

# Parents – the good the bad and the deluded

*Miro Martin*

Once suspended a student who deliberately hit another student across the head with a cricket bat, resulting in several stitches and a trip to hospital. When I contacted the mother of the suspended student I was asked in a very affronting manner "...Did you instruct my child beforehand that this behaviour was inappropriate...?" I cannot print my reply, but my Italian blood did get the better of me on that occasion.

Over the last 30 years I have met a vast array of parents and, just like their children, these parents are unique individuals. Despite the individual differences, I have attempted to synthesise different stereotypes and, in keeping with the educational jargon of acronyms, I have coined the following...

## IP

### *Irate parents*

This is not a new category that I have uncovered. This is an old group that goes back to prehistoric times. These parents usually arrive unannounced at the classroom door or principal's office with nostrils flared and sphincter muscles clenched like bear traps.

For this group, every word uttered from their child's lips is gospel truth and their child's version of events is the only version. They must be well versed in the Old Testament because many will tell the principal to go forth and multiply, but in much more colourful language. I must be missing something here because they use the term as a form of insult, but like the famous American comedian, Lenny Bruce used to say, this is actually a pleasant greeting like, 'Have a nice day.' Who would not agree with me that the act of procreation is a pleasant activity?

## MCIPACDNW parents

### *My Child Is Perfect And Can Do No Wrong'*

This is probably a macronym rather than an acronym. Their children are always angels at home and they won't accept that their child is capable of aberrant behaviour at school. When their children are in trouble it is always the fault of someone else's child or poor teaching. MCIPACDNW parents have a tendency to go to the media or a higher authority and, although they threaten to take their children elsewhere, they rarely do. They just keep teasing you with their threats to leave.



## WHNB parents

### *We Have No Boundaries*

This group allows their children to do whatever they like. They can watch whatever they like on TV and whenever they like. And why shouldn't they? These children have their own TVs in their bedrooms! This group shows genuine concern when brought into the principal's office and really want their children to conform, but they can't get their children to do anything they ask. They don't hand out punishment or consequences to their children because it may upset them.

## ITMCTBAW parents

### *I'm Training My Child To Be A Wimp*

This is hardly an acronym. This cohort is training their children to be wimps. Their children are always the victims of bullying. At the slightest quiver of their child's bottom lip

this group immediately contacts the principal to protest that their child has been called a nasty name or was pushed in the playground. Their children must be protected from any form of pain or discomfort that may be caused by their association with other children. This group's children must never be allowed to see the world as it really is or experience a normal childhood. They must never be allowed to go swimming if it's a bit chilly or if they have a cold.

## PE

### *Parentis Extinctus*

This group is extremely endangered and, as the name implies, may already be on the verge of extinction. This group doesn't believe everything that comes from their child's mouth and actually believes the teacher or principal who has told them that their child has misbehaved. These parents don't take their children to another

school when their children are disciplined, but support the teachers and hand out consequences at home for their child's poor behaviour. This group often comes to school to help out and be involved. They regularly thank teachers and genuinely appreciate everything the school is doing on their child's behalf. When they have a concern they approach the teacher directly and sit and discuss the matter in a civilised manner.

## CPC

### Car Park Committee

I have already written a separate article on this group. They meet in the car park or shopping centre to complain about the school, teachers and principal. They never actually convey their thoughts directly to the school, but rely on gossip and rumour. Chicken Little is their guru and they are always looking over their heads because they have been told the sky is falling. Since writing about the CPC I have actually discovered an affiliate group, the **WOJ** (worshippers of Janus). Janus was a Roman God who had two faces, one facing backwards to the past and one facing forward to the future. This group is two-faced and will be pleasant and cheerful in your office, but once they enter the car park, their mood changes to gloom and doom.

## MCIAG parents

### My Child Is A Genius

This is a small, but significant group that has high expectation for their children. They can't see the value of letting their highly intelligent four-year-olds waste their time playing in prep when they could be in Year 7 doing calculus and philosophy. When MCIAG children misbehave it is always because they aren't being extended and are bored in class. You don't need social skills when you are smarter than Einstein.

## WDBIM parents

### We Don't Believe In Medication

I actually had some parents a few years ago who believed that asthma was 'all in the mind' and wouldn't give their child Ventolin. They were even arguing with the ambulance driver who was called to treat the child after an attack during lunch break.

I am not fond of ADHD diagnoses or of prescribing Ritolin, but for some children this is the only recourse a school has to give the teacher and other students some respite from extremely disruptive behaviour, not to mention the fact that it may also improve their chance of learning. WDBIM's stubbornly refuse to have their children assessed by health professionals

and, after assessment, they usually refuse to accept the diagnosis and prescribed method of treatment.

## EIE parents

### Expert In Education

"I went to school so therefore I'm an Expert In Education." I briefly mentioned this group in a previous article, *Drowning in Advice*. Many EIEs are also members of the CPC. Unlike the car park committee, however, this group readily shares its wisdom with teachers and principal and are more than happy to advise us on how we should teach the children and run the school. They believe everything they hear and see in the media, especially anything that criticises the education system and therefore supports their own point of view.

There are many more groups I could mention. This is just a sample. Perhaps I will write *Miro's Glossary of Parent Groupings* when I retire.



Miro Martin is a primary school principal with more than 30 years in education. He is a regular contributor to *Education Today*.

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