



Judge Denise Langford-Morris

Sentence from page 1A

longer than the recommended minimum guideline of 36 months that Maas and Bauer's attorney David Gorcey had agreed was appropriate before Monday's sentencing.

Just before sentencing, Langford-Morris agreed to a request to take into account the boy's pediatrician's opinion that a recurring bowel problem was related to the sexual assaults. She also agreed with Maas that Bauer's "exploitation" should also be considered in the sentence.

Gorcey countered that his client had pleaded no contest based on the lower guidelines.

"I just can't see how this man can be sent to prison for eight years," he said before Langford-Morris sentenced his client, exceeding that lower guideline by two years. "As a former prosecutor (in Oakland County), I would not ever consider this appropriate."

He added that his client was progressing in counseling and had been promoted at work over the past year.

"His therapists have said prison would be extremely detrimental (to Bauer)," Gorcey said. "This is not the answer."

But the judge, who pointed out that the guidelines are not binding, reminded Gorcey that in addition to what was best for Bauer's rehabilitation,

she had to consider what was a fair punishment, what was in the best interests of the victim and his family and how to set an example by the sentence.

Bauer had discovered through his therapy that he had been sexually abused as an 11-year-old, Gorcey said. Ironically, Bauer admitted to sexually abusing his victim who was 11 at the time.

In his statement before sentencing, Bauer apologized to the victim and family.

"That night I destroyed my family," he said. "Only through counseling was I able to see the damage I did to the victim. I wish someone I could apologize to them."

The victim's mother fought back tears and read a statement condemning "Joe" for his actions in taking advantage of her son's and family's trust. She also praised her son as "a hero for standing up for himself and protecting his (younger) brother."

Outside of court she said the family was "extremely satisfied" with the verdict.

Gorcey tried to comfort members of Bauer's family who were stunned by the sentence.

"It's 100 percent sure," he said of chances for appeal. "The prosecutor didn't even know about this (change in guidelines)."

Grace from page 1A

Other signs point to William Grace thriving rather than merely surviving.

A stronger parent teaching organization has emerged in the past few years. The group has raised money to buy new computers for the media center and is getting more people from the community involved.

The organization's next project is to buy new playground equipment for the school.

William Grace has also entered into a partnership with nearby Botsford Hospital. Children have made greeting cards and performed musicals for Elder-Med patients. Nutritionists and physicians from the hospital return the favor by speaking to classes.

All those things seem to provide a springboard for better times. But, there's still work ahead.

William Grace's school improvement team has outlined some goals, including improving test scores. This year's MEAP results saw a nearly 8 percent jump in fourth-grade reading scores (46.4 satisfactory compared to 38.6 in 1992) while there was a noticeable drop in math and science.

"We hope a nurturing, welcoming climate will help those scores," Novatis said. "Those are snapshots . . . We hope we wouldn't be evaluated on one score. There are a lot of things that make a school tick."

"As with any school, parent involvement is not 100 percent," Bracciale said. "We encourage our parents to become involved."

That's not always easy.

Compared with other elementary schools in the district, William Grace does not draw from an affluent area. It's not uncommon for both parents to work, or in some cases, have one parent raising a child.

vinced the kids that it is important."

Pollak credits the PTO for turning some of those attitudes around. She said the group has become more than just a social outlet. "They have a goal," she added.

Pollak sees many strengths at William Grace, too. She said the staff is committed and the challenges as a teacher are rewarding.

"I'm very proud to say I teach here," Pollak said.

Carolyn Danielson agrees. She's been teaching at Grace for 31 years and raves about the facility, staff, parents and students.

Others share their enthusiasm.

On a tour of the school, Novatis marvels at the facilities for special education students and the Reading Recovery Room.

The change would seem to be a radical one for her compared to Wood Creek, but the new principal is already its most ardent sales person, calling Grace the "jewel of the district."

Said Novatis: "Just because you haven't heard of William Grace doesn't mean we're not here."

New principal at Grace

The school also has a new principal.

Barb Novatis takes over for Richard Close, who retired in January after 15 years at the school. Novatis, who was principal at Wood Creek Elementary for eight years, reportedly wanted the transfer to William Grace.

Part of it is getting more parents wound up in school affairs.

Fran Bracciale, of Grace PTO, estimates 60 percent of the parents belong to her group. They're trying to increase the number through various activities such as skating parties and nights where parents can learn about computers in the media center.

A double-sell job

Sometimes, it's a double-sell job to child and parent on the importance of education, Pollak said.

"When they go home — there's nobody home for lots of them — nobody asks them how they did. If they did ask and said, 'I did lousy,' there would be no repercussion."

"You can just do so much in school," Pollak said. "When they go back home and this is not an important job to the people at home, it's real hard for me to convince the kids that it is important."

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