

# CAVERNA

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follows months of high-profile concerns previously reported by the Barren County Progress.

## New Video Circulates

The video, recorded by the child's regular classroom teacher, shows the student visibly upset after a splint was removed from an injured finger. The family says the injury occurred during an encounter with another student. In the recording, a staff member can be heard telling the child, "Try to quit crying and get yourself together."

Superintendent Amanda Abell confirmed the district is reviewing the matter.

"We are aware of a video circulating involving a student who became upset after not receiving points on his behavior chart," Abell said. "The video was originally shared privately by the

teacher with the child's guardian."

Abell added that the district had issued a similar statement last week after a substitute teacher was accused of being physically aggressive with a student. That communication noted the incident was reported to Child Protective Services and local law enforcement and that the substitute was removed from the district's roster.

## Recent Incidents Under Review

This latest situation adds to a growing list of concerns raised this year:

- May: A legal-notice letter signaled a potential lawsuit alleging a student was beaten with a belt while classmates watched. Claims included assault, harassment, civil-rights violations, and negligent supervision.
- August: Allegations emerged regarding

a "Trooper Island" outing where a mentally disabled student was reportedly assaulted with what was believed to be a pencil—later identified as a toothbrush holder. The district acknowledged receiving "additional information" and launched a fresh review.

- Summer: A former Caverna High School basketball coach was indicted on child-abuse-related charges, including assault, wanton endangerment, official misconduct, and failure to report abuse or neglect.

## Parents Calling for Change

With each new episode, frustration among parents continues to rise. Many argue these issues point toward systemic failures rather than isolated lapses. Concerns raised include inconsistent supervision,

communication breakdowns, inadequate handling of special-needs students, and reporting and documentation procedures.

District officials have not issued broader comments about the string of incidents but have continued to emphasize cooperation with law enforcement and a commitment to improving student safety.

## What's Next

The district's newest investigation remains ongoing. Parents are expected to raise concerns at upcoming school board meetings, and additional public-records requests may shed light on how previous complaints were handled.

Jobe Publishing will continue to monitor developments as Caverna Independent Schools face yet another round of child-safety scrutiny.

## PARENT STATEMENT REGARDING CLASSROOM INCIDENT INVOLVING THEIR SON, LINCOLN:

"We are deeply disappointed, disturbed, and heartbroken by what happened to our son, Lincoln. The actions and inactions of teachers, staff, and even the behavior allowed from other students are unacceptable by any standard—especially for a vulnerable child with special needs who relies on the adults around him for safety, support, and emotional regulation.

It is crushing as parents to know that we are legally required to place our children in school, yet the very institution designed to protect and guide them allowed this level of mistreatment. Our family has tried multiple times to move our children to safer, more supportive environments, but options in our area are extremely limited. At this point, we are grateful that we are able and willing to homeschool, because the emotional damage from incidents like this is too severe to ignore—not only for our child, but for other children like our Lincoln.

Our heart breaks for Lincoln, but it breaks just as much for the other children and parents who have endured the same or similar treatment. Lincoln trusted these adults just as he trusts us to keep him safe, help him regulate, and treat him with dignity. That trust was violated in a way no child should ever experience—not from parents, and certainly not from a school that is paid to care for and educate children.

Our hearts also break for the many parents who have pulled their children out due to bullying by teachers and certain students, again and again. We ask that you reach out and share your stories so your child can be heard as well.

We will not take this lightly. We are our children's voices. We have noticed a pattern, and we want to hear from others who have experienced the same."

# HOPE

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Now, as decorations go up in homes and across communities for the Christmas season here in Hart County, the mission team at HCBC finds themselves carrying the same spirit they felt along the Amazon River months ago - a spirit of generosity and obeying God's will - into this holiday season.

When asked if she could share an encouraging word with everyone reading this story, Harlan said, "Strengthen bonds and relationships with one another. Obey God's call. He will make a way. God works in us and through us for His glory."

Houk expressed a message she hopes others in the community will embrace during this season of giving.

"God can use anyone, anywhere," Houk said. "Several members of our team questioned

how helpful we would be without set skills or knowledge, but we all easily found a niche and purpose while there. Whether it means traveling thousands of miles to a remote location in the Amazon, supporting people in our communities at home, or being a prayer warrior for those on the front lines, everyone can be used. There are so many opportunities to share God's love and message of hope. It simply takes a step of faith and some obedience."

Horse Cave Baptist Church plans to continue building its partnership with Amazon Hope and the communities along the river, as well as continuing an ongoing connection with a church in Foz do Canumã.

"We hope to continue our international

missions ministry in the years to come," Houk said. "We have appreciated and felt the love and support from our small community and can't wait to see what else can be accomplished and what people can be reached with this partnership."

This holiday season, as the Horse Cave Baptist Church mission team reflects upon the miracle of Jesus' birth, they also reflect upon their days along the Amazon River.

What the team carried home from those distant waters shows that faith and hope - shaped by courage and obedience - can begin anywhere: in a small Kentucky church, on a boat in the Amazon, or in a heart willing to be used for a greater purpose. And that doesn't fade with the seasons. It stays, ready to guide the days ahead.

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