



NOWHERE TO GO, NUMBER 2

In Pt. 1, issues and causes were discussed. Pt. 2 finds that while the impacts of bathroom misbehavior are numerous, solutions are harder to find.

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At Clarke Central High School, students' mistreatment of bathrooms has reached a boiling point. In other words, where there's smoke, there's a toilet.

From vaping to violence to vandalism, the problems concerning student misbehavior in the bathrooms are numerous, as are the impacts they have. However, finding solutions is a challenge.

"(Bathrooms are) one of the last places that young people can go where they are essentially unsupervised," CCHS Associate Principal Dr. Cindi Lowe said. "People need to be able to go to the bathroom, feel safe (and) not feel like they have to manage who else is with them. We don't want to have to follow young people into the bathroom, but as long as these behaviors are happening, it's leading us to be more and more supervisory."

To flush out student misbehavior, the bathrooms were renovated in 2016, equipped with open entrances so that faculty can keep an eye, or nose, on things, along with hall monitors.

Subsequently, the administration offered e-hall passes beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, according to CCHS Associate Principal Dr. Summer Smith. More recently, hall monitors were stationed in the hallways.

"One of the solutions was the hall monitors. They made a huge difference," Smith said. "(The bathrooms) are still not great, so that's the kicker. But, there's a noticeable monitoring. We are able to stay on top of certain student behaviors with their help."

Left: BATHROOM VANDALISM: Clarke Central High School custodian Pamela Harris poses in the East Wing second floor bathroom on March 26. Harris expressed frustration over the destruction that some students cause in the school bathrooms. "(Students) took all the soap dispensers off, they broke them off. On my floor, first floor, I know some broke off down there," Harris said. "They're doing it just to have fun. They're not doing it because the bathroom is so bad that they can't go in there, because it's not. We have come a long ways to get 'em up to par, so I'm not understanding why they keep going in there and doing what they do in there." Photo by Aza Khan

Right: CUSTODIAN'S CLEANING STRUGGLE: Clarke Central High School custodian Blanca Lynch cleans the cafeteria bathroom mirrors on March 30. In response to the conditions of the CCHS bathrooms, CCHS Associate Principal Dr. Cindi Lowe expressed frustration with the workload of custodians. "Are we aware of it? Yes. Do (we) listen to their complaints? Yes. Are we trying to work on their complaints? Absolutely," Lowe said. "I feel terrible that they're having to do that and we're trying to work on it because it's additional work for them, additional frustration, additional stress." Photo by Lucas Donnelly

THE IMPACTS

The impact of students' treatment of the bathrooms can be felt around the clock.

For CCHS custodian Blanca Lynch, who works the first shift, the conditions of the bathrooms can be an unsafe environment and add to her workload. While Lynch feels a rapport with the students, she also expresses frustration with the destructive behaviors of students that make her job more difficult.

"I would find (toilet paper) in the bushes, toilet paper everywhere. Like a college party happened," Lynch said. "They would take all of the (soap dispensers) out and pour them on the floor, and that was dangerous."

For CCHS custodian Pamela Harris, who works the second shift, seeing what is left of the bathrooms from a day's worth of mistreatment impacts her optimism.

"It makes me feel like we ain't getting nowhere," Harris said. "(Students) just hang out in the bathrooms, they throwing whole rolls of tissues in there, throwing food in there, and they're being real bad in the bathrooms. (Students) see us every day cleaning those bathrooms. They smell them every day. They knows we clean 'em, it's just, they don't care."

Through requiring hall passes for bathroom use and placing hall monitors near the bathrooms, the administration's increased surveillance of student behavior in bathrooms has had mixed impacts, according to CCHS senior Da'oud De Lane.

"The administration is creating stricter regulations for people who can use the bathroom, and I guess that's a benefit to track down to see who's doing what," De Lane said. "But I think (it's) definitely damaging for students because

they're breaking the trust between students and teachers."

According to CCHS sophomore Se'Kayia Miller, while the administration's surveillance approach may help track down and discourage misbehavior, a hostile environment is still present, causing some students to feel uncomfortable entering crowded bathrooms.

"Most of my friends, when they (need to) go to the restroom, they just hold it because they don't want to go in there," Miller said. "They don't want to be bothered or they don't want anybody to ask them if they have anything to smoke or anything like that."

Miller lays responsibility for improving the state of the bathrooms squarely on students.

"People just need to learn proper hygiene and how to actually keep things clean. Then I feel like bathrooms would be way, way, way better, truthfully, because our bathrooms are disgusting," Miller said. "People don't care because it's school bathrooms, but if you're going to the bathroom and can't use it, you would get irritated."

-- PAMELA HARRIS,
CCHS custodian

CCHS bus driver and hall monitor Nakeida Johnson has worked in the Clarke County School District for 16 years, four of which as a hall monitor. Johnson's job requires that she regularly interact with students.

"We will knock on the door, but of course, it's a delayed reaction because they weren't expecting to get caught. That's when they're dispersing and doing whatever they do to make sure it's not found," Johnson said. "(There's) more disrespect to us as hall monitors/bus drivers. Our job is to make sure that they're not in there doing those things or whatever. (Students will be like), 'Oh you're just a bus driver, whatever.' We're also adults, and we also know right and wrong."



THE SOLUTIONS

According to Lowe, the administration's approach to combating negative behavior in the bathrooms is being vigilant with following hall pass procedures and responding firmly.

