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Sketch draws suspension for Williamstown senior

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MONROE TWP. A high school senior is fighting his suspension after he was sent home last week for creating a stick figure animation of one character shooting the other in the head.

The basic drawing was created as an assignment for a graphic design class last Monday morning at Williamstown High School.

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The class began about an hour after the shooting massacre in Norris Hall on Virginia Tech's campus.

The 18-year-old, referred to only as D.K. in the affidavit filed in U.S. District Court in Camden on Monday, is claiming his freedom of speech was violated.

He's asking a federal judge to require Monroe Township School District to allow him back in class and pay for his attorney fees.

School Superintendent Robert Terrill said the student was suspended Thursday "for

communicating some terroristic actions on the computer" and would have to pass a psychological exam before returning to school.

Terrill said the district's response was "standard procedure." He would not comment on whether or not the deadly shooting at Virginia Tech had any effect on the administration's decision.

"When somebody communicates about shooting people, we have to look at this seriously," Terrill said. "That's why we removed the youngster from the school. I'm sure what happened at Virginia Tech makes you more aware, but we do this any time it happens."

Although D.K. has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and receives in-class special education support, he is enrolled in the gifted and talented program and is ranked in the top 10 percent of his class, according to court papers.

A flight commander in the school's junior ROTC program, the student also takes classes at Gloucester County College.

D.K. claims that the animation wasn't complete when he showed it to his teacher, Christine Dailey, Tuesday morning.

"He wanted to add details of the bullet not actually harming its target but rather being deflected or destroyed," the document states.

Dailey told him the drawing was inappropriate and reported the incident to the administration, according to court documents.

Only the student and the teacher saw the animation and it "never had any kind of disruptive effect on the school environment," the statement says.

"I think it's outrageous, given his background and what the picture looks like," D.K.'s lawyer, Jamie Epstein said. "I'm confident a jury would agree with me."

D.K. is asking the court to require the district to clear his record of any improper conduct relating to the incident, provide him with two hours per day of tutoring until he returns to school. and pay the

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attorney fees and costs.

Superintendent Terrill referred additional questions to the district's attorney, John Aramano, who could not be reached for comment.

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