

# FREEDOMISM

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## *Randomly generated opinions*

If you haven't learned already, I am a teenager. It's summer now, and I should be caring less about school and all the ridiculous, hypocritical policies that it enforces on its students. But for the past few months, once policy that can be found at my old middle school and many others across the United States and in other nations can be described as one of the most ignorant and idiotic practices ever conceived. It relates to punishment and how it is dealt to school bullies.

The policy in question is this: in your classic run-of-the-mill bullying situation, where one party preys on another, instead of punishing the bullies only, both parties must receive punishment in the situation. Why any school administration would think this is a good policy is beyond me — it discourages students from reporting bullying situations involving themselves and strips any sense of "safety" from those who are victimized. There are three possible reasons for such guidelines even existing:

1. Schools are afraid of parents of the bully or bullies questioning their evidence or appealing punishments, or parents who place equal blame on the victim based on their child's own testimony.
2. Schools refuse to "waste time" investigating such matters and base punishments purely on the more-than-likely skewed testimonies from both parties, in which the bullying party will accuse the victim(s) of equally malicious acts against them.
3. Schools believe that students who fight back (*defend* themselves) from bullies are committing an act worthy of punishment itself.

This is one of the many ironic situations in life where punishment fails to solve a problem — it only makes it worse. Victims of school bullying deserve special treatment from schools, not heavy punishments such as suspension that do nothing other than crush their self-esteem, make them feel more victimized and strip away days, if not weeks of valuable instructional time for no clear reason. Policies like this one have led to much uglier situations: lawsuits and, ultimately, suicide. All of this because schools are emotionless. They create ruthless "systems", treating everyone equally in situations where equality is least appropriate. Bullying is an ever increasing problem in the public school system, each year more and more suicides and wrongful deaths are connected to it. Yet still, there are no calls for reform. School punishment systems are inadequate and fail to provide any student with any safety. They crush the already scarred bullying victims into fragile beings, on the verge of shattering into a million pieces.

We need to provide bullying victims with mental and physical rehabilitation, and assure them that school is a safe environment for them to spend their days in. Bullies must be removed to separate facilities and also rehabilitated for their own good. This is occurring in some school districts, but it has not yet overtaken the "all bullies, no victims" policy. An all-encompassing federal law on school bullying would be appropriate, but at the current pace Congress is addressing issues, is unlikely.

Self defense in schools can be expanded to protection from teachers. Schools don't like to admit it, but too many teachers abuse their power over students and take it to unnecessary and, in many cases, illegal levels. For example, if a student was disallowed access to the bathroom in a major emergency, students should have power to ignore the teacher's ruling and proceed to the restroom at any cost. This situation came up in a Texas school in 2003, where a student was physically barred by the teacher from using the restroom. The male student, on the verge of wetting himself, was forced to use an empty plastic water bottle that had been discarded into a nearby trash can instead of an actual toilet. The student was then given an unbelievable *three week suspension* while the teacher was only given a "warning" in her "file".

Government officials denying students the right to have their bodies naturally excrete waste should be illegal, regardless of what the situation is. Schools have become so rule-ridden that going to the bathroom has become a "privilege" that one has to "earn", not a right. If any student is denied the right to go to the bathroom in a situation like the one I just described, they should be allowed to use any appropriate amount of force to make their way to the facility. Punishment-free. Teachers in this society are given too much power, and they must be punished accordingly when they abuse it. Am I calling for students to receive all the rights an adult has? No, but I am asking for their right to *go to the bathroom* to be recognized. 5 minutes of missed study can be made up easily, but the experience of sitting in one's own waste or urinating into a bottle in front of a group of peers cannot. Limiting or banning bathroom trips could even be considered government discrimination against people with overactive bladders. It sounds absurd, sure, but in court it could become a valid case.

The power of schools and their staff is becoming too great. Reform is needed as soon as possible, to prevent any more abuse of punishment. If not, we could see more and more unnecessary humiliation and victimization. It is the responsibility of the public schools of the United States to educate and protect children; unfortunately too many of them are failing to live up to that standard. If the promises our school districts keep making to parent are continually broken, a twinge of anarchy may just come into the mix.