

Full interview quotes with Traci Chidester- (Home school teacher).

This Includes her expert opinion on dealing with school boards and administrators, as well as some of her personal experiences dealing with the board of education.

As a Utah homeschool teacher, a long time mother and someone who has experienced as aspects of the school system in Utah, I have learned much about the Public schools, Charter schools and home schools, there is some information I would like to share with you that pertains to your topic.

I have a great respect for the charter school systems in Utah. I believe as far as sending your child off to school they are less likely to be bullied in a charter school because I have witnessed the administration itself, the teachers, guidance counselors, and principles take great steps to avoid it and go to appropriate and reasonable lengths to make it stop. I am not saying that it does not happen in Charter School's I have personally just found that when it does occur, it is mild in comparison to public schools and it is something that they do not take lightly and do not procrastinate in punishment and most importantly finding out the real reason one is a bully and seeking out the right tools to help the children that have been exposed.

I have found that any violation in bullying policies result in the student being expelled and forced back into the public schools so it just does not happen as frequently as in public schools and the children want to be able to attend the charter school, because of the academic programs available and the ideal atmosphere for children that are more on the eccentric side, or who have a great passion in things like art, dance, theatre, and film making along with many others. The bottom line is I have witnessed that children are more likely to find a common ground with their peers and develop a strong bond with those that share the same passions as they do. They do want to be able to continue gaining their education in a school that is seen as a privileged school for those with special needs, wants, talents, and overall drive for success, so the population of bully's is lower because they consequences of no respect and persistent bullying results in that transfer back to public school and their regulations.

I had a child who attended Parkview elementary school in the Salt Lake City school district. In 1992 she was in the third grade. This child was overweight. She was continually bullied by a group of girls at the school. These young girls went to great lengths to do whatever they could to hurt and torture my child and being that we lived in a very multi-cultured area of Salt Lake and the type of life styles that were available on every corner these young girls went as far as to form a gang

named after my child. Here are a few examples of the type of bullying that my young daughter had to endure. They would follow her into the bathroom, look over the stall while she was going to the bathroom and spit on her and call her names. These children would contaminate her belongings by stealing her back-pack and putting urine and fesses in it. They also found a way to lock her in the bathroom and told her that if she came out that they would have their older brothers kill her and her family, yes that's right, in the 3rd grade my child had to endure Death Threats by other students in public school. My child did not remain silent, however it never seemed to make much of a difference because they would torment her still the same and even more because she was told to keep her mouth shut. I never saw anything other than the teachers having conversations with these girls about it and they would simply ask them if they were doing the things that my child was accusing them of and they would respond by saying that they would never do something like that. Here is where I see the largest problem, many times with adult teachers standing by a group of 7-8 girls would form circles around her and push her and shout loud enough for people in the next classroom to hear, things like Free-Willey, Miss Piggy, and profanities that no child should use, and while this was taking place the teacher would sit at her desk pretending not to hear anything because it was the classes free time or right after lunch. This teacher would sit there and do nothing. These girls would trip her, constantly call her names, they

would forge notes with her name on them and then report her to the teachers as having written these notes. Her third grade teacher would not believe that she was not writing these notes and went so far as to call her a liar to her face and to call the gang officer for the school in as a handwriting expert to say that it was his opinion that she wrote the notes. This was a joke. This child was teased and made fun of every day she attended this school for 3 years. My constant complaints to the teachers and principal were always met with the same downplay of the situation and always the comment "well kids will be kids" This always made me angry beyond belief.

This gang of girls followed this child for three years. If a new student would move in they would be threatened by the gang that they better not have anything to do with my student or they would pay and they would be required to swear into the gang and forced to tease my child. The straw that broke the camel's back was in the 6th grade. Her teacher, Mrs. Monson was the wife of a prominent Utah senator at the time. Mrs. Monson allowed these children to circle around my c child while in the classroom pushing her from one child to another and screaming "Free Willy" This was a frequent event and was ignored. I finally sought the help of a friend of mine who was the superintendent Iron County at the time. He sent up a meeting with the Superintendent of SL district to try to resolve the issue. As the meeting

went on it was clear that things would never change at this school or in this district. We were told that they would not discipline the teacher because her husband was a senator and that their financial contributions to the district were great and that this must be over looked. They district agreed that we did have grounds to take legal action against them.

My child did not want to endure the pain of court trials after all she had been through. The district agreed that she would never be in a safe environment as long as she was in the SLC district. They transferred her records on a permanent transfer to Granite district and we drove her 30 miles each way to another school for the rest of her school years to keep her from these girls. The school did suspend the girls for 3 days each for the crime and this seemed so trivial to me it was unbelievable. The worst of all was after all she had endured the district asked her if there was anything they could do for her to help her heal. She stated she had only one request that was for her 3rd grade teacher to write her a letter apologizing for calling her a liar. The teacher refused to do this even after all that had been done. She finally agreed at the order of the district and the letter was the most ridiculous thing I have ever read and nowhere near a letter to say I am Sorry. I refused to let my student read it. Despite all the obstacles this child did graduate High School

but it was a miracle. There was so much more I felt the school system could have done to protect my student.

One would think that things have changed since the mid 90's but I am overseeing the education of my niece who lives in Davis County school district. She moved into the Layton Elementary boundary 3 years ago. She attended the 6th grade for 3 weeks. During those 3 weeks she was also bullied by few girls. These girls called her a lesbian. When questioned about it they told the principal that she was gay, she is not gay. The principal went so far as to call all the parents in her class and tell them to keep their children away from my niece. Having already experienced severe bullying in our life and lack of care or concern on the part of administrations, we make the choice to pull the child from public school after 3 weeks in Davis school district. She has been homeschooled for 6th 7th and 8th grade and will start a charter school next year to complete High School. A few months ago a young girl had left town for summer break and asked this niece to go to the school and retrieve her bike because she had left it there before leaving town. My niece went to the school to get the bike. This same principal was there and saw her. She called the other girls mother and told her that she should keep her daughter away from my niece because she is "Bad News' and Lesbian" Wow 3

years later no contact with this child and this principal has nothing better to do but continue to bully this child.

In closing I would say that my experience has been that Administration, Teachers, Principals and school district officials have had as much to do with students being bullied, allowing continued bullying and downplaying the acts by students and failure to follow through with tougher no bullying policies.

Change is necessary, the principals and teachers should have harsher punishments including losing teaching licenses for allowing these things to continue while children are in their care. At the onset of verbal bullying the bullied student should have greater protection and the offenders should be removed from the schools and their parents should be forced to be the ones to drive their children to schools to keep children safe. Also after these experiences I would never use the public school systems ever again.

Traci Chidester