

December 22, 2025

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Board of Education, Sun Prairie Area School District
501 South Bird Street
Sun Prairie, WI 53590

Re: Sun Prairie West High School - Independent Investigation Report

Dear Board of Education:

Thank you for asking my firm and I to represent the Sun Prairie Area School District in conducting an independent investigation. Previously, you asked our firm to conduct an independent investigation related to inappropriate incidents that may have involved students and former staff at Sun Prairie West High School and which have recently been the subject of criminal charges against a former school employee, Robert Gilkey-Meisegeier. In particular, we were asked to investigate whether any school district employees were aware of inappropriate conduct and whether any school district employees failed to timely report any suspected child abuse pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 48.981(2)(a)16m or any other applicable laws or district policies.

Methodology and Independence

Before turning to the findings of our investigation, I would like to briefly describe the process that we took in order to conduct the investigation. Generally, our investigation included both a document review and many in-person interviews. We also researched and reviewed applicable state and federal law.

In terms of document review, we reviewed all relevant school district policies, relevant employee personnel files, training records, training materials, student records (specifically attendance and discipline records), investigation summaries/notes as well as all publicly available information connected to the pending state and criminal charges against Gilkey-Meisegeier. We also reviewed emails from the relevant time periods and a variety of text messages that we were provided. We independently searched and reviewed social media posts pertaining to relevant events and the District's response. We also reviewed a copy of the internal administrative review of the school resource officers conducted by the Sun Prairie Police Department.

Additionally, we conducted in-person interviews of many individuals with relevant information. Beyond interviewing involved students and parents who were willing to participate, we interviewed the following employees of the Sun Prairie School District: Dr. Brad Saron; Stephanie Leonard; Nick Reichhoff; Bridget Kotarak; Chris Sadler; Jennifer Ploeger; Ed Ford; Nehemirah Barrett; Jamie Diaz; Zenna Schultz; Shelby Wampole; Erin Kaste; Nora Haigh; and Quinton Cannon. In total, there were over 50 hours of interviews conducted as part of this investigation.

All school district officials were provided warnings pursuant to *Garrity v. New Jersey*, 385 U.S. 493 (1967). We also sought interviews with students and families who may have had relevant information. To accomplish that, we sent written communications to relevant families inviting them to participate in voluntary interviews at neutral locations. Some families did choose to participate in interviews, while others understandably decided not to participate.

I conducted each interview with the assistance of an associate with our firm, Attorney Kathleen Kruse, so that we could ensure an accurate accounting of everything that was discussed during the interviews. Impartiality and independence was maintained throughout the duration of the investigation. While I did periodically provide updates to legal counsel for the District, no District officials or legal counsel attempted to control or interfere with our investigation. All District officials that we interacted with or interviewed were professional in all interactions.

FACTUAL OVERVIEW

Rumors During the 2023-2024 School Year

Sun Prairie West High School opened in 2022. That Fall, Robert Gilkey-Meisegeier started at Sun Prairie West as a Youth Advocate. He also served as the Sophomore Boys' Basketball Head Coach. Student A, then a sophomore, served as the basketball team's student manager.

From our interviews, we learned that during the 2023-2024 school year, students began to gossip about an inappropriate relationship between Gilkey-Meisegeier and Student A¹. There were no specifics to the rumors, but they were pervasive enough that the administration within the school became aware of it. Administration generally believed that the rumors originated from a female student who had been involved in multiple verbal conflicts with Student A.

In the aftermath of one such student conflict, Principal Jennifer Ploeger and Assistant Principal Ed Ford began to informally investigate these rumors. They spoke with students who had been discussing the rumors and asked whether they were aware of any evidence to substantiate the claims. Each time, students allegedly said there was none. Gilkey-Meisegeier and Student A, when asked, both denied the allegations that their relationship was inappropriate. Ploeger and Ford ultimately concluded that the rumors were retaliatory, stemming from a dispute between Student A and a rival group of girls. No formal action was taken, though Ploeger advised Gilkey-Meisegeier not to put himself in a compromising position and to keep his distance from Student A to avoid the rumors in the future.

The rumors continued into the 2024-2025 school year. It seemed that the rumors would increase in intensity if Gilkey-Meisegeier was disciplining students more often, or if Student A was having problems with other students. However, each time the rumors would re-surface, Ploeger generally believed that the rumors would always link back to a group of students who had disputes with Student A.

¹ Throughout this report, we make a conscious effort to protect the privacy and identities of all students. However, within this report, Student A is referred to by this pseudonym so that the reader can differentiate between interactions involving her versus other students who are simply identified as a student.

November 2024 Student Suspension

On November 13, 2024, a student, who was not otherwise involved in any prior rumors, allegations or investigation, was suspended for two days after loudly alleging during a FaceTime call that Gilkey-Meisegeier had an inappropriate relationship with Student A. Just prior to voicing these allegations, this student was disciplined by Gilkey-Meisegeier for wandering the halls during class. Voicing her displeasure, the student was on a FaceTime call in the commons area with an unidentified individual, talking about Gilkey-Meisegeier's alleged inappropriate relationship with Student A. Youth Advocates Shelby Wampole and Erin Kaste overheard this conversation, and immediately reported it to Principal Ploeger.

Ploeger contacted Assistant Principal Nehemirah Barrett and asked him to promptly suspend the student from school and inform Gilkey-Meisegeier when the discipline was doled out. Barrett met with the student to discuss her behavior and her consequence. During the conversation, the student indicated that she knew there was an inappropriate relationship between Gilkey-Meisegeier and Student A, because there were text messages between Student A and Gilkey-Meisegeier.

Despite an explicit reference to the existence of text messages and the insinuation that they were inappropriate in nature, Barrett did not follow up on this claim or inform Ploeger. As part of the suspension process, Barrett spoke with the student's father, who, according to Barrett, apparently reiterated that the school was making a mistake.

Before suspending this student, Barrett did not meet with Student A, Gilkey-Meisegeier, or anyone else – he was simply following Ploeger's orders. After receiving confirmation from Wampole that the student had in fact been discussing the rumors loudly in the commons area, Barrett and Ploeger believed they had enough evidence to impose a consequence on this student. When Barrett and Ploeger collaborated on the consequence, Ploeger believed that a suspension was appropriate. Barrett questioned the severity of the suspension and advocated for a restorative justice session, however, Gilkey-Meisegeier declined to participate. Ultimately, the student received an in-school suspension for the remainder of the school day, and an out of school suspension for the following day.

Following the student's suspension, Assistant Principals Ford and Barrett spoke with Gilkey-Meisegeier and strongly advised him to refrain from interacting with Student A at school. While Ford and Barrett did not believe the rumors, they believed it was in everyone's best interest for the rumors to die down. Gilkey-Meisegeier was reportedly reassuring and grateful for their recommendations.

Anonymous Tip

On April 3, 2025, just before 10:00 p.m., an anonymous tip was submitted to the Sun Prairie School District, alleging that Gilkey-Meisegeier was involved in an inappropriate relationship with Student A. The tip expressly suggested grooming behavior and retaliation and expressed deep concern about the relationship's impact on Student A and the overall school environment. The tip also contained an example of a student discipline issue, with allegations of inappropriate discipline of certain students, that occurred less than 48 hours prior. In full, the tip was as follows:

I am writing to express concerns about the safety and well-being of a student at Sun Prairie West High School, [Student A].... I believe she is being subjected in inappropriate behavior by Robert Gilkey Meisegeier, the dean of the school.

