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Conflict divides school officials, student

Student allegations probed by officials

"I have investigated to the 10th degree with all parties involved except the student."

"If I felt there was anything a staff person did that was unjust, I would have no problem facing that individual."

That was Assistant Superintendent Lynn Nutter's response to the North Farmington High incident which has spawned varying stories from school administrators and students involved.

Nutter and School Board Trustee Michael Spiece met with reporters yesterday to iron out the controversy centered on a student who feels she was mistreated by administrators the day she participated in a strike over parking fees.

"We screwed up," Spiece said, referring to the hoedodgepodge of information given by assorted persons.

"We should have answered all the questions or none."

Nutter quizzed North counselors and administrators about the incident.

"To the best of my knowledge, she was not dragged to the office. She was taken by the back of the arm — there was no physical abuse," he said, responding to one of the student's claims.

"She elected to leave the building on her own."

Nutter said the two-week home program the girl was placed on — which allows her to do school work at home but prohibits her from attending classes at North — was meant as a "cooling off" period.

"HOPEFULLY, SHE'LL GET back in school satisfactorily," he said.

The girl is scheduled to meet with North Principal Clayton Graham this morning.

Nutter said he was on school grounds Sept. 16 when a dozen students protested the \$10 parking fee, some carrying signs.

He recalls North administrators telling those students that their attendance records would suffer if they weren't in class by first hour.

The girl and two other students defied the order, but returned to school during third hour, Nutter said. The two others were reinstated the same day after parent conferences.

The girl was dealt with more harshly because she used obscenities and was inubordinate to administrators.



LYNN NUTTER
Asst. Superintendent

Asked if it was regular attendance procedure to call a parent conference for tardy students, Nutter admitted it wasn't regular practice for a student to be summoned to the office under such circumstances.

"Usually that's handled through the attendance office," he said.

Spiece said he was drawn into the controversy when the girl's mother called him two days after the incident.

"On two occasions, we talked. I told her I could see there might have been a problem, but she said she was satisfied."

Senior chronicles 'suspension'

By MARY GNIEWEK

A North Farmington High senior claims she was suspended from school for two weeks following a student protest Sept. 16, contradicting an earlier statement by school officials that she received a one-day suspension.

The girl, a 17-year-old vocational education student, is scheduled to meet this morning with North Principal Clayton Graham who will decide if she should be allowed to return to classes at North.

Graham says the girl wasn't suspended since she is receiving credit on a homebound program for classes she is barred from attending.

The forced two-week absence expires today.

The student, who was protesting the school's new \$10 parking fee, claims she was singled out by administrators when she returned to school three hours after the strike.

Two other strikers who defied the principal's order to stop protesting and enter school when the bell rang were allowed to return to classes after their parents met with administrators.

The rest of the strikers, who disbanded when class began, received no disciplinary action.

The student who contacted the Observer is allowed to attend food service classes at the vocational center in

Walled Lake and receives homework assignments to keep pace with her classwork at North.

DURING THE MORNING of the picketing, she claims Graham and Assistant Principal Norman Dickson told her she was kicked out of school and should find another school to go to.

"They think I'm delinquent because I dropped out of school (last year for two months)," she said.

She claims one administrator told her mother that she wasn't fit for society.

The girl returned to North Sept. 16 prior to fourth hour. She said a teacher summoned her from a bathroom in the west lobby and told her an administrator wanted to see her.

An administrative assistant waited outside the bathroom door and that's when the confrontation took place.

"He told me to come to the office. I asked him why. He started asking me who I was. He grabbed my arm and started dragging me down," she said.

"At first, I resisted. Then I walked peacefully."

She was detained in an empty office for a half hour with administrators blocking her first attempts to leave.

"They gave up after all the yelling I was doing," she said. "I ran out the door. I ran out of school."

She went back to school the next day with her mother.

"GRAHAM TOLD ME if my behavior changed in the future, I could come back."

The disciplinary action "has nothing to do with the strike," Graham says.

"It's for her department in working with the staff."

The girl admitted she mouthed obscenities at school officials during the confrontation.

