



## New State Discipline Rules:

# BACKLASH

# OR BALANCE?

**Gary Kipp**

*AWSP Executive Director*

**Do you remember** the unbridled exhilaration of swinging on a swing when you were a child?

As you started back down, with the ground in front of you, you would pull back and stretch your legs as far as you could, and each time you got a little bit higher. You knew that the higher you got going forward, the higher you got going back, and that was the thrill that you could feel all the way down into your tummy. And, if you were lucky enough to have someone push you, you didn't have to pump at all. The inertia resulting from the force of gravity bringing you back to earth caused you to go nearly as high on the other side with no effort at all. If mom was pushing you from one side and dad was pushing you

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back in the other direction, you would spend your afternoon effortlessly on top of the arc on one side, passing quickly past the ground on the way to the top of the arc on the other side. What a rush.

I was reminded of this phenomenon when analyzing the proposed draft of the new discipline WACs that are being written by OSPI this year. State Superintendent Chris Reykdal's office has been tasked with the difficult challenge of writing these rules to guide districts on how to implement

the new laws governing student discipline next year.

To their credit, OSPI staff held statewide input sessions to hear ideas from the public on how they should approach this work. At the time of this publication, OSPI released its draft of the revised proposed rules and is awaiting further public input before finalizing them this spring and putting them in effect by the start of the 2018-19 school year. The

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initial draft placed such an onerous restriction on removing disruptive students from class and school that I worry the result will ultimately swing the pendulum higher on the other side.

It wasn't long ago that "no tolerance" policies were the rage. If a third-grader ate his peanut butter sandwich into the shape of a gun, out the door he would go. No tolerance for misbehavior translated into no judgment for those enforcing the rules. Think of no tolerance for misbehavior as the top of the arc on one side of the swing. Think of no tolerance for punishment as the top of the arc on the other side of the swing. The new WACs are providing momentum to get higher on the side of no tolerance for punishment.

Granted, this picture is an overstatement of reality. We were never at the top of the arc with state policies regarding no tolerance for misbehavior, and we are not going to make it to the top of the arc on the other side. And granted, we need to deal with the disparity of suspensions in many schools among sub populations. However, I believe it is fair to predict that the higher the swing gets on the no-tolerance-for-punishment side, the easier it will be to get as high on the other side.

When it becomes more difficult to remove a disruptive student from class, even temporarily, and when schools are responsible to provide a comparable education to the removed student that the behaving students are receiving in class, the more likely it will be that we see a backlash propelling the swing in the other direction. ■



Gary Kipp has served as AWSP's executive director since 2003. He has more than 40 years' experience as a teacher, assistant principal, principal and assistant superintendent.

# Humor me!

Created by **David Ford**, Retired Washington State Principal

