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Indianapolis Teen Says He Needed Stun Gun To Protect Himself From Bullies

Several groups who advocate for equal rights have come to the defense of an Indianapolis teenager expelled for firing a stun gun in school.

The Indiana Youth Group, the Gay Straight Alliance Network and GLAAD have all expressed disappointment in Indianapolis Public School's decision to expel 17-year-old Darnell "Dynasty" Young. Young, who has told his story on Good Morning America and CNN, said his mother gave him the stun gun for protection against bullies who taunted him because he was openly gay.

"All day I'd be on my guard," Young told The Indianapolis Star, adding that he and his mother complained to administration about the bullies more than 10 times. "It never got better. It always got worse."

Arsenal Technical High School Principal Larry Yarrell said the school had tried to work with Young, but the teen had trouble identifying his aggressors.

In a release, the district said Young had been expelled until Jan. 7, 2013. The stun gun incident occurred April 18. IPS spokesperson Mary Louise Bewley cited the district's zero tolerance policy in its decision to expel Young and said students in K-12 participate in an anti-bullying programs:

IPS offers Gay Straight Alliance groups on multiple campus, including Arsenal Technical High School. The district does not condone bullying. Students who violate the rights of others through bullying behaviors are held accountable.

While the district does not condone bullying, it also does not allow weapons to be brought on our school campuses for any reason. Students who violate this rule will be held accountable.

Some have accused IPS of hiding behind its zero tolerance policy, saying the district should have

done more to keep the bullying from escalating to the point where Young thought he'd need the stun gun to protect himself. One legal scholar, David Groshoff, has said under Indiana's "Stand Your Ground" statute, Young was well within his rights to bring the stun gun to school, regardless of the district's policy.

"So based on my reading of the law and of a parent's obligations to that parent's own child, not only was Darnell's mother, Chelisa Grimes, right to provide her son with the means to defend himself against the initiation of force against her son by bullies, but Darnell was right to use that force to reasonably protect himself," Groshoff writes for the Huffington Post.

But others have defended the school district's decision, saying that it's never OK to respond to bullying with violence.

"While educators must decide if punishment can stop short of expulsion under the circumstances, there can be no excusing the use or even possession of an unlawful weapon by a student," writes Dan Carpenter in an editorial for the Indianapolis Star that also condemned the actions of Young's bullies.

The teen's supporters plan to rally Tuesday before a school board meeting in Indianapolis.

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