Asked why administrators first claimed the girl received a one-day suspension, Dickson said "Mainly because we don't discuss discipline problems on the front page of the newspaper."

"That's not the way we conduct our forum."

School Superintendent Lewis Schulman says he doesn't believe school officials tried to cover up the truth:

"I don't really know all the facts," he admitted. "The student code adopted by the (school) board governs discipline. The schools are responsible for implementing policy."

"The girl and her mother have every right for appeal if they feel they were wronged."

Though Schulman's office wasn't contacted by the girl, the student's mother called Trustee Michael Spiece two days after the incident.

"My conversation was that the response (of North administrators) was based on things other than the strike and was satisfactory to the parent involved," Spiece said.

Showing work alternatives is key to creating student enthusiasm

By LISA AWREY

Teachers these days are competing with television for children's attention, says Amy Jackson, an alternative education teacher at Power Junior High.

"So, we have to be twice as enthusiastic . . . and make school live," she explains.

When she is not at Power or Sarah Fisher or at night school studying for her double master's, Amy Jackson spends her free time at Greek town or at museums with her students.

"I'm at doer," she says. "Kids are doers too; they just need encouragement." Ms. Jackson explains.

Amy Jackson's philosophy is part of the alternative education enrichment program at Power Junior High where students meet for one hour a day to experience a different kind of learning.

Most of the students in Ms. Jackson's class have been referred to her because of learning disabilities.

ternative to the kind of learning they've been used to so they won't tune out school completely, she explains.

First the students are given firsthand experience at being what they complain about most — teachers.

"We want them to see what it's like if the shoe were to be on the other foot," Jackson explains.

"So, I ask them 'what would you do if you were the teacher,' and they suddenly seem to see that it's not so easy," she says.

EACH STUDENT is asked to teach something he or she knows how to do. This semester everything from cooking lasagna to roller skating was tried.

The program also stresses the importance of decision making and real life situations.

"So much is so exotic for these children," the teacher says.

When Ms. Jackson first came to class, the students were fascinated with her hair (she is black).

"They wanted to know why it was

straight one day and not the next . . . why it was this way, why it was that," she says.

The students were also intrigued by the fact that their teacher lived in Detroit.

Finally, she arranged for her students to visit a home in Detroit so they could see that there was nothing fantastic about the idea.

Another of the enrichment program's ideas is to get the children out into the community.

"Of course everyone wanted to go to a bar," says Ms. Jackson with amusement.

The teacher avoided the obvious impossibility of the request by bringing the bar to the students. One of the students' fathers who was a bartender came to class and tended bar.

And to make the experience educational, the drinks were measured out by the metric system.

The students were disappointed to learn that bartenders do not drink on the job.

IN ORDER to satisfy some of the other popular requests for field trips, Ms. Jackson took the students to see a recording studio.

This experience resulted in yet another slight disappointment. Those interested in rock music were awakened to the reality of the long hours and hard work involved in recording music.

Teaching students to think logically, make their own decisions and to be able to justify those decisions is another part of alternative learning.

"We asked them to make commercials explaining why they should be allowed a full day off from school to visit the Old World Market," she explains.

In this exercise, the students learn how to state their case and back it up with sound arguments.

"I want to go because I did all of the dishes and because I did all of my homework" was one student's answer — a lot more convincing than "just because-a-cause," Ms. Jackson laughed.



Amy Jackson believes in alternative kinds of educational enrichment, like trips to museums or Greektown. (Staff Photo By Randy Borst)

Seniors get occupancy break in new condo bill

By JACKIE KLEIN

A bill giving senior citizens 4-to-10-year leases in apartment units converted to condominiums was passed Tuesday by the state Legislature.

The bill is expected to be signed into law by Gov. William Milliken this week. It makes null and void a Nov. 4 Southfield ballot proposal seeking a two-year moratorium on conversions of all rental property in the city to condominium ownership.

"It's too late to take the proposal off the ballots because they've already been printed," said Southfield City Clerk Patrick Flannery. "But the measure is self-executing and void by state law."

