

City Honors Mock Trial
2021-2022 Tryout Packet

Welcome to Mock Trial! Last year, City Honors won the Erie County Championship, and then the Western Region of the State. We went on to the State Championship and finished fifth overall, out of over 200 teams. Our faculty advisor is Dr. Kurt Minervino, and we will have two attorney advisors – attorney John Morrissey (CHS class of 2006) and me.

We hope to return some of the students from last year’s team, but all students must try out. **There will be both attorney and witness spots available.** The competition is starting out via zoom, so we will conduct our tryouts by zoom as well. We have been told that the competition may switch to live trials at any time.

Tryouts will be scheduled on **Tuesday, November 30th and Wednesday, December 1st, beginning at 7:00 pm each evening.** If you are interested in trying out, please contact me by email at henryjnowak1@gmail.com. You can reserve a spot for one of those evenings, and I will send you the zoom link. If you need a different date or time because neither evening will fit into your schedule, please contact me and I will arrange an alternate time for you.

For the tryouts, please see the four attached sworn statements of witnesses to an altercation on April 27, 2017. Alternative gender pronouns are used in the statements, but you can decide the gender of any particular witness you decide to refer to in your presentation.

Good luck!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Henry Nowak", is written over a horizontal line.

Judge Henry Nowak,

Attorney Advisor

ATTORNEY INSTRUCTIONS

1. For those of you trying out as attorneys, you will be presenting an **oral argument**. Based on all four witness statements, you will argue either:
 - a. **That Carson Connors should be found guilty of disorderly conduct for his or her behavior on April 27, 2017,**
OR
 - b. **Carson Connors should be found not guilty of disorderly conduct.**
2. Your argument should be 1-2 minutes. Argue strongly for whatever side you choose (as opposed to examining the question from a neutral standpoint).
3. There is no required format for your argument, but you will need to tell us which option you have chosen and why, based on specific testimony contained within the four statements. Be organized and confident. You may use notes if you wish, but you will score more points for good eye contact with the camera.
4. You may consider any or all of the following factors to prepare your argument:
 - a. the pressure Lauren Smith felt to improve her students' test scores;
 - b. any bias Lauren Smith or Bobbie Jones felt toward Carson Connors;
 - c. the relationship between Lauren Smith and Bobbie Jones;
 - d. whether Carson Connors' conduct was caused or precipitated by Lauren Smith's actions;
 - e. whether the school district's policy "zero tolerance" policy led to the charges and suspension of Carson Connors;
 - f. whether any of the witnesses should or should not be believed.
5. You are likely to face a "hot bench." This means that the judges may interrupt your argument to ask questions about the strengths and weaknesses of your side. For example, the judges may refer to a particular point in a witness' statement and ask how it affects your argument. The judges also may pose hypothetical questions and ask if your argument would change or stay the same. These questions may not have easy answers. The judges are looking to see how you think and respond on your feet. It is more important to give the judges thoughtful answers than to complete the argument you have prepared.

WITNESS INSTRUCTIONS

1. For those trying out as witnesses, select **one** of the four statements and be prepared to present a 1-2 minute oral summary of your testimony, **in character and without notes**.
2. Know the facts well, but personality counts more than precision. Resist the urge to simply memorize or reiterate exactly what is in the affidavit.
3. After you give your summary, we will ask you questions. Stay in character. **Some of these questions may seek information that is not in your affidavit.** In response to those questions, you may add additional detail that fits with your character. Think about what your character might say or do!
4. Have fun with this! We are looking to see how you understand the character and react to questions while playing that role.

