



The Zoom Waiting Room is the New ‘Go Sit in the Hall’

By Educator Barnes – September 17, 2020

A few years back, I spoke at the statehouse for the school discipline bill. Part of my testimony highlighted students being excluded from the classroom. Typically, when data is pulled for exclusion, in school suspension and out of school suspension data are the metrics that are referenced. During my testimony, I highlighted other ways children are excluded. Sending a student to sit in the office or the hall is exclusion. Sending a student to another

classroom is also exclusion. Unfortunately, exclusionary practices have continued in the virtual setting.

Don't get me wrong. There is a time when a child needs to be excluded. If students are not being safe and are endangering themselves and/or others, the exclusion is warranted. I will also note that some students are triggered by the teachers. If certain students are always being excluded, the teacher needs to make sure he or she is not contributing to the students not being successful or unsafe.

Exclusion is only one tool in the discipline tool kit. It should not be the first option. Exclusion from the learning environment should not be the end goal, and restoration is a key component of exclusion. If teachers are kicking students out as the end goal, this does not help the child. This is why I am concerned about students being kicked out of remote classes.

In the remote setting, students are being kicked out of class and put into the waiting room. They are even being suspended from the class. How does this help our students? If the student is already at home, now the student is at home and is not learning.

If the students are being booted out of the online environment because of being inappropriate on video or writing inappropriate messages in the chat, the teacher can take control by turning off the camera or restricting the chat. Then, the teacher should follow up with parents/guardians. In the in-person setting, teachers should do all they can to keep the student in the class, and the same actions should be applied to the virtual environment.

We already know that some students are not doing as well in the virtual setting academically, so we need them in class. If they need to be excused, school administrators and teachers should work with the student and the family to help the student not have the same behavior moving forward. We cannot allow exclusionary practices to become a power move by teachers who just don't want to deal with students. The Zoom waiting room should not become the new "go sit in the hall."