



Deadly Public School Time Outs for Special Needs Children

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I spent some time in special education classes as a child for a physical handicap -- a bone disease that, thankfully, that did not progress far enough to cause permanent damage. Of course, my participation in these classes was more about the additional revenue the school would receive from the state than any benefit I received concerning my handicap. Now, I will qualify this with the acknowledgment that there are likely many good people caring for these children in most schools. However, like any public school teacher, these special needs teachers are strangers caring for children that especially need the loving kindness of mom. A hat tip to Fearfully and Wonderfully Made for this article from CNN about children forced into cell-like school seclusion rooms. (UPDATE: Just an update to note that I never saw anything like this article describes. I didn't really spend much time there. But, I do remember one incident of a teacher berating and humiliating a quadriplegic student for soiling himself.) "Seclusion rooms, sometimes called time-out rooms, are used across the nation, generally for special needs children." "A few weeks before 13-year-old Jonathan King killed himself, he told his parents that his teachers had put him in 'time-out.'" "The room where Jonathan King hanged himself is shown after his death. It is no longer used, a school official said." "'We thought that meant go sit in the corner and be quiet for a few minutes,' Tina King said, tears washing her face as she remembered the child she called 'our baby ... a good kid.'" "But time-out in the boy's north Georgia special education school was spent in something akin to a prison cell -- a concrete room latched from the outside, its tiny window obscured by a piece of paper." "Called a seclusion room, it's where in November 2004, Jonathan hanged himself with a cord a teacher gave him to hold up his pants." Now, your state may offer you all kinds of "help" for your special needs children, even if you home school. But, is that something you really want? In other instances of alleged abuse, from the article: A Tennessee mother alleged in a federal suit against the Learn Center in Clinton that her 51-pound 9-year-old autistic son was bruised when school instructors used their body weight on his legs and torso to hold him down before putting him in a "quiet room" for four hours. Principal Gary Houck of the Learn Center, which serves disabled children, said lawyers have advised him not to discuss the case. Eight-year-old Isabel Loeffler, who has autism, was held down by her teachers and confined in a storage closet where she pulled out her hair and wet her pants at her Dallas County, Iowa, elementary school. Last year, a judge found that the school had violated the girl's rights. "What we're talking about is trauma," said her father, Doug Loeffler. "She spent hours in wet clothes, crying to be let out." Waukee school district attorney Matt Novak told CNN that the school has denied any wrongdoing. A mentally retarded 14-year-old in Killeen, Texas, died from his teachers pressing on his chest in an effort to restrain him in 2001. Texas passed a law to limit both restraint and seclusion in schools because the two methods are often used together.