



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS
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*Enhancing the mental health and
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April 13, 2010

Chairwoman Carolyn McCarthy
Healthy Families and Communities Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Rayburn House Office Building, Rm. 2181
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Todd Platts
Healthy Families and Communities Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Rayburn House Office Building, Rm. 2181
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman McCarthy and Ranking Member Platts:

On behalf of the members of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), we are writing to thank you for holding the upcoming subcommittee hearing addressing *Corporal Punishment in Schools and Its Effect on Academic Success*. We would like to submit for your consideration, NASP's position paper on the use of *Corporal Punishment* as written testimony related to this important issue.

NASP is the largest school psychology organization in the world and represents more than 26,000 school psychologists who are dedicated to increasing positive outcomes for children and adolescents. NASP promotes children's healthy learning and development through programs and services that strengthen the academic achievement, positive behavior, social-emotional learning, and mental wellness of all students, especially those who struggle with barriers to learning. School psychologists provide a broad array of services to general and special education students including: direct interventions such as counseling, interventions (academic, behavioral, and crisis), and social-emotional skills development; assessment of student academic progress, and the assessment of cognitive, behavioral, and social-emotional needs; and consultation with parents, teachers and school administrators. School psychologists have specialized training in school systems, learning, child development, and mental health, as well as expertise in research-based strategies, data collection and analysis, and outcomes evaluation.

NASP has formally opposed the use of corporal punishment in schools for decades. According to the Office for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education, more than 223,000 students nationwide received corporal punishment at least once in the 2006-2007 school year (Human Rights Watch and American Civil Liberties Union, 2008, p. 3). A landmark study by Hyman (1995) examining the effects of corporal punishment outlined significant negative outcomes realized by preschool and school-aged children associated with the use of corporal punishment in schools including lower performance levels in three domains: ability, academic achievement and social competence. Additionally, Hyman and Perone (1998) found that these deficits further contribute to feelings of inadequacy and resentment and may lead to higher rates of anger, hostility, violence, and aggression against school property, peers, and authorities.

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Importantly, there are many alternative approaches to discipline that have proven very effective in schools. This includes teaching children appropriate self-management and social skills and reinforcing positive behaviors. School psychologists work closely with teachers and administrators to put in place these more successful strategies, such as the use of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (SWPBIS). These programs are widely recognized as improving student behavior and academic outcomes and are excellent alternatives to punitive techniques such as corporal punishment.

Given the research indicating the negative effects associated with the use of corporal punishment in schools and the fact that the use of corporal punishment is still prevalent and permissible in 21 states, it is time for federal public policies to put an end to this practice in schools.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this matter. If you have any additional questions, please contact our Director of Public Policy, Dr. Stacy Skalski at sskalski@naspweb.org
Sincerely,



Susan Gorin, CAE
Executive Director

References:

- Human Rights Watch and American Civil Liberties Union. (2008). *A violent education: Corporal punishment of children in U.S. public schools*. New York: Human Rights Watch. Retrieved from <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2008/us0808/us0808web.pdf>
- Hyman, I.A. (1995). Corporal punishment, psychological maltreatment, violence, and punitiveness in America: Research, advocacy, and public policy. *Applied and Preventive Psychology, 4*, 113-130.
- Hyman, I.A. and Perone, D.C. (1998). The other side of school violence: Educator policies and practices that may contribute to student misbehavior. *Journal of School Psychology, 36*, 7-27.