



South Kitsap School District investigating photo that shows students wearing shirts with profanity

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SOUTH KITSAP — South Kitsap School District Superintendent Karst Brandsma has called for an investigation into a photo circulating on social media that shows South Kitsap High School students in a classroom wearing T-shirts that say "Read a F-ing Book." The vulgarity is spelled out and some students are giving the finger.

The photo appears to have been originally posted on June 14, 2018, on the personal page of a teacher at South Kitsap High School. The district became aware of the photo March 24 by an email from a community member, Brandsma said.



South Kitsap School District (Photo: South Kitsap School District)

"The photo is not a part of any approved educational activity or curriculum and is obviously not appropriate in a school setting," Brandsma said. "It does not represent what we expect nor what our community expects of the educational environment."

Brandsma on Friday said the district began investigating immediately after learning of the photo, but he could not add any details at this time.

"As of today, Friday, March 29, we are not able to release any additional information but do want to assure our community that we take this matter very seriously and will investigate to the fullest manner possible before taking any appropriate actions," Brandsma said.

Results of the investigation were not available on Tuesday afternoon.

Public interest in the photo ignited on March 28 when Rep. Jesse Young, R-Gig Harbor, posted a copy of the photo on his legislative Facebook page. The caption of the forwarded photo identified the class as a "SPED"

(special education) language arts class.

Young condemned the photo, calling it "manipulative and borderline abusive to the students."

At least two people in the comment thread posted screenshots showing the teacher's Facebook icon and a post dated June 14, 2018, with the message, "My irreplaceable, unflinchingly supportive 6th block senior class. Love you all!!!!"

Angelina Buschke, a student in the class who is pictured in the photo, said the T-shirts were made by a student, an inside joke among the class Buschke describes as "my family."

"She's getting hit for something she didn't do," Buschke said. "She's a great teacher."

Buschke was "disappointed" in Young's statements implying students in the photo were vulnerable because of their special education status. Everyone in the photo was 18 or older and took part willingly, Buschke said.

The original posting of the photo went up two days after graduation in 2018 and has been taken down.

The email alerting the district to the photo came from Jim Johnson of Citizens Supporting South Kitsap Schools, a group Johnson describes as supportive of schools but "concerned about the decision-making of the district and the board."

This is at least the second time this school year the district has investigated a teacher as a result of material shared on social media.

A teacher at the high school was formally reprimanded In January after an investigation confirmed the existence of a video on social media showing the teacher having physical contact with a student described by the teacher, the student and other students who witnessed it as horseplay. A student in the classroom made a video of the incident and briefly posted it on social media before taking it down.

The teacher admitted to having sent text messages to the student that were "overly familiar" in tone and included content of a personal nature, according to district documents. The teacher also admitted to encouraging the student to delete the non-school-related texts.

Brandsma warned the teacher that any future violation of the district's policy on maintaining professional boundaries with students could result in termination.

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