

Violence in the Schools

By the Educators' Association for Quality Education (EAQE),
an organization which includes teachers from elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities

What is the problem?

One of the most destructive elements in the educational process is the problem of classroom discipline. Some students are completely disruptive to the learning process, and nobody seems to be able to deal with them.

Many teachers spend far too much time dealing with a small number of students, and this hurts the rest of the class. In some cases, the students are belligerent and even violent towards teachers and students.

How did it develop?

- School administrators often do not have the backing of their boards and, as a result, do not back their teachers who have serious discipline problems. They often demonstrate an ostrich-in-the-sand attitude. If a problem gets too hot for them, they have subtle ways of making teachers feel inadequate if they can't control all their students regardless of the severity of the problem. The result is demoralized teachers who withdraw and ignore most negative behaviours.
- Play-based learning (also known as child-centred learning) has taught students that the only worthwhile activities are the ones that are fun. Even our finest entertainers can't captivate an audience for more than an hour or two — how can a teacher be expected to entertain all day long? Students have to be trained to push themselves through activities that may at times be tedious.

- Problems of inattentive or hyperactive behaviour may in part be caused by a system that is far more concerned with the rights of the offender over the rights of the victims. When a violent student harms another, often the victim leaves the school for his own well-being.
- Child-centred education demands that there be no failure. This has resulted in almost all students being shoved along regardless of their ability to handle the work in a higher grade. This increased frustration has led to a strong feeling of failure, diminished self-esteem, and ensuing discipline problems.

What are the solutions?

- 1) Teachers need help. The giant bureaucracy should be designed to help teachers do their job. Instead, it has become a self-serving monster that keeps growing out of control, siphoning money away from the classroom and doing very little to assist the classroom teacher. In fact, it often undermines the learning process.
- 2) The Ministry should work to maximize the number of teachers in the classroom. Some boards have only 50% of their personnel actually teaching. Those not in the classroom should be made aware that their priority should be to create a positive learning environment for the majority of students.

- 3) Schools should be given the authority to deal with destructive students. The community's support for firm, enforceable discipline codes should be sought.
- 4) The policy of main-streaming all special-needs students is unreasonable. Integration is possible only for students who do not place excessive demands on a classroom.
- 5) Discipline problems will be minimized when inadequately-prepared children are no longer permitted to progress through the system. Many students are pushed on without essential skills. They become frustrated, and they become problems.

It is time to return teachers to teaching, to being in authority, to following a set province-wide curriculum, to having high expectations of every child, and to being accountable. With these structures in place, violence would not be erupting at every turn.

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