

JEA P. STREET
COUNCILMAN, TENTH DISTRICT



LOUIS L. REDDING CITY COUNTY BUILDING
800 N. French Street, 8th Floor
Wilmington, Delaware 19801
(302) 395-8350
Fax: (302) 395-8385
Email: Jpstreet@co.new-castle.de.us

COUNCIL

Memorandum

To: All recipients of the March 18, 2013 letter to Mr. Fredrick W. Polaski from Jea P. Street

From: Jea P. Street 

Date: 3/19/2013

Re: Revised Letter

The above referenced letter has been revised as follows:

1. The date of the OCR letter has been changed in three places to the correct date of December 14, 2012
2. On the second page, the word gull has been changed to gall.

The revisions are underlined.

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March 18, 2013

Revised March 19, 2013

Mr. Frederick W. Polaski, President
Christina Board of Education
600 N. Lombard Street
Wilmington, Delaware 19801

Dear Mr. Polaski,

I write to express my concern about the Christina School District's (the District) position as reported in the attached March 14, 2013 News Journal article. I am gravely concerned about the District's action in the instant matter and the continued actions of the District that are doing irreparable harm to African American children in the District in general and African American children in the City of Wilmington in particular. The current situation along with other recent actions and determinations by the District call the competence and integrity of the District Superintendent and the Christina Board of Education into serious question.

In the instant matter, it appears that the District is yet again acting in bad faith by not adhering to an agreement made with State Officials regarding Race to the Top funding. In my view, the District's apparent willingness to put **\$2.3 million in jeopardy** is a breach of promise to the effected schools and teachers impacted by this decision. The District has a dismal record of retaining teachers in the high poverty segregated schools that the District intentionally created without permission from the State Board of Education beginning in 2004. Regrettably, the District now stands ready to destroy the minimal progress that has been made in these schools with the assistance of Race to The Top Funding. This decision flies in the face of the generally accepted important educational standard of **continuity of staff**.

This is one of several decisions recently made by the Superintendent and The Christina School Board that exemplify the **epitome of bad faith and poor judgment**.

On December 14, 2012 the United States Department of Education Office For Civil Rights (OCR) determined that the District had discriminated against African American children in discipline "District wide at each school level" (December 14, 2012 letter page 9). In making this determination OCR stated that;

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"The District's policies and practices afforded decision makers broad discretion in interpreting and applying provisions of the code, including applying penalties in excess of the provisions outlined in the code, which contributed to the resulting disparities" (December 14, 2012 letter page 18)

In the resolution agreed upon by the District and OCR the District was required to;

"Designate an employee to serve as the "District's Discipline Supervisor" (Resolution page 4) and at the same time the District was required to "identify a District office administrator who will address complaints from parents, guardians, students, and others regarding the implementation of the District's disciplinary policies" (resolution page 5)

In response to this, the District had the unmitigated gall to make the most influential decision maker regarding discipline during the investigative period, the Discipline Supervisor. In addition, the District made this same person, one of two people designated to address complaints. This preposterous decision destines the resolution for failure and guarantees continuation of the District's modus operandi of ongoing discrimination that I have been complaining about since November 17, 2005.

During the summer of 2012, the three obstructionists on the Christina School Board voted twice not to allow Mr. George Evans, Esquire to fill the vacancy on the Christina School Board. Although Mr. Evans had held that position for almost thirty years and was the only applicant for it, the obstructionist refused to seat him on the Board. A Court Order was required to seat him and to assure that the City of Wilmington has a representative on the Board. I am among several leaders in the Wilmington Community who believe that this decision was race based in a futile attempt to keep Mr. Evans from continuing to speak up and speak out for African American children as he had effectively done for so many years.

As a result of these and other things, it is my fervent hope that Dr. Williams and the three obstructionists on the Christina Board will resign from their positions immediately. Any one of the concerns set forth above are good cause by themselves to call for these resignations. Collectively, the matters of fiscal impropriety, broken promises and bad faith, ongoing discrimination and exclusionary race driven practices must be viewed as **weapons of mass educational destruction** and dealt with accordingly.

