



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

November 15, 2018

RE: Letter of Reprimand

Dear Mr. Chambers:

This letter serves as a written reprimand as a result of your sending/attempting to send a personal/political message out to families of students using district personnel, students and resources.

On or about October 10, 2018, the administration received concerns from staff members stating that you had written a letter to the families of the district, asking them to attend the next board meeting. The concerned staff members reported that you had made multiple copies of the letter and put it in their staff mailboxes. One staff member said that you had personally gave them instructions to distribute the letters home with their homeroom students and that you also enlisted their help in disseminating this same message to other teachers. The incident reportedly occurred on or about the same date as the concerns.

A summary of the administration's investigation is as follows. Staff members who originally approached administration were questioned about the letter. The IT department reviewed electronic data. School district administration reviewed video footage. After finding evidence supporting your involvement, an interview was conducted on October 24, 2018. During that interview you stated that you created the letter, copied it at school, placed approximately 400 copies in HS teacher mailboxes and verbally told teachers to distribute the letter to students. You also stated you gave the letter to your students to ferry to their parents. Furthermore, you stated that you did all this because the district was not acting fast enough in communicating to parents and that your communications with the school district board of education president requesting communications with parents, had been unanswered; thus, you decided you needed to communicate with parents.

After completing the investigation, the administration has concluded that you did craft, print, and disseminate, multiple copies of a personal message to families using District staff, students and resources. Our investigation concluded that four-hundred and one (401) copies of the letter were made and that an undetermined number of letters were distributed to students to take home to their families. This behavior is not acceptable. Although the content of your message was not objectionable, standing alone, this is not about the message you were sending but about the manner in which you used district time and resources to do it. In addition, your actions put your colleagues in an untenable position by asking them for their assistance in distribution of your private/political message home to families. Furthermore, it is also inappropriate to use students as a courier for your private communications.



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Although the use of the schools' children as couriers for your unauthorized campaign is perhaps the most egregious aspect of this incident, your comments during our investigation are particularly unnerving for the future. In this regard, you described your own motivation in terms that this information needed to be distributed to parents because the Board was not communicating effectively on these issues. There are a great many things that are wrong with this perspective.

The Board of Education is the democratically-elected governing body for the District. It is not appropriate for you to override the Board's procedures or communications in this manner while performing services as a District employee. Further, you do not necessarily know the efforts that the Board is making to, e.g., reach out to its constituencies and, therefore, are not necessarily in a position to draw the conclusions that you have. The Board may also have its own reasons for approaching its meetings and communications on these issues as it has. Of course, you have an independent right to speak on issues of public interest within the limitations that public employees must observe; you simply cannot use District time or resources or put a captive audience of District students to work to communicate your message.

Considering the foregoing misconduct, I am hereby issuing this written reprimand. I am also required to advise you that further misconduct may result in further disciplinary action against you, up to and including possible dismissal from employment. Please advise if you have any questions concerning this letter of reprimand or any expectations and directives contained in this letter; otherwise, I will assume that you fully understand our expectations in this regard and can be expected to satisfy those expectations.

Sincerely,

Jarred Burke
District Administrator

Hand delivered
CC: Mark Chamber's Personnel File