

Report of Investigation

Complaint against Jack Raaen

Social Studies Teacher

Carl Ben Eielson Middle School

Fargo Public Schools

Complaint Received: March 26th, 2021

Investigated by Brad Larson

Principal, Carl Ben Eielson Middle School

Fargo Public Schools

I. Introduction

- A complaint was received by Bradley Larson, Principal, Fargo Public Schools, on March 26, 2021 via in person. The complaint was submitted by students. Mr. Larson received a complaint of misconduct toward students at Carl Ben Eielson Middle School, that was done by Jack Raaen. The alleged incidents occurred on multiple dates during the 2020-21 school year. The Director of Human Resources was notified of the complaint on March 26, 2021. Jack Raaen was notified of the complaint on March 26, 2021 via phone. In attendance during that phone call was Bradley Larson, Principal and Natalie Richter, Dean of Students. A determination was made that Bradley Larson, Principal of Carl Ben Eielson, would conduct an investigation and submit a report to Dr. Robert Grosz, Associate Superintendent, Secondary Education and Doug Andring, Director of Human Resource for a decision determination if any policy violation happened.
- Policy violation considerations: AP 5060 Discrimination, Harassment and Violence; AP 6061 Anti-Bullying; AP 5255 Staff Conduct

II. Information Gathering

March 26, 2021 and March 29, 2021: In-person interviews were conducted with multiple students and one teacher. Natalie Richter, Dean of Students, took notes during the interviews. The interviews lasted approximately 15 minutes for each student.

Relevant details from interviews: Mr. Bradley Larson shared the necessity for confidentiality with all interviewees and discussed the district's non-retaliation policy.

Below are the statements that were presented to the respondent (Mr. Jack Raaen) and includes his comments to each accusation. The signed copy of the meeting is attached to this report.

The following was given to Mr. Raaen to respond to:

1.(Multiple students reported) Mr. Raaen told student(s) a story about another student's mom stating that she said "I'm so happy I want to fuck you" while hugging him, after he found her lost keys.

-This is a story that had to do with ? I did not say the above statement but said there was colorful language in the story.

2. (Multiple students reported) Mr. Raaen rubs and touches female students' backs, shoulders, and arms; moves their hair and makes them feel uncomfortable.

-any touch is always between shoulder and neck; stating good job or settle down

3. (Multiple students reported) Mr. Raaen pulls them out of class or has waited for a student outside of the bathroom to talk with them about random issues.

-I deal with lots of problems from the bathroom because of proximity to my room; I do not go there to talk with students. I only discuss with them if they have to come out of the bathroom because of what was going on in the bathroom.

4.(Multiple students reported) Mr. Raaen has made comments about the dress code that has made them feel uncomfortable.

* As well as moving a student's shirt over, looked up and down, and put the shirt back.

* "We should figure out the dress code so (student) can wear short skirts and crop tops".

-I have consciously not responded to dress code issues because we don't have a female on our team to do so.

5.(Multiple students reported) Mr. Raaen randomly calls students out about dating other students in class in front of their classmates and makes them uncomfortable because these kids are usually not dating.

-All in an attempt to gain relationships. I never push an issue of dating or not dating another student.

6.Multiple student(s) and a parent reported) Mr. Raaen made a comment about "Off like a prom dress" after referring to a student going to prom with another student in the class.

-That is a saying we have used in my home but I do not remember saying that to any students here at school.

Teacher stated "My feeling is that I have agitated a group of students and they have created these accusations in an attempt to get me out of their way."

The Above statements were summarized by the below interviews from students and teacher and emails from parents. The names of the following have been removed as they were told they would be anonymous.

Student 1:

Witnessed: I have seen him rub students (girls) arms shoulders and close contact, moving hair, rubbing down your arm. Really close, I get a teacher helping you and being close, but this is different.

-I was wearing a flannel, moved the flannel over and looked me up and down and moved it back. Looked at my normal black shirt, and he said that may be distracting. I asked for who? He said "I am distracted"

-Staring at me, he moves my hair, it's just really weird. I had a good relationship; he has helped me but now it is a too close kind of bond.

