

Dear General Assembly,

Education reform is a must, but the devil is in the details which include definitions, process, transparency, and equal representation.

Equal representation must mean that students and parents and residents hold equal standing in the laws of this state. It does not mean that teachers and administrators and BOE are the only entities whose rights are represented by laws that affect and determine the educational climate, processes, and access to information, protection, and action. At this time, it feels that way.

A school and educational environment benefit when the learning environment is productive and when the product is nurtured and respected.

What is the product? The skill sets, competence, and confidence of its students. If those aspects are valued and protected, most all other aspects of the learning environment will be positive.

Bullying Laws:

It appears that there are only laws dealing with student on student bullying. What about adult employee on student? The adults have unions to represent them. The students do not.

Teachers privately tutoring own school students/student families or soliciting for such for fees or access/violation of Code of Ethics

Is it appropriate that teachers in great/good public schools make themselves or solicit their students or make themselves available as private tutors.

Many smart and capable students seek private tutors because basic course material or presentation of material is confusing, not taught at all, or barely taught. This also ties into Evaluations. If the students and families are not part of that process, the evaluations can be one-sided, missing the input of whether the students are confident in their learning and environment and what factors contribute to their competency and confidence or the lack thereof.

In order to cover and to learn course concepts, in order to figure out what they are not learning in the course, students seek help: for those with money or influence, tutors for hire are sought.

Should teachers in their own schools privately tutor their own school students? Other states prohibit such an arrangement whereby teachers in a district who have access to and prior knowledge of course tests, quizzes, are dept chairs or have access to other teachers make themselves available only to a select group of their own department or district students and families. Information may be shared whether inadvertently or not to only then a select group of students not the entire class.

This creates an unhealthy and unequal access to teachers and the learning environment is compromised. Teachers who should make themselves available to all students are selecting only a few to help as a private and/or paid tutor. Is it appropriate for private tutors who are teachers in the district to provide such services since they have access and knowledge of the school's testing policies and documents, past work,, other teachers...?

Are these mostly the same tutor fee paying students upon whom department awards, college or other recommendations are awarded?

What is the appearance of appropriateness and fairness when in fact there is unfair access based on payment or influence when a district teacher has been paid thousands of dollars by a district family for privately tutoring their sons/daughters while in the same school or school system?

So could it be appropriate for teachers to provide in their own districts private tutoring to their own school's students when there are many other students foundering and clamoring for help? Even if there may not be many other students requesting or seeking help, a teacher in his/her own district and/or department would have knowledge and access of assessment models, other teachers, past tests, quizzes, Unfair advantage to those students who can pay: therefore unfair to those students who can not pay or do not have such access.

The big question then becomes, which comes first: An accepted standard of lackadaisical or confusing or incomplete teaching that puts students' learning at risk and creates or foments the demand for district teachers to tutor privately or course material and practices that require more than what the classroom instruction plus diligent student involvement can deliver. Each feeds a cottage industry that is unhealthy and unfair to students because teachers privately tutoring in their own district provides unequal access and opportunity.

Evaluations:

Who evaluates the teachers and administrators?

What do the evaluations comprise? Are they available for families without reprisal?

Are parent and student feedback included? If not, why not?

Who would decide who evaluates the teachers or administrators?

Should an administrator who never taught a particular educational age group or that particular discipline evaluate the effectiveness of a teacher in that discipline or age group?

Should a school be responsible for documenting complaints and concerns regarding particular learning/teaching environments?

Should the process be clear and protective of all parties, not just the adults?

Transparency in Education

Should policies and regulations, information, access to information, be required to be provided clearly and easily to students and families, residents of the town? Why can't a parent or student find out easily who is in charge of what discipline in a school? Why can't a parent find out the exact process required to bring and document a situation or concern to the school, the district (i.e., does it need to be in writing, should it specify so, to whom).

We seem to have legislation that addresses the rights of adults and their protections. When will we have legislation that protects and addresses the needs and rights of students and their families regarding their educational experiences and concerns?

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