***Case Study The Case of the Powdered Aspirin***

As principal of Medford Elementary School, Charlene Daniels was quite concerned about the rumors that several students had been bringing powdered aspirin to school and “huffing” the powder in the restroom after lunch and after recess. At the last faculty meeting, Charlene had discussed her concerns with the faculty and asked them to be more vigilant than usual as students left the cafeteria and returned from recess. It was this vigilance that led sixth-grade teacher Ralph Smith to her office. “Ms. Daniels, I just saw sixth-grader Lasiandra Davis go into the girls’ restroom next to the cafeteria. I just caught a glimpse, but I am sure I saw a brown paper bag in her hand. I could not follow her into the restroom, but I sent Mrs. Hale to go check.”

Mrs. Hale came out of the restroom just as Charlene and Ralph arrived holding a brown paper bag covered with a white powdery substance. “I found this in the trash can under some papers. When I arrived Lasiandra Davis was the only one in the restroom. She saw me searching the trash can and left the restroom before I could stop her.”

Charlene immediately placed the brown bag with the white substance in a plastic container, called the police, and started her own investigation. The investigation lasted all afternoon, interrupted several classes, and caused several students to miss significant time in the classroom. All five of the sixth-grade teachers spent considerable time talking to their students trying to get more information. By the end of the day, Charlene was fairly convinced that Lasiandra had indeed been in possession of the paper bag. She based her conclusions on a couple of students’ testimony that they had seen Lasiandra with a paper bag right before lunch, Lasiandra’s teacher’s observation that Lasiandra had seem “agitated” after lunch the past several days, and Mr. Smith’s belief that he had seen Lasiandra take a brown paper bag into the restroom.

Charlene called Lasiandra to the office and confronted her with the allegations. Lasiandra denied that she had brought powdered aspirin to school. She said that she was not in possession of a paper bag after lunch as Mr. Smith had said, and that she knew nothing about the bag found in the trash. Charlene informed Lasiandra that she was suspending her for 5 days for “disturbing instruction.” She based this finding on the fact that all sixth-grade classes had been disrupted, that all five of the sixth-grade teachers had participated in the investigation rather than teach their classes, and that she as principal spent all afternoon investigating the incident.

Lasiandra’s mother and father were not happy with Charlene’s decision. Both parents had called Superintendent Johanson. Charlene’s parents and the superintendent had agreed to meet the next day to appeal the suspension.