

Please read direct quotes from former and current staff members below. Please note that most teachers requested to be anonymous because they are scared of retaliation by Debra Mastriano (referred to below as DM), even after they have left. This is part 1 as there is so much more to be shared.

"I know I have told many co-workers I would never let Debra Mastriano run me out, but let the truth be told. During DM's first week as a principal at our school, she saw Mrs. Diaz (an old paraprofessional) and I talking in the cafeteria and in a very nasty tone she told us that "She doesn't want her staff to be talking to one another!". I know DM was friends with Superintendent Ilene Alstchul who gave her tenure. Prior to her getting tenured, any complaints that went against DM, Ilene ignored because the whole intention was to give her tenure. She even made DM a role model for all other principals in the District. As time passed and she got tenured, it started getting worse in our school community. She put the guidance counselor in the cubicle on the 2nd floor with the Parent Coordinator and the Assistant Principal to give counseling to the students, which is a privacy violation. Then, she eventually had the guidance Counselor doing lunch duty in the Cafeteria rendering services to students on their lunch breaks. On another occasion, DM got upset with a teacher I worked with because she gave a student with a disability—and no behavioral issues—a grade she didn't think he deserved. DM made them change the grade to a 1 (he had always been a 4). A formal report was filed on this grade change incident during Superintendent Christine Loughlin's tenure. Additionally, DM made it very clear to fill out incident reports on the self contained students so she could use it against them during their IEP renewal meetings but never reported incidents to OSIS (which is where formal incident reports are supposed to go in the DOE), because she didn't want to make it look like the school was bad. I even met with Christine Loughlin on her 2nd day as the active Superintendent, speaking about DM and had a parent join in who cried talking about what DM had done to her one and only black male son. When we returned to in-person learning, DM had remote teachers on the computer supervising in-person school classes from home with paraprofessionals in the classrooms alone (it's against regulations for paras to be left alone with students). When I brought it up to the chapter leader, DM had added another student assignment to me within 24 hours. By that time, I had 3 different assignments. I knew she would retaliate against me when I came back to work. Let's not forget, since DM came to the school, she took away all the child friendly activities away from the students like, outdoor performances that families enjoyed coming to, birthday parties, celebrations, trips etc. She made that school like an asylum. If parents only knew what DM is all about they would do everything to get her out because she is toxic and has no empathy for others." -Karmishi Juman, Paraprofessional who left after 25 years to work in another school

"DM told me after I had my second child that she was letting me go and she is doing this to act like my mother, as a good mother would tell me [their father] to get a better job now that I have two kids." - Anonymous Former 3-5 Teaching Assistant who left in 2019 after 8 years

"Towards the end of the 2021 school year DM asked teachers to accompany students to the bathrooms as a class or in groups because some of the bathrooms were messy. One day when taking a group of boys to the bathroom, I was standing outside of the 3rd floor boys bathroom. As DM passed by she asked me why I was standing there and not checking the bathroom. I responded "I thought teachers weren't allowed to go in student bathrooms" to which she replied "of course you can" and then something along the lines of "how else are you supposed to know who made the mess?" She then proceeded to enter the boys bathroom with two of my students still inside. They walked out nervously a few seconds later followed by Mastriano who instructed me to check inside the bathroom next time (which I of course did not)." