

APOLOGY ACCEPTED; OPPORTUNITY DENIED

In the fall of 2016, I spoke with Jeri Epstein about a conversation she had with Justin Rydstrom, current Executive Director at the Idea School, and a former Board member at WEDJ. She mentioned to me that he wanted me to contact him. It took me a few months to respond, but I phoned Justin. What promoted my call to Justin was a headhunter's email that listed the ad for the City Arts (WEDJ's new name) Executive Director position – with a note that read: “Would you consider going back?” Every part of me wanted to return to WEDJ, but it was important to put time and careful thought into the decision. When I contacted Justin, I listened as he informed me that John Goldman had been let go at Idea and at WEDJ, Rydstrom said was sorry for being part of my release at WEDJ. As I suspected, he did not want to step up and challenge his boss, given that he was a new school leader. I appreciated that Rydstrom had the courage to apologize for his part in the process that led to my ‘administrative leave’ and subsequent dismissal. I mentioned to him that I had been approached about the position at City Arts. He told me that the school would be lucky to have me and seemed very supportive. I followed up our conversation with a request for a reference letter, however, there was no reply to the e-mail. Around the same time, I received a text message from Ms. Palmer, suggesting that I return to WEDJ because the Board members were gone, and the staff wanted me back. I reviewed the list of Board members on the City Arts site, and discovered there was one remaining Board member, Tammy Daub. Goldman had indicated that the Board's decision was unanimous, so for me, her presence was a deterrent. Apart from being deeply committed to opening a new school in Canada, I realized that even if there was hope at the micro school level of making it work at WEDJ, I could do little to change the culture of the DC Charter Schools that worshipped test scores to the detriment, I believe, of learning and success in college, careers and life. Had I returned to WEDJ/City Arts, this story could not be told.