Published on *Gay-Straight Alliance Network* (http://www.gsanetwork.org)

Darnell 'Dynasty' Young's expulsion puts spotlight on IPS' handling of bullying

Indianapolis Public Schools' decision to expel a 17-year-old Tech High School student who brought a stun gun to school to scare away bullies has raised questions about whether the district takes bullying seriously.
Local and national groups are criticizing the way the school handled the situation, and some of the teen's local supporters are organizing a rally before the IPS Board's meeting Tuesday to raise awareness about bullying.

Darnell "Dynasty" Young, who is openly gay, was suspended pending expulsion April 16 after he brought a stun gun to school, raised it in the air and fired it to frighten six students who had surrounded him during a passing period.

His mother, Chelisa Grimes, said she gave him the stun gun for protection from students who repeatedly called him names and threatened to beat him up. Grimes said she and her son complained to the school staff about the bullying several times throughout the school year, but staff members told them Young called attention to himself because he liked to accessorize his outfits with Grimes' jewelry and purses.

The family learned late Monday that Young has been expelled until Jan. 7. That means he won't be able to finish his junior year and will miss the first semester of his senior year.

"I couldn't believe that they did it," Grimes said. "They really kicked him out."

Grimes and Young can appeal his expulsion to the IPS Board and the courts if necessary, but Grimes said they're still weighing their options. They could try to enroll him at a charter school or private school, but it's not likely that would have much success because of the expulsion. Young said he wants to get his general educational development certificate and go to college.

The IPS decision angered not only the family, but also groups that support gay teens in Indianapolis and across the country.

Mary Byrne, executive director of the Indiana Youth Group, which provides programs and support

for gay teens, called the decision "the latest example of the school administration's failure to take the problem of bullying seriously."

"We must not cause further harm to Dynasty and other victims of bullying by denying them the opportunity to continue their education in a safe learning environment," Byrne said in a statement Tuesday. "Instead we must prioritize creating a safe learning environment, rather than punishing students for actions that result out of our failure to do so."

The Gay-Straight Alliance Network, a national group that works with Gay-Straight Alliances in schools, also was critical of the way the school handled the situation.

"Dynasty, like many other lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender young people, was pushed out of school by an administration that failed to keep him safe and by school discipline policies that remove students instead of resolve the problem," Carolyn Laub, the organization's executive director, said in an email. "When schools use a 'zero tolerance' approach to school discipline, they unfortunately reinforce an environment of fear and punishment and fail to create a climate of inclusion, safety, and respect for all students."

IPS spokeswoman Mary Louise Bewley said the district takes bullying seriously and punishes those who bully other students. But she said the district supports Young's expulsion because he broke the rules by bringing a weapon to school.

"While the district does not condone bullying, it also does not allow weapons to be brought on our school campuses for any reason," Bewley said. "Students who violate this rule will be held accountable."
Tech Principal Larry Yarrell said last week that the school hasn't been able to punish the students who allegedly bullied Young because Young and others weren't able to identify them.

Regardless, IPS Board member Samantha Adair-White is calling for an independent investigation of the alleged bullying and the school's response.

More than 60 people have said they will attend Tuesday's rally, according to a Facebook page about the event. Young plans to speak at the rally.

Young said he has been overwhelmed by the support he has received locally and nationally. He and Grimes have appeared on CNN and "Good Morning America." Kris Jenner, the mother of the Kardashian sisters, tweeted a message of support to Young last weekend.

May. 9, 2012
News Article
http://www.indystar.com/article/20120509/LOCAL/205090318/Tee... [1]
Indianapolis Star
Carrie Ritchie

Source URL: http://www.gsanetwork.org/news/darnell-dynasty-youngs-expulsion-puts-spotlight-ips-handling-bullying/050912

Links:

[1] http://www.indystar.com/article/20120509/LOCAL/205090318/Teen-s-expulsion-puts-spotlight-bullying-IPS