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The Open School Door

A Series of Articles on Clinton County Schools and Their Problems

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How do laws affect schools? Within what limits do schools have control over children within the schools?

Under our American law system schools are able to make any reasonable rules and regulations needed to provide the best possible educational system as the citizens desire within any given community.

In most cases such as attendance, conduct, program of courses and school activities there isn't too much contention over the right of schools legally to control their operations. It is in the borderline areas that problems may arise.

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ONE OF these borderline areas was recently the matter of students driving of cars to school. Until the recent ruling by the state attorney general, the schools had no right to have any real legal control over student transportation so long as pupils got to school and in classes on time. We might add here this this seems to be still a great administrative problem to regulate.

It might prove of some interest to see some of the areas in which Michigan schools do have control:

1. It is compulsory for young people, 6-16, to attend school. However, in extreme cases, students may be suspended. If a student is suspended they must be referred to juvenile court which, in turn, must provide other

educational arrangements.

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2. **SCHOOL** systems have a right to decide what school a student must attend unless the parents wishes to pay for some other educational arrangements acceptable to the local board of education.

3. The local elected board of education shall be within state legal limits—the legal basis of the operation of the local school systems—and shall make any final legal decisions.

4. In matters of student dress and conduct, the board has complete control. Usually, however, only extreme actions or dress come under legal consideration. An example of this would be that most schools have regulations concerning the wearing of girls' slacks and the continued use of foul language by students.

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5. **CONCERNING** school supplies the law states that parents must send the child to school equipped with the proper textbooks and supplies unless financially unable to do so, then other arrangements must be made. This could include locks for lockers, appropriate apparel for gym classes, etc.

6. The problem "corporal punishment" often comes up but is legal in extreme cases as long as no lasting harm or pain is inflicted. Certainly, "corporal punishment" should be a last resort in an extreme case and really very

seldom helps a problem but drives it "underground."

7. Schools have jurisdiction over children while on the way to or from school, the same as while in school.

8. Under a more recent law all new students in a Michigan school must furnish a statement from a physician to the effect the youngster has been immunized against smallpox, diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and poliomyelitis. Only those with proven religious objection are excused from this law.

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AS WE CAN see in this case the schools have the legal basis to control the general health of their students.

We have mentioned only a few of the laws the citizens of Michigan expect their school to enforce and they can be changed any time the citizens so desire in a democratic nation.

Be sure and look for the facts and details about the Bath school system next week and other school systems in later issues.