

Art Teacher Apologizes for Allowing Students to Step on US Flag

A teacher at a Kentucky public high school has apologized for a project in which the U.S. flag was placed on the floor for students to step on.

In the art exhibit that was part of Shand Stamper's art history class, an American flag was placed on the floor with a music stand on top of it. Students were then encouraged to stand on the flag and write about how they felt while standing on it.

The McCracken County High School students wrote essays about certain pieces of art and then chose to express the pieces. The controversial display was a recreation of "Dread" Scott Tyler's 1989 art installation, *What Is the Proper Way to Display an American Flag?*

Stamper apologized in a letter obtained by the *Paducah Sun* that was sent to Superintendent Nancy Waldrop, high school principal Michael Ceglinski and members of the school board.

"I love our flag and the nation it stands for," Stamper wrote. "I love the freedom I enjoy because of our brave veterans. I feel sick and deeply sad that through my actions I have dishonored these men and women and also poorly represented you all."

Indeed, the display has angered many local residents; some called for the teacher to be dismissed.

"This teacher should be fired and run out of town," an online commenter wrote to the newspaper. "I have a son serving to protect this flag at this very moment."

Another reader said, "It is a sad day when the symbol of this great nation is relegated to occupy the floor. It is a truly sorrowful day when the one who placed it there has the nerve to ask 'How does it make you feel?'"

Stamper said she was not politically motivated and that the display was selected by her students, not assigned by her. She said her error was in supporting the students' choice.

"My mistake was saying to my students: 'This is your choice and I'll support your decision,'" she said. "My intention was for my students to talk intellectually about what they were doing and why."

Stamper explained that the presentation was supposed to include a small display meant for her class, which was in the hallway for less than 30 minutes. Afterward, when the goal of creating intellectual conversation had been completed, the flag was picked up and properly folded by Assistant Principal Jon Reid.

"My lapse in judgment was based on it being a re-creation of an historic piece; if a student asked to do an art project like that, I would of course have said no," Stamper explained.

"[To say] I am devastated by my actions bringing outrage and negativity on you is a gross understatement," she continued.

According to the *Sun*, Stamper will meet with Waldrop on Thursday morning. The superintendent has confirmed that an investigation is ongoing but would not comment further on Stamper's status, citing personnel issues.