

# **HISD Principals for Superintendent Resignation**

## **Call to Action**

**Released May 22, 2024**

**Call to Action:** The HISD Principals for Superintendent Resignation call for Superintendent F. Mike Miles's resignation or termination due to a lack of leadership, misconduct, and failure to address issues within the school district.

**Call to Action:** The HISD Principals for Superintendent Resignation request the education commissioner appoint a Takeover Conservator. This conservator would monitor academic performance standards and financial accountability. They would also oversee HISD in correcting identified deficiencies and speak on behalf of schools to ensure the takeover implementation is legal and ethical.

**Summary:** These recommendations are based on significant issues related to the leadership of the Superintendent, each of which are outlined in this document.

HISD Principals for Superintendent Resignation make these calls to action based on repeated patterns of unethical leadership from Superintendent F. Mike Miles, his repeated failures to communicate honestly and effectively, and his creation of a culture of fear and intimidation within H.I.S.D., which have collectively led to a widespread loss of trust in his leadership. Such loss of trust directly impacts students, teachers, and schools.

These claims are evidenced by the areas listed below.

### **1. Culture of Fear and Intimidation**

### **2. Appraisal System**

### **3. Inconsistent Information Shared with the Board of Managers and Stakeholders**

### **4. Human Resource Violations**

### **5. Chaotic Leadership Management**

### **6. Intimidating, Inappropriate, and Unprofessional Language**

## 1. Culture of Fear and Intimidation

In 2023, HISD moved to a LEAD system for principal evaluations. The Superintendent stated that “accountability without support leads to a culture of fear,” which led to principals believing they would receive robust instructional support for success in the LEAD system. However, many principals have had minimal instructional coaching throughout the year, leading to a culture of fear.

Division leaders are focused on compliance and continue reiterating in trainings and school visits about being ready “in case the Superintendent visits.” When emphasizing compliance, Division leadership states, “We don’t want to end up on a list.” Principals receive multiple texts and communication whenever the Superintendent is in the area, so we are on high alert. This creates a culture of intimidation for staff.

## 2. Appraisal System Discrepancies

**Example #1:** In HISD, the Principal Appraisal System is known as LEAD. Since June 2023, there have been five versions of LEAD released, causing confusion and distrust. Principals continue to be rated on indicators and metrics of which they are unaware. By changing the standards, and doing so without communication, principals in HISD do not have a clear metric for success as it pertains to LEAD.

### **Example #2: Executive Leadership Rubric**

At the start of 2023, principals were informed that the Executive Leadership Rubric would not impact principal reviews for 2023-2024, as copied below:

- **Principal performance.** Principal performance includes an assessment of the school’s quality of instruction as assessed by an independent review of the instruction in a school. The performance score also includes the Principal’s score on the Executive Leadership Rubric (Appendix H) and on the School Systems Review (Appendix I).

*For the 2023-2024 school year, the principal will not be scored on the Executive Leadership Rubric nor the School Systems Review. Instead, those possible points will be added to Quality of Instruction and to SPED compliance.*

However, in March of 2024, principals were told in a meeting that the Executive Leadership Rubric would be used to determine positions for the 2024-2025 school year. Principals needed to meet a minimum requirement or would not be given a contract. Multiple principals were asked to resign or brought forward for termination because they did not meet the minimum requirement of this rubric, and this was the only criteria used to determine their performance.

**Example #3: Lack of Transparency:** When principals asked to see the data from the Middle of the Year (MOY) proficiency screener, the Superintendent said principals didn’t need to get into the “weeds” of the data. This means principals did not get access to the data used for the MOY proficiency screener; many of these principals were then asked to resign without knowing the specifics of their LEAD student achievement data. LEAD data is a forced curve, meaning that there will be instant turnover of whoever happens to be at the bottom of the curve on a particular test. This also fosters a climate of competition instead of collaboration among principals and Divisions.

**Example #4: Teacher Appraisals:** Abrupt changes to the appraisal system have allowed teachers to be fired for low averages on the spot observation form for the school year. This administration changed the system in May of 2024. Principals have been directed to terminate

teachers with spot averages under a certain number without knowing the minimum number, even as teachers are demonstrating improvement throughout the year. These directives came down even though the Superintendent has previously stated to the Principals Advisory Committee that "you are the decision maker on staffing in your building." This impacts the culture of support and growth on campuses.

