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ABSTRACT

This publication is the complete transcript of a weekly radio program devoted to contemporary issues in American education. This particular program focuses on the topic of violence and vandalism in schools. In separate segments of the program, Willard McGuire, vice-president of the National Education Association, comments on the seriousness of violence and vandalism in schools throughout the nation, students and teachers from Cardozo High School in Washington, D.C. discuss their experience with school violence and vandalism, and participants in a national conference on school violence and vandalism present a variety of perspectives on the problem. Included in this final segment are remarks by the following individuals: Cornelius Golightly, president of the Detroit Board of Education; Robert Scanlon, spokesman for Research for Better Schools, Inc.; Richard Rossmiller, from the University of Wisconsin; William Lucas, assistant superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District; Carol Kimmel, president of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers; and James O. Wilson, from Harvard University.

(JG)

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TRANSCRIPT FOR PROGRAM SCHEDULED FOR BROADCAST

THE WEEK OF MARCH 22, 1976

Options in Education

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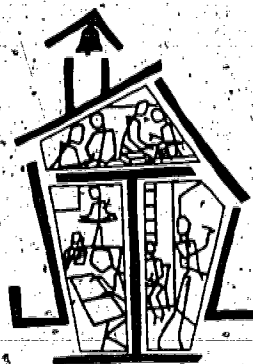
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(MUSIC)

BLAIR: I'm Wendy Blair with NPR's OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

(MUSIC)

OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a news magazine about all the issues and developments in education -- from the ABC's of primary education to the alphabet soup of government programs. If you've ever been to school, we have something that will interest you.

(MUSIC)

Violence and vandalism in schools are problems that won't go away. In fact, they seem to have reached crisis proportions.

MERROW: This is John Merrow. On this program we're looking at this problem from two vantage points -- research and experience. David Selvin prepared the following report, which focuses on one large urban high school:

(BELLS/NOISY CORRIDOR SOUNDS)

TEACHER: "Last spring I was a teacher at Spingarn High School in Washington, D.C., and I was raped by two young men."

SELVIN: Last year, 100 murders, 12,000 armed robberies, 9,000 rapes were committed, and over 600 million dollars worth of property was vandalized here in the United States in our schools.

SELVIN: "Would it be fair to say that teaching has become a hazardous profession?"

TEACHER: "In certain situations, because of the social milieu which the schools find themselves in, yes, it is dangerous. I feel a lot of repressed anger on the part of the students, which makes them act out in different ways. They don't have any avenue for their frustrations."

SELVIN: Even though there really aren't any accurate statistics on the subject, all indications are that violence in American schools has increased dramatically during the past decade. In fact, according to a report issued recently by a Senate subcommittee, "The primary concern in many American schools today is no longer education, but preservation." Vice President of the National Education Association, Willard McGuire:

MCGUIRE: I think the perspective that most adults bring into this is school activities, pranks, and mischief of various sorts. The kind of thing we're speaking about today in terms of school violence is far different, much more severe, much more widespread. Rape, murder, assault, burglary, and all kinds of vandalism are on the increase and are very much apparent in all parts of the country and in all sizes of school systems.

SELVIN: These are things that are happening inside the schools, you're saying?

MCGUIRE: I'm speaking now of things that happen inside the school

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during the school day, and, of course, some of the vandalism is at night on school property, which is a reflection of an attitude toward the school as an institution.

SELVIN: And involves students and teachers?

MCGUIRE: Students and teachers are involved. Sometimes the assaults or robberies are between student and student and sometimes between students and teachers. The fact of students assaulting teachers is on the increase, and murder and rape, things that we consider to be hard crimes, are definitely occurring within the school setting today.

SELVIN: "Did you ever think that when you were going to teachers' college that this kind of thing could ever happen?"

TEACHER: "Well, as I've said a lot of times before, you have to be pretty naive to teach in these public schools, or probably any large city public schools, and not realize that there's violence around you, and that you can become the object of that violence for no reason at all."

SELVIN: "What about violence towards teachers? There are teachers in the city who have been mugged and raped and robbed and beaten, whatever. What do you think causes that?"

STUDENT: "The majority is over grades."

STUDENT: "Like you fail, right, all the frustration come out of you. You know, you just don't care no more, because you done failed. You think you tried, but really you ain't tried that hard, but you, you know, all the frustration come out here, and you just don't care no more. So, like the teacher say something wrong, you don't want to hear, you know, and that's when it starts."

STUDENT: "You know you going to fail and all your friends going on to another grade, you know, and you back, you know -- that would make people mad, I guess."

SELVIN: "Yeah, but mad to the point where students are willing to rape a teacher? I mean that somehow doesn't jive."

STUDENT: "There just something wrong with them when they rape a teacher, see. They got a mental problem."

STUDENT: "They got some kind of a problem, you know, when they do something like that."

STUDENT: "They ain't going to just do that to a teacher. They probably did it to somebody out on the street too, but they just like that teacher. Like a lot of people, you know, like their teachers, yeah."

