



STAPLES HIGH SCHOOL

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JOHN M. DODIG
Principal

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June 9, 2008

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Each year at this time of year, my administrators, secretaries, teachers and I are busy planning for, organizing, and arranging end-of-year activities. Everything from chaperoning two proms on Saturday nights, to the High Honors Banquet, the Awards Assembly, Baccalaureate, and the graduation ceremony all take hours of preparation in order to be successful. It means almost every evening at some school event for three full weeks. All the while, school goes on as usual. Students expect that we will appear at their championship games, that we help chaperone the Talent show and attend their banquets. In fact, the Scholar/Athlete Banquet is this Tuesday night. We do this willingly and with joy because we support our students in everything they do for their four years.

While all of this is going on, there is always a group of seniors who feel it is their duty and responsibility to create and pull-off a "senior prank". One senior came to see me about an idea that I thought was really funny and WOULD fall in the realm of "prank". He was looking for my unofficial approval. When I asked him if he represented the entire senior class and that this would be THE "prank", he said NO and then understood why I could not be complicit in what he was trying to do. Then one morning at 6:30 AM my Head Custodian came to tell me that someone had placed a portable toilet on the roof. I smiled and said "If that is the prank, it was pretty clever". I asked him to leave it up there for a couple of hours so whoever did this could enjoy the fact that people actually saw it. Later in the day, the maintenance and custodial crew removed the structure from the roof. Although I thought it was funny, in reality the roof membrane could have been breached and any subsequent leak in the roof would not have been covered by warranty because the membrane had been compromised. It didn't happen so we and they were lucky. No harm done.

Later in the week, as my custodians (I only have two during the day) were busy setting up for events in the LMC, the auditorium and elsewhere while doing what they do every day (cleaning up spills, emptying trash in the cafeteria during lunch, responding to teacher needs) they received word that someone had damaged some or all of the boys' toilets in the new building. As I walked the second floor checking this out while he looked elsewhere we discovered that, indeed, someone had organized for each male toilet to be made inoperable (no flushing) while leaving massive amounts of human feces in the bowl. This man had to go from toilet to toilet looking at the contents, having to live with the smell while he used wrenches to fix each toilet. Another Senior Prank that wasn't so funny. Why should anyone have to be asked to live with those sights and smells just because someone thought it was funny?

And now Friday a young senior girl (who by the way was not graduating well before this incident and both she and her father knew that months ago) decided on yet another prank. Their intent was NOT to bring awareness to global warming or the high price of gas even though that is the way it has been

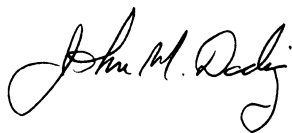
reported in the media. Our Teen Awareness Group wanted to promote the idea that drinking and driving are dangerous in combination and was given permission to park a crushed car on our campus. If this girl and her father had worked with our Environmental Club or Club Green to promote these ideas, I would have given permission to park her pony on campus with a suitable sign draped over its flanks. This was NOT their intent. The intent was to cause a disturbance. The intent was for hundreds of students to file out of the school to watch the pony parade around campus. The intent was to put administrators in a position that would make them look silly.

We got wind on Thursday that something was going to happen early Friday morning. Not knowing what it was and knowing that I didn't want to arrive at school to find graffiti all over the front of the building, I informed my Head of Maintenance who informed the police department. I even hired one of my security men to spend the night in his car to protect our 80 million dollar building. We didn't know that the horse was what these kids were waiting for.

As we adults know, not all things turn out as we plan. I do not believe that it is my job to "take it like a man" each year waiting for someone or some group to pull off a prank. Some of them turn out to be funny while others turn out to put people in harm's way, although usually unintentionally. Personally speaking, I don't think this is something that we simply have to endure each year. No one has spent more time with these seniors than Mrs. Morgan other than you, their parents. I resent that she had to be placed in a position with other administrative colleagues to make a decision on the spur of the moment in the rain about what to do and then have people laugh at her/them. "Staples administrators suspend senior girl for bringing her pony on campus to call attention the high price of gas. She will not attend graduation." The headline smacks of ridicule. The headline writer didn't know that she knew months ago that she was not graduating and, if you believe me, this was NOT about promoting anything other than causing mayhem for us to deal with.

I am not looking for emails of support or disapproval. I am simply trying to give you the context in which this incident took place in order to provide another point of view. Waiting for the proverbial shoe to fall each June takes some of the joy out of the job. Seeing our seniors leave is serious business for us. It is an emotional experience for those of us who have worked with them for four years. We feel some of what you feel when you think of your children leaving home to start a new chapter in their lives. Yes, my administrators and I do take it personally.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M. Dodig". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being the most prominent part.

John M. Dodig

Mission Statement

We are a community of learners engaged in a quest for academic excellence and committed to civic and social responsibility. We are unwavering in our belief that we must act with integrity and treat each other with respect.