(http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)
Search
You are viewing this article in the AnnArbor.com archives. For the latest breaking news and updates in Ann Arbor and the surrounding area, see MLive.com/ann-arbor (http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

Posted on Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 5:55 a.m.

Q&A with Joan Doughty: Denying children an education is the wrong way to teach a lesson

By Lucy Ann Lance

While the Ann Arbor Public Schools district has indicated it is not policy to send home students who have unpaid fines, it apparently did happen to a number of students at Pioneer High School at the start of the school year.

This has sparked a community conversation concerning the impact of poverty on education, a topic of which **Joan Doughty** is passionate. She is executive director of Community Action Networ (http://www.hvcn.org/info/can/)k (CAN), which provides assistance to low-income families through Ann Arbor's four community centers, Hikone, Bryant, Northside, and Green Baxter Court.

Dean Erskine and I talked with Doughty on 1290 WLBY about how a high school junior who lives in public housing at Hikone found herself at home on the first day of classes. CAN ended up paying the fines to get the student back in school that day.

Doughty: She tried to register and was told she had outstanding book obligations. She had lost two books and was told she couldn't register and couldn't attend school unless she paid them. She knew that her dad wouldn't get paid until that Friday. She was sent to the principal and she was told, "Well, then you need to get out of my school and go home." She was obviously pretty humiliated. She had come to school on the school bus and didn't know how she was going to get home, but she found change and did take the AATA bus home.

Joan Doughty is the executive director of the Community Action Network (CAN), which provides assistance to low-income families through Ann Arbor's four community centers.

Lucy Ann: The parents were never called and told, "Your child is being sent home?"

Doughty: Her mother doesn't have a working phone, but the school didn't check in with her to see what was going to happen after that.

Lucy Ann: They didn't inquire how she was going to get home?

(http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)
Search
You are viewing this article in the AnnArbor.com archives. For the latest breaking news and updates in Ann Arbor and the surrounding area, see MLive.com/ann-arbor (http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

Doughty: No, and in fact I found out later that the same thing happened to one of the kids we work with at the Bryant Community Center. He was sent home twice on the same day. He went to register and apparently he didn't have his mother's signature. This is a kid who definitely has some challenges, he has cerebral palsy, and he left the school and took the AATA bus home, got his mom to sign the registration forms, got a ride with a friend of the family back to school and said, "Ok, here is my registration form." Then he was told, "Oh wait, you have a book obligation" and was sent home a second time.

Lucy Ann: I can't imagine sending a child home for something as simple as not paying a fine.

Doughty: There were other ways to deal with it, and this is the first day of school. It's when you meet your teachers, when they tell you what your expectations are going to be for the school year. When I paid the fine, there were two women who were helping me and I did say, "So, were there other kids sent home?" They said, "We sent about 10 kids home." And then they held up a large packet of papers and said, "We would have sent these kids home if they had come." There were about 30 other kids who didn't pay their obligations, but they didn't come to school. We say that education is the ticket out of poverty and here is a kid who is trying to get an education and takes her school seriously.

Lucy Ann: There's got to be a better way to handle this. School policy stipulates that you cannot register if you have these outstanding obligations, and you have to be registered to be in school.

Doughty: One of the books had been missing for two years and she's not denying that she lost the books. The parents say that they didn't receive any notifications of any missing school books. We could debate whether that's true, but the means of communication are dependent on electronic notification, then phone. The way they reach parents is they call them and e-mail them, and a lot of the parents of the students that I serve don't have reliable phone service and they don't have e-mail.

Lucy Ann: Community Action Network is a remarkable resource. You do so much. Did I hear you say that you paid that fine for the student?

Doughty: Yeah, but there were at least another eight or 10 students that didn't have CAN, and what about those students? How did they get back in school?

Lucy Ann: In an earlier AnnArbor.com article Liz Margolis, director of communications for the Ann Arbor Public Schools, is quoted as saying that Pioneer Principal Michael White said he did not send students home for outstanding obligations. It does disturb me that there's a difference of opinion as to what went down, but Mr. White wants people to take personal responsibility. He wants his school well-run. There's a lot to be said about instilling a sense of personal responsibility in students, and if you have to have paid your fines, that's a good learning lesson for students. What's wrong with that?

Doughty: Nothing. Except the price that they pay should not be their education.

Lucy Ann: There's a larger issue that we're getting to and that is this economic disparity and what it does to students and their education.

Doughty: Exactly. That's the point that I've been trying to make, but of course the media focus on this one particular incident, which is provocative. The larger picture is that the Ann Arbor Public Schools graduation rate for low-income students in 2009 was 63.4 percent. That's nothing to be proud of, and Washtenaw County does worse; it's 57.7 percent.

(http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)
Search
You are viewing this article in the AnnArbor.com archives. For the latest breaking news and updates in Ann Arbor and the surrounding area, see MLive.com/ann-arbor (http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

Lucy Ann: Do you think when it comes to the achievement gap and identifying students who need extra services, extra help, in order to be able to graduate, that the issue is poverty and not necessarily race?