AFFIDAVIT OF LAUREN SMITH

1. My name is Lauren Smith. I am 35 years old. I live alone in an apartment complex located at 234 Lily Pond Circle in Bigtown, New York. I graduated from SUNY Binghamton with a B.A. in English Literature and obtained my M.A. in Education from the Teachers College at Columbia University. I am licensed to teach English Language Arts in grades 7 through 12 in New York State.
2. In August 2005, I was hired to teach 11th grade English at Bigtown High School. This was a dream come true—I grew up in Georgica, a neighboring town, and it’s great to be back at home. I love literature and reading, so introducing young people to the classics seemed like the perfect job for me, and living in a community where there are places to hike and ride my bike was an added bonus.
3. I enjoy teaching, but sometimes get discouraged because it’s hard to engage kids. Some come from dysfunctional families, others have learning differences, and, of course, many are experiencing the typical teenage angst that distracts them from their studies. However, on the whole, I’ve had a successful teaching career. I believe I have a talent for designing lesson plans and leading the class discussion. I really enjoy mentoring my students.
4. I was introduced to the harsh reality of standardized testing soon after I started my job at Bigtown High. Standardized tests are stressful for students because whether and where they go to college often depends on their performance on high-stakes assessments. Standardized testing causes a lot of anxiety for teachers because their effectiveness in the classroom is measured, in large part, by the test results.
5. My classes’ standardized test scores are usually in the mid-range, but the overall scores plummeted in 2014. They were well below average in 2014 and 2015. I attributed this to students’ personal problems and their inability to concentrate in class. Social media, in my opinion, is a big part of the problem; kids can’t focus on schoolwork anymore.
6. At the end of 2015-2016 school year, the majority of my students were scoring in the **first quartile** on the districtwide assessment test, near the bottom. I told Dr. Sidney Crosby,

the assistant principal, that this was likely due to a handful of students who, because of unique personal challenges, performed poorly. Dr. Crosby agreed. S/he told me that the teaching is hard and that my overall performance was satisfactory.

7. In September 2016, shortly after school started, Dr. Crosby had a meeting with the all the teachers in the English Department. S/he told us that the administration was dissatisfied with the test results of the 11th grade English classes on the past five assessment tests. At the meeting, Dr. Crosby, a big proponent of the districtwide testing program, stressed that the 9th and 10th grade teachers must do more to prepare the students for the 11th grade districtwide assessment test. S/he also emphasized to the 11th grade teachers that poor performances by their students on this assessment would negatively impact the teachers’ careers.
8. After the meeting, Dr. Crosby pulled me aside and told me that I had one more chance to get the majority of my students’ scores on the districtwide assessment test into at least the **second quartile or higher**, otherwise I would be assigned to teach 9th grade English in the 2017-2018 academic year. That would be horrible for me and in my opinion, almost as bad as getting fired. It would entail redoing all of the lesson plans I have developed over the years. My summer would be completely ruined. Besides, I love the challenge of teaching the upperclassmen.
9. Needless to say, I was under a lot of pressure during the 2016-2017 academic year, but I rose to the challenge. I used more visuals and interactive exercises in the classroom and this engaged my students. They performed well on the quizzes and tests I designed. Therefore, I was sure that most of my students would score well into the **second quartile or higher** on the districtwide assessment test in May.
10. Although I made considerable progress with my students during the 2016-2017 academic year, there was one incident in April 2017 that was very upsetting. On April 27, 2017, I saw Carson Connors, a troubled student, repeatedly push another student in the hallway. I couldn’t identify the other student because his/her back was to me, and s/he ran away after Carson pushed him/her.

