



FAQ: Investigation into Grade and Record Changes March 29, 2022

Note: The following questions were submitted by community members but have been edited and summarized in order to provide clarity. The most recent changes or additions are listed at the top.

In the Investigation Report, there are several references to Mr. Gilchrist mentioning that he changed grades due to general education teachers not following accommodation plans as per Individual Education Plans and 504 plans. Is there any evidence that this claim is true?

In reviewing that claim with staff, including Special Education teachers and administrators, there is no evidence that staff failed to follow those accommodations required by student IEPs and 504 plans.

How will the District address changes made to the records of graduated students?

The academic records of graduated students will revert back to the teacher issued grade in all instances except those where clear evidence confirmed that the change was consistent with District grading policies. These corrections will occur no later than mid-April. Graduates will not be notified that their grade is being changed back to the original, but may contact the Spring Lake High School Registrar requesting a copy of their transcript at any time.

How will the District address changes made to the records of current students?

The parents of current students whose grades were changed by the former principal will be notified by email this month that their child's grade will be changed back to the original, teacher issued grade and have the opportunity to appeal the final grade to the teacher of record.

Why did the District accept the resignation of Mr. Gilchrist instead of terminating his employment?

The District consulted with legal counsel on the question of how to end employment with Mr. Gilchrist. While terminating his employment is a more punitive measure, it is in the best interest of the District legally and financially to avoid potential future litigation by accepting his voluntary resignation.

Would Mr. Gilchrist's pension and/or other retirement benefits have been impacted had the District terminated his employment?

No. Whether a Michigan public school employee is fired or resigns has no impact on his or her retirement benefits, which are controlled by the Michigan Office of Retirement Services and not their employing district.

Why wasn't an independent investigation conducted by an outside party?

Board policy calls for complaints against administrators to be investigated by the Superintendent, with the exception of complaints against the Superintendent, which should be reported to the Board president. This investigation was conducted as per Board policy and in consultation with legal counsel. However, SLPS will be forwarding the investigation to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE). MDE may investigate the matter further and could revoke Mr. Gilchrist's administrative certification.

Will there be any further investigation into these matters?

The investigation was thorough and fair, and resulted in a clear assignment of responsibility. Consideration was given to expanding the initial parameters but the findings, including interviews with teaching staff and a review of emails related to these matters, do not indicate that doing so will further clarify “why” the conduct occurred.