

# COATESVILLE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

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*Erika Zeigler, Director of Human resources*

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## COATESVILLE AREA SCHOOL BOARD TO LAUNCH ISSUES STATEMENT ON SENIOR STAFF RESIGNATIONS

District to Launch Sensitivity Training for all Faculty and Staff

COATESVILLE – (SEPTEMBER 24, 2013) The Coatesville Area School District (CASD) confirmed today that the resignations of former Superintendent Richard Como and former Athletic Director Jim Donato occurred after the two were informed that the board was commencing the legal process to terminate their employment because of highly offensive text messages exchanged by the two men on their district phones.

On Sunday, August 18, Board member Dr. Tonya Thames Taylor was provided with copies of text message exchanges that were allegedly shared by Como and Donato. Dr. Taylor contacted Board President Neil Campbell, Vice President Richard Ritter, and Solicitor James Ellison regarding the text messages, and an immediate internal investigation was ordered.

After a preliminary investigation by counsel, both men were instructed not to report to work and were subsequently advised that legal termination proceedings would be commenced immediately.

On Thursday, August 29, both Mr. Como and Mr. Donato resigned. Their resignations will be formally voted upon by the CASD at its September 24, 2013 meeting.

"The racist and sexist language expressed by the two men was sickening and obviously unacceptable. The Board followed state and federal laws and moved as expeditiously as possible while simultaneously cooperating with the District Attorney," Board President Campbell said.

Campbell said that the district would continue cooperating with the on-going investigation by the Chester County Office of District Attorney. The district will not comment on the investigation.

Campbell also confirmed that the district's internal investigation continues. The district has not found any indication that any other CASD employees were involved in the offensive exchanges, Campbell said.

The Board has reached out to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) and is working with PHRC officials to provide mandatory sensitivity training to Board members, administrators, staff and faculty and to review and recommend improvements to the school district's diversity policies and codes of conduct.

The board will provide updates to the community on that effort moving forward.

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