Doughty: I really wish the conversation was elevated to a point where we say, "Why aren't we doing whatever it takes to make sure that all our students are graduating?" I know that at some point you do have to subdivide and say, "Ok, what's going on for different groups?" But it doesn't seem to be an overall mission to make sure that all students are graduating.

Erskine: A student who loses a book, did they do anything about it? Did they think that it would just go away if they ignored it? And if they did, isn't that showing a lack of discipline, and if you have a lack of discipline, how can you get a good education?

Doughty: If our kids don't graduate from high school, guess what? They're not going to be self-sufficient adults. So guess whose responsibility they're going to be then? Ours. If she had felt that she would be able to work it off by helping in the cafeteria or the library or any other way, she definitely would have gone for that option. I know these individuals. These are not kids that want to be failures, not adults that want to live off welfare. They don't want to be a burden to society. They want to be self-sufficient, but these are the little things that happen along the way during their education and they're not made to feel very welcome. I really hope that Ann Arbor Public Schools looks at what are the bigger challenges that students face. Those students who are not graduating, what is going on in their life? I know a lot of it goes along with the challenges that are part of being a family with low-income. I agree with Dean that you don't want to foster this idea that, "Ok, you're poor so you don't have to pay." That's not the point that I was trying to make. The point was, please don't make them pay with the one thing that we say is going to be the ticket out of there, their education.

Lucy Ann: We have to inspire students, we have to make them want to achieve, we have to get them excited about school, and sending them home isn't the way to do that. There are other ways that this could have been handled.

Doughty: I think at the Ann Arbor Public Schools' administration there's agreement about that. I think they're sort of fumbling with this because I honestly didn't start with taking this to the media. I brought it to the attention of the school district.

Lucy Ann: Our community centers are fantastic places, providing homework help, a place for these students to feel safe, and to be able to excel. I think what goes on there is just marvelous.

Doughty: Thank you. I love going to the centers and I also make sure that the students have dinner at night. We do a lot of eviction prevention, DTE shutoff prevention, and a lot of community building. Last week we were going by everybody's houses to make every single parent aware of curriculum night. We go to every parent individually and say, "You're going, right? Do you need a ride? Do you need child care?"

Lucy Ann: Giving them the resources they need in order for their students to excel. Doughty: Research shows that when parents and schools have good relationships, students do better. So we do our part to bring those two parties together. A lot of our parents did not have very positive school experiences

(http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)
Search
You are viewing this article in the AnnArbor.com archives. For the latest breaking news and updates in Ann Arbor and the surrounding area, see MLive.com/ann-arbor (http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

themselves, so they're not super enthusiastic about going to school necessarily. We need to make sure that every parent feels welcome and that every parent understands that this is the new responsibility that comes along with being a parent.

Lucy Ann Lance and Dean Erskine co-own Lance & Erskine Communications, which produces "The Lucy Ann Lance Business Insider" (M-F, 8 a.m.-11 a.m.) and "The Lucy Ann Lance Show" (Saturdays, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.) on 1290 WLBY. The programs are live streamed at www.1290WLBY.com (http://www.1290WLBY.com), and podcast on www.lucyannlance.com (http://www.lucyannlance.com). The above interview is a condensed version of a longer conversation that is edited for clarity. The complete audio interview is posted online at www.lucyannlance.com (http://www.lucyannlance.com).

Comments

AMOC

Mon, Sep 26, 2011 : 1:40 a.m.

Sending students, especially handicapped or emotionally vulnerable students or students without their own transportation, home without actually interacting with the parents is a major mistake and SHOULD NOT be happening in AAPS, no matter how old or young the student is. But it does happen, regularly. The Principals at many AAPS schools regularly violate the PBIS guidelines and/or district-created behavior plans for their students. Nor do they keep appropriate records of the time that students are removed from classes, which is a violation of a number of civil rights regulations. Further, the record keeping in the high school book depositories is terrible, and students are often not informed for a year or more after a book was due to be returned that the book was not turned in / they have a fine. So, ERMG, you need to re-think your comment that the problem had been known for 2 years; the student in this story may have been completely surprised by the existence of the fine, or astonished by the amount of it.

Mark Quigley

Sun, Sep 25, 2011 : 1:11 p.m.

It is a shame that the BOE and the AAPS can't figure out how to solve library fines, proper bus routes or restitution for $766,000 spent in 2010 on 205 ineligible dependents who received health care benefits. Why are we sending kids home for a library fine? Why aren't we able to pick them up in a bus and get them to school and why aren't we sending home over 150 employees who participated in the theft and fraud of health care benefits? Don't send the kids home; collect the monies due the taxpayers and children and deposit those dollars into the General Fund. Solve your problems, AAPS Dr Green.

Cendra Lynn

Sun, Sep 25, 2011 : 7:11 a.m.

(http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)
Search
You are viewing this article in the AnnArbor.com archives. For the latest breaking news and updates in Ann Arbor and the surrounding area, see MLive.com/ann-arbor (http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

"If you have a lack of discipline how can you get a good education?" This is a real question??? Education is not about discipline. Education is about learning about the world and finding your passion. Learning cannot take place under duress. Learning can not happen when one is demeaned. Learning takes excitement, interest, joy. Learning happens naturally in everyone when their environment allows it. We(psychologists) have proven time and again that punishment teaches nothing. Positively reinforcing the wanted behavior is how to get that behavior repeated. This incident shows a severe lack of education in the school administration. The effects of punishment or positive reinforcement were already known when they got their post-secondary education. What were they learning?

cette

Sun, Sep 25, 2011 : 4:19 p.m.