11. Carson was in my 11th grade English class during the 2016-2017 academic year. I hate to say it, but the kid is bad news. S/he is a bully, isn't invested in school, and gets really poor grades. I didn't have any personal problems with Carson, but I had my eye on him/her. S/he is arrogant and didn't get along well with his/her classmates.
12. After I saw Carson push the student, I told him/her to go with me to Dr. Crosby's office. The school's no-bullying policy requires that all incidents be reported to the assistant principal. Carson, however, refused, telling me that s/he did not want to be late for his/her next class. I lightly touched Carson's arm in an attempt to lead him/her to the assistant principal's office. Carson then moved away from me and screamed "Take your damn hands off me. You can't tell me what to do you freakin' idiot. Go screw yourself."
13. Bobbie Jones and Zeke Baldwin, Bigtown police officers who serve as the high school's resource officers (SROs), apparently saw the altercation on closed-circuit TV. I grew up with Bobbie and we've been close friends since we were in grade school. When Bigtown High needed an SRO, I recommended Bobbie for the job. I told the hiring committee that Bobbie is great with kids, and the school district hired him/her in September 2013. I'm glad s/he is on the job.
14. After witnessing the assault on closed-circuit TV, Bobbie and Zeke rushed to the scene. Carson continued to be belligerent when the officers arrived, yelling that s/he was not going to the assistant principal's office. I told the officers what happened, and they arrested Carson for disorderly conduct. To be candid, I feel that Carson got a break and should have been charged with assault. Bobbie told me that there is a big gang problem at the school and that if I see something, say something. It is believed that Carson is one of the ringleaders.
15. Bobbie and I talk during the school day and frequently eat lunch together in the faculty lounge; it's nice to have an old friend at work. I often confide in Bobbie and told him/her that my position as an 11th grade English teacher was in jeopardy because of the low test scores. I made a few joking comments to Bobbie about how students with "educational challenges" have affected classroom scores on standardized tests, but I never asked Bobbie to get Carson Connors or any other student removed from my class on trumped up charges. Although Bobbie asked me if there was anything s/he could do to help me, Bobbie was only offering emotional support. We're honorable people and would never conspire to get low-performing students suspended or expelled.

16. It’s Carson’s own fault that s/he wasn’t in school on the day of the districtwide English assessment test and didn’t take the test at that time. Several other students in my English classes who had relatively poor academic records were also under out-of-school suspension on May 2nd and did not take the test. Again, it was not my fault that they were unavailable to take the test. My students who did take the test did fairly well on it, with a majority just making it into the **second quartile or higher**. So, I am still teaching 11th grade English for the 2017-2018 academic year. Any speculation that Carson’s absence helped in this successful outcome on the assessment test is insulting to me as a teacher and to the students who have worked so hard to learn the material. In accordance with district policy, Carson took the test on May 23rd, but his/her score was not used to calculate my assessment test results. That’s not my doing, but rather, it is policy and procedure established by the district. I don’t remember the exact score s/he received, but I believe it was probably in the low range of the first quartile. For a determination whether or not Carson’s score and the scores of my other students who did not take the test because of suspensions would have resulted in the majority of my students not getting into at least the **second quartile or higher**, you would have to check with the test developer, located in Cincinnati, Ohio, who does the scoring. Who knows?! If Carson and the other students had taken the test on the original date, they may well have scored much higher. Any discussion regarding the affect Carson had or didn’t have on the overall assessment results is pure speculation.
17. It’s outrageous that Carson is challenging his/her arrest under “school-to-prison pipeline” theory. I remember reading something about this theory in the news, but didn’t pay much attention to the story. Right now, I’m focused on helping my students read text critically and develop a love for literature. I’m also hoping to find a partner with whom I can start a family. I don’t have the time or energy to concoct schemes to get students thrown out of school. The simple truth is that Carson is a troublemaker and, in my opinion, should have been dealt with more harshly because s/he is menace to the other kids at school.

I affirm the veracity of the foregoing statement.

