

**From:** [Jan Cook](#)  
**To:** [Amy D. Martin](#)  
**Subject:** Bullying  
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Dear Ms. Martin,

After reading the letter to the editor from Keri Strahler, I am compelled to list our experience in the 501 school district regarding bullying. I have 3 grandchildren and all have special needs. The oldest 2 boys have dyslexia, and the youngest has a speech disability.

When my oldest grandson started school, he had significant problems with bullying. He experience sexual abuse in kindergarten. Later, in first through third grades, there was verbal abuse and physical abuse. In one incident, there was even camera footage of kids stomping on his feet. The teacher admitted that it was difficult to watch what was happening to him and that she knew there was worse abuse going on, probably in the bathrooms. He was kicked and hit with fists. In some of these situations, the bullies were sent to the office and they would be suspended for a couple days. This was ineffective punishment which I witnessed when I walked out behind one of the kids with his mother and heard her tell him that he would get a 3-day vacation and could watch videos for that time. Obviously, suspension was not the answer to solving this problem.

The mental toll was even worse. His special education teacher told him (and my daughter) that he would never be able to do more than wipe down tables at McDonald's. She admitted to my daughter that she had no training in dyslexia. (Twenty percent of the population has dyslexia). He has continual anxiety and to this day, we can not even drive near the school.

My grandson felt worthless and at the age of 9, contemplated suicide and had a plan. He told us later that the only reason he didn't follow through is because of his friends in his Sunday school class.

We talked to the principal and the teachers, attended PTO meetings, and contacted the 501 office. I offered the idea that perhaps the kids who have been bullied could be transferred to a "safe" school with no tolerance for bullying. I also suggested that the bullies could be placed in a separate room and segregated from the rest of the school until they could behave appropriately. There seemed to be no solution to the problem.

Our daughter did the only thing she could to help the children and enrolled them in the K-12 program at Lawrence Virtual School. The first thing my oldest grandson said to his new teacher was, "I'm so sorry. I don't want you to waste your time. I'm too stupid to learn". This from a kid with a high IQ. While it is a difficult balance for the family with two working parents, it was the only option since they cannot afford a private school. I am happy to report that all three are making remarkable progress, even as they continue to suffer psychologically and have counseling through Lawrence Virtual.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my frustrations and for making me feel that someone

might actually listen. I grieve for the kids who continue to be bullied. Thank you for giving us hope that someday there may be schools where children feel safe and encouraged to be all that they can be.

Sincerely,

Jan Cook

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