Mr. Larson asked How long have you felt uncomfortable? -- I did not pay attention to it at first. All the jokes started to become noticeably gross. We would say, oh it's just Mr. Raaen being Mr. Raaen, but then I realized the comments and jokes are just weird.

This Friday: RANDOMLY he said in class-- (student) and so and so are going to prom.

Then he used the transition:

"And we are off like prom dresses" It made me uncomfortable because he was just talking about me going to Prom with so and so.

Points to anyone and say they are dating in front of class. You guys are getting married and going to have kids. Makes people feel uncomfortable.

Mrs. Allebach said she talked with Mr. R about the jokes and it stopped, but it hasn't. Multiple classes a day there are comments and jokes about others-- "really weird comments"

Student 2:

Tell me what you have seen or heard with Mr. Raaen that has made you uncomfortable:

-if it happened with a girl it would be okay, but it makes it more uncomfortable because he is a man.

-Me and (student 3) and maybe someone else were talking about _____'s family so he brought up this story--He said she (mom) lost her keys, then said mom said I am so happy I could F you. I don't know...just felt weird!

-This happened during advisory. We would hang out in his advisory. Lots of people were there but student 3 for sure and maybe someone else was there for the story.

-Has put his hand on my shoulder during a test and stated "Oh you silly bc I finished my test". Made me uncomfortable

-Makes comments about people dating -- said I was dating certain students and I wasn't. Makes comments about _____ and _____ dating.

-Makes comments in class and assumes ethnicity and makes comments. Weird how he says things like that. If they seem Hispanic, he will say a comment but hard to explain. Assumed that someone who was black would answer the questions about being discriminated against.

-Comes off caring when you are crying, but then sometimes we do not want to talk. It is uncomfortable when he pulls us out of class. -- sometimes out of the blue! Pulled me out (not even sure why and started going off on...) Told me that people are jealous of me after telling me I was pretty. Telling me how smart I was and asking me if I think I am as smart as another student who is known to be smart.

-He also makes calls to parents and talks nicely to parents and then when we say something to parents, they think he is super nice.

If I was talking with someone in class-- he holds me to a different standard "I expect more from you"

-I used my phone and he said, "I hope you know I can see what you are doing, and I expect better." I don't think it is fair when he holds people to different standards.

I don't look forward to his class. He just talks about random things--

_____ has talked to other past students that have said some of the same things.

Dress coded me for my back showing and brought it up in class and it wasn't even something.

Randomly touch my shoulders in class and in passing periods
Come into my other classes which is very odd. Mr. Lovin's room once. He started to rub my back, it was weird.

Were you present about the story about the keys? You mean about _____'s mom?
No I was not there.

Randomly say to
Calls my mom, not a school number. She answers and it is about school but

He just makes me feel uncomfortable.
Randomly announce that I was dating _____ ...just odd. Made me so uncomfortable.
All the time makes random

Do you see him do this with other people? Yes, other people in my class too. All the time. At least 4 times a week.

Teacher #1--

- _____ and I talked: mid Feb/ 1.5 months ago, was upset (is often), I asked what was going on. _____ explained the story with Mr. Raaen.
-apparently Mr. Raaen knew the sister, he found keys in the parking lot, and Mr. Raaen said the mom was so happy she said, I want to fuck you.
_____ says that Mr. Raaen told _____ the story.
I told _____ and asked if I could talk to Mr. Raaen about it. _____ said yes--this was during period 5-- At the end of the day, I asked Jack about it.
He laughed and said it was true. I told him that _____ is upset. And tried to explain, you are insulting _____ mom. He said, "Okay maybe I shouldn't have said that.

How did all this come up again?

The _____ - on Friday around advisory time. We were having a card game tourney with Ms. Allebach' s class. Student 1 said something about a teacher making _____ uncomfortable. I asked, Student 1 is there something going on? No, not right now. I think they were planning to talk to someone--But I did tell _____ if _____ wasn't going to talk with me, you should talk with someone.

