

Republican Perspective
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Protected from the Truth

Back in the day, report cards were handed out in class. A student took his report card home, got his parent's signature, took his lumps, and brought the report card back to the issuing teacher. Apparently this has changed.

Nowadays it seems that report cards are available to parents on-line, or in some cases mailed directly to them. The latter is how it works at one particular private boys school in New York.

Here is an excerpt from a report card transmittal letter dated January 8, 2016: *"Since our goal is to share accurate information with parents, and not to discourage or hurt a student, great discretion must be used before allowing your child to view his report card. Certainly, report cards should not be seen by students without parental permission and guidance."*

So apparently it's not a certainty that a student should be told how he is performing. And if the student is to find out how he did, the parent must provide guidance so as not to "discourage or hurt" the student. Huh?

The transmittal letter goes on, in anticipation that the bad news may cause such trauma that the student should not learn of it. Here's the punch line: *"If after reviewing the enclosed report card, you would like us to develop a second version of this report card for your son with higher grades, please call..."* (I omit the name and telephone number.)

Now I have heard of kids forging their parents' signatures or trying to falsify their grades before showing a report card to their parents. But I had never until now heard of a school or parent falsifying a grade (or colluding together to falsify a grade) before showing the report card to the kid.

This reversal seems so insane as to defy belief. It probably has its roots in the everybody-gets-a-trophy self-esteem movement. Whatever twisted thinking underlies this foolishness, the potential harm is obvious---and considerable.

At the low end of the spectrum, let's say the student is failing but is shown a false report card that says he is passing. Where is the incentive for him to forgo the video games, get cracking on his homework, re-double his scholastic efforts, seek additional help or tutoring, and so on.

Or let's say a student thinks he is college-bound, is earning B's, but is shown that he is getting A's. When will he learn the truth? Maybe when he gets his rejection letter from his chosen university and finds himself at a community college.

In either situation, the student is being ill-served by the collusion of his school and his parents. The obvious harm is that the student will be unprepared for his future---and perhaps condemned to failure in the real world.

I don't know whether any of the parents took advantage of this offer to falsify their children's grades. I certainly hope not. At least some were so appalled by the offer that they complained---and even turned the letter over to the press (I picked it up from the Daily Mail and other media).

We can hope that this practice is a weird anomaly---neither widespread nor a glimpse of the future. I don't know whether the school has belatedly awakened to the concept that protecting students from the truth is a really lousy idea.