

## What Ethical Leadership Acts Like – Part 1

Dear Martha Saunders, [Gordon Cannon](#), [Alvin Williams](#), [Harold Doty](#), and [Charles Jordan](#), take a look at the following article from NJ.com, *The Jersey Journal*. It should remind you of your failures of ethics and leadership:

By [Meghan D. Hodgin/NJ.com](#)

on January 19, 2013 at 12:15 PM, updated January 19, 2013 at 1:44 PM

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As the new superintendent for Bedminster Township School District, I am honored to welcome you back to another exciting and productive school year. I want to begin by thanking the numerous staff, parents, and community members who continue to provide a warm welcome since my arrival on July 15th. I look forward to spending the next few months learning even more about our District and the community.

Bedminster Township School District is focused on providing a high quality education for each and every child. Indeed, it's one of the reasons I wanted to come to Bedminster. As the employees of this District educate the community's children, we will continuously improve to insure implementation of our District's mission: *"...dedicated to the development of values, skills and knowledge in all children through a meaningful and challenging education, enabling them to become contributing members of their community...has expectations that children at all grade levels will achieve through the delivery of instructional programs aligned with and measured against the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards."*

What I find inspirational about Bedminster Township School is the dedication and capacity to continuously improve and implement our mission. I've been immediately impressed by the pride, determination, knowledge, and skill demonstrated by our employees. Quite simply, I feel privileged to join BTSD and become a part of the Bedminster community, a community that so readily supports our endeavors.

I hope parents and community members will continue your strong support of our schools and our employees. Your volunteerism and donations always make a difference to our classrooms. We need your partnership to continue offering an excellent education to every child. Please communicate with teachers, join us at school events, join the Parent Teacher Organization and support our children by showing that you value the school, its programs and its teachers.

Thank you for your strong support of our school. Again, it is my privilege to serve you, and I look forward to becoming an integral part of our community.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Koos, Ed.S.

This welcome message appeared on the Bedminster School District's website until Jan. 11 at 3:09 a.m., when the website was modified to change the text of the letter.

*From bedminsterschool.org*

**BEDMINSTER** — The board of education says it has looked into the concerns surrounding two cases of possible plagiarism by Superintendent of Schools Carolyn R. Koos, and is "satisfied that she understands her mistake and will not repeat it," board president Louis Casella said in a statement.

"The board has fully expressed and discussed its concerns with the superintendent," Casella said. "Superintendent Koos has apologized for any adverse effect this may have had on the district."

NJ.com first reported the possible plagiarism Jan. 10, when a **letter sent to the district appeared to be a near word-for-word copy** of a Nov. 27 note that was published on an Iowa school district's website, written by Bettendorf Superintendent of Schools Theron J. Shutte.

Koos' version of the letter — which had her signed name at the bottom — remained on the district's website until Jan. 4, when it was taken down 30 minutes after NJ.com left voicemail/email messages for Koos.

Koos told Bernardsville-Bedminster Patch **that the seeming plagiarism of the Bettendorf message was actually a misunderstanding**, and that she should have attributed Shutte's messages to him.

Koos called the incident "a mistake," and said she had an email from Shutte giving her permission to use the comments in her own letter, according to Patch.

However, Shutte told NJ.com he first heard from Koos sometime on Jan. 4, two days after the letter was already published on Bedminster's website with Koos' name signed to it.

On Jan. 11, Casella said the **school board would investigate the possible plagiarism** and, "as soon as we're able to get through everthing and get to the bottom of it, we will take appropriate steps from there."

But earlier that morning, the school district's website had been changed to edit **another letter from the superintendent that appeared to be plagiarized** from another school district.

The letter was originally published on the school district's website at the start of the school year, but at 3:09 a.m. Jan. 11, the page was modified and the letter had been adjusted.

Until then, most of the letter was a word-for-word replica of portions of a 2011 letter from

a Santa Clara, Calif. superintendent.

Santa Clara Unified School District Superintendent Bobbie Plough told NJ.com in an email that she does not know Koos, and "this appears to be a portion of my message from our Santa Clara Unified 'School Days' publication in 2011."

Anne Buchholtz, a professor of Leadership and Ethics and director of the Institute of Ethical Leadership at the Rutgers Business School, previously told NJ.com that plagiarism is a huge problem in New Jersey's schools.

**According to Standard Five of the New Jersey Standards for Teachers and School Leaders**, "School administrators shall be educational leaders who promote the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner."

"Plagiarizing is not acting with integrity, and it certainly isn't ethical," Buchholtz said.

Casella said the school board has directed Koos "to establish and implement a protocol for all future information disseminated from her office that will avoid any recurrence."

[http://www.nj.com/somerset/index.ssf/2013/01/bedminster\\_superintendent\\_unde.html#incart\\_river\\_default](http://www.nj.com/somerset/index.ssf/2013/01/bedminster_superintendent_unde.html#incart_river_default)

Well, does this report about Ms. Koos sound familiar? It should. With a big difference. Well, Martha Saunders, Alvin Williams, Gordon Cannon, Harold Doty, Charles Jordan, and those who allow plagiarized documents to remain on the USM website as if they were original materials, does this report about Ms. Koos sound familiar? It should. With a big difference. You chose not to act ethically with the same behavior that a New Jersey school district corrected with regard to Ms. Koos' unethical conduct. Some leaders know how to act ethically, even though you don't. Let's refresh your memories...See Part 2 of this report, tomorrow.