

The Education System Loves Promoting Anti-Bullying... Until Homeschoolers Do the Same

For many American parents, the idea that their child is talented enough to land a small role in a famous Broadway musical would be enough to burst a few buttons. But imagine that this same child went to Broadway intending to try for a small role and walks away with the lead instead. Now that's liable to make parents, teachers, and many others euphoric.

That's just what happened to 12-year-old Lilian Hardy, only Hardy's Cinderella story happened on the other side of the pond in London. According to [The Guardian](#), Lilian "auditioned for an ensemble role in the West End musical [Matilda] but ended up landing the lead, and performed at the Cambridge Theatre in London until last September."

But there was just one glitch. Lilian, you see, is homeschooled, and her theatre fling appears to have been one of the extracurricular activities she chose to pursue. When the Royal Shakespeare Company applied for a performance license for Lilian, the local city council got involved and determined that Lilian needed to enroll in a real school "or prove that she is receiving an adequate education." [According to her parents](#),

"[T]hey have sent ample evidence of Lilian's progress to the local authority, including samples of her work and details of her studies, which they say prove she is being suitably educated. But the council has said it is not enough and is seeking to arrange a meeting with the authority's home education adviser, or evidence provided by a third-party

education professional."

But Lilian isn't the only homeschooler who recently made the news for receiving flak from the powers that be. Over in Norway, authorities went after another 12 year old, a homeschooler named Kai Kristiansen.

Kai's parents, a Canadian and Norwegian, began homeschooling him after he endured bullying in a traditional school. But the bullying followed him home when the school reported his absence to the Norwegian equivalent of Child Protective Services. Kai's mother [recorded what happened](#) next in the video below:

A child's advocacy organization explained that the seizure of Kai was not due to his parents being accused of "violence, maltreatment, drugs or sexual abuse." Rather, "the only reason provided in the court documents for taking the son was because he was homeschooled."

Both of these cases are curious because they involve an issue that schools – and even whole countries – regularly advocate for: anti-bullying. In the U.S., an entire [government program](#) exists to prevent the ill-treatment of children in school. This is similar to the [European Antibullying Network](#) (EAN), which [seeks to develop](#) a "common antibullying tool for schools in Europe."

So why is it that schools purport to encourage anti-bullying efforts, yet become the bullies themselves when parents try to promote the health and well-being of their child? If the education system was truly committed to doing the best for children, wouldn't it be happy if parents were taking action on their own and seeking the formation of a happy, healthy, talented, and well-adjusted child?

But because they're not, one has to wonder if such devotion to

anti-bullying is simply lip-service. Perhaps, after all, schools are more interested in keeping their charges in-house and under the control of the system rather than fostering a student's intellectual growth and freedom.

[Image Credit: Diego Grez (CC BY 3.0)]