

FEATURED

Schools rank first in civil citation study

Submitted by The Children's Campaign Sep 23, 2016

MAYO — Florida's second annual comprehensive study of alternatives to juvenile arrests for common youth misbehavior — called "Stepping Up: Florida's Top Juvenile Civil Citation Efforts 2016" — ranks Lafayette County schools the best in the state.

Juvenile civil citations are an alternative to arrest for common youth misbehavior.

"We are proud to be recognized for our efforts in reducing the number of arrests for common youth misbehavior," Superintendent Robby Edwards said. "This is another reminder to me of how great it is to live in Lafayette County. Parents who set a good example for their children, and youth who are respectful of others go a long way in keeping these numbers low."

The study was authored by Dewey Caruthers, president of Dewey & Associates, who is one of Florida's top juvenile civil citation experts and supported by state and national juvenile justice reform organizations.

The study also shows increasing the use of civil citations statewide up to 75 percent would enable law & order entities to invest up to \$62 million in preventing and addressing felonies and serious crimes, as well as significantly improve life outcomes for nearly 7,000 arrested youth.

"This year's study supports — in more depth and with more data — last year's findings that civil citations increase public safety, improve youth outcomes and save taxpayer money," said Caruthers. "We are unable to find any data that shows arresting youth for common youth misbehavior instead of issuing civil citations is a good idea," Caruthers said, noting the Stepping Up 2016 recommends only in rare and exceptional circumstances should law enforcement arrest instead of issuing a civil citation.

Stepping Up recognizes the state's top-performing counties, school districts and law enforcement agencies, which are categorized by division based on eligible youth.

There are eight school districts that are ranked as the state's top-performers for the second year (in alphabetical order): Dade, Lafayette, Monroe, Nassau, Okaloosa, Pinellas, Union and Wakulla.

"These top-performing school districts recognized by Stepping Up 2016 are the best in the state at not arresting juveniles for common youth misbehavior," said Roy Miller, president of The Children's Campaign, Florida's leading child advocacy organization for juvenile justice reform. "Without a doubt, arrests close doors to youth for future education and employment. We are calling on all counties, school districts and law enforcement agencies to get on board and dramatically increase utilization rates."

The nonpartisan study is supported by The Children's Campaign, Southern Poverty Law Center, ACLU, Joseph W. & Terrell S. Clark, Jessie Ball duPont Fund, Florida State University Project on Accountable Justice, James Madison Institute and Florida

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