

This is a rebuttal document in response to the written reprimand dated February 1, 2018.

I became a teacher because I consider myself to be compassionate and kind, and I truly care about the education of young people. Despite the challenges that I face—a job with an exorbitant workload; a new school; a new community; and in some cases, significant behavior issues—I would never let these things compromise my ideals and my professional behavior.

The rules and expectations in my classroom are clearly posted and visible, and I reteach them regularly. When I issue directions and consequences, I do so in a calm manner. When interacting with a student in a disciplinary matter, I always give directives in a matter of fact way. Students are expected to abide by the rules and expectations which exist in my classroom, and are aware of the consequences for misbehavior. My classroom features a “time-out” area where students can take time to decompress and then rejoin the educational environment. When I send students out of class for any reason, I always invite them back in readily.

In response to the allegation that I pushed a student while telling him to get in line, this claim is patently false. I did not push the student, nor is it in my nature to do anything of the kind. While I understand that a child will want to protect their friends, I have concerns about the validity of the corroborating statements made in support of the student. The student was the last in line on the way out of the classroom, and as all students and the homeroom teacher were facing towards the exit, there could have been no witnesses had I pushed him at that time. In addition, since the students were in a single-file line at that time, if I had pushed him, he would have collided with the student in front of him. Given the severity of the reaction from this administration, I do not believe that the student fully understands the ramifications of making this allegation.

I believe the student was upset because I had placed him in “time-out” in accordance with the rules and expectations which exist in my classroom. On the day in question, I had sent the student to the “time-out” area after two warnings because he was disruptive to the classroom environment and learning process. After about 10 minutes of time, the class had ended, and I asked the student to rejoin the line as the students filed out. This is a standard part of my classroom routines and procedures; the students line up before they enter the room and class, and they line up at the end of class before they are led to another class by their homeroom teacher. When I asked the student to rejoin the line, he asked me what went wrong. I explained to him that he had not met the expectations in class that day, in particular, Rule #2 which reads, “Raise your hand and wait to be called on before speaking.” I told him not to worry, that I was not mad, everything was ok, and I was sure he would have a better class the next time I saw him. At that time, I patted him gently on the back, in a friendly and consoling manner. I was really trying to help. At that moment, the student did not express to me any further frustrations, and I was under the impression that we had a good rapport.

The experience of being accused of harming a child has been deeply difficult and traumatic for me. I absolutely, categorically did not push this student. This statement is false. If I have been passionate in my defense, it is because I am passionate in my teaching. It is important not to touch any student without a legitimate educational purpose. While this is a somewhat complicated issue, I have observed many examples of touch used for educational purpose, and I fully believe what I did falls within those bounds. I would like it to be clear that no recordings of private conversations have ever existed. I believe that students deserve to be treated with respect and understanding, and I hope it is clear that my classroom has been, and will always remain, a safe and constructive learning environment for all students.