



## **Circuit Court Upholds School's Decision to Bar Student from Participating in Graduation Ceremony**

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By **Deidra Norris**

It's that time of year – finals, prom, senior trips, parties....and senior pranks. Year after year administrators attempt to curb this “perceived” rite of passage for seniors and maintain discipline and order in the school buildings the last few weeks of school. Administrators find themselves short of consequences for those graduating seniors who will matriculate into jobs, junior college, or universities across the nation after leaving high school. Many administrators have opted to take graduation events off the table for those graduating seniors who violate school policies and rules. A Cook County Circuit Court affirmed a school district's ability to discipline students by barring a student from participating in graduation related events.

On Wednesday, June 1, 2011, Judge Kathleen M. Pantle denied a motion for an emergency injunction filed by parents of a graduating senior whose senior prank involved printing obscene pictures on a school computer and dropping the pictures down a New Trier High School stairwell. The school suspended the student for the remainder of the year and barred the student's participation in the graduation ceremony and graduation party. The parents filed the complaint against the School District disputing, not the student's misconduct nor the suspension of the student, but the fact that the punishment also included the student being barred from participating in graduation events. The parents argued that the school could not go above and beyond suspension to discipline misbehaving seniors. Judge Pantle rejected this argument and further reinforced prior precedent establishing reluctance by courts to get involved in the day-to-day administration of discipline of students.

Provided that school administrators give notice to parents and students that misconduct could result in the student being barred from extra-curricular activities and school-related events, administrators have the option of barring students' participation in these types of events to preserve an environment conducive to learning, even in the final days of school.

The District was represented by Franczek Radelet attorneys **Jennifer A. Smith** and **Deidra A. Norris**.

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