



MUSTANG PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Empowering Today To Achieve A Better Tomorrow

Charles Bradley
Superintendent
Mustang Public Schools
12400 SW 15th ST
Yukon, OK 73099

8/9/2022

Oklahoma State Board of Education
Oklahoma State Department of Education
Oliver Hodge Building
2500 N Lincoln Blvd
OKC, OK 73105

Superintendent Hofmeister, Carlisha Bradley, Jennifer Monies, Estela Hernandez, Brian Bobek, Trent Smith, and Sarah Lepak (Members of the State Board of Education):

My name is Charles Bradley and I am the Superintendent of Mustang Public Schools. I am writing to you today in regards to the decision that was rendered at the July 28, 2022 State Board of Education meeting concerning the accreditation status of Mustang Public Schools in relation to a reported violation of HB 1775.

I would like to open a dialogue and request that the decision be revisited at either a Special Board Meeting or at the next Regular Meeting of the Board on Thursday, August 25, 2022. When I learned that Mustang was being discussed in an open meeting of the State Board, I was surprised and quickly turned on the live stream only to hear the vote that Mustang Public Schools would be Accredited with Warning for the 2022-23 school year. To say I was in shock would be an understatement. The only agenda item that related to this discussion and decision was for "Discussion and possible action on school district and school site accreditation recommendations for the 2022-23 school year -70 O.S. §§ 3-104, 3-104.3, 3- 104.4; OAC 210:35-3-201." For such a harsh consequence, I would expect that there would be a separate agenda item, specifically naming Mustang Public Schools, and providing the opportunity to hear the evidence and specific context of the situation. Regrettably, this did not occur, so I am requesting that MPS be afforded the opportunity at either a Special Board Meeting or at the next Regular Meeting of the Board.

Additionally, from my reading of the law and rules of HB 1775, it appears that there is no appeal process for school districts when it comes to matters of consequence relating to findings presented to the Board. This would, on face value, appear to prohibit due process. In fact, I have yet to hear from a member of the State Board or the State Department of Education in an official capacity to discuss the decision. It would only seem fair to allow for discussion in an open forum about the events, investigation, determination, and consequences. In this case, that has not occurred. In fact, most of the information that I have gleaned has been through media reports such as from *The Frontier*:

The district reported its findings to the state and has its own plan of correction, State Department of Education spokeswoman Leslie Berger told *The Frontier*. Mustang claimed that the State Department of Education had confirmed the findings of its internal investigation, but Berger said the agency never endorsed the district's conclusion.



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The question here is obvious, if the Oklahoma State Department of Education did not agree that there had been a violation of HB1775, then why was Mustang's accreditation recommendation anything other than "accreditation with no deficiencies?" And then there is this from *The Daily Oklahoman*:

...the board learned Mustang Public Schools also had an HB 1775 complaint that it had investigated and confirmed. Board members said they were unaware they were voting on a second district accused of violating the law. All school accreditation recommendations were compiled for one blanket vote until the board pulled out Tulsa and Mustang individually.

To be consistent with their Tulsa decision, board members voted 4-2 to label Mustang as accredited with warning, as well, though the state Education Department recommended accreditation with deficiency.

If the Board members, themselves, were unaware of an impending vote to downgrade Mustang's accreditation status, how could I or anyone for that matter, be reasonably informed about what to expect? I will detail more about the specific events later, but suffice to say that in order to afford Mustang Public Schools with due process, and for there to be an open dialogue so that all parties can be on the same page and make an informed decision, I request that the Board revisit this decision in a Special Board Meeting or at the next Regular Meeting of the Board.

In regard to the specific context that precipitated this matter, I will attempt to summarize the events leading up to and immediately following the incident. In January 2022, a parent brought a concern to MPS Administration about an activity that occurred in a single middle school classroom. Just as with any concern presented, we promptly investigated and acted quickly to resolve the issue to the complainants satisfaction within a matter of days. This was a singular isolated incident by a single employee, out of over 1,600 employees, which has now led to severe consequences for an entire district of over 13,000 students. I fail to see any incentive for a school district to investigate concerns and remedy them when this is the outcome. MPS acted quickly and did everything correctly in this instance, yet the consequences of one singular curricular choice were amplified without any knowledge of context in an attempt to be fair and consistent with an earlier decision of the Board at this same meeting. I submit to you that the decision to lower Mustang's accreditation to Accredited with Warning was not fair, but it was, instead, equal. It is my belief that, especially in matters of this seriousness, that individual consideration ought to be granted to each case, rather than arbitrarily applying a standard of equalness. **Based on the context, and after close examination of the law, this *voluntary* activity may not have even violated the letter of the law.** To be fair, I request that an agenda item be included in either a Special Board Meeting or at the next Regular Meeting of the State Board of Education to allow an open dialogue concerning the specifics of the situation, and to provide guidance on how Mustang, and districts throughout the state, ought best handle the complexities presented here.

Finally, I would like to conclude by thanking you for your time in reading this and for your public service. I am a lifelong educator and public school supporter. As the leader of an incredible school district, I cannot simply stand idly by in this instance without asking for remedy. Ultimately, I believe that given the issues outlined above, the decision to downgrade the accreditation status of Mustang Public Schools should be vacated and the accreditation be restored to Fully Accredited with No Deficiencies. In absence of that, I would ask that, at a minimum, the Board amend the original decision to match the recommendations from the State Department of Education and vote to levy Accreditation with Deficiency for 2022-23. Our amazing staff and our wonderful students and families deserve the chance to be heard, and I will gladly represent them either at a Special Board Meeting or at the next Regular Meeting of the Board. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,
Charles Bradley, Superintendent
Mustang Public Schools