

June 9, 2016

To: Sapulpa Public Schools' Board of Education

From: Bobby J. Alfred

Re: My Retirement

It is with mixed emotions that I hereby tender this official letter of resignation from my position as Principal of Holmes Park Elementary, the Number One School. I have just completed my 42nd year of employment with Sapulpa Public Schools. Thirty-five years of my 42 year career have been spent in administration. I have served as Principal of four Sapulpa elementary schools: Holmes Park, Washington, Jefferson, and Garfield. My professional accomplishments and career highlights are numerous and rewarding!

I will share some of my experiences, both accomplishments and challenges, with you. I do so in the hope that they might be helpful and enlightening as you proceed in your service to Sapulpa Public Schools.

In 2015, Holmes Park raised its OSDE School Report Card, based on OCCT test scores and attendance, from a "D" to a "B". This resulted in a congratulatory visit and commendation from Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin in April, 2016. The current Superintendent attempted to utilize Holmes Park's celebratory meeting with the state's highest official to make a political statement. He proceeded to tell her that, "We had a school which scored even higher," referring to Freedom which had surpassed Holmes Park by only one point, 86% versus 85%. This was

very disappointing and insulting to the Administrators, staff, students, and stakeholders in attendance.

Holmes Park was ranked 2nd out of 60 area schools (excluding Tulsa Public Schools) for raising the achievement of the lower quartile of our student population. This is a tremendous achievement! To contrast, Freedom received an “F” for working with this particular group of students within its school. This Superintendent, however, never congratulated me, my staff, or my Assistant Principal on this stellar achievement, though he presented this information at HPE on two different occasions. He never referred to the school by name as ranking 2nd at a budget deficit informational meeting for the staff and later for the stakeholders. I had to tell my staff that they were the school who ranked 2nd.

The 2010-2011 school year brought one of my biggest challenges and accomplishments. In the Spring of 2011, I was chosen to be the Principal of Holmes Park Elementary, and Ashley Hearn was selected as Assistant Principal. She resigned in early summer to take a position as Principal in Owasso, at a school closer to her home. I worked single-handedly throughout the summer to manage the completion and opening of Holmes Park, a school of 750 students. I merged two schools into one-working late hours, often seven days a week, for the entire summer to insure the successful blending of two very proud, loyal, and historic schools-Washington (the first NCA accredited elementary in Sapulpa) and Woodlawn (that had been awarded Great Expectation status). Mr. Johnson was not hired until early August.

During my tenure, Holmes Park Elementary has achieved and maintained Great Expectations Model School Status.

In 2000, while serving as Principal of Washington Elementary, we attained high academic achievement and improvement earning the Blue Ribbon School Award from the United States Department of Education. As a result, I was nominated for the Terrell Bell Award. I also was awarded the Human Relations and Distinguished Service Awards for Sapulpa Public Schools.

I share my leadership accomplishments with you, the BOE, not to boast but because my leadership unbelievably was questioned this past 2015-2016 school year by the current Superintendent. My record of success is true and speaks for itself!

Thirty-eight of the 42 years I have devoted to Sapulpa Public Schools have been outstanding! I have had an opportunity to work with six previous Superintendents, as evidenced through their interactions and support of others. They held Doctorate Degrees (either an Ed.D. or Ph.D.) and certainly possessed the necessary “people skills” and utilized fairness, equality, and common sense. They were respectively: Dr. Martin, Dr. Rayburn, Dr. Dodson, Dr. Crowder, Dr. Cummins, and Dr. Webb. These individuals worked hard to further Sapulpa Public Schools’ mission of providing “Academic excellence in a caring environment.” They were highly visible at all school functions.

The current Superintendent is the only one with whom I have ever had difficulty with in a working environment! In my opinion, he immediately transformed the work environment and atmosphere to one of negativity, insensitivity, tremendous turmoil, and loose spending. Despite the strain of being personally harassed and demeaned, Holmes Park has continued to flourish under my leadership and that of Mr. Roger Johnson and the remarkable staff. We proved repeatedly that HPE was not the “underdog” but in fact, the “top dog.”

In my opinion, it would be a travesty, injustice, and insult to the community, Holmes Park staff, students, and stakeholders if Roger Johnson is not assigned to the position of Holmes Park Principal.

I have had numerous concerns regarding this Superintendent during the past four years that I wanted to address before the Board. He strategically brought before you the very policy which would have allowed me (and others) to do so and asked you for its deletion. It was at his very intense suggestion that it was done. This action removed a vital check and balance on the office and power of the Superintendent. I would ask the Board to be guardians of the rights of Sapulpa's students, stakeholders, and employees. In order to safeguard those rights, I find it necessary to inform the Board of some concerns and incidents that have occurred. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said: "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter." I cannot remain silent any longer.

At the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year, this Superintendent stated that he "had lost confidence in my leadership." He did not, however, offer a plan for improvement. This caused me to question and mistrust his motives. During this same time period, he moved a class of Special Education students from Liberty STEM Academy to Holmes Park. Liberty had just been awarded funding by the OSDE for training and instructional support that would have greatly benefitted these students for the next five years. He did this despite stating that he "had lost confidence in my leadership." This action certainly made me question and mistrust this Superintendent's motives.

