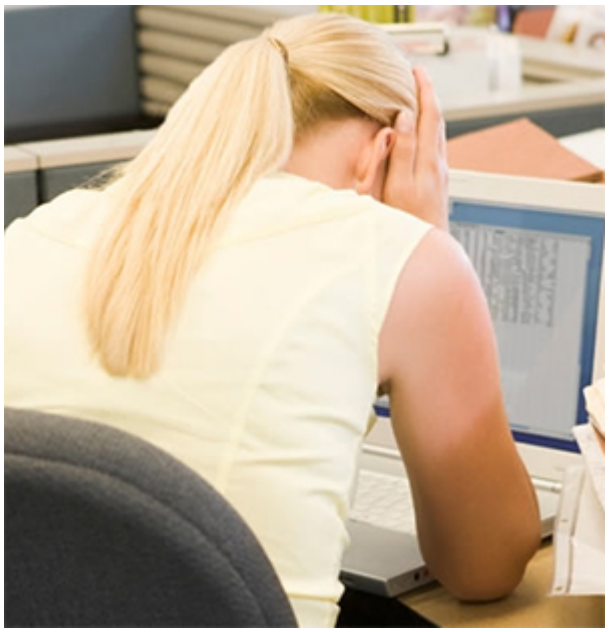
Survey highlights violence problem



A survey of teachers and school leaders has highlighted the ongoing problem of violence in schools, with figures showing teachers were more likely to be the victim of violence from students, while principals were more likely to be assaulted or verbally abused by parents.

The survey of 3,000 education staff in WA showed that 38% of principals reported they had been the victim of physical violence from parents during 2016, while 55% said they had been verbally abused by parents.

This was much higher than for teachers, with 1.5% saying they'd been the victim of physical violence from parents, while 19% said they had been verbally abused by parents.

However, the figures revealed teachers were much more likely to be assaulted by students, with 24% of teachers reporting they had been the victim of physical violence from students during 2016, while 51% said they had been verbally abused by students.

This compared to 1.5% of principals who said they had been physically assaulted by a student, while 48% had been verbally abused.

State School Teachers' Union of WA president Pat Byrne said the figures were disturbing.

"Teachers and school leaders should be able to go to school without being abused, assaulted, bullied or harassed by students and their parents," she said.

"We simply cannot accept that education staff being abused in their workplace is the new normal.

"Every one of us has the right to go to work without being threatened, and these violent incidents are taking a huge toll on teachers and school leaders, who just want to get on with doing their job."

The survey showed that 20% of teachers and 23% of principals reported that physically violent behaviour from students was occurring at their school on a weekly basis.

Further, 31% of teachers and 20% of principals reported that physically violent incidents perpetrated by parents occurred on average once a term at their school.

Ms Byrne said neither teachers nor principals were confident that the Department of Education's current strategies were working.

"When asked how effective they believed the Department's behaviour management policies were, only 13% of teachers and 30% of principals said they regarded the procedures as 'effective or 'very effective'," she said.

"It's clear the government needs to provide more funding for an expansion of programs designed to address student behavioural issues and assist at-risk students.

"We also want professional development and support for education staff, especially those working in at-risk schools, as well as more specialist staff to be employed in these schools.

"There also needs to be more genuine alternative placement options for problem students, so that they can get the help they need, while limiting their disruption of other students."

Ms Byrne said while the union believed these measures would help curb violence in schools, parents needed to take responsibility for both their and their children's behaviour and work with schools to address any issues.

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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