Dated: Bigtown, New York
August 22, 2017

Lauren Smith
Lauren Smith

AFFIDAVIT OF BOBBIE JONES

1. My name is Bobbie Jones and I am 36 years old. I am an Officer with the Bigtown Police Department. Currently, I am assigned to Bigtown High School as a School Resource Officer (SRO).
2. I have an Associate’s Degree in criminal justice and have been in law enforcement for 13 years. Before joining the Bigtown Police Department in 2004, I was a Security Guard at Bigtown Savings and Loan. I’ve been an SRO assigned to Bigtown High School since September 2013.
3. I like being an SRO. I’m not sure I would even have stayed with the force if I was still out dodging bullets in the neighborhoods. I couldn’t believe my luck when I found out that my old friend Lauren Smith was on the search committee for the Bigtown High School SRO position back in 2013. I will soon have the magic number of 20 years in the pension system, and sometimes on our lunch breaks, we joke that I’ll owe Lauren a big chunk of it. I say that I’ve bought enough rounds of beer after work to make up for it! In all seriousness though, I’ll never be able to repay Lauren for helping me get this gig.
4. It’s unfortunate, but it seems like I have a more secure job at Bigtown now than Lauren does. Lauren gets a lot of flak from the administration for test scores and stuff like that. I know it haunts Lauren, and I wish I could do more to help. It’s not Lauren’s fault that kids like Carson Connors don’t learn proper English at home and don’t seem to have any interest in learning it at school.
5. As much as I appreciated my job at Bigtown High School, these snot-nosed little punks really get to me sometimes. Most of them are good kids, I suppose, but the bad ones get worse every year. The last year or two this one little gang has been terrorizing the weaker kids. We know who they are, but they’re street smart and they know where all the cameras are so it’s hard to catch them red-handed. Plus all the victims are afraid of them so nobody ever snitches. These gangbangers just don’t belong in school. The only thing they are at “at-risk” of is me banging their heads! Just kidding.

6. In April 2017, we caught one of them in the act. Lauren saw that delinquent, Carson Conners, shaking down some poor kid and stepped in. Of course, Conners started mouthing off at Lauren and resisting. My partner and I saw the whole episode unfold on the video and got to the scene pretty fast.
7. By that time, Conners was having a full-on tantrum, cursing and yelling at Lauren and aggressively pulling away. Lauren had simply directed Conners to go to the assistant principal’s office after seeing Conners bullying another kid who we were never able to identify.
8. Conners was saying that nothing happened and that “that idiot” Lauren had simply made up a big scene in the hallway. Conners was apoplectic. To me, it seemed obvious that Conners was lying and was just upset about finally getting caught. I mean, who are you going to believe, this little petty criminal or a respected teacher?
9. Either way, there was no excuse for the way Conners reacted. Conners was practically foaming at the mouth and swinging around. I tell you what, that kid is lucky Lauren wasn’t hurt. The whole thing would have gone down much differently if Lauren had been so much as scratched.
10. If the tapes would have been preserved, we wouldn’t even be here. I mean, you couldn’t make out who the victim was, but you could see that Lauren was obviously responding to something and you could see that Conners’ reaction was way over the top.
11. Normally, we keep the tapes on a rotating weekly cycle. That usually gives us time to pull one out before it is overwritten if there is an incident. That’s what we did here. I pulled the tape containing the Conners’ shakedown and stored it in a locked desk drawer for safekeeping. Over the weekend, my basement office was flooded with three feet of water. There is a restroom directly over my office and a water pipe burst causing the flood. The tape sat in water for more than fifty hours and was completely destroyed. Oh well—I’m not going to lose a lot of sleep over it. Like I said, who are you going to believe?
12. I’ve heard there is some nonsense out there that Lauren had it out for this kid. Lauren might not be in Conners’ fan club, but no one is around here. The way Lauren tells it, thugs like Conners could cost some teacher a job. I’m sure most of the staff at Bigtown High School would rather

not have to deal with kids like that—Sidney Crosby has said as much—but that doesn’t change what happened. Hey, if it takes something like this to get rid of those bad eggs, so be it.

- 13. It seems that every time there is some incident at school they drag out this quack doctor, Avery Johnson, to make unsupported allegations. Dr. Johnson testified against me and the City in a case where I was accused of using excessive force against another one of those street urchins. The case was dismissed on technicality, but the ultimate outcome would have been in my favor anyway because I did not do anything wrong. Anyway, this so-called doctor is still trying to get me fired and will say anything to get me in trouble. Conners is guilty, but that doesn’t matter to Dr. Johnson.

