WHAT IS THE SCHOOL'S APPROACH TO DISCIPLINE?

FFLIC recommends that parents consider discipline rates and how many times the school reported a child to the police, which we call "school climate." It is important to look at the school culture and how the school views and treats children. While some information can give you hints as to what the climate is like (for instance, high suspension rates usually indicate stricter, more aggressive climates), numbers are not going to tell the whole story.

Alternatives to suspension
In contrast, some schools use alternatives to suspension. These are more positive approaches that focus on preventing misbehavior by building relationships and encouraging good behavior with clear expectation and rewards. This is known as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). When a child misbehaves, these schools tend to see the misbehavior as the problem, not the child, and to try to find the cause of the misbehavior and correct it. These schools might also use restorative approaches, which is a method of discipline focused on repairing the relationships between those harmed (for example, the target of a rumor) and those causing the harm (the students spreading the rumor).

Finding a supportive school
Parents can try to choose schools that utilize these practices, or encourage their schools to use them. You will probably need to ask around to other parents and students and to talk to your child because there is no data on which schools use PBIS and/or which use them correctly. Also, don’t be afraid to talk to the school itself. Studies show that alternatives to suspensions like PBIS contribute to improved grades, so it’s in the best interest of schools to use these tools. Additionally, these practices reduce the likelihood of your child being suspended, dropping out, or coming into contact with law enforcement.

For more info about PBIS:
Visit www.pbis.org and ask FFLIC about the "Parents in Leadership" Project.
Need help advocating for your child?
Call or Email 504-708-8376 or fflic@fflic.org