

As an educator, I have seen firsthand how parental rights have been abused by the schools. The biggest example I can give is through the schools withholding of information about a student's sexual identity. I had a student that wanted to identify as the opposite gender but didn't want to tell her parents. Her parents had noticed that her grades were dropping and were noticing changes in behavior and wanted a conference with us teachers. We had been calling this child by a different name for months and I made it clear in our team meeting that I thought it was our place to tell the parent that the problem with the child was that she was coming to school and was going by a different name. She was going through the day as the opposite sex, so obviously that was likely causing many of the issues the parents were seeing in her. Her mom was distraught by her grade changes and couldn't understand what could be wrong.

Some of my teammates disagreed and did not think it was our place to "out" the child. Before the conference with the parent, I was confronted by my administrator with information from our district legal team. I was presented with a 44-slide presentation of LGBTQIA+ AND student rights and I was informed that if I "outed" a student to their parent without their permission, I could possibly be in violation of the law. This document cited all sorts of case law, FERPA and what I feel were other erroneous examples of scare tactics and intimidation to force educators to comply with otherwise ridiculous requests like not informing parents when their child is behaving out of the norm at school. A discussion like this with an administrator was a clear message to me that I better not tell this parent what is going on with their child. I felt that my job was in jeopardy if I spoke up. I did not attend the meeting fully (it was virtual so I merely observed with my camera off and did not engage).

I have been in education for 24 years. I have three Master's degrees and I am an Ohio Master Teacher. Parents and educators have to be able to work together to make students successful. There is no student that can be truly successful and truly well-rounded when they don't have both home-life and school-life working to bring success to the other. A parent MUST be able to trust that schools are NOT taking it upon themselves to decide that they know what is in the best interest of the child. The parents are always the ones that know what is best for their kids and should ALWAYS know what is going on in the lives of their children.

Andrea McCullough