MCGUIRE: Teaching is certainly different than it was just a few

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years ago. I could be more concerned with the teaching-learning process sometimes back. Now, survival and getting along is certainly taking more and more of my time and more and more of my thoughts.

STUDENT: "You got to talk back to them. If you don't talk back to them, you're not even expressing your feelings to them. They wouldn't know if you right or wrong. But they don't pay no attention to you when you come down here and tell them. They believe the teachers."

STUDENT: "But if you get your head knocked out, they don't know how to act for real, see."

STUDENT: "People got the wrong attitude these days, though."

STUDENT: "Yeah, they jump off too fast."

STUDENT: "Uh huh, and you know when a student say something back to her, she send you downstairs, and that's what cause violence in school."

STUDENT: "I know, because they figure you can't speak back to them."

SELVIN: "Why are you still a teacher?"

TEACHER: "I know that before this happened, I was doing a good job and was getting reactions and teaching, I guess, students the way I really felt that things were happening -- things were gelling at long last with me in teaching. And I had been out of it six years. And I felt that this was one violent incident which would take some time in my psyche to get over, but if I pursued a suit against the individuals who committed this crime, that my anger could be pacified, or whatever. But I felt after I went back that that wasn't the case. I didn't know that till I went back, and I guess I'm responsible enough or pure of ethic enough or something to feel that you shouldn't drop it all in the middle of the year. And I'm doing some serious thinking now about not going back. The pressure is too much. I don't like looking over my shoulder, wondering if this person who I don't know is going to come at me with some weapon or -- it's become a real burden."

STUDENT: "Plus the teacher's not teaching the student nothing these days. And that's why you not coming to school. That's why you just hanging around doing nothing."

STUDENT: "If they give people the proper respect they want in return, maybe they'll get some."

STUDENT: "Really, you know, people trying to go around jumping people and stuff, and you know, like me, I ain't going to let it happen, see. You know, like a person try to jump me, I'm going

to fight back, you see. And that cause a lot of violence, see. That's one source, you know. But it's a lot of other reasons too."

TEACHER: "I know in the last ten years the mood of students everywhere has changed, as it has in the whole country. Everybody is just really turned off, and suspect and cynical of everything. They know that because it filters back down, that getting this high school education doesn't mean all that much. When the unemployment rate for kids just a little bit older than them is forty, forty-five percent in Washington, why? You know. And so this cynicism and this repressed anger that doesn't have any place to be directed now, because there's really such a -- I mean I think it's a real repressive period in terms of the government for minority groups. It gets directed towards the nearest source, which it may, in fact, be teachers and the school where they are forced to spend a lot of their time. And I know ridiculous courses and things that don't have any relevance. So, you know, I understand. I can rationalize their feelings. I still -- you know, I'm still angry too about me."

SELVIN: I guess the bottom-line question is this violence that's taking place inside the schools -- is it possible that if it gets worse, that it could ultimately destroy the school system?

McGUIRE: I suppose in the ultimate end it could, but I don't believe that's going to happen, because I think already we are seeing in our country a recognition of the problem and a desire to work on solutions to it. We in the National Education Association believe that it's not a teacher problem or a parent problem, but a problem of our entire society, and one that will probably only be solved when all of the elements of society get together and move toward a solution rather than fixing the blame on any one particular segment.

STUDENT: "They don't fight with fists no more. It's guns now."

STUDENT: "We had a dude get killed for some dough. Like, some other dudes came up to the school and asked him for some money. He didn't give it to them, so they shot him. You know, like they killed him. So, I figure it's about the same all over."

TEACHER: "Last spring I was a teacher at Spingarn High School in Washington, D.C., and I was raped by two young men."

(BELL/FOOTSTEPS)

SELVIN: With thanks to the students and faculty at Cardoza High School here in Washington, D.C., I'm David Selvin for OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

(MUSIC - BUFFALO SPRINGFIELD)

MERROW: That report is a useful jumping-off point because it

raises the unanswerable question -- Who is responsible? You heard students blaming teachers and the system and educators talking about our violence-prone society. Sorting out the responsibility would be easier if the problem were described more precisely. That was one of the goals of a recent conference in Washington, arranged by CEDAR -- the Council for Educational Development and Research. CEDAR, which represents the interests of educational researchers and their universities in the Capitol, usually worries about such arcane things as knowledge dissemination or the wash-out factor in cognitive score gains. This two-day conference was a little different, gathering together worried school officials, security experts, and researchers, who shared horror stories about student behavior and equally horrifying stories about the costs of violence prevention and people protection.

BLAIR: Whatever the motives of the young people, they're criminals and ought to be treated that way. That's the view of Cornelius Golightly, President of the Detroit Board of Education.