It has come to my attention that Robert been following [Student A] on multiple social media accounts and is frequently seen in presence, often in his office. Notably, he makes a point of closing the blinds or rushing her out when other staff members are nearby. This behavior raises serious concerns about the nature of their relationship. There have also been ongoing rumors and hearsay among students, which complicate efforts to fully understand the situation.

I am aware that Robert and [Student A] communicate regularly via text messages. There have been instances where [Student A] has reportedly asked for his advice on what to wear to school, which I find to be disturbing. Furthermore, Robert has acted as her primary means of transportation, and there are significant gaps in understanding about what occurs during these rides.

Additionally, Robert has purchased several items for [Student A] and has been seen with her at Dunkin' Donuts in his vehicle. Given these facts, I am deeply concerned about the appropriateness of their relationship. I believe [Student A] may deny these occurrences, as it seems Robert has manipulated and groomed her to the point where she may not recognize the situation as inappropriate.

One specific incident that raised alarm occurred on April 2nd, 2025, when a group of girls and [Student A] became involved in a conflict. When the situation deescalated, Robert came down looking to see what the commotion was, in which instigators seemingly aware of the relationship between him and [Student A] decided to tease Robert saying "[Student A] was getting beat up outside." Which caused Robert to rush outside to intervene. After the conflict was defused, Robert appeared visibly upset and reports suggest he retaliated by threatening the students involved and attempting to single out bystanders by assigning them Out-of-School or In-School Suspension.

While this particular incident is concerning, my primary worry is the ongoing nature of Robert's behavior and its negative impact on [Student A]. It has become increasingly difficult for students to feel comfortable in his presence, and his interactions with [Student A] seem to be part of pattern of inappropriate and unsettling behavior. I also empathize with [Student A], who appears to be under significant emotional and psychological pressure, with Robert constantly hovering nearby.

I urge the administration to investigate this matter thoroughly, as the atmosphere at Sun Prairie West High School is becoming uncomfortable for many students. and the well being of [Student A] seems to be at risk. It is essential that we address these

concerns promptly and ensure that all students are in a safe and supportive environment.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. I trust that appropriate steps will be taken to investigate these allegations and provide the necessary support for those involved.

I am a senior at Sun Prairie West who has been uncomfortable for years now, and I wish to no longer hold my tongue in hopes to create a safer environment for future students.

The tip was submitted through the District's website. Notifications of website submissions are routed to two administrative email inboxes: Bridget Kotarak, the Director of School Operations, and Nicholas Reichhoff, Assistant Superintendent. Kotarak actually received the full text of the website submission, but Reichhoff only received a general notice of receipt of a submission, in case Kotarak was out of the office for some reason. However, Kotarak was in the office on April 4, 2025, and reviewed the tip before 7:00 a.m. that morning. Upon review, Kotarak advised Reichhoff that she was taking care of the submission and she then forwarded the tip to Principal Ploeger. Given that she believed that the tip also implicated personnel issues, Kotarak also notified Chris Sadler, the District's Director of Human Resources.

Kotarak, Sadler, and Ploeger spoke briefly on the phone during the morning of April 4, 2025. Ploeger and Sadler immediately placed Gilkey-Meisegeier on administrative leave. Sadler took lead of the investigation and made plans to interview Gilkey-Meisegeier and Student A the following Monday. Following her receipt, review, and forwarding of the tip to Ploeger and Sadler, Kotarak had no further involvement despite being the District's Title IX coordinator.

Sadler approached the matter from a human resources perspective, focusing on potential work rule violations. He conducted two interviews—Gilkey-Meisegeier (in person) and Student A (by phone), during which Student A's mother was present. Sadler did not review records, interview other students, or examine disciplinary history.

During his meeting with Sadler, Gilkey-Meisegeier admitted to giving Student A rides home, but indicated that he had permission from her parent to do so. He also admitted that he had texted Student A, but only about school sporting events. He denied any inappropriate relationship with Student A and emphasized that he was close family friends with Student A's family.

Later that day, Sadler and Ploeger attempted to interview Student A. She was not in the building. Sadler eventually reached Student A's mother on her cell phone. Student A's mother echoed Gilkey-Meisegeier's denials and expressed frustration that these rumors were still going on. According to Sadler, Student A's mother referred to Gilkey-Meisegeier as an "uncle" figure. Student A then got on the phone call and also denied any inappropriate relationship.

Sadler did not interview anyone else. Nor was there any investigation into who wrote the tip. Per staff at West, once Gilkey-Meisegeier was placed on leave, it became common knowledge that a

specific student supposedly wrote the tip, and that she was openly indicating that she submitted the tip that was hopefully going to lead to Gilkey-Meisegeier being fired.

As part of the investigation, Ploeger took no investigative steps herself beyond participating in the telephone interview of Student A and her mother. As a result of his investigation into the tip, Sadler did provide two written admonishments to Gilkey-Meisegeier, reminding him that he may not transport students without the proper paperwork from the District, and that he may not communicate with students other than through approved channels and apps. Gilkey-Meisegeier was removed from administrative suspension Monday evening and returned to work the following day, April 8, 2025.

April 2 Incident Leading to Discipline

The anonymous tip specifically referred to an altercation between students that occurred earlier that week on April 2, 2025. A fight allegedly erupted between Student A and another female student over a boyfriend (and/or former boyfriend), starting on social media and ending with an altercation in the commons area towards the end of the school day. Gilkey-Meisegeier left an administrative leadership meeting to respond to the fight. The tip specifically referenced that Gilkey-Meisegeier threatened to discipline bystanders who teased him about rushing to Student A's aid.

Gilkey-Meisegeier consulted with Ploeger regarding discipline for the fight. Previously, Ploeger had requested that Gilkey-Meisegeier get a second opinion when Student A was involved, based on the prior allegations. After hearing Gilkey-Meisegeier's account of the altercation, Ploeger agreed that discipline on both sides of the altercation was warranted.

Ultimately, Student A received a one day, in school suspension for enticing a fight and making social media threats. However, the other female student received a one day out of school suspension. A third female student, who was by all accounts a bystander to the altercation, also received a one day out of school suspension. Ploeger indicated that she was not aware that Gilkey-Meisegeier disciplined this bystander and it is unclear if Gilkey-Meisegeier believed that this bystander was the individual who allegedly made a comment about Student A being involved and needing his help.

This bystander student and her parents contested her suspension and met with Gilkey-Meisegeier the following day. After receiving pushback, Gilkey-Meisegeier quickly reversed the suspension and told the student to just go to class. The suspension, however, remains on her official record, despite her attendance reflecting her presence in class.

This incident was never examined during the investigation into the anonymous tip, despite the fact that it was explicitly referenced. Had anyone reviewed the incident and discipline reports, along with the attendance records of the bystander student, a discrepancy would have immediately been identified. Further, had anyone from the District contacted the bystander student and/or her parents, it seems obvious that they would have expressed great concern about what transpired with Gilkey-Meisegeier only days prior.

