

When I first came to Lafayette (12 years ago) there were almost no after school activities offered. Mr. T was running a cross country program but there was no basketball or step team. The building was pretty much locked down at 3:30. Not even the playgrounds were used much. Except for the Lafayette Aftercare Program and a few students working with a teacher, the building was empty.

Then a few programs began to be developed. These were small groups with parents offering such things as knitting or working in our garden. Fees were not charged and since everything was happening while I was still on duty I did not ask for building use agreements. I knew the parents and where they could be found if there were any issues about the activities. Girls Scouts, both Brownies and Daisies were next with some after school dates as well as some Saturday events. Mathcounts lost its home at UDC so we opened the school on Saturday for those competitions. I served as the security collateral, opening and closing the building and staying on site while the events occurred.

The last few years have completely changed the situation. We now have about 15 outside vendors who want to have programs at the school such as Mad Science and Interact Story Theater. They charge fees and pay their employees. They are not volunteers. I do not know much about these programs. I don't hire their staff. I don't know what kind of screening process they use. Just that they want to use space in the school and parents want their children to participate. The foreign language program continues with two parents keeping it running. They also work independently of the school hiring 10 part-time employees to provide the instruction. And more programs arrive every year. Requests come to use the school almost weekly.

I talked to the realty office last spring about this new group of users and was told I really needed a building use agreement from any group that wants to use the building. Nothing about this was new. This is a long standing DC policy. I had just not asked for this in the past when I was dealing with parents and onetime events with groups that just needed a space. But these groups are different. They now want to run money making enterprises at the school.

While the rent issue seems to be getting a lot of attention, that is not the section of the building use agreement that I am interested in. Lafayette does not see one dime of any rent that is paid. It goes to the DC treasurer. The section of a building use agreement that I am concerned about is the part of the agreement that makes sure that

groups screen their adults and have insurance in case something happens while the children are in their program. The realty office informed me that without that paperwork on file I am personally liable for anything that could happen while a group is in the building. I do not want that level of personal liability so I am asking every group to complete the use agreement. No exceptions.

I can ask that all security and custodial fees be waived which saves groups a boat load of money but I cannot waive the rental fee. Girl Scouts are being charged nothing since they charge no more than a membership fee and screen their leaders but the groups that charge participation fees are being asked to pay rent, have insurance and complete background checks of their employees. I should have been doing this all along. This is not a new policy. To not follow it means I am at personal risk. I know who my teachers are and we have to be finger printed and have a new background check each time we renew our certification. The Lafayette teachers who coach sports do this yearly. Shouldn't the people who come into the school and work with students also have to meet some sort of standard? I really don't want to discourage enrichment activities at the school. Many children enjoy these immensely. But I do feel that I have taken this position this year to simply ensure the safety of the students at Lafayette.