

# To reduce student suspensions, teachers should try being more empathetic

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## Science:

School suspension rates have nearly tripled in the United States since the 1970s, rising from just 3.7% of all students in 1974 to nearly 11% in 2011. That's a big deal because missed class means missed learning, and suspensions can predict future unemployment and even incarceration. Now, a new study suggests that even a minor attitude adjustment among teachers can have a dramatic effect on those rates: Math teachers encouraged to be more empathetic saw student suspensions drop by half.

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Psychologist Jason Okonofua, who led the new study, spent his early years attending public school in Memphis, Tennessee. In 10th grade, his good grades landed him a spot at a prep school in Rhode Island. When he arrived, Okonofua was struck by how differently the teachers responded to their students—if a student felt something was wrong and spoke out, for example, teachers would encourage him to voice his opinions. The same behavior in his former school would likely have landed the kid in trouble for talking back. “They were totally different approaches,” he says.

Read the whole story: [Science](#)