In addition, there is communication/media equipment at Holmes Park, valued at approximately \$30,000 to \$40,000, which this Superintendent would not allow Holmes Park Administrators to use. He denied several requests to use this equipment over a four year period,

even having the lock on the door changed. This equipment was purchased with bond money specifically for Holmes Park when the community voted to build this school.

My goal in education has always been to provide strong leadership and a caring school environment for students, stakeholders, and staff while promoting mutual respect and great expectations for all! I have always led by example to instill a sense of family, camaraderie, pride, and school spirit within my students, stakeholders, and staff. This Superintendent's leadership style is the polar opposite of mine. He utilizes negativity, fear, intimidation, and retaliation. He has brought ideas from a failing Tulsa Public School System rather than gleaning ideas from a successful school model.

In 2015, this Superintendent asked me not to refer to Holmes Park as the "Number One School" in his meetings. I complied out of respect for the office, not the man. All of my students deserve something of which they can be proud. Some get this at home, through parental nurturing and involvement. Some, however, may suffer from current societal issues: broken or dysfunctional homes, absentee parents, poverty, neglect, etc. I have always given my students something of which they can be proud and positive-their school, the "Number One School." We all still refer to Holmes Park in that manner, and the only one who has **ever** been irritated or offended by it is this Superintendent. In my opinion, community and staff support for this Superintendent is low, though they have tremendous respect for the school district.

This was evidenced by a USE Survey given to all employees of SPS. Results were to be presented to the BOE by USE President Carla Cale. There has been a mass exodus of vital and valuable employees from the district since this Superintendent has taken the job. Many have stated this as a reason for leaving, but some have remained quiet for

personal reasons. Sapulpa Public Schools' successes are not because of this Superintendent but are in spite of him. With current budget cuts and state funding shortfalls, it is crucial that administrators and educators feel Administrative support.

This Superintendent promotes physical fitness only when it pertains to running, his personal sport of choice. One of my first encounters occurred regarding my personal use of the Holmes Park Elementary gym, to play basketball with friends on Sundays. During the 20 plus years in which I used the Washington Elementary gym, there had never been an incidence of theft or destruction. This Superintendent conveyed that at TPS, they had discontinued the rental or free use of facilities. He relayed this using a racially insensitive comment: "You and your brothers will no longer be allowed to play basketball at the Holmes Park Elementary gym." For the record, I do not have fifteen biological "brothers." I am one of four brothers in my family and all are college educated professionals. A good Superintendent acknowledges the strengths of diversity and also promotes unity.

In this age of racial divisiveness, this Superintendent downplayed a major racial incident in SPS involving the Head of Maintenance and a black maintenance worker who was subjected to unspeakable acts, including racial slurs, racially disparaging remarks, and harassment on the job due to color. This Superintendent emailed a letter to staff praising the Head of Maintenance and his service to SPS upon his "early retirement." This Superintendent's duties should include protecting all personnel, regardless of certified or support. This was not the case, in my opinion. In the words of Dr. King: "The time is always right to do the right thing."

When Mr. Roger Johnson was selected as Assistant Principal in August 2010, the previous Administration allowed the current Principals

to meet with and interview the candidates and make recommendations to the Superintendent. This allows the Principal the ability to recommend a candidate whom he or she feels will be a good “fit” for the school. This hiring practice for Administrators will hopefully be continued by this Superintendent.

In an evaluation session prior to the 2015-2016 school year, I told Mr. Armstrong of my intent to retire at the end of the year so the District Administration would have a full year to work with Mr. Johnson on taking leadership at Holmes Park. This Superintendent did nothing toward this goal. Instead I was asked numerous times throughout the year, “You are going to retire, aren’t you?” In my opinion, this Superintendent prefers to exclude people of advanced seniority and experience and minorities in positions of administrative leadership or within Sapulpa Schools’ total workforce.

This spring, the Superintendent had students and teachers present successes they had achieved at their particular schools and at the District Science Fair at a BOE meeting. He did not personally attend the District Science Fair but, in promoting this at a Board Meeting, gave the impression that he was somehow involved. He is rarely involved or present at a Elementary events. If the teachers are present and give up an evening of their family time, he should as well. This is unacceptable. The successes of any individuals, schools, or organizations are not as a result of this Superintendent, but again in spite of him.

In conclusion, I would ask the Board to have this Superintendent complete the entirety of his contract, before adding an additional year. I would encourage you to have him provide data to support his statements and then verify the data.

Thank you for allowing me to begin and end my career with Sapulpa Public Schools. Despite the challenges of the last four years serving under this Superintendent, I will always remain a loyal Chieftain and supportive Holmes Park Husky. I leave you with a final MLK quote: “Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

Yours Sincerely,

Bobby J. Alfred

P.S. Again I would strongly recommend Mr. Roger Johnson as my successor. He has worked extremely hard and is very familiar with the school, its programs, its students, staff, and stakeholders. The position of Principal should deservedly be assigned to Mr. Johnson.

Attached is an email to an Educational Parent Support Group written by one of our HPE parents which provides an independent stakeholder view of the #1 School, Holmes Park Elementary.

Special Note:

In my opinion, the actions of this Superintendent's past with the Tulsa Public Schools and present with Sapulpa Public Schools have made our district the laughing stock of this area.