Actually, true punishment will mean that something will never ever happen again, and that's actually hard to do and is often quite unethical. Like sticking you're hand on a fire and getting the burned What happens is what an adult thinks is punishment is actually a reinforcer of behavior,,,

cette

Sun, Sep 25, 2011 : 12:03 p.m.

There's ways, but that's the point. The principal isn't using them. He sends kids home instead, kind of worthless behavior management. Now, he's been told better, but he's choosing not to implement the school's new policy.

A2centsworth

Sun, Sep 25, 2011 : 7:41 a.m.

@Cedra Lynn- How are my children suppose to learn when there is no discipline in the classroom? They are in classes with students that show no respect for the teachers, disturb the other children, and slow down the learning process for everyone because the teachers have to constantly reprimand them. Learning cannot happen naturally in that setting. The school administrators have to deal with these children on a daily basis. Positive reinforcement only goes so far. Students need to show respect for others as well as themselves. How do you propose to teach them that if our society is constantly lowering the standard of behavior?

tom swift jr.

Sun, Sep 25, 2011 : 3:34 a.m.

As the director of a small nonprofit agency, I'm often encouraged by my Board to seek some on-line media attention regarding our programs. My response is always: "Whatever good may be stated by an article about what we do will be offset X2 by the comments that follow it. Accusations, lies, mis-information, attacks and defamation... It just isn't worth it." Joan, you do good work, don't take these comments to heart.

KeepingItReal

Sun, Sep 25, 2011 : 5:10 p.m.

(http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

Search

You are viewing this article in the AnnArbor.com archives. For the latest breaking news and updates in Ann Arbor and the surrounding area, see MLive.com/ann-arbor (http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

Tom: Your attitude is a prime example why fewer people are willing to support non-profits. Can Doughty show any examples of how her program have enriched the lives of the population she serves other than providing food programs and the like. Show one kid that have gone on to greater heights as a result of being exposed to her program have you ever heard the degrading comments that Doughty makes about the parents and kids she serves? A good example of a program that help kids to develop their potential is the Peace Neighborhood Center.

Sparty

Sun, Sep 25, 2011 : 2:38 a.m.

I don't know where some of you are coming from. Education is a legally established right, not a privilege, and it can not be denied at the whim of a rogue administrator without appropriate policies granting him or her that authority by the school board. Of course the boards actions can be legally challenged. This case should be challenged for trying to illegally make a minor responsible for debts at school that only a parent can be held accountable for, and for sending children home without parental notification thereby creating huge liability issues. These are minors whether you choose to acknowledge it or not. If they were your darlings I'm sure you'd have some concerns, especially if they have cerebral palsy, other health conditions, or you might be concerned about a rapist running around town.

A2centsworth

Sun, Sep 25, 2011 : 6:32 a.m.

Joan Doughty stirred up a hornets nest with half truths and very little facts. She made statements from hearsay, without naming her source, and for all we know made up the story about the disabled child as well. If any child comes to school unprepared, is disrespectful, unruly, wearing inappropriate clothing, carrying a weapon or any of a number of infractions, they should be sent home. They may have a right to an education, but they do not have the right to disturb everyone else, loose resource materials and be disrespectful. Mr. White is attempting to teach these students self reliance, self respect and Responsibility. It is about time someone in this town is taking on that tough task.

NewA2Mom

Sun, Sep 25, 2011 : 12:33 a.m.

I think that Ms. Doughty is doing great work by giving a voice to low income people! But in this particular instance, there is something more than a low-income/middle-income issue with regard to access to education or book fines. From my personal experience with Pioneer and Mr. White: Mr. White oversteps his legal authority regularly. My child was kicked out of the school by Himself for NO other reason than my child was failing 2 of the 7 classes attempted. My child was a new student, recently moved into the area, had no friends and had an acknowledged disability. No behavior or truancy issues at all. To say the least it was a difficult time for all of us and we just went along with sending him an alternative school for the balance of the year. When we attempted to re-register at Pioneer this year, we were told by members of his staff that he said specifically, that my

(http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)
Search
You are viewing this article in the AnnArbor.com archives. For the latest breaking news and updates in Ann Arbor and the surrounding area, see MLive.com/ann-arbor (http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

child was not allowed to come back to the school. No way! I had to jump through hoops, call the Superintendent's office speaking to the Asst. Supt. several times (no help), threaten legal action and finally got Liz Margolis who, exasperated for the situation, had to get to the bottom of this, all the while no one would acknowledge the real problem; that Mr. White illegally denied and tried to continue to deny my child an education! No repercussions?! One day someone will sue. It has been worked out for us now but we now know that we are not the only family that had to deal with this type of situation. I hope someone gets control of this rogue administrator. There needs to be a balance between teaching responsibility and "coddling". These are real young people we are talking about, not lazy teenagers or uncaring parents. Let's stop labelling one another and show some empathy. P.S. A2CentsWorth: School is NOT a privilege, it is a RIGHT. And no, this is not an exaggeration and there is not more to the story.

cette

Sun, Sep 25, 2011 : 11:59 a.m.