GOLIGHTLY: In one week, two different schools, we had two students who were murdered. The school board committee decided that enough was enough. Why should the school system add to Detroit's reputation as the murder capital of the world? So, it was decided we would stop it. Plus the fact we had no guilt feelings about the matter. It wasn't blacks killing whites or whites killing blacks. It was blacks killing blacks in this instance, so why feel guilty? Just simply say, "You've got to stop." So, one promising practice is a determination to simply say, "We will have a code of behavior. We will spell it out in detail, and we will expect you to live up to this code. And if not, you will go out. And going out may very well mean going to prison." Now that seems a very hard and a very difficult sort of thing to do. I remember prior to that time, moving into my neighborhood, every day there was arson in the school. We had a meeting, and we decided to put a policeman in the school, catch the arsonist, and let the authorities deal with this person within the framework of the law. The group broke up, and one group over in the corner was busy discussing a new procedure. I asked, "What's going on?" And they said, "Well, we're a group of lawyers, and we're planning how to defend this person once he's caught." Now, that guilt was great. These were white lawyers. We caught the culprit, but he happened to be white, and not black. And the parents took care of him, and the school has not had any fires since that time. We put policemen in the schools, and the policemen have had a very good influence -- if you have a committee that refuses to put policemen in there -- but if you have a committee in which your mayor, your school board, your school administration, and your committee itself is not divided, not having any guilt feelings. We can't solve the whole problems of the world -- we can't take care of all the injustices of the world, but we can keep one child from killing another child, or assaulting a teacher. The fundamental thing that I feel is successful about the Detroit school system has been the willingness for the society at large and for the mayor and for the school board and for the local community leaders to accept the fact that violence is a part of our society and that it has to be contained, and that you do not treat a person as an equal if you expect him to behave in a way that's less than you expect yourself to behave.

BLAIR: Cornelius Golightly, President of the Detroit Board of Education.

MERROW: The term violence seems to have become a kind of shorthand

for vandalism and other criminal behavior that's not necessarily violent, like burglary. Thus, the 600 million dollar annual loss takes in vandalism, burglary, and violent crimes, like assault, rape, and murder. Vandalism might be a better word, because the largest dollar losses are from mindless destruction of property, and from deliberately set fires. What's more, research indicates that youthful burglars very often destroy what they steal from schools. That means most school burglaries aren't for monetary gain or to feed a drug habit, but for some more complex purpose.

BLAIR: Very little research has been done in the area of violence and vandalism prevention and control. Generally, schools find out about programs that supposedly work from their friends in other systems and from the security industry itself. A Philadelphia company, Research for Better Schools, has identified four kinds of programs that schools use to reduce violence and vandalism. The four categories -- security systems, counseling programs, curriculum and instructional programs, and organizational modification -- were described at the CEDAR meeting by Robert Scanlon.

SCANLON: The first then being the security systems, which includes the programs that are directed at the protection of the staff and students from outsiders, protection of staff and students from themselves, and the protection of the physical facilities from vandalism, burglary, and arson. One example of a program that is currently being instituted was initiated because a southern superintendent realized that in his urban-suburban district of approximately ten to twenty thousand students that he was sustaining over two hundred thousand dollars of loss due to vandalism and theft each year. As a result, he hired a school security director, who was commissioned to design, develop, and install a system to reduce these losses. The school security director then reviewed over 300 various types of equipment and procedures that could be used and selected an audio-monitoring system as the core of his system for the school district. This was used because it could take advantage of the existing public address system in each of the 25 school buildings. Some schools have gone directly at the truant problem. They've seen that as a problem that must be addressed directly. One security director, in cooperation with the police force, set up a procedure where the police would pick up any student during school hours, phone in to a computerized central location, and find out which school the student should be attending and drop him off there. They not only had attendance going up, but they found the daytime crime in the city had dropped dramatically, maybe as much as 80 percent. Another example just to show the array is that one principal found it was impossible for his students to get to school. Simply the threat of physical harm to and from school was too great for a large proportion of the students to attempt to cross through the gang turfs. Consequently, he set up a safe cord program which singled out one street as a safety street where all students could come to and from school without harm. He did this through cooperation with the teachers, with the parents, with the police, and with the security staff of that particular school district. Thus, you can see the range of programs that can be included, even in one of these categories.

The second category then is that of counseling services. These programs are focused on the intensive help of students in trouble. These include both group and individual approaches. The array would include such things as street workers, who work the off-school hours and go for the kids that are not in school as



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anticipated or to talk to parents of the students who are not there. It is a different type of counseling that is normally found in a school environment, particularly out of our backgrounds. There have been police specially selected because of their rapport with juveniles, who have been given office space to conduct their normal business, so that they can become known to the school students as people rather than as a uniform.

The third area is addressed in terms of curricular and instructional approaches. Specialized instructional programs to help those who are in trouble are included, whether they involve behavior improvement, or basic skills programs. Instructional approaches for students on moral, legal, and ethical concerns are also included. You have other programs that address teacher training, that have been developed on various aspects of crisis intervention. You also have programs directed at the students, both elementary and secondary levels.