Sincerely,


Jea P. Street, Councilman
New Castle County, District 10

PC: The Honorable Jack Markell, Governor, State of Delaware
Ms. Wendella P. Fox, Director, Philadelphia Office, United States, Department of Education
Dr. Mark Murphy, Secretary of Education, State of Delaware
All Members of the Delaware State Board of Education
Dr. Freeman Williams, Superintendent, Christina School District
All Members of the Christina Board of Education
The Honorable Thomas P. Gordon, County Executive, New Castle County Delaware
All Members of New Castle County Council
The Honorable Dennis P. Williams, Mayor, City of Wilmington
All Members of Wilmington City Council
All Members of the Delaware General Assembly Representing the City of Wilmington
All Members of the Delaware Black Caucus
Mr. Richard Smith, Delaware State Conference of Branches, NAACP
Mr. Charles Brittingham, Wilmington Branch, NAACP
Mr. Gary Hayman, Newark Branch, NAACP

State rejects Christina's teacher bonus proposal

by **Nichole Dobo**
The News Journal

The state Department of Education rejected the Christina School District's proposed alternative to the state teacher bonus program, according to a letter sent Tuesday to district officials.

This volleys the issue back to Christina's court, with millions in grant money at stake. The district stands to lose more than 2.3 million in Race to the Top funds and has two weeks to re-

spond before action on the money would be taken by the state.

The department first warned Christina that it might lose the grant money last month. The disagreement centers on efforts to improve staffing issues at struggling schools.

Christina Superintendent Freeman Williams said he was a "little disappointed" by the state's rejection of the local bonus program, but he believes the

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Bonus: Teacher attrition an issue

Continued from Page B1

district has not done anything that should have put its grant money in jeopardy. The district had submitted a bonus plan that would give \$1,000 yearly to educators rated effective.

Earlier this year the district declined to participate in the state-run teacher bonus program that awards up to \$20,000 over two years to teachers rated highly effective.

Christina officials will review feedback from the department, Williams said, but he could not be specific on what might come next because that is still being researched.

"We are doing our due diligence ... and we are really examining what our options are," he said.

The school board will meet in public next week to decide how the district will respond, Williams said. The deadline is March 29.

The Department of Education says in 2011 the

district agreed in writing to be a part of the state's bonus program, and that if it does not do so - or create an acceptable local alternative to it - the district will lose its grant money.

"This is about making good on promises made to parents and students," said Delaware Secretary of Education Mark Murphy.



Mark Murphy

low-performing schools. In 10 of the highest-needs schools in the district, about a quarter of teachers who started in the 2007-2008 school year were there five years later, according to the Department of Education letter sent Tuesday to Christina officials.

"While this could be attributed to several fac-

tors, CSD's attrition rate in its high-need schools during that five-year period was significantly higher than that of all other high-need schools in Delaware," the letter said.

Schools taking part in the state's bonus program had a lower attrition rate than Christina, according to the March 12 letter.

Union President Dave Davi, of the Christina Education Association, said last month that he believes the state's program is flawed because it relies too heavily on student test data to award bonuses. He said that he was willing to "draw a line in the sand" on the issue.

Christina School Board member Elizabeth Scheinberg said that the district and the state have a philosophical difference of opinion on how to best solve the problem of retaining staff at struggling schools. She believes the district's plan meets the requirements in the language cited by the state as its lever to withhold mon-

ey from Christina.

Other districts have declined to take part in the bonus program, but Christina, because it had agreed to the program, is the only one that has attracted a threat to withhold millions in funding over the issue.

The state has cited this phrase as the reason it is singling out Christina for possible grant revocation: "The District will also align resources as well as the plan for implementation with the State sponsored incentive assistance program scheduled for implementation in 2012." This wording was approved by the district and state in June 2011. District leadership has changed since then. There is a new superintendent and a new local leader of the Delaware State Education Association.

Contact Nichole Dobo at 324-2281 or ndobo@delawareonline.com. On Twitter @NicholeDobo.