

April, 2018

Dear Constituents of District Six,

July 28, 2015 I was sworn in to serve District Six as a member of the Liberty County School Board of Education. I was elected to replace a long time, retired educator Sampie Smith who resigned from the position after two meetings wondering and asking some of his friends why someone who dedicated over 30 years to a profession would only serve two months before removing himself. It did not take me long to find the answer to my questions. I knew during campaigning and by attending the board meetings that the culture of the board was unsettled but once embedded it soon became apparent that the culture of the board was actually quite hostile. I soon learned that there are four on the board that are a quasi-board discussing agenda items prior to meetings to determine what the outcome would be to voting. This same four have certain staff throughout the system that they want protected, staff that serve as their moles for information, so they all bond together to protect each other's chosen people whether these people are certified to do the job or whether the superintendent feels that a person is performing at a high performance indicator yet at other times these same board members might receive one anonymous letter on a staff member about how that anonymous writer feels a staff member is performing and a board member will tell the superintendent to "go fire" the person. Board members have been taking on the role of day to day management and operations which violations the accrediting standards. The discussion among a quorum of board members of business items and evaluations of hired staff outside of scheduled meetings is a violation of the open meeting act but this happens quite frequently.

The first six months on the board, I observed a board member openly bully and harass the school superintendent not at board meetings but in the general public. The same board member made comments on social media about their opinion of other school board members which not only violated the accrediting standards but violated the legal, mandated Code of Ethics for School Board Members. There are board members that have privately bullied, harassed, and held the superintendent hostage with their job to get what board members want done in addition to the one that has gone public with the harassment. A board member has actually been up in the faces of employees, to include the superintendent, screaming and bullying them. The recommendation by our board association was to have a mediation session which we did in February, 2016. After six hours of "mediation" with a professionally trained outside mediator, the mediator told this board she could not help.

I ran for this board to advocate for students and teachers. Yes, I believe that board members should focus on student achievement however as a 30 year educator I have watched the morale of teachers go down since the late 80's and I know that without happy teachers in the classroom we will not retain high quality educators and will continue to have a constant turnover of staff so my first meeting with the superintendent focused on that topic. I am a realist and I do believe in the trickle down effect. As a school system employee, I put the teacher/staff morale problem on the back of the former superintendents but as a school board member what became very apparent was that the trickle down starts with the Liberty County Board of Education members harassing, intimidating and bullying the superintendent to meet their hidden agendas and protect their selected staff. I believe that in the past the issue of micromanaging the superintendent and staff has not been brought to the public because superintendents had been hired that really did not care if the board ran the show. I also believe there have been other board members in the past who did not know school law to know that illegal actions were taking place or they did not want to be bothered therefore did not challenge these board members. Now, standards and ethics are written so that highly qualified and certified hired staff manage and operate the school system while the elected school board members approve and oversee policies, approve and oversee budget, hire and evaluate the school superintendent and **only** the school superintendent.

It became apparent I was going to have to go beyond the boundaries of Liberty County for help. I made phone calls to the State Department of Education and the Governor's Office. I was told that there is