The fourth and final area -- and I apologize for the term -- organizational modifications. That's busy words out of the academic community. I couldn't think of a better term, but these include a variety of modifications that would go to a school district or a school building in accommodating the problem, whether they be alternative programs for disruptive students, changes in school rules and regulations, or new roles for individuals associated with the schools.

There's no single program that is best. They must be adopted and applied to the given situation in a given school at a given time and place. In summary, a variety of unique programs do exist, salted among our 16,000 school districts and over 50,000 school buildings. And these programs can, then, provide a base for our national effort to reduce school violence and disruption in the country. Furthermore, there are hundreds of educators out there that have been working and are currently working on these problems that can provide the leadership that is required to address such an issue.

BLAIR: Robert Scanlon of Research for Better Schools in Philadelphia.

At various points in the conference, the audience was invited to question the speakers. Program Chairman Richard Rossmiller, of the University of Wisconsin, fielded the questions and then repeated them for the radio audience.

ROSSMILLER: Let me repeat the question so the audience can hear. As I understand it, the gentleman is interested to know if unionization of teachers is a contributing factor to the rise in violence in our schools. Anybody on the panel, or Cornelius?

GOLIGHTLY: I'd like to speak to that, because one of the things that the Detroit Board of Education has sought to do was to remove, or rather to establish, as a basic policy position that there should be no corporal punishment of the children. Now, one of the things the Board felt was that corporal punishment is usually inflicted by a much larger teacher on a smaller child. We have very few instances of corporal punishment against students 17, 18 years old.

Now the state law provides corporal punishment, and the

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school contract for the teachers contains the fact that this should be consistent with state law. Now we can modify that, but we'd have to do it through negotiations to get this change in the teacher contract. The policy position of the Board stated that it would be a change in the working conditions if this was done unilaterally by the Board. So, for the past two years, we have sort of put it on the back burner, not negotiating that question, because we've had other questions in terms of salary matters, the matter of having to distribute teachers throughout the school system in accordance with the present desegregation difficulties that we have in the city of Detroit, and the like.

But there is, I think, a tendency on the part of confrontation if you have a group that protects itself, and the teachers do protect themselves, that there is not this sense of community. So, I think that that's one of the instances that we could cite to support the belief that the unionization does contribute in that sense. Now, that's not all of it, because the teachers themselves work to change the policy, but I believe that it is also the case that once any group has a right, or privilege, they do not freely give it up unless for something in exchange. Perhaps we could buy that corporal punishment ability that teachers have for a \$5,000 increase in pay for each teacher.

LUCAS: I was talking about teachers' union and collective bargaining in California. We have not as yet enjoyed that aspect of staff relations, although a bill was signed this year -- a collective bargaining bill -- and so we will be on board with collective bargaining starting next year.

In that bill, the scope in negotiations section that covers working conditions -- and I'm sure that teachers in a negotiation are going to be talking about their six-hour day and relating that to the salaries they're now being paid just to instruct and will want a subsidy to spend so-called off-hours out of the contract with students. There are problems that we're anticipating in this area, financial problems, because depending on what the contract terms are, we still need teachers with students -- away from the chalk board and out of the classroom. And the public is going to have to pay for that.

BLAIR: The first answer was provided by Cornelius Golightly of the Detroit Board of Education. The Los Angeles situation was described by William Lucas, Assistant Superintendent for Government Relations, in L.A. We'll hear more from Lucas in a minute. John?

MERROW: I detected a marked hostility toward teachers and teacher unions at the conference, Wendy. That question brought the issue into the open, but I also overheard a number of conversations in the hall, between sessions, the gist of which was that teachers were somehow part of the problem, that is, they leave school early, exactly when the bell rings, or the union contract specifies that teachers don't have to be responsible for discipline, and so forth.

The American Federation of Teachers, the country's second largest teacher union, may have been anticipating this mood and tone when it wrote for the conference program:

"While many school systems have adopted protective measures, most of these have been

ineffective, partly because of a tendency to shift the blame to the victim of the crime. In other words, teachers may be accused of provoking attacks by being too lenient."

Prolonged public debate on the issue of responsibility would have split the conference into several factions. There are those who say that school crime proves that America, like Rome, is declining and falling, while others argue that violence is as American as apple pie -- school violence is simply more visible, but no less criminal than white-collar embezzlement or the buying of politicians.

School critics like Jonathon Kozol and William Harwood argue that schools are purposely designed as repressive, violent institutions in which children from kindergarten on up learn that the power of teachers is arbitrary and that teachers' whims are law. The meeting avoided this whole debate, and with good reason. Early on, speakers agreed that school crime was a problem and that their task was to find solutions, not to restructure society or the schools.

BLAIR: Well, John, William L. Lucas, whom we heard answering a question about the role of unions, described the situation in Los Angeles where he's Assistant Superintendent in charge of government relations. As you'll hear, the government body he does most of his relating with is the police department.

