

May 1, 2019

Dear Mr. Grosso and Dr. Mutchler,

Please consider this letter a rebuttal to and request for removal of the "Letter of Direction" I received from you on April 24, 2019 and that was placed in my personnel file.

At 4:54 p.m. on Friday, April 5, 2019 I received an email from Dr. Adam Law, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources indicating that I was the subject of an investigation for a possible disciplinary offense. I was given no indication whatsoever of what the offense may be related to. Understandably, I had a very distressing weekend where I wracked my brain wondering what I could have possibly done to subject myself to possible disciplinary action. For seventeen years I have been an exemplary employee and high school English teacher for this district. I have never been guilty of misconduct nor insubordination to any administrators, colleagues, students, or parents of this district. I am Nationally Board Certified and even renewed that certification last fall. I received an Excellent on my last evaluation and have never been found Needs Improvement on any evaluation for all seventeen years. I gave my time and dedication to the students of this district as newspaper advisor and teacher of media and journalism classes for nine years. I have been active in professional development and GEA for most of my career. I love my students and I love teaching. I could not imagine what I may have done wrong.

When pressed for further information, Dr. Law revealed only that the inquiry was related to an informal complaint about possible political activity that would violate Board Policy 3233. I was also informed that while Dr. Law would be present, a lawyer for the district would be doing the questioning and conducting the interview. I contend that both the lack of information provided to me to prepare for questioning and the formality of the proceedings far outweighed the severity of the informal complaint. This was especially true, since I did not conduct any political activity on district property, using district compensated time, nor using any district resources. My name was clearly brought up by mistake by the informant. The formality of the proceedings and manner in which I was made aware of them felt like intimidation and bullying from the district that I did not feel I deserved, nor was warranted for the situation. What should have easily been cleared up by an informal conversation with Dr. Law, turned into a formal interview conducted by the district lawyer for which I felt I needed GEA and IEA representation, delaying the interview further and increasing my anxiety.

At the interview on April 15<sup>th</sup>, I clearly explained I did not receive an envelop containing canvassing materials for the upcoming school board election. I have always been completely honest in all my dealings with this district. I was honest during my interview. I provided information about the canvassing I participated in on Saturday, March 30<sup>th</sup> which was completely within my legal rights and not in violation of Board Policy since it did not use any district resources and was not conducted during compensated time. I was then dismissed with no indication that my true words had absolved me from any wrong doing and had to wait until April

24<sup>th</sup>, the absolute last day contractually that the district could release its findings, to receive another email from Adam Law with the Letter of Direction attached. I was not even provided with the curtesy of a conversation in person or a phone call. Instead of being told I was found innocent of any wrong doing, I received a formal Letter of Direction, informed this document would be put in my personnel file for the remainder of my employment by the district, and also sent a hard copy via certified mail. All indications of a very formal result of an informal and unfounded complaint.

I object to the presence of a formal "Letter of Direction" that reads like a written warning when I was not found to be in violation of district policy, nor guilty of any wrong doing or discipline worthy activity. The strong language of the Letter of Direction stating that I "denied" receiving the materials in my school mailbox and "instead claiming materials [were] provided" at a neutral meeting place on the day of canvassing, while accurate, leaves me feeling as if my words were not 100% taken as fact, but instead interpreted by the lawyer, Dr. Law, and the Board of Education to be possibly false. Additionally, the conclusion of the Letter of Direction stating that there "was not sufficient evidence to suggest" I violated Board policy, while again accurate, implies that I may have violated the policy but there was just no evidence to prove it.

I have come away from this experience feeling disrespected and distrusted by my employers. It is extremely difficult to continue to feel optimistic and to "heal" the relationship between teachers and the Board of Education after a very difficult and disheartening school year to have it end with an excessively formal, expensive, and time-consuming investigation. The outcome is unacceptable. I have not violated Board policy, but I will have a constant and formal reminder sitting in my personnel file which suggests that the "lack of evidence" does not exonerate me from any violation. Please remove the Letter of Direction from my file.

Sincerely,  
Sara L. Salvato  
Nationally Board Certified English Teacher  
Geneva High School