May 29 and 30, 2025 Reports, Termination & Arrest

May 29, 2025, was a watershed of information. Three female students received a Snapchat audio message from a former West student, alleging that a different classmate, (not Student A), had engaged in sexual activity with staff members at West. The message did not name any specific names of staff members, but insinuated involvement by Gilkey-Meisegeier and reference to the study hall room. The students who received this Snapchat message presented these messages to Youth Advocate Shelby Wampole and Special Education teacher Zenna Schultz, who promptly reported the allegations to both social services as well as a School Recourse Officer, Shamika Anderson. The newly identified student allegedly victimized by Gilkey-Meisegeier completed an initial interview with the SRO but declined to confirm any of the allegations.

The next day, this newly identified student again met with the SRO, and was then forthcoming, identifying inappropriate behavior by Gilkey-Meisegeier. Also on Friday, May 30, yet another different female student (not Student A or the student named in the Snapchat audio) approached Youth Advocate Erin Kaste and disclosed that she had asked Gilkey-Meisegeier to buy alcohol for her. In exchange, Gilkey-Meisegeier asked this student for inappropriate pictures of herself. This student also said that she had personally observed inappropriate text messages and pictures between Gilkey-Meisegeier and Student A. Kaste and this student immediately spoke with administration. That evening, both the student involved with the alleged alcohol purchase in exchange for pictures and the student identified in the Snapchat audio were transported to Safe Harbor for an interview with police and were accompanied by staff and administrators.

That Sunday, June 1, senior leadership at the District level —namely the Assistant Superintendents Leonard and Reichhoff, Superintendent Saron, Sadler, and Kotarak—met via video conference to discuss the unfolding events. This meeting was the first time that Superintendent Saron became aware of any allegations (or even rumors) of inappropriate conduct by Gilkey-Meisegeier. Assistant Superintendent Leonard similarly was not aware of even a rumor of inappropriate conduct on the part of Gilkey-Meisegeier until the June 1 meeting. Assistant Superintendent Reichhoff was previously aware of the April anonymous tip, but was thereafter told that the tip was fully investigated and found to be unsubstantiated.

Gilkey-Meisegeier was placed on administrative leave effective June 1. After further investigation, Gilkey-Meisegeier was terminated from his employment with the District on June 9. Gilkey-Meisegeier was later arrested by the Sun Prairie Police. He was charged with fifteen felonies, including two counts of child sexual exploitation, and thirteen counts of possession of child pornography. In addition, he faces similar federal charges.

SUMMARIES OF INTERVIEWS OF SPECIFIC DISTRICT EMPLOYEES

Within this section, please accept a brief overview of some, but not all, of the interviews that were conducted of certain key individuals. While we did learn useful information from each and every interview we conducted, this section is intended only to provide a high-level synopsis of certain key interviews.

Bridget Kotarak (Director of Student Policy and Student Operations)

Kotarak was hired by Sun Prairie in September of 2024 into her current position as the Director of Student Policy and Student Operations. In this role, Kotarak serves as day-to-day support for the fifteen campus principals, especially related to student behavior and discipline. Kotarak also serves as the Title IX coordinator for the District.

On April 3, 2025, just before 10:00 p.m., an anonymous tip was submitted via the Sun Prairie School District website, alleging that Gilkey-Meisegeier was involved in an inappropriate relationship with Student A. That tip routed to the email inbox of Kotarak. Kotarak reviewed the tip before 7:00 a.m. on Friday, April 4, 2025. Upon review, Kotarak forwarded the tip to Jennifer Ploeger, the Principal of Sun Prairie West High School. Kotarak and Ploeger spoke briefly on the phone. Given that it was a personnel matter, Kotarak also notified Chris Sadler, Director of Human Resources.

Kotarak had no further involvement with the tip after passing it along to Ploeger and Sadler. It was Kotarak's sense that Sadler and Ploeger were jointly investigating the tip, but she had no real knowledge as to what they were doing. Kotarak took no steps related to Title IX with regard to the tip. Kotarak indicated that this was partially based on the anonymous nature of the tip.

On May 29, Ploeger called Kotarak to make her aware of the allegations against Gilkey-Meisegeier connected to the Snapchat audio message and to inform Kotarak that students and staff were going to Safe Harbor to be interviewed by Sun Prairie Police. Kotarak took no action relative to Title IX based on this report.

Further, following the investigation and arrest of Gilkey-Meisegeier, Kotarak took no action as it related to Title IX. At least initially, no Title IX supportive measures were offered by the District to the students involved in this incident, until the family of one of the students who was taken to Safe Harbor requested a meeting with school officials to discuss changing schools.

Chris Sadler (HR Director)

Sadler first became involved with the allegations against Gilkey-Meisegeier when the anonymous tip was received in April of 2025, alleging an inappropriate relationship between staff member Gilkey-Meisegeier and Student A. The tip was first seen by Bridget Kotarak, who forwarded it to Principal Jen Ploeger, and then involved Sadler. Sadler, Kotarak, and Ploeger had a brief phone call Friday morning. At that time, Sadler learned that there were prior rumors involving Gilkey-Meisegeier and Student A. Sadler was only aware that there were rumors, that they involved Gilkey-Meisegeier and Student A, and that they were less specific than the anonymous tip. According to Sadler, Ploeger informed him that she had investigated the rumors in the past and found them to be unsubstantiated.

During the phone call, Sadler contends that it was decided that he and Ploeger would co-lead the investigation. Later, when asked, Ploeger did not agree with that characterization. Based on the totality of evidence, it appears that Sadler was primarily responsible for the investigation.

Upon receipt of the tip, Sadler and Ploeger placed Gilkey-Meisegeier on paid leave before classes began on Friday. Sadler indicated that he approached the investigation from a human resources perspective. Sadler was concerned with three of the allegations from the tip. First, that Gilkey-Meisegeier had transported a student in his vehicle, specifically to Dunkin'. Second, that Gilkey-Meisegeier had communication with Student A outside of the messaging apps approved by the District. Third, that Gilkey-Meisegeier was coaching Student A on what to wear. These were especially concerning to Sadler, as they were violations of District policies against employees transporting or communicating with students other than when approved. He emphasized that the other allegations were not necessarily of concern to him, because they did not specifically violate any district employee policy.

Gilkey-Meisegeier was interviewed first thing in the morning on Monday, April 4th at the Sun Prairie District Offices. Ploeger was not present for the interview, which supports Ploeger's statement that she did not "co-lead" the investigation as Sadler suggested. During the interview, Sadler recalled that Gilkey-Meisegeier was frustrated. Gilkey-Meisegeier did not believe that he did anything wrong. He denied ever transporting Student A to Dunkin'. Gilkey-Meisegeier did admit that he had transported Student A home. However, this had been done after a sporting event, with permission from the student's parent. Gilkey-Meisegeier claimed that he was not aware that he needed to be approved by the District to transport students and told Sadler that he would not be doing so again without being approved. Gilkey-Meisegeier also admitted that he had exchanged text messages with Student A. Gilkey-Meisegeier indicated that these text messages were related to school athletic events, as Gilkey-Meisegeier worked game management along with his responsibilities as Dean. Sadler did not ask to review the text messages or otherwise verify that Gilkey-Meisegeier's representations were accurate. Gilkey-Meisegeier denied that he had coached Student A on what to wear, but indicated that they had discussed only information about school athletic events. Gilkey-Meisegeier emphasized that he was close with Student A's family, and that there was no inappropriate relationship between them.

