



Williamsport Area School District Statement on Myrtle Beach Incident

The Williamsport Area School District proactively serves students and families of our community. We take this responsibility seriously, and the safety of our students is our top priority. The district follows a high standard of communicating with the public and protecting the privacy of our students.

In light of recent concerns raised on social media, it is evident that the circulation of inaccuracies and misinformation have created confusion that is detrimental to students, staff and the district. The district is releasing the following statement to provide facts where we are legally able to do so, while still protecting the privacy of students:

Near the end of the 2017-2018 school year, local law enforcement brought to the district's attention an alleged incident involving indecent and inappropriate behavior by a baseball player during the team's spring trip to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. The information had not been previously reported to any district administrator or employee. Once the district was contacted, a prompt investigation was completed and appropriate discipline was issued. Federal educational privacy laws prohibit the district from disclosing any specifics regarding what discipline was levied and who was involved.

In addition to the district's own investigation, the matter was investigated by outside agencies, including the Lycoming County District Attorney's office and law enforcement in Myrtle Beach. When contacted by Myrtle Beach authorities, the high school principal immediately referred them to the district attorney's office and the district's school resource officers, who serve with the Williamsport Bureau of Police. All questions regarding why charges were or were not pursued can be deferred to those agencies, as those decisions are not made by the school district.

It is important to note that the district first became aware of this incident after law enforcement had already been contacted and a ChildLine report made. The report to ChildLine was not duplicated by the district, as it had already been reported.

The district's investigation was conducted by the high school principal, district administrators and district legal counsel. Once it became clear which students were and were not involved in the incident, it was apparent that the high school principal had no personal conflict of interest or personal relationships with the students involved. The principal was permitted by the district's

solicitor to participate in the investigation, and his actions were appropriate and thorough. As an added measure of diligence, a second administrator also participated in the investigation.

As is the case with all student disciplinary matters of this degree, the district allows legal counsel to be present—if a student or a student’s family so desires—when that student is being interviewed and when potential disciplinary measures are being discussed. No outside legal counsel was present for any other meetings or interviews.

The district has communicated with the families of all students involved in the incident to the full extent to which we have been able. We have done this while abiding by federal educational privacy laws, which prevent the district from disclosing both the type of discipline imposed and the identity of the students who were disciplined. We understand these restrictions can be frustrating for parents, students and community members. However, the district worked directly with the families of the students involved to provide the most comfortable and appropriate educational setting for the students following the incident, and has at all times aimed to act in the best interest of the students.

The Williamsport Area School District does not condone inappropriate and indecent behavior. The district has fully conducted an investigation of this incident and has transparently cooperated and participated with law enforcement officials. We urge our students, families and community members to avoid posting statements to social media that are inaccurate or misleading, as those statements can be detrimental and potentially harmful to our students.

While we certainly understand the public concern around this matter, we want to assure our community that the appropriate measures have been taken to navigate a situation that has dictated a high level of confidentiality due to federal educational laws.

We will continue to do everything we can to ensure the safety and security of our students and prevent another incident like the one in question from occurring again.