

Concerns on misconduct protocols arise

Christy Avery / *The Bagpiper*

Me Vs. The World

Annalise Bassett

I was harassed repeatedly by a student when I was in eighth grade.

This person taunted me over and over again, called me names, made jokes about me, took pictures of me in class and would not delete them no matter how much I asked.

The incident was reported to my counselor, both by my friends and me. Despite us being told something would be done, nothing ever happened or changed.

Every year, schools have orientation for their students, where the rules of school are explained. The NAFCS bullying policy states that “bullying

is prohibited by the school corporation,” and “students who commit any acts of bullying are subject to discipline including but not limited to suspension, expulsion, arrest, and/or prosecution.”

But according to Izzy Kalman of Psychology Today, “Studies have shown repeatedly that the most highly regarded bullying prevention programs rarely produce more than a minor reduction in bullying and often result in an increase.”

How does this happen? Well, students are encouraged to follow a “see-something-say-something” rule, where if they see, hear, or experience bullying, they should report it to a trusted adult.

Unfortunately, bullies can act even worse when they find out they have been reported

by someone. After a friend and I told our counselor, my bully made a rant on Snapchat about how I had reported him. Then, he continued to harass me in class.

In December, a friend of mine told me that his friend was sexually harassed by another kid at school. He reported the incident to a school administrator, and was told that it was “just an accident.”

There is no such thing as an “accidental” sexual harassment. People just do not harass someone repeatedly on accident.

According to assistant principal Joe Voelker, students have a number of ways to report bullying anonymously.

“They can go to the anonymous hotline on the New Albany-Floyd County Schools website, because we get those

very quickly. They can send an email; no one will know that you sent an email...They could call after hours and leave a message. We do follow up on any anonymous tips that we get, too,” said Voelker.

However, senior Catie Lehman still said that she thinks schools do not do enough to combat bullying and harassment.

“I have seen teachers and other staff members stand by as a student is getting harassed or picked on and the staff member decides to ignore it,” said Lehman. “Many bullies get by unpunished and the victims [continue] to be bullied.”

But Voelker said the school does try to get to everyone’s reports and fix the problems.

“We really try to follow up with everything that comes

to my desk, not just bullying, harassment, all types of school discipline. I try to do the best I can to address every issue that comes to my desk,” said Voelker.

Although the effort is obviously appreciated, trying is not always enough. Schools should be taking every opportunity to recognize bullying and put a stop to it, more concretely than what is currently being done. The best thing for schools to do is to be there for kids. Communication with all parties involved in a case is necessary, including parents and teachers of everyone involved in the incident, as well the Department of Education.

Above all, we cannot turn the other cheek. We must stand up for ourselves, report it when we see it, and treat others with the respect everyone deserves.

To view a Q&A with Indiana Department of Education press secretary Adam Baker, go to fchsbagpiper.wordpress.com.