

## **Public Statement – Dr. Melissa Skinner**

January 27, 2025

I am writing to address recent developments regarding my decision to accept an early and mutual separation, and to provide clarity on the circumstances surrounding this decision.

First and foremost, I want to assure our community that my actions and decisions have always been guided by a commitment to ensuring our scholars receive the highest level of academic excellence. As a Superintendent, it is my duty to analyze data, make informed decisions, and prioritize what is best for the growth and success of our students. I have done that every step of the way since I accepted this position.

The release of state assessment scores, along with daily observations of instructional practices, underscored the need for significant changes in literacy practices and overall academic strategies. Specifically, Steins Pillar Elementary experienced a 12% decline in ELA and a 14% decline in Math performance during the 2023–2024 school year. At the district level, 3rd grade ELA state testing scores showed a 12.6% decline, with an overall proficiency rate of just 35%. These outcomes made it clear that we must reevaluate and implement measures to support our scholars in becoming proficient and confident readers and learners. As the above is part of the public record I expected the community to be supportive in the actions I took to strengthen and enhance the learning environment for the students.

I understand that potential reassignments and restructuring decisions may not always be met with unanimous approval. However, these actions are part of my contractual obligations and responsibilities. While I cannot disclose confidential personnel information, I want to emphasize that all decisions were made based upon evidence with the district’s best interests in mind.

With regard to the allegations of quid pro quo hiring or nepotism, I want to provide clarity on these matters now that I am leaving the district. The claim of quid pro quo is entirely unfounded. During my hiring process in March, it would have been impossible for me to foresee that a Transportation Manager position would become vacant in November or that a board member would later express interest in applying. All decisions regarding this matter were made in full compliance with district policies. From my vantage point, the decision to hire Jessica Brumble as Transportation Manager was based on a committee’s objective evaluation of all candidates.

Regarding allegations of nepotism, it is important to note that the hiring process for the position in question was managed by the Human Resources department while I was not yet physically present in the district. A campus committee conducted interviews and selected the candidate they deemed the best fit for the role. Furthermore, the board reviewed and approved this hire during a public meeting as part of the agenda, and no concerns were raised at the time.

I remain committed to transparency in all decisions and processes. After careful reflection and discussion, the decision to pursue a mutual separation has been reached. While I believe that the complaints against me are based on innuendo and lack factual basis, I understand that my trust in

the community, and the community's trust in me, has been irrevocably damaged. This outcome allows for a transition that prioritizes the district's continued focus on academic excellence and growth while respecting all parties involved.

I appreciate the relationship which me and my family have established in Crook County and I am grateful for the opportunity to help the students grow academically.