You misunderstand something I am trying to say. Bad behavior persists because of mishandling of children by the adults. It needs to be addressed and fixed, but the way to effect change is by selecting the right consequences. That's where the Principal is failing, and when he fails, children fail right along with his actions.

A2centsworth

Sun, Sep 25, 2011 : 6:24 a.m.

No, I am not mean, just being fair. Excuses and special allowances are welfare thinking, instead of learning autonomy. Regarding A2mom, How can a child with a learning disability succeed in a class of 30 kids? I have seen autistic children screaming out loud and banging their heads on the desks because they could not handle the regular classroom activity. This helps no one. It slows down the learning for the rest of the class, and ostracizes the disabled child from their classmates. Once out of school all students will be thrust in the real world. Whether they go to college, work in McDonalds or learn a trade, they have to be responsible and not rely on excuses and special treatment. Mr White scares the fragile sensibilities of Ann Arborites because they are clueless to the reality outside this sleepy little Midwestern town. Folks, there is a big world out there, and you are doing your children a disservice by teaching them to whine. In my house we have a saying, What do whiners get? the answer is a loud "nothing". Wake up, not every person is equal, otherwise we would all be getting the same paygrade. You cannot raise people up unless they see upward mobility as their only choice.

cette

Sun, Sep 25, 2011 : 1:58 a.m.

It's just crazy, I found the blog PioneerUncovered where it just chronicles the principal's ways.

cette

Sun, Sep 25, 2011 : 1:09 a.m.

Wow, you're kind of...mean.

A2centsworth

Sun, Sep 25, 2011 : 12:44 a.m.

(http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

Search

You are viewing this article in the AnnArbor.com archives. For the latest breaking news and updates in Ann Arbor and the surrounding area, see MLive.com/ann-arbor (http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

There are always two sides to a story, and whereas, as the parent you are certainly correct to fight for your child, I truly feel that being in school with other children demands that a child obey certain rules, and if they cannot, they do not belong there. This "no child left behind" attitude reduces education to the lowest common denominator, and therefore those children that put forth effort, behave, get their work done, bring their books back are the ones that suffer. Perhaps if your child had a disability preventing him from passing his classes, he should be placed in a situation where he can succeed. Life is not about making allowances and excuses but about challenging ourselves to reach higher and expand our horizons. Hooray for Mr. White who has not knuckled under the ridiculous attitudes of people who cannot see the forest for the trees.

Sparty

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 6:25 p.m.

I still say it should be illegal, if it isn't, to send a child home unattended by their parent to a possibly unsupervised situation. Thank goodness there were no safety issues and no liability issues created as a result of these actions. For goodness sakes, one of these kids has cerebral palsy and was forced to travel alone! There is a sick individual out there attacking women that has not been caught, and the school is sending teenagers home alone ? And posters here are focused on teaching the TEENAGER a lesson? WHAT about the principal? Education was denied, school aged children were held responsible for debts that only an adult can be held responsible for legally, and I find it hard to believe that further legal action won't be taken as a result of the foolhardy actions taken at this school. If I was one of the parents, I would be on turning this into a media circus, with the ACLU, legal claims, etc. due to the fear raised by one of my children being put at potential harm.

Edward R Murrow's Ghost

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 8:27 p.m.

It was the first day of school. She missed nothing. Tempest in a Teapot. GN&GL

KeepingItReal

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 8:18 p.m.

I don't think that education was denied. I think the student got a good lesson in life one that is often missing among our cuddled teen. Doughty is the one that should be challenged on this because I question her motives toward the principal and her integrity in turning to the media to create this story.

A2centsworth

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 7:54 p.m.

(http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)
Search
You are viewing this article in the AnnArbor.com archives. For the latest breaking news and updates in Ann Arbor and the surrounding area, see MLive.com/ann-arbor (http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

How utterly ridiculous, you are talking about a 17 yr old, not a child. I see 12 and 13 yr old kids walking around downtown all the time without parents. Taking the transit bus home is commonplace and looking at Ms Doughty's other statements in the article it is safe to say she is lying, or at least exaggerating the truth to a large extent. Some people want to cry foul at every turn, yet complain about the lack of responsibility in todays youth. School is a privilege. A student must obey all the rules to attend, this is no different.

A2centsworth

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 4:53 p.m.

Mr. Doughty's intent is questionable. No one was "denied" an education. How ridiculous her statements are. She is looking for a platform for her own interests. Her statement saying the school only notifies via phone and email are incorrect. Pioneer High School is efficient in its use of the postal system, and mails notices to parents. This is not about poverty, it is the lack of responsibility and the need for attitude adjustments. Everyone regardless of minority or poverty status has the same education available to them here in Ann Arbor. It is people like Doughty who wants special allowances and makes excuses that create the attitude of entitlement. This same mentality that created "African American Parents Day", to make the black families feel welcomed. Well excuse me! Why isn't it PARENTS DAY, as we are all parents regardless of the color of our skin. Why single out one race and tell them they have to have a special day so they feel equal? They are already equal. How insulting to them! High school juniors and seniors with jobs are not unheard of. Insisting students do their homework, is a good thing. How will these young adults fare in the real world without the Ms. Doughtys to bail them out of messes due to their lazy irresponsible behavior. Educational gap? My child is being penalized when students do not do their homework or take on their responsibility during group projects, and disturb the class because they do not have the manners to sit and be quiet. I support Mr. White. He is preparing them for the world when they will have to do their work or get fired. Unless one puts forth the effort, one cannot expect a return. With all of Ms Doughty's counseling these students all they seem to be learning they are exempt from the rules because they come from disadvantaged homes.

