



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

825 North Capitol Street, NE, 9th Floor

Washington, DC 20002-1994

(202) 442-5885 – fax: (202) 442-5026

January 26, 2010

The Honorable Vincent C. Gray, Chairman
The Council of the District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington D.C. 20004

The Honorable Marion Barry, Ward 8
The Council of the District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington D.C. 20004

The Honorable Kwame Brown, At-Large
The Council of the District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington D.C. 20004

Dear Chairman Gray and Councilmembers Kwame Brown and Barry:

I received your letters and emails and wanted to take the time to fully respond to the issues raised in each each, however, I believe it is important to address the common concerns right away. Student safety is our highest concern, and we have thousands of teachers, principals and staff members who share that commitment and treat our students with great care and respect every day.

The comment I made to *Fast Company* was made some time ago --and in the context of explaining the importance of considering teacher performance, and not just seniority, in deciding which teachers would be let go during a reduction in force necessitated by a budget cut. I was describing the kind of conduct that was appropriate to take into account in implementing the reduction in force.

The examples I gave involved a very small minority of the teachers who were terminated in the budget reduction.

One teacher against whom serious allegations of sexual misconduct had been made was terminated in the RIF. This teacher was immediately put on administrative leave and removed from the school as soon as the allegations came to our attention. This person was not in the classroom at the time of the RIF, and DCPS referred the case to MPD.

Below are some of the questions I received from you and other Councilmembers that I want to address head-on:

How many of the RIFed employees were accused of sexual misconduct/corporal punishment/time and attendance abuse and why weren't they fired before the RIF?

One teacher had been accused of sexual misconduct; again, this person was immediately put on administrative leave and removed from the school. The investigation was still pending at the time of RIF.

Six of the employees terminated through the RIF had served suspensions for corporal punishment. Two of the employees terminated through the RIF served suspensions for being AWOL on multiple occasions and several other employees had egregious time and attendance records.

The progressive discipline procedures contained in the applicable collective bargaining agreements prescribed suspension, rather than terminations, for these situations.

What is the process for reporting, investigating and acting on allegations of serious employee misconduct?

Principals are required to report all allegations of corporal punishment or sexual misconduct to the school's Contract Security Officer (CSO). The CSO then files an incident report and reports the incident to MPD, who reviews the allegation and determines whether a formal criminal investigation is needed.

When there are allegations of serious misconduct, are teachers immediately fired?

Not necessarily. For example, if a teacher has committed corporal punishment, depending on the surrounding circumstances, DCPS may not be able to fire the teacher on the first offense.

The RIF was a difficult time for DCPS, and we want to continue to work together as a school system to move past it and to remain focused on serving students. I will work to provide any additional information requested in your correspondence in a supplemental response as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,



Michelle A. Rhee
Chancellor

Cc: Mayor Adrian M. Fenty
All members of the Council of the District of Columbia