

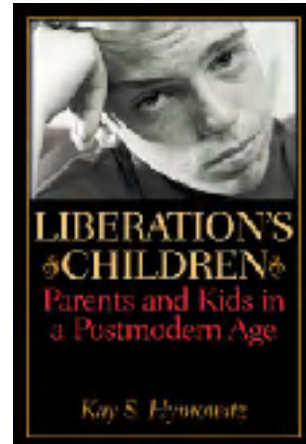
Who Killed School Discipline

Liberation's Children by Kay Hymowitz

The facts are that discipline has been the foremost issue (or concern), of parents with child in public schools, for several decades. During this time, much has apparently changed due in part to the growing degree of troubled families and disorderly kids. Couple the troubled families with the limiting authority if educators and what results is the death of discipline.

Ms. Hymowitz writes:

Discipline in the schools isn't primarily about expelling sex offenders and kids who pack guns, of course. Most of the time, what's involved is the "get your feet off the table"...



Supreme Court decisions have made such simple authority more difficult, she adds; as one decision enforced the constitutional right of free speech and the other expanded *due process* rights for students.

Both decisions may seem at first blush to be appropriate or reasonable; but the outcome of the second in particular has given students the right to file a law suit – or at least threaten to do it.

Costly and involved, law suits are not certain to success but, from the view point of the teen, the power of the adult (staff) is diminished. The author continues:

School bureaucracies have struggled to restore the discipline that the courts and federal laws have taken away, but their efforts have only alienated students and undermined adult authority even more.

As a countermeasure to the risk of law suits, legal jargon and “psychobabble” are described as the tools of teachers – designed by none other than lawyers and psychologists, respectfully. In the vein of effort, “school bureaucrats have been falling over one another in their rush to implement trendy-sounding ‘researched-based programs’”. These “programs” fall under such titles as:

- Emotionally literacy training
- Anti-bully workshops
- Violence prevention curricula
- ...and the like in “preventive measures” and “early interventions” for various school discipline problems

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To this approach on discipline, the author concludes:

...consequences of these changes (as described above) has been to prevent principals and teachers from creating the kind of moral community that is the most powerful and dependable guarantor of good discipline...

She continues on described this “moral community”:

A community of shared values cannot be legalistic or bureaucratic or based on moronic behavior exercises; it must be personal, enforced by the sense that the authority figure is protective, benevolent, and worthy of respect.

The environment that develops from this absence of local authority (or community) is described as an “adolescent society”. By that description to suggest that adult guidance is minimal – thus leading to rise and control of the students. Meanwhile, the adults do their best to limit any litigation in the form of a lawsuit or any civic influence for same.