

May 3, 2017

To the Members of the Region One Board of Education,

On February 15th, 2017, I was notified that my private medical information had been made public by Assistant Superintendent Pam Vogel. In a meeting with a paid consultant from outside of the district, Ms. Vogel openly discussed the contents of my personnel file, detailing my medical history within earshot of an employee. As a result of Ms. Vogel's disregard for my confidentiality, other persons now know the specifics of a recent medical leave, as well as specific information about my medical condition.

A leader's actions influence climate. Instead of working to build a climate of trust and respect, Ms. Vogel's actions instead speak to an inability, or an unwillingness, on her part to see the district's employees as individuals deserving of support. The context in which Ms. Vogel revealed my private medical history was purposefully demeaning, and she referred to my health as if it was something over which I should feel shame. The truth of the matter is that Ms. Vogel knows nothing more about me than my condition. She has never visited my classroom, nor spoken directly to me on those occasions when my department met for curriculum development. She is a non-entity where my day-to-day life is concerned.

Ms. Vogel has publicly championed herself as someone dedicated to individuals who face barriers to learning, citing her own family and her past work in special education. Yet she spoke about me in a judgmental and limiting manner, based solely on her knowledge that I had taken a medical leave for a specific condition. Each day I come to school, do my job well, and go home thinking about the day to come. Until recently, I felt myself capable of believing that this is how people see me, not as someone with a disability. Yet as more people learn of my condition as a result of Ms. Vogel's unprofessionalism, I find myself fearing that word will continue to spread. Will parents begin to question my efficacy as an educator? Will students ask to be placed in another teacher's class? Will colleagues go out of their way to collaborate with someone else?

Make no mistake, I am good at my job, and I will not allow myself to be defined by my condition. Still, I worry that this message will be overshadowed by the stigmas Ms. Vogel has helped perpetuate. She has opened the door for this type of speculation to occur, a line of inquiry which does not align with my demonstrated abilities as an educator.

Had I done likewise, and divulged the contents of a student's 504 or IEP, I would not be slapped on the wrist, given a stern talking to, nor sent to training. I would be fired, which is the only adequate response to Ms. Vogel's behavior. In revealing private information about my medical history, she has violated the code of conduct to which all in her position are held. She should be subject to the consequences associated with her actions.

Sincerely,

John/Jane Doe