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# My View: When principal foiled a middle-school caper

Joel Weiss 17 hrs ago 2



In my career as a public school administrator, I had the good fortune to be principal of several elementary schools and one middle school. My longest gig was the 11 years I spent as principal of Clarence Middle School.

I love middle level students! They are energetic and unpredictable; the emotional and physical changes that take place during a student’s time in middle school is just amazing.

Middle level teachers are a special group. They recognize and appreciate the joy that their students bring to the classroom. No two days are predictable nor alike.

One of my “joyous” experiences took place one day at Clarence Middle School. I tried to make appearances in the cafeteria every day to help teachers and aides who had drawn the short straw and had the task of monitoring student behavior during lunch.

One fairly calm day, if such a thing is possible in a middle school, as I was walking down the hall to the cafeteria, I noticed three girls talking frantically outside the cafeteria doorway. They were in a three-person huddle, busily talking and seemingly quite agitated.

As I approached the three young ladies, one of them – let’s call her Mia since I really don’t remember her name – came up to me with the other two members of the three musketeers right behind her for moral support. “Mr. Weiss, you have to do me a favor ... pleeceeease, Mr. Weiss do me a favor.”



Joel Weiss spent 11 years as the principal at Clarence Middle School.

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As her backups nodded with approval, I suspiciously asked what the favor was. “Call my mom and tell her that someone stole my glasses. Tell her that you and a teacher got them back but that they’re broken.”

It took a few seconds for it to sink in. My next question was obvious. “Did someone steal your glasses and break them?”

Mia rolled her eyes as only a middle school student can.

“No, that’s why it’s a favor. I dropped my new glasses when I was at my locker after second period and my mom is going to be really upset with me. But if you call her and tell her the glasses were stolen and then somehow broken but you got them back, she’ll be happy I have them again and I won’t get grounded.”

With that request, she let out a deep breath, content that she had made an excellent case for herself. Her buddies seemed extremely proud of her for being so persuasive.

I declined to participate in the scheme. I did offer to call Mia’s mom and tell her the new glasses were broken, without mentioning the scheme that had been concocted in front of the cafeteria. Mia let out a large sigh, seen and heard frequently in middle schools, rolled her eyes and said no. The three friends walked away in a huff, no doubt to hatch and execute another way to solve the problem.

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Reflecting on the event from a number of years ago, I have mixed emotions. I think I handled it properly. I feel good that Mia trusted me to be for a minute or two one of her confidants. But I wonder how I had inspired Mia and her friends to make them even think that I would go along with such a scheme.

I have no idea how this episode actually ended. My guess is that Mia had to face the music when she got home and explain how she had broken her new glasses. Of course who knows; knowing how I disappointed her, it’s possible Mia told her mother that the principal broke them.

2 comments

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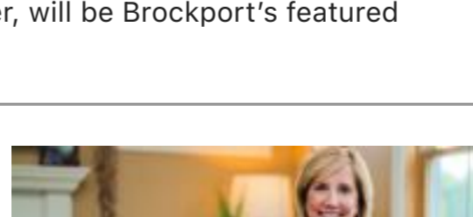
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