Why should schools move away from punitive responses?

Punitive responses involve forcing compliance through fear rather than increasing students’ capacity and competences to think critically about the implications of their behaviour (for themselves and others) and make better decisions.  

Punitive responses shut down conversations by focusing only on the specific behaviour and context, rather than engaging students in a meaningful dialogue in which they can express their ideas, feelings and reasons for their behaviour.  

Punitive responses are likely to alienate students by promoting a particular behaviour and encouraging students to fit in to the existing world rather than equipping them with tools necessary for participation in the world and giving them “the opportunity to show who they are and who they want to be.”

Punitive responses tend to be disproportionally applied to those who already face marginalization based on their race, socio-economic status, or other factors.


