

The Rights Stuff

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A Touchy Issue

It appears as though LEA has been receiving more calls and e-mails than usual about student discipline and intervening when a child becomes violent this year.

What should a member do in such a situation?

First of all, LPS Board Regulation 5400.2 states (with editorial emphasis):

“Certificated Employees’ Responsibility for Student Conduct:

1. The principal shall be notified of actions for which a student shall be temporarily removed from the classroom.
2. The student shall be subject to the denial of certain classroom privileges.
3. **The certificated employee shall be responsible for using reasonable measures necessary to maintain control:**
 - a. **In the classroom,**
 - b. **In the school building, and**
 - c. **On the school grounds.**
4. Certificated employees shall be responsible for reporting all violations of school policies, rules, and regulations to the principal.”

Second, The *LPS Certificated Personnel Handbook* in section HH states in part under “Student Discipline” (with editorial emphasis): “If a fight occurs between students in any school building or on the school grounds, **staff should immediately verbally command the students to stop and attempt to gain additional adult assistance. Staff may intervene in fights or physical struggles. The degree and force used shall be as reasonable as necessary to protect the safety of the combatants and surrounding persons.**”

Some Do’s and Don’t’s

In addition to following the policies and procedures above, LEA recommends:

1. Know what your building procedures are for emergencies and student discipline and follow all building procedures. If procedures are not clear or need to be updated, discuss that with your administration.
2. **Before** intervening in a student altercation, **call an administrator for help** so they can intervene or have a colleague place the call as you continue to monitor the situation and **verbally** try to deescalate the situation.
3. If it is **an emergency** or apparently a serious situation and no administrator is available, seek the assistance of additional colleagues before intervening **and/or call 9-1-1** or the building security.
4. **Never** leave school grounds to intervene in a student altercation. Teachers have **no authority** off of school property (unless it is a school activity; i.e. a field trip), and off school grounds expose themselves to personal harm as well as liability, are not covered by Worker’s Comp, and should **call the authorities** if they observe a student altercation.
5. **Never** attempt to “take down” a student, put them in any kind of body hold, carry them, or restrain them if you have not been properly trained to do so—and then **only if it is absolutely necessary**. Restraining or carrying students puts certificated employees in jeopardy in a multitude of ways. Don’t go there.
6. **Never** touch a student when you are angry or upset. Period.
7. Regardless of the altercation and intervention necessary, it is always a good idea to have adult witnesses if a teacher must intervene. Call for help!