

Board of Education Colleagues,

I apologize in advance for bringing this issue to your attention, because of the damage and distraction it may cause to the focus and priorities we have set, together, for our school district. Yet, I cannot remain silent, in the midst of such injustice. Doing what is right, just and ethical is more important, to me, than quietly accepting recent actions, just to maintain my employment at a school and district that I have wholeheartedly embraced and have come to love. Our work needs to be focused on the kids we serve; not on creating distraction and fear.

I request an opportunity to address the full Board, at an upcoming meeting, regarding my recent disciplinary measures, which I feel are not in alignment with Board Policy 1139 – School Administrator Discipline. Between August 31st and September 1st, Executive Team members chose to put three current TCAPS principals on unpaid suspensions. This is, to my knowledge, absolutely unprecedented. I am also asking for an immediate injunction so that any penalties against me are held in abeyance until the Board of Education has the opportunity to meet with me.

I have been informed that I will have a 5-day (non-consecutive), unpaid suspension and have been placed on a vague Individualized Development Plan, because of my lack of planning and follow-up communication around the July removal of the Rock at West Senior High. This suspension is the second harshest penalty imposed on a TCAPS Principal in the past decade (and possibly longer). I will absolutely own and apologize for my mistake. However, I can provide evidence that this penalty has not been applied in accordance with Board Policy 1139 and stands to erode the morale, trust and collegiality, that we have worked for hard to establish in this district.

This disciplinary action was decided upon by our Executive Team members, was delivered to me by Associate Superintendent Parker, and was upheld on appeal to Superintendent Soma, Associate Superintendent Parker, and Dr. Cindy Berck (although they did offer to remove the IDP consequence and consider removing record of this incident from my file if I have two more years of good performance).

I look forward to the opportunity to present and discuss my concerns with you, the members of the Traverse City Area Public Schools Board of Education. I am not requesting a closed session, but would be willing to meet in that format, if the Board prefers.

**Thank you for your consideration,
Joe Esper, Principal
West Senior High School**