Sadler then immediately traveled to West to interview Student A, for which Ploeger was to be present as a familiar face and as a female representative of the District. However, Student A was not in school that day. Eventually, Sadler was able to reach Student A's mother on her cell phone. Sadler first spoke with the mother, who adamantly denied that there was any inappropriate relationship between Gilkey-Meisegeier and Student A. She informed Sadler that Gilkey-Meisegeier was authorized to give Student A rides home. She emphasized that Gilkey-Meisegeier was like an "uncle" figure, and he had been over to the family's house for dinner.

Student A then got on the phone call. Her mother was present for the entire interview, and it mirrored Gilkey-Meisegeier's account. She denied any inappropriate communication and confirmed that rides occurred only when her mother was unavailable to pick her up. Both Student A and her mother expressed no concern over the tip or its allegations, as relayed to them by Sadler.

Sadler contends that he then met with Ploeger in her office to discuss the investigation, his findings, and what steps to take next. He indicated that the ultimate decision to bring Gilkey-Meisegeier back from leave was made by him in consultation with Ploeger. According to Sadler, they concluded there was no evidence of grooming or misconduct beyond the policy violations of transporting a student without the proper documentation and texting outside of approved channels.

Sadler recommended corrective measures: restricting communication to approved apps, requiring transportation approval, and assigning another dean to handle Student A's discipline issues to avoid perception problems. Gilkey-Meisegeier was taken off of administrative leave and was back at West on the next day.

Sadler noted that the investigation did not extend to other students or staff, nor did it involve law enforcement, as he felt there was no reasonable cause to report. Sadler did not request or review any discipline records, or investigate the altercation that occurred on April 2, as referenced by the tip. He authored a report, summarizing his findings related to his investigation in April, which echoed his verbal account as summarized above.

Later, when the Snapchat video surfaced in May, Sadler ultimately terminated Gilkey-Meisegeier's employment for failure to report misconduct and inappropriate online interactions.

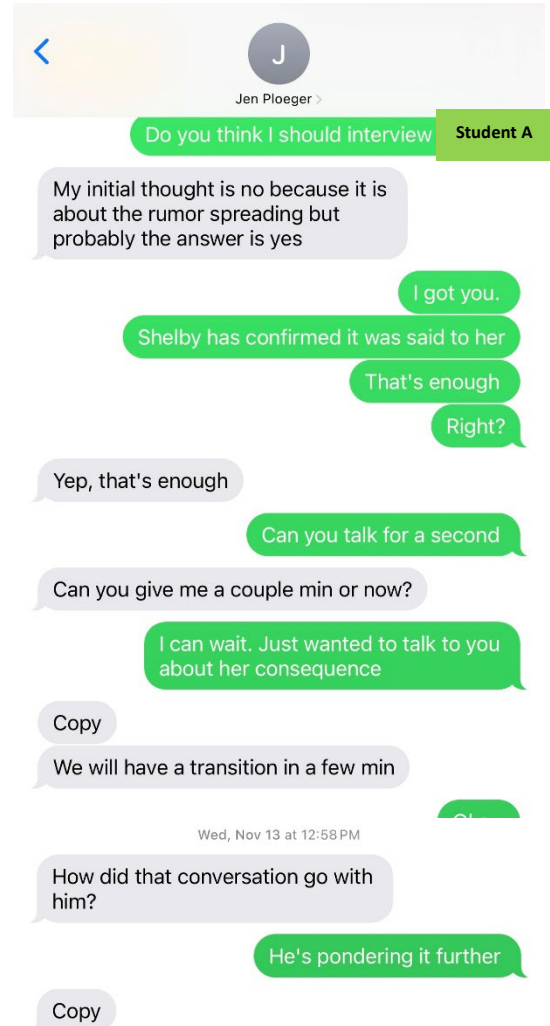
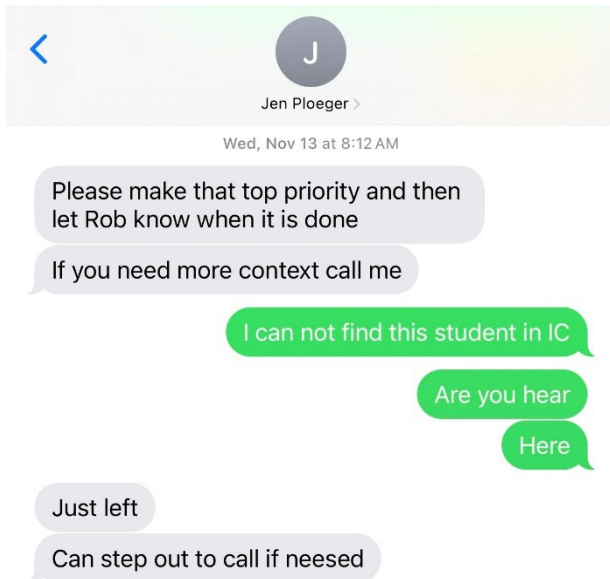
Jennifer Ploeger (Principal)

Ploeger explained that Gilkey-Meisegeier started at Sun Prairie West as a youth advocate in Fall 2022 and coached JV basketball. Rumors that Gilkey-Meisegeier and Student A had an inappropriate relationship began during the 2023–2024 school year. Ploeger first learned of the rumors from Gilkey-Meisegeier, who told her “people are spreading rumors.” Gilkey-Meisegeier and Student A were known to have a close relationship.

Ploeger emphasized that there was never enough information to launch a formal investigation. She took the rumors seriously and spoke with students whenever possible, aiming to uncover any misconduct. Students were interviewed informally about the rumors by Ploeger and Assistant Principal Ed Ford, but students could not substantiate claims with any proof. No records were kept regarding these interviews. Ploeger never reviewed cameras, documents, or texts, as allegations were general and lacked specifics. Ploeger spoke with Student A during the 2023-2024 school year about the rumors, and Student A expressed frustration over the rumors and a desire for them to stop. Student A denied that there was any inappropriate relationship between her and Gilkey-Meisegeier. Student A was so distressed that she sought to graduate early to avoid the ongoing campus conflicts.

The next year, when Gilkey-Meisegeier was a full-time dean, the rumors persisted in the fall. In November of 2024, Ploeger initially claimed to become aware of a student being suspended for spreading the rumors about Gilkey-Meisegeier. Initially, Ploeger insisted that she only learned of the suspension of this student after the fact. Ploeger believed that a female student had been disciplined for spreading rumors about Gilkey-Meisegeier participating in inappropriate behavior, but that the decision was later reversed. Ploeger initially indicated that she was not directly involved in the suspension. Further, Ploeger conceded that she did not know how the suspended student and the prior female student who Ploeger believed started the initial rumors in the prior school year were connected, as the female student had graduated by then. If these two students were not connected, Ploeger agreed that the student suspended in November of 2024 would have been a new source of information potentially supporting the students' allegations.

