

Memorandum

To: PCSD Board
From: Todd Aldinger
Date: 1/3/2018
Re: Summary of Dr. Williams interview

On December 21, 2017, I interviewed Dr. Nicole Williams about certain matters related to graduation. The following is a brief summary of her answers:

I asked Dr. Williams when she first became aware that students graduated via Appeals to graduate with a lower score on a Regents examinations in 2017.

She did not recall the date when she first became aware. Dr. Williams then proceeded to refuse to answer questions until she could re-read my report from November 15, 2017. She delayed and read my report, and refused to answer whether she was aware that students graduated with Appeals before reading my report.

I next asked her how she became aware that students graduated via appeals. She was unable to answer. She delayed and said she could not answer without having more data available to her.

I asked Dr. Williams if she knew students were graduating via Appeals on Graduation Day: June 23, 2017. She answered "No."

I asked her whether she recalled students graduating in 2016 with Appeals to graduate. She refused to answer without having access to more data.

I asked her whether she was aware that Students graduated via 504 designations that were awarded in June. She delayed, and read my report again. She did not give a responsive answer.

I asked her if she recalled knowing that on June 23, 2017 certain students were graduated by 504 designations. She replied that she could not answer this question.

I asked her if she was aware that it was her responsibility to sign Superintendent Determinations and Appeals to Graduate. She gave a non-responsive answer. She then proceeded to again read my report and quote to me from it, instead of giving an answer.

I asked her if she ever reviewed an Appeal to Graduate. Her response was that she may have done so with her team early in her tenure.

I asked her whether she signed an Appeals Summary Form from 2014. She delayed by reading the entire document out loud. She finally answered that it appears to be her signature.

I asked her whether she signed or submitted an Appeals Summary Form to SED in 2017. She delayed and read the report and the form again. She then answer that she did not recall signing and submitting an Appeals Summary Form to SED.

I produced an Appeals Summary Form from 2015 and asked her whether it was her signature. She stated it was not. The signature belonged to Michelle Cardwell, who was an assistant superintendent at the time the document was executed.

I asked her if she ever reviewed Appeals Forms from earlier years. She was not able to answer.

I asked her when she became aware that students were graduated in 2017 via appeals and that these Appeals forms were not signed by her as superintendent. She did not recall the exact date or the month. She would not answer if she became aware of this before receiving my November Report.

Her attorney requested that we take a break.

When we returned to the interview Dr. Williams answered that she was first made aware that there were Appeals signed by someone other than herself when she first read my report.

I asked when she became aware that students who were going to receive 504 designations in August. She answered that she became aware of this at or around the time of reading my report.

I asked if she recalled meeting with Ms. Palmer, Ms. Lovinsky, and Ms. Simpson in August 2017 to discuss 504 designations in August. She does not recall having such a meeting.

I then presented her with an email regarding the August 2017 Section 504 meetings on which Dr. Williams was copied.

After some prodding, Dr. Williams recalled an informal conversation she had with Ms. Palmer in the high school. She denied discussing anything other than asking Ms. Palmer follow up with Dr. Rappleyea regarding Section 504 processes and procedures.

Dr. Williams had reviewed Dr. Rappleyea's response. She confirmed it was her practice to have other individuals other than her sign documents meant for her signature but they would be expect to sign on elsewhere on the document under a label accurately identifying their role, and not to sign on the superintendent line.

Dr. Williams would not answer whether she thought it was proper that Tracy Farrell signed Appeals forms because that is a legal question. She believes that she would need a legal opinion.

I asked Dr. Williams whether she met with Ms. Farrell this week to discuss appeals. She said no. I then asked Dr. Williams whether she met with Ms. Farrell to discuss this investigation. She responded that she asked Ms. Farrell earlier this week why she signed appeals. Dr. Williams said that Ms. Farrell through up her hands and said "something about the secretarial staff or the clerical staff." I asked Dr. Williams why she denied meeting with Ms. Farrell this week but then acknowledged having asked about the Appeals. Dr. Williams indicated that when I used the term meet with she was only answering to the extent that she did not have a formal meeting with Ms. Farrell.

I asked Dr. Williams if she read Principal Simpsons response to my report. We discussed a specific Appeal form. She was not able to comment on the propriety of the Appeals form, even though numerous sections were left blank, because she has not had the opportunity to interview team members.

Dr. Williams stated that she is not able to determine that a single student received an improper Appeal without being able to interview her team members.

I asked Dr. Williams if she ever took an investigation or looked into whether attendance Policy 5100 was being followed. She did not recall if this had ever happened.

Dr. Williams is not definitively aware that any student graduating in violation of Policy 5100 since she became Superintendent.

Dr. Williams has never looked into the PLATO program to ensure that credit recovery is being distinguished from credit acquisition.

Dr. Williams refused to answer whether she has spoken with Beth Sims since July 1, 2017.