The bill, introduced by state Sen. Doug Ross and state Rep. Joseph Forbes, both Oak Park Democrats, protects severely handicapped and elderly tenants from being evicted from their converted apartment units if they can't afford to buy them, according to the bill.

Under the measure, senior citizens 65-70 years old, paraplegics, quadruplegics and the blind would be given four-year leases after conversion of their rental units.

SENIORS aged 70-74 could continue to rent their units for six years, 74- to 79-year-olds for seven years, and 80-year-olds for 10 years.

Condominium developers, under

the bill, are prohibited from charging more than market rents for comparable apartment buildings.

Ross said. The bill provides that tenants may sue developers who charge excess rents and also sets a penalty for violation of the law.

"This is a major victory," Ross said Tuesday. "The bill gives strong protection to senior citizens and it's also agreed upon by developers and landlords. The threat of a moratorium in Southfield was the tool that broke the ax."

"The bill offers more years of leasing converted buildings than the proposed moratorium would. State law preempts a weak local measure. But developers were afraid every city would try to

pass a moratorium. This is a statewide solution."

The state will try to reimburse developers for losses incurred by renting units, Ross said. The reimbursements would be equal to 70 percent of the price of condominium units. Developers can repay the state when the condo units are back on the market. This is a revolving loan at no real cost to the state, according to Ross.

"This has been a great effort and I'm extremely happy with the results," Forbes said Tuesday. "The proposed moratorium won't mean anything, but I hope people in Southfield will vote on it so we know how they feel. Developers and landlords are also happy with the legislation."

SENIOR CITIZENS aged 65-69, according to the bill, are eligible for a loan from Michigan State Housing Development Administration if they want to buy their units after leasing them for two years.

The state may be able to help seniors 75 and older to buy their converted units, giving them lifetime protection, Forbes said.

Ross and Forbes claim there's a housing emergency in Southfield because a growing number of condo conversions are threatening the health

and welfare of senior apartment tenants.

The city-wide petition drive for a moratorium was launched this summer by Ross and Forbes after the Senate failed to act on bills introduced by the two legislators to provide lifetime leases for elderly renters.

Ross' district includes Oak Park, Southfield, Lathrup Village, Farmington, Farmington Hills and other west Oakland County communities. Forbes' district includes Oak Park, Southfield and Lathrup Village.

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When it came time for Mrs. J. Jackson to sell her '74 Datsun, she advertised in her hometown O&E newspaper. Her advertising message appeared before 350,000 qualified readers. "The response was great. In one day the car was sold." Take a clue from Mrs. Jackson when you have a selling job to do. Remember one call does it all.

644-1070

Business leary of drug abuse bill

By LISA AWREY

Many businesses balk at the idea of being forced to pay for drug abuse treatment, according to State Rep. Sandy Brotherton, R-Farmington.

The Michigan House of Representatives has already approved a package of bills, including one which requires Blue-Cross Blue Shield and commercial health insurance to offer benefits for intermediate (less than 24 hour care) and outpatient substance abuse to all customers.

but Brotherton is bothered by the mandatory nature of the bill, he says.

Many of the larger corporations, the auto industry for example, already include substance abuse (alcohol and drugs) treatment in their insurance plans, Brotherton explains. "But some businessmen are apt to throw out medical insurance all together if this particular coverage is included," he says.

It is hard to convince the small businessman of the effectiveness of drug abuse programs, says Brotherton.

"It is not that these programs aren't good; it's just that they don't keep accurate records. So, there is no way of keeping track of their success," he adds.

Because it has been difficult to prove the effectiveness of drug abuse programs, the government has been "snipping away" at state aid for these programs for years, says Brotherton.

The measures for the bill were introduced so that the private sector (insurance companies) would pick up some of the slack and subsidize substance abuse treatment.

"This package of bills is a new ven-

ture," explains Brotherton, "to tighten up the regulations on these programs." One of the bills would reduce costs of treatment by up to 90 percent by focusing on outpatient and intermediate care.

The bill is aimed at treatment of the early stages of abuse rather than of the later effects of drug abuse which require hospitalization and also cost more money, says Brotherton.

It will be easier to convince businesses to offer aid for 24-hour care that will

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