While Ploeger initially maintained she had no involvement in the November 2024 suspension, text messages between Ploeger and Assistant Principal Nehemirah Barrett establish that Ploeger was actually directly involved in the suspension of the student in November of 2024. Per Barrett, he met with Ploeger regarding the suspended student's behavior and the need for discipline. According to Barrett, during that meeting, Ploeger insisted on a 2-day suspension for the student for spreading the rumors. That in-person conversation was followed by the following text messages between Ploeger (grey) and Barrett (green):



When confronted with the text messages, Ploeger acknowledged that the text messages must be from her but maintained that she had no memory of the text messages nor of her participation in the incident or suspension — her memories were only that of hearing about the suspended student's behavior and discipline in hindsight. However, I did not find Ploeger to be credible in any respect related to the November of 2024 suspension.

On April 2, 2025, Ploeger was in an administrative team meeting when she and other administrators were notified via radio that there was a fight or disturbance in the commons area. Gilkey-Meisegeier stepped out of the meeting to help address the conflict. In the aftermath of the incident, Ploeger worked with Gilkey-Meisegeier to consult on student consequences, because Student A was involved in the fight. While Ploeger did not believe that there was any inappropriate behavior on the part of Gilkey-Meisegeier, she wanted to provide a balanced viewpoint to avoid the perception of bias. Gilkey-Meisegeier reported to Ploeger and recounted the incident between Student A and the other female student. Ploeger agreed that discipline on both sides was warranted. Ploeger herself did not speak to any students or staff who witnessed the altercation. Ploeger did not recall any specifics about the discussion between Gilkey-Meisegeier and herself.

Ploeger did not recall the specific discipline that was given to the students involved in the incident. Ploeger was not aware that the two female students had received an out of school suspension while Student A received an in school suspension. Nor was Ploeger aware that the third female student (the bystander) had come to school with her parents to contest her suspension, and that Gilkey-Meisegeier met with the family and ultimately sent the student to class—despite the suspension remaining on her record.

When asked about these events, Ploeger agreed that the discipline imposed on the two “sides” was inappropriate because it was disproportional. Further, Ploeger indicated that Gilkey-Meisegeier’s handling of the bystander family’s complaint did not comport with her expectations for a Dean or administrative team member.

On April 4, 2025, just before 7:00 a.m., Ploeger received a copy of the anonymous tip from Bridget Kotarak. Ploeger, Kotarak, and Chris Sadler spoke briefly on the phone before the school day started. After a brief discussion, Ploeger and Sadler placed Gilkey-Meisegeier on administrative leave. Also, during that conversation, Ploeger recommended to Sadler and Kotarak that a full investigation take place into the tip’s allegations, noting that the tip was more specific than past rumors that she was aware of. Ploeger declined to lead the investigation to avoid the appearance of potential bias since Gilkey-Meisegeier was part of her administrative team. It was her understanding that Sadler ultimately led the inquiry.

Ploeger’s involvement in the investigation was limited to being present during Sadler’s interview of Student A and her mother, in order to have both a female and building administrator present. Ploeger confirmed the statements made by Student A and her mother, as previously outlined above in the description of our interview of Sadler. Following the phone call, Sadler and Ploeger spoke about the investigation. Ploeger contends that the conversation was brief and that Sadler made the ultimate conclusions based on his investigation. In the end, Sadler emailed Gilkey-Meisegeier, copying Ploeger, and took Gilkey-Meisegeier off of administrative leave. Gilkey-Meisegeier returned to work the next day.

Ploeger did not know if Sadler had investigated the April 2 incident during his investigation into the anonymous tip. Ploeger was never asked about the incident or asked to provide any records. Ploeger emphasized that her role in the investigation was extremely limited, and consistently disputed Sadler’s view that she was co-leading the investigation. This does appear to be consistent with her level of participation.

Ploeger also indicated that West's school resource officer (SRO) should have also been aware of the rumors in the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school years. However, she did not recall having any specific conversations with the SRO about the rumors or asking for his assistance in addressing them. On Friday April 4, when the tip was received and Gilkey-Meisegeier was placed on leave, Ploeger agreed that the SRO approached her at some point during the day and asked whether Gilkey-Meisegeier was on leave. Ploeger confirmed that he was on leave and told the SRO that it was due to "the rumors." Ploeger does not remember any further specifics about that conversation.

School Resource Officer Royse Sessums

We were interested in interviewing SRO Royse Sessums but were unable to compel an interview and provide *Garrity* warnings since Officer Sessums is employed by the City of Sun Prairie and not the school district. However, we learned that the City of Sun Prairie conducted its own internal investigation to review the actions of the school resource officers. The City of Sun Prairie was cooperative with our investigation and afforded me the opportunity to review the interview from its internal administrative review.

We understand that the following questions and responses from Officer Royse Sessums occurred during the City's internal review:

Lt. R. Thomson: Before the police department's official investigation, do you recall any discussions you had with anyone at the school about Rob and his interactions with students?

SRO R. Sessums: Didn't have any conversations about interactions with students. I did approach Principal (JP) Pluger (sic) when I found out that they were investigating something, the same day I learned he was on, he was not in the building. I asked something to affect, am I needed in this? And it was in the hallway during passing time, and she said something to the effect, like, "Not at this time."

Lt. R. Thomson: Could you expand on that again?

SRO R. Sessums: I believe it was the day that I was made that I heard that he was not in the building and that his email was disabled. I passed her in the hallway. She was with another administrator. I don't remember which one, but I asked if this was something I needed to be aware of. And she responded, and at that time, something to the effect of not, she didn't believe so, but at that time, she didn't know what the accusation was, what she was aware of.

Shelby Wampole (Youth Advocate)

In November of 2024, a female student was disciplined by Gilkey-Meisegeier for roaming the halls during class. Later that month, Wampole observed that same student in the commons area on a FaceTime call. Wampole overheard this student saying that she was not going to listen to Gilkey-Meisegeier because he was a pedophile. Wampole reported this statement to Principal Ploeger and Wampole later became aware that this student was subsequently suspended for spreading false rumors.

When Gilkey-Meisegeier was placed on leave in April following the anonymous tip, Wampole was aware that he was on leave, citing that it was common knowledge. Wampole identified multiple students that the administration could have talked to in order to investigate the allegations in the anonymous tip. There were apparently several students who were known to be very close friends with Student A, who may have been able to provide useful information. However, again, Wampole was not made aware of the tip by school leadership and she had no knowledge of what the school or district did to investigate the tip.

On May 29, 2025, Wampole was in the lobby common area with Zenna Schultz, a special education teacher, when they were approached by two female students. The students told Wampole and Schultz that they were getting Snapchat messages from a former student who had graduated. The former student was concerned that there were rumors that he had been “messing around” with a current student, who was under 18. The former student said on the Snapchat recordings that if the rumors about him did not stop, he was going to expose the inappropriate sexual relationship between this current student and at least one teacher.

Wampole and Schultz promptly reported the allegations and Snapchat audio messages to the School Resource Officer at that time, Shamika Anderson, and the school’s social workers. The Sun Prairie Police Department ultimately became involved and Gilkey-Meisegeier was subsequently terminated.

On either Thursday or Friday, Wampole did have contact with David Harper, who was implied as potentially being implicated in the Snapchat audio, though Harper was not actually identified by name in the audio. Wampole knew that the female student referenced in the Snapchat audio had consistently scheduled meetings with Harper. Based on that, Wampole advised Harper not to have one of the students that was referenced in the Snapchat audio in his office and informed him that the allegations had been reported to police. She had no further contact with Harper or Gilkey-Meisegeier.