Period 5, student 5 pulled me aside, there was something going on with Mr. Raaen and feeling uncomfortable. I told _____ to talk to a counselor and then hopefully an administrator will call you down. I have student 1 that same period and _____ told _____ a story about removing a prom dress--Passed out a test and then said "And we are off like prom dress"-- student 1 made a comment that it wasn't okay, not sure if that was that day or another. I told _____ that _____ should tell admin.
-I ran into a few _____ later. They told me "They told us we would be called down later. I am worried they aren't going to do anything." I told them I want you to make sure you are heard.
Student 1 also shared _____ talked to older _____ and they said things have been going on for years....like students had felt uncomfortable too about things he had said.
-there was a group chat and I told them it was good that you are united.

Teacher stated, Everybody knows he says things he shouldn't. He will drop a F bomb if he is frustrated in a meeting. I have never heard him say anything to a student though.

Last week, (Wed/Thursday) Jack did tell me about an incident that happened a few years ago. About grabbing something and meant to touch a student's back and touched _____ butt.

Student 3:

I was dressed coded one time and I was talking about how it could be unfair. We were talking as a class. Mr. Raaen said "we should get the dress code figured out so student 3 can wear short skirts and crop tops". He said it in front of the class and made me feel uncomfortable.

I saw him coming up to a [redacted] that was having anxiety attack in science, friends were saying she just needs space and he kept giving her hugs. I don't even know if teachers should be doing that.

[redacted] was talking with Mr. Raaen and they were talking about [redacted], telling [redacted] their family is a little weird. Told us he found a key and he said the mom said she was so happy she could find him ...then he was saying things [redacted] sister would do like always make out with guys. Things he should not be saying to students.

My friend, [redacted], had [redacted] phone taken out of [redacted] back pocket by him. I did not witness it but told me.

Student 4:

After I told Mr. Finton, Mr. Finton told Mr. Raaen and then he came and talked with me. He said ...We don't want problems between us.

Told me, "my mom is pretty and attractive but I don't mean anything of that in a bad way and we shouldn't have problems". It's been about a month. I have not noticed anything since.

Student 5:

-if we are just talking about school...he would touch my arm or caress my back. I don't like people touching me especially people I don't know well.

-He says random comments about students dating in class -- making it up. Kinda weird.

-in class towards student 1, he said that they ([redacted] and another student) were going to prom together and later said "Off like a prom dress".

Me and Student 3 looked at each other like did you hear that?

-Friday, on my way to the bathroom, my friend stopped me to ask me where I was going...Mr. Raaen assumed we were skipping. A teacher came into the bathroom and said Mr. Raaen was waiting for me. When I came out, he was close to me and touching my arm and said, "I don't want people skipping. I don't want people doing this." I tried to back away and not sure if he noticed that I didn't want him to touch my arm but he kept doing it as he was talking.

-This happened 6th period (beginning)

-This student is requesting to have a different advisory

Thinks these students have had issues/concerns with him as well: [redacted], [redacted], [redacted], [redacted] (on other team), [redacted].

Student 6:

He said he was in trouble then for that. I am not sure if he knew something was coming because that was earlier in the week. Maybe a coincidence or he knew something.

Have you seen any inappropriate touching?

-Nothing I would question. Shoulder touches maybe.

-He (Mr. Raaen) has mentioned dress code, things like shouldn't wear that but I am not going to mention anything.

-Admin asked if thinks this is just talk amongst a certain group or the whole team?-- said it was definitely something that was being talked about amongst everyone.

Parent Emails:

---Original Message-----

Parent 1 email.

Sent: Tuesday, March 30, 2021 9:11 AM

To: Bradley Larson <larsobr@fargo.k12.nd.us>

Subject: Student 3/statement on Mr. Raaen

Good Morning-

Pursuant to our conversation yesterday, Student 3 has talked to me on several occasions throughout the school year about Mr. Raaen & inappropriate things he has said in class. The following are a select few that has discussed with me.

Mr. Raaen told Student 3 & , a story about another students mom & how he found her keys after she lost them years ago & Mr. Raaen said this mom was so happy she wanted to f*** him.

Mr. Raaen was talking about the dress code to their class & he said something about how the dress code should be changed so Student 3 could wear a short skirt & a crop top & get away with it. He said this to the entire class.

Last week they had a test & as they started he said "And we're off like a prom dress."

There have been numerous instances that Student 3 has shared with me that Mr. Raaen has talked to their class about sex in general....and as he is a history teacher, I'm not sure how that would be something he needs to discuss with his class.

