



Our Children,  
Our Schools,  
Our Future

---

## PRESS RELEASE

TO: NEWS MEDIA  
RE: **REQUEST FOR STATEMENT REGARDING ACLU SUIT**  
FROM: DR. THOMAS A. OPSTAD, SUPERINTENDENT  
DATE: DECEMBER 7, 2010

Statement from Dr. Thomas A. Opstad, Superintendent, Aberdeen School District:

The Aberdeen School District has not yet been served with a copy of the lawsuit filed by the ACLU on behalf of former student Russell Dickerson so we cannot address the specifics of the complaint. The District adamantly denies that the District has allowed any student, including Russell, to be harassed without prompt corrective action being taken.

Russell is currently a member of our staff and provides tutoring to some of our elementary school students. The fact that he is currently employed by the District is indicative of the fact that he feels safe and comfortable in our schools.

During Russell's time as a student, the District worked diligently and collaboratively with the Dickerson family to investigate and address Russell's complaints about his treatment. The District takes complaints of harassment very seriously. Where misconduct was substantiated, students who engaged in harassment were appropriately disciplined.

In addition, the District took a number of proactive steps to establish a school culture that respects individual differences and promotes an appreciation of diversity, including:

- Surveying all District students concerning bullying and harassment and sharing the results with staff at the respective schools,
- Discussing bullying and harassment at parent/teacher/student conferences and providing a guide to parents and students on the topic,
- Training all staff and students to reduce and eliminate harassment from District schools,
- Providing seven days of cultural competency training for administrators and selected staff with diversity consultants, *Reach Out*.

The District continues to work with its staff, students, and the community to provide a safe learning environment for all students.