

Howell Education Association

PRESS RELEASE

Karen Langer, President
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From: The Howell Education Association

Date: December 18, 2008

Re: Howell Education Association Response to School Board Member's Comments

The Howell Education Association is comprised of over 450 members teaching grades K-12 in 11 buildings. With a membership of this magnitude, communication is a great challenge. In 2007, the Howell Education Association began a password-protected list-serve to provide a means of communication to members, as well as provide a forum for members to express diverse opinions covering a wide range of educational subjects.

The officers of the Howell Education Association are charged with many responsibilities. Our primary responsibility is to serve as representatives for our members in all matters. When Howell Public Schools School Board member, Wendy Day, published on her blog a copyright protected communiqué posted by a teacher in our password-protected forum, our member felt publicly humiliated and attacked. The choice to publish the comments without prior permission from or notification to the teacher is a deliberate attempt to convey misleading information that the Howell Education Association was considering job action at a time when we have a settled contract and are not engaged in bargaining talks. It is an attempt to undermine the efforts that have been made to move our District forward in a positive manner.

It is our duty as Union officers to defend all teachers with the resources we have available. To clarify this further, we have added additional copyright language to all of our postings on our list-serve to help protect us from a repeat incident. Our decision to seek legal counsel and issue a cease and desist letter to Ms. Day in order to protect our members from further personal attacks was done in a civil and respectful manner.

It is our view that the Howell community has high expectations of their duly elected officials. School board members represent the community as well as the employees that work for the schools. Though Ms. Day makes the claim that her blog was personal rather than an expression of her public office, we disagree. We further question the wisdom in her decision to pontificate, from her public board seat during a public meeting, in response to our legal request to cease and desist in her behavior. We feel that these actions have brought negative attention to Howell Public Schools and the Howell community. We find her response to our request to cease and desist completely inappropriate and feel that speaking from her board seat invalidates her claim that her original action was private rather than public. It is our view that her actions and demands are an attempt to interfere with Association business, and thereby are a violation of the Public Employment Relations Act.

We cannot and will not cease in our responsibility to represent and protect our membership.