### 3. **Inconsistent Information Shared with the Board of Managers and Stakeholders**

The Superintendent stood before the Board of Managers on March 21, 2024, and told the public that no adverse employment decisions would be made based on the MOY Proficiency Screener. In May, Superintendent Miles used the MOY Proficiency Screener to make adverse employment decisions for principals and teachers.

### 4. **Human Resource Violations**

**Statements and Release of Confidential Appraisal Information:** In March, the Superintendent sent an in-person Outlook meeting invitation to all principals rated as “not proficient,” which resulted in principal names being published in the *Houston Chronicle*. The information about not being proficient should have been kept confidential as a personnel matter, per state law and HISD policies.

### 5. **Chaotic Leadership Management**

The Superintendent’s leadership has created confusion between various levels of leadership. There is a vast disconnect between what the Superintendent says and what happens at the Division level. At Principal Advisory Committee meetings, the Superintendent answers questions in a way that directly contradicts what Divisions are communicating to principals.

**Example #1:** Executive Directors and some Senior Executive Directors were unaware of the pending principal terminations and were not part of the decisions on principal termination. This is true despite the Superintendent's reassurances to Principal Advisory Committee members that any principal who was to be terminated would be well aware of their standing due to ongoing coaching and feedback from the Executive Director. The Superintendent even encouraged principals to "look your executive director in the eye" and ask them if you would be welcome to return.

**Example #2:** The Superintendent stated principals should not be asked to turn in Action Plans early unless the Executive Directors sit down to work on them alongside principals. Following the meeting, Executive Directors sent emails stating Action Plans were due a week early so they could review.

**Example #3:** The Superintendent expects Executive Directors to be 100% focused on instruction and supporting principals. This is not happening at the Division level. Executive Directors are focused on compliance and deadlines. In June 2023, the Superintendent stated that school principals would not be asked to complete forms, give information, or run reports that can be done at the central level. He also stated principals would be relieved of operational responsibilities, such as following up on maintenance requests, due to the addition of Executive Directors of Support. If anything, the addition of this role has added a layer of red tape for principals who are simply trying to get HVAC repaired, understand why food items were not delivered on time, or ensure transportation for a homeless student, for example. And despite the

existence of these Executive Directors of Support, principals are told time and time again to "make it work" when faced with major logistical barriers that distract from instruction. This has not been executed by Divisions.

When instructional walks do occur, the feedback should focus on quality of material, high-level questions, scaffolding, etc. Instead, it focuses on compliance elements of instruction (being on schedule, posting objectives, using timers, etc.)

**Example #4:** Divisions give earlier deadlines than what is required from H.I.S.D., which causes confusion. This contributes to the culture of fear. Will principals face negative repercussions for not meeting Division deadlines but meeting H.I.S.D. Deadlines?

## 6. **Intimidating, Inappropriate, and Unprofessional Language**

The Superintendent repeatedly speaks inappropriately about situations in meetings.

**Example #1:** The Superintendent has referred to "downtown girls and uptown girls" and stated, "My girlfriend is prettier than yours" in a whole-group professional setting.

**Example #2:** In the most recent principal meeting, the Superintendent stated the principals who did not receive contracts "couldn't handle it" and "are not committed." These principals include current Principal Advisory Committee members, current Division principals of the month, 2023 HISD principals of the year, former HISD principals of the year, HISD principal academy mentors who have been entrusted to coach principal apprentices, and members of the Senior Leadership Academy.

**Example #3:** At the December principal's meeting, the Superintendent stopped and asked two African American staff members if they were wearing shower caps.

**Example #4:** In a March principal's meeting, the Superintendent stated that principals should stop contacting board members, legislators, and stakeholders. He is "here to stay, and [we] should not wait him out."

**Example #5:** He has also indicated that he "does not need a reason to terminate an employee." This contributes to the culture of fear: he picks and chooses who is terminated without following the appraisal systems he developed.