A2centsworth

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 8:07 p.m.

"politically correct" is just another way of bowing down to the lowest common denominator and giving every group a chance to moan, whine and complain. No thank you! There is something to be said for saying it like it is and being HONEST!

local

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 5:11 p.m.

Wow, I agree with you totally, but I will see how long it will take to have your comments removed because someone doesn't think you were being politically correct.

DBH

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 4:48 p.m.

(http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)
Search
You are viewing this article in the AnnArbor.com archives. For the latest breaking news and updates in Ann Arbor and the surrounding area, see MLive.com/ann-arbor (http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

In all of the discussions about accountability on the part of the students and their parents, I have not seen addressed the discrepancy between Margolis's statement that Principal White has said he does not send students home for outstanding obligations, and the fact that the student in the original story (and, apparently, about 10 other kids) was sent home due to her outstanding obligation. Is it Principal White's policy to do so, or isn't it, and how do Margolis and White explain the discrepancy? I see no accountability, anyone taking responsibility, for this contradiction between the two.

kms

Sun, Sep 25, 2011 : 3:02 a.m.

I, too, am disturbed by this discrepancy. What really happened at Pioneer? Were 10 kids sent home or not? Does Mr. White confirm or deny this>

Peter Eckstein

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 4:15 p.m.

Congratulations to Joan and CAN for advocating for humane treatment of children who (I don't want to shock anyone) sometimes still act like children. School should be a positive experience, especially from Day 1, and the punitive reaction of this school only serve to undermine a child's attachment to the place and encourage dropping out as soon as possible.

A2centsworth

Sun, Sep 25, 2011 : 6:45 a.m.

This girl is 16. She is not a child. At that age I was going to school, working 20 hours a week, sewing my own clothing on my grandmothers treadle machine, and watching my three siblings on a daily basis. I walked a mile and a half to and from school each day, rain, snow or shine, as we did not have a car, and what clothing we did buy was from a rummage sale of used clothing. We were happy to have them, and cut out our rich friends name labels from their summer camp clothing. I respected my teachers and if I didn't have milk money, drank water. I did not whine that others had more than me, we made do. What you put into an experience, you get out of it. I have a college education because I worked and paid for it. I had respect for myself and others. What Joan Doughty is doing is taking away the self esteem and pride of all these students, by teaching them that because they do not have as much as others, they should be treated differently, given special exceptions and they do not have to be responsible for their actions. She is weakening an entire generation with her do-gooder attitude, and taking away their ability to be motivated to succeed.

average joe

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 7:18 p.m.

I don't believe the age of this student could be described as a "child". If she is old enough to be part time employed, she is not part of that group.

justcary

(http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)
Search
You are viewing this article in the AnnArbor.com archives. For the latest breaking news and updates in Ann Arbor and the surrounding area, see MLive.com/ann-arbor (http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 4:02 p.m.

NOT ONE from ANY OF YOU. 15 comments, and NOT ONE idea as to how this problem of irresponsibility, bookkeeping, accountability, parent contact-ability (including family avoidance of school contact in many cases, school employee speaking from experience here) COULD BE HANDLED DIFFERENTLY without adding further cost to the massive losses that the schools take when students do not return materials. I think it was handled quite reasonably and quite precisely like a college would handle the problem. LANCE and DOUGHTY have conflated a day denied at school with denying students access to education. This is irresponsible and inflammatory. Mr Murrow issued the first reasonable comment I've ever read from him: "...'depriving a student of their education' is using hyperbole in a public forum." Roberto Clemente Center sends students home for simple behavioral choices, and they can because it's a privilege for students to have access to that center. They screw up too much, they go back to the big schools to flail. This is not denying education ladies! It's teaching responsibility. I'm disappointed in these two community leaders. How noble of CAN to pay the fine. Why not help this child get her act together instead? Where were you when this child was preparing to start her learning year? How about paying her bus fare to get to registration where this could have been ironed out?

cette

Sun, Sep 25, 2011 : 12:55 p.m.

Oh, there's lots of ideas, but the administration at the school has to be open to implementing them. You illustrate exactly the point, failure leads to more failure.

Edward R Murrow's Ghost

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 8:21 p.m.

First reasonable comment? Wow. Thanks for the back-handed slap. I'll have to re-think what I've posted. GN&GL

cette

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 3:50 p.m.