LUCAS: The Los Angeles unified school district still continues to experience violence and vandalism on campus, in case you didn't know. During the school year of 74-75, from July 1st, 1974 to April 30th, 1975, our security section recorded -- and I want you to underline recorded -- 232 assaults against school employees, including teachers and administrators, 338 assaults against students, and 60 assaults against security agents. When one considers the fact that the district has found it necessary to divert twelve million from the general funds of the budget at the expense of the educational program for the express purposes of offsetting the dire consequences of violence and vandalism on campus, the magnitude of this problem is brought into sharp focus.

Hardware, such as intrusion alarm systems, has been an extremely effective means as an immediate deterrent to on-campus disruption and vandalism. However, as a longer-range solution to the amelioration of this problem, we feel that the educational options hold a greater promise of success.

Neighborhood Alert is our program in which residents living within visual range of a school are enlisted to help maintain protective watch over the school and report disruptive activities. This has been especially effective in our Watts area.

We have a handbook, which was designed by the district, to provide practical assistance to the school administrator confronted with disruptive activity. It identifies various types of disruptive activities, suggested steps to minimize the impact of such disturbances, and cites the legal authority to support action taken by the school administrator. This publication also lists a comprehensive collection of preventive measures which have been or can be of practical help, not only in our district, but also in other districts, as well. The written out title of the handbook is

"Emergency Legal Procedures." An acronym is help, and sometimes the administrators would call in and ask for help, and we don't know if he needs that handbook or a security officer. So, we send a security officer out with a handbook in hand.

The Los Angeles unified school district has a cooperative agreement with the Los Angeles Police Department to maintain surveillance from the air over schools in critical areas of the district by use of helicopters, on a visual and photographic basis, for day use, and for night use, equipped with spotlights and infrared photographic equipment.

As far as rehabilitation is concerned, we have installed a new program of educational option in the district called "Community-centered classroom." We call it "Tri-C" out there. The district conducts seven small storefront, off-campus schools for students expelled or recommended for expulsion from the regular school programs. The primary focus is on the utilization of community and district resources to provide necessary educational rehabilitative services.

We have six opportunity schools in our district. They're operated by the district to meet the needs of the pupils with severe emotional and/or behavior problems. Small classes, individualized instruction are provided, and along with that is a high per-pupil cost, as you may very well recognize.

Administrators are compelled to keep a disproportionate amount of their time keeping the lid on, at the expense of the educational program. It becomes evident that, without intervention, the violence and vandalism taking place in our urban schools will continue to expand at a rate which can only be described as catastrophic.

Much of what we're doing today is in the form of quick and temporary repairing of the dikes, which we have built out of necessity in our early efforts to stem the tide of rising youth delinquency.

BLAIR: William Lucas, Assistant Superintendent of the Los Angeles Public Schools.

Once again, Program Chairman Richard Rossmiller fields questions from the audience.

ROSSMILLER: The question is why do social education programs offer more promise than hardware problems in the L.A. schools, directed to Mr. Lucas.

LUCAS: I was thinking more in terms of short range, than long range there when I used the concept of the dikes. It's our thinking that we cannot wait any more for promising social practices or educational options. As you know, they take a long time to tool up. They're costly, and they're very difficult to evaluate.

Hardware is something that we can install once we get the money, and we get immediate results. And I guess I'm thinking of the overall now societal problem with our prisons that I just don't like to equivocate schools with prisons, and if we don't have the hope for the long-range educational options, then there's nothing left but to turn our schools into prisons. And that is something that we just cannot accept.

ROSSMILLER: Our time has depleted. I would like to indicate to this audience that this study and this report is only beginning. It is the first step for us to look at what schools themselves are doing to solve the problem. It's obvious from the result of this effort that some schools have been successful in their efforts to reduce problems of violence and disruption by using funds from local and a variety of state and federal sources. However, it is certainly clear that many schools with serious problems do not have the knowledge and skills needed to define the character of the problem and to adapt programs which would reduce the problem.

And secondly, many schools do not have the resources, that is, the staff, or the material, or the funds to release sufficient energy to plan and initiate a program. It is now time to launch a national effort to help schools solve this problem. And, gentlemen, we thank you.

BLAIR: Summarizing was Chairman Richard Rossmiller.

MERROW: Keeping the lid on, or seeking solutions that confine to hours spent in the school are expensive and possibly futile. Carol Kimmel, President of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, reminded the CEDAR group that the problem does not exist in a vacuum.

KIMMEL: It appears in the news. They see violence and wars and civil disturbances. Those are the things that get top billing, whether they see it in the news programs or whether they see it in the kinds of programs which are intended for "entertainment." According to the studies that have been done by the Senate subcommittee to investigate juvenile delinquency, some school administrators feel that little could be done in schools, as long as the public permits and condones this type of reaction.

