

Students at Warren, Michigan high school protest firing of principal

A WSWS reporting team
22 April 2010

Hundreds of students demonstrated outside Lincoln High School in Warren, Michigan Tuesday to protest the firing of their principal, Patrick Victor. The previous night the local school board voted 4-3 to not renew the contract of the popular principal.

Van Dyke Public Schools Superintendent Kathleen Spaulding recommended to the board that it not renew Victor's contract for performance-related reasons. He has been placed on administrative leave for the remainder of the school year.

According to students interviewed by the *World Socialist Web Site* the rationale for the dismissal centered on inadequate test scores. The expanded use of student testing to target "failing schools" which are subject to sanction is a central feature of the Obama administration's reactionary Race to the Top program.

The protest began in the early morning and was joined by parents and teachers. Students carried hand-lettered signs supporting Victor and joined in spirited chants opposing the board action. Groups of students continued to picket the school in support of Victor until well into the afternoon. The school board summoned Warren police. There were no reports of arrests.

One school board trustee who opposed the firing told the *Macomb Daily*, "As far as I'm concerned the students and staff thought he was doing a great job and he was going above and beyond his normal duties."

Students interviewed by the WSWS agreed. Jerica Kube, a senior at Lincoln, was outraged at the dismissal of Mr. Victor. "They say he is too easy, too nice, but he isn't. He is just fair. He actually respects us."

"Yes," said another student. "He knew you by name. He made it his business to know everyone."

A parent and school employee, Sandra Campbell, joined the protest. She said she opposed the firing. "I was threatened and told that if I talked to the media I

would be fired."

Campbell, who has two children at Lincoln, including a daughter who is a senior, said that Victor was formerly a principal in Hamtramck, Michigan and did a phenomenal job when he came to Lincoln two years ago.

"Before he came there were fights between the races," Campbell said. "When Mr. Victor came he wanted to make sure that everyone got a good education and was safe."

"I wouldn't have my daughter anywhere else. This is not about anything except our children. Before he came to Lincoln the school was a mess. My daughter was doing horrible in school. She met with him and she is walking out as a straight-A student. That's a good principal."

Campbell opposed claims that Victor had a bad relationship with teachers. "At the school board meeting 50 teachers stood with him and said he was a good teacher. A handful of teachers do not speak for the majority."

Demetrius Glenn, a Lincoln student, felt the firing of Victor showed the school board was indifferent to the feelings of the students. "The schools are supposed to be about the students, so why is the board so opposed to listening to the students? The board is not asking us and we want to be heard."

Another student told the WSWS, "We have slowly been getting our test scores back up to where they need to be. I don't see how getting a new principal is going to help. We all respect Mr. Victor. He tries to relate to us."

"Mr. Victor stood up to every charge they made against him," she said. "He was able to defend himself. They could not prove a single charge."

Denetta Wilson said, "He saved us by keeping us in

school. A lot of us were getting into trouble, but he would sit us down and talk to us. He was supportive.”

“How will getting another principal help?” she continued. “Mr. Victor will get involved and break up fights.”

Another student added that while Mr. Victor would talk to you, “he would also discipline you, but he would tell you why.”

Jerry, another student, agreed. “He was such a good principal. He was respectful and really tried to help you out.”

Campbell felt the board wanted a puppet. “These students want to be in school. Mr. Victor would tell them that they have a purpose here.”

“No one cares about how the kids feel. When we tell them their views don’t count it sends the wrong message.”



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