As I indicated, this has been an ongoing conversation in our home all year. Student 3 has definitely been bothered by these conversations and was very aware that they were inappropriate. There have been many days has come home feeling uncomfortable about things he has said.

On the flip side, Student 3 is very concerned about "ruining his life". is concerned about his family & daughters. is questioning whether the things he has said were merely him joking around and maybe the students shouldn't have said anything.

I appreciate that you are taking this serious & looking into in further.

Parent 2- The following email is a chain of emails, so they are printed in red to help know they are connected. The most recent is at the top.

Sent: Monday, March 29, 2021 3:28 PM

To: Bradley Larson <larsobr@fargo.k12.nd.us>

Subject: Fwd: Student 5

Here is the email I was referring to when we spoke today. I just wish this email would have been between him and I. Instead, he pulled Student 5 aside again and told I was basically "swearing" at him because I capitalized the word 'one' and that he takes personal offense to the use of capital letters. I understand that I may have come across rude but I really was a little upset that he pulled aside when his class was 50% of the issue with grades. Student 5 ended up leaving school early that day because he made cry during class. This was partially my fault for getting involved, but I do feel he could have kept this email between us and not drug student 5 into it during class time.

And in regards to the last email he sent, still does not have the same access as other students. He never did get a login to whatever the other students are using. said they even got the library/tech person involved and it's just "not working" to get a login. So now has to carry the history text book back and forth. No big deal, but if other kids are getting graded on these virtual assignments I don't want to be missing out on not only the learning part of it but also the grades. Maybe other kids are only graded on tests too, that part I don't know.

-Parent 2

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Jack Raaen <raaenj@fargoschools.org>

Date: Fri, Mar 5, 2021 at 8:14 AM

Subject: Re: Student 5

To: Parent 2

Thank you for your kind words. Student 5 is a wonderful kid and I feel lucky to have had the opportunity to work with . does best and is always kind and willing to listen. Spring has sprung early, and the drama is always a part of adolescents. I will make sure has complete access to all materials. Thanks for being a caring and involved . You can't imagine how many parents are not involved. Have a great weekend.

Jack

On Thu, Mar 4, 2021 at 4:47 PM Parent 2 wrote:

I appreciate the response. Student 5 likely did not explain the entire conversation you had with so I may have misinterpreted the small amount I was told. I have just been watching grades closely because gets incentives at home for keeping good grades. It's

something we talk about regularly. It just caught me off guard when [redacted] mentioned you talking to [redacted] about improving grades when I have been watching that particular grade closely for some time waiting to see improvement. That's when [redacted] also mentioned not having the same assignments as the rest of the students because [redacted] 'doesn't have a login' to something so those assignments would just be 'discluded from her grade'. That concerned me for because [redacted]'s not a great test taker. Not only does [redacted] lack studying skills but [redacted] is still playing catch up on the reading/comprehension part of the tests. My real concern was [redacted] not having the same opportunity as other students with grades/assignments so it's not only tests reflecting on [redacted] grade. I may have 100% misinterpreted this part of [redacted] explanation.

Yes, [redacted] has been very involved with [redacted] friends drama at school (and outside of school) and I too would like that to lessen so [redacted] is able to focus on [redacted]. Student 5 thrives on friendships and feeling included which is why virtual academy was not working well for [redacted]. It is for sure starting to get dramatic when [redacted] start getting in the picture at this age.

Please know that I greatly appreciate all you do and have done for [redacted] and bettering [redacted]. I really, really do appreciate it. It's heartwarming to know there are teachers who truly care for their students' success. You are one of those and want you to know I do thank you for that!

-Parent 2

On Thu, Mar 4, 2021 at 4:09 PM Jack Raaen <raaenj@fargoschools.org> wrote:

Sorry I didn't respond earlier to your email. My schedule has me teaching nonstop to the end of the day after 10:20, but had a team meeting between 9:30 and 10:15 that kept me from responding to your email. I was not positive I understood your concern. Was it that I spoke with Student 5 about not getting [redacted] work done, or sliding grades? Or were you questioning the structure of my history class and/ or the rigor of my class.

