

Dear HJT1 Families,

In an effort to provide clear communication with District families and staff, we wish to inform you of some attention that the District has been under recently.

As a District, we strive to promote a positive school and work environment for all students, staff, and the community. In recent weeks, the District has been made aware of some concerns over an agreement made between the HJT1 District and CESA 6 to contract a short-term District Community Coordinator position using one-time federal ESSER III funding.

This temporary position was created to identify student learning loss due to the pandemic, serve as a parent liaison to strengthen the home/school connection and implement enrichment opportunities for students. The District's Director of Curriculum & Instruction oversees and supervises this position.

For full transparency, we wish to clarify that the CESA 6 employee who was selected to provide this service for the District, is Mrs. Cindy Smits, a former HJT1 employee and spouse of Dr. Mark Smits, HJT1 District Administrator.

Mrs. Smits was hired by CESA 6 and selected for this contracted role at HJT1 due to her experience and skill set. Prior to leaving the District in 2020, Mrs. Smits served the District as a Community Coordinator and Gifted & Talented Coordinator. Her previous experience in this same role, and her knowledge of the District, allowed Mrs. Smits to promptly fill this role and begin providing support.

It is important to know that this contract was approved by the Board of Education at the December 2021 school board meeting. Due to the nature of their relationship, Dr. Smits was isolated from the service agreement process and was not involved in the negotiations between CESA 6 and Cheryl Simonson, HJT1 Director of Curriculum & Instruction.

This was a legal contract between HJT1 and CESA 6 and Dr. Smits did not violate any school board policies, nor did he violate any state statutes.

Please know that all of these decisions were made in the best interest of students. We strive to provide a professional and nurturing environment for all students and staff in our District. We hold our administrators and staff to the highest of standards and we vow to evaluate our efforts and strive for continuous improvement. The success of children is our highest priority.

If you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact [schoolboard@hjt1.org](mailto:schoolboard@hjt1.org).

For the Board of Education,

Greg Erickson, Board President