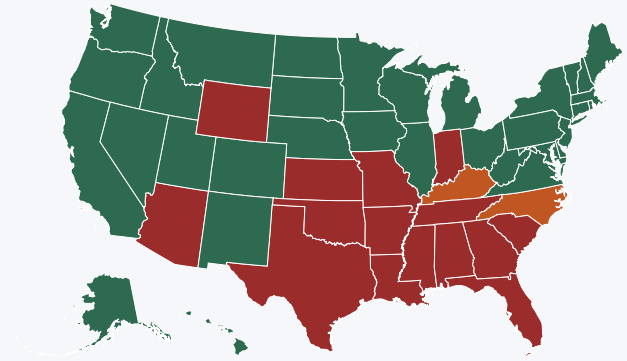
Can a teacher still paddle a child at school?

In **17 states**, yes. The law does not require it or recommend it. It permits it, if the local school board says so. **The same board can say no.**

WHERE IT STANDS, OCTOBER 2026



Prohibited by law: 33 states and DC

Legal, every board prohibits: 2

Legal and in use: 15

19,851
children paddled in US public schools in 2023-24. Children, not incidents.

28,310
times it happened, in 832 districts, as the districts themselves reported it.

71% fewer
than in 2017-18 (69,492), mostly with no change in the law. Boards and principals stopped on their own.

137 of 199
countries and territories prohibit it in schools. 17 US states still permit it.

WHO IT LANDS ON · UNITED STATES, 2023-24

81 of 100
are boys.

17 of 100
have a disability.

2.3× and 4×
Black students, and Black girls, compared with white students and white girls. US Secretary of Education, letter to every governor, 2023

WHAT THE RESEARCH FINDS

21 studies
Across 67,400 children, school corporal punishment goes with more aggression, more anxiety and depression, and lower school performance.
Visser, van der Put and Assink, 2022

75 studies
It did not even reliably stop the behavior in the moment. No study has ever found a benefit.
Gershoff and Grogan-Kaylor, 2016; AAP, 2023

54 controlled studies
What works instead: taught expectations, a consequence that fits, practice. Better behavior and grades.
Korpershoek et al., 2016

WHO HAS SAID STOP

79 organizations in one letter in 2016: the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychological Association, the NEA, the AFT, the principals, the school psychologists, the National PTA, the NAACP, the ACLU. The pediatricians again in 2023, on their own. The US Secretary of Education in 2023, asking every state to end it.

WHAT THE LAW PROTECTS

Every state that permits it shields staff only for force that follows the board's policy and that a court later agrees was **reasonable**, **not excessive** and **necessary**. Where a milder method works as well, the common law has never called force necessary. The research above is the answer to each word.

"The Board prohibits the use of corporal punishment in the District."

That is a complete policy, in a policy code every board already has. In Texas alone, 291 boards adopted this exact sentence.

1,190
boards in the 17 permitting states already prohibit it in writing

827
districts permit it on paper and reported not one use last year

PARENTS

In every permitting state you can refuse in writing. The letter takes two minutes, and the school must honor it.

earthpilot.org/kids/resources/#letters

BOARD MEMBERS

Put the sentence on an agenda. The model policy in your state's code, the training and the letters to families are free. The district is recognized as a Safe School.

earthpilot.org/kids/kit/

EVERYONE

Watch the four-minute film for your school board, find your district's own policy on the map, and send this sheet to one board member.

earthpilot.org/kids/board/

SCAN

Sources. US Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection 2017-18, 2021-22 and 2023-24 (district self-reports; the Department says districts likely underreport); state statutes and 3,559 district policies quoted in the open record; Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, March 2025; US Secretary of Education letter, March 24, 2023. Every figure with its primary source and verification date: **earthpilot.org/kids/resources/**