



Corporal Punishment – a School Discipline?

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School Corporal Punishment (CP)

Many people think corporal punishment has long disappeared from all American public schools. This is not so.

Only 30 states (plus D.C. and Puerto Rico) have abolished it. CP is still lawful in the other 21 states, and it is a fairly common practice in three of them, all in the South: Alabama, Arkansas and Mississippi.

Statistics

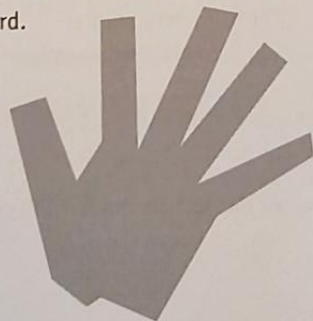
There were about 223,000 paddlings of students in the 2006-07 school year – down from 457,754 in 1996-97. Total paddlings were equivalent to only 0.5% of the total US school population. However, many punishments are not properly recorded.

In percentage terms the heaviest-paddling states in 2006-07 were still Mississippi (7.5 per cent of students paddled during the year) followed by Arkansas (4.7%). Alabama comes third with 4.5% Texas, with its much greater population, is the “world capital of paddling”: 49,197 punishments recorded, but this is down from 118,701 in 1996-97. This figure amounts to only 1.1% of Texas students paddled during the year but, simply because Texas is so big, it represents about one-fifth of total US CP.

At the other extreme, the number of officially recorded paddlings in Idaho was 111, in Kansas 50, in Colorado 8, and in Wyoming zero.

Modus operandi

CP in US schools is almost always applied with a wooden paddle to the student's clothed backside. A typical punishment consists of two or three strokes. The offender is asked to bend over a desk or chair or to put his hands on the desk and leaning slightly forward.



Where and by whom

Until recent years, CP was often administered in the classroom, or in the hall just outside it. Today it is more common for the punishment to be delivered privately in an office, often by the principal. It requires formal procedures and documentation. This helps guard against the danger of angry teachers resorting to random violence.

Who gets paddled

Female as well as male students may receive CP. However, 75% to 85% of paddlings are of boys. There are no age restrictions: the recipient may be aged anything from 4 to 18.

Rules and regulations

Many US school districts nowadays lay down rules for CP and publish them in their school handbooks. These often specify such things as the offenses for which a paddling may be meted out, the maximum number of strokes, the size of the paddle, the part of the body to be targeted, who can administer it and where and in whose presence, whether prior parental consent is necessary, and what happens if the student refuses to take the punishment.

Results

Paddled students tend to say that it hurts like crazy at the time, but that the pain often does not last very long. If administered accurately, it only leaves the buttocks sore and, at worst, harmlessly bruised for several days; it should not cause injury or bleeding.

Private Schools

Private schools are less constrained than public ones in matters of punishment. In many cases, part of their appeal to parents is that they can impose strict discipline.

In several states – Alaska, California, Illinois, Michigan, Nevada, New York, Utah and Washington State – CP is allowed in private schools even though it is banned in public ones.



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1. How many American states have abolished corporal punishment (CP)?

- A: 21
- B: 29
- C: 31

2. Where does CP happen the most?

- A: In the South
- B: In the North
- C: In cities

3. When comparing the school year 2006-07 to the school year 1996-97 there are:

- A: More paddlings
- B: Less paddlings
- C: It doesn't say

4. Why is Texas the 'world capital of paddling'?

- A: Because of the large percentage (1.1%)
- B: Because it is a large state
- C: Because one-fifth (20%) of USA's paddlings occur in Texas



5. What is a paddle?

- A: A flat wooden board
- B: A leather belt
- C: A whip

6. Where are students most often spanked?

- A: In the classroom
- B: In the hall
- C: In an office



7. Who can be paddled?

- A: Boys
- B: Girls
- C: Boys and girls

8. If carried out accurately, the results of paddling are:

- A: Bleeding
- B: Sore bottoms
- C: Long lasting pain



9. Why do private schools appeal to some parents?

- A: They have strict discipline
- B: They don't paddle students
- C: The text doesn't say