

Do a Favor

(Early Monday Evening, Dog Walk)

You are walking your dog around your neighborhood when you see your neighbor, Dorothy Dornstein, doing some gardening in front of her house. Before you can say, "Hi, Dorothy," she rushes down to the sidewalk yelling, "I've been meaning to call you! You're still on the school board, aren't you?"

Dorothy is very concerned about the way her daughter's teacher, Ms. Bitterman, has been treating her daughter. Just yesterday, Ms. Bitterman accused Dorothy's daughter, Donna, of failing to turn in her required math homework and lowered her semester grade from A to B because of it. Dorothy works closely with her daughter on her math homework and knows that her daughter completed the homework and handed it in on time every week as required. Dorothy's daughter even has several homework papers returned by Ms. Bitterman with "good job" written on them-papers that Ms. Bitterman says Donna never handed in.

Dorothy is crushed by this injustice and its effect on her daughter. Tears are welling up in eyes. Her daughter is extremely diligent and has never missed an assignment, and her daughter has a nearly perfect record on her math tests, averaging 98% for the semester. Math is-or at least was-Donna's favorite subject, but this experience is turning Dorothy's daughter off to math in particular and school in general. Dorothy wants her daughter moved to another math class immediately.

Your dog is getting fidgety as you listen to Dorothy's heated tale, and you are getting a little fidgety yourself. You know from a confidential briefing that Ms. Bitterman is having some emotional problems this year that are interfering with her performance. The problem appears to be more serious than you were led to believe, so the only fair thing to do is to move Dorothy's daughter. You put your arm around Dorothy and say, "That is a terrible story, Dorothy. I am so sorry. Ms. Bitterman has been having some problems lately. I'll talk to the principal tomorrow about moving Donna."

It makes you feel good that you can help your neighbor with a situation that is very important to her. Sometimes being a school board member can make you feel like a hero, you think to yourself, as your dog wags his tail all the way back home.

Discussion Questions

WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE ACTIONS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER, AND WHAT COULD THE SUPERINTENDENT HAVE DONE TO PREVENT IT?

