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Violence is Not the Answer

While it may be known as an outdated form of punishment, corporal punishment continues to exist in many Georgia schools. According to [the Atlanta Journal - Constitution](https://search.proquest.com/pubidlinkhandler/sng/pubtitle/The+Atlanta+Journal+-+Constitution/$N/26032/DocView/2028386892/fulltext/6D19615E24E442CBPQ/1?accountid=11226), over half of Georgia’s school districts still use corporal punishment (Broady). Despite the Supreme Court ruling that corporal punishment is allowed, most states have made laws banning it in their schools. However, Georgia is one of nineteen states that continue to allow it. Thus, the Georgia government should outlaw schools’ use of corporal punishment on their students.

Many people in opposition to banning corporal punishment argue that children will not learn from their mistakes without corporal punishment; yet, there are many effective and nonviolent punishments that work just as well in teaching students a lesson. The use of nonviolent techniques promotes better behavior in the long run, instead of simply scaring children into behaving. Additionally, while discipline can have a negative connotation, teachers can use “positive reinforcement strategies to increase desired behaviors” (Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health). This makes students want to follow the rules in order to get praise and recognition for good behavior. Schools should also incorporate in-school suspension facilities, smaller classroom sizes, and policies for “teaching and disciplinary methods” in order to “deemphasize the necessity for corporal punishment” (Greydanus). Thus, there are other methods available to promote desirable behavior that don’t involve violence.

While there are other methods, teachers’ use of corporal punishment also impacts the relationship with their students, further hindering their success in a classroom. The use of physical violence as a means of discipline creates fear. It is because of this that the open communication vital for effective education is affected (Greydanus). Furthermore, students’ success in school is heavily dependent on the relationship with the teacher; positive teacher-student relationships promote success and lead to optimal achievement. However, corporal punishment leads to “conflict and dependency in teacher-student relationships” which result in “unfavorable outcomes such as a negative school attitude [and] school avoidance” (Yoon). In addition, the environment this method of discipline creates is unfavorable to the classroom despite opposition’s arguments on its effectiveness. According to the Journal of Adolescent Health, corporal punishment constricts the educational environment making it “unproductive, nullifying, and punitive” (Greydanus). While teachers utilize this method to try to promote better learning, it is in fact having the opposite effect due to the impact on the relationship between teachers and students.

Not only does corporal punishment impact teacher-student relationships, it leads to both physical and psychological harm of the students. This harm has been shown to have many negative impacts on students in the future. While corporal punishment does inflict some pain that usually does not last very long, it has become evident that it often leads to physical abuse. Elizabeth Gershoff describes how “nearly two-thirds of the abusive incidents began as acts of corporal punishment meant to correct a child’s misbehavior” (“More Harm than Good”). This shows that corporal punishment can be either abused or lead to unintentional, longer-lasting injuries. It also has been shown that corporal punishment leads to mental health problems. Children who experience corporal punishment are more likely to “have symptoms of depression or anxiety” that affect them later on as well (Gershoff). Schools should not be allowed to have disciplinary methods that inhibit a child’s well-being. The purpose of a learning environment is to help students achieve success in the future, not to cause them so much stress that they have mental health problems.

In addition to the harm corporal punishment has on students, it sends the wrong message to children, teaching them the wrong morals. While many teachers use this disciplinary method to stop aggressive behavior, it actually promotes it. It shows them that violence is acceptable which often leads students to be violent later in life. Gershoff explains that children and adolescents who were disciplined by corporal punishment are more likely to use violence on their own families (“More Harm than Good”). This begins to create a cycle of violence that affects society. This occurs because children are not learning to “adopt societal values and attitudes as his or her own” and instead learning to “use violence as a means to influence others” (Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health). The use of corporal punishment leads to more disciplinary problems than intended which is why it is an ineffective form of punishment in schools. It only leads to more problems in the classroom, impacting student learning.

When examining the impact corporal punishment has on the students both short term and long term and on the classroom environment, it is evident that Georgia needs to ban corporal punishment in schools. This will lead to more success in the classroom and out of the classroom for students. They will be able to learn in a positive environment and won’t be plagued with psychological issues later on in life. They will also be able to learn societal morals, inhibiting the cycle of violence. Students should not have to fear for their safety in a classroom and instead focus on the education they deserve.

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