I affirm the veracity of the foregoing statement.

Dated: Bigtown, New York
August 28, 2017

Bobbie Jones
Bobbie Jones

AFFIDAVIT OF CARSON CONNERS

1. My name is Carson Connors and I am 19 years old. I reside with my parents at 534 South Percy Street, Bigtown, New York. I will be a senior at Bigtown High starting in September 2017. I currently work as a stockperson/cashier at Dollar World, one of those chain dollar stores that are now very popular. I will likely lose my job if I am not able to get this trumped-up criminal charge thrown out.

2. I was having trouble with Mr./Ms. Lauren Smith, my 11th grade English teacher, from the very start of my junior year in September 2016. I’m sure s/he looked at my school record and noticed all of my Cs and Ds as well as a few Fs. I could probably do better if I studied some more, but I like hanging out with my small gang of friends after school and on the weekends. We meet at the Bigtown Mall or at the community center. I did manage to get some Bs in my physical education classes though. No doubt, Mr./Ms. Smith felt that I was going to be a problem for him/her since I was not one of those brown-nosing, smarty-pants geeks that s/he just loves. S/he probably thought s/he would have to work a bit harder with me being in his/her classroom. S/he never appeared to be a teacher willing to put in any extra effort. OK, I will say it: s/he was LAZY. If Mr./Ms. Smith knew how to teach or just cared a little more, my English grades would probably be a little better.

3. So, on April 27, 2017, I am walking down the hall after my 11:30am lunch period to get to my next class before the bell rings at 12:15pm. I noticed a person from the neighborhood who used to come to the community center. I don’t know his/her name, but I recognized the face. I go up to him/her and as I am gently patting him/her on the back, Mr./Ms. Smith like a crazy person comes up to me, yelling at me to stop and to go with Mr./Ms. Smith to the assistant principal’s office. I wasn’t doing anything wrong and did not understand why I needed to go to the assistant principal’s office. Besides, I was getting close to being late to my next class. Mr./Ms. Smith then grabs my left arm and tries to lead me to the office. I pulled away and said, “Take your damn hands off me. You can’t tell me what to do you freakin’ idiot. Go screw yourself.” On reflection, I probably should not have said that to the teacher, but s/he caused the situation.

4. The next thing I see is these two school cops running towards us. Mr./Ms. Smith tells the officers that I was assaulting a student and causing a disturbance. Officer Jones, who is always

with Mr./Ms. Smith during their lunch period, tells the teacher that s/he saw the whole thing on camera, which is why they are on the scene. The officers put me in handcuffs without even listening to me and hauled me off to the police station. I was not allowed to call my parents until much later.

5. I called my parents after being at the police station for about an hour. They were both at work. They arrived at the police station about two hours later. Officer Jones, who has a reputation for roughing up students and making false allegations, told them I was being charged with disorderly conduct. I was issued an appearance ticket and was released to my parents. I was told to report to city court on April 28, 2017 for the arraignment. I appeared in court on April 28th with my attorney and my parents. Judge Judy (I don't remember her last name) read the charge and asked me, "How do you plead?" I, of course, said not guilty. Judge Judy set trial, which will be before another judge, for Monday, June 5, 2017 and released me on my own recognizance. Under the policy of the school district, I cannot return to school until I go through something called a due process hearing. The hearing was held on Monday, May 1st and I was suspended from school for one week.
6. Although my lawyers say I have a solid defense, I am still very upset about the situation Mr./Ms. Smith has put me in. My lawyers tell me all the time that the teacher cannot create the circumstances leading to an altercation and have me charged with a crime. Mr./Ms. Smith was just making up stuff just to get me I trouble. That's just not right! I don't see why I should have had to go the assistant principal's office. Assistant Principal Crosby is a piece of work; what a goof ball. S/he walks around the school like s/he owns the place. S/he has the teachers, especially Mr./Ms. Smith, scared crap-less, thinking they will all lose their jobs because of poor scores on the assessment tests.
7. I was set up. I didn't know it at the time, but I now suspect that they were just trying to get me out of school so that I would not be able to take the English assessment test. It's interesting that Mr./Ms. Smith did not direct the other student to go to the assistant principal's office. S/he just let the student walk away. The student could have cleared up this matter quickly. Mr./Ms. Smith didn't want that. I suspect this whole scheme was concocted by Officer Jones and Mr./Ms. Smith during one of their lunchtime discussions. I see them going to lunch in the teachers' lounge practically every day.

