Corporal punishment in schools and educational settings was prohibited in 1996. However, it is still being widely used. The 2012 study by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention found that a total of 49.8% of the learners surveyed had been caned or spanked by an educator or principal as punishment for wrongdoings. This percentage was up from 47.5% in 2008. The study also found clear linkages between violence and corporal punishment in the home, violence in communities and violence in schools. Violence in schools is a result of violence within the home and communities, not as a result of corporal punishment being abolished.

In 2008, the Human Rights Commission reported that corporal punishment is still applied in more than half of South African schools (51.4%), with the Eastern Cape (65.3%), Mpumalanga (64.1%) and Limpopo (55.7%) reporting the highest incidences of such schools. Thus, the claim that the prohibition of corporal punishment in schools has led to indiscipline and out-of-control children is not supported by the facts.
7 STEPS FOR SCHOOLS TO MOVE BEYOND CORPORAL PUNISHMENT:

Management Systems and Training Programmes (MSTP), through the UCT Department of Education, developed a 7-step programme for schools in moving from corporal punishment to positive discipline:

1) Get everyone involved, from learners and their parents and teachers to community structures (e.g. community and religious leaders)
2) Assess the current situation
3) Create a plan for positive discipline which considers priorities, goals and strategies, and involves all stakeholders
4) Test the strategies in the school generally and the classroom
5) Keep everyone informed
6) Evaluate
7) Revise if necessary

This worked well in the schools which were involved in the development and testing of the methodology, in rural and urban and peri-urban areas, and in primary and secondary schools.

Case study

Kubusie Combined School

The Kubusie Combined School is located in a rural district of South Africa’s Eastern Cape province. It is one of the most impoverished areas in the country, and has a poor academic track record. In 2004, only 29% of Kubusie’s final year learners passed their matriculation exams. In the same year, 14 teacher were held hostage at the school and there were violent clashes between learners and police.

In 2005, all the stakeholders of Kubusie Combined School joined forces to turn their discipline system around, using the seven steps outlined on this fact sheet. They identified the following discipline problems:

- Learners were using drugs on school premises.
- Learners were bringing dangerous weapon to school.
- Many learners were habitually late.
- Some learners roamed around school instead of attending classes.
- The school uniform was not worn in the proper way.
- There was aggression and fighting amongst learners.
- School work not done or kept up to date.

To address these challenges, the school stakeholders:

- designed and adopted a new discipline policy.
- negotiated new school and class rules.
- defined roles and responsibilities for their representative council of learners.
- tried out and adapted many positive discipline strategies, some of which are described on this fact sheet.

The behavior of learners improved and teachers started working together more effectively as a team. Kubusie Combined School moved away from using corporal punishment, and was no longer plagued by drug use and weapons. Learners were less often late or absent from school. They attended classes and concentrated more on their schoolwork.