

December 9, 2022

Dear GIPS Staff,

We grow, discover, and evolve together – even as seasons change.

When I joined Grand Island Public Schools it was my first time stepping foot in Nebraska and I immediately fell in love with the heart you had for supporting students. Now in year seven of my tenure I look back and am overwhelmed with gratitude for the work that we – and all the partners that came alongside us – have accomplished. In many ways GIPS has raised the bar, and set a path for innovative programming, transformational leadership, and maintained a steadfast commitment to students.

Serving as the Superintendent of Grand Island Public Schools has been one of the most extraordinary and inspiring opportunities an educator could ask for. But as we face the dawning of a new season, we find ourselves facing new terrain.

In that light, it is with a heavy heart of appreciation and admiration I share that I will be offering my humble letter of resignation to the Board of Education at Monday’s Board meeting.

Though I may struggle to find the right words to capture all GIPS means to me, I am anchored by the depth of the relationships you have afforded me and the milestones we have reached together.

I marvel at all we have built in seven years:

- Leading the district in developing our first comprehensive 5-year strategic plan.
- Continuing to serve one of the largest, most diverse collections of students in the state.
- Strengthening community relationships and bringing corporate partnerships to a brand new level in the district.
- Propelling robust “grow your own” efforts ranging from establishing a High School student “pathback” initiative, a para-to-teacher program, establishing a teacher leader coalition, and building the Tri-City ASCEND principal pipeline program.
- Launching the Academies of Grand Island Senior High after collaborating on a bold revisioning model.
- Crafting a strong graduate profile which serves as our north star for college, career, and community readiness.

1/3



Students who *thrive*.

- Bolstering high school academics by offering 86 AP and Dual Credit Courses.
- Receiving National AP Honor Roll Distinction for the first time in our district's history.
- Students earning a record number of industry certifications.
- Unlocking student opportunities to earn and learn by becoming the first Nebraska district to establish a Registered Apprenticeship program.
- Becoming the state's first district to earn a GearUp Promise Grant bringing-in more than \$13 million for college prep.
- Earning our first "Demonstration Schools of Rigor" awards.
- Championing early childhood education in working alongside other like-minded leaders to revitalize unused real estate, notably turning an old Shopko into a state-of-the-art early childhood learning center.
- Empowering our special education students to open their own thriving coffee shop.
- Watching our students compete in activities at the local, state, and national levels always honoring GI pride.
- Launching countless new programs, activities, sports, and clubs by establishing an extracurricular excellence plan dedicating resources to provide opportunities for all students.
- Expanding social-emotional learning supports for students and staff.
- Growing our EL program to unprecedented support.
- Advocating for equity districtwide and adopting our first anti-racist policy.
- And so much more.

GIPS even led the way during perhaps some of the most unprecedented times during the pandemic. Through it all we still brought food, internet, technology, learning and school reentry to our students.

In many ways GIPS has defied the odds. Our work has shaped the lives of tens of thousands of students and impacted our great community to an immeasurable degree.

I am proud of you; I am proud of our students; I am proud of us.

I want to thank the Board of Education for their courageous and unwavering leadership. Their trailblazing vision brought me here and launched a new trajectory for our district. Becoming the first African American Superintendent in Nebraska's history and the district's first female leader was the honor of a lifetime.

Through it all, beloved staff, Grand Island Public Schools has become a lighthouse district for equity, breaking barriers and shaping paths for all students. It is my hope that light will continue to shine. Our students, their futures are depending on it. Every student deserves to be seen, understood, valued, and elevated. And it's your work carrying that charge every day.

2/3



Students who *thrive*.



You are difference makers. Because of you, I can confidently say this district will continue to hold-up Every Student, Every Day, A Success as the call to action.

Being an educator for nearly 27 years, I am even more convinced that students must remain the focus, every step of the way.

The time has come for me to transition to further make an impact in the field of education. Because of Grand Island Public Schools, I am prepared for the next phase of my leadership journey. I have always felt my steps are ordered by a higher calling and I accept the call for the opportunities ahead. The current political landscape has yielded thoughts to remind me of the importance of concentrating on my faith, my family and pursuing some writing projects while still leading and advocating for public education.

I will formally offer my resignation to the Board at Monday's meeting. If accepted, I intend to serve through January 11, 2023 and collaborate with the Board of Education to ensure a smooth transition.

The Board will enter into an Executive Session to discuss and then reconvene to take action. Pending the approval, the GIPS Board will establish a timeline to appoint an interim Superintendent and launch what will likely be a nationwide search for the next district leader.

I also want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of the colleagues who have been mentors and friends to me. Thank you for your sincere support.

To the many organizations, boards, committees, and community partners that allowed me to join their collaborative efforts – thank you for granting me the opportunity to share my voice.

I want to thank each and every one of you as well as our incredible students, parents, and community for the opportunity to serve. No one walks alone and each of you has guided me; guided us; guided our district.

Because of the many relationships and our collective work on behalf of the kids – we championed the common good. The good life here in Nebraska has done more than make a lasting impact, it has transformed my heart and the way I view the world.

And please remember... The work is not done, but you have everything you need deep down inside of you to go even further, even higher, and whatever you do, keep being better together.

#WeAreGIPS,
- Dr. Tawana Grover, Superintendent

3/3

