

National  
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Against  
Censorship

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March 6, 2013

Dr. Philip J. Savini, Jr., Superintendent  
R.W. Brashear, Board President  
Brownsville Area School District  
5 Falcon Drive  
Brownsville, PA 15417  
[psavini@basd.org](mailto:psavini@basd.org)

Dear Dr. Savini and Mr. Brashear,

We are writing to express our serious concern over the decision to suspend thirteen students because of a 30 second video showing them doing the “Harlem Shake.” This disciplinary action is wholly disproportionate to the offense, given that the video caused no disruption of educational activities and was only seen by those who elected to watch it on YouTube.

Enclosed is a statement further explaining our position on the over-reaction to this type of conduct, which is not limited to Brownsville. What distinguishes Brownsville is its history of similarly disturbing actions revealing disrespect for fundamental constitutional rights. To our knowledge, there have been at least three such claims in the recent past, one in which a teacher was suspended after a third party posted a video of a bachelorette party in her home, one in which a student was harassed and disciplined for declining to stand during the Pledge of Allegiance, and one involving resistance to students’ efforts to form a Gay-Straight Alliance. The most recent incident merely adds to the already deeply troubling pattern of constitutionally suspect conduct by the Brownsville School District.

We therefore request that you revoke the most recent suspensions and remove any reference to them in the affected students' academic record.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with your questions and comments.

Sincerely,

Joan E. Bertin  
Executive Director  
National Coalition Against Censorship

Witold J. Walczak  
Legal Director  
American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania