

Scenario 2:

You are the UniServ director for a rapidly changing county. The northern portion of the county is quickly becoming a bedroom community for Washington DC while the southern portion of the county is fighting hard to remain true to its rural southern roots. This has led to many clashes regarding local policy, both at the school board and board of supervisor level. Four years ago, you and your teachers sat through a series of increasingly contentious school board meetings regarding the bathroom policy for a young transgender girl in the fourth grade—the only openly transgender student in the county. During that spring, parents became increasingly hostile and threatening to the board, and indicated that they would personally go after the jobs of any employee who allowed this young girl to use the girl's bathroom. That summer, the school board passed a policy that required the student to use only single stall bathrooms and barred her from using both the boys' and girls' bathrooms or locker rooms.

One day in the first month of a new school year, you receive a call from a PE teacher at one of your schools. She tells you that earlier that week, the school held one of the state-required lockdown drills during a PE class where that girl, now a 14-year-old 8th grader, was a student. The 3 PE teachers quickly conferred after realizing that their lockdown procedures did not take this student into account. The lockdown procedures call for boys to shelter in place in the boys' locker room and girls to shelter in place in the girls' locker room. This student, however, uses the single stall accessible restroom in the gym when she needs to change or use the restroom during PE class. Without clear guidance—and with the wrath of the parents still echoing in their minds—the teachers had decided to have the one male PE teacher take the boys into the boys' locker room, while one female PE teacher took the rest of the girls into the girls' locker room and the second female PE teacher remained in the gym with the transgender student.

The PE teacher proceeds to tell you that the mother of the child runs a group called Equality Stafford and has posted on Facebook about the incident. That post has quickly gone viral and has already been shared a couple hundred times:

Equality Stafford Community,

This past week, an incident occurred during a middle school lock down drill in Stafford County. When the drill began, a particular class of children took shelter in the bathroom/locker room nearest them as they were in PE. One student was prevented from entering either the boys or girls locker room while the teachers discussed where she should go. The student was forced to watch the adults charged with her care, debate the safest place (for the other students) to have her shelter. During this debate, she was instructed to sit in the bleachers until the drill was complete, away from her peers and identified as different. After some additional debate, she was made to sit in the locker room hall way, by the door alone and away from her peers. This happened because the child, in addition to being a model student, also happens to be transgender.

.Let me be clear. During an event that prepares children to survive an attack by actual assailants, she was treated as if she was so much of a danger to peers that she was left exposed and vulnerable. These events occur across our country right now but this one happened here.

We need you. We need all of you to come out on October 9th at 6:30 pm to the Stafford County School Board Meeting at 31 Stafford Avenue. We need you to come and lend your voice to the growing cry. This is unacceptable, this cannot happen to one more child. Not one more in this county. Not ever again.

Please bring yourselves, your friends, your colleagues and your voice to this school board meeting. We need you.

How do you support and educate other union members to understand the needs of transgender students and staff?

What might you advocate for in a new policy?

How do you use this issue as an organizing issue?

Va. transgender student separated from other youths in safety drill, mom says

By [Debbie Truong](#)

October 9, 2018 at 5:10 p.m. EDT

The superintendent of a Virginia school system has requested a review of safety procedures amid allegations that a transgender student was forbidden from entering a locker room during a middle school safety drill.

Students in the 14-year-old girl's physical education class in the Stafford County Public Schools were shepherded into the girls' or boys' locker room during the Sept. 28 drill. But the student was prevented from sheltering in either, according to the girl's mother and Equality Stafford, a group that advocates for LGBTQ rights in the county's schools. The drill was designed to simulate a lockdown that might happen if the school were threatened.

"It doesn't make me confident she'll feel very safe, should there be an actual emergency," said the girl's mother, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of safety concerns.

Teachers debated where to direct the student before having her sit in a hallway leading to the locker room, separate from her peers, the mother said. The girl, who changes for physical education class in a single-stall restroom, found the encounter "mortifying and embarrassing," her mother said.

