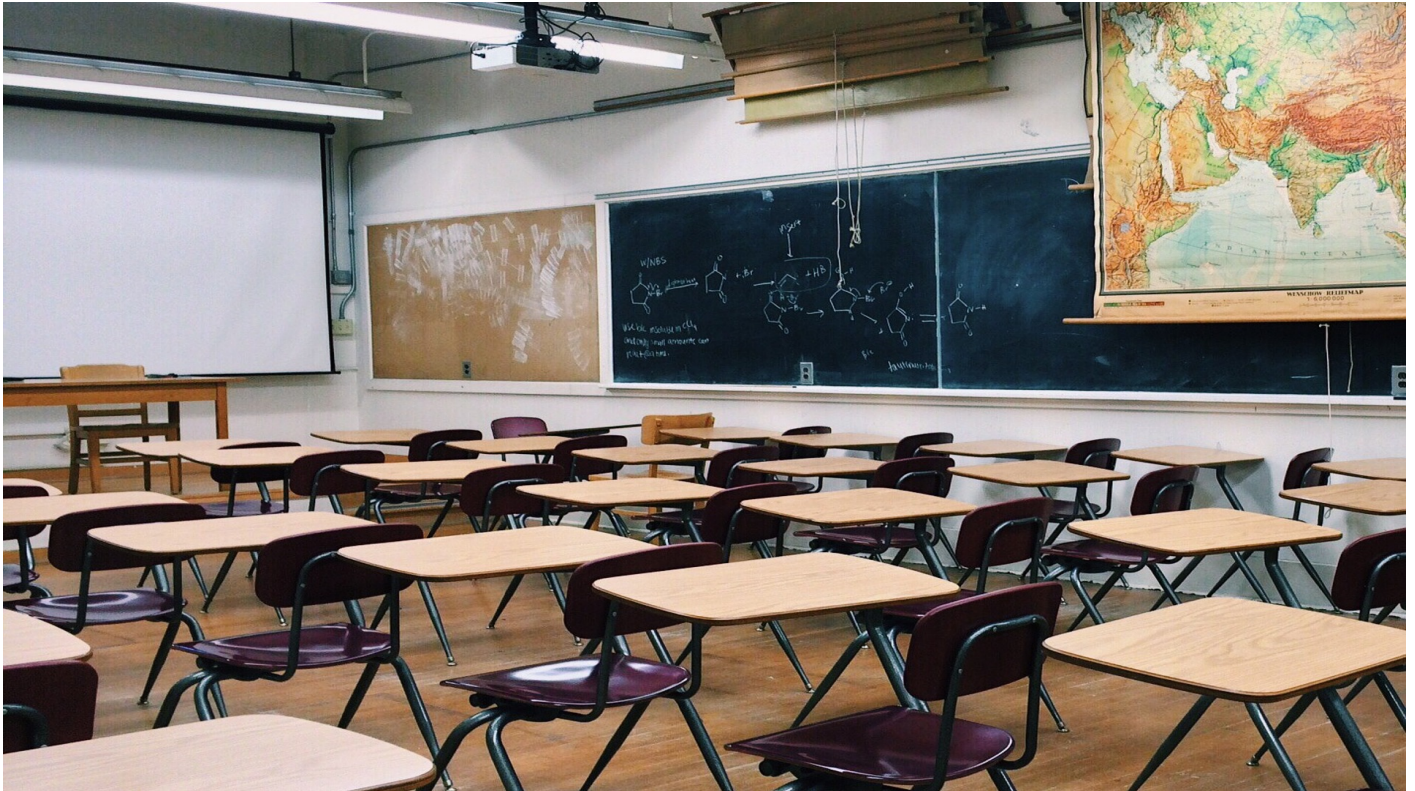




Students Who Are Bullied Deserve Educational Options

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By: *James V. Shuls*

Kids can be terrible. I know. I have four of them. They bite. They kick. They scream. They mock. They tease. They do just about everything you tell them not to . . . sometimes because you tell them not to. As parents, my wife and I try our best to teach them to love each other, to have compassion, to offer forgiveness, and to just be decent people. We fail at this on a daily basis.

That is why I have some sympathy for teachers and school leaders when it comes to issues related to bullying. I have four kids; they have hundreds. I understand that some amount of bullying or fighting is going to occur at schools because schools are filled with children.

This doesn't mean we can't do anything about it. Parents and schools need to be proactive about preventing these kinds of problems. But what do we do for students who do not feel safe at school right now?

In most cases, our policies require the child being bullied to confront their bully. They have to come forward to their parents, teachers, or principals. Then, often times, they have to work with that student to overcome differences. While there may be some merit in attempting to build these bridges, sometimes this is just a bridge too far.

The problem with all of this is that most parents have little recourse. They can bring the issue to the attention of the school, but then they must trust the professionals to address the issue that

first happened under their watch.

Students should not be forced to continue attending a school where they don't feel safe.

As my colleague wrote about [recently](#), Florida did something innovative to address this problem. It created the [Hope Scholarship Program](#), which allows “purchasers of motor vehicles to contribute their vehicle sales tax to fund private school scholarships.” Those scholarships are awarded to victims of bullying or physical attacks.

School choice programs, such as this or Empowerment Scholarship Accounts, give parents control. These programs equip parents with the resources to place their child in a school where they will feel safe and supported.

Teachers and school administrators will do the best they can to help students and prevent bullying. But like it or not, it will occur. When it does, those children deserve educational options.

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