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CASSIDY PRIDES ITSELF ON HELPING MINORITY PARENTS AND STUDENTS

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On Monday, the Herald-Leader published Merlene Davis' column, "Unlike many in town, I can admit my mistakes." I wonder. The "mistake" she was admitting was a simple case of mistaken identity where I was confused with Jack Lyons, the principal and my neighbor at Morton Middle School. So what if I had to listen to, "Merlene thinks all you white guys look alike" jokes all day. No big deal, right?

I was not the least bit amused, however, by what followed. She wrote, "It is Day who doesn't believe a minority should necessarily be seated on his site-based council."

This statement is untrue and she knew it was untrue when she wrote it. We know this from her own hand. Back in the summer of 1994, when Cassidy Elementary School was asking that all parents be permitted to vote in an election for a minority representative to school council she wrote the following: "The purpose of the law is to ensure minorities have representation on a school's decision-making panel. That's basically it. Cassidy agrees with that aspect of the law. But it wants to change how that minority is selected." When she wrote that column (with the curious headline, "Neither O.J. nor Cassidy school is above law," I did not complain. In fact, I disagreed with her opinion but found that the item was fair and met the standard of journalistic integrity we have a right to expect. So what is the explanation for this slap in my face?

Could it be she was not sufficiently careful when it came to checking the facts? Could it be that she only remembered what she wanted to remember from the earlier story? Could it be that she unwittingly revealed her own racial prejudices? I don't know.

But I do know this. The folks at Cassidy have worked hard to establish positive relations with our minority parents, including:

Holding regular parent-teacher meetings at the Housing Authority's Breckinridge Street Community Room.

Setting up polling places for all council elections in the Bluegrass- Aspendale neighborhood.

Arranging transportation for parents who may need it for all school events.

Establishing a fund through the Cassidy PTA to pay for student needs (like gymnastics classes or piano lessons) for students whose families might not be able to afford it.

Establishing Extended School Services tutoring program.

Establishing a breakfast program to feed hungry children.

Transporting sick children home and occasionally, picking up late children who may have

missed their ride.

Providing scholarships for children attending special field trips.

Participating in Project Reward (in cooperation with the Housing Authority) to provide extra academic assistance and incentives.

Establishing a parent liaison who helps communicate school events to the Bluegrass-Aspendale neighborhood.

Supplying materials children may need to participate in the science fair, band, orchestra and other special programs.

Making special arrangements which allow parents to register new kindergarten students at the H.H. Greene Center on Breckinridge Street.

The establishment of a Booster Program (in 1988) to meet a myriad of special needs including tutoring, clothing for those who need it, etc. (This program was recognized by the Volunteer Center of the Bluegrass as the Outstanding School Volunteer Program of 1994 and recipient of The JC Penney Golden Rule Award).

And much more.

In as much as we have proactively addressed the important issues of race in our school (and continue to do so) only to have it trivialized to the public by an irresponsible or incompetent columnist bent on promoting her own cavalier attitudes, I can't think of any reason why the entire Cassidy School community shouldn't be grossly offended.

Richard Day is principal of Cassidy Elementary School.

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