

SPANKING AT SCHOOL

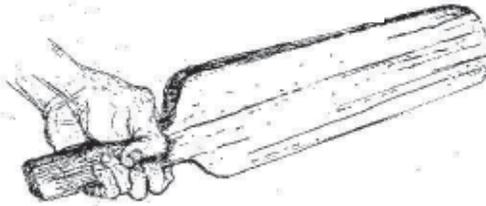
The disciplinary hitting of students in the United States typically involves battering the buttocks with a flat stick or board called a paddle. At the time of this writing, the practice is legal in 21 states. It should be understood that paddling is not the only method for inflicting pain. Forced exercise and denial of use of the bathroom, for instance, are commonly used as forms of corporal punishment. But paddling, because it is specifically prescribed and so blatant, serves to overshadow and thereby give cover to less obvious forms of abusive treatment.

Corporal punishment is deemed by its users and defenders as being in the children's best interests and essential to the smooth functioning of the school. Were that true, schools that are the most punitive would be the highest-performing, children who are routinely punished would be the best behaved, and teachers' colleges would teach paddling. In fact, school systems with the highest rates of corporal punishment are the worst-performing, children who are the most punished are the most troubled and difficult to manage, and there is not one accredited teachers' college in the United States that instructs future educators in the proper method for hitting children. Documented research shows a correlation between school corporal punishment and certain negative social outcomes. States that have the highest rates of school paddling also have the lowest graduation rates, the highest rates of teen pregnancy, the highest incarceration rates and the highest murder rates. (See "Correlation between high rates of corporal punishment in public schools and social pathologies" at www.nospank.net/correlationstudy.htm)

The use of corporal punishment in schools also has a dampening effect on the performance and morale of teachers who don't subscribe to the practice. They have difficulty working alongside paddlers. Their survival in such an environment depends on their willingness to remain silent about what they see and hear. They know that paddlers feel threatened by their very presence. Some move on. Some are driven out. It's not unusual for a paddling school to degenerate to a level where it is nothing more than a magnet and safe haven for unfit teachers. A teacher recounts this experience when he applied for a position in such a place:

"The interview began with the director asking me how I felt about corporal punishment. I told him that I disapproved of it and that I couldn't and wouldn't do it. He replied, 'Well, since that's the way you feel, you're of no use to us here.' And the interview was over."

School corporal punishment has disappeared nearly everywhere in the developed world. Not one country in Europe permits it, and abolition is spreading at a rapid pace among developing nations. Nowhere is there any



movement within governments or among educators to reverse this trend and return to the old ways. Only one country on record temporarily revoked its prohibition against hitting students: Germany during the Nazi period.

Meanwhile, the United States remains the principal laggard in this regard with between 1/3 and 1/2 million school beatings per year. Typical injuries resulting from school corporal punishment can be viewed at www.nospank.net/violatn.htm.

What should enlightened, responsible parents do about corporal punishment in their schools? If you knew that a school bus had bald tires and faulty brakes, you would not let your child ride that bus and you would demand that your school authorities correct the problem immediately. If you knew that the air ducts in your school were contaminated with asbestos and the classrooms were painted with lead-based paint, you'd remove your child immediately and alert other parents to the danger. Corporal punishment is no different. It is very dangerous and all sensible people in the community should unite in opposition to it.

HITTING THE BUTTOCKS AND SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

Medical science has long recognized and documented in great detail how being struck on the buttocks can stimulate sexual feelings. Children are especially susceptible. The tragic consequence for many children who have been punished by spanking is that they form a connection between pain, humiliation and sexual arousal that endures for the rest of their lives. In *Slaughter of the Innocents*, David Bakan writes:

"...The buttocks are the locus for the induction of pain in a child. We are familiar with the argument that it is a safe 'locus' for spanking. However, the anal region is also the major erotic region at precisely the time the child is likely to be beaten there. Thus it is aptly chosen to achieve the result of deranged sexuality in adulthood..." (p. 113)

The pornography and prostitution industries do a thriving business catering to the needs of countless unfortunate individuals whose sexual development was derailed by childhood spankings. If one puts all other considerations aside, this should be reason enough never to spank a child.

J. RIAK, June 2006

Produced by Parents and Teachers Against Violence in Education (PTAVE), P.O. Box 1033, Alamo, CA 94507. This material has been excerpted from the booklet *Plain Talk about Spanking* at www.nospank.net/pt2006.htm and may be reprinted from www.nospank.net/cp-schools.pdf. Copyright waived.