If your concern is about my talking to Student 5 about [redacted] grades then you should know that I am required to do that with every student I have in advisory. We review grades for advisory students on a daily basis, and try to talk to students when there changes in their grades, both positive and negative. In [redacted] case I saw grades starting to slide, and noted that [redacted] had been showing up late to class a few times. We talked about being less involved with some of the spring drama and concentrating on [redacted] work. I tried to make it clear that I think [redacted] is a very good friend to many of [redacted] peers, but that should not get in the way of [redacted] work.

If your concern is about the History class I teach and the rigor involved, I can state the following. We started the semester on a unit that is very long. As a department we are trying not to grade the work done to prepare for a test. I agree with you that this creates a potential for students being put in position for high stakes testing. I have developed ways for students to prove knowledge after taking a test and not doing well. I offered those plans to all students and

made it clear that it was their job to come to me for what they were to do. It largely depended on what weakness they showed on the test. 78% of the students taking the test performed at 84% or higher. most of the students who didn't do well did not prepare for the test. Today I talked to Student 5 about why didn't come to me and offered a way to prove knowledge in the test. One of the things we have to strive for in 8th grade is preparing them to be successful in high school.

I hope this clarifies your concerns for you, if not please give me a call. I appreciate your concern and hope this helps.

Thanks,

Jack

On Thu, Mar 4, 2021 at 9:30 AM Parent 2 wrote:

Hi Mr Raaen,

I understand you spoke with Student 5 about grades yesterday and I just wanted to follow up with you. I've been asking about math assignments pretty regularly so is attempting to catch up on those. I guess my concern is with History. has only had ONE graded assignment since the start of the semester (two months now). How can improve that grade when there is no opportunity to do so? When I asked about it said doesn't have a login to the class assignments since started the school year late. Does that seem right or even fair? So I appreciate your concern about her overall grades but where is the opportunity to improve in the class you teach? Are we missing something?

-Parent 2

Student Email to Mr. Gandhi:

This student was not informed they would stay anonymous as they emailed:

From: . < @fargoschools.org>

Sent: Tuesday, March 30, 2021 12:29 PM

To: Rupak Gandhi <gandhir@fargo.k12.nd.us>

Subject: Mr. Raaen

Hello Dr. Ghandi, I am emailing you regarding the sensitive situation with my history teacher Mr. Jack Raaen. My name is , I am a bearcat at Carl Ben Eilson middle school. Mr. Raaen is one of the most involved teachers I have ever had. He is very invested in his students, and will go to many lengths to see to it that they meet their learning needs. I understand how the accusations against him came to be, but I do not believe he had any ill intent. Mr. Raaen is the kind of teacher who will pat you on the arm to show sincerity, or pull your hair as a joke. From my perspective it has never been with malice, or ill will. He's always been very caring of his students as a teacher, and talks of his wife and daughters frequently. It seems like the discomfort may have been a misunderstanding, and I would hate for such a kind, determined teacher to lose so much over a pat on the arm. Mr. Raaen has been a teacher for decades, and

has never run into such a problem that it requires his termination. Not only does it ruin his career, but it also invalidates real victims of sexual assault. If he is fired on such tenuous charges, other children who have been genuinely assaulted are invalidated. I respectfully request that you take this into consideration when deciding what to do about this matter. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely, _____ of Carl ben Eielson middle school

III. Findings of Fact

Based on interviews conducted and evidence reviewed during my investigation, I found that:

- The statements of all complainants/ interviewees (students and teacher) were consistent as shown in above notes.
- The statement of the adult witness (teacher) reported the respondent (Mr. Raaen) admitted to him that #1 did occur.
- The statements of the respondent neither denied nor admitted to the incidents/behaviors listed.
- The respondent did not explain nor go into detail regarding many of the incidents.
- Policy violation considerations: AP 5060 Discrimination, Harassment and Violence; AP 6061 Anti-Bullying; AP 5255 Staff Conduct

IV. Plan of Action

This investigative report will be submitted to Dr. Robert Grosz, Associate Superintendent, Secondary Education, who will be asked to make a determination if policy/procedure violation occurred and what steps need to be taken, if any.

-Submitted April 6, 2021

By: Bradley Larson

Principal, Carl Ben Eielson Middle School

