

Teachers Report Increasing Abuse at the Hands of Students

Teachers have always had a hard job. It takes a dedicated person to prepare lessons, manage a classroom full of children, and deal with unhappy parents.

But the role of teacher has become even more difficult – even dangerous – in recent years.

One quarter of teachers report being the objects of student violence and abuse according to a recent survey out of the UK. Verbal threats and swearing are common forms of treatment, [explains](#) *The Guardian*, and many teachers fail to report such incidents “because they fear... school leaders would take no action.”

Unfortunately, it seems the toxic school climate is only getting worse. As one teacher reports:

‘Having taught for almost 40 years I have witnessed a demonstrable and seemingly unstoppable deterioration in pupil behaviour,’ one said. ‘Moreover, teachers are, it seems, now expected to tolerate verbal abuse and threats as par for the course and, quite literally, an occupational hazard.’

The abuse and fear teachers are experiencing in the classroom are not unique to the UK. Many American schools offer similar chaotic environments, putting teachers at risk and making them “[feel powerless to discipline](#)” the students in their charge.

Why the sudden change? Why has the teaching profession turned into a landmine which could send a dedicated professional to the hospital with an injury or nervous breakdown brought on by abuse?

One answer is the culture of disrespect present in our school system. This culture of disrespect, [notes](#) family physician Leonard Sax, is often overlooked as schools place great emphasis on motivating students to learn:

I think the key to understanding the decline in American academic outcomes relative to those of other nations has at least as much to do with how the United States has changed as with how other nations have changed. American teachers and administrators often devote much effort to making education cool and fun in the eyes of the students. Hence all the screens, all the gadgets. If kids don't regard education as cool and fun, then they will not be motivated to learn. I've heard comments of this variety from many school administrators in the United States. And if students are not motivated to learn, then classroom management – getting kids to behave – consumes a disproportionate share of the teacher's time and energy.

But it's not about entertaining the students, implies Sax. It's about raising them to respect adults so that they themselves can become respectable adults:

*The solution is not to purchase more and more electronic gizmos and screens so that school comes to resemble a video-game arcade. The solution is to change and reorient the culture **so that students are more concerned with pleasing the grown-ups than with looking cool in the eyes of their peers.** (Emphasis added.)*

The question is, who will we allow to be in charge: the teachers or the students? If the latter, then we shouldn't be surprised when teaching becomes a toxic profession that no one wants to enter. But if the former, then perhaps it's time to reassess, step away from coddling our students, and begin reinstating a culture of respect for parents and teachers alike.

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