In some of the larger cities, school personnel have told us that the violence in their schools can definitely follow a pattern of what the TV programs have shown a week before, that students are being given excellent instructions, not in school, but on TV, in how to create disturbances, how to destroy both human beings and property. And we think we'd better begin taking a better look at that.

A third area of concern is the increased use of drugs, including alcohol, by students. There is evidence that the use or pushing of drugs and alcohol in the school is very much related to the violence and vandalism that follow.

We're concerned, and this was mentioned earlier, that the unrest in adult society provides an example of public policy that relates to the necessity of old game rules under which society operates.

Why would students have any reason not to believe that might makes right? What is the real difference to them, between seeing adults stoning buses, or striking illegally, and youngsters then setting fires or breaking windows, because they don't like the principal, the teacher, or the kid across the aisle.

An area of concern to us is that many parents don't feel comfortable in the schools, and this often is reflected in their children's view of the schools too. Whether it's intentional, or whether it's just the result of size, complexity, or administration --



or maybe the lack of time per parental contact -- many parents feel shut out of the schools. They know that children no longer go to a neighborhood school, and many teachers don't live in the same area in which they teach now. And it's unusual for parents and teachers to really have the kind of relationship that they had in earlier years. We have a feeling, though, that there's a great lack there, and that we're going to have to think about rebuilding that kind of communication if we really want to get at the root of some of the problems that are causing violence in the schools.

Finally, the lack of parental supervision of children and support for the school is a big concern. I don't leave this item until the last, because in my observation, I think it's probably the most important. But I think from here on I'd like to talk about what I think we as parents, teachers, and community leaders are to do to change this picture. Obviously, there are going to be some short-range goals and some long-range goals. But first, I'd like to talk about what some of the immediate actions are that can be taken.

Some of the solutions that can be found for the high school or sometimes even the junior high school student, who simply isn't going to stay in the usual classroom setting without creating a problem -- we do feel that the kind of push-out that most suspensions have been really do not create any solution to the problem. And we do feel that an in-school type of suspension, if suspension is indeed what is called for, really makes better sense, because this can be done within the school setting and with an opportunity to allow counseling assistance at the same time that this discipline is being applied. The child then still remains in school, and the problems which create a kind of anti-social behavior aren't simply transferred, as a suspension does, from the school out into the shopping center or somewhere else in the community. And schools, I think, can assume that responsibility by varying the patterns that they use.

Within the current laws, we think that provision should be made, if possible, for young people to "stop out" of school, not drop out, but stop out, without it being viewed as a defeat or a failure, and with some opportunity to later return to school without any penalty being incurred. In some areas, we're aware that attempts are being made to develop a system of internships, or a more liberal arrangement of school-work programs for young people over 14. This in some states is going to require a revision of compulsory school attendance laws. And there has to be a distinction between this kind of constructive revision and the kind of push-out that we ordinarily find in the school system.

Absenteeism is this pattern that starts early and leads very often to drop-outs and juvenile problems. In the national PTA, with the help of a private foundation grant, we've created some pilot projects in five states to study absenteeism in the elementary schools and try to determine what can be done to lower this rate in the early grades. And several observations might be made as a result of these early pilot projects.

Absenteeism sometimes reflects the attitudes or the work pattern of the parents. No one is getting up, perhaps, to get those children off to school. And for some parents, it is of no significance that a child is missing a day of school.

Or, it may be that absenteeism is because a youngster has missed a bus, and there's no one to take him. Or he has no coat, or shoes, or raincoat, to get to school.

Or, he woke up sick, and mother had no way to deal with that.

In the PTA, we have found that parents, rather than school principals, or the school nurse, or the security officer, are the ones to call the home and find out why is that child absent, are more likely to find out what is the real cause and begin to offer some assistance instead of it simply being a condemnation.

Sometimes it means that we have to offer some assistance about getting that child to school. Sometimes it means that a supply of clothing at the school has to be available for children who are absent because of that, that if a child is absent, that we're not looking for punishment. We're looking for why.

We're trying to find out why this absenteeism is occurring, and we believe that PTA's and parents can do very much to make some real inroads on that problem.

Parents also have to face up early to the fact that drug and alcoholic use in the home and in the school. We have half a million teenagers now that are drinking to excess. Alcohol is easily accessible to their children, and for many parents this is a much more socially acceptable kind of a problem than drug use was. And yet it is just as serious.

Parents, students, and school personnel need to talk about these problems. Children have to be given information about drugs and alcohol, but they also have to be given some assistance in the ability to develop decision-making skills. They have to learn that in the long run they're going to have to make value judgments and decide for themselves about whether to drink or not, about whether to use drugs or not, about whether to join that gang that vandalizes the school. And if young people decide not to participate, they have to feel that they have the support of parents, teachers, and peers, or they won't make those decisions.

Now, parents want to be involved in the education of their children, but they want to be involved in the decision-making kind of process. They don't simply want to serve as monitors in the halls or in the lunch rooms. These are important things happening to their children, and they want to be a part of those decisions. They know the children that cause trouble in school are often those that will work very well with other parents, and they want to help in that way.

