

Greetings Board of School Directors,

Thank you for the opportunity to lead Jenkintown Elementary School for these past three years. As I conclude my 36th year in public education, I have to say that being at Jenkintown is the perfect end to my career.

This community, the students, and especially the faculty, are some of the best I have had the privilege to be associated with...I am happy to retire at such a high point.

I would be remiss, however, if I did not share part of the reason I am retiring at this time. While wanting to spend quality time with my family is certainly a reason for my decision, as with any profession, people do not leave jobs, they leave people. I have had the fortunate experience of working under many superintendents, both as a teacher and administrator. Two stand out as being exceptional: Dr. Christopher Adams, (Assistant Superintendent, Hempfield School District, and Dr. Rick Dunlap, Interim Superintendent, Coatesville Area School District). Their servant leadership, their vision, and especially the manner in which they delegated responsibility to their building leaders had a positive lasting impression on me. I have tried to emulate them as I led by their example.

I bring this to your attention, because what I am about to share are firsthand examples of my experiences. The level of micromanaging, lack of transparency, and sometimes deceitful actions of our current superintendent made it difficult for me to do my job to the best of my ability. Here are only a few examples: In terms of micromanaging, I have never worked under a superintendent that dictates teacher placements, room assignments, and even student placements within classes. During my 2nd year at JES, I wanted to move a student from one kindergarten classroom to another. I was told emphatically, no...I may not move that student. The teacher was struggling in the classroom, and a change would have helped the student. The teacher subsequently resigned about three weeks later, and then I was told I could move the student. How is this best for our students? Additionally, I was directed to move teachers with very little input, yet was told, "It is your building so you should take responsibility for these decisions." I have no problem taking responsibility for my decisions on where to place teachers...my issue is that I did not have any say in the decisions. This is common with our superintendent. She makes unilateral decisions, then tells us, (the administrative team), that this was a "team decision" when in fact it was her decision alone.

As the superintendent, she has every right to make any decision she wants, and as an administrative team, we do not have to like her decisions, but we have to support them. I

understand this, but we (the admin team) do not like that she makes us say it was our decisions...this is unethical.

Another example of her micromanaging is when she told me that I am not allowed to have any students of color in my office for disciplinary reasons, despite the fact that a student of color may require discipline. This makes it very difficult for a principal to run a safe and orderly school.

In terms of lack of transparency, we rarely know where our superintendent is when she is not in the building. The rest of the Act 93 team shares with everyone when we might be out, yet the superintendent does not. This poses a safety concern considering if there was an emergency, we don't know where she is. Often, we try calling her and do not get through initially. Rarely do we even know if she is going to be out or when she simply leaves early without letting any of the Act 93 team know. A perfect example of this is when I wanted to let her know I was going to attend the PSERS retirement seminar on March 27th. She was absent from school that day, nothing was in AESOP, and none of the Act 93 group knew she was going to be out. I had to call her on Friday, March 28th to let her know I was retiring and she did not take my call.

She did call back about 30 minutes later, letting me know she was in Boston. Additionally, when she has told us she is going to be out, it is a challenge to believe her as she tells us she is attending a Superintendents* conference. This year alone, she has "attended" five such conferences. Last summer I got reprimanded for taking two consecutive weeks off, (which she approved prior the end of the school year), yet she doesn't have the courtesy to let her administrative team know when she is going to be out? The rest of the Act 93 group is very purposeful about letting each other know when we will be out as we understand one of us being absent puts an additional burden on the rest of the team.

In terms of deceitful actions some of what has transpired could even be considered unethical. For example, when I originally interviewed at Jenkintown in the spring of 2021 she actually gave me the questions for the interview over the phone prior to the interview. While this surprised me, thought it might be standard procedure for Jenkintown.

When I did not get the position, she told me that the board "wanted someone who was gay and understood DEI firsthand". Another deceitful circumstance dealt with teacher placements. I was told where to move teachers in an attempt to get them to either quit or retire.

The last major concern I have is with her fiscal irresponsibility. I have lobbied for additional teachers every year I have been here, only to be told there aren't any funds to accommodate that request. I believe having three teachers in every grade in the elementary school will strengthen our program, as teachers will not need to switch grades every year.

Instead, they can become experts in their grade and support our students more thoroughly. During my tenure as principal, four teachers have left the elementary school who were at the top of the pay scale. They were replaced with two 1st year teachers, and two long term substitutes. The district realized over \$50,000 savings on each of these placements. I am told we don't have the funds to hire any additional teachers, so where did the extra money go?

Personally, I believe teachers have a more direct and positive impact on student growth. I know other positions across the district have also not been replaced (one classroom teacher, multiple instructional assistants), while other positions were filled with teachers at a much lower cost. If we truly want to do what is best, why are we reducing our instructional team and building our administrative team? Lastly, why did the district hire my replacement at over \$16,000 more than my current salary, although he has 10 years less experience than I. These are but a few examples of fiscal irresponsibility that continues to hurt our students in the short term as well as in future years.

There are so many incredible facets about this district, and I truly will miss my faculty and fellow Act 93 team partners. I can honestly say that as of last September, retirement was not even on my radar. I only looked into the possibility of retiring because of the micromanaging and unethical leadership of our superintendent. The final straw was when I was called into her office under false pretenses in November. She told me the meeting was for "informal counseling" by her (she is not certified to counsel). I was denied the opportunity to bring representation to this meeting with me because she said it was not a disciplinary meeting. (I have emails stating this from her). However, the Director of HR was present for the meeting, resulting in a disciplinary letter being placed in my file that represented only her side of the meeting. This is an example of the retaliation teachers and I have received from her. I reached out to you to discuss this since one of the topics she shared was that "many of the board members are concerned with how I am running the building." I was told I could not speak to you. I am too good of a principal, vetted in strong ethics with a deep pedigree in administration that I have parlayed into a very successful career in my 21 ears as an administrator. I have good years left in my leadership tank, and unfortunately Jenkintown will not be the beneficiary of my talents.

Please understand that talented, strong administrators want to be the principal at Jenkintown Elementary School, but in my opinion, the constant undermining, micromanaging, and lack of leadership by the superintendent is the real reason none of the elementary principals have remained in this position for more than three years since the arrival of the current superintendent.

I wish only the best for my successor, and pray that he does not befall the same restrictions and micromanagement that has resulted in the continual transition of elementary principals in the Jenkintown School District. Our faculty, and especially our students, deserve better.

Thank you and be well.

Dr. Christopher Jahnke, JES principal (retired).