

Testimony by Megan Amundson
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Manifest Educational Hardship does not work for New Hampshire families. It did not work for our son this summer.

I sat before you less than 4 months ago asking that you reverse the decision of the Conval School Board. We requested a change in school assignment because we saw that our son's attendance at the school would prove to be an educational hardship. As his parents we know what is best for our child. What is a hardship for one family is not a hardship for another. We as parents have the right to direct our child's education. This fact is something outlined in the 14th Amendment. We were asking that our son be placed in a different public school not a private school. We were asking that our son be given the same educational opportunities students living a tenth of mile from us have.

In March of this year we met with the Principal of the High School. Our goal was to learn about the school and its program of studies. At that meeting we shared our goals for Robert with the principal. He was less than enthusiastic about what it was we were looking for and went as far as to say he didn't care if Robert came to Conval or not. We left the meeting with our son telling us that he did not want to be at a school where the principal would say something like that. Upon further research we learned that the programming at the school was not equal to what Robert could receive at Keene High School. Two of the other facts that drew us to seek reassignment was that Conval did not offer French and they had no swim team. We also sought reassignment because we wanted our son to attend school closer to where I teach so that I could be available to him if he needed anything. Our reasons came with ideals and values that can't be measured or proven. Our reception from the school district was annoyance at best. The attitude of the superintendent and the school board was one of arrogance and apathy.

Schools rely on the fact that laws like Ed320 protect them from having to reassign a student. They will say almost anything knowing that no one will hold them accountable. During the course of the summer the superintendent came up with all kinds of wild stories about what the district would do to accommodate what we wanted for our son. For instance, Robert could be transported to Conant to take French or if he took it online he would have the support of the certified teacher. When we were denied and had to enroll Robert in school we decided to exercise the option of taking French at Conant. After one brief conversation with the advisor I was informed that there was no way to make that work because the schools' daily schedules don't align. Wanting to just get Robert settled we opted for option B and have him take online French and work with the certified teacher. I was informed last week after requesting the name of the teacher no less than 5 times the teacher was no longer with the district. Now I am being told that I have misperceptions about what she was talking about this summer.

Robert is a talented swimmer who should be allowed to swim on a high school swim team. His participation could allow him to be a state champ as well as help him earn a scholarship to college. In this day and age having opportunities to earn scholarships is more important than ever. Although Robert could go to school at Conval and play sports for Keene. He would have to play all sports there. He has to wait to get to Keene at 3:00 in the afternoon because he has no driver's license and I work in Keene. Again, we are at the mercy of the district who says...just do another sport. Why do they get to dictate what Robert does?

The language in the law stating that a parent must prove hardship does only one thing, protect school districts from having to reassign a student. Why is the state protecting school districts? Isn't the role of the DOE and BOE to protect students as well. Districts use thousands of dollars to fight parents when they have it in their power to work with parents to find the right public school option for their families. My son is not a line item in some superintendent's budget. Families like mine are being held hostage by districts who want to tell us they know what good

for our children, As a citizen and a taxpayer I deserve better and my child deserves better.

Summary -

The burden should not be on the parent to prove anything the system is so messed up that most parents seek other educational opportunities rather than wait out just to be rejected.

Districts are being protected

Districts should not be allowed act as if because we use a public school we have no say

Districts have financial resources that far outreach what the average NH family has

In our case the decision is going to impact our son's ability to get a college scholarship.