8. My lawyers talk about this “school-to-prison pipeline” thing, which is the result of zero-tolerance policies implemented by some school districts like Bigtown. I had never heard of this “pipeline” craziness until my lawyers started looking into it and talking to me about it. I really work hard at trying to learn the subjects at school. It is not completely my fault that I have difficulty grasping some of the concepts. Anyway, it is not right that they would try to get me suspended from school just prior to a big assessment test. Mr./Ms. Smith’s English assessment test was held on May 2nd. I suppose it was very convenient for him/her that I was not available to take the test. I did take the test later just so I could get some points toward my final classroom grade. My assessment test score was not that good.

9. I don’t know anything about a gang problem at BHS and I am certainly no ringleader. This “problem” is all in the minds of that goofy assistant principal and that rogue cop. They are making up all of this stuff to justify what they did to me. It is not true that I am hiding the identity of the student I was talking to prior to Mr./Ms. Smith’s intervention. This is a big school with almost two thousand students. The suggestion that I was “shaking-down” this student is completely false. Besides, the student was not complaining. Mr./Ms. Smith should just mind his/her own business.

10. Because my defense team has requested a series of adjournments to completely investigate this case and prepare a quality defense, the trial of this matter will not occur until early 2018. I could have pleaded guilty, paid a small fine and avoided any jail time. But, there are important principles involved here. As I learned in We the People, which was one of my favorite classes in middle school, a person is innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. Also, even the worst criminal is entitled to due process of law. Finally, the prosecution must, in order to convict, prove a person is guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. I am simply exercising all of the rights I learned about in middle school.

I affirm the veracity of the foregoing statement.

Dated: Bigtown, New York
August 4, 2017

Carson Connors
Carson Connors

AFFIDAVIT OF BILLIE JO STAPLETON

1. My name is Billie Jo Stapleton. I am 63 years old. I reside at 12 Olivia’s Way in Bigtown, N.Y., where I was born and raised.
2. I recently retired as a math teacher from Bigtown High School, where I taught for 35 years. I received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1976. I also hold a Master of Arts Degree in Education from Stanford University.
3. I graduated from BHS in 1972. I was always good with numbers and did extremely well in math, especially physics, although you never would’ve guessed it back then, based upon how I looked and acted. I had long hair, and wore dark shades, tie-dye and a green ragged army jacket. I was into social justice--on the cusp of protests and marches for every cause. I was angry that I was stuck being a high school student in Little Bigtown, USA, as I used to call it. It wasn’t until years later that I realized how lucky I was that my teachers hadn’t labeled and given up on me, and instead, had actually challenged me to think and learn.
4. Anyway, after I graduated from M.I.T. in 1976, I took a year off and traveled cross-country, following my favorite band, the Grateful Dead. I ended up in the San Francisco Bay area, where I enjoyed the happenings and sense of community, and knew that what I really wanted to do was to teach--to share my knowledge with teenagers, who were our tomorrow.
5. I discovered the Stanford Teacher Education Program (STEP) pretty quickly, and once I read their mission statement, I knew it was for me —“to cultivate teacher leaders who share a set of core values that includes a commitment to social justice, an understanding of the strengths and needs of a diverse student population, and a dedication to equality and excellence for all students.”
6. I graduated from STEP in 1979, with certification as a secondary school math teacher. I taught in the Berkeley public schools for three (3) years. When my Dad got sick in 1982, I came back to Bigtown to help, and ended up staying. It was a long, strange trip, but I was right where I wanted to be.

