



Richland School District

1996 US Highway 14 West
Richland Center, WI 53581

*Building Futures,
One Child at a Time*

KATHY STOLTZ
Business Official

JARRED BURKE
District Administrator

SHAUN TJOSSEM
Special Education Director

January 10, 2019

Mark Chambers



RE: Letter of Suspension

Dear Mr. Chambers:

This letter is to summarize our investigation into the misuse of your electronic key in October of 2018, the determinations that we have made as a result of that investigation, and to inform you of our decision to suspend you for five days without pay.

A brief summary of our investigation follows. On Saturday, October 20, 2018, Adam Sheldon, a former Richland School District (RSD) employee, was seen inside the Richland Center High School (RCHS) weight room. The video and electronic access information established that Mr. Sheldon had entered the building alone through the northeast door near the maintenance loading dock by using your electronic key.

The RCHS Principal contacted Mr. Sheldon on his (Mr. Sheldon's) cell phone. Mr. Sheldon returned the phone call and left a voice mail message. In that message, Mr. Sheldon stated that he had taken your electronic key. However, he specifically added to his voice mail that he had done so without your knowledge.

The Superintendent and HS Principal questioned you (with your union representative present) about this situation. You stated that your wallet was on your counter and that Mr. Sheldon took your key from your wallet without your consent. You added that when Mr. Sheldon returned to your home, you questioned Mr. Sheldon about why he would do such a thing.

During the first meeting that you had with the Administration about this situation, you were asked if you had any other conversations with Mr. Sheldon since the incident. You acknowledged that you did have some conversations via text that day and you shared some of the text messages that were exchanged between you and Mr. Sheldon.

Mr. Sheldon later shared a number of text messages from the same conversations with the Administration. However, the text messages Mr. Sheldon provided included a text message in which you asked him "Did u say u took my wallet or just the fob?" You did not disclose or share this text

message with the Administration at our earlier meeting, even though it was part of the same group of messages.

In your second meeting with the Administration, we asked you about this specific text message and, in this regard, asked you why you would ask Mr. Sheldon this question. Your initial responses did not directly address our question. You continued to deflect this inquiry throughout the meeting, telling us that you did not think that Mr. Sheldon taking your key and accessing the building without your consent was a big deal because Mr. Sheldon was a former employee who had helped construct the weight room. You also stated that--again because you ostensibly felt that the theft of your key was not a big deal--you chose not to report anything about it to us.

These answers were evasive, rather than responsive. You were given a series of opportunities to explain why you would try to secretly verify whether Mr. Sheldon reported that he had taken your wallet or only the fob. Had events transpired as you reported them, you would have had no need to ask this question; you would have already known whether the thief had stolen your wallet or only the fob. What you would have not known with certainty is who the thief actually was (had the fob truly been taken without your knowledge or consent) and, indeed, might not have known that the fob was missing at all if it had been misplaced before you arrived at home or had been removed from your wallet, while the wallet itself was left precisely where you had left it (as reported). In sum, and with due respect, critical aspects of your report do not add up.

Misuse of District electronic keys or the use of electronic keys by unauthorized personnel presents a serious security concern for the District. For example, access to the school by unauthorized personnel can compromise pupil confidentiality, the safety of District personnel and guests, and the security of District property. The District's faculty and staff understand this.

Nevertheless, you did not promptly share all of the information that you had about this situation with appropriate District officials; something that should always happen if a District employee genuinely believes that their electronic key has been stolen. In addition, if your account of these events is treated as objectively true, your failure to promptly report the theft of your electronic key would have been reckless and a failure to take reasonable steps to protect the District's security. If your electronic key was, in fact, taken without your permission, you would also have been expected to contact appropriate school personnel immediately but, according to you, you instead waited for Mr. Sheldon to return to your house (and apparently knew to question him specifically about the missing electronic key). This would not be the proper procedure to follow if your electronic key were actually stolen.

Further, the evidence establishes that the key was not, in fact, stolen. Instead, the evidence indicates that Mr. Sheldon had your consent to use the electronic key in the first place.

Mr. Sheldon volunteered in a voice mail, without being asked, that he took the electronic key from you without your knowledge. It is difficult in the circumstances to see this unsolicited comment as anything other than an effort to shift the blame to himself, that is, from a District employee who can be held accountable to someone who cannot be. In addition, you sent him a text that can only be described as part of an effort to coordinate your statements with one another. Nevertheless, you did not reveal that

this particular text message even existed when you shared the other related text messages with the Administration. The content of the text message that you concealed indicates that you concealed it so that your efforts to align your stories would not be discovered. Consequently, the evidence in this investigation indicates that Mr. Sheldon used your electronic key with your consent, but subsequently the two of you coordinated with one another to contend that the key was stolen instead, presumably to suggest that you hadn't willingly given a friend who does not work for the District access to the High School building on the weekend.

Finally, you knew that giving him the electronic key was improper. You represented that you questioned him over why he had taken the key without your consent (a statement that acknowledges the impropriety). In any event, giving someone that has no business in District buildings free access to the facilities would be wrong regardless of whether you realized it or not.

I have considered your prior (and recent) disciplinary history, the breach of our security procedures, and the considerable (and costly) time commitment that had to be made to complete this investigation. This investigation, with due respect, was made far more time consuming and challenging because you simply would not own up to the fact that you exercised poor judgment in this situation. This is an aggravating factor in determining the appropriate level of discipline.

For these reasons, I have little alternative but to impose a five (5) day suspension without pay. I am also required to advise you that further misconduct may result in additional disciplinary action against you, up to and including possible dismissal from employment.

Please advise if you have any questions concerning this letter of suspension; otherwise, I will assume that you fully understand our expectations concerning electronic key security and your obligations to provide truthful and complete information in District investigations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jarred Burke", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jarred Burke
District Administrator

Hand delivered
cc: Mark Chambers Personnel File