



**ROCKFORD
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**

LaVonne M. Sheffield, Ph.D.
Superintendent
201 South Madison Street
Rockford, Illinois 61104-2092
Phone 815/966-3000

November 23, 2009

Ms. Molly Phalen
Rockford Education Association, IEA-NEA
4949 Harrison Avenue, Suite 102
Rockford, IL 61108

Dear Molly,

I am writing to let you know that I am concerned by the comments you are making to local news media that draw a false connection between minor pranks at East High School and our discipline code.

The purpose of this letter is to set the record straight so that members of your bargaining unit are operating with the best information possible.

First of all, as you well know, no changes have occurred in the Discipline Code for Rockford Public Schools. What the Board of Education adopted in September was an administrative guide to assist in the uniform application of discipline and to encourage positive behavior interventions over punitive measures that result in students losing valuable instruction time.

Secondly, recent disruptions at East involve a few students pulling fire alarms -- and nothing more. By commenting to the media that teachers are concerned over changes in discipline protocol, you're adding fuel to an imaginary fire. Students have falsely activated fire alarms since fire alarms were invented. There have been no riots or gang violence associated with these random juvenile stunts and East remains a safe learning environment. Students responsible for recent disruptions are being arrested and recommended for expulsion. To issue statements in the media that suggest otherwise is doing more harm than good. If you or your members have any information to support such an implication, please send the facts to my office at your earliest convenience.

Finally, you are a veteran educator who occupies a leadership position in our schools. Teachers will model their behavior after yours. I'm sure that you do not want the spreading of half-truths and innuendo to become the norm for the most important group of employees in our education system. Adults should not be perpetuating unfounded rumors.

I trust we will continue to work as partners in support of our children. The future of our children and our town depends on us.

Sincerely,

LaVonne M. Sheffield, Ph.D.

C: Board Members