

OPINION Section
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Christina's new policies are the right way to go

It has not been smooth sailing of late for the Christina School District, what with the recent brouhaha over the Race to the Top money and the transferring of teachers at two schools.

Over the last couple of years, the district has also been criticized for having one of the highest student expulsion rates in the nation under its zero tolerance disciplinary code.

The district made national headlines when it expelled an 11-year-old girl who was found with box cutters in her jacket. It turns out that the coat had recently been purchased from a Forman Mills store. The girl's mother insisted that the box cutters must have come from the store, and store officials confirmed they used the same type of tool.

A lawsuit filed by the local American Civil Liberties Union branch has been dropped and the expulsion rescinded by the school district while it changed various aspects of its disciplinary policies.

Two similar incidents also grabbed headlines: An elementary school student was expelled for bringing a pastry knife to school to cut a cake, and a 6-year-old was expelled for bringing a camping utensil to eat his pudding at lunch.

The district has now decided to consider mitigating circumstances before imposing penalties on students, to increase from two to 10 the number of days to consider a case, and to provide better training to school officials in advising students of their rights.

Kathleen MacRae, executive director of the ACLU, praised the district for adopting a more common-sense approach to discipline. We do, too.