
TITLE IX INVESTIGATION – FEBRUARY 2018 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. A letter sent by Superintendent Shubel stated that high school teacher and girls' cross-country/track coach, Mr. Nick Hopkins, is under investigation following allegations of inappropriate conduct? Can you elaborate on what type of misconduct happened?

We cannot provide additional details on this matter as it could potentially reveal the identity of former students who have asked to have complete confidentiality and anonymity. We are grateful for their cooperation and wish to respect their privacy and not violate their trust.

2. Who filed a complaint?

In order to make sure everyone feels safe coming forward with concerns, we will not voluntarily disclose the identity of any person who brings concerns or information to us. We will protect complainants from retaliation to the best of our ability. We ask that our school community respect the process and respect the rights of individuals to be honest with us if they have pertinent information to this investigation. We appreciate that it takes courage for anyone to step forward with a concern about a teacher or coach.

3. Will criminal charges be filed?

Information has been referred to the City of East Grand Rapids Department of Public Safety. At this time, no criminal charges have been filed and it is premature to speculate about whether any will or should be filed. Those inquiries should be referred to the City of East Grand Rapids Department of Public Safety which is conducting a separate investigation. The School District does not determine if criminal charges will or should be filed.

4. How many students were affected?

Those affected have asked for complete confidentiality and anonymity. Out of respect for them, we cannot provide additional details.

5. Have current students been affected?

At this time, students currently enrolled in East Grand Rapids Public Schools have not come forward with complaints of alleged inappropriate conduct by Mr. Hopkins. We encourage any students to come forward for support, information, resources, or information about filing a formal Title IX complaint. Students may contact their principal; Mrs. Jenny Fee, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction and Title IX Coordinator; or the Superintendent's office.

6. When did the misconduct first start taking place?

We cannot provide additional details on this matter as it could potentially reveal the identity of former students who have asked to have complete confidentiality and anonymity. We are grateful for their cooperation and wish to respect their privacy and not violate their trust.

7. Were there prior rumors concerning Mr. Hopkins?

In all issues regarding district personnel we address any specific, fact-based, concern brought to our attention. We act promptly to investigate and, in unusual personnel cases like this one, we place the staff member on paid administrative leave to investigate and evaluate the situation. The district looks at each concern on the merits of all facts presented and circumstances. Since the investigation is confidential, what you may be hearing in the community may not be accurate, so please keep that in mind.

8. We heard some of his former students had relationships with him after they graduated. Is that true?

Yes, and those affected have asked for complete confidentiality and anonymity. Out of respect to them, we cannot provide additional details as it may compromise their identity. As a district we hold all of our teachers and staff to high standards of professionalism and ethical conduct. If a staff member breaches these standards, we will hold them accountable. We ask that all members of the EGRPS community respect the process and refrain from negative or pejorative statements about any individuals suspected or rumored to be involved in the investigation.

9. Is it unlawful for a teacher to have a relationship with a former student after graduation?

No. However, our standards of professional and ethical conduct expect more of staff than simply being free of criminal behavior. EGRPS staff and coaches are role models and we hold them to high standards and expectations.

10. How long will the District's Investigation take?

We cannot provide a specific timeline for the investigation. When rare situations such as this arise, we are committed to following our District policies and procedures. This means we will ensure that our investigation is conducted fairly and with careful due diligence. Doing so does not allow us to pre-determine a set timeline.

11. Where can I find information regarding Title IX?

The District Title IX policy and guidelines can be found [here](#) or on our website. Mrs. Jenny Fee, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction, serves as the district Title IX Coordinator and can be reached at jfee@egrps.org or 616-235-3535.

12. What can I do as a parent to help my child(ren) if they have questions?

We ask that you speak with your child(ren) and make them aware of the importance of reporting potential inappropriate conduct and that district policies and protocols are in place to protect all of our students. These policies are strictly enforced, and protocols are followed when concerns are brought to our attention, either formally or informally. Encourage your child to report any concerns to their teacher and/or principal.

13. Has due process been provided to the staff member?

The district has and will continue to provide Mr. Hopkins his due process throughout the investigation. He also has access to representation from the East Grand Rapids Education Association.

14. Are students or staff able to speak with Mr. Hopkins during the investigation?

During any district investigation staff members are directed to not speak with students and/or staff about the investigation so as to not interfere with the investigation. In this particular situation, Mr. Hopkins was placed on an administrative leave of absence and received a specific directive that he was not to speak or discuss the investigation with anyone affiliated with EGRPS, staff, current and/or former students, and parents, with the exception of his representatives from the East Grand Rapids Education Association (EGREA).

15. If a current or former student has information pertinent to the investigation, who should they speak to?

They can speak to their building principal, or Mrs. Jenny Fee, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction and Title IX Coordinator, can be reached at jfee@egrps.org or 616-235-3535.

16. What should I do if I become aware of any teasing, taunting, shaming, blaming, or retaliation occurring among our students either in person or on social media?

Please share this information with the principal so that situations can be addressed and dealt with immediately.