

What Our Students Need Now: Virtual School Culture That Is Healthy, Just and Strong

Overview

We are in unprecedented times, and now more than ever, the school community has the opportunity and the responsibility to focus on what matters most — safe, just and healthy students and school communities.

At a time when many students are learning in virtual settings, educators and administrators must address discriminatory policies and practices that often contribute to disproportionate discipline. For far too long data has shown that Black, Brown, Indigenous and LGBT students are more likely to be disciplined and disciplined more harshly than their white peers for the same behavior.

4 Things You Should Know

- **Respect that students' homes or places of residence are not a classroom** Educators who lead on practices and policies that support student academic, social and emotional health — no matter where a student is learning — establish stronger relationships and improve school climate and student outcomes.
- **Remove discriminatory dress codes** Many school dress codes were discriminatory before the pandemic, predominantly targeting girls, and remain discriminatory in virtual learning where strict dress codes and enforcement fail to support engaged student learning.
- **End student suspensions and expulsions** Harsh school discipline policies that failed students before the pandemic continue to fail students in virtual learning.
- **Support social, emotional and physical health & wellness** In this moment, nothing is more important than the health and wellbeing of students, their families, and our school communities. Students from K-12 are being asked to be on screen for hours at a time, many without real support because families are struggling with balancing work, job loss and health crises while students are learning at home.

States, districts and educators can create safer and more inclusive learning environments using evidence-based strategies that empower students to learn and thrive. **Learn more about how you can support Virtual School Culture That is Healthy, Just and Strong on NEA EdJustice.**

