

We're Done Now  
By The Donato-Sapp  
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The three of us want to begin this by telling you about The Donato-Sapp Family Values. We started these when Helena was very small and have grown them together as a family. Like the school's Core Values, these are the core values that guide our family.

- Our first value is to be kind.
- Our second value is to be bold.
- Our third value is to do more rather than less.
- Our fourth value is that you don't have to be perfect and failure is okay.
- Our fifth family value is to never say anything negative about homework.
- Our sixth Donato-Sapp Family Value is to show up.
- Our seventh family value is to embrace imagination.
- Our eighth value is to never speak negatively about anyone's body, and that includes our own body.
- Our ninth value is to speak up for justice

The situation we find ourselves in today has been clarifying, and has resulted in the addition of a 10<sup>th</sup> family value. Our 10<sup>th</sup> Donato-Sapp Family Value involves the division of labor in relationships. Physical labor, sure, but emotional and intellectual labor in particular. This lesson is not new in our coaching sessions with Helena regarding her friendships, but we find it important enough to merit emphasis for all her relationships going forward.

This question of equitable labor is one reason we have decided to conclude today our work with the boys who bullied Helena and their families. While the three of us have been present, open, willing and able to participate in dialogue with our counterparts since Day One, our efforts have been met with baffling silence from them. It has been weeks — nearly a month! — since the violent verbal attacks on Helena, and we haven't heard a word from these families. Zero, as of this writing. Stunning.

You expressed an intention to implement a process of Restorative Justice at our initial meeting. RJ cannot even begin to happen without all parties voluntarily coming to the table. RJ is not a one-sided process. And RJ is predicated on authentic remorse on the part of the one who has done wrong. Here we couldn't even start the most basic dialogue, and dialogue is just one aspect of the process. We heard your intentions, and we saw your efforts. But to be clear, Restorative Justice did not even come close to happening here. What a missed opportunity!

In our conversations you called this “the most egregious bullying incident” you've seen at our school. It happened to Helena. It happened to the three of us. Still, we've been willing to do more than our share. All for peace and goodwill.

In spite of our desire to do the work of justice, we realize that the effort is futile without the partnership of the other families. In fact, the ringing silence and absence of good faith from any of the other families makes the work risky. Risky because it has become essentially a one-sided monologue, not a dialogue. If we press on with the reading of Helena's statements to the boys, it would be doing so without express consent from their families. We feel that this not only puts disproportionate burden on our family but also exposes us to undue peril. Our desire to do potentially transformative work is blunted by this risk. Just as we shouldn't be doing all the work, we shouldn't also assume all the risk. Besides — and this is an important point — all parties do need to come to the table voluntarily for the work to truly be transformative.

Besides the horrible trauma we've experienced, the continual bullying afterwards, the pain and tears and weeping, the loss of safety, peace, and friendships-once-held-dear, we've also spent countless hours working to resolve and find a way to peace. We have continued to be generous and open and inviting. Helena identified an extraordinary way to lift up who she identified as Upstanders, resulting in a transformative event on this campus that those of you who witnessed it said it simply left you in a state of awe.

As disappointed as we are that our work didn't go as far or have the exact outcome as we had hoped, it doesn't erase any of our efforts. We recognize the limitations of an institution, that there is an invisible structure bigger than us, a calculus that involves conflicting interests, liability, fear, money, inertia and the status quo. In her 12-year-old wisdom, Helena at our first meeting thoughtfully cautioned that Wealth, Conservatism, and Power might exert influence here. Turns out, she may be right, as we feel its full weight.

It is important for Helena that she communicate to you that ALL of the school signed the handbook to abide by the school's Core Values – and that includes all students, their parents and guardians, all staff, administration, and faculty. She wanted that explicitly stated here.

It is imperative that Helena also know that she continues to have Voice and agency in the work of justice, in the confrontation-with-humility that she so wanted to do with the boys who were unkind to her. But, like we said earlier, everyone needs to come to the table voluntarily or it is not a true healing process. So, even though we no longer will be moving forward with begging these boys and other families to join us at a peacemaking table, we feel it is necessary for Helena to be able to voice what she has worked so hard to script and so desperately wants to say to those who were unkind to her. So she is going to speak it to you three adults today so that you can bear witness of her strength, generosity and kindness.