

The young men on that team worked hard all year, brought their training and their competitive spirit to the championship round.

For as long as anyone in Ipswich can remember, the high school graduates have had a tradition of smoking a cigar or posing with one for a celebratory photo. And upon seeing a photo of such a celebration, Superintendent Blake couldn't handle it. He acted irrationally - deciding to suspend the players. The players had no hearing. No meaningful opportunity to be heard. No opportunity to defend themselves. Blake acted as judge, jury, and executioner. And he moved with lightning speed.

Our investigation, thus far, reveals that Blake appears to have a bias against the athletes in this school and as a superintendent on his way out of the position, his actions reek of retaliation. He did not seem to have any such desire to suspend band members who did the same thing. His bias seems to be raging and his the stench of retaliation hangs over this community.

Prior to this, the Ipswich School Committee gave Blake his lowest-ever rating heading into his final year. His performance was sub par. His communication and collaboration with colleagues and professional culture was sub par, and his responsiveness to the community were all sub par. Earlier this year, Blake was scrutinized when there was a serious injury at a lacrosse game with both personnel and equipment deficiencies becoming part of the public criticism.

What makes that part of the story interesting is that the lack of safety equipment and an AED at the game is far more important than whether kids posed for a photo. But that got swept under the rug and they took their sweet time dealing with that. Lacrosse parents pushed for accountability, and there is a perception in town that Blake acted here out of animus and retaliation against the team. And that perception seems quite fair.

Had he not acted in that way, he would have given these players at least due process. There was no due process, no consideration. Just a bitter and angry man lashing out at kids when he should have supported them or at least treated them fairly. When you look at how obsessively he and Principal Mitchell acted after suspending the players, you can see that they both had the ability to do so. They released a childish statement that makes them both look ridiculous – claiming they did analysis that sounds like a CSI episode.

We find this particularly disturbing because my client has seen photos of Principal Mitchell's own son celebrating with a cigar, and photos of both Blake and Mitchell standing with students celebrating the same way.

We look forward to Ipswich becoming a better place when Blake is not longer permitted any authority or power over young people. And as far as we are concerned, Mitchell and his hypocrisy and bias has no place in a reasonable community either.

Mr. Gianakakis has nothing to be ashamed of. But Blake and Mitchell should not be able to hold their heads up in any decent community of fair minded individuals. They should be more concerned with a lack of AED and the fact that they prefer to torpedo their own community rather than be reasonable men.

