

November 19, 2011

To the members of the South ARC,

It is of utmost importance that I draw to your attention a situation which occurred a week and a half ago between my grandson, to whom I am legal guardian, and a teacher at a school which at this point will remain unnamed.

First of all, you need to know that until June of 2011 my grandson was a student at Mountain Secondary. He transferred to a local school in order to have access to special programs as he is very mechanically talented. He is on an IEP. **His IEP identifies him as a special needs student with comprehension and writing problems. This IEP gives him the entitlement to various accommodations including a scribe, extra time for processing, organizational assistance, and information chunked into manageable tasks. It says in his IEP that he needs a quiet setting in order to work and prompts to stay on task. It also says he needs to be near the teacher and have his work divided out into parts, one section at a time because of his comprehension processing problems.**

On November 9th I received a phone call from the teacher telling me about a verbal altercation between himself and my grandson after lunch that day. The teacher was extremely agitated and in fact was screaming at me. I had to hold the phone away from my ear in order to be able to listen to him. During that phone call, the teacher said to me that:

- 1) He had been teaching for many years, “even in the correctional system, not that I think he is there yet.”
- 2) My grandson had had five questions to do and had not completed his work. “Do you know how many he did? Four – just four. This is not acceptable.”
- 3) That he would put my grandson “so high up in the leaves with paper work that he would never touch a wrench again [at that school].”
- 4) That there was one of two things that could happen: that he would be put out of the class or put on a “leash”. The teacher explained that he meant that my grandson would be tracked from the moment he entered the school until he left the school each day. He made it clear that my grandson could not change classes as he was the only teacher of this class.

After I hung up the phone, I got a phone call from my grandson. He was very distraught; in fact, he was crying. Under my instructions, he came home immediately. This is what he told me:

1) The teacher was mad because my grandson did not understand the question. He had told the teacher three times that he did not understand the question. The teacher had him read the question out loud in front of the class. The teacher had then said, "If you can read it, you can understand it."

2) The teacher then asked him if "the baby needed a nap or his hand held?" The teacher then stated that "we do not do that at this school. I will send you back to where you came from."

This all occurred in front of the other students in the class.

Although I contacted the vice principal immediately, and asked to speak to the principal, it took over a week for me to get any response from the principal and only after I pursued the matter aggressively. In the meantime, my grandson missed this class for five days. As of the date of this letter, he still is not back in class. He has been spending the period in Learning Resource. He was given no class work to do there until I called and reported he had none.

There seem to be three issues here:

- First of all, the verbal abuse I endured from a teacher who only a few days before had given my grandson straight E's on his progress report. I had met with the teacher and all had been going well;

- Secondly, the verbal and emotional abuse that my grandson suffered in the hands of this teacher. He was treated with sarcasm. He was belittled. He was publically humiliated. If he had misbehaved in any way, shape or form, there is proper procedure to follow that does not include a verbal or emotional assault from the teacher. No child, particularly a vulnerable child with identified special needs, may be subjected to this kind of treatment. To allow this behaviour on the part of the teacher to go unchecked is a disgrace to the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and it goes against the board's pledge to provide "safe, inclusive and respectful places" for students to learn. It is clear to me that my grandson is not safe in that class;

-Thirdly, the fact that my grandson is on an IEP and is a former Mountain student should have been plenty of indication that accommodations were required for him to succeed. I understand the IEP is a legal document. **I understand that he is legally entitled to the accommodations as outlined in his Individualized Education Plan.** We are not talking about a problem in September. The term is half over and the teacher does not know his student.

The question remains, where is the "safe and nurturing inclusive environment" for my grandson?

I am still working with the school to straighten this out and with my grandson to make sure that he can return to a classroom in which he feels safe from ridicule and unfair expectation - from the *teacher*. This is an example of why integration does not work. Integration does not work if the teachers are not trained, if they are not selected properly, if they do not want to accept students with special needs, or if they are not properly supported.

I ask the South ARC to make recommendations for our special needs students that will ensure not only the best future but the best present for them as well. This is a time to show the public that we do listen

to the parents, that we do nurture our children, that we do look after those who need help learning to look after themselves.

Thank-you,

Beverly Bressette

Member, Mountain School Council

Parent representative, South ARC