

Shoreline school district settles ex-principal's lawsuit for \$700K

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Matthew Nagle was demoted from Shoreline Unified School District principal to elementary school teacher in 2018. (Alan Dep/Marin Independent Journal)

The Shoreline Unified School District has paid \$700,000 to settle a lawsuit by an administrator it demoted following a contentious election.

For a rural district with about 500 students, the settlement amounts to a drain of approximately \$1,100 per pupil, after insurance coverage.

Matthew Nagle, the former principal at the West Marin and Inverness schools, [sued](#) last year after being reassigned to teach at Bodega Bay Elementary School. He had spent 16 years in administration.

The demotion happened the same month Nagle lost a 2018 election challenge against Superintendent Mary Jane Burke, the longtime head of the Marin County Office of Education. Nagle claimed the demotion was payback for his campaign.

During the race, he criticized Burke's job performance, her \$300,000 annual salary and her political fundraising activities. Nagle, who has Mexican heritage, also said academic achievement has lagged for black, Latino and low-income students during Burke's tenure.

The lawsuit claimed Robert Raines, the Shoreline district superintendent, demoted him because he is "subservient" to Burke, who has financial oversight authority. Nagle also claimed district board trustees defamed him and hurt his professional reputation.

The district denied political motivations for Nagle's demotion but did not publicly explain it, citing employee confidentiality restrictions.

The district and Nagle signed the settlement on Feb. 14. Under the agreement, Nagle resigned that day, the last before a one-week winter break.

The district sent a brief letter to Bodega Bay school families informing them of Nagle's departure. A substitute teacher was assigned to the kindergarten-to-second grade class for the rest of the year.

Shoreline agreed to pay the money by Feb. 28 to Nagle's lawyer, Robert Jaret.

The district did not admit wrongdoing.

"It was in the best interests of the district and our students and staff to settle the matter," Raines said.

The district has an annual budget of about \$15.5 million. Raines said \$550,000 of the settlement will come out of budget reserves and the rest from insurance.

The payment will reduce the reserves from more than \$5 million to about \$4.5 million. Raines said he expects no budget cuts as a result of the settlement.

Nagle, 54, said he hopes to land a new job as a principal but has had "zero interest from Marin County schools." He has moved from Fairfax to Palo Alto.

He said he is considering another run for Marin schools superintendent in 2022. He lost to Burke by a 4-to-1 margin in 2018.

"It's not a sure thing whatsoever, but we're looking at it," he said.

Burke, who was not named as a defendant in the lawsuit, did not respond to a request for comment on the settlement.

Tags: Education, Marin schools, Mary Jane Burke, newsletter, Shoreline Unified School District, West Marin