

Title: Statement from Pamela Smith-Gordon: Promoting Equitable Education for All

Attn press:

My Letter of Resignation was initially intended to encourage the OSDE Board and Superintendent to reflect on the issues within the department and engage in discussions for finding possible solutions. Unfortunately, it ended up being released to the media.

Statement of Belief:

First and foremost, my belief is education is not a partisan issue. Education is for all, no matter your political views or your personal likes. It is not up to our educators to teach personal views, religious preferences nor personal opinions. It is up to our schools to ensure each child receives a strong fundamental foundation in the basics and to build from there by teaching facts, critical thinking skills, independent thinking and to promote self-confidence. These are the tools in which our educational systems, be it private, public, home schooling should focus. These tools will ensure our kids become self-reliant, capable decision makers by the time they leave 12th grade. They will be equipped to make their own decisions and much wiser choices. They will not depend on others to make their minds up for them.

Role of the OSDE:

The job of the OSDE, I believe, is to make available funding opportunities, set and enforce rules, regulations, procedures, and accountability under the umbrella of “**Service**”. The OSDE should be the first place our education providers come to for guidance, help to implement programs and for support. We should be there to serve and ensure.

Respecting Dignity:

It is crucial that no schools should ever be threatened, humiliated, or scolded publicly. The first course of action for a school having difficulties is to work together to evaluate what the problem is and to work with them to correct the problems, leaving their dignity intact. We did not see this with TPS and the OSDE, which was to be their source of help, ended up being a dictator threatening at every turn. It was the neglect of the OSDE which let TPS get so far behind.

Avoiding Political Exploitation:

No child or educational entity should ever be used as a political pawn or to gain self-promotion and from the inside of the department, it appears this was

happening. Why else would more time be spent with cameras instead of in the halls of a struggling OSDE in transition? Our Oklahoma should come before a National concern.

The Call for Change:

Once again, I want to emphasize that education should not be a partisan matter. To fulfill our responsibilities toward the students and institutions we are meant to serve, the OSDE must operate at its best. Leadership plays a crucial role in promoting a vision and inspiring belief in a mission. As a passionate Oklahoma educator and citizen, I felt compelled to inform the "difference makers" our OSDE Board and Superintendent that a change is necessary.