

# Paul R. Baird Middle School

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Guidance (413) 583-5687 \* Nurse (413) 583-5688

Dr. Stacy Monette  
Principal

Mrs. Mary Dobek  
Assistant Principal

## *Instructional Focus*

*At Baird, we focus on actively participating in our learning and using our critical thinking skills to help us understand and contribute to the world around us.*

May 19, 2021

Bonnie Manchester  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

BY: First Class and Certified Mail

Dear Ms. Manchester:

Please be advised that, pursuant to M.G.L. c. 71, § 42, I have decided to terminate your employment with the Ludlow Public Schools due to conduct unbecoming of a teacher. Said determination is based upon my review of all of the information before me, including but not limited to your counsel's correspondence dated May 17, 2021. More specifically, you have engaged in the following conduct:

You shared sensitive confidential information about a student's expressed gender identity against the wishes of the student, the direction of the Guidance Counselor, and in contradiction to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) guidance. This was done without consulting colleagues, the administration, or the student. In fact, you indicated that the only thing you said to the student was that you received the student's email.

If you believed that it was necessary to inform the parents prior to allowing the team to work with the student to determine how best to do so, the appropriate means to express your belief would have been through the so-called Mariners team and/or Guidance Counselor. Indeed, during the Mariner team's meeting on March 3, the Guidance Counselor discussed the email with the team, and you did not raise any issues or concerns regarding notification to the parents. Instead, you took it upon yourself to inform the parent.

You have provided no rationale to explain why you could not have discussed your concerns with the student, the Guidance Counselor, and/or your team. There were certainly numerous appropriate methods to deal with any potential concerns, but instead you failed to raise your concerns with anyone involved in the situation.

Not only did you fail to raise concerns, but you failed to inform anyone that you had told the parent on your own. Contrary to your assertions, this shows a complete lack of concern for the student's well-being. By your own admission, the only thing you stated to the student regarding the email is that you had received it. If you truly had the best interest of the student at heart, you could have spoken with the student and assisted the student with how best to inform the student's parents. Working with the team, this approach would have ensured notification to the parents in a caring and supportive manner. Instead, you blindsided both the student and your team by doing so on your own.

You were untruthful numerous times during the investigation of this matter. First, during the investigation meeting on March 25, 2021, you indicated that you had no communication with the parents regarding the content of the email. However, during the follow-up investigation meeting on April 14, 2021, you admitted that you informed the father that the student was changing the student's name while you were at the father's garage getting an oil change.

Second, you indicated that you read the email, left it on your computer, but did nothing else with the email. Despite being asked numerous times, you insisted that you did not make any type of copy of the email or do anything else with the email. However, your counsel indicated during the meeting that you sent him a copy of the email. A search of your public school email account shows that you did not use said account to email your counsel. Therefore, you clearly made a copy of the email. Further, a search of your public school Google Drive account showed that you took a screenshot of the email (see enclosed). In addition, you cut and pasted the email and created a Google doc of the email wherein you removed the student's name and replaced it with XXXXXX (see enclosed).

Your untruthfulness during the investigation alone is sufficient grounds for termination.

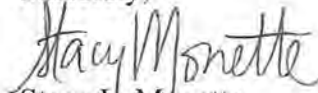
You violated state law and regulations regard student records/privacy as well as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) by releasing student information to individuals who did not have the right to view the information. The email contains extremely private and confidential information regarding the student. If you wanted to provide your counsel with the email itself, that request should have been made through the school system. Then, a determination could have been made regarding whether or not the email could be released and/or if redactions were necessary. Instead, you did so on your own volition without any regard for the student's rights.

Since your school account was immediately shut off when you were placed on paid administrative leave, it is also clear that you removed the email from the workplace prior to being placed on leave. Doing so is also a violation of state law and regulations as well as FERPA, and clearly violates the student's rights. It is also further evidence that you were untruthful during the investigation.

The argument that other teachers used educational materials and student records off-site during the pandemic misses the point. Those teachers were using student records for an educational purpose. On the contrary, you were not using the record for an educational purpose and you were not sharing the record with someone that had a legitimate educational interest in the record.

For all of the above reasons, I have decided to terminate your employment with the Ludlow Public Schools effective immediately. Your final paycheck, COBRA information, and unemployment form is enclosed.

Sincerely,

  
Stacy L. Monette,  
Principal

Enclosures

cc: Personnel File  
Frank McNamara, Jr., Esq. (email)

The Ludlow Public Schools strives to provide a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment in which all students can thrive and succeed in its schools. The Ludlow Public Schools prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, sex, gender identity, national origin, pregnancy or pregnancy related conditions, disability or sexual orientation and ensures that all students have equal rights of access and equal enjoyment of the opportunities, advantages, privileges, and courses of study.