

This 1896 Text Gives One Clue on Handling High School Discipline

The prevalence of school discipline issues has escalated in recent years, so much so, that [last Friday](#), a Minnesota high school student assaulted a teacher during a fight, leaving him with traumatic brain injury.

How do we restore order and handle such glaring discipline issues in our schools?

An 1896 article by Chas. L. Biedenbach in [The School Review](#) might provide some answers. Biedenbach, writing from Oakland High School in California, noted that the goal of all discipline should be “the pupil’s moral training.”

“A high school should not be judged by the intellectual prodigies it turns out, but by the high-mindedness of the young men and women that step forth from its portals. Does a community get better citizens, better fathers and mothers, because of its high school? Are the graduates becoming men to whom a vote is a sacred thing, and women whose ideal it is not to be playthings of society but the equals of men as wielders of power and sharers of burdens?”

All this depends upon the discipline of the school – the moral atmosphere that permeates it. ...

No one rule or one teacher can bring this. The trend of the whole school must be in that direction. A knowledge of what is right is imparted by its constant presentation and wise elucidation. ...

The child acts from desire, therefore the heart must be reached. Purify that by persuasion and the desires springing

into life therein will have no taint. ...

It is the habit of good conduct that makes good citizens. Our present citizenship may be good, yet it is woefully poor when compared with the ideal that we are justified in forming from observance of its best examples. What exists in the few can be approximated in the mass, and the high school especially must be its birthplace."

Instead of offering students excuses for their bad behavior based on their race, social class, or economic background, do more of today's high schools need to heed Biedenbach's advice and seek to instill moral values and better character in students?

Image Credit: InGenWeb