

SCENARIO: GUN IN SCHOOL...WHAT NOW?

Problem - Jason is walking down the hallways during his third period after a 45-minute Chemistry class from that one teacher everyone cannot stand...you know who I am talking about. Out of nowhere, his close friend comes running up to him and whispers that the sketchy new kid in school brought a gun that morning. Jason is told not to tell anyone and to just stay as far away from the kid as possible. His friend then runs off to her next class, and Jason finds himself freaking out. How could she be so calm about this? What does he do now? The kid has not used the gun, so maybe he will not? Does Jason go inform an administrator, or does he just mind his business as his friend said?!

Jason is freaking out. He has been put into this unfortunate predicament and does not know how to handle this. If he tells, the kid can possibly end up suspended or even locked up. Jason is aware of what the Student-to-Prison-Pipeline can do to minority students like them! But, on the other hand, Jason needs to also consider the lives of everyone else in the school, including his own. Now, what can he do?

Solution - Jason decides to find that one teacher that he trusts, and goes straight to them. Jason tells them everything he has learned that day in a secluded area (since he fears that someone will overhear them). The teacher promises to keep his name out of it. By doing this, Jason is aware that he has done the right thing, not only for him but also for his fellow students, the teachers, and administration. He knows the kid will be confronted, but it was the right thing to do. Now, he can sleep easy knowing that it was the right thing to do. Jason is a savior.

SCENARIO: THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE

Problem - Tamia is called into the dean's office due to an altercation during lunch. Tamia was being insulted and pushed by another student because of her unique style. After being fed up she took physical action and they fought. Now she's sitting in front of the dean. The dean informs her that the way she handled the situation was wrong; in a school, any violence taking place needs to be handled in the safest way. Tamia gets angry and explains to the dean that the student was provoking her and that she did not intend to put anyone in danger, that she was just defending herself to the best of her ability. The dean explains that this is just the policy of the school and that she and the other student will be suspended for a week to reflect on their actions.

Solution - Tamia decides she needs to educate the dean on the "school to prison pipeline." She explains that zero tolerance policies increase suspensions and arrests for minority students which increases the chance those students will enter prisons later. She wants to stay in school but if the dean suspends her, she is three times more likely to be in contact with the juvenile justice system the following year. Tamia proposes that they utilize a restorative justice practice to reduce suspensions in their school. They learn about how to start restorative justice at:

<https://freedomandcitizenship.columbia.edu/school-pipeline>.

Restorative justice allows Tamia to stay in school. Tamia, in addition, promises to manage her anger and have a civil conversation with the other student.

This brochure was produced by New York City high school seniors in the Freedom & Citizenship Program at Columbia University

<http://freedomandcitizenship.columbia.edu>

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STUDENTS HAVE RIGHTS:

SIX SCENARIOS FOR PROTECTING YOURSELF IN SCHOOL

SCENARIO: A RIGHT TO PROTECTION

Problem - Jasmine is walking through scanning and gets told to step aside. She is confused and annoyed that her morning is being slowed down but she complies. She is told that the Mace that she keeps in her backpack for protection is a threat to others and she must be suspended for bringing it to school. Jasmine claims that, being a vulnerable teen traveling alone, it brings her comfort to have a method of defense on hand. Jasmine feels like her rights to protection are being violated but is told that the decision is final.

Solution - Jasmine takes a breath. She does not have the right to bring a weapon to school but she thinks of one right she does have: the right to assemble a student council that can aid in helping students who have gone through similar experiences. Jasmine meets with her school guidance counselor and expresses that she would feel more comfortable discussing injustices to students with other peers. Jasmine asks for permission to form a student faculty alliance club with support of a school social worker. Even though she doesn't have Mace anymore, Jasmine feels less vulnerable.

SCENARIO: TURNING AROUND A BAD SITUATION

Problem - Zayn has been asked to leave the class because of his disrespectful behavior (using foul language towards the teacher because the teacher was rambling). Since Zayn was already having a bad day, he lashed out at the teacher despite the teacher doing his best to reason with Zayn. Zayn, as a result, finds himself in the Assistant Principal's office. The Assistant Principal informs Zayn that as a result of his behavior, he will be suspended for a week pending a meeting with his parents. Zayn is now freaking out because he knows that this looks terrible for him, and that his parents will not stand for it. Zayn is now contemplating what he can do.

Solution - Zayn reflects on his actions and realizes his fault in the situation. Zayn knows that he should've thought about the consequences of his behavior before lashing out. He knows that a bad day doesn't make an excuse for disrespecting his teacher and is aware that he could've stopped himself from having an outburst. Zayn owns up to his actions and takes the incident to his school social worker. Zayn proposes that he and the teacher have a one-on-one meeting to prevent the escalation of negative feelings towards each other. The school social worker arranges the meeting and they reconcile. Zayn's teacher says that everyone has bad days and that he can confide in him anytime, he just wants the best for him and his future and to see him graduate. By being proactive about resolving the bad situation Zayn made sure one suspension does not turn into another one.

SCENARIO: STANDING UP TO TEACHERS

Problem - Sarah is sitting in class when her English teacher decides that it is best to write another essay for the hundredth time that marking period. She had been writing non-stop essays (almost four a week) and Sarah feels exhausted and fed up with everything. She decides to confront the teacher to voice her opinion, but he does not seem to be listening to her. Whenever Sarah tries telling him how she feels, he shoots her down as if Sarah is an annoying fly buzzing in his ear. Sarah is heated and is ready to stand up for herself even she has to be disrespectful about it.

In this scenario, Sarah feels her actions are warranted by her teacher's bad attitude. She knows that if she decides to be disrespectful towards the teacher, she will be the one to get into trouble and could even get expelled if it gets out of hand. If expelled, Sarah could be headed towards the Student-to-Prison-Pipeline (the tendency for students--mainly minorities or those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds--to face trouble in school that leads them towards prison later).

Solution - Sarah decides to take a deep breath. She already knows that she is in the right for trying to have a civil conversation with him, and possibly he does too. Sarah sits down in her chair and keeps quiet, completes the assignment her English teacher told her to do and hands it in. She knows that this will only benefit her in the future. When the bell rings, Sarah goes straight to her guidance counselor and notifies them of what occurred. By doing this, she has shown that she has self-control and is not just a reckless teenager (like the teacher may believe). She gets her side of the story on record and asks for support in convincing the teacher to change his assignments. Afterward, Sarah goes to her next class and continues being the strong individual she is and pays him no mind.

SCENARIO: CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Problem - Zora is wearing a headwrap in school--a common hair accessory worn by many people of the African diaspora. A teacher she does not recognize tells her to remove the headwrap or face other consequences that will result in serious penalties. She feels oppressed even in their own learning environment. She complies but feels that her voice is being silenced.

Solution - Zora makes it known that she disagrees and is hurt by the actions of school officials. She decided to review the rights she's given in school and realizes nowhere does it say cultural garments are prohibited. She takes the situation to the school authorities and advocates for cultural sensitivity training. By staying calm during the incident she kept herself safe and bought herself time to find the right school authorities to help her change the situation at school.