

# Books & Punishment

BREAKING THE SILENCE  
CHILD ABUSE AWARENESS TRAINING

## The Scenario:

You walk into a classroom to ask a teacher a question. You notice Jimmy, a 3rd grader, standing along the back wall of the classroom holding his arms at 90° angles with 3 books in each hand. He looks like he might have been there for a while and is trembling. You look quizzically at the teacher. She says that Jimmy kicked another student and that is his punishment. What do you do?

## Discussion Begins

## What do you do?

**Do you report?** If so, to whom? If so, when? If you don't, what might happen to Jimmy? To the teacher? To you? To your school? To LAUSD?

If you report and the Local Law Enforcement Agency or the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) tells you...

...to **handle it administratively**, what do you do next?

...**they will investigate**, what do you do next?



## Legal Response

The safety and well-being of every student must be the first and foremost priority for all educators. As such, immediate action should be taken to remove any child from any situation which threatens her/his safety or well-being.

Indications are that the child is under physical duress. There may be mental suffering as well, especially if the child is being humiliated in front of other students. Any kind of physical punishment, such as running laps, doing push-ups, or holding heavy books is a form of corporal punishment, which is illegal. This situation constitutes reasonable suspicion that child abuse has occurred and a Suspected Child Abuse Report must be filed with either the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) or the Local Law Enforcement Agency.

### Other Considerations

Additionally, you should notify an administrator of the inappropriate conduct. The administrator should then notify the Local District Operations Coordinator.

As appropriate, the Local District Operations Coordinators and/or Division of Human Resources Representatives shall consult with Employee Relations and communicate with the Local Law Enforcement Agency to determine whether they may begin an administrative investigation. Once clearance has been obtained from the Local Law Enforcement Agency, the administrative investigation shall proceed. Upon conclusion of the investigation, appropriate administrative action should be taken, if warranted.

### Listen

While seeing a colleague treating a student this way can elicit a strong emotional reaction (i.e., anger), it is important to remain calm.

### Protect

This is a situation that cannot be ignored. This situation must be addressed by following the legal response. Doing so is the best way to protect students and promote a safe learning environment.

### Connect

Acknowledge this teacher's frustration with Jimmy's behavior. Ask if there is anything that you can do to help. Every school site has protocols, systems, and resources to support and address student safety and well-being. This is an opportunity to become familiar with and use the procedures, policies, and resources at your work site.

### Model

Maintain a professional and calm level of emotions and reactions. Do not express shock or anger at the possible perpetrator or event.

### Teach

If appropriate and the teacher is receptive, provide constructive alternatives for dealing with Jimmy's aggressive behavior.

**Emotional Support**