7. That is, I was, until July 2017, when I retired from Bigtown High, after learning that Assistant Principal Sidney Crosby was planning to recommend that I be moved from teaching AP Calculus to teaching intermediate-level geometry for the 2017-2018 academic year. Not that I actually thought the school principal would agree with Crosby, given my excellent record as a teacher at BHS for 35 years. I have just had it with Crosby and his/her twisted view of teaching. Besides, why would I want to be teaching proofs at this stage of my teaching career?! Enough is enough!
8. I have been at odds with Crosby since s/he first arrived at the school about 10 years ago, as an Assistant Principal. S/he’s a real micro-manager, which doesn’t surprise me since most of his/her experience in the education field was and remains management positions. Crosby’s Ph.D. is in Educational Administration, and it’s no secret that s/he never enjoyed working in the classroom.
9. When it comes to teaching, Crosby’s incompetent. It’s all about the numbers with him/her. S/he has no enthusiasm for working with the young minds that we were entrusted to teach, and certainly doesn’t share in the joy of helping students learn and grow. That’s why it really galled me that Crosby didn’t like my teaching approach, and would frequently demean me at faculty meetings.
10. Given my teaching mantra, I usually ignored Crosby and his/her comments—especially since an overwhelming majority of my students was doing exceedingly well on the districtwide math assessment test. Still, there were some things I just couldn’t ignore, particularly his/her blatant discrimination against “at-risk” students—particularly those with poor academic records. Crosby was a huge proponent of BHS’s zero tolerance policy. This didn’t surprise me at all, in view of his/her stated opinion that the “business of education” has really changed for the worse now that schools have to teach kids things that they should have learned at home, are obligated to feed them two meals a day, and aren’t backed up by the parents, while teachers and administrators have to struggle to keep up academic standards, for fear of losing their jobs.
11. It’s the attitude of paper-pushers like Crosby that’s resulted in the “school-to-prison pipeline” crisis. By insisting that the justice system handle all behavior and discipline issues—even minor school infractions that aren’t even criminal or against the law, school authorities are effectively tossing “at-risk” students into the pipeline to prison. And, if they time it right, these misguided

“educators” can have the “at-risk” students, who often have low grades and other issues, removed from a school for a period that includes assessment testing, which, of course, would most likely raise the school’s scores.

12. I even heard Crosby admit as much, shortly after school began last Fall. While walking past one of BHS’s meeting rooms, I overheard him/her discussing the District’s zero tolerance policy. Then Crosby said, “Well, that’s one way to reduce class size and at the same time get those class assessment scores up.” Crosby may have been laughing then, but his/her comment was anything but funny. Anyway, Crosby’s sentiments are having deleterious effect on otherwise good teachers. While sitting in the faculty lounge last March, Lauren Smith and Officer Bobbie Jones were whispering about getting students who habitually score poorly on tests suspended before taking these assessment tests. I could not believe what I was hearing. It is just pathetic what Crosby has done to the academic climate at BHS.
13. The incident involving Carson Connors and Lauren Smith last Spring was the last straw for me. Connors, an “at-risk” student, was arrested and, as a result, missed the English assessment exam that s/he was scheduled to take. S/he then returned and scored in the lowest quartile on the makeup test, which doesn’t count for District assessment purposes. I was told that there were several other students who also had relatively poor academic records were under out-of-school suspension on May 2nd and did not take the English assessment test until later. I could not believe that the school-to-prison pipeline had finally permeated BHS.
14. I no longer wished to be a part of BHS. I had always known about Crosby’s warped view of education. S/he had also been trying to get rid of me for years. This time, s/he had succeeded—not because of a recommendation not to rehire me after 35 years, but because in my mind, this is not what education is all about.

I affirm the veracity of the foregoing statement.

Dated: Bigtown, New York
August 21, 2017

Billie Jo Stapleton
Billie Jo Stapleton