The mother said she discussed the incident with Stafford Superintendent Scott Kizner, whom she described as concerned and receptive. The Stafford school system, about 45 miles outside the District, issued a statement saying it does not comment on individual incidents involving students but noted that Kizner requested a review of all protocols and procedures.

"We take such matters very seriously and they will be addressed," the statement read. "The welfare of all students is of the utmost importance."

On its Facebook page, Equality Stafford called the incident unacceptable, and the group protested the girl's treatment at a Tuesday night school board meeting.

"During an event that prepares children to survive an attack by actual assailants, she was treated as if she was so much of a danger to peers that she was left exposed and vulnerable," read the post, which amassed hundreds of comments and was shared more than 1,200 times.

The mother said the school system reviews transgender students' requests to use restrooms or locker rooms that align with their gender identity on a case-by-case basis. Her 14-year-old, she said, isn't allowed to use gender-specific facilities in her middle school.

The woman emphasized that she doesn't blame her daughter's P.E. teachers.

"This isn't on the teachers, and they are not the bad guys," the mother said. "The issue is the lack of policies and training."

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STAFFORD COUNTRY SCHOOL BOARD RESPONDS TO TRANSGENDER STUDENT SINGLED OUT DURING ACTIVE SHOOTER DRILL

RVA STAFF | OCTOBER 10, 2018

[Menu](#)

TOPICS: [ACTIVE SHOOTER DRILL](#), [EQUAL RIGHTS](#), [STAFFORD COUNTY](#), [STAFFORD COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD](#), [STUDENT](#), [TRANS](#), [TRANSGENDER](#), [VIRGINIA](#)

A Stafford County Middle School has come under fire for isolating a transgender girl during active shooter training last week. According to a Facebook post by Equality Stafford on October 3, the incident occurred during a lock down drill.

“One student was prevented from entering either the boys or girls locker room while the teachers discussed where she should go. The student was forced to watch the adults charged with her care, debate the safest place (for the other students) to have her shelter,” it read.

The post goes on to say that she was made to sit in the gym with a teacher until the drill was over, while “away from her peers and identified as different.”

The post also poses a larger issue: “After some additional debate, she was made to sit in the locker room hallway, by the door away from her peers. This happened because the child, in addition to being a model student, also happens to be transgender.”



Equality Stafford

October 3 at 9:20 PM · 📍

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This past week, an incident occurred during a middle school lock down drill in Stafford County. When the drill began, a particular class of children took shelter in the bathroom/locker room nearest them as they were in PE. One student was prevented from entering either the boys or girls locker room while the teachers discussed where she should go. The student was forced to watch the adults charged with her care, debate the safest place (for the other students) to have her shelter. During this debate, she was instructed to sit in the gym with a teacher until the drill was complete, away from her peers and identified as different. After some additional debate, she was made to sit in the locker room hall way, by the door away from her peers. This happened because the child, in addition to being a model student, also happens to be transgender.

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****ETA:** It is important to highlight that the child's PE teachers are not the bad guys. They are teachers without guidance in a county without guidance for these issues. They were following that they were told to do.

Equality Stafford was also clear about how the drill was conducted, and where the school believes the major risk during an active shooter scenario would be.

"Let me be clear. During an event that prepares children to survive an attack by actual assailants, she was treated as if she was so much of a danger to peers that she was left exposed and vulnerable," they said.

In a later post, the LGBTQ group pointed out that the teachers who led the lock down drills are not the "bad guys" and that they are teachers without "guidance," scared of potential "retribution" from parents and the administration.

"These teachers need education and support, and we need you to accomplish that," the post went on to say.

Indeed, Virginia schools have grappled with trans issues for the past few years: trans teen Gavin Grimm sued the Gloucester County School Board (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/22/us/gavin-grimm-transgender-bathrooms.html>) to use the boys' bathroom in a case that went all the way to the Supreme Court. Grimm won his case in May of this year, but not without a three-year struggle, which included the school board contesting the ruling.

