

New State Law Should Apply to High School Only

By The Northmen's Log staff

Schools often drill into your head that they are preparing you for your future, for the real world. As of Jan. 1, this has become as true than ever for students in Missouri schools. Now students who bully or fight in school, at bus stops, or on the bus, could face felony charges.

The Northmen's Log believes this law would be beneficial if applied to students in secondary school only.

This law is made to combat bullying that causes "emotional distress" and fights in schools. Younger students in elementary likely don't know what these terms mean and see no wrong in their actions when they are angry. Students in primary school should face consequences from the school itself to help them learn the difference between correct behaviors and the wrong behaviors. If fighting and bullying persists, then in high school law enforcement should be brought into the equation at an appropriate age.

Patrick Wallace, Executive Director of Communications at St. Louis Public Schools said in a statement to CBS News that he, "can't see us reporting a 6-year-old." Wallace also highlighted how just this year suspensions for students under the third grade at the school district ended.

Young students deserve the chance to make mistakes without feeling criminalized.

With that same mentality in mind, it might seem like just a chance to ruin a student's future if they are given a felony for participating in a fight or harassing another student, but that's hardly the case. Once a student is out of high school, fighting someone could lead to a felony, so why should it be permitted in school? As long as the student is under 17, the charge would be on their juvenile record. At 17 and older, students should just know better, and deserve the punishment fit for the crime.

This law could deter students from fighting and bullying in the first place. Students often times don't take school consequences seriously. ISS and OSS become a small price to pay for their bold actions. Many students just accept these "punishments" repeatedly without thinking twice. Facing potential felony consequences, up to four years in prison, students may not be as willing to take a chance. Felonies can have a detrimental effect on a person's life, from probation to jail time. That would be a much more serious consequence compared to a day in ISS or days at home on OSS and will likely influence kids to better handle disputes.

Students of an older age group should know how to handle their disputes better than to fight and harass each other, and if they don't then they should face the same consequences they will face outside of school.