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Tuesday, January 22, 2008

Principal charged after incident not reported to cops

By Jeremy P. Meyer
The Denver Post

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A Denver middle school principal was served with a summons Monday on misdemeanor charges of failure to report a crime at her school and was temporarily removed from her job, her attorney said.

Nicole Veltze, 37, principal of Skinner Middle School in northwest Denver, will appear in court Feb. 21, according to her attorney, Rich Caschette.

Veltze will be assigned to the Denver Public Schools central offices until the legal matter is resolved, said Alex Sanchez, DPS spokesman.

"The district and Ms. Veltze mutually agreed that an interim reassignment would be in the best interest of the students and staff in order to minimize disruption," he said.

Police said the case has been forwarded to the district attorney's office. A DA spokeswoman could not be reached for comment Monday, which was a state and federal holiday.

According to Caschette, Veltze had been investigating a sexual-harassment claim that one student made against others at the school in December.

"These are 13-year-old kids doing what 13-year-olds do," he said. "One complained. She did an investigation."

Police were notified by a parent of a child involved in the allegation, and authorities say Veltze violated the law by failing to call police about the incident in a timely matter, he said.

"These charges . . . arise because of a turf battle between the Denver Police Department and Denver Public Schools . . . between reporting requirements," Caschette said.

Jeremy P. Meyer: 303-954-1367 or jpmeyer@denverpost.com
<<mailto:jpmeyer@denverpost.com>>

Rocky Mountain News

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

Denver principal accused of failing to report alleged abuse

By **Nancy Mitchell** <<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/nancy-mitchell/>> , **Rocky Mountain News (Contact**
<<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/nancy-mitchell/contact/>>)

A Denver Public Schools principal was charged Monday with a misdemeanor count of

failure to report an allegation of child abuse or neglect at her school.

But the attorney for Nicole Veltze, principal of Skinner Middle School in northwest Denver, called the claims "absurd."

"Basically, this whole case arises from a turf battle over reporting requirements between the Denver Police Department and DPS," said lawyer Rich Caschette.

"My client has unfairly been made the scapegoat in this ongoing debate between the police department and DPS," he said. "She was following DPS policy in everything she did."

DPS spokesman Alex Sanchez said Veltze has been temporarily reassigned, at her request, to the district's administrative headquarters at 900 Grant St.

A letter will be sent home today to Skinner families. School was not in session Monday because of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. Former Kepner Middle School Principal Deborah Lanman will take over Skinner.

"We are cooperating with the police department and the district attorney's office," Sanchez said. "We look forward to engaging these two agencies in the future to discuss district policies and state statutes."

The charge stems from an allegation of sexual harassment made by one student against at least one other student during class. Veltze was investigating the claim when the parents of the alleged victim notified police.

Police then contacted Veltze, asking why it had not been reported. Caschette said the principal was still trying to complete her investigation at the time.

He said there are "ambiguities" in DPS reporting policy and in state law.

Denver police spokesman Sonny Jackson declined comment on the charges and on Caschette's criticisms. District attorney spokeswoman Lynn Kimbrough said she didn't have any information about the case because courts were closed Monday.

DPS and Denver police have clashed before over the reporting of alleged crimes in schools. In 2002, a police captain claimed that delayed reporting by DPS staff was impeding criminal investigations.

mitchelln@RockyMountainNews.com or 303-954-5245

Saturday, January 19, 2008

A swelling movement

In a tightly regulated environment, the prospect of freedom can become contagious.

Just ask Manual High School Principal Rob Stein, who last week requested the same sort of autonomy desired by the principal and faculty of Bruce Randolph Middle School. In December, Bruce Randolph asked for a waiver from most of the provisions of the contract between Denver Public Schools and the Denver Classroom Teachers Association. Other campuses in northeast Denver may join this campaign.

We're heartened by this spontaneous uprising. It has been led as much by unionized teachers as by school management; two-thirds of Bruce Randolph's DCTA members backed autonomy, and at Manual the vote was unanimous. The DPS board unanimously approved Bruce Randolph's request last month, so the district is open to giving some schools more control.

But the union brass has balked. Union officials insist they aren't rejecting the autonomy request. Instead, at a Jan. 8 vote, the board said it needed more time "to identify which provisions to the contract, if any, impede student achievement." Union President Kim Ursetta echoed those sentiments when she spoke with us after the vote. She called the Bruce Randolph proposal "vague."

The speed of approval matters because school budgets will be largely set in February; the campuses would gain much more leverage in allocating the money they get from the district under the autonomy agreements.

If the union wants to know what provisions impede learning, how about those involved in hiring? At present, Bruce Randolph and Manual can't recruit teachers who are willing to accept the challenges these schools face with the same freedom enjoyed by private schools. Stein told us that one teacher he "hired on a handshake" last April eventually took another job because the teacher was not added to the district's payroll until September.

The union's stalling could backfire. Greg Ahrnsbrak, the DCTA representative at Bruce Randolph, told us that the teachers' resolve to push for the autonomy agreement has only intensified since the board delayed its decision.

After all, as Ahrnsbrak said, the union is supposed to represent the views of its membership, and the faculty at some schools have passionately embraced autonomy. "You would think the union would support its members," he said.