At a school board meeting last night, Superintendent Scott Kizner said he personally apologized to the teen and called for a change in the school's policy. According to Fredericksburg.com (https://www.fredericksburg.com/news/local/stafford/stafford-superintendent-apologizes-to-transgender-student-amid-national-outcry/article_8d0f967a-2092-57c0-9328-33a68a084c15.html), Kizner was quoted during the meeting:

"We did not live up to my unwavering expectation that every child and adult — regardless of race, religion, color, disability, gender and sexual orientation — is treated with respect and dignity, and for that I apologize to the student, the family and the Stafford community."

Kizner was asked whether he thinks the trans student should have been allowed to shelter-in-place in the girl's locker room during a potential incident. He replied by saying that students should head to the most secure location regardless of their gender.



RVA Staff





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HOMEPAGE NEWS

Stafford schools superintendent a to trans student

Middle schooler separated from classmates during lockdown drill

Published 4 years ago on October 10, 2018

By **Michael K. Lavers**



The superintendent of the Stafford County School District on Oct. 9, 2018, said he has personally apologized to a transgender middle school student who was separated from her classmates during a

lockdown drill.

The superintendent of the Stafford County School District has apologized to a transgender student who was unable to enter the girls' or boys' locker room during a lockdown drill.

The Free Lance-Star newspaper [reported](#) Scott Kizner spoke at the Stafford County School Board's meeting on Tuesday.

Kizner said he personally apologized to the trans middle school student for the incident that took place on Sept. 28.

"We did not live up to my unwavering expectation that every child and adult — regardless of race, religion, color, disability, gender and sexual orientation — is treated with respect and dignity and for that I apologize to the student, the family and the Stafford community," Kizner, [according to the Free Lance-Star](#).

The incident received national attention after Equality Stafford, a local LGBT advocacy group, wrote about it on Facebook on Oct. 3.

"The student was forced to watch the adults charged with her care, debate the safest place for her (among the other students) to have her shelter," read the Facebook post. "During this debate, the student was instructed to sit in the gym with a teacher until the drill was complete, away from her peers and identified as different. After some additional debate, she was made to sit in the locker room hall way, by the door away from her peers. This happened because the child, in addition to being a model student, also happens to be transgender."



Equality Stafford

about 4 years ago



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306

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1.3K

Local LGBT activists attended Tuesday's meeting. The Free Lance-Star reported a number of trans people spoke.

The Stafford County School District does not include gender identity and sexual orientation in its non-discrimination policy. The Free Lance-Star reported both Kizner and members of the Stafford County School Board said during Tuesday's meeting they are open to potential changes.

The mother of a Stafford County Public Schools student who asked the Washington Blade to identify them by name said Kizner's apology "is very much appreciated."

"Words are powerful, but it's action that is meaningful and long lasting," she said. "We are moving forward working with Dr. Kizner and the board to implement the inclusive policies and trainings that were promised."

RELATED TOPICS: #EQUALITY STAFFORD #SCOTT KIZNER #STAFFORD COUNTY
#STAFFORD COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #TRANSGENDER #VIRGINIA

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EXCLUSIVE: Mother of transgender daughter kept out of locker rooms during lockdown drill speaks out

She hasn't been permitted in a gendered restroom for four years, her mother explained.

ZACK FORD 

OCT 11, 2018, 4:35 PM

CREDIT: GETTY IMAGES

Over the past week, a story has [gone viral nationally](#) about a Virginia transgender student who was forbidden from sheltering in a locker room with her classmates during a lockdown drill. But, as the student's mother explained in an exclusive interview with ThinkProgress, that incident follows years of discrimination she's experienced at the school.

Amy, who asked only to be identified by her first name for her family's privacy in their small town, told ThinkProgress that her daughter "Paige" (a pseudonym) has been prohibited from using any gendered facility at the school for nearly four years. That's why, according to Amy, "there was a tremendous amount of confusion about where exactly my daughter should shelter" during the drill. Paige is literally forbidden from entering either the boys' or girls' locker rooms, so when the drill took place, her teachers honestly weren't sure whether an exception could be made.

