



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on December 28, 2022

## In 'Equity's' Name, 'Top School' Hides Academic Awards From Students, Hurting College Chances

It wasn't enough that upon taking her "elite" high school's helm five years ago, Principal Ann Bonitatibus aggressively sought to change the institution's racial composition in equity's name. Now we learn that the politically correct Bonitatibus was also party to the withholding of top students' academic awards — also in equity's name.

What's more, this hurt those scholars' college-admissions chances because they weren't able to cite the awards on university applications.



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Per [The Washington Times](#):

Administrators at a top-rated high school just outside Washington reportedly withheld notifying students about their National Merit Scholar awards for multiple years on equity grounds.

At least 1,200 [mainly Asian-descent] students at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology [TJ] in Alexandria, Virginia, have been affected by a policy that has been carried out by Principal Ann Bonitatibus as recently as this year....

The policy reportedly reflected the school's desire for "equal outcomes for every student, without exception."

Brandon Kosatka, the director of student services, reportedly told Shawna Yashar, a TJ parent, that he and Ms. Bonitatibus agreed to underplay the awards because they didn't want to hurt the feelings of the students who weren't recognized.

"We want to recognize students for who they are as individuals, not focus on their achievements," Mr. Kosatka told Ms. Yashar....

Pit stop: How do we fully "recognize students ... as individuals" absent consideration of achievement? Has Bonitatibus developed a technology by which she can perfectly read hearts and minds?

After all, we tend to recognize people's individuality by noting their passions and achievements. Of course, character does matter most, and schools generally do recognize it — as expressed via conduct. Yet conduct is in a sense an achievement (though it can also be a pretense when not from the heart). The point: Achievement, whether significant or deceptive, is largely all we have to go by.

The *Times* continues:

Being named a National Merit Scholar means that a student scored in the top 3% nationwide on the PSAT. It's a major boost to a student's college applications and ability to compete for lucrative scholarships.



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Ms. Yashar was the parent who first learned about the withholdings, discovering this fall that her teenage son was recognized as a National Merit Scholar in fall 2021, according to the report.

However, Ms. Bonitatibus didn't distribute the notices to families last year, and didn't alert the students of their commendations this year until mid-November, well after the early application deadlines for certain elite universities.

Elaborating on the damage the TJ officials caused, City Journal (CJ) [writes](#) that since starting as a freshman at the school in September 2019, Yashar's son, "who is part Arab American, studied statistical analysis, literature reviews, and college-level science late into the night. This workload was necessary to keep him up to speed with the advanced studies at TJ, which *U.S. News & World Report* ranks as America's top school."

Owing to his PSAT scores, Yashar was recognized as a "Commended Student," "one of about 50,000 students earning that distinction," CJ informs. "Principals usually celebrate [such] National Merit scholars with special breakfasts, award ceremonies, YouTube videos, press releases, and social media announcements."

"But not at TJ," the site continues. Bonitatibus and Kosatka "have been withholding this information from families and the public for years," even though recognition "by National Merit opens the door to millions of dollars in college scholarships and 800 Special Scholarships from corporate sponsors."

So this likely cost these kids money (a basis for a lawsuit?). Speaking of which, if Bonitatibus and other woke-joke social engineers really believe in equity — meaning, "everyone ends up in the same place," as Kamala Harris once put it — why is it applied selectively?

Why, for example, is Bonitatibus afforded more money and authority than her teachers? Shouldn't this be equalized? Is it equity for thee, but not for me?

Then, what about TJ's sports and extra-curricular activities? Is equity applied there as well?

Whatever the case, TJ's transgressions are no surprise, given its history. That is, the "episode has emerged amid the school district's new strategy of 'equal outcomes for every student, without exception,'" CJ further relates. "School administrators, for instance, have implemented an 'equitable grading' policy that eliminates zeros, gives students a grade of 50 percent just for showing up, and assigns a cryptic code of 'NTI' for assignments not turned in. It's a race to the bottom."

And Bonitatibus is a bottom feeder and breeder. When she took TJ's helm in 2017, she was none too pleased that the school's students were 70 percent of Asian descent; 20 percent white; and 10 percent black, Hispanic, or multiracial, [reported](#) The Federalist's Asra Q. Nomani in April. Consequently, in 2020, "Bonitatibus emailed our mostly minority, immigrant families, telling us to check our 'privileges,' expressing her shame at our 'Colonials' mascot, and outlining her vision for a new racial makeup at the school," Nomani informs.

Whether the very white Bonitatibus sought to relinquish her own position to a "minority" was not reported.

Oh, the kicker: The principal's "diversity" efforts led to students underperforming and dropping out at record rates, states Nomani.

Bonitatibus deserves condemnation, and has received it. Yet there's a deeper issue: Such equity efforts



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pave a road to Hell even when pursued with good intentions. They reflect a shallow, superficial worldview. Consider the consequences:

- Killing productivity — in general, people cease striving upon realizing their efforts won't be rewarded.
- Killing character — children must learn to handle failure, and, as with languages, such coping is learned best at young ages. Failure can be a blessing, too. For "Pain is the megaphone God uses to get through to deaf ears," as C.S. Lewis put it, and failure is thus beneficial in two ways. First, it sometimes steers us away from what we don't have a proclivity for (saying, in essence, "This isn't for you") and toward where our gifts truly lie; and, second, it can help cultivate virtue, such as patience and humility. A person who hasn't failed hasn't lived.

Apropos to this, Bonitatibus has been the worst of failures with her educational policies. And making this plain to her, via a pink slip and some incidentally "hurt feelings," would be highly beneficial to her and her students.



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