@Ghost, I like your commentary and think you have good ideas, but this is not just a tempest in the teapot. It reflects how not to manage problems. The BOE spent so much money on the Superintendent to help close the achievement gap, and she has said that's what she wants to do. The district was being watchdogged by the DOJ for having so many minority kids in special ed and because their rates of suspension and expulsion, especially of minorities were so high. That's why they consult PEG. So keeping kids in school and learning is supposed to be the priority, and using Positive Behavior Support is supposed to be how they achieve it. I don't think Principal White got that memo. When the Principal, who supposed to help with these matters, sends kids home for something that a) should have been dealt with a long time ago b) should have been dealt with while keeping kids in schools, it is noteworthy. It's kind of a core problem in the district. Kids at home aren't learning much, except what it took to get taken out of school.

cette

(http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)
Search
You are viewing this article in the AnnArbor.com archives. For the latest breaking news and updates in Ann Arbor and the surrounding area, see MLive.com/ann-arbor (http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 9:15 p.m.

I know it doesn't seem like a big deal to you and the girl will live,(I say dryly)that's the good news. But it is important, for kids,all kinds of kids, in all kinds of situations, that the right consequence be chosen so that the right behavior gets rewarded, and consequences chosen by adults do not make situations worse.

Edward R Murrow's Ghost

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 8:51 p.m.

This behavior had been going on for two years. This very minor punishment resulted in the fine being paid almost immediately. Seems to me that there is no problem here. Rather than blaming the school for finding the solution to the problem, it seems to me that Ms. Doughty's time and energy would be better spent working with the family to figure out why it took two years and being sent home from school to solve this problem. GN&GL

cette

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 8:37 p.m.

What I am saying is to change behavior, the district now runs Postive Behavior Support. That means, in order to get the child, even older children, to behave the way you want them, to, staff uses positive reinforcers for the behavior they want to see happen. It was, and any one can correct me if I'm wrong, something the school had to do, to get out of being monitored by the DOJ.

cette

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 8:35 p.m.

No, not at all. Sending kids home is a problem if you want to keep kids in school. Doesn't matter the color.

Edward R Murrow's Ghost

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 8:26 p.m.

The original article is at: http://www.annarbor.com/news/pioneer-high-students-say-there-were-sent-home-from-school-over-book-fines/ No mention of race in the article, and (forgive me) nothing in the rather poor picture suggests this child is of a racial minority. But interesting that someone wants to make an issue of (what they think is) her race. GN&GL

Edward R Murrow's Ghost

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 8:19 p.m.

Was not aware it was a minority student and don't know what difference it makes. Are you suggesting that it is OK to send home white students who had had fines unpaid for two years but that it is not appropriate for students of color? Nonsense. Good Night and Good Luck

KeepingItReal

(http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 2:36 p.m.

Search

You are viewing this article in the AnnArbor.com archives. For the latest breaking news and updates in Ann Arbor and the surrounding area, see Mlive.com/ann-arbor (http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

This whole situation could have been handled much differently has Doughty choose to pursue it. Instead, she choose to go to the media and turn this matter into a full blown conflict between CAN and the school and between administrators that will create barriers for healthy interactions in the future. There are many disadvantages and inequities that low-income students face in school, but teaching them to be dependent and irresponsible will not help them at all. Why couldn't Doughty engage the student and school administrators in a process to arrive at a mutually acceptable plan for the student to pay the fine and get on with school. This would have been a much more effective way to teach the student some life problem solving skills that would serve her well not only at school but in other areas of life as well. I'm troubled by her statement that "there were about 30 other kids who didn't pay their obligations, but they didn't come to school." Why weren't these kids in school and whose responsibility was it to see that they were in school? That's to me a much more important issue than CAN paying a fine for a student.

janofmi

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 2:33 p.m.

How can kids learn if they are denied access to the learning. The students should be held responsible for the books, but sending them home the first day of school was inexusable. I bet if these kids were from some of the more financially able familes thier lawyers would have been at the throats of AAPS for denying their kids the right to a free education (This case law, i believe, came form an Ann Arbor lawsuit)

justcary

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 3:54 p.m.

They learn by being denied access to something they believe is important enough to show up for, which school was for this girl.

John A2

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 2:31 p.m.

WOW, what happened to the schools obligation to teach these children. If the kids have money they owe then make them pay for their books before they get them next time. I do like the idea of making them responsible, but make them do community labor for the fines incurred.

justcary

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 3:53 p.m.

Only an idiot would that forced labor is an answer to this issue. It costs more to administer community labor than the benefit received. Schools can no longer assign work details, such as a wall washing detail for a graffiti vandal because it smacks of incarceration or enslavement or humiliation.

You are viewing this article in the Ann Arbor.com archives. For the latest breaking news and updates in Ann Arbor and the surrounding area, see MLive.com/ann-arbor (http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

And what is even worse that depriving a student of their education is using hyperbole in a public forum. This young woman was not deprived of an education. She was sent home on the FIRST day of school (little educating happening that day) due to a problem she had failed to address over a TWO YEAR period. Sending her home was meant to evoke a response that had not been forthcoming over that TWO YEAR period. And we wonder why we have a generation of younger people who appear to believe the rules don't apply to them. It's no mystery to me. Every time they break the rules and they then suffer the consequences for their actions, there are parents, friends, family, etc .... all too ready to say that they were being picked on because they were (multiple choice: rich, poor, black, white, yellow, gay, straight, fat, thin, nerdy, stupid, etc.....). This is a tempest in a teapot. She paid the fine. She missed the first day of school. She's back in school. Hopefully she learned there are consequences for her actions. Good Night and Good Luck

Tony Livingston

Sun, Sep 25, 2011 : 2:14 a.m.