"This is exhausting work," Amy explained. "I shouldn't have to fight so hard for one child to just be able to go to school and be safe with her peers." Yet despite the national attention and uproar that erupted after the incident, the school board at its meeting this week announced no immediate policy proposals to prevent it from happening again. The superintendent, who is new to the district, [did apologize to the family](#), but nothing has

otherwise changed. In the meantime, Paige is still not permitted to use the girls' facilities.

"It's the responsibility of not just our schools, but our school boards and all the people involved in our school system to make sure that every single child feels taken care of," Amy said. "And my child has not felt taken care of by her school board."

Years of discrimination

When Paige first came out as transgender at age 10 back in 2015, she was the first transgender student the Stafford County School District administration had ever been asked to accommodate. And at first, Amy recalls, they were actually very supportive, allowing Paige to use the girls' bathroom at her elementary school. "They asked a lot of questions, they asked *her* a lot of questions about what she needed, and they did the best they could to accommodate that."

That lasted all of two weeks — until a group of angry parents wearing "Save Our Schools" stickers confronted the school board about their accommodations. Amy described them as speaking "very disgustingly against my child" and "saying very, very awful things," such as calling her a "predator." The Stafford County School Board unanimously agreed to reverse the school's decision to let Paige use the girls' restroom.

Elsewhere in Virginia, the Gloucester County School Board had made the same decision to restrict Gavin Grimm's bathroom access just three months prior. Grimm, a transgender boy, was mounting a legal fight against his school, making it a "hot topic" at the time. (Grimm's case is actually still ongoing over a year after he graduated.) Amy feels that Paige, as the only out trans student in Stafford, was similarly made an example of.

Justice for Gavin Grimm: Federal court rules school engaged in illegal transgender discrimination

Unlike in Gloucester, however, Stafford didn't pass any written policy governing how the district would treat transgender students. They only made a decision about Paige specifically, leaving it to the individual schools across the district to make their own decisions about how to respond in other cases. "That obviously hasn't worked very well for us," Amy said, pointing out that Paige is now in her second school in the district and neither has accommodated her. She's also heard from parents across the district whose trans kids are facing similar restrictions.

Since that 2015 school board decision, Amy has had to meet with school officials every summer to talk about how to protect Paige's safety and ensure she receives the best education possible, but that has never resulted in allowing Paige to use the restrooms. It has resulted, however, in ongoing humiliation and ostracization for Paige.

In elementary school, classes would be taken to the bathroom as a group, with the students divided by gender on either side of the hallway. They'd then go into the restrooms two at a time. "It was humiliating for her," Amy explained, "because she would have to walk down a completely separate hallway to go use the bathroom."

Likewise, in her middle school, Paige is forced to use a bathroom located in a main hallway heavily trafficked by all students — and nowhere near her classroom. She is not permitted to use the gym's locker rooms, which means she is denied access to a gym locker. She alone must carry her gym clothes with her in a bag and change in a separate

restroom. When she stays after school to hang with her girlfriends, Paige can't go to the bathroom with them. One time she tried, and a teacher actually pulled her out.

These are experiences that transgender students have reported across the country, and studies have shown such isolation can have a negative impact on their mental health, how safe they feel at school, and their academic performance. Some even avoid using the restrooms entirely, which can have serious repercussions for their physical health.

"It's embarrassing," Amy explained, "and something that makes me the most sad about that is that I don't think it makes her that upset anymore. She's used to it and doesn't know anything different. She's known two weeks of freedom."

She's known two weeks of freedom.

But despite her brave, resilient demeanor, recent events have shown that Paige is still very much affected by this daily discrimination.

Anti-LGBTQ legal group quietly encourages community members to reject trans kids

The drill

On Friday, September 28, Paige was in PE, her fourth block class, when a lockdown drill began. While the students and staff retreated into the locker rooms, the teachers at first had Paige remain in the gym sitting in a chair with a teacher. After the teachers openly debated what should be done, they decided to move Paige to just inside the locker

room door, but she was kept isolated in the entry hallway away from the rest of the students, who were in the locker room proper.