"We have to become really proactive in following our own procedures about bathroom passes and how long they're out and how many kids leave a room at the same time," Lowe said. "We also have to be trying to establish a culture and mindset that we're proud of who we are, what we have, what our facilities are, and we want to take care of them."

Regarding the school's handling of misbehavior, Johnson highlights the school's zero-tolerance policy in addressing misbehavior.

"As far as how (the administration) has been handling it, when they do catch them and they do find the evidence to support what we already know was going on, they're making examples out of them— zero tolerance," Johnson said. "I'm with the repercussions of what's going to happen if you're caught. I'm loving it, I'm for it."

However, while Johnson praises the zero-tolerance policy, she also acknowledges its potential harm and the importance of compassion.

"A lot of times I'll go in and I'm just like, 'You know I'm supposed to report you, right?' But I'm just like, 'Just come on out here, just come on and go to class. Whatever it is, put it up.' So it's more times than I can recall where I actually save them versus reporting it," Johnson said. "I know kids need to be at school because I'm a parent first, but some of them you can get to and some of them you can't. You're not going to be able to save everybody."

Due to past student misuse, the West Wing bathrooms have been locked to help limit the number of supervised bathrooms in the school and has proven to be an effective solution.

"I'm pretty upfront with my students when they ask about the (West Wing) bathrooms. It was a drugstore, and we would report it and nothing would happen," CCHS foreign language department teacher Erica Cascio said.

"Since the bathrooms have been closed, (the) hall is quieter. We have fewer

students milling, there's less of a scent of marijuana in the air, less traffic in general on the hall. It's better for our students to maintain the learning environment. (Locking the bathrooms is) not a perfect solution, but it's a solution."

"We also have to be trying to establish a culture and mindset that we're proud of who we are, what we have, what our facilities are, and we want to take care of them."

-- DR. CINDI LOWE,
CCHS Associate Principal



Featured: STUDENT LEADERSHIP: Clarke Central High School Senior Army Instructor Lieutenant Colonel David McMickle poses in front of the men's bathroom in the JROTC building on March 30. McMickle's approach to maintaining quality facilities has centered around student leaders and responsibility. "I'll have a male and a female in all of our blocks, and at the end of their class period, they have to go through (the bathrooms) and look at it and fix (any) problems before they're allowed to leave the building," McMickle said. "So, if I spill something, the students, the leaders, go in there and get a mop bucket filled up, (we) put sign out says wet floor, but we don't call a custodian over here to clean up after stuff that you did. That's like your parent cleaning up behind you because your room is not clean, and that's part of what we teach here." Photo by Lucas Donnelly





For CCHS Senior Army Instructor Lieutenant Colonel David McMickle, the solution is setting higher expectations for students to take care of school infrastructure.

“We have the catchy acronyms, the GLADS (are GRADS). I think a continued emphasis on that could inspire students,” McMickle said. “That, to me, is part of what I’m teaching my students. We teach anything from respect to the flag, conflict management, drugs, alcohol. But also what we expect when we graduate from high school, what society at large expects from us, I think this is part of what we should be doing as a school, (as a) community.”

One of the obstacles administrators have encountered when searching for solutions is that if misbehavior is eliminated in one area, similar activities are likely to pop up somewhere else in the school. De Lane believes that this explains why, despite some success, no solution has worked completely.

“I feel like the reality side of it is that this is a school, and that we do have stuff that we need to enforce. And I feel like obviously enforcing not smoking in the hallways, they’re gonna smoke in the bathroom or they’re gonna smoke

under the stairs or whatever,” De Lane said. “So I feel like it’s a normal thing to expect when you deal with teenagers and boundaries. You say no to this, they’re going to try to do something else.”

McMickle’s approach to keeping the bathrooms clean places the responsibility on the students, emphasizing their role in being part of the solution.

“(This is clearly) something that needs to be improved at Clarke Central, so not only do we need to identify a problem, but I think it’s important for students to be part of the solution.”

-- LIEUTENANT COLONEL DAVID MCMICKLE,
CCHS Senior Army Instructor

“(This is clearly) something that needs to be improved at Clarke Central, so not only do we need to identify a problem, but I think it’s important for students to be part of the solution,” McMickle said. “If (we) put the onus on the students to make a difference, you guys can do that.”

Similar to McMickle, Lowe feels that a mentality shift is crucial in preventing misuse of the bathrooms.

“We have to make kids feel that being in class is far more important than hanging out in a bathroom and all those things

were things that we’re constantly trying to look at how to improve on,” Lowe said. “It is a very multifaceted, complex problem because as long as we can’t directly supervise what’s happening, it has to be a choice that kids are making to do the right thing and we have work to do in making them want to make that choice.”

Above: SHIFTING MINDSETS: Clarke Central High School Associate Principal Dr. Cindi Lowe talks at an ODYSSEY Media Group press conference in Room 231 on March 29. Lowe emphasized the importance of shifting the mindset of students surrounding the bathrooms. “We have to become really proactive in following our own (bathroom) procedures. We also have to try to establish a culture and mindset (where) we’re proud of who we are, what we have and what our facilities are, and we want to take care of them,” Lowe said. “We have to constantly be doing that as well. And we still have to be really on top of monitoring the bathrooms (like) we’re trying to do now. But we also need the help of students and people that are in the bathrooms.” Photo by Isabelle Duncan