

School Violence Can be a Problem for New Zealanders

While certainly not to the degree of the horrendous school violence that one reads about in the States, there is mounting evidence that school violence is a growing problem in New Zealand and Australia.

Last year racial tensions at Waiuku College in Auckland, New Zealand, erupted into an incident that resulted in a student being slashed in the face with a broken bottle. The kind of violence one usually equates with street gangs and not young men in their school knickers. On campus fellow friends and fellow students of the victim, who required many stitches and faces permanent disfigurement, said they were not happy with the lack luster response in the wake of such a violent attack. The school only proscribed a 2-day suspension on the attackers. Students said the incident stemmed from a group of boys that had been bullying others for a long period of time. Most students said they felt school authorities had little power to curb such behaviors so “you just learn to keep your head down”.

And such incidents of bullying are becoming increasingly common. A recent study conducted this year by the Hawke's Bay Primary Principals' Association in conjunction with the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, found that 6% of teachers reported recurring physical attacks on themselves or their aides. Almost 1/3 of teachers reported they had at least one student who physically attacked or otherwise intimidated other pupils. The report concluded by cautioning against schools tackling the problem alone.

Enter Edmond Otis. Edmond Otis is a motivational speaker and trainer who specializes in programs of stress management and conflict resolutions designed to specifically to reduce violence in schools and other public venues such as libraries. Mr. Otis has recently relocated from the USA to New Zealand where he had initiated, and still oversees, several such programs still in use by the schools and library system there (www.aact-now.com). Upon his arrival in Hawkes Bay, Mr. Otis was surprised to see that such an idyllic setting still faced many of the same issues as schools and other organizations back in the states. Mr. Otis feels his *AACT Program for Making Schools Safe and Sane*, is ideally suited to “nip in the bud” the growing problem of school violence in New Zealand, and the somewhat larger problem that exists in Australia. The AACT programs have been specifically designed to give teachers and school officials the tools they need to effectively communicate with agitated students and family members; to recognize and respond to the warning signs of violence, and to; effectively deal with unreasonable, angry, and potentially violent individuals.

These would be just the tools that teachers here seem to be lacking and need. Malcolm Dixon with the Hawke's Bay Primary Principals' Association, feels that the Ministry of Education does not provide appropriate support and resources for schools to adequately handle the violence issue. He has called for schools to be given increased funding which would allow them to employ outside providers such as Mr. Otis to cater to their children's needs.

Edmond Otis is a keynote speaker and motivational trainer dedicated to giving entrepreneurs, business owners, and key executives the tools they need for success. He has recently reallocated with his family from California to Hawkes Bay New Zealand. To learn more about his services to go www.EdmondOtis.co.nz