I don't agree. Lots of kids lose books. The difference is that if parents have money, they just pay for it. If parents don't have money, it becomes a problem. There are more and more fees that are required at public schools as budgets are cut. It is not a problem for families with money. It is a big problem for families on very tight budgets.

Skyjockey43

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 9:08 p.m.

Up is down, black is white, dogs and cats are living together, and I suddenly agree wholeheartedly with everything ERMG just said. Welcome to Bizarro World. Personal responsibility is going the way of the Dodo Bird. Keep making excuses for bad behavior and then sit back, and wonder why this country is swirling slowly down the drain

njoy1

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 2:10 p.m.

Before Principal White left for military duty (2yrs ago) he had a policy that if a child did not have his homework ready she would be removed from class. (I do not know is this is still true.) This was enforced by "homework monitors" who who would enter randomly selected classes. The teacher would have to tell who did not do the assigned work- and the student would be removed from class. Many teachers did not support this practice. Everybody makes choices. And there should be reasonable consequences for these choices. The penalty for no homework should be reflected in the course grade. Removal from class only means the student now misses the content AND the next assignment. The penalty for poor grades-- how about a supervised study hall? (There is not a study hall option amongst electives at Pioneer.) It takes supreme self-confidence to calmly stand up for oneself, especially to an adult. Youth without that confidence are at a significant disadvantage in any school structure. And that IS developmentally normal. At the

(http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)
Search
You are viewing this article in the AnnArbor.com archives. For the latest breaking news and updates in Ann Arbor and the surrounding area, see MLive.com/ann-arbor (http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

same time, I suggest that it is irresponsible for the school to take advantage of the imbalance. By rigidly applying such rules, the school reinforces fear and shame which has kept too many people from completing compulsory education let alone going beyond. Who could ever believe a principal, teacher, or counselor who says, "I'm here to help. My door is always open." after such treatment? It is about mutual respect: for self, for others, and for the process of learning.

justcary

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 4:07 p.m.

Study halls cost money and do not move students toward meeting their stringent graduation requirements, as one cannot earn credit there. People with your views voted in a governor and legislature hostile to education, and tend to come up with ideas that cost more money. Why are so many readers rallying against an administrative decision that is cost-neutral and kicks a little butt?

sh1

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 2:22 p.m.

You say you don't know if this is "still" true. How did you hear about it in the first place? It does not ring true to me.

Gramma

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 2:01 p.m.

It appears that the disparity comes in due to unequal ability or willingness of a parent to pay off fines immediately. A stay at home mother of more means may receive a call from her child and hop in her car and drive over to the school and pay the fine. The child's sense of responsibility is never addressed. The financially well off teen may hop in his car, drive home, get the money from Mom and return to pay the fine. The child's sense of responsibility is never addressed. A teen of less means may not have access to money to pay the fine and borrows money from friends to catch the AATA home, requiring 2 buses and an hour and a half. At home, she goes to her room and searches yet again for the book. By the time her Mom arrives home from her part time job at Walmart, it is too late to go back to school. Mom has only enough money for her bus fare back and forth to work until she gets her next pay. The child misses 4 days of school and is deemed irresponsible. Do we need to look at our definition of responsibility?

AMOC

Mon, Sep 26, 2011 : 1:21 a.m.

A2centsworth - That the school "makes an effort via phone email AND postal mail" was not my experience when my oldest son was at Huron. The only notice of or information about a supposedly missing text book from his sophomore year (a class he had dropped before ever picking up a book from the depository, actually) was provided when he went to register for his senior year.

A2centsworth

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 6:02 p.m.

(http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

Search

you are forgetting that this child and her family had 2 years to take care of it. I do not believe there was no notification. The school makes efforts via phone, email AND postal mail to get in touch with families.

You are viewing this article in the AnnArbor.com archives. For the latest breaking news and updates in Ann Arbor and the surrounding area, see MLive.com/ann-arbor (http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

njoy1

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 1:32 p.m.

I attest that the school is rigid on the book issue; what they fail to recognize is that the book repository record keeping is inaccurate. Every year for the past 4 years, Pioneer has charged my son a fine for a total of 10 books. He did lose one book. Fortunately, hewas able to pay for it himself. He failed to turn in 5 books at the end of the year. Apparently one year he was allowed to keep them through finals; the book repository was not open when he went to return them; so he left. By this time we had figured out the system; just bring them back at registration. Of the 5 that he brought back, they only had a record of 3 missing. If you are keeping count with me, my son lost/kept 6 books. The book repository had a record of 4 of these. Yet they charged for 6 more that were later confirmed to have been turned in. Please imagine the verbal berating my son took the first year this happened before we realized that it was the school, and not him, that was disorganized! Within the month I get a note from the school that they found the books. We were due a refund.(Profound apologies to my son for not believing him.) Ironically, they require you to bring the original receipt for the lost book charge. I did not have it (the first time) and so sent my son to the office with the official note from school. They told him no receipt- no refund. I hit the roof! They have a record that we paid. They notify us of the error. And yet they still put it back on us to prove that we paid for the book for which they charged us. When I took time off to go into school myself (I had my cancelled check just in case I needed it), they were very accommodating and apologized for any inconvenience; and that my son must have misunderstood; because his story just doesn't make sense...(really?). On this issue, the default reaction from school is that the students screwed up. I just want to say that it goes both ways.

skigrl50

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 12:42 p.m.

