

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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WINTHROP PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
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November 5, 1976

Mr. John Weldon, Principal  
Public Education's Representative on  
Maine's Commission to Revise the Statutes Relating to Juveniles  
Lisbon Falls, Maine

Dear Mr. Weldon:

I wish to express my sincere concern with respect to pages 11 through 16 of the report of Maine's Commission to Revise the Statutes Relating to Juveniles. There are a number of issues contained in this report to which I, as a public school superintendent, am very opposed.

The report addresses truancy and recommends that all associated court action be terminated. Although in theory this statement has an excellent educational ring to it, in practice it is not all practical. One must only observe the peer pressure situations with drugs and alcohol which is available during the school day in almost every community. Unless the schools are given some strong authority in the area of mandatory attendance, students will frequently be absent from school sessions.

It is my feeling that erratic attendance not only has an adverse affect on the student who is truant, but it also adversely affects those who are not truant. All of our available resources at present are given to meet the individual differences of students created through handicaps, illnesses, etc. To create a situation where classroom competency is further affected, will greatly infringe upon the educational opportunities of those seriously seeking an education.

It is my further opinion that a suspension policy is a useful tool and in the hands of a capable principal, it is generally used in a very constructive manner. In most cases the suspension technique abruptly stops a situation and gives all involved an opportunity to put the situation into the proper perspective.

There are many times that without the opportunity to suddenly defuse an environmental situation, all parties involved would make decisions from an emotional frame of mind rather than from a logical position.

The last point that I wish to make is that all involved in schools have a great desire to make the schools as meaningful as possible. However, one must realize that there are not resources available to build a program which meets the interests and the environments necessary to make the school a highly attractive facility for every child. With unlimited resources I am quite certain that we could design such a program; yet I see no hope of going the varied facilities and broad expanse of programs necessary to meet the tastes, desires, needs, and pleasures of the many students within a school district.

John Weldon

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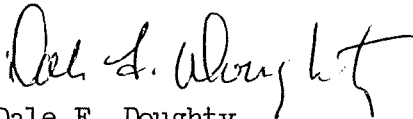
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Public Education's Representative

Maine's Commission to Revise the Statutes Relating to Juveniles

If society feels that each child should have a basic education to a minimum age of 17 for the purpose of preparing the person to function in a free and democratic society, then society must give education the tools to keep the child in attendance. The school sees the child for 175 days a year for 5 hours a day. This represents less than 10% of the child's year. In such a limited exposure, the school must receive strong support if the school is to carry out it's purpose.

Sincerely,



Dale F. Doughty  
Superintendent of Schools

DFD/a

cc: Hamilton Giberson, MSSA President  
Sawin Millett Jr., Commissioner of Education  
Lehan Edwards, Principal, Winthrop High School  
Sherman Bonney, Winthrop Police Chief