

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Heidi Haas, President - Board of Education**

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**907.388.1912**

**NEWS RELEASE**

**Former Superintendent's Arbitration Case Resolved**

Two and a half years after terminating former superintendent Peter Lewis, the parties received a decision in the arbitration matter.

Despite disagreement with portions of the decision, it is in the District's best interests to simply pay the award, minimizing further financial risks and permanently resolving all claims and allegations at issue. In Alaska, courts generally defer to the arbitrator's decision as arbitration is the preferred method for resolving disputes.

Lewis was terminated from the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District in 2014 after the Board learned that Lewis had prior knowledge of significant allegations regarding district employee Claude Fowlkes and that Lewis failed to ensure appropriate employment action was taken. The Board did what was needed at the time and the district has moved on.

As the Board learned of these concerns it was committed to acting on the identified problems as quickly as possible. It immediately hired an outside investigation firm so that it could fully understand what actions needed to be taken. As a result of the Board's efforts, there is now an effective system in place to ensure that employee investigations, evaluations, discipline and hiring decisions are managed in a manner that ensures consistent, fully informed decision-making.

Many positive changes have been made since the Lewis termination, and the Board continues to have confidence in the current administration. For instance, the Human Resources' department was strengthened; the District instituted a team approach to disciplinary investigations and decisions; and the Board passed a policy expanding its sexual abuse awareness and prevention program. Changes like these have been the key to a significant shift in the District to ensure that allegations of employee misconduct involving students are handled in an appropriate, serious manner that errs on the side of student safety.

Board President Heidi Haas stated, "The superintendent is the only employee we supervise. The Board made the right decision, and together with Dr. Gaborik we will continue to ensure the District is a safe, supportive environment for students and staff."

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