

MEDIA STATEMENT

Local news agencies have recently reported charges against two women for wanton endangerment arising out of two incidents at McNabb Elementary School. In some reports it is suggested that the school and its staff undertook “less restrictive behavioral interventions” before seclusion was implemented. It is also reported that proper notifications took place. The family of the student disagrees with these assertions and wishes to present their view of the incidents, based on their study of the video surveillance and discussion with school personnel.

The child, a 9-year-old at the time the two incidents took place, is a special needs student with multiple impairments, including Autism, sensory processing disorder ADHD and DMDD. In addition, he also has diagnoses from the University of Louisville Pediatrics/ Weisskopf Center Development of a Social Communication disorder.

On February 11, 2019, the student began to show agitation while at his seat. During the time his agitation was developing, the video shows no direct intervention by any of the adults in the room, and no attempt at redirecting the student or de-escalating the situation. After warning signs of frustration on the part of the child, his agitation culminates in him striking his computer monitor and knocking it backward on his desk. The monitor did not fall to the floor nor leave the desk. The teacher’s aide responded by approaching the student, picking him up by his underarm, out of his chair, swinging him around and letting him drop to the floor. She then drags him by one arm across the floor to an isolation room where it appears on the video that he strikes his head on the door frame and/or wall. The student was then placed in the isolation room. This

“restraint”, not authorized by state law, was conducted by one staff member, despite the presence of other staff in the room.

On the second occasion, February 15, 2019, the student is mostly hidden from direct filming by the camera by a screen. The child can be seen waving his arms above his head. In response, the teacher in the classroom approaches the student’s desk and reaches for the child. In response to her approach, the boy seems to push his desk backward. She appears to pull the student, still seated in his chair and desk, to the floor and drags the youth to the seclusion room. Again, he was dragged by one arm in an unauthorized method. No appropriate child positive restraint practices were employed. There was no redirection or de-escalation. The child is dragged by one adult staff, despite the presence of two other staff in the room. The child is not placed completely in the seclusion room, but the teacher stands over and next to him, while the child remains on the floor as the aide and other administrative staff watch without interceding.

News stories suggesting that proper notification took place are not accurate in the family’s view. The child’s parents were not notified of these incidents until February 20, 2019, nine days and five days over the incidents respectively. It is the parent’s position that they should have been notified of the “dragging” incidents on the date they occurred. The child had not communicated these events to his parents.

The child’s mother was not originally told that there was more than one incident or that the incidents were on digital video. Paducah police informed the father of the second incident and of the video surveillance when he was contacted by Paducah Police during their investigation. The family’s access to reviewing the video has been

limited visits to the Board Office to be reviewed under the supervision of school system personnel. Additional requests were made to review lengthier portions of the video to view activities in the room leading up to and the following the incidents in question.

Again, to restate: At no time does the video from February 11, 2019 or February 15, 2019 show the student causing a danger to self or others. The video surveillance shows little, if any, in the way of de-escalation interaction between the special needs student and the adult staff in the room. At no time does it seem that the staff worked in tandem to carry the student, on either date. Audio is not available as part of the recording on either date.

Autism is known to cause issues with communications and behavior that can be avoided by proper de-escalation techniques that were not utilized by the staff in the student's room. Furthermore, other administrative school staff were in the room and did not intervene on February 15. Requests for additional training in Autism behaviors, ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) and ABA therapy techniques in the school setting were requested by the parents only to be denied by the school system.

The parents were shocked, saddened and disappointed by what they viewed in the videos.