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AP Language (1A)

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Education without Character

*The Baltimore Sun’s* recent editorial “School suspensions solve nothing” (2016), published is an attempt to raise concerns about the rising trend of school suspensions in Baltimore City schools and to offer encouragement to new BCPS superintendent Dr. Sonja Santelises in her effort to address the issue. *The* *Sun* compares the effects of suspensions to that of “restorative practices” in an effort to champion the latter as a difficult and costly, but ultimately more effective, solution to discipline issues in schools. The editorial also argues that policies are only one facet of the solution to discipline problems in schools and that central offices and school boards need to be on the same page of understanding with teachers, administrators and families with regard to policies and their intents. *The* *Sun’s* purpose is to offer support to Dr. Santelises in her effort to address the complicated issues facing Baltimore City Schools and to advocate for greater social and emotional awareness of the lives of students when it comes to addressing any disciplinary action and reform.

*“Sending a student home eliminates any possibility for teachers and administrators to actually address the root problem.”*

Though it should certainly be encouraged, it seems somewhat optimistic that teachers and administrators can alone “address the root problem” of a student’s disciplinary issues that the *Sun* admits to include complex socio-economic conditions like “trauma, poverty and neighborhood violence.” Suspensions, sometimes, are necessary and can be a deterrent, if used sparingly and with careful consideration of underlying factors. Having been suspended for discipline issues myself, I would argue that the punishments had a lasting positive impact on my behavior and performance. I was ashamed of my behavior, and sought to prove to my peers, teachers and administrators I was a better, more responsible person when I returned. I also admit that, in large part, this was because I was suspended to a home that supported the school’s position and further encouraged me to reflect on and reform my behavior. I do not think that excluding students from school, though, is a universal solution. It should be part of a broader platform of approaches that needs to take into account the individual circumstances that are often feeding into an individual student’s in-school discipline problem. I accept there is a link between suspensions and the “long term costs” associated with this often temporary solution, like increased drop-outs and crime rates, but I also believe that there are tremendous obstacles to enacting the sort of reforms necessary to curb these trends. Though changes at the school-level are an important part of helping to manage discipline, and “restorative practices” contain much promise as one strategic piece, there needs to be a broader social, political and economic effort that school reform is part of, not central to, if we truly desire better schools and better communities.

Works Cited

“School Suspensions Solve Nothing.” *The* *Baltimore Sun*, 2 Dec. 2016,

www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/editorial/bs-ed-suspensions-20161114-story.html.

**GRADING**

**Marks indicate:**

**+** = adequate, not necessarily flawless, but you’ve done a pretty good job

✓= developing, flawed in too many ways, needs revision of content, organization or

expression

-- = inadequate, lacking in content, organization, style and care

🗶 = unnecessary, off-topic, digressive, unacceptable

**Grades are given for:**

1. Proper formatting and style, including providing *social sin title* and “quoted” or paraphrased statement of writer’s argument prior to your argument paragraph as well as an MLA formatted citation.
2. Rhetorical Analysis paragraph
3. Argument paragraph
4. Annotations depth and closeness of reading, even of images