When parents feel a part of their schools, they make it a better place for their children and for everyone's children. They gain a feeling of knowing the staff better, and they are able to interpret the atmosphere of the school for the rest of the community.

Now, in some of the serious problems that we've talked about, we feel that we should be careful not to allow schools to become a sanctuary from the law, that students who are involved in assaults or violence should be punishable by law. And that parents, even if it involves changes in state law, should be held legally

and financially responsible for the vandalism that is perpetrated by minors.

We are beginning to move into this area of the violence that is available to children on television. In California, for example, the PTA's there have established a system where PTA people are viewing television shows, rating them, and publicizing this information so that parents can make a more constructive choice about when to use that off button on television.

Probably only when this kind of pressure is brought to bear, and parents begin to accept that responsibility for what their own children see, will we begin to see a change there.

We also are involved in a highly controversial area because the PTA is working now to support legislation for the control of hand guns. We're very conscious of the fact that the greatest number of victims of hand-gun crimes fall into the age bracket of 15 to 21. And we intend to try and do something about that.

Now, parents want to send their children to school feeling that they are safe. If the school is a community school, we find that the vandalism is reduced and that in effect the school is the safest place for both children and for parents to come to.

But the long-range solutions for us really are a change of attitude in the people of this country. The PTA has worked since before 1900 to try and strengthen the home as the basic element of society. We still believe that that's the root of this problem. And that if children are to achieve at a higher level, be educated in good health habits, to try and develop better emotional health, to try and get at these kinds of long-range solutions that we're really talking about, we're going to have to give some thought and some real effort on strengthening the family unit. These are different kinds of responsibilities that these parents are having to take on, and we feel it's terribly important to begin to give some assistance to those families to really develop some strengths back at the home base.

The PTA, as well as other organizations, is going to try to provide some leadership and preparation for parenthood with young people. We believe that young people need to know and appreciate the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and that they then will be willing to assume a share of responsibilities for these problems in our society.

We really feel that hardware and security guards may protect the property, and they may reduce the violence to some extent, but until we can get to the real root of this and change the environment in which our children grow, we will not have really approached anywhere at all meeting the problems of violence and vandalism.

MERROW: Carol Kimmel, President of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers.

Earlier you heard Richard Rossmiller call for a national effort at the federal level. A new study commissioned by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration says that twelve and a half million federal dollars will be needed to effectively combat the problem. Research for Better Schools, Incorporated of Philadelphia issued a report last week. It says that fear of violence creates a vicious cycle which leads to more violence. This fear often

causes individuals to arm themselves against perceived danger with the result that more and more people are carrying guns. Fear itself thus may become a major source of new violence, the study says. The LEAA also reported that gang violence is increasing, intimidating witnesses and dominating public facilities. Additionally, intruders, very often drop-outs and truants, account for a large proportion of crime in schools.

But not everyone agrees that large sums of Federal money for security and enforcement can solve the problem. One speaker at the CEDAR conference doubts whether the federal government, or anyone else, can eliminate school crime. "Perhaps the federal role," he said, "should be limited to collecting and analyzing data." The speaker was James Q. Wilson, Professor of Government at Harvard University.

WILSON: We are facing a problem, the causes of which we do not understand, are not likely to understand very well and probably cannot eliminate in anything like a generation or two. What we are seeing, not only in this country, but in virtually every industrialized country from which we have data, is a profound shift in values and institutional attachments that is producing all manner of rebellion, dissent, and the like. And that without unacceptable reductions in personal liberty, without unacceptable intrusions into family life and into the indoctrination of the young, we are not likely to reverse that important worldwide change in values.

In the meantime, however, there are things I think we can do. We can, above all, learn to experiment with practical alternative solutions to the problem of enhancing the security of schools so that education can go on reasonably free of those distractions and threats. And I think that these experiments require us to assume that we don't know very much about the problem at all right now. I'm sure that there are around this country a number of experiments already going on about which I and probably most people are entirely unaware. Unless the results are disseminated, unless the evaluation is done by persons other than those carrying out the experiment, unless there is a good deal of careful re-analysis of alleged findings of various efforts to change the pre-conditions for school security, that they will have no impact, that all over the country we will reinvent the wheel, or more likely, reinvent the square wheel by repeating each other's mistakes. And that all over the country we will continue to discuss this problem as if it could be resolved by an appeal to preformed attitudes, ideologies, and political convictions. And the softies and the toughies will continue to talk right past each other without ever getting down to the common problem all of us share, which is to how to make our schools reasonably safe for the best education we are capable of giving to our schools.

What kinds of projects might be undertaken? I don't have a comprehensive list. I'm not nearly as knowledgeable about what needs to be done as most of the people in this room. But I will mention some things that occur to me. You can accept them or reject them. I'm sure you can at least add to the list. My point is not to recommend some panacea, but to get people thinking along lines of testing alternative ways to do this in ways that are credible to third parties.

