

Sariah McCall



November 5, 2018

Superintendent
Charleston County School District
75 Calhoun Street
Charleston, SC 29412

Dear Dr. Postlewait,

Please accept this letter as notice of my resignation from public education effective immediately.

Please understand that this has nothing to do with my children, Ms. Wallace, or the rest of the faculty and staff at Murray-LaSaine. I couldn't have dreamed of a more perfect fit for my class, administrator, and school. I thought I had found my forever school. In fact, the only things keeping me from resigning until now were the love I have for my students, the love I have for the act of teaching, and the heavy guilt I feel for my children being negatively impacted by this in any way: emotionally or academically. However, I cannot set myself on fire to keep someone else warm.

The systemic abuse and neglect of educators and other public service workers in the state of South Carolina should have its citizens so enraged. The unrealistic demands and all-consuming nature of the profession are not sustainable. I am still a human being. There was no time to be a functioning human being and give this job all the attention and love it deserves. This career with its never-ending list of "extra duties and responsibilities" that we are not given the resources for completing. I cannot let a career dictate and demand all of me for another minute, and I will not be bullied into continuing to do so out of misguided guilt for possibly neglecting the children. It is unrealistic to expect this much from people. We're teachers, but we're still people.

I have compared the systematic expectations of the profession to the list of signs of abuse provided by the Domestic Abuse Hotline. If you replace "he" with "public education," it would almost match perfectly with what we are all going through across America. If I were to say that my partner is putting me through all of this abuse and mistreatment, people would be putting me in a shelter and insisting that I leave him. But because this is my calling and I must sacrifice myself for the sake of the children, then it's really not that big of a deal. Because if I really love my job and I really love the kids, then I should be willing to do whatever it takes and make whatever sacrifices I need to in order to give them everything they need. Do more with less time, funding, and resources. Take more of the blame, guilt, and responsibility. Be ready to sacrifice your personal life, mental health, and physical safety. Don't be a complainer. After all, if you only work 7-3 for 180 days of the year, then what could there possibly be to complain about? If only it were that easy. In the hardest act of selfishness I have ever been faced with, I must put myself over the demands of helping raise other people's children. I won't be in an abusive relationship with public education any longer. I will model to my current and past students what self-respect, setting hard boundaries, and standing your ground for what's right looks like in action.

Through this whole situation, I have fiercely defended how much I love my children and how much I love the act of teaching. I won't let anyone try to put that blame there. It is because I love teaching that I will not tolerate what the state is doing to the educators and children under its care. Unfortunately these issues will not be resolved until the perception of public education and other state social services change. Then people will band together for the common goal of elevating these necessary resources to the status of respect they deserve. The public has to demand that they receive the time, funding, and resources they require. We need to prioritize education, not just offer it lip-service. Until enough people decide that this is worth making a fuss over, those that are in power have no reason to listen to our hurt, pleas, and fears to make any changes. This will keep happening. It will not get better like this.

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I understand that you and the Board of Trustees must now contact the State Department of Education. I understand that my teaching certification may be suspended or revoked for a time period not to exceed one year. While the very idea breaks my heart, I know you have to do what you have to do. It is a heavy price to pay, but one I have to accept.

I hope in time you can find forgiveness for me and the decision I had to make. I hope that if you have anger or frustration or sadness over this, that you are able to take it to the avenues responsible for this systemic problem. I had to put my family and my health over my career. The profession existed before me and will continue to exist without me. My children had teachers before me and they will have many after me. But my family only has one of me. I only have one chance to live a life that fulfills all of me, not just my career goals. I have to prioritize my values. Words cannot express the guilt, shame, and sadness I feel that my sweet children and lovely school have been or may continue to be negatively impacted by this in any way. I truly hope you can forgive me and extend me grace in time.

With so much love,
Miss Sariah McCall