

KATAHDIN SCHOOLS RSU #89

Office of the Superintendent

800 Station Road Stacyville, ME 04777 Voice: 207-365-4272 Fax: 207-365-4138

Dear Katahdin Staff, Families and Community Members,

Recently, an anonymous letter has been distributed containing misinformation regarding my character and intentions within my role as district superintendent.

While I am hurt by these false accusations I do understand the source - Change.

Change is difficult for everyone and our world is constantly changing. The changes that are occurring in our district may feel uncomfortable for folks, especially those who desire to remain comfortable doing what they've always done.

At this point in time, if we try to continue to do what we've always done, our students will not be prepared for today's world and our district will not be able to thrive.

The district partnership that has been created by the formation of the Katahdin Children and Families Foundation (KCFF) is an investment in our community. Students, families and community members have and will continue to benefit from the goals of the foundation - offer learning opportunities beyond the public school, offer high quality nature-based child care and connect youth to their community.

The first point in the letter speaks of my dual role as superintendent and executive director. This is a common role for many district leaders throughout the state and country and does not present ANY conflict of interest. Both of these roles are overseen by the Board of Directors of RSU 89 to whom I regularly report.

The compensation of \$650,550 is completely false. I am being paid a typical full-time superintendent salary to run the school district and support the creation of the Katahdin Children and Families Foundation. This investment in the school and community is supported by the Board of Directors of RSU 89 as it aligns directly to our strategic plan to generate revenue for the school. My entire 7 years as an employee of RSU 89 have included me doing two roles - 2 principal roles, 2 superintendent roles, superintendent/principal roles. In small rural districts wearing many hats is not uncommon.

My dedication to doing what is in the best interest of the school district has not changed with the formation of this foundation. The school district and community are benefiting directly from this partnership. I have overseen and been directly responsible for the creation of grant-funded projects for RSU 89 that exceed \$2,000,000. A few examples of how the district has benefited include: full generators for both schools, new boiler room at KES, new windows and doors, replaced tile at KES, outdoor pavilions, trail behind KES, etc.

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It has been assumed that the grant funds that have been awarded to KCFF could have gone to the school. That information is false. The grants that have been awarded to KCFF are not grants that are eligible for public schools. The benefit of having a non-profit partner with a school district is that the district can benefit from the funds when it partners with a non-profit organization. Many grants are only eligible for non-profit organizations (not public school systems).

The concern expressed regarding the school being without a guidance counselor has nothing to do with the foundation as our counselors and support staff regularly attend student field trips. Counselors are being paid to support students which is exactly what they are doing on field trips. Additionally, the field trips that occur to the Orchard are approximately 2 hours in length.

The benefits of the Katahdin Children and Families Foundation are just beginning to be realized. This organization was just formed and work only began on July 1 of 2022. In less than a year the foundation has been able to:

1. Secure a community learning center that is expanding its offerings to public school children, homeschooled children and community members for events such as the recent pruning workshop that took place in April.
2. Fund after care for PK, K and 1 students beginning in the fall of 2023.
3. Offset funding for our Food Service/Ed Tech position.
4. Offset funding for my salary.

Our next steps include securing grant funds to house a nature-based child care program at Katahdin Elementary School, another great need for this community.

The partnership between KCFF and RSU 89 is partially funding the district to employ a Food Service Ed Tech so that we can bring in and serve more garden fresh foods to our students and staff. The school district will invoice the foundation and the foundation will use the grant funds to pay the school district.

The partnership between KCFF and RSU 89 is funding after care to be offered to PreK, K and 1 students next school year, something that we have not been able to do with our current 21st Century Grant.

The partnership has also funded a portion of my salary for the coming year.

All of this in less than a year. Building a strong foundation, just like a strong school district, takes time.

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The model of a community partner supporting a school district is happening all over the country in different ways.

I have shared this model of the Katahdin Children and Families Foundation partnering with RSU 89 at the state and national level and it has been validated as a powerful strategy that can allow the school district to innovatively support students and the community.

The visits to The Orchard by school children are designed to offer them an experience to learn in a new setting beyond school. Children love visiting The Orchard as evidenced by one 3rd grader who said, "I love coming here because I get to choose what I want to do. When I don't get to choose what I want to do it's not very motivating."

I also request that if you know the person or people who are responsible for this letter, please encourage them to reach out and learn the facts so that we can move forward together instead of wasting time spreading misinformation.

In terms of representing what's best for the school, I have been doing that since the day I moved here in 2016. The district has benefited from my passion and strong desire to offer the best possible education to ALL children so they can thrive to become productive citizens of our community, state and beyond.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to further discuss any of the information I have shared.

Respectfully,



Marie Robinson, Ph. D.
[Superintendent of Schools](#)/Executive Director
[Katahdin Children and Families Foundation](#)