

DOUBLE DIPPING CORRECTIVE ACTION

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

A question was asked, "If my child gets into trouble at school, should I also punish him when he gets home?" In the old days our parents told us that if they got 'the cane' or 'paddle' at school they would get two more for good measure when they got home! Thankfully corporal punishment has now been banned from most school districts, but the question of double punishment is a valid one.

In the elementary school where my husband does some part-time work parents are told they can volunteer so long as they go through the new screening process. They can email or call the teacher whenever they have a concern, and, of course there are the age-old 'parent teacher nights'. With all of these opportunities, parents should be aware how their child is progressing at school and know of any behavioral issues. So, when should we leave the school to deal with our child's behavior and when should it also be addressed at home?

There are a number of reasons why kids misbehave in the classroom. One might be the lack of training in appropriate social behavior which is the parents responsibility. The teacher needs to explain classroom expectations and etiquette to the parent as well as the to the child. This is usually done at a grade-level orientation night. By working together the parent and teacher should teach the child the positive behavior expected. By punishing a child at home for non-performance at school, when they have not been trained in the first place, is unfair and an inappropriate training tool.

Another reason for misbehavior at school may be underlying stress in the home. Issuing punishment is only going to make matters worse for the child. The appropriate action from the parent is to reduce home stress as much as possible, and for the teacher to be sensitive and show tolerance in the situation. Some kids misbehave because of physical deficits such as not being able to keep up with the work academically, having ADHD, not being able to hear or see adequately or by being constantly tired. Each of these causes needs to be addressed according to the situation and punishment at home is not appropriate.

Are our kids being negatively influenced by some hero on TV, a friend or dare I say it – us? Sometimes we have to look at ourselves to see where our kids' behavior is coming from. If they are copying what they see in you, then acknowledge it and demonstrate the change so they can copy your positive example.

Is your child a bully? Is he spiteful? Does she cheat? Does he use bad language? Does she ignore authority? Occasionally a child will do something

totally out of character at school. When notified by the school, the parent should discuss the situation with the child asking what prompted them to do such a thing. If remorse is evident, then the child has learned a life lesson and, apart from suffering the consequences at school, the situation should be dropped at home and not mentioned again. When a child is repeatedly disobedient and/or disrespectful at school and the above causes are not in evidence, then consequences at home for their behavior at school is appropriate.

We know that it is a far better teaching tool to encourage positive behavior rather than punishing the negative. However, we are given the responsibility as parents to prepare our children to behave appropriately in school, at work, as future parents and in society. Expectations need to be explained and kids need to be trained to meet expectations at all levels. Included in the training are boundaries and consequences for non-conformance. It is better that our kids learn these things in their early years rather than be battling against authority through their adult lives.

We all make mistakes and sometimes our kids' behavior shows up some gaps in our own parenting. We have to be adult enough to realize that we may have overlooked training them in given areas and address the situation without blaming ourselves, or our kids. These are life lessons. We needn't beat ourselves up for an error of omission. We just need to fix it and move on.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.