

## POINTS OF VIEW

# Boarding school presents home environment

**QUESTION:** I have a son who is very bright. However, he skips school, doesn't do his homework and, I'm afraid, he is getting in to the wrong crowd — a drug crowd. He is in the eighth grade and in a good school system. Someone told me that there are some private boarding schools that may help my situation. Do you know of any and where they are located? I would like one out of this immediate area but within driving distance.

**ANSWER:** You need to get a copy of the Boarding School Directory for the United States (1-800-637-8308). After a bit of research, I found there are 242 of these boarding schools in the country.

Of course, we have the internationally known Cranbrook Kingswood School, a day and boarding upper school in Bloomfield Hills with students from about 25 states and 15 foreign countries. And there is the Interlochen Arts Academy, an intensive fine arts school, which is second to none in the nation and maybe the world. There are other boarding schools within driving range of your home in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and other nearby states. The only other boarding school in Michigan is The Leelanau School, an

eighth to 12th grade co-educational, non-denominational college preparatory, boarding school in Glen Arbor near the Sleeping Bear Dunes — a beautiful setting.

## A look inside

Having been in public education all my life and not really having a full handle on boarding schools, I took it upon myself to talk to Leelanau's assistant director of admissions, Pam Touhey. Candidly, I was interested in looking at a private boarding school's curriculum, rules, activities etc. to make a comparison with what I lived through during 35 years in the public school trenches as a teacher, principal and assistant superintendent.

What a dream environment! The Leelanau (boarding) School would be to work in. There is a class ratio of six to eight students per teacher. Study periods are mandatory 8-10 p.m. except Fridays and Saturdays. If a student is not maintaining a good grade point average, increased study hall time on the weekend is allotted.

Grades are posted every week and parents know how their child is doing each week in school, not every six weeks via a report card.



DOC DOYLE

There is mandatory, periodic drug testing (if parents feel this is against their constitutional rights, then take your kid home). Can you see public education demanding mandatory drug testing to keep drugs out of school? It would be a feeding frenzy for lawyers.

Yet when one of our public kids flips out on drugs, it's "what are those funny school people doing about this?" It's the principal, the teachers, the superintendent, the board and its policies that have failed.

Get out of line in The Leelanau School, i.e. cheating, foul language, fighting, and you meet with a disciplinary review committee consisting of the principal, head master, teachers

and student representatives. The peer pressure, having classmates on the review board, makes it a total school family issue. And peer pressure, in a safe and caring environment, does work.

The students can't just leave the campus and "cool around in their car at the mall" or roam the area. Students take trips to Traverse City and other immediate areas on weekends, take other educational and experiential trips (white water rafting, skiing, camping, cultural activities), but always on a school bus and they are always chaperoned.

Sound a bit regimented? I'm not sure! I always thought we adults were responsible for our children. How about a trade-off where 100 percent of the Leelanau student population is accepted to four-year universities?

Each student has other home type responsibilities, such as dishes, raking leaves and there is a daily room inspection. These were the standards I was brought up with under a naval chief petty officer and so were my children. Didn't hurt me or my children.

## A home away from home

But The Leelanau School (you can find others in the boarding school

directory) offers more than clear rules and structure. It becomes a "home away from home". Staff members live on campus with the students. There are Family Advisory Units, that is, staff members assigned to five or six students, creating the family-oriented environment.

The curriculum standards are of high quality, offering advanced or accelerated classes similar to what is found in many local quality school programs.

A drawback for me, thinking as a former typical high school student, would have been to leave all my friends. However, in your case, since you have the money and you see your son drifting, a boarding school may be a wise choice.

Keep in mind these are not schools for delinquents. Most of the students are well put together young adults. This type of atmosphere should rub off on your child since he is young and not quite yet into the drug scene you see him heading toward.

Good luck!

James "Doc" Doyle, a former teacher/school administrator/university instructor, is president of Doyle and Associates, an educational consulting firm.

# Educational industry tries to hoodwink taxpayers

One of the best family stories that I grew up hearing was the one about my grandfather standing up to the KKK during the early 1930s.

It's something we could all learn from. The difference now, though, is that the educational establishment has become the KKK, hiding behind white sheets and trying to scare us into propping up an old system whose time has come.

But back to the South during the Depression. Then as now, there wasn't enough state or local money to support two school systems, one for blacks, the other for whites.

So to save money, the local school board decided that black and white students who lived in the same country neighborhoods should ride on the same school bus. They went to separate schools, of course; this was nearly 30 years before southern schools were integrated. But consolidating the bus

routes would save some money.

The thought of black and white kids on the same school bus prompted the local chapter of the white-sheet boys to tell their neighbors to keep their kids off the buses.

For some reason that's lost to time, my grandfather decided to put my father and uncle on the bus. And for a week they were the only white kids on it.

But then came Friday night, and the KKK got together for an informal barbecue on my grandfather's farm. Grandpa was the subject of the roast.

There they stood in their finest. I've often wondered if the guys' wives ever complained about missing sheets. Anyway, they called my grandfather out of the house and told him to keep his kids off the bus.

Grandpa recognized the voice of the grand dragon, or whatever he was, and



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using country terms suggested that he would keep his kids off the bus if the grand dragon would refrain from his visits to places where black prostitutes were employed.

The KKK went away and after a couple of weeks there were black and white kids on that school bus. And about 25 years later that neighborhood in Arkansas became the first in the South to

have an integrated system.

But now back to the modern day KKK in Michigan, which is composed of school administrators, teachers unions and school boards.

Like my grandfather, voters are standing up to the modern day KKK and saying: "No, we're not afraid of your threats and we're not going to pay for duplicate bus routes just to prop up an old social order."

No matter how much liberal rhetoric school officials put out for public consumption about equal opportunity for students, we've still managed to create exclusive school districts for a privileged few that leave poor, rural white kids and blacks in urban areas out in the cold.

It's not just racial segregation, it's economic segregation that would make Selma, Ala., look like a center of liberal beliefs.

The state Legislature's scrapping of

the property tax system for education is the best thing that's happened to this state in 30 years. We've got a chance to redesign a system that ensures that every kid has an equal chance at life.

However, the modern-day KKK will be staging plenty of raids in Lansing and in local school districts. They'll be fighting needed school district consolidations, controls on teacher strikes and the sweet deal that the Michigan Education Association has on medical insurance that sends about \$1,000 per year into union coffers to finance political campaigns.

Like my grandfather did in the 1930s, it's time for us to call the KKK's bluff. They tend to go away when you figure out who they've been sleeping with.

Jeff Counts is the editor of the Plymouth and Canton Observer Newspapers.

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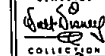
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