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**FBI may join probe of mock lynching;
Valdosta students suspended for act using black doll****BYLINE:** JINGLE DAVIS**SOURCE:** AJC**SECTION:** Metro News; Pg. 1B**LENGTH:** 491 words

Lowndes County High School officials are asking the FBI to investigate the mock lynching of a black-painted **Barbie doll** on campus as a possible hate crime.

Three white students --- a junior and two freshmen repeating the ninth grade --- have been suspended in the incident, said Principal Ann Rodgers.

Racist graffiti was also found in a boys' bathroom at the Valdosta school, where about 25 percent of the 2,750 students are black.

Superintendent Steve Smith said the FBI was being asked to investigate because school officials wanted to be sure of doing the right thing. "We're trying to follow the proper procedure for handling the incident," he said.

Rodgers said, however, that she thought students' actions reflected their immaturity and were not intended to intimidate or frighten black students.

"We've been trying to find out if there's some underlying cause, but I think these students were just trying to get attention," she said. "Students this age will do some ridiculous things for attention."

But Sabrina Bradley, whose 14-year-old daughter, Santana, is a freshman, said her daughter was frightened by the mock lynching. The Bradleys are black.

"She came home and told me a white boy had a **Barbie doll** painted black with a rope around its neck like he was **hanging the doll**," Bradley said. "It scared her. This is her first year in **high school**."

Superintendent Smith said he believed the incident was an isolated one.

"We've had no racially motivated incidents previously and do not believe this is a true reflection of our school," he said.

The school's investigation, he said, indicated the students planned the mock lynching on the school bus.

"It sounds as though they thought it would be something funny to do," he said. "We don't think it's funny. We're taking it very seriously."

Rodgers said the first black-painted **Barbie doll** was found last Wednesday **hanging** in a tree on campus where school buses unload.

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Other students quickly took the doll down and threw it away, she said.

On Thursday, the mock lynching was repeated. This time, students took the doll to school authorities.

During the subsequent investigation, the letters "KKK" were found on a wall in a boys' bathroom, now closed for repainting, Rodgers said.

Parents of the suspended students have cooperated fully with school officials, the principal said.

"The parents are appalled at [their children's] actions," she said.

School officials have asked student leaders, black and white, to be on the lookout for any other problems on campus, Rodgers said.

"We'll probably meet with the Student Council and plan some activities to make sure something like this never happens again," the principal said.

But Bradley said she and other black parents thought school officials should first punish the students involved more severely.

"If our black boys did something like this, they'd be put in jail," she said.

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