My questions for CAN is if they are so active in getting low income parents and students engaged in the educational process, where were they in getting these families to high school registration 2 weeks before school started? Had this student gone to her scheduled registration this whole incident could have been cleared up before school started.

A2centsworth

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 6 p.m.

@janofmi isnt it your responsibility to figure it out? When my children moved into the AA school system, I called, got all the information needed and since my computer was not hooked up yet, went to the library to get other information, and also went to the school. I work full time, but they are MY children and it is MY responsibility. The more we make excuses the less self sufficient people think they need to be.

janofmi

(http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 2:39 p.m.

Search

You are viewing this article in the Ann Arbor archives. For the latest breaking news and updates in Ann Arbor and the surrounding area, see MLive.com/ann-arbor (http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

I reflect back to part of the interview where it stated that many low income familes do not have phone and email access. Also, it is a sad fact that low income families often are forced to move from one address to another. No matter what the reason, students and families often do not get the information about registration dates. When my kid was moved to AA schools he was late in registering because the information was not easy for us to access.

Elan

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 12:32 p.m.

Difficult topic... was the kid careless with his/her books? Was the parent adequately involved with the kid's education or is the kid pretty much on his/her own? Was the style of the principal's comments clouding the core message he was wanting to get across--- in all ways, be responsible!!! I can't judge from afar. What I do know is to be done properly in such a touchy area, each case be handled individually and in a supportive manner. No place for vertebrata or drama here at the expense of a child's feelings. They showed up!! to school and were not home like some other students were doing.

DBH

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 1:38 p.m.

"...vertebrata..."? The subphylum of which vertebrates are members? I don't understand.

cette

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 12:01 p.m.

Unfortunately, on the last article about this, the last thing was said was how poor kids don't get a break, which was completely missing the problem with sending kids home for book fines.The point is that the school should not deny access to the school for such an infraction. And in fact, the principals are charged with getting the achievement gap down, and suspensions and expulsions down by changing behavior using postive behavior support. Principal White totally blew it. And just how often does he send kids home? And for what? That's the story.

Ahmar Iqbal

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 11:57 a.m.

A book fine is not the only issue here, but also why was this fine not addressed for 2 years? Moreover the incident reveals how we address responsibility on the part of our schools, individuals and as a community. Last spring, for my 6th grade son, we received an e mail that so and so book is missing. After cleaning his room, we found it and he returned it to school. On the other hand, my 15 year old high school daughter forgot to return her novel in June and we went to the Huron book depository in July to return the book as she was told that registration would not be otherwise

(http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)
Search
You are viewing this article in the AnnArbor.com archives. For the latest breaking news and updates in Ann Arbor and the surrounding area, see MLive.com/ann-arbor (http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/)

possible. We as parents were not informed regarding my high school daughter's missing book. I guess the school system has different approaches for different age groups with more self responsibility towards the high schoolers and more interaction with the parents for younger kids. Seems fair and in line with the goals of developing character, responsibility and preparing kids to be responsible adults. At the same time, I certainly don't want my child coming home from school unannounced. Aside from the safety issue, parents should be informed and why this did not occur, should be examined. Notwithstanding other issues, access to a great education is a strong community value evident in many aspects of Ann Arbor schools. However, responsibility is also a two way street. Community Action Network's role in getting parents to curriculum night, etc. is wonderful. But at the end of the day, there is no substitute for parental involvement in their child's education development. CAN can not be the emergency contact and bail out a student every time. While education is a key out of poverty, a person's self motivation to use such resources needs to be addressed. Developing responsible individuals is a role that parents must be the LEAD on and of course schools and other community resources should encourage.

A2centsworth

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 4:19 p.m.

Bravo Mr. Iqbal! Eloquently put.

Gramma

Sat, Sep 24, 2011 : 1:46 p.m.

Not all parents are providing this support for a variety of reasons. A highly stressed single Mom working more than one job to put food on the table and pay the rent will have less time available to deal with lost books even if she is well intentioned. Some parents are irresponsible, but their children should not be further penalized by the schools for their parents lack of responsibility. Some teens are actually going to school and working as the sole support of their family, because a parent has a disability. When the parents will not or cannot take responsibility, the teen carries a heavy burden already.

Registration on or use of this site constitutes acceptance of our **User Agreement (http://www.mlive.com/useragreement/)** and **Privacy Policy (http://www.mlive.com/useragreement/)**

© 2013 MLive Media Group All rights reserved (**About Us (http://www.mlive.com/aboutus/)**). The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or otherwise used, except with the prior written permission of MLive Media Group