

# What Teachers May See

**As part of a class assignment, several students from McMaster's Social Work 4B03 class (Adult Family Violence), created some case studies for teachers to help increase their awareness about the ways that being exposed to woman abuse in the home can impact a child's learning in school. Here are some excerpts from their case studies:**

## **Charlotte, Grade 7**

He accused my mom of having an affair with one of her coworkers. He pushed her, threw her to the ground, and hit her across the head. Finally, he threw her into the brick wall at the side of our house, hitting her repeatedly. When she did not get up, he suddenly quit and went into the house. It took weeks for her injured body and her many bruises to heal. I now recognize that I would never tell my friends or my teachers of his behaviour. As I could not sleep at night, I would fall asleep in classes, which eventually impacted my grades in school. Around that time, I was diagnosed with depression and became suicidal for the first time.

## **Jessica, Grade 8**

Jessica is South Asian and is the eldest sibling from a middle class family. Her parents are refugees from Cambodia. About two months ago, Jessica saw her father violently attack her mother from the stairwell. He proceeded to slap, push, and spit on her mother. This abuse has now become a regular pattern in her home affecting her sleep, eating habits and emotional state. Jessica begged her mother to go to the police or leave but her response was that she could not go to the police because they will be alienated from their community. It is a private matter that would bring shame to the family because of the negative stigma attached to reporting abuse based on traditional Asian culture and values.

## **John, Grade 4**

At school John is well liked and has a large group of friends. He has also shown an early talent in soccer. His grades are average; he behaves in class and is helpful towards his teachers. He seems to be a happy child who is well adjusted. However, at the beginning of Grade 4 he came back from summer holidays a changed boy. He would daydream in class, his grades steadily declined, and he quit the soccer team. He constantly stayed after class to help his teacher and would become sad when she left to go home. Additionally, he became withdrawn and docile when his mother picked him up from school.

## **Jacob, Grade 3**

When I was having nightmares or difficulty sleeping, I would lie in bed and hear my mom screaming, knowing my parents were fighting and that my dad had hit her. At recess I would be caught fighting with other classmates, and my teacher said to me that my continued aggressive behaviour would get me suspended from school. I began feeling sick more often with bad stomach aches, so I stayed home from school some days.

## **Sebastian, Grade 4**

I am writing this letter of apology for hitting John because you told me to. You said if I don't stop hitting then I am going to have to go to a different class. That is NOT fair because he made me mad because he made fun of my clothes. It is NOT my fault that my pants are from a village because my dad lost his job and my mom says she can't afford anything better even though I begged! You got me in trouble at home when you call to say I've been bad. My dad yelled at my mom and told her it was all her fault even though I'm the one who didn't keep my hands to myself like you said. In my home the man is the king of his castle and dad said a true man takes what he wants without whatever force necessary. So I had to punch John because he didn't listen when I told him to leave me alone.

## **Trevor, Grade 4**

At home, Trevor's father is physically and verbally abusive to his mother. Any small issue is taken out on his mother. It is evident that Trevor is learning how to be violent from witnessing this behaviour in the house. When his father calls his mother names and hits her, she surrenders and gives him what he wants. Trevor has learned