For students' sake, let's hope the union board is listening.

Getting the story straight on DPS maternity leave

This Web only Speakout has not been edited.

Nicole J. Head

Saturday, January 19, 2008

Fast moneymaking in the media leads to a loss of the truth. A month ago, Celia Gruzalski, Dr. Sarah Grope, Kayla Lewis, Dr. Marilyn Welsh and I presented to the school board requesting a regulated policy for maternity leave for students of DPS. Since then, radio stations and news reporters around the country have taken it upon themselves to interpret this presentation however best suits their needs.

People have reported that East High School has a policy that doesn't allow students to have a maternity leave. That is absolutely untrue. People have made the same claim against Denver Public Schools. Again, untrue.

This all came about after Celia and I ran a psycho educational group for pregnant students at East for a semester. East High School was extremely supportive of the group, and the board of education was very supportive of our request for maternity leave for students.

Here's what is true: there was no policy in DPS regarding maternity leave for students. So, without the endorsement of administrators nor the school board, students were being told that they couldn't take any maternity leave. This led to students feeling unwanted, misunderstood, and isolated.

It's not that DPS didn't care about these students, nor that they were knowingly acting against the best interests of these students. The problem was that no one had ever talked about it before. We presented to the board, and they listened.

It's 2008, and the country is alive with news. This allows us to be well-informed members of a democracy. I can read about anything from new medical discoveries in Sweden to the happenings of the school board right here in Denver, Colorado with the click of a few buttons. Instead of letting this lead us down a path of exciting and controversial news seeking, let it lead us down a path of creating change.

Focus on what matters. Encouraging young mothers to bond with their babies and allowing every baby their fair right to bond with their mother is the issue. Making young mothers feel welcome in school so that they continue to pursue their education as they become role models for the next generation is the issue.

Attacking a school and a school district on false claims is not. Indeed, it serves only to hurt the same students people are trying to advocate for.

Nicole J. Head is a graduate student who was a counseling intern at Denver's East High School last year.

Yourhub.com

Friday, January 18, 2008

IB education prepares students for success

Across the U.S. and here in Colorado, public schools of all kinds are working hard to deliver a meaningful, relevant education that prepares students to thrive in our increasingly changing and interdependent world.

They're also working hard to capture the attention of parents.

In Colorado, students may attend public schools outside their own neighborhood or in a different school district entirely.

Now more than ever before, parents have many choices for different schools that best match their children's needs and interests.

This month, parents will explore schools, talk to other parents, visit open houses and tour classrooms. It's the time of year they can "choice" into schools outside their neighborhood. The choice enrollment period for Denver Public Schools started Jan. 7. The first-round deadline is Jan. 31.

While "choice" is positive for children, the scores of choices can be overwhelming for parents.

Choosing an International Baccalaureate (IB) education means students learn the kinds of behaviors and skills essential to success in the 21st century - analyze and evaluate vast quantities of information, solve complex problems, communicate effectively using a variety of media, work in teams, create, and innovate.

IB students learn on a deeper level, make connections to the world around them, and ask questions. They are intellectually curious about the world, are analytical and creative thinkers, and express ideas with confidence. They also learn a second language, participate in community service and appreciate cultures around the world from an early age.

IB is one of the fastest-growing and most prestigious educational approaches in the U.S. It's taught worldwide to over a half million students in nearly 2,200 schools in 126 countries - and right here in our own backyard.

The southwest Denver family of IB schools is a unique partnership among Sabin International School, Henry World School and John F. Kennedy High School (JFK). Faculty at the three schools work together to offer a seamless IB education to students from preschool through high school.

Sabin is one of just three public elementary schools in Denver to offer IB for all students from Early Childhood Education through grade 5. Henry is the first public middle school in Denver to provide IB for all students in grades 6 through 8. And when the IB Diploma Programme starts this fall for juniors (and next fall for seniors), JFK will be the only Denver high school to offer IB for students in all grades - 9 through 12.

Students throughout the greater metro Denver area are eligible to attend Sabin, Henry or JFK.

The highly esteemed IB approach to learning, which began in 1968, is recognized for its rigor, high quality and global emphasis.

Data show that rigorous coursework is a predictor of later success. A national study found that students who enrolled in IB courses were more prepared for college, earned higher first-year grade point averages in college and had a higher college graduation rate. This was true for all ethnic groups and socioeconomic levels.

Leading college admissions expert Barmak Nassirian recently told Education Week, a national weekly newspaper focusing on education issues, that IB generally is regarded as "the gold standard of high school curriculum in admissions circles."

And almost half of the U.S. high schools listed in Newsweek magazine's top 100 last year were IB schools.

What's most important is taking the time to research schools, visit with teachers and principals, and talk to other parents. Taking the time to research the right educational fit for your child will pay big dividends in the long run.

--Wendy Pierce of Sabin International School, Wendy Lanier of Henry World School and Jeannie Peppel of John F. Kennedy High School are principals of the southwest Denver family of IB schools. For more information, visit <http://sabin.dpsk12.org>; <http://henry.dpsk12.org>; or <http://jfk.dpsk12.org>.