

NORTH BETHESDA JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Bethesda, Maryland
20034

April 3, 1970

Dear Parent:

On Wednesday, March 25, about twenty North Bethesda students, in protest against my having suspended a student, staged a demonstration on a sidewalk in front of the school. They carried signs and began marching up and down at about 7:30 a.m. before they even had spectators. Two press photographers were already on the scene, invited by the demonstrators.

From 8:10 to about 8:25 a.m., with the arrival of the buses, the number of student spectators had increased to, perhaps, three to five hundred. The other students went into the building. Both the demonstrators and the bystanders were orderly.

The demonstration was to end at 8:30. At 8:25, I was escorting the parents of the suspended student to the office when a group of the demonstrators dashed in to tell me that trouble had started. Members of the Student Alliance, invited by the marchers, had arrived. Our non-demonstrators had jammed against their cars, kept them in their cars, and blocked the street. Some of our students were pounding on the visitors' cars and bouncing the cars. An overzealous non-demonstrator began grabbing some of the signs and tearing them up. A boy got hit.

As I dashed to the scene, I directed that the police be called and that all men teachers be directed to report to the area. When I reached the demonstration area, the short scuffle was over. The demonstrators had disbanded, and the students cleared the roadway to allow the cars to move. Some of the teachers and some of the students, including some demonstrators, assisted me in passing the word to move into the building. When I moved toward the building and motioned for the students to follow, they did so. (The police say they arrived as I was leading the students into the building.)

Some of the demonstrators apparently had hoped to generate support for a walk-out at 2:00 p.m. At least two, perhaps more, of the demonstrators began agitating for the 2:00 p.m. walk-out soon after they came into the building. Others of the group with cooler heads and better judgment went to these people and convinced them that what they were doing was unwise and that they should pass the word that the walk-out was off.

The first period was delayed a few minutes, but the rest of the day went very smoothly except for the setting-off of a fire alarm by a student at 12:15. The conference with the boy's parents was pleasant and profitable. Many teachers took the opportunity to discuss student rights and student action. Many thought it was one of the most rewarding days of the school year.

At 1:45, I talked briefly to the students (over the public address system) about the morning's incidents and the proposed walk-out. I warned against the walk-out and any further demonstrations. The police car was to have returned at 2:00 p.m. I do not know if they came at that time, but one car with one

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policeman did stop on the parking lot at 3:10 p.m.

Addendum

Some parents expressed an interest in the paper "High School Bill of Rights," which was distributed without permission and necessitated the suspension which prompted the demonstration. The paper is too long to even put in capsule form, so I will give the gist of five "rights" listed in the paper under "Freedom of Political Activity," which was the main issue of the demonstrators.

1. Students may form political and social organizations in the school which champion unpopular causes and regardless of political or social views of the organization.
2. Students have the right to full use of school facilities--bulletin boards, auditorium, public address systems, mimeo facilities to advertise their ideas and activities that take place inside or outside the high schools.
3. Students have the right to plan and carry out forums, assemblies, seminars, etc. . . . at any time chosen by students. Speakers chosen by students may not be rejected by administrators and/or faculty.
4. Students have the right to distribute any leaflets, pamphlets, and political material freely inside and outside school grounds without authorization.
5. Students have the right to strike.

Sincerely yours,

Ellis G. Glime

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Principal

EKG/dw