



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on November 9, 2021

High-school Student Punished for Reporting Sexual Assault Even After Assailant Confessed

A North Carolina high-school student is being punished by school administrators for reporting she was sexually assaulted in a school bathroom — despite the fact that her alleged assailant confessed to the crime.

The 15-year old girl, a sophomore at Hawthorne Academy of Health Sciences, a magnet school in Charlotte, told the [Daily Beast](#) the male student who allegedly assaulted her “had been harassing her for weeks, following her into the bathroom and groping her without her consent.”

“He would, like, come into the bathroom and he would push me into the stall,” the girl told [WBTB](#). “He put his hands in my pants and then he was like touching my breasts.”

According to the Daily Beast:

The student says she did not report it until she attended a Title IX assembly in late August or early September, where administrators encouraged students to come forward about instances of abuse. She had hesitated before, she said, because she was afraid no one would believe her.

Around the time of the assembly, the girl spoke with another student who told her she had had a similar experience with the same assailant. The two of them brought their allegations to the assistant principal, who notified the police, triggering an investigation.... A few weeks later, her mother said, the police called to say the alleged assailant had confessed. He was later charged with two counts of sexual battery.

Then something strange happened: Having done precisely what school officials told her to do, and having been vindicated by a police investigation, the girl was suspended from school for a day and forced to sign a non-retaliation letter. The assistant principal told her mother the school believed her daughter was lying about the incident. “There was,” the Daily Beast noted, “no mention of any punishment for the male student.”

The mother claims she asked the assistant principal about the conflict between the results of the police investigation and the school’s actions, to which the assistant principal allegedly replied, “Unfortunately, what the police department does has nothing to do with the school system.”

Later, after a public outcry, the girl’s suspension was temporarily stayed while a second investigation took place, but she was still going to be required to attend a weekend class called “Sexual Harassment Is Preventable.”



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Fed up with the school's actions and the lack of communication from any other school officials, the mother took her case to WBTV's chief investigative reporter, Nick Ochsner, who had previously [reported](#) on the questionable handling of sexual-assault accusations on other campuses of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS).

Ochsner couldn't get anywhere, either. Most officials, and all school-board members, rebuffed his requests for comment. A couple officials, citing legal prohibitions on public comment, offered perfunctory statements.

On Wednesday, concerned students at Hawthorne Academy decided to stage a walkout in protest of the school's actions. School administrators, having caught wind of the plan, co-opted it into a "town hall" where students could discuss the matter with them. Roughly 100 of the school's 255 students showed up for it. Some students referred to the school's treatment of their classmate as "victim blaming," which garnered applause from other students, wrote WBTV.

"It's heartwarming to know if no one in CMS cares, at least the students are trying to support her," the mother told [FOX 46 Charlotte](#).

Indeed, school officials' attitude toward the girl was best exemplified by the fact that the only time the principal has called her mother during the entire saga was to tell her that her daughter was rude when she got off the bus Wednesday morning — hardly a shock given the way she has been treated.

It took two more days for anyone else to contact the mother, and then it was someone from the school's Title IX office saying they were investigating the charges.

She still has no explanation as to why the school is treating her daughter the way it is, but she told the Daily Beast it has led the girl to "question[] whether she did the right thing or not. So we just have to keep reassuring her that what you did was right, and you shouldn't let anybody make you feel any other kind of way."



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