

To: Local Media

From: Hewett & Wood, P.A. on behalf of the Withrow family

Date: May 14, 2013

We have been notified by the Johnston County School Board that our initial appeal to the designated School Hearing Officer has been denied. The next step in this administrative process would be an appeal and subsequent hearing in front of a panel of the Johnston County Board of Education. However, after meeting with the school board attorney and some additional information being brought to our attention, we have decided not to pursue any further appeals. Cole will finish his high school career at the alternative school and will receive a diploma.

There has been an abundance of media and online attention given to this matter. A lot of negative comments have been directed toward the school administration and the Johnston County Board of Education. Cole would like to apologize for all the stress and negative attention this matter has brought. Although we may not agree with the North Carolina School laws regarding this situation and the corresponding policies of the Johnston County School System, after careful review we do believe they have been followed in this case.

We would like to specifically address the Superintendent of the Johnston County School System, Dr. Ed Croom. We are thankful that he has modified the mandatory suspension to allow Cole to continue his studies and graduate from the Johnston County School System. Dr. Croom was not required to do so, but we believe he recognized and took into account that Cole did not intend to cause anyone harm. Cole and his family hold no ill will towards the Johnston County School System, its' employees, Principal Kirk Denning or the Board of Education, and he would ask that his supporters feel likewise. In closing, Cole is a Christian and an Eagle Scout and does not endorse or support any of the negative comments and requests that it please end now. The family and Cole ask for your continued prayer. Although this concludes the educational aspect of Cole's case, we must now focus all our efforts on his pending felony charge.