

May 7, 2019

Dear Mr. Grosso and Dr. Mutchler:

I am writing this letter so it may serve as a rebuttal to the letter I received from District 304 on April 22nd, that I have been informed will be placed in my personnel file. First, I am requesting that the letter be removed from my file. Failing that, I request that this letter be placed in my file alongside it. Your letter to me should be removed because I have done nothing that warrants a "letter of direction." Interestingly, the letter even states that there is no evidence to support the allegations that I violated any board policies. Although I did receive campaign materials in my GHS mailbox, I **did not know they were there**. I was not informed that they would be delivered in this manner and I certainly did not request that they be delivered in this manner.

I remember the day I was hired at Geneva 304, 13 years ago. It was possibly the proudest day of my life up to that point. Since then, I have done nothing but exemplary work for this district. In my 13 years at GHS I have been actively engaged in my profession in numerous ways. I have been a soccer coach, a speech team coach, Environmental Club sponsor and served on numerous committees. I started teaching AP Environmental Science in my second year of teaching and increased the program from one section to three sections. I have also been a GEA rep, traveled with students to Europe, and have served as the Activities Director for the past 8 years. As Activities Director, I have worked with every possible stakeholder in District 304- parents, administration, students, business owners, and faculty/staff. My interactions have always been positive and productive. Along with retaining the traditions of GHS that preceded me (such as Homecoming, Prom, and more), I have built new traditions (such as Winter Wonderland Week, the Activities Fair, and more). I brought back in-school pep rallies because I believe in the importance of shared experiences and fostering a sense of community. Needless to say, I have given this district my heart and soul. In addition, my most recent evaluation was "Excellent", and I have never been disciplined in any way by district or building administration.

I want to take this opportunity to review the circumstances of the investigation into me and some of my colleagues. An "informal complaint" launched a very formal and, I believe, intentionally intimidating process. I was given a mysterious email at almost 5 p.m. on a Friday evening informing me that I was the subject of a "fact-finding" mission that could result in disciplinary consequences. Having done nothing wrong, I was understandably confused. I was not informed as to what offense I had supposedly committed under an administrative opinion that such knowledge could possibly compromise the investigation. I was not interviewed by my administrator, but by a lawyer I had never met before. Once the investigation was complete, I was not even given the courtesy of a face-to-face conversation about the findings, but instead received an email and not one, but two, hard copies of the letter- one sent by certified mail. And this was all because I was the recipient of a **closed envelope** that I was not aware would be delivered in this manner, and that I did not request be delivered in this manner. It was not as though I had put any student or colleague in danger in any way. How can I be held responsible for this envelope showing up in my mailbox unexpectedly?

The investigation described above took approximately 3 weeks to resolve and countless tax dollars were spent in the process. In my opinion, it is an absurd response to a very minor issue. It could have been handled with a quick conversation between me and an administrator. I believe it is a thinly veiled attempt to harass me and discourage me from being the very thing we say we want our students to become- an engaged citizen.

I think back to the person I was approximately 13 years ago (almost to the day) when I got hired at District 304. I wonder how crestfallen that optimistic young teacher would have been to learn about the direction her district would eventually take. This year has been extremely hard on teachers and on the entire community. It would be in everyone's best interest to begin to heal and move on- but it becomes impossible when teachers are continually threatened and harassed. Please remove the letter from my file and refrain from treating teachers this way in the future.

Sincerely,

Emma Cole