

May 4, 2009

To the Editor,

I am profoundly disappointed in your recent article “The Principal and The Paddle.” It is a story with many missed opportunities that could have been used to engage the public in an important and emotionally charged issue.

Prevent Child Abuse America’s policy position on corporal punishment is that age-appropriate discipline may be necessary in school and institutional settings but that non corporal means of discipline, such as giving time-outs, explaining rules, or taking away privileges, have been shown to be more effective than paddling. Whether the use of corporal punishment in schools is appropriate or not however, is not the focus of this letter. My focus today is highlighting how this article could have encouraged readers to ask a different series of questions to educate and inform the American public on this contentious issue.

The article could have been more balanced in asking what the long-term impact of corporal punishment is on a child’s development? Are those long term impacts worth the perceived short-term benefits as described in the article? Are children able to differentiate between this type of sanctioned behavior and the other types often found on the school playground or at the school bus stop; behaviors that themselves bring disciplinary action in many circumstances? Do children translate the use of this type of punishment as an acceptable means to control and manage others rather than providing more peaceful and more effective means of solving problems? The article told a local story that could have been an important forum for a national issue.

We all play a role in ensuring that prevention strategies exist in the communities in which we live. We also all play a role in children’s development and I hope your next article will focus on these things. We know that teaching children violent discipline teaches them violence. More importantly, we know that it is not effective. Certainly many of Principal Nixon’s other actions and reforms should be celebrated and we can all probably learn from them to enhance our collective efforts on child development. Child development is the core of community development and community development is what drives economic development. I look forward to the article that glamorizes these facts as well.

Regards,



James M. Hmurovich, President & CEO
Prevent Child Abuse America

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Mission Statement

To prevent the abuse
and neglect of our
nation’s children.

