

Tewksbury Public Schools

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

I am writing to you to apologize for the inadvertent release of an internal document compiled to help me better understand the sudden increase in the number of students attending out-of-district schools. It is my understanding that the document has generated a high level of concern among parents, guardians, and community members, and has caused many of you to lose trust in the Tewksbury Public Schools and in me personally. For this, I am sincerely sorry.

The document, entitled "Revised Data – Out-Of-District Placement Data", was compiled by staff, at my request, in preparation of addressing the significant rise in out-of-district placements. I wanted to better understand the conditions under which students were being placed in out-of-district schools. Data fields in the document identified grade, school location, previous placement, year placement started, settlement or team decision, level of placement cooperation and notes. Names were not included. Although the document was inadvertently included in the March 24, 2015, School Committee meeting agenda, it was not referred to or discussed during the meeting.

I realize two specific data fields generated the highest level of concern. To fully understand the meaning of the data points, it is important to understand the context in which the data was compiled. First, I wanted to identify the conditions under which a student was placed in an out-of-district school in an attempt to plan how we might improve special education programming for all. I also wanted to know whether building capacity through in-district programming would increase the likelihood parents might seriously consider returning their child to the Tewksbury Public Schools. In hindsight, the terms, "likely, less likely and not likely" would have been a better word choice. I am very sorry for any anguish or embarrassment the document has caused to any individual or family.

I cannot begin to tell you how embarrassed I am and, more importantly, how sorry I am to have caused many of you to lose the trust and respect of the Tewksbury Public Schools and me personally. I take my leadership role seriously. Trust and confidence is a critical aspect of successful school leadership and I am truly sorry for what has been lost. I promise to work towards regaining the trust and confidence of parents, guardians, and students and hope this correspondence will serve as the first step.

Sincerely,

John E. O'Connor

John E. O'Connor, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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TPS Mission Statement:

To educate and challenge all learners in the Tewksbury Public School Community while supporting their development as well prepared and productive members of a diverse global society.