



Draper Notes

September 2, 2015

Superintendent Not Interested in Highly Effective Teachers

This is a brief story of a teacher named Tammy Jones. She was born, grew up, and graduated from DeSoto County. Mrs. Jones eventually returned to DeSoto with her family and pursued a teaching career at DeSoto County High School, her alma mater. As an exceptional teacher, she spent countless hours with her students to make certain that they were successful. In addition, she coached in various extracurricular activities afterschool. Mrs. Jones was an extraordinary role model for our students.

After becoming dean of students at DeSoto County High School, that same firm but fair attitude toward our students was demonstrated on a daily basis. Not everyone agreed with every decision, which is the case with every dean of students, but her strong sense of right and wrong was evident in those decisions regarding our students. Even as dean, she would be out on the field coaching our students at the end of her workday.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Jones had not accumulated the number of years in this county to earn tenure (professional service contract). So when the new superintendent (Gary) took office in November, 2012, Mrs. Jones was told at the end of the school year that her services were no longer needed. No reason was given.

Mrs. Jones was promptly offered a teaching position in Hardee County and worked just as hard as she did in DeSoto. In fact, she earned the designation of a highly effective teacher. Every school district in Florida wants to hire highly effective teachers. Very recently, Mrs. Jones again applied for a teaching position at DeSoto County High School. She wanted to return to her home county. The people at DeSoto County High School interviewed, checked references, and made a recommendation to hire Mrs. Jones as a teacher. Of course, she wanted to coach our students afterschool. Sadly, this recommendation was disapproved by the superintendent (Gary) without reason. Instead of placing a highly effective, certified teacher in the classroom, the superintendent approved the hiring of a substitute teacher.

Substitute teachers are important for the smooth operation of classrooms for the short term, but the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) expects each school district to work diligently to find certified teachers for every classroom. Certainly, the FDOE would find it strange that a fully certified teacher, with excellent credentials was disapproved without reason for a vacant classroom teaching position. Everyone knows that the superintendent (Gary) does not have to give a reason. That is something we hear often.

Mrs. Tammy Jones is a product of DeSoto County, educated in DeSoto County, left DeSoto to earn the necessary teaching degrees, is a highly effective teacher, and tried to return to assist other fine teachers in making a difference in the lives of DeSoto students. Mrs. Jones' four children all have or presently in the process of obtaining college degrees. Her children were also born, grew up and graduated from DeSoto County. One of her daughters is a Captain in the United States Army. It is obvious that her parenting skills are also excellent.

All of these reasons to hire Mrs. Jones do not matter. With one click on a computer, the superintendent (Gary) disapproved the recommendation of Mrs. Jones without citing any reason. Again, our students lose.