The humiliation of the whole experience caused Paige to have a panic attack. According to Amy, some of the teachers thought she was just upset because the drill was scary. "One teacher recognized what was really going on and why she was upset," Amy said. After the drill, "she told [Paige] alone privately that she didn't understand why they were doing it that way, that it wasn't right, and that if she ever needed anything or support or someone to talk to, she was always there for her."

Amy doesn't entirely blame the other teachers, because she recognizes that the policy may have put them in a difficult situation. "They've been told she's not allowed to go into the girls' locker room," she explained. "So when you're told that by those above you, whether that's administration or the school board, that this is the rule... they were probably afraid if they let her in there that their jobs were at risk."

"Part of me would like to think we can just use some common sense and say, 'This is a lockdown drill... This is a situation where we're practicing for something that could happen and we need to make sure we do it right,'" Amy said.

But as Paige explained in a note to the school board this week, she felt like "an afterthought."

The school board meeting

News of Paige's experience first started circulating because of a [note posted on Facebook](#) last week by Equality Stafford, a group that promotes LGBTQ inclusion in Stafford County schools. The note encouraged the community to show up to this week's school board meeting and show their support, which they did.

Paige wanted to speak for herself at the meeting, but the board's rules require that any public speaker share their name and address, and Amy wasn't comfortable that it would be safe for her. In fact, Amy wasn't even sure she was comfortable letting Paige *attend* the meeting, but Paige was insistent. As tough as the drill itself was, Paige seemed to "bounce back pretty quickly" and wasn't bothered by the attention the story was receiving.

Michigan mom defends her trans kid against a hostile town

They agreed to let Paige craft a statement about her experience that didn't include any identifying details, and at the meeting, Amy asked her aunt to read it to leave room for some anonymity. "When my aunt started reading, by the end of the first sentence... Paige started bawling. She let out a gasp and she just started bawling." This cascaded to other people, as family friends and strangers alike began crying upon hearing Paige's story. "I think she had been holding that in for a little while," Amy said. "And I think hearing her words read out loud by a family member who also got choked up while she was reading it — I think it just hit her in that moment."

In her statement, Paige described four years of suffering, "being treated like an outcast." She recounted the events of the drill and how it made her feel to be treated differently from the other students in a crisis situation. "If we were practicing our safety, why was I first made to sit in the hallway of the locker room facing a wall, alone, by the door?" she wrote. "The door in which, if there was someone armed in my school, I would have been the first one gone. I felt like an afterthought."

"Blame is pointless now," she insisted. "I want to stop being treated like an afterthought. I want you to stop treating me like I am a predator. It's time for you to fix this."

"She was surprised she got so upset hearing it," Amy added. She's always admired her daughter's resilience, but she also worries about the cumulative effect of all this rejection. "That's a lot for any *adult* to deal with," she said, noting that Paige's story is by

no means anonymous among her friends and community. "She cried and cried and cried, and then she was okay."

Superintendent Scott Kizner, who's only been serving the district for about a month, publicly apologized at Tuesday's meeting. Amy acknowledged that he has apologized to her and to Paige privately as well, which they appreciate. "It's the only apology we've ever gotten through all the years we've been in the school system... for the way she's been treated." She believes the apology was important to see for LGBTQ students and staff throughout the county who can't be out and open and she hopes it sets a tone for moving forward.

"At the same time, words are cheap," she countered. "I want to see change. It's appreciated, but it doesn't change anything. Until something changes, I'm going to keep working to make sure it does. The fact is: When my daughter went to school today, she still had to use a separate bathroom and she still had to change in a staff bathroom. The apology didn't change anything for her because she still has to go to school the next day and deal with the fallout."

The fact is: When my daughter went to school today, she still had to use a separate bathroom and she still had to change in a staff bathroom.

Amy is optimistic about change, but she doesn't want to force that change through legal channels. She wants the school to recognize that it's the right thing to do. Tuesday's school board meeting, she said, "was the first time that I have felt optimistic they were willing to implement policy and trainings because it was necessary and meaningful."

Along the way, there have also been "amazing" teachers who have treated Paige as if she were their own daughter. "If it wasn't for those teachers, I don't think I would have