

January 3, 2022

Dear Jason Mellema and The Dansville Schools Board of Education,

It is with mixed feelings that I am writing this letter to you, as I always thought I would retire from Dansville Schools, rather than unexpectedly resign from here. I had been struggling with this decision, but when I returned from break on January 3rd and learned that same day that Mr. Stolz had turned in an application for the recall of Mr. Kapp, it became clear, as my heart became more heavy, that I needed to move forward with my resignation. Please accept this letter as my resignation from my position as Dansville Middle School Principal. I have made the decision to pursue a different opportunity that will allow me to focus my attention on my family's needs as well as my well being. My last day at Dansville Schools will be (was) Friday, January 14, 2022.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here and am honored to have had the chance to touch the lives of so many children, amazing teachers and hardworking staff. It has been as much a pleasure to learn from them as it has been to teach and lead them. Thank you so very much for making my administration career all the more meaningful by providing me with an opportunity to return to my home with my Aggie Family.

To my fellow administrators, current and recently retired, I say thank you. Thank you for laughing with me, creating lasting memories that I will cherish, and for letting me learn beside you. I would not be the educator I am today without the leadership of Amy Hodgson, who was an extraordinary leader. She taught me to exhaust every possibility to help and support our students, reminding me that the more we help them now, the better their future, which in the end, also improves our community and our world. Amy taught me how to lead with my heart and gave me the green light to think outside the box, be creative, and be myself, which not all superintendents would do. I will miss you all.

I have worked in multiple school districts, and it is hard to explain my experience at Dansville Schools as being anything but magical and positive. Our Aggie Family, (meaning our school staff and our community), supported each other, we helped each other, we listened to each other, and we trusted each other. This past year, that trust has been put to the test. Rather than communicate directly with the teachers, staff, coaches, and administration, some community members have relied on a board member to intentionally circumvent established policy. A policy that is built on a foundation of trust, ensures good communication and promotes healthy relationships. If we want to continue as a united school community, a true Aggie Family, this behavior that is eroding the foundation of our school, must come to an end. As an administrator, I have learned that assumptions, based on either no facts or only one side of a story, creates problems that can grow so big that they cause serious harm. I believe this has happened right here in Dansville- this place I love- my home. As a community, we need to be brave enough and care enough about the future of our school, to have conversations and listen to one another with open hearts and minds, knowing we will not always agree.

My parents taught me to do my best, no matter what; no excuses. My husband and I have instilled this same way of thinking in our own children. We work hard, we do our best, and we try our best because we want to make the Graf/Minnis family proud. I have considered it a privilege and an honor to be an Aggie for as long as I can remember. I think it's just in my DNA because our family has been part of this school since the late 1800s.... and I still feel that way today. Our district's future can be bright, but only if our community will come together and begin to trust one another again. A school cannot function the way our school has functioned for so many wonderful years, without unity between parents, students, staff and the school board. We must trust again to repair what has been damaged in our Aggie Family.

Because of my love for this school and the pride I take in representing both my family and my Aggie Family, I have been working hard to make this transition as smooth as possible for our students and staff. It is with a heavy heart that I say good-bye to all of those who have meant so much to me. I wish all the best to the Dansville families and hope for nothing but good things for the future education of each of your children.

Sincerely, with all my Aggie love,

Erin E. Graf