

The Salem Leader  
Educationally Speaking  
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01/21/08

### **Let's look at school bullying**

Let's take a moment to imagine a real-life situation. Imagine you're walking around the square at 7 PM on a Sunday night. You're minding your own business and someone jumps out from the side of a nearby doorway and starts making threats by punching and screaming at you. You, being a rational person, look around for assistance and realize no one is around you. Then, the other guy punches you in the face. So, you reel back and punch the guy square in the nose. He falls down and you have a chance to run away and call the police. The police arrive, determine you acted in self-defense and you go home to carry on your day.

Now, imagine that you're 16 and walking the halls of a local high school. You're in the middle of the hallway during class time because you needed to use the restroom. Someone else darts out from a nearby doorway and also starts throwing punches. You realize no one is around and after being hit in the gut, you get up and clock the guy in the face. He falls down and you run away to find a teacher or administrator. Then, you explain your story to the principal and the next day you're sitting at home because you were suspended from school for fighting. You now have a permanent scar on your otherwise perfect record.

Somehow, an incident almost identical to what happened on the Salem Square does not play out the same in the halls of a school. When I was in school I was told that the school's zero-tolerance policy resulted in immediate suspension for both parties involved in any physical altercation.

I don't have to tell you how ridiculous and asinine that policy is. If someone starts throwing a punch at me and no one is around, I'm going to haul off and whack you in the face. Schools would have your children believe that if you just show love and kisses to the other party they'll immediately stop punching you in the groin and help you up off the ground, then invite you to dinner and a movie after class.

I'm not a parent, but I share the concern many parents have about sending their children to school. I think it's safe to say if parents could bubble-wrap their kids like a UPS package, some would. And if some parents believed wearing leg stockings on your head would prevent little Suzy from catching a cold, you'd see a lot of kids walking around with scrunched up noses and funny looking faces.

This newspaper has recently reported on a story of a young student at Salem Schools who has been the victim of bullying on a school bus. That also raises concerns about what happens at school. Alas, since most kids today are either wimps or are too fat to run away, Indiana University's Center for Evaluation and Education Policy is on the scene.

According to a January 14 story out of Evansville from the Associated Press, IU Researchers have reported different punishments reinforce different students. For example, making Jimmy pickup trash on Highway 135 might work better than detention. They also mention Indiana schools rank statistically worse than other states in the number of suspensions per 100 students. They don't mention what punishments might work but I think it's safe to say that suspension and expulsion don't work – most kids welcome the days off.

That's why I suggest we start making kids take self-defense training in physical education class. We'll start them young when they're in elementary school. Who's going to mess with a kid if he thinks he might get roundhouse-kicked in the chin? Of course for that to work we'll have to do away with that silly "Zero Tolerance" nonsense. Nothing in life has "zero tolerance". Everything has a gray area and for anyone thinking that children shouldn't fight, the next time you're yelling at your spouse for leaving the toilet seat up, remember that adults shouldn't fight either. Sometimes people go awry in a situation and you have to kick 'em in the groin to get their attention. If someone attacks me I have a Constitutional right to defend myself. Since when did we start making our kids leave the Constitution at the bus stop?

Teaching your kids about daisies and pixie dust isn't going to keep them from getting ticked off at someone. Neither is preaching the Bible or making them sit in their room to "think about what they've done". Then again, who knows, maybe when your kid gets clocked in the face, maybe they deserved it.