



## BARSTOW UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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DATE: May 31, 2011  
TO: Nick Benson  
25435 West Main St.  
Barstow, CA 92311  
FROM: Teresa Healy, Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services  
SUBJECT: Randall Albritton – Complaint

On May 2, 2011, a complaint was filed by you on behalf of your grandson, Randall Albritton Jr. (Stu# 20753) who is a student at Barstow High School. In the "Statement of Complaint or Board Policy Violated" section, you cited six concerns. I investigated your complaint by interviewing your grandson, the teacher, administrator, and other students. I also reviewed course pacing guides, sample lesson plans, and the California State Standards. Please understand that it is the district's strong belief that this matter, and particularly this response summarizing various student interviews and otherwise examining issues regarding particular students and their scholastic achievement, is a student record under federal and/or state law. Accordingly, the district respectfully requests that you refrain from any publication of this document or any portion thereof. We trust you will appreciate this serious concern and avoid any potential legal ramifications that could result.

Each area of complaint is listed below, with my findings and recommendations.

#### **"Improper monitoring of student activity."**

Issue: In your complaint, you cite the concern of student supervision after a student is released from a teacher or after school activity.

Finding: According to current practice, there is an "activity bus" that transports students at 4:15 pm. As students are there voluntarily, there is no expectation that students who chose to work with a teacher after school, stay the entire time. Students are supervised by site administration and other personnel on campus. We have thought about this practice further and there may be an adjustment to campus safety monitor hours to include direct student supervision until the activity bus leaves campus. Students will be asked to wait in a designated area to be better monitored.

#### **"Instructing students that their parents are misinformed and stupid."**

Issue: In your email to Ms. Levine, you state that Mr. Duarte told the students that (your quotes) "you shouldn't watch Fox, they lie and only stupid people watch it".

Finding: Through student interviews, I was not able to ascertain that the teacher said, "you shouldn't watch Fox, they lie and only stupid people watch it" as you stated. During the

interviews with your grandson and other students, I specifically asked about whether the teacher guided or instructed towards one political ideology or questioned beliefs and values held by students and their families. Every student agreed that the teacher questioned the students about current events and asked them to “back up” their statements with fact. They also shared that they could research the requested facts and bring them back at a later time. The students had a guess as to the teacher’s political beliefs, but could not be sure as the teacher apt to take the opposing view to make the students think. Most shared that class discussions were interesting but did not feel threatened or vulnerable by having their opinions questioned or discussed.

**“Failure to correspond with parents when requested.”**

Issue: You did not receive a method to contact Mr. Duarte regularly to follow your grandson’s progress in class.

Finding: The expectation is that teachers return messages to parents by the end of the following school day. Teachers have voicemail on campus so that parents can leave a message directly with the teacher. Teachers may ask parents to utilize the online Parent Portal on Infinite Campus to monitor student progress, but still need to communicate with parents in a timely manner. The agreed upon daily note will still remain a suggestion. Site administration will work with the teacher to ensure that timely communication is occurring. If it does not, please contact the high school principal.

**“Failure to follow school curriculum.”**

Issue: You cite that “Mr. Duarte is not teaching World History, he is teaching socialist and Marxist left wing agenda”

Finding: Teachers follow the California State Standards for their subject area, which is put into a District Pacing Guide to ensure that the Standards are covered in a timely and sequential manner.

The California State Standards for History-Social Studies (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/hs/st/ss/documents/histsocscistnd.pdf>, p40) states:

1. Students compare the present with the past, evaluating the consequences of past events and decisions and determining the lessons that were learned.
2. Students analyze how change happens at different rates at different times; understand that some aspects can change while others remain the same; and understand that change is complicated and affects not only technology and politics but also values and beliefs.
4. Students relate current events to the physical and human characteristics of places and regions.
4. Students construct and test hypotheses; collect, evaluate, and employ information from multiple primary and secondary sources; and apply it in oral and written presentations.

Additionally, the Pacing Guide for World History shows that students should be working on “Causes and Consequences of World War II” (3/2/11) which includes: Axis Drive for Empire, Appeasement, WWII Origins, Theaters, Turning Points, Leader Conferences, Holocaust, and the Human Cost of War; and “International Development- Post World War II” (4/18-4/21/11) which includes: Cold War, Yalta Conference, Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan, Third World Influence, Trouble Spots, Middle East, China, Eastern Europe and the Fall of the USSR.

A review of Lesson Plans for March 2, 2011 shows that the lesson included a handout that where students reviewed an article from the Huffington Post regarding misinformation in the media—

specifically referring to Fox News, and included a review of World War I ideas and relates these to World War II. Another handout/worksheet reviewed the Union movement, Imperialism, and related issues from World War I, Russian Revolution and World War II. Additional student work includes Hitler and appeasement, utilizing the adopted textbook.

On April 19, 2011 the Lesson Plan includes a handout reviewing current events on the federal budget deficit, a review of various wars, and prevention of the spread of communism. This was followed by a clip from a current event video regarding the consequence of the 9/11 attacks and its effect on Constitutional Rights.

According to the teacher and students who were interviewed, each class includes discussion and debate regarding the material being covered. Students receive points for participation in the discussions, regardless of their opinions.

**“Requiring students to supply materials in violation of state law.”**

**“Threatening students with after school chores should they not comply with his demands for materials he wants used”.**

Issue: Mr. Duarte “mandates that all assignments are put into sheet protectors” and “but if he were going to have to provide the protectors, Randy would have to wash his car”.

Finding: Students are asked to keep a notebook in which the daily work is placed in sheet protectors. Notebook checks are conducted randomly throughout the semester and sometimes students are able to use their notebooks during quizzes. Students who cannot afford the supplies are asked to meet with the teacher privately. The teacher did report to me that he does state to the students that they can earn the supplies by washing his van, but has never actually had students do so. The teacher provides the materials for students who cannot afford them.

The site administration will work with all staff to ensure that they are not requiring students to purchase supplies for their classes. All materials required for a class will be provided by the school, conforming to Education Code.

In summary, I would like to thank you for your concern for your grandson. Additionally, the Barstow High School Principal is available to assist with any future concerns. Please be assured that the District shall take any and all appropriate actions to correct any and all deficiencies found in the course of this investigation.

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cc: Susan Levine, Superintendent

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