

## **Kevin Skelly Statement on OCR resolution**

For over a year, our school community has watched OCR open a number of investigations, and this has, understandably, provoked many questions and concerns. We have patiently and persistently tried to work with OCR to review this particular case and their practices in general, but these efforts haven't resulted in measureable changes or even acknowledgement of some clear errors, so I am glad to see this Resolution and hope it will help move our relationship with OCR to a more effective place.

I want to emphasize that we all agree with and honor the OCR's purpose, it is their practices with which we take issue. We included with the Resolution a list of some activities we undertake toward the goals we share with OCR to illustrate the ongoing commitment of our staff and community members to make our schools and classrooms safe and welcoming for all. Most of these activities created to nurture student well-being and inclusion have been going on for years and come from the dedication of our staff and innovative community partnerships for which we are very proud and thankful.

I know from my many conversations with staff that these investigations have taken a significant toll on staff morale and confidence, not to mention the time it has diverted from the hard work it takes to serve students well. We are dedicated to continuous improvement, and we are open to OCR's productive and instructive input. To this point, we have nearly completed implementation of a 2012 resolution agreement with OCR; again, we welcome OCR's guidance on ways that we can improve our practices.

Our community can absolutely count on the District to cooperate with any government agency or organization that seeks to help us improve our work for students and staff. Our interactions with OCR attorneys have always been respectful and courteous.

Our concerns with OCR's process, as identified in the proposed resolution and supporting documents, relate to District experiences where we have found OCR's process to be working against the very goals that OCR and the District share. OCR's process has caused unreasonable delays, excessively burdened our staff members, and not allowed the District to see and share important information efficiently.

We are especially troubled by ways that OCR's process has contributed to inaccurate reporting on student issues. We welcome scrutiny, but when reporting is simply providing commentary based on incomplete facts of student situations for which we are not allowed to make facts public, our community is misled and our work as educators and school leaders is made so much more difficult.

A central goal of this resolution is to support the work of our staff and students toward the very goals we share with OCR. We would like OCR to reexamine processes that have significantly burdened our staff and students and that have been open to exploitation.

As was mentioned by Ms. Mitchell, we have been working with OCR on these matters for over two years. If we thoroughly and honestly examine our situation, and ask the right questions, we see that OCR's investigative practices have caused significant delays, missteps, and misuse of staff time. We hope that examining these points will improve collaboration between OCR and public schools, and benefit all students and dedicated educators. Thank you.