.	0	*	0	*
Silver Grove Ind.	0	*	0	*	Eminence Ind.	0	*	0	*	Mercer Co.	0	*	0	*	Whitley Co.	21	0.5	56	1.2
Southgate Ind.	0	*	0	*	Hickman Co.	19	2.4	9	1.2	Burgin Ind.	0	*	0	*	Corbin Ind.	0	*	0	*
Carlisle Co.	37	4.3	0	*	Hopkins Co.	0	*	1	*	Harrodsburg Ind.	16	1.7	**	**	Williamsburg Ind.	1	*	17	2.2
Carroll Co.	0	*	0	*	Dawson Springs Ind.	0	*	0	*	Metcalfe Co.	0	*	0	*	Wolfe Co.	96	7.2	0	*
Carter Co.	4	*	8	0.2	Jackson Co.	0	*	0	*	Monroe Co.	27	1.3	11	0.6	Woodford Co.	0	*	0	*
Casey Co.	0	*	0	*	Jefferson Co.	1	*	0	*	Montgomery Co.	18	0.5	0	*					
Christian Co.	85	1.0	1	*	Anchorage Ind.	0	*	0	*	Morgan Co.	56	2.5	19	0.9					
Clark Co.	5	*	7	0.1	Jessamine Co.	0	*	0	*	Muhlenberg Co.	0	*	0	*					

* Rates were not calculated for counties with fewer than 6 occurrences.

** District merged with Mercer County School District.