

Board members need consequences, too

If a student called a classmate a 'libtard,' there would likely be repercussions.

If a district employee made derogatory comments on a disability or someone's gender identity, it would be a major infringement of district policy. There would be severe consequences.

In fact, Rockwood has an anti-harassment policy all students and staff must follow.

It reads in part: "It shall be a violation of District policy for any teacher, administrator, or other school personnel to tolerate harassment because of a student's race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, perceived sexual orientation or gender identity."

In August, Rockwood School Board Director Jessica Clark made comments that clearly violate this policy.

For the Rockwood School District to continue to be a welcoming place for **all** its students, we no longer believe Clark can adequately represent the district and should resign.

Speaking to an audience at a radio talk show event, Clark introduced herself, clearly identifying herself as a new school board member.

She made comments including, "They come to the school board meetings with their gay flags and their masks. I use the word 'libtard', they said I was an ableist. I mean, they come in with the

kids in the wheelchairs and everything. Like, 'oh, Jessica's an ableist.' Whatever, I was talking to you. You are a libtard and I mean that and I stand on it."

She also made comments about gender identity saying, "When we talk about this transgender crap, you're not gonna do that to my kids. My kids don't get to leave the house as girls and go to school and be validated as boys."

As a board member, Clark is supposed to be an advocate for all students in the district.

Not only did she act against district policy, she also lost the respect of those she directly insulted as well as those who work hard every day to serve all the district's students.

During patron comments at the Sept. 1 and Sept. 15 board meetings, dozens of people spoke about how her comments made them and their families feel invalidated.

At both meetings, Clark sat and listened to each speaker. She never apologized.

Her initial response to the critics came on her talk show when she said, "I mean what I say. I'm not going to back down. You don't like my jokes? Get over it."

And, this has not been the only time her actions have been in the spotlight.

Search "Jessica Clark" or "Rockwood" online. She has been the focus of negative media attention multiple times

■ The Image Speaks

The staff editorial reflects the majority opinion of the Image staff.

As journalists, we strongly believe in the First Amendment and freedom of speech. However, we also know sometimes there are consequences for the things we say. In addition, those who represent the Rockwood School District, from employees to elected board members, should follow the same policies and expectations and be held accountable for following the district's guiding principles.

since her election in April.

The way you represent your district in public is an important component of being a board member, and the kind of attention she is drawing is not the kind of press Rockwood needs.

We know Clark was elected by over 9,000 Rockwood voters who believed she best represented their views. But but do those people still feel represented by her? Not many have been at recent meetings speaking in support of her.

While we believe strongly in free speech, we also know there are often consequences that come with that freedom. You have the right to offend people. But they have the right to take action.

The board is currently amending its Code of Ethics because of this latest controversy. The new version will include this: "Board members are to maintain a professional decorum when discussing school matters in

and out of Board meetings, including, but not limited to, refraining from making disparaging or inappropriate comments regarding students, staff, or the Rockwood community."

Her words were disparaging and inappropriate. A student or employee would be disciplined for the same.

She has not apologized and shows no remorse. It's unacceptable she still has any power to make decisions that can impact the very groups she clearly disrespected.

The Board of Education needs to make decisions "to ensure all students realize their potential," as the district mission statement asserts.

Though she was removed from her district committee appointments, these consequences are not enough.

Jessica Clark does not represent the core values outlined in Rockwood's vision statement and should resign from the Board of Education.

Photo Opinion

Should school board members be free to state their opinions regardless of how it might reflect on the district?



Alifiya Shakeel • 9

"[People] can say what they want but [have to] realize that not everyone will agree."



Madison Pfeiffer • 10

"They are entitled to their opinion, but if it is going to hurt someone, [it] should not be shared."



Nathan Smythe • 11

"They should state their opinions when it is relevant to helping students in their education."



Brad Allison • 12

"As long as they can deal with the consequences, they should be allowed to share their opinion."