

**REPORTS ON CORPORAL
PUNISHMENT: IN
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

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Reports on Corporal Punishment: In Board of Education by New York Board of Education

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NEW YORK BOARD OF EDUCATION

**REPORTS ON CORPORAL
PUNISHMENT: IN
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New York City and County - 1st ed. of 1877

Corporal

REPORTS

ON

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

IN BOARD OF EDUCATION.

- REPORT OF COMMISSIONER JARVIS . . OCT. 5, 1870
- REPORT OF COMMISSIONER HALSTED, NOV. 5, 1873
- REPORT OF COMMISSIONER WEST, . . JUNE 6, 1877
- REPORT OF COMMISSIONER WALKER, JUNE 6, 1877

NEW YORK:
BOARD OF EDUCATION, 146 GRAND ST.

1877.

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J. S. ...
Boston

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT.

IN BOARD OF EDUCATION, OCTOBER 5, 1870.

Commissioner JARVIS presented the following report from the Committee on By-Laws, Printing, Elections and Qualifications, relative to Corporal Punishment :

To the Board of Education :

The Committee on By-Laws, Printing, Elections and Qualifications, to whom was referred, at a stated session of the Board, held April 6, 1870, the following resolution, viz. :

Resolved, That By-Law No. 42, page 86 of the Manual of 1870, be repealed ; and that By-Law No 43 of the Manual of 1869, pages 81, 82 and 83 be re-adopted ;”

and, also, to whom was re-committed a report of said committee, presented by the President, then chairman of the committee, adverse to the adoption of said resolution, at a stated session of the Board held May 18, 1870, together with a resolution directing the committee “to report some resolution by which the children could be controlled in the schools,” respectfully

REPORT:

That, after mature deliberation, they can see no reason for changing their decision in reference to the subject of corporal punishment in the schools, and therefore adhere to the views expressed in the report recommitted to the committee, and would again report it for adoption were it not for the fact that petitions have, since the presentation of said report, been presented by teachers in favor of the re-enactment of the by-laws authorizing corporal punishment in the schools, and as it is alleged in said petition "that corporal punishment is a necessity for the proper government of the male departments, and that the schools have suffered in discipline in consequence of its abolishment," and as some zealous and conscientious friends of the schools have expressed the same opinion, it is deemed advisable to present to the Board and the public all the facts and circumstances that led to the abolishment of corporal punishment in the schools under its control from its inception to the present time.

This is done for two reasons.

FIRST—To give full and accurate information on the subject to the Board, so that it may be guided to a proper and final decision of the question.

SECOND—For the purpose of demonstrating that in the public schools of this city corporal punishment is not only unnecessary for the proper government of a school, but that the schools have thrived better, both in discipline and scholarship, since the commencement of its gradual abolishment in 1865.

Your committee, in stating the facts, will be as concise as the importance of the subject will justify.

In the year 1865 several complaints were made by parents

against teachers for cruelty in inflicting corporal punishment, which were brought before the Board of Education and its Superintendent of Schools for consideration. In the same the following resolution was offered in the Board :

Resolved, That the Committee on By-Laws, Rules, and Regulations be, and they are hereby instructed to report to the Board at its next session a by-law prohibiting corporal punishment in all the primary schools and primary departments under the control of this Board.

This resolution was referred to the Committee on By-Laws, Rules and Regulations, and the Committee, in connection with the President of the Board and Superintendent of Schools, made a careful and critical examination of the whole subject.

It was first ascertained that it had been the standing rule of this Board and its Superintendent that no scholar should receive corporal punishment, except in cases of *extreme necessity*, and after all other means of correction had failed.

After this, notices were sent to all the Principals of Primary Schools and Departments, with a request that they should give their views on the subject, and state generally whether corporal punishment was a necessity in conducting a school, and, if so, when it would be justified. Twelve principals, representing schools in various sections of the city, stated that corporal punishment was not a necessity—that their schools were governed without it; all the others deemed corporal punishment absolutely essential to conduct their schools properly. What they considered causes for corporal punishment were so frivolous and varied, that the committee came to the conclusion that, although the rule existed that corporal punishment should only be applied in cases of "*extreme necessity*," yet it was of little or no effect in restraining its infliction.

The committee next inquired as to the number of corporal punishments inflicted in the Male Grammar Schools and Primary Schools and Departments, and it was estimated, after a careful computation, that there were over one hundred thousand cases of corporal punishment in the year 1864, in the schools, although the twelve Primary Schools before alluded to, with an average attendance of over four thousand, showed that they were controlled without the rod, and with a record for discipline and scholarship above the average. That in some schools corporal punishment was the exception and in others the rule. Thus, in many schools the cases of corporal punishment exceeded five thousand a year, while in others, with equal average attendance, they did not reach fifty, the difference in the Male Grammar Departments being more marked than in the Primary Schools and Departments. The officers of the Board of Education at that time, and several of the members who had given attention to the subject, were in favor of abolishing corporal punishment forthwith, at least in the Primary Schools and Departments, but the rod had been used too long to obtain a favorable response to their views, and the committee was compelled, much against its will, to submit the following by-law, which is substantially the same as section 43 of the By-Laws of 1869 :

Sec. "Corporal punishment of any description, or for any offence, shall be inflicted only by the Principal or Vice-Principal of a school, and by the Vice-Principal only in the absence of the Principal. The offence for which the punishment is inflicted shall be distinctly stated to the pupil, and it shall be the duty of the Principal to keep a record of every such punishment, stating the name of the pupil, the offence committed, the evidence of such offence, as ascertained by personal investigation by such Principal or Vice-Principal, and the nature and extent of such punishment; and said Principal shall forward a transcript of such record monthly, on or before the 3d day of each month, to the City Superintendent of Schools, who shall keep the same

for the inspection of the Board of Education, the School Inspectors and the School Trustees. Any Principal neglecting to keep such record, or to forward the transcript thereof as above required, or who may be guilty of inflicting any cruel or excessive punishment, and any teacher, other than the Principal or Vice-Principal aforesaid, who shall inflict any corporal punishment, shall, on the recommendation of the City Superintendent, on proof of such delinquency or improper punishment, be removed by the Board."

When this by-law was adopted many advocates of the abolishment of corporal punishment complained; they insisted at the time that it really left things as they were before. But the Principals of Schools took a different view; and the Male Principals immediately thereafter called a meeting of their association and drew up a formidable protest against the enforcement of the by-law, assigning, among other things, the reason that it would destroy the discipline of the schools, by interfering with the prerogative of the Principals, and tend to degrade the scholars if a record was made of their transgressions. The protest was unheeded by the Board, and the by-law was enforced.

The first reports in pursuance of the by-law were presented October 31, 1865, but the by-law was not in full operation until the next month (November), which showed the following results.

Corporal punishments inflicted in the Male Departments	2,434
Corporal punishments inflicted in the Female Departments	1
Corporal punishments inflicted in the Primary Schools	1,485
Corporal punishments inflicted in the Primary Departments	589
Corporal punishments inflicted in the Colored Schools	124

Total.....4,633

Which was at the rate of about 46,350 annually.