

THE HITTING STOPS HERE

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Johnny Hunt, Superintendent
Public Schools of Robeson County
410 Caton Rd.
Lumberton, NC 28358

Dear Mr. Hunt:

The purpose of this letter is to call your immediate attention to a serious human rights violation against children attending your schools.

Your current policy allows students to be physically punished by being struck on the buttocks with a wooden board. While such treatment may result in the child's immediate compliance with the will of the punisher, the long-term effects are only negative. The child learns to distrust and resent the adult(s) in charge. Because children experience intense anger at being forced to submit to painful, degrading and humiliating treatment, they are apt to seek ways to vent those feelings in destructive acts toward others. Some abused children will strive to emulate their abusers. Others will turn their anger inward by engaging in self-destructive behaviors, by performing poorly at school tasks and by loss of self esteem.

Hitting a child's buttocks is also problematic for these reasons:

- a) It can cause hematoma, hemorrhaging, damage to the sciatic nerve, tailbone injury, and compression fractures to the lower spine.
- b) Pain to the buttocks in childhood can become associated with erotic feelings, and those feelings can become fixed, resulting in life-long sexual dysfunction.
- c) As an ethical matter, hitting children's buttocks is grossly discriminatory. Identical treatment of an adult constitutes the crime of assault and/or sexual battery. Spanking is also included as an example of sexual harassment in many school and workplace policies.
- d) School paddling violates Title IX because girls and boys are impacted differently. Unlike boys, girls who are maturing would have to reveal intimate personal information in order to avoid the chance of this punishment being unfairly compounded by menstrual discomfort.

We have surveyed teachers' colleges in your state and have been unable to find one that teaches candidates for teacher certification the "correct method for hitting children." It's not part of any formal curriculum, even though it is one of the most dangerous behaviors an educator can engage in.

In consideration of the above, we request that you respond to the following questions:

- 1) Do you intend to continue using buttocks beating as a disciplinary option?
- 2) If you intend to stop the practice, when will that decision go into effect?

Sincerely,



Paula Flowe, Director
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