

Superintendent at Gates Chili on paid leave; interim named

District officials give no details about Ward's exit

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Without directly addressing the abrupt departure last week of Gates Chili schools Superintendent Kimberle Ward, the district's Board of Education on Tuesday put her on paid leave and appointed a temporary leader to take her place.

Associate Superintendent for Instruction Carol Stehm was appointed as the district's interim superintendent, "effective immediately through and including June 30, 2019." That was the date Ward had planned to retire — as well as the end date of her contract with the school system — according to an announcement Ward made earlier this year.

District officials have divulged no details about what led to Ward's abrupt departure. Prior to appointing Stehm on Tuesday, school board members still did not address the matter, although they did vote to place Ward on paid administrative leave through the end of June.

A three-sentence statement issued Tuesday night announced the move, but shed no further light on Ward's departure. The community learned of Ward's exit last week, after an email sent by board President Jeff Pettenski to district employees became public. In that email, Pettenski simply said that Ward was "out of the district" and that Stehm would assume Ward's duties in her absence.

Officials last week would provide no more details, including if, or when, Ward was expected to return.

Ward's Twitter account, @GatesChiliSupt, was deleted sometime between Wednesday afternoon and Thursday morning. She has not responded to messages seeking comment.

Ward became the top official in the Gates Chili in 2013 and earned a salary of \$201,000. She previously spent four years leading the Naples Central School District and was a teacher or administrator in the Brighton, Marcus Whitman, Newark, Wayland-Cohocton, Union Springs and Corning-Painted Post school districts.

A search for a permanent superintendent is ongoing.

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Ward