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BTF RELEASES DISTURBING SCHOOL SAFETY AND UNACCEPTABLE LEARNING CONDITIONS SURVEY CALLS FOR MANDATORY INTERVENTION SERVICES FOR SUSPENDED STUDENTS TO PREVENT FUTURE SUSPENSIONS

“The very disturbing response from hundreds of teachers (749), from 61 of the 76 schools/sites over a short period of time, is an urgent call for immediate action by the Superintendent and Board of Education to ensure that suspended students are provided with intervention services to resolve and correct the issues that gave rise to the suspension”, stated Phil Rumore, President of the Buffalo Teachers Federation.

The questions and teacher responses were as follows:

- **Disruptive Student Behavior in my school is:**

- 17.01 % Dealt with quickly and appropriately.
- 42.82 % Dealt with inconsistently and as such is problematic thus leading to continued disruptive student behavior and unacceptable learning conditions.
- 18.33 % Is not dealt with appropriately leading to increased disruptive student behavior and unacceptable learning conditions.
- 14.08 % Is almost out of control leading to increased disruptive student behavior and unacceptable learning conditions.
- 07.77 % Out of control.

Please Note:

- Only **17.01 %** of the respondents report that disruptive student behavior is “Dealt with quickly and appropriately”.
- **83.00 %** of the teachers responded that disruptive student behavior is leading to unacceptable learning conditions for the students seeking to learn.

- **21.85 %** of the respondents report that disruptive student behavior “**Is almost out of control leading to increased disruptive student behavior and unacceptable learning conditions**” and disruptive student behavior is “**Out of Control**”.
- **I Believe that Discipline and Suspensions are Underreported in my School.**
 - 71.79 % of the respondents **agree**.
 - 28.21 % of the respondents disagree.
- **An Administrator Discusses how a Student's Behavior Can Be Expected to Improve Before Returning the Student to the Teacher's Class.**
 - 31.00 % of the respondents agree.
 - 69.00 % of the respondents **disagree**.

There is apparently a directive from the District to lower the suspension rates. As one can see from the survey, where **71.79%** of the responding teachers believe that this directive is being implemented by some administrators not reporting suspensions, not suspending students for serious and disruptive acts.

The survey responses can be found at www.btfny.org/pressrelease/2020/dis_survey_responses.pdf.

While lengthy, the public is encouraged to read some of the very troubling and disturbing incidents that are detrimental to the education and safety of Buffalo students and staff. **Note: in most cases nothing was done by the administrator to correct the issue.**

Note: Many teachers were hesitant to report incidents because they suffered reprisals by administrators; therefore, other teachers with firsthand knowledge of the incidents have reported some of the very troubling incidents.

A program called Restorative Justice/Practice has apparently been implemented in other school districts and has apparently been found to lessen disruptive student behavior and the suspension rate in some schools.

It has begun to be implemented in the Buffalo Public Schools; however, teachers are concerned that there is insufficient training, insufficient principal support and insufficient time in the day to implement it with fidelity.

However, this program is just one part of a comprehensive action plan needed to reduce the incidents of disruptive student behavior.

“Everyone wants to reduce suspensions; however, just sending a student back to class after the student has started a fight, threatened to hurt a student, bullied a student, cursed at the teacher, hit the teacher, continued to disrupt the class, etc., sends the message to the other students that the behavior is acceptable. This invariably leads to other students adopting the disruptive behavior and most feeling unsafe. Ultimately, someone gets hurt – usually a student.”

“We must work together to ensure that our students’ learning environment and safety are not compromised by disruptive student behaviors **while also working with the disruptive students to find the cause of and how to correct the disruptive behaviors and we must begin in the early grades.”**

“The Superintendent and Board of Education must immediately approve and implement a policy requiring that suspended students receive the intervention services of trained pupil personnel, e.g. school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, school attendance teachers, etc. and community/government partners.”

“In order for our students to receive said intervention services, additional pupil personnel must be hired so their caseloads are no more than 100/1”, Rumore concluded.

In reference to the issues raised, the BTF Executive Committee and Council of Delegates (elected school representatives), unanimously passed the following resolution:

WHEREAS, Buffalo teachers are seeing a significant increase in student behaviors that are detrimental to student learning and school safety; and

WHEREAS, Suspension alone, in most cases, does not address the underlying cause of the detrimental student behavior; and

WHEREAS, The District, in order to reduce suspensions, must not focus on the number of suspensions, it must focus on the behavior(s) that resulted in each suspension; and,

WHEREAS, Buffalo teachers, while being very concerned about the student behavior that is detrimental to student learning and school safety, also believe that to end said student behavior, suspensions must require District-provided intervention(s); and

WHEREAS, Said intervention(s) involves the resources of trained pupil personnel, e.g. school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, school attendance teachers, etc. and community/government partners; and

WHEREAS, The caseload of trained pupil personnel employees is, instead of 100/1, often 800/1 or more; and

WHEREAS, It is the District’s responsibility to ensure that suspension necessarily entails intervention(s).

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the Buffalo School Board/District will ensure that every student suspension requires the student to receive the intervention services of school counselors, school social workers, school attendance teachers, school psychologists and/or other trained providers to work with that student, and if necessary, his/her family, so that the behavior that led to the suspension ends, and the student and other students can succeed; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Education, to ensure that the required intervention services are provided to suspended students, establish caseloads for the above named District providers of no more than 100/1; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board/School District will continue and expand its outreach to city, state and local agencies that can provide said intervention services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That henceforth the designation "Suspension/District intervention(s)" will be used and implemented.

Recommended:	Philip Rumore
Moved:	Rebecca Pordum
Seconded:	Joseph Montante