



Downingtown Area School District

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May 11, 2017 Statement on the situation Involving, Dr. Zachary Ruff, Dean of Students at the Downingtown STEM Academy.

On Thursday afternoon, May 11, 2017 Dr. Zachary Ruff, Dean of Student Life and Academics at the Downingtown STEM Academy, tendered his resignation to the Downingtown Area School District Board of Directors. Dr. Ruff, the School Board, Administration and all members of the Downingtown Area School District would like to put this terribly unfortunate incident in the past to enable everyone to move forward.

Dr. Ruff's resignation comes following a "Loudermill" hearing that was held on Friday, May 5, 2017. This hearing is required for all tenured employees under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. During this hearing, Dr. Ruff was given notice of the allegations against him and was given an opportunity to present his version of the series of events that occurred on April 21, 2017. Dr. Ruff, his attorney Thomas Kelly, and the District's solicitor reviewed and discussed the confrontation that was caught on a YouTube video and substantiated by DASD surveillance video. In addition, it was noted that the DASD surveillance video did not substantiate the allegation that the demonstrators were banging on cars.

After hearing his side of the story in accordance with due process, Dr. Ruff brought up the possibility that he would resign. Dr. Ruff asked for, and received, additional time to review the charges and subsequent evidence to determine whether he would resign from employment. At the conclusion of the hearing, the District suspended Dr. Ruff without pay. Today he tendered his resignation to the School Board.

Since this matter has become a national news story, the School District has received hundreds of communications from people in and out of the community, some supporting Dr. Ruff and some condemning his actions. Dozens of people came to School Board meetings to express their views, again, with some supporting Dr. Ruff and some condemning his actions. Hundreds of posts have been written on our social media pages and dozens of articles from news and on-line sources from across the nation have featured this situation. A national news channel interviewed the demonstrators, Connor and Lauren Haines. The district received an overwhelming amount of emails, phone calls, and letters, including one from the Alliance Defending Freedom, an organization that is representing the Haines.

After considering this situation in total, its divisive impact on the community, the reaction from his students, and the attention this situation has garnered nationally, it is clear to us that Dr. Ruff decided

that the best thing for his students, the School District, and the community was to resign from employment effective at the close of business on Thursday, May 11, 2017. In reviewing the video, Dr. Ruff knew that the conduct he displayed was not representative of who he is and was not representative of the kind of educational leader he prided himself on being. Dr. Ruff has acknowledged that the demonstrators had a right to be on a public sidewalk. He acknowledged that his conduct cannot be defended or condoned and he deeply regretted his actions as displayed on the video.

This school district will not interfere with the rights of anyone to express themselves, as those US Constitutional 1st Amendment rights are established in law. The Downingtown Area School District has policies that comply with all legal requirements, including compliance with the First Amendment. The two demonstrators had a right to be on a public sidewalk and a legal right to speak there as well.