

School fights disrupt learning environment

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Contributing Writer

When a fight breaks out, word quickly spreads about the commotion. Rumors drift throughout the hallways, and students gather around the contenders, waiting for the first hit. For some, fighting is a matter of pride and, for others, merely a response to a misinterpreted action. "It's a reputation thing," senior Sarah Mortimer said. "You have to back up what you say."

Regardless of the reasons, school fights attract a lot of attention. In recent years, some students and faculty members have noticed a growing number of fights occurring at school.

"The last few years, it's been on the rise," one science teacher said. "It used to be one a year."

In fact, compared to other schools, the fight count at Fremd is relatively low.

"Fremd would have two per month," Principal Marina Scott said. "We are kind of low compared with other schools."

However, the number of fights is not necessarily the main concern. The teenage violence that they reveal is more appalling to sophomore Mike Bacha.

"A girl put a lock in a sock and started beating a girl with it," said Bacha, describing a fight that occurred at Fremd two years ago.

Although the fights may be less prevalent at Fremd, the violence is just as serious as at any other school.

"This guy punched this other guy in the face," Mortimer said. "Most of them end up with bloody noses."

There are many reasons for this misconduct. Some attribute it to the normal dislike that teenagers may have for each other. Others blame it on more deeply rooted issues.

Counselor John Baima attributes fights to simple gestures as impersonal as a simple nudge.

"It mainly has to do with basic understanding, like bumping in the hallway or jealousy over a girlfriend," Baima said.

In some instances, fights can prove to be a serious matter that threatens more than just the contenders. English teacher Angenette Fudala broke up a fight last year while



Logue photo by Jennifer Mells

TAKING A HIT. Even simple provocation can rub someone the wrong way. Tiny nudges can easily become an all-out fight.

she was eight and a half months pregnant.

"It started when one kid pushed another kid, and then it escalated from there to fist fighting," Fudala said. "They probably stopped fighting because they saw I was pregnant. I grabbed them by their shirts and brought them to the office."

Despite the intensity of Fudala's situation, she refuted the belief that fights have increased because she has only seen three fights in the past three years.

But when fights do break out, the students observing sometimes add fuel to the fire.

"You hear the cheers and the chanting of the kids, and a circle forms," cafeteria staff member Janet Weber said.

Bacha says he believes that the major attraction for students are those who participate in the fights as opposed to the actual fight.

"People like seeing who's in the fight more than the fight itself," Bacha said.

According to administrators, if a student is being provoked to fight, he or she should go to a faculty member right away instead of waiting for the fight to escalate.

Counselor John Baima also offers other methods to resolve fights.

"We have Peer Mediation and students trained in conflict resolution," Baima said. "It involves sitting, talking about what went on and usually talking through the problem."

Fighters will face consequences

- The lightest punishment a student will receive for fighting is suspension.

- The length of the suspension will then be determined.

- There is no self-defense policy. Therefore, responding to provocation makes a person just as guilty.

Fremd math teacher shares his knowledge on the other side of the world

Christine Chen
Managing Editor

The school lost a valuable member of its math department this year, the enthusiastic Daniel Hays, who left in July to venture across the world. After traveling 6,600 miles across the Pacific Ocean, Hays is now in China teaching English.

Hays' journey abroad was not completely unexpected. He had always wanted to explore another country to expand his views.

"My decision to move to China was a result of a desire to see more of the world and experience a new culture," Hays said. "I began to realize that my desire to spend extended time in a foreign country was not a passing urge. It became something that I had to do, a dream that I had to acknowledge."

Math teacher Ken Harris admires his colleague's initiative in traveling abroad.

"I was supportive and enthusiastic about him going abroad. I admire his adventurous spirit, and his ability to adapt to change is impressive," Harris said.

Hays is teaching English on the senior campus of the Shenzhen Foreign Languages School to students who are the equivalent of sophomores in high school.

"I teach at a boarding school for some of the best students in the country, so they are relentless in their studying," Hays said.

Hays has noticed several differences be-



Photos courtesy of Daniel Hays

HEY TO HAYS IN CHINA. Math teacher Daniel Hays visits a lake near Yangzhou (left). Hays teaches English to high school sophomores at Shenzhen Foreign Languages School (right).

tween Chinese and American education. After observing Chinese students working diligently in class from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. with few breaks, the distinction between students from the two different cultures became apparent. Hays acknowledges that his students in China are motivated and hard-working and that they have been trained to focus on their studies at an early age.

"I think students in America have a less intense attitude towards studying. Americans make more time for social and extracur-

ricular activities. Also, Chinese students are more polite and very respectful of all teachers," Hays said.

In China, Hays has gained awareness for the Chinese perspective of world events.

"I am seeing firsthand how similar people are at heart despite having radically different languages, customs and histories. I think the experience has reminded me of how important it is to accept that which is different and embrace diversity," Hays said.

Despite the insightful experiences and

All quiet on the public school front

Colleen Veit
News Editor

Lawmakers in Illinois passed a law on Oct. 12 that requires public schools to have a moment of silence at the beginning of each day.

The moment of silence, which took effect last Friday, does not have a specified time period and will not be enforced. If schools refuse or forget to participate, they will not be punished.

The decision to require a moment of silence was vetoed by Governor Rod Blagojevich because of a belief that it may promote prayer in public schools, but the state legislature overruled his veto with a 74-37 vote.

Supporters say it is not intended to be a time for religious reflection, but that students are allowed to pray.

Freshman Asha Bazil thinks the legislation is not fair to all religions.

"A lot of religions sing and chant to pray, so I think the moment of silence is biased towards Christianity and other religions that pray silently," said Bazil.

Advocates of the legislation said it will reduce classroom violence and school-related stress.

However, Principal Marina Scott does not believe the legislation passes the Lemon test, which states that legislation must have a secular purpose, cannot promote or inhibit religious practices and cannot entangle church and state.

"When I was looking at the moment of silence legislation, I thought, 'Does this have a secular purpose?'" Scott said. "[The moment of silence legislation] encourages prayer."

Scott does acknowledge the benefits but believes the new legislation is not necessary.

"I would like to be able to reserve the right to have a moment of silence over the P.A. when somebody's passed away," Scott said. "However, to some extent, I do think doing it every day is in violation of the law."

Since 1969, teachers and schools have been allowed to engage students in a brief moment of silence at the beginning of the day.

Senior Anna Koepke says that the new law obligating a moment of silence is redundant.

"I don't understand the purpose of having a legislation like this if it is not fully enforced," Koepke said.

The District 211 Board of Education is addressing guidelines to determine how to implement this law.

interesting places Hays has visited, he still faces a major challenge—language.

"Chinese is very difficult. For one thing, there are thousands of characters. Also, the tonal nature of the language makes pronunciation difficult for foreigners. I have improved some, but it will be a year-long challenge," Hays said.

Both students and faculty alike look forward to Hays' return.

Senior Matt Bloomstrand says the school is not the same without Hays.

"Mr. Hays really brightened up eighth hour with stories that related to people our age. He really taught math class in a fun, different way. I miss all the jokes he used to make," Bloomstrand said.

Hays was granted a leave of absence and will return to Fremd next year.

"We are really looking forward to him coming back," Principal Marina Scott said. "I hope that he will be able to share his experiences and incorporate them into what he teaches and what he communicates to his students and his fellow teachers."

Hays is looking forward to sharing his experiences.

"I'm actually very excited to return. I miss Fremd very much. It is the interactions with the people there that I miss most," Hays said. "Chinese students are nice, but they do not compare to the wonderful students at Fremd."