Zenna Schultz (Special Education Teacher)

In April 2025, Schultz was aware that Gilkey-Meisegeier was on leave for a short period, but did not know why. She only knew that he was gone when she went to send a chat and his email was disabled.

On May 29, 2025, Schultz noted that some of the girls in her class were whispering and acting secretive. Around 10:30 a.m. that morning, Youth Advocate Shelby Wampole called Schultz down

to the commons to talk to some of her students who were upset about the Snapchat audio messages previously referenced. Schultz instructed the students to screen record the messages to preserve them and promptly reported the allegations to the School Resource Officer, as well as the school's social workers.

On Friday, May 30, Schultz saw Gilkey-Meisegeier first thing in the morning in the commons area. She asked if she could speak to him in his office. During that meeting, Schultz informed Gilkey-Meisegeier about the allegations that had arisen the day before and she also sent him a recording of the Snapchat audio that had been turned over to police the day before. Schultz apparently had a desire to be transparent with Gilkey-Meisegeier. Schultz had no real explanation for why she shared the allegations and audio with Gilkey-Meisegeier knowing that he was the subject of the allegations, but she believed that since Gilkey-Meisegeier was the subject of the allegations, he should be aware of them. Again, however, by the time the allegations and audio were shared with Gilkey-Meisegeier, law enforcement (through the SRO) already had the Snapchat audio from the day before.

Generally, Schultz had a very good and trusted relationship with the student mentioned in the Snapchat messages. Later on May 30, 2025, Schultz transported this student to the Safe Harbor interview and provided her with support.

Erin Kaste (Youth Advocate)

In November of 2024, Kaste observed a female student talking on the phone, spreading rumors that Gilkey-Meisegeier was engaged in inappropriate relationships with students. Before disciplining this student, Assistant Principal Nehemirah Barrett spoke with Kaste to confirm that this student had been talking about Gilkey-Meisegeier. Kaste told Barrett that the student was frustrated that Gilkey-Meisegeier was still in the building. According to Kaste, this student claimed to have had made some sort of report about Gilkey-Meisegeier in the past, but nothing had been done about it.

Following the anonymous tip in April, Kaste was aware that Gilkey-Meisegeier was on leave. She was made aware of the tip on social media, or someone showed it to her, but she was not contacted as part of any investigation. Kaste heard right away which student had submitted the tip, because the student who submitted it was telling other staff and students and was proud to have submitted it, believing that it would ultimately lead to Gilkey-Meisegeier facing consequences for his inappropriate conduct.

On May 29, 2025, Kaste was aware that Wampole and Schultz had spoken with the School Resource Officer about some sort of concern they heard about on Snapchat. The following day, Kaste spoke with Student A briefly and connected her with the School Resource Officer. Later, a completely different female student contacted Kaste during the school day and appeared nervous and distressed. This student disclosed to Kaste that Gilkey-Meisegeier had sent her inappropriate messages. Kaste and this student immediately reported this conduct to Assistant Principal Ed Ford, who then elevated it to law enforcement.

Late in the afternoon on May 30, the student who made the report to Kaste was taken to Safe Harbor for police interviews. Kaste joined to support the student and was interviewed by the Sun Prairie Police Department later that night.

Nehemirah Barrett (Assistant Principal)

In November of 2024, Barrett collaborated with Ploeger on addressing a student's behavior after staff confirmed she had made statements indicating that Gilkey-Meisegeier was engaging in inappropriate conduct. Although Barrett preferred restorative practices over suspension, this student was ultimately suspended at Ploeger's direction. Barrett emphasized that he never investigated the truth of the rumors because he was directed by Ploeger to suspend the student for spreading the rumors. After this student's suspension, Barrett learned that Ploeger had previously advised Gilkey-Meisegeier to distance himself from Student A, a detail Barrett wishes he had known earlier, as it would have influenced his handling of the situation with the student facing discipline for spreading the rumor. It is important to keep in mind that Barrett was new to the school building that year.

In November of 2024, Ploeger contacted Barrett and asked him to handle a student's discipline, although ordinarily Assistant Principal Ed Ford would handle that student's discipline due to her position in the alphabet. Barrett was not sure why Ford was not asked to assist. Barrett's impression from his conversation with Ploeger was that she had already met with Gilkey-Meisegeier and that Gilkey-Meisegeier had confirmed that the allegations were just rumors with no merit, and that he was sick of them. This is why Ploeger expressed to Barrett that she wanted the student to face significant discipline.

While Ploeger previously indicated to us that she had no real involvement in this student's discipline and only became aware of it after the fact, Barrett was very clear in recalling that Ploeger was the one to actually direct the discipline. Barrett became aware of the student discussing Gilkey-Meisegeier on the FaceTime call because Ploeger told him about it and she directed that the student be suspended for two days. Barrett provided us with text messages that corroborated his statements and demonstrated that Ploeger's prior statements that she only learned of the discipline after the fact were incorrect.

Barrett himself was an advocate for a restorative justice resolution and would have preferred for this student and Gilkey-Meisegeier to meet and have a restorative conversation. But, Gilkey-Meisegeier was not interested in participating. Barrett was not an advocate for the suspension, however, Ploeger nonetheless directed that the suspension occur.

Barrett met with the student to discuss her consequences. He impressed upon her that her allegations were serious and could impact Gilkey-Meisegeier's career. During this conversation, this student made allegations to Barrett that Gilkey-Meisegeier and Student A were engaged in inappropriate texting. Despite this allegation, Barrett did not ask any follow up questions about the texting, did not report the reference to inappropriate text messages and took no further action.

Barrett indicated that he was unaware that Ploeger and Ford had previously interviewed students to investigate rumors. Barrett was new to the school and his statements in this regard are credible.

Barrett stated that knowledge of such prior history would have influenced his handling of the suspended student's situation, notwithstanding Ploeger's directive to issue a suspension.

Edward Ford (Assistant Principal)

Ford first heard rumors about Gilkey-Meisegeier and Student A in Spring 2024 during a verbal conflict between Student A and another female student. The female student made unsubstantiated statements about Student A and Gilkey-Meisegeier having an inappropriate relationship. These statements were investigated quickly by Ploeger and Ford. Both Student A and Gilkey-Meisegeier denied any inappropriate relationship. The female student was not disciplined and the focus was instead on preventing further conflict between the girls.

The next school year, in November 2024, similar rumors were spread by another student, who alleged inappropriate interactions between Gilkey-Meisegeier and Student A on a FaceTime call. Ford understood that these claims were again found to be unsubstantiated, though Ford had no role in the investigation or discipline despite the fact that the student who spread the rumor was within his responsibility within the alphabet. Instead, this student was disciplined by Barrett. Ford did not know why he did not handle the situation since the student was on his side of the alphabet; however, there are times where the alphabet division of responsibility is abandoned in the event an administrator is unavailable.

