

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

STATE OF GEORGIA

DOUGLAS M. ECHOLS,	*	
	*	
Appellant	*	CASE NO. 1976-2
	*	
VS.	*	
	*	
DEKALB COUNTY SCHOOL	*	
DISTRICT,	*	
	*	
Appellee	*	

Charges were lodged by the Superintendent of Dekalb County against Douglas M. Echols, a Chamblee High School football coach, for "unprofessional conduct" in distributing a written memorandum to his eighth grade football players preceding an emotionally charged game against the "Lakeside Vikings." While the writing and distribution of this memorandum forms the basis of this appeal, it serves no useful purpose to print here its content.

The memorandum came into the hands of Mr. Tony Martin, the head football coach and a teacher at Chamblee High School, who immediately took it to the High School Principal, Mr. Leslie J. Evinger. Both men, reasonably experienced in school administration, thought the note of such consequence that they called it to the attention of the Superintendent of Dekalb County Schools, Dr. Hinson. The memo was written by the Appellant on November 8, 1975, and on November 12, 1975. Dr. Hinson wrote a letter to the Appellant notifying him that he was relieved from duty effective the following day and there would be a hearing conducted on November 24, 1975. This same letter set forth the grounds for the suspension and gave the names of the witnesses who would be called to testify against the Appellant at the hearing.

The hearing was held by the Dekalb County Board of Education as scheduled; Mr. Echols was there and was well represented by legal counsel. Following the hearing, the

Dekalb County Board of Education voted to make permanent the suspension and through his attorney Mr. Echols appealed that decision to the State Board of Education. Among other grounds, the Appellant alleged that the decision was not supported by the evidence. We disagree and sustain the Dekalb County Board of Education.

How can a written memorandum be so bad to merit such harsh reprimand? Perhaps the Dekalb County Board of Education felt, as does the State Board of Education, the problem was more serious than just the writing and distribution of this particular note. Perhaps the local board, composed of laymen like this Board, believed that more is required of a teacher than just a good mind, a good education and zeal. How important is attitude?


The transcript clearly shows that Mr. Echols realized he had made a mistake and should have never written thoughts and then passed them out to the eighth grade football players. On page 96 of the transcript, he was asked if there was anything wrong except that his note was printed, and Mr. Echols responded, "No, Sir." How unfortunate it is that the Appellant saw nothing wrong with a verbal delivery of the same message. The problem is very well expressed in the concluding paragraph of the Appellee's Brief when counsel writes, "Both the Board of Education and the teacher agree that the teacher made an error in judgment. The teacher claims that his only error in judgment was writing something out thereby allowing it to be used in evidence against him at a later date. He does not understand that his error in judgment was his belief that in filling his role as a teacher of children, the use of such ill-chosen and inappropriate values, attitudes and words were necessary to motivate children."

Good attitude is important. More than that, it is essential. The Dekalb County Board of Education thought so and so do we.

Other grounds alleging error are without merit.

All members of the State Board of Education voting to sustain the Dekalb County Board of Education except A. J. McClung, who dissents.

This the 8th day of April, 1976.

  
Richard Neville  
Vice-Chairman for Appeals