

Dear Lawmakers,

To work daily in high school classrooms is quite an eye opener to the average citizen. Every day I am grateful of the safe, healthy, upbringing provided by my ever present and guiding parents that valued my well-being and education. Every child born is deserving of such a nurturing stable life.

What I have found in the past twelve years, are many students whose lives have been literally broken and they lack the skills to pick up the pieces and move forward effectively in their lives. Their unstable foundations stem from disappointments due to events such as divorce, incarceration, addiction or death of one or both parents and the resulting feeling abandonment that leaves a person with anger and distrust in others.

Their lives meet mine in the high school classroom. Earlier this year, a couple of students were asked to catch up on a science lab together. Apparently the much larger student was very angry and took it out on the other lightweight student, grabbing him around his neck (right in front of me) and pushed him all the way over to the counter, holding the student's neck flat back on the counter until the male teacher came over to break it up. That student has had anger issues prior to that resulting his being sent to the office a number of times. This event was quite unsettling for me, as well as for other students. He had really snapped.

Even tonight as I write this letter, I am not sure as to my safety in that situation or others. Sometimes I wake up at 4 am. in the morning and think about the situations and individuals that I work with and wonder if I would be just safer to leave my job and avoid the possible dangers involved.

As I mentioned before, there are more students, with anger, trust and bullying issues. These young people, particularly at their age, lack the "tool box" to deal with the emotions that often prevent them from learning. Eventually this turns into a repeating cycle of failed parenting due to parental abandonment, addiction, incarceration and result in the expression of anger with themselves or expressed at others, possibly suicide or murder. These are not bad people but broken lives that are desperately in need of professional counseling and community support.

Again, all children deserve the help they need to cope in this world and we owe it to all the children and the staff to provide a safe environment every day in our schools.

Thank you for your time.

Para-professional
Eastern Oregon