

Teachers union asks board to suspend Hanson, other top officials

By Mackenzie Mays
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The [Fresno Teachers Association](#) is calling for the Fresno Unified school board to suspend Superintendent Michael Hanson and other top officials, citing their possible role in the alleged shredding of documents amid a federal investigation.

FTA President Tish Rice asked the board to place Hanson, Chief Financial Officer Ruthie Quinto and Chief Operations Officer Karin Temple on administrative leave until the findings of the investigation, which focus on officials' involvement in no-bid contracts, are made public. She issued the call at a news conference outside the school district building Wednesday.

"We are concerned about reports that we're getting just today that documents are being shredded in key district offices. We're not sure if this document shredding is being done as a normal course of business or could be related to the federal investigation," Rice said, amid cheers of teachers who attended the news conference.

A federal grand jury [subpoena](#), served to the district last month, is demanding the district turn over a wide range of documents, including officials' personal emails and phone records – questioning their relationship with developers.

But Hanson said the allegations were false, and pointed to ongoing salary negotiations with FTA as Rice's motivation, calling her claims "opportunistic."

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Tish Rice, Fresno Teachers Association president

"We gave very clear direction to all the people that would need to preserve documents and we are incredibly confident that they're doing that. I think what you had tonight was an irresponsible allegation thrown out, like has happened so often around here ... It is not coincidental that we are in a negotiations process that (FTA) expects a lot more out of and we have given our last, best and final offer," he said. "I think it's unfortunate, I think it's disingenuous, and in the end, I think it needs to be clarified, but what is being alleged is not occurring."

Rice would not identify the source of her information, but she stood before the board at its regular meeting later Wednesday and made the same allegations.

"When other employees of this district are investigated, the protocol, we all know, is to put them on leave. Why should these three be treated any differently?" Rice told the board. "The public is tired of the half-truths."

Rice said regardless of the document-shredding allegations, the three officials should still be ousted, pointing to the board's recent hires of attorneys and public relations employees and [controversy](#) about Hanson and others using a phone app that automatically erases any trace of text messages.

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Superintendent Michael Hanson

Hanson and Quinto admitted to using the [Cyber Dust](#) app – which touts its ability to leave no digital footprint – to conduct school business last year. But they denied allegations it was related to the ongoing federal [investigation](#).

In response to the calls for him to resign, Hanson said “absolutely not.”

“I am employed by the board but I work for the kids of this city and I have very strong board support to continue doing the work that they’ve charged me to do, which is to take care of our 73,000 kids honorably every day,” he said.

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