

School Blames Child for Nation of Islam 'Handout'

A second parent has now come forward acknowledging their child received a Nation of Islam "handout" in a third grade class at Harold McCormick Elementary School in Elizabethton, Tennessee—contradicting claims by the school district that the document was not distributed in the classroom.

I first told you about this story on Monday. Parent Sommer Bauer told me her son's teacher gave him a document that portrayed the presidents on Mount Rushmore as being racists.

School superintendent E.C. Alexander refuted allegations that the Nation of Islam document had been distributed in class. He told me the document was never meant for public distribution and that the child took the sheet of paper from the teacher's work station without her permission.

"The student (without permission) took the sheet from a 'ton' of discarded teacher's material on that table; then, the student took it home and gave it to the parent," Alexander wrote in an email to educators after my column was published.

Supt. Alexander also posted a statement on the school district's website. He hurled all sorts of allegations my way—words like "misleading" and "totally incorrect" and "sensational."

Yet, he never got around to telling us what was misleading or totally incorrect or sensational. And we still don't know how that Nation of Islam information found its way into that third-grade classroom.

"Our System has been defamed (possibly permanently)," he bemoaned.

"Now, the thought that we as public educators would deliberately distribute such material is absolutely absurd," he wrote.

He also took great umbrage at my characterization of the Nation of Islam document as a "handout."

"The sheet in question was not a hand-out sheet distributed to students," he wrote on the school district's website. I should point out that he underlined the word "not."

Instead, he referred to it as a "sheet." So for the sake of accuracy, the Nation of Islam "handout" will be known as the Nation of Islam "sheet."

Parents were given a letter on Tuesday stressing that the material contained in the Nation of Islam "sheet" was not distributed to students, was not shown during or after the lesson and was not used as a reference.

There's just one problem with the school district's explanation—a second parent has now come forward corroborating Mrs. Bauer's story.

"Yes, they were handed out and yes the students did look at them and read them," the parent told me.

The parent asked not to be identified to protect her child. She told me she came forward because of how the school is treating Mrs. Bauer's son.

"I don't want this little boy to be looked at as a liar," the parent said. "As of right now that's what all of these adults are making this boy out to be—and that makes me sick to my stomach."

So what happened inside that third grade classroom at Harold McCormick Elementary School?

According to the parent, the children were separated into four

groups. Each group was given two “sheets of paper.”

“The teacher held up each one and said, ‘These do not go home. These are just to use here,” the parent told me.

The Nation of Islam “sheet” explained that George Washington hailed from Virginia, a “prime breeder of black people.” Of Theodore Roosevelt, it was alleged he called Africans “ape-like.” There were also disparaging comments made about Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln.

The parent told me that the teacher did not teach students from the Nation of Islam “sheet.” But she did hand it to the students.

Maybe this was just an innocent mistake. It’s possible the teacher may have printed the first thing she Googled without giving it a second glance. It happens. Teachers are busy folks.

But what was not an innocent mistake was a school district trying to portray an 8-year-old boy as the bad guy.

And what is not acceptable is sending out mass emails accusing the child of pilfering a “sheet” from his teacher’s work station.

If I didn’t know better, I’d say that little boy is the victim of grown-up bullying.

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