First, it seems to me that we need to know a lot more than

we now know about who is victimized in the school setting and under what circumstances. Under what circumstances do these things occur? Who is involved? What are the relationships between assailant and victim? To what extent is the crime that's called school crime really school crime in the sense that it occurs genuinely in a school setting and is conditioned by the facts of school life? To what extent are we referring to school crime anything that involves somebody who currently is enrolled in school, or any person who is currently employed by the school, or anything that occurs somewhere on or near school property? These are very different matters. If it's the latter, then perhaps we should invest less attention in improving the security of the school. If it's the former, perhaps we should invest many more resources in improving that security.

I'm not proposing school victimization surveys, simply out of a scholar's love of more statistics, though I confess I do love them. I make my living by manipulating them, some say by distorting them, and I would like very much to have that data. But I think also there is a learning process that you go through that familiarizes you with greater detail of the nature of the problem if you have to go out and get the facts systematically, rather than ask each separate school district by whatever technique it now employs to suggest whatever data coupled with whatever horror stories it now has. That's, of course, what we did with respect to crime for a long time, and I suspect we're doing with respect to schools right now.

Secondly, it seems to me we could experiment effectively with alternative security arrangements in schools or alternative school-building plans. At one point, we thought crime that occurred in buildings was everywhere the same, unaffected by the building design. Along came Oscar Newman, whose book "Defensible Space" showed the important relationship between the heights and physical facilities of a public-housing project, and the amount of crime that occurred in it, independent of the composition of the population of that building. Now, obviously, we can't tear down all the public-housing projects and build them up from scratch according to Oscar Newman's specifications, but new programs can and should take importantly into account his very striking findings. It seems to me the same thing can be learned about schools.

Internal discipline methods, school assignment policies, and they're alike-- we have those who believe that children should be suspended from school if they commit an infraction; and others say no, that that only confirms the criminogenic tendencies of a person if he's kicked out and labeled as a failure. And there are others that say these matters shouldn't be handled by the schools at all, but turned over to the secular arm, the police and the courts. Others say, no, no, the criminal justice system is inappropriate. But these are not questions about which we have to debate out on the basis of ideology. We can find out the answers to that question by looking closely at what happens to persons who are handled as a result of various infractions by these alternative means, by suspension, by the use of the juvenile justice system, by the use of internal school systems.

Now, lastly, it seems to me, we have to realize that crime does not occur in the schools in isolation from crime in the rest of society. Indeed, much of what's called crime in the schools are really just crime committed by young persons, many of whom

happen to be enrolled in a school some place, or happen to commit the crime on the way to or from school, or perhaps on school grounds. Most of the serious property crime is committed by juveniles. Most of the serious violent crime is committed by young adults, but the age at which they start doing it is getting lower and lower.

We often bemoan, those of us in education, that we have so many tens of thousands separate school districts. Those of us who study the criminal justice system often bemoan that we have forty thousand separate police departments. This is not as great a problem as it is a challenge. We have all of this variety waiting for an opportunity for people to test seriously practical ways of solving these problems. And I think that if there is any single message that I would like to leave with you as you begin your final hours of deliberation is to accept that challenge and to use the diversity of our system, and our capacity for evaluating the results of social intervention as ways of coming to grips with this problem and substituting some realistic strategies for competing ideologies. Thank you. (CLAPPING)

BLAIR: James Q. Wilson of Harvard, addressing a conference on school violence and vandalism.

The conference was sponsored by CEDAR, the Council for Educational Development and Research in Washington.

(MUSIC - SIMON & GARFUNKLE)

BLAIR: John, I thought Professor Wilson did an excellent job of summarizing the situation.

MERROW: I think there are a couple of other points worth recalling. Point one is that no more than ten percent of the school kids are causing the problems. Perhaps the ninety percent who aren't the problem can help create some solutions. And point two -- we've passed truancy and compulsory attendance laws to keep the kids off the streets and in the schools, but we all ought to have learned by now that we can't just stash the kids some place. Schools need alternative programs and perhaps more of what is called consumer participation. ID cards with photos might be a good idea. They're used on most college campuses without any apparent violation of anyone's civil liberties.

Schools simply must be allowed to keep their priorities straight, that is, to provide appropriate environments for learning and for teaching.

(MUSIC - SIMON & GARFUNKLE)

BLAIR: A transcript of this program costs twenty-five cents and includes a list of books and articles on school crime. A cassette costs \$4.00. Send your requests to OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, 2025 "M" -- as in crime -- Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. That address again -- OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, 2025 "M" Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

(MUSIC)

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CHILD: OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a co-production of The Institute for Educational Leadership at the George Washington University and National Public Radio.

BLAIR: The producer is Midge Hart, executive producer John Merrow. I'm Wendy Blair. Join us next week for OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

CHILD: This is NPR, National Public Radio.