

Board presentation on Discipline

March 30, 2009

I'm Shelley Potter, president of the San Antonio Alliance of Teachers and Support Personnel. I'm here to speak with you this evening about the widespread concern out in the schools, especially at the secondary level, that the administration is not being supportive with regard to enforcing appropriate student behavior. The question we hear from teachers and other staff is: Are we creating safe, orderly campuses that students will want to attend and parents will want to send their children to? Or are we hampering our ability to attract and retain students by not using appropriate consequences with students who choose to engage in inappropriate behavior, thereby creating environments where bullying, fighting, cursing teachers and staff, and the like drive students who choose to behave and their parents out of our schools to other districts, charter schools, private schools, and home schooling? Customer service should not mean that we're afraid to address inappropriate behavior for fear of upsetting a student or parent. While allowances are made and second, fifth, and tenth chances are given to the one or two percent of students who consistently choose to misbehave, the parents of the 98-99% of our students lose faith in our schools. Those parents generally do not come pound on the table and yell and scream and raise Cain; they just quietly take their children out of our schools and send them somewhere else.

This concern doesn't just exist amongst our teachers and school staff. It also exists in the community. I've been out in the community quite a lot over the past two months. And the number one reason I hear for why people choose not to send their children to our secondary schools is their concern about safety and discipline. They will not send their child to a school that they perceive does not enforce appropriate behavior.

So, tonight I ask that the Board approve a resolution at your next Board meeting affirming the importance of safe learning environments in which students are supported in making appropriate choices regarding their behavior and in which inappropriate behavior, especially serious misbehavior, is dealt with quickly and in a manner that sends the message that our schools are environments for learning, not for fighting, bullying, or cursing. Thank you.