

Greenfield Education Association Deeply Dismayed Over Resignation of Superintendent Patenaude

Contact: GEA Executive Board: Ann Valentine, Tara Cloutier, Judy Bennett, Kim Herlihy, Luke Martin, Anna McBean, greenfieldeducationassociation@gmail.com

The Greenfield Education Association is dismayed with the resignation of Superintendent Patenaude during this challenging time. In service to this district over the last 16 years, Ms. Patenaude led with the utmost integrity and always put the best interests of Greenfield's students, staff, and families at the forefront of every decision. The recent attacks and accusations regarding school budget management do not reflect the dedication, superb management, attention to detail, and transparency she has consistently demonstrated.

Karin Patenaude's approach which consistently fosters open dialogue with stakeholders built a trust within GPS schools, staff, students, families, and the broader community. During this budget season she demonstrated a willingness to answer budget-related questions from the School Committee, the City Council, the mayor, and the community, working closely with the school business manager from TMS to provide regular budget planning information and explanations of best and historical fiscal practice. Her commitment to open communication and transparency in financial matters is beyond reproach.

If the city wishes to conduct an independent audit of the years that TMS has managed the school department's finances, we fully support that process. We are confident that such a review will confirm Superintendent Patenaude's commitment to responsible stewardship of public funds and ensure she receives the respect she deserves as the highly qualified professional that she is.

The hostile and accusatory tone from some members of the School Committee and City Council meetings—including the mayor—this year toward Superintendent Patenaude alarms the GEA membership. Because of the severe shortage of competent superintendents in Massachusetts, we felt lucky that Superintendent Patenaude chose to put her expertise, efforts, and talents to work for our district and the children in our city.

As educators, we know the importance of stable leadership for our schools and the negative impacts which will result from losing such an effective leader. Before beginning the search for a new Superintendent, it is in the best interest of Greenfield Public Schools and its constituents for the School Committee and City Council to reflect on their conduct and their ability to make decisions in the best interest of the city.

The future of this district is now more challenging and more precarious than under Superintendent Patenaude's leadership. While we recognize the constraints now imposed by the mayor's budget, the GEA expects bargaining to continue in good faith and hopes the hiring of a new Superintendent will not be used as an excuse to delay the current contract negotiations.

Research and case studies show that trust in our educational leaders is critical, and that benevolent, competent, and reliable leadership—like that demonstrated by Patenaude—builds stability and consistency for staff and students, especially during challenging times. To put it simply, the GEA is disheartened with the conduct and tone of the mayor, the School Committee, and the City Council over these last several months. Karin Patenaude's leadership of Greenfield Public Schools kept our members hopeful about the future of the schools despite this challenging time. Her resignation extinguished our optimism as the remaining elected officials have proven themselves to be beneath the moment.