

May 11th, 2021

TO: The Peninsula Union School Board President and Members (President John Nicolini, Member Robin Marks, Member Dale Unea)

FROM: The Peninsula Union Certificated Union, and select classified staff members

RE: Official Letter - Motion of No Confidence against Lark Doolan, Principal/Superintendent

To The Esteemed Peninsula School Board,

We are writing this letter to the Board of Trustees because we have lost confidence in the leadership of Superintendent/Principal Lark Doolan. This arises from a continuous series of negative and harmful experiences we have had with him.

Over the course of the last several months a common narrative has emerged, one that centers on harm that has been caused by Lark Doolan and a fear of speaking up about it. A majority of our staff have reported feeling harmed by the words or actions of our administrator this past school year. Several have reported ongoing or chronic harm that has affected mental as well as physical health. A former intern reported feeling this way as well. These employees have also expressed feeling too afraid to speak up about the harm caused for fear of retribution.

The staff unanimously asked for a restorative conference with the Superintendent/Principal, to begin a process of healing and renew our trust in our working environment. The Superintendent/Principal has always been adamant in support of restorative practices to build the trust of our students and a sense of community.

Despite several repeated offers to mitigate harm through restorative justice, Lark Doolan was evasive and dismissive of such requests. Instead he chose to retaliate against our union's leadership for bringing the impact of his actions to his attention, and for organizing union meetings to discuss our concerns about working conditions. He further blamed staff afterward during a staff meeting for not communicating with him correctly, and outlined appropriate procedures for how we need to talk to him in the future, as well as how we can respectfully take feedback from him. This further intimidated the staff and was additionally harmful.

The working environment that Lark Doolan has created at Peninsula deprives teachers and staff of the basic emotional safety required to feel safe and comfortable at work. The majority of employees (7 out of 9) have reported feeling anxious during interactions with him, and afraid to speak to him directly about micro and macro aggressions for fear of retribution. This fear stems from past and current evidence of staff members speaking up and being punished or disciplined. Other staff members not at the receiving end of this interpersonal violence watch it happen, and fear for their own well being. This inconsistent application of discipline and confusing differences in how staff members are treated further causes distress amongst a majority of staff. One of the

reasons the turnover rate has been so high at Peninsula since Lark has been hired is because of his interpersonal aggression toward staff members he does not like or agree with.

Additionally, threatening and retaliating against workers for speaking to colleagues about working conditions interferes with protected rights under the Educational Employee Relations Act (EERA), and is an illegal unfair labor practice.

Lark has made it very clear that he is not willing to compromise or collaborate with staff in solutions to move forward through harm. The need that he has to control situations has overridden his ability to work productively with staff to solve problems. When we try to discuss the issues with him he continues to refuse to take ownership of the harm he has caused, and instead places undue blame on others.

We have lost faith in his ability to be a fair, just, and empathetic leader. We do not take this decision lightly, and we feel extremely afraid of further repercussions this may cause us and our employment. However we can no longer ignore the abuse and sincerely want it to stop.

For all of these reasons, we have lost confidence in the leadership of Superintendent/Principal Lark Doolan and urge the Board of Trustees not to renew his contract of employment.

With regard,

Heidi Taylor
CTA Bargaining Unit Spokesperson
(on behalf of 6 Peninsula Union Certificated and Classified Staff Members)