

Administrator duties: corporal punishment term paper samples

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Following the American Psychological Association's Guidelines

There are many responsibilities a school administrator must watch over when it comes to ensuring the safety and decent education of students.

From demanding laws like search and seizure be enacted properly, to seeing that all students enjoy a separation of church and state it appears the duties of an administrator are endless. Many landmark court cases, such as *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, have seen their way to the Supreme Court over these and other issues in order to ensure that students receive a fair education at the hands of teachers and administrators. Fairness seems to be what is most often on the minds of parents, teachers, and lawmakers; safety often takes a backseat. The seamy underbelly of the school system can often creep up in the form of abuse, as seen in the *Ingraham v. Wright* and *Baker v. Owen* debacles revolving around corporal punishment, or abuse in schools. While I believe that each responsibility on behalf of the administrator is important, there are many reasons I think corporal punishment will need to be paid close attention to during my career in order to keep students safe, and avoid future lawsuits.

The struggle against corporal punishment began in 1975, when, in *Baker v. Owen*, the Supreme Court ruled that administrators had the power to administer corporal punishment to students, even at the dismay of parents. It was the first case that publically addressed corporal punishment in schools. Many believe the Supreme Court was wrong primarily because the school in question had been asked not to corporally punish the student because he was frailer than the other students were, and may have learning

disabilities. The mother of the student, Baker, sued the principal, Owen, under the assumption the school had violated her Fourteenth Amendment Right. The court recognized her right, but denied her the ability to protect her son, stating that she failed to include the corporal punishment was cruel or unusual. Instead, the Supreme Court settled on guidelines administrators must follow, i. e. warning the child corporal punishment would befall them, in order for it to be justified. Later, in 1977, *Ingraham v. Wright* arose once again sparking the fight against corporal punishment. The student, Ingraham, was had been restrained in 1970 by the assistant principal, and then paddled by the principal, resulting in the need for medical attention. Complaints were made on behalf of the child's Eighth and Fourteenth Amendment rights, and the decisions were upheld by court appeals. Today, corporal punishment is considered cruel and unusual. Essentially, a child cannot be paddled, restrained, or beaten by administrators in an effort to discipline them. Yet, somehow, it still happens. According to, "Probability of Corporal Punishment: Lack of Resources and Vulnerable Students," some of the most vulnerable students left open to corporal punishment are unfortunately those who cannot speak for themselves. Special education programs are some of the lowest funded in the country, but they contain some students who need some of the most complex resources. Highly educated staff, such as occupational and behavioral therapists would be a great wealth to these students. Stimulating equipment would also help special needs students learn and communicate better. However, most schools cannot afford these tools. In reality, most special needs programs are underfunded, understaffed, and overcrowded. Administrators often turn

blindly from corporal punishment or administer it themselves when dealing with difficult students. As an administrator, setting an example and creating a safe, educational environment for all students should be at the forefront of every individual's mind. Senselessly beating students because they are special needs is not how to go about creating this setting.

Not only special needs students are at risk of corporal punishment. As stated in, " Discipline or Prejudice? Overrepresentation of Minority Students in Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs," many educators use harsh discipline as a mask for their own racial biases . Not only is this dangerous, but it is a bad example to set. The outcome can easily result in serious injury or death if left unchecked by fellow administrators or school leaders. The world is full of hate and racism already. Adults hate one another based on their race and heritage. To be an adult in a position of power, and to use that position in order to hurt a child simply because of the race they were born is not only unlawful, but unthinkable. It goes beyond the bounds of " cruel and unusual " It is inhumane. As a school leader, I would attempt to cultivate an accepting environment among students and educators, in order to avoid these scenarios from taking place.

Safety of students would always be my primary goal as an admistrator, and when leading a school. However, educating students is also incredibly important, and according to studies published in Educational Researcher there is a correlation between how often and the way in which a student is disciplined, and their acheivement . It was found that students suffering from harsh, corporal-like punishments were less likely to succeed in school, and were also more likely to be seen as problem students be staff. Students who

were disciplined less often, or less severely were seen differently by staff and were more likely to succeed than their peers. As an administrator, I have no choice but to recognize corporal punishment does not successfully discipline the child; it only makes life easier for the educator for a few moments. The educator is fed up and wants peace in the classroom. However, corporal punishment is not effective, or a longterm solution to the problem. Leading the school, for me, will mean continuously finding longterm, effective discipline solutions that do not leave the child damaged, but able to succeed.

In sum, *Ingraham v. Wright* and *Baker v. Owen* should have been the beginning of the end for corporal punishment. Educators, administrators, and school leaders should have seen immediately the impact this punishment had on students. While it was deemed unfit for use by the Supreme Court, it still goes on today. Studies show students who endure it even have a lower propensity to succeed than those who do not. I cannot change the world, but as a school leader and administrator, I can keep this legal case in mind, and always be cultivating a safe, educational environment in my classroom, where corporal punishment is never an option. Students will remain respectful through other means of discipline, and though it may take time, eventually others will see it works, and I will not be the cause of anybody's poor education, nor will I be at the receiving end of a lawsuit.

References

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