Jamie Diaz (Dean of Students)

Diaz first became aware of rumors involving Gilkey-Meisegeier and Student A toward the end of the 2023–2024 school year. Diaz was made aware of the rumor when students approached Chis Davis, another Youth Advocate, of their concerns, who in turn spoke with Diaz. Diaz and Chris Davis reported the rumors to Principal Ploeger. The rumors lacked specific details, and Diaz did not know Student A personally at the time. She believed that the school administration followed up with some form of investigation, though she received no formal communication about the outcome. Gilkey-Meisegeier later mentioned to Diaz that he needed to meet with administration due to a rumor, appearing surprised and unclear about the situation.

Diaz recalled students frequently visiting Gilkey-Meisegeier's office, including one of the students who came forward as an alleged victim in late May. Diaz expressed concern to Gilkey-Meisegeier about this student spending time in his office instead of class. Diaz also shared this concern with Ploeger. Specifically, Diaz advised Ploeger that Gilkey-Meisegeier was not properly documenting some of his student visits with female students, which impacted attendance records, but Diaz was not aware of any action that was taken by Ploeger as a result of this issue.

Diaz was also aware that the student who was suspended in November of 2024 had expressed anger toward Gilkey-Meisegeier and claimed she had been suspended unfairly. Barrett, who at the time was a new administrator, told Diaz he had been directed by Ploeger to suspend this student. This statement by Barrett to Diaz was made contemporaneously and supports Barrett's statements during our interview.

Separately, Gilkey-Meisegeier allegedly told Diaz he had confronted administration before the student's suspension in November of 2024, threatening to quit if the situation wasn't rectified.

Later, in April of 2024, Gilkey-Meisegeier informed Diaz he was placed on leave due to an anonymous tip involving Student A. He requested Diaz to attend a meeting with HR meeting as his note taker. As such, Diaz was a witness to Chris Sadler's interview of Gilkey-Meisegeier.

According to Diaz, during the interview, Chris Sadler asked about Gilkey-Meisegeier's relationship with Student A, texting students, and giving rides to students. Overall, Diaz believed that Gilkey-Meisegeier did not grasp the seriousness of the situation after his interview with Sadler, but Gilkey-Meisegeier maintained that his relationship with Student A was innocent and Diaz had no reason to believe otherwise.

Diaz later read the tip for the first time in a police report after Gilkey-Meisegeier's arrest. After reading what was actually in the tip and comparing it to the interview that occurred between Sadler and Gilkey-Meisegeier, Diaz felt that there was a disconnect. Specifically, after reading the actual tip, Diaz felt that details within the tip differed significantly from topics that Sadler questioned and didn't question Gilkey-Meisegeier about during the HR meeting.

On May 30, 2025, Diaz had some minimal contact with Gilkey-Meisegeier. Diaz left West early on Friday, May 30th and was not in school on Monday, June 2nd due to illness. When she reached out to Gilkey-Meisegeier to check in after her absence, she learned he had been interviewed by police and had his phone confiscated. Gilkey-Meisegeier seemed emotionally distressed and mentioned multiple female students (not including Student A), suggesting he was placed on leave for failing to report incidents that may have involved David Harper and students. Diaz found all of Gilkey-Meisegeier's statements very confusing.

Diaz concluded that while she had knowledge of student dynamics and day-to-day interactions, she never witnessed any behavior from Gilkey-Meisegeier that substantiated the prior rumors. She emphasized that her concerns with Gilkey-Meisegeier were procedural, such as documenting student meeting and directing student to appropriate support, rather than behavioral misconduct. Still, even these procedural shortcomings were reported by Diaz to Ploeger and it does not appear that Ploeger responded in a meaningful way.

Nick Reichhoff (Assistant Superintendent for Operations)

Nick Reichhoff became aware of the April anonymous tip either on Friday, April 4, or sometime during that weekend. He was surprised by the allegations, given Gilkey-Meisegeier's previously positive reputation. Reichhoff was aware that Kotarak had received and reviewed the tip and forwarded it to Ploeger and Sadler. Reichhoff expected that Kotarak, as the Title IX coordinator, would use her training to assess whether the tip warranted investigation. Reichhoff acknowledged that if the allegations were true, they could merit a Title IX investigation.

Chris Sadler informed Reichhoff regarding the investigation's progress. Reichhoff met with Sadler on Monday, April 7 and Sadler concluded the allegations were unsubstantiated, relying heavily on statements from Student A and her mother. Reichhoff was informed of the investigation's findings

and the issuance of directives to Gilkey-Meisegeier, cautioning him about texting students and giving rides.

At the end of May, Reichhoff recalled receiving a call from either Ploeger or Sadler informing him that students were being taken to Safe Harbor to be interviewed based on allegations of inappropriate conduct by staff members. This was the first that Reichhoff learned of the specific allegations that ultimately led to Gilkey-Meisegeier's termination from employment and arrest. Since this call came at the time that students were being taken to Safe Harbor, we know that this would have occurred late in the day on Friday, May 30, 2025. Reichhoff shared the information with Assistant Superintendent Leonard and Superintendent Saron and confirmed that this would have been their first knowledge of any issues involving Gilkey-Meisegeier, at least as far as he knew.

During the summer of 2025, the family of one of the students who reported allegations and was taken to Safe Harbor requested that she be transferred to East High School. Reichhoff approved the change.

Dr. Brad Saron (Superintendent)

Dr. Saron first became aware of allegations involving Gilkey-Meisegeier on June 1, when there was an emergency meeting among senior leadership in the immediate aftermath of the Snapchat audio being disclosed to school officials and law enforcement. Prior to that, Dr. Saron's only interaction with Gilkey-Meisegeier had been passing him in the hallway while visiting West. Given the reports from other school and district officials, we believe that it is clear and undisputable that Dr. Saron was unaware of any prior rumors involving Gilkey-Meisegeier, as well as the April tip, until June 1, 2025. No one we interviewed even suggested that information about the rumors or investigations reached Dr. Saron's office.

Prior to the police involvement on May 29 and 30 and the subsequent meeting on June 1 that for the first time included him, no mention of misconduct involving Gilkey-Meisegeier was elevated to Dr. Saron's attention.

CONCLUSIONS, FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

In the 2023-2024 school year, there were certainly rumors circulating among students, suggesting an inappropriate relationship between Gilkey-Meisegeier and Student A. However, those rumors were not specific and did appear to stem from Student A's conflict with a specific female student. Ploeger and Ford did investigate by speaking with several students, beyond just Student A, but no information was provided to substantiate any of the rumors. Student A also denied any inappropriate conduct.

However, it should be noted that Ploeger indicated that Student A was so distressed by the rumors about her and Gilkey-Meisegeier, that she mentioned that she wanted to graduate early to no longer be in the school building. Even if the rumors of an inappropriate relationship were in fact false, the widespread existence of these rumors may have constituted a possible hostile environment harassment under Title IX. The unwelcome conduct, in this case the rumors, may have been so

severe, pervasive ^{or}² objectively offensive that they were effectively denying Student A access to her education. Student A's concerns should have been elevated by Ploeger to Kotarak in the Title IX office for further investigation, but they were not.

Turning to November of 2024, Barrett acknowledged that the student he was suspending at Ploeger's direction told him that Gilkey-Meisegeier and Student A had exchanged text messages. If true, such an exchange was a clear violation of District policy. However, Barrett did not ask for any further information and he did not elevate the suspended student's accusation to Ploeger. This was likely due to Barrett being new to the school and being without the benefit of knowing the history behind these rumors. To that end, Ploeger's direction to Barrett to handle the student's discipline (including dictating the specifics of the discipline) ultimately deprived the situation of context that may have brought more information to light. Nevertheless, the new allegations related to the text messages were never elevated nor investigated, and a student received a two day suspension for "spreading rumors" about Gilkey-Meisegeier – but the "spreading rumors" actually constituted a report that warranted a legitimate investigation.

Furthermore, during our investigation, the suspension of the student in November of 2024 remained on her discipline record and should be removed.

The anonymous tip received on April 4, 2025, also warranted significantly more investigation than was undertaken. The tip raises a number of concerning allegations against Gilkey-Meisegeier, including explicit reference to "grooming," disproportionate discipline practices, texting and providing rides to Student A. The tip also suggests that this inappropriate behavior was negatively impacting the overall school environment, as well as Student A herself.

Under the President Trump-era revisions to Title IX effective January 31, 2025, there are three categories of conduct that may form the basis for a formal complaint under Title IX:

1. Quid Pro Quo Harassment – In which "[a]n employee of the recipient conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the recipient on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct."
2. Certain Sexual Misconduct Crimes – Conduct involving "[s]exual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking"
3. Hostile Environment Harassment - "Unwelcome conduct that is so severe, pervasive, *and* objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the recipient's education program or activity."

I do believe that the allegations suggest quid pro quo harassment. They also suggested that students were experiencing a hostile environment at school with conduct that was severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive.

² As previously referenced, the Title IX framework changed back and forth between the administrations of President Trump, President Biden and now the second administration of President Trump. At the time of the initial rumors and at the time of Student B's suspension, the standard was "or."

That is not to say that the allegations in the tip, alone, constitute the basis for a formal Title IX complaint—they may not. They do, however, create a clear indication that a formal complaint may be warranted, which could only be ascertained with further investigation. The investigation done by Sadler was insufficient to address the concerns raised in the tip, particularly as far as Title IX could be implicated. As the HR director, Sadler, arguably, approached the investigation appropriately for his limited role within HR.

Ultimately, it is clear to me that Sadler was not the appropriate person to lead the investigation into the April tip. The tip implicated far more than just personnel concerns. As the Title IX coordinator and also the first District official to receive the tip, Kotarak should have recognized the Title IX and student learning environment implications. At minimum, Kotarak should have stepped in to lead the investigation into the April tip. This broader lens may have uncovered additional information that Sadler's investigation, largely limited to District employee policy violations, did not discover.

This may have included speaking with other students who knew Student A – the tip itself suggested that Student A was likely to deny the existence of an inappropriate relationship. An investigation by the Title IX office rather than HR would have also included a review of student discipline records, including the discipline event specifically referenced in the tip that occurred earlier that week. Had the discipline records from the April 2 incident been reviewed, the records would have clearly demonstrated disproportionate discipline, as well as a student being suspended by Gilkey-Meisegeier, but yet attendance records showing that the student was in class, which we now know occurred because Gilkey-Meisegeier didn't enforce the suspension after being confronted by the student's parents.

It should also be noted that the student who was suspended, but sent to class by Gilkey-Meisegeier, still has the said suspension on her official student record, which should be removed.

Furthermore, following the watershed of information reported in May of 2025, Kotarak still failed to approach the matter from a Title IX perspective. No supportive services were offered to alleged victims of Gilkey-Meisegeier until one family reached out to make the request for a change in school. While the events occurring near the end of the school year undoubtedly complicated the outreach to involved students, it is worth noting that at the end of this investigation I requested a listing of all Title IX complaints (which can be initiated by third parties or by the Title IX coordinator) and the events involving the allegations against Gilkey-Meisegeier are still not included as implicating Title IX.

As noted above, the April of 2025 tip should have been investigated by the Title IX office, at a minimum, to identify whether further action was needed. I will also note that while I do not believe that the April of 2025 tip was required to have been forwarded to law enforcement for investigation, it certainly could have been forwarded to law enforcement. It appears that the SRO at Sun Prairie West was well liked and while there is suggestion that the SRO must have been aware (to a similar extent as school staff) of the rumors from the 2023-2024 school year, as well as the rumors during the 2024-2025 school year, we did not find any evidence of any formal reporting to the SRO (or anyone in law enforcement) that could have been used to initiate an investigation.

David Harper

During the course of our investigation, there was no indication that David Harper had been engaged in inappropriate behavior with any student at West. He was not the subject of any rumors, nor did any staff or administration have any prior knowledge or experience that may suggest that he was engaged in any inappropriate conduct. Harper became implicated in the May 29 Snapchat audio messages, which reference staff in the in-school suspension room, which Harper oversees. There was not, however, any mention of him by name, nor any other indication that he was otherwise engaged in such conduct. Moreover, it also appears that Gilkey-Meisegeier initially told at least some individuals that he was on leave for not reporting inappropriate contact between students and Harper, but that seems to have been a baseless allegation levied by Gilkey-Meisegeier to cover for the real reason he was placed on leave and ultimately terminated.

Conclusion

In summary, the investigation revealed several critical issues. School-level and district-level administrators failed to recognize Title IX obligations, which I believe resulted in insufficient investigations into serious allegations. Investigative practices were poor, with limited interviews, lack of documentation, and an HR-centric approach that was not primarily focused on the students involved. Communication breakdowns allowed key information (such as a student being suspended despite indicating that text messages supported her allegations and the “suspension” of a bystander to the April 2 incident) to go unaddressed. Disciplinary decisions and Gilkey-Meisegeier’s involvement clearly created an appearance of favoritism toward Student A, further eroding trust.

Moving forward, the District should review the continued effectiveness of Ploeger, Sadler, Barrett, and Kotarak in leadership roles, given the demonstrated lapses in judgment in varying degrees. Ultimately, given their leadership roles and the information that they possessed, I conclude that Ploeger and Kotarak were in the best positions to have properly investigated the growing allegations involving Gilkey-Meisegeier. While I found no evidence of malicious intent or mandatory reporting violations, the failures in judgment and process were significant and raise serious concerns about the ability of Ploeger and Kotarak to maintain credibility and effectiveness in their roles going forward.

Further, while I have levied criticism toward both Barrett and Sadler, I also fully recognize that had Ploeger and/or Kotarak effectively performed their responsibilities, Barrett and Sadler very likely would have had different perspectives when they carried out their responsibilities.

I also find the lapse of judgment by Zenna Schultz and Shelby Wampole in disclosing the allegations to Gilkey-Meisegeier and Harper (respectively) concerning. While it seems that their disclosure of the allegations (and Schultz’s providing of the audio to Gilkey-Meisegeier) was not done in an effort to impede any investigation, it easily could have had that effect. The disclosure of this information showed a concerning, albeit temporary, lapse in judgment. I do note that both Wampole and Schultz were forthcoming and credible during their interviews. Further, both

provided important support to the students who came forward at the end of May to report inappropriate conduct.

Finally, I suggest that the Title IX office be subject to a thorough review and likely a significant modification of operations. Beyond personnel within that office, I believe that the manner in which Title IX issues are identified, investigated and tracked can and should be improved upon.

We appreciated the opportunity to be of service to the Sun Prairie Area School District. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact me as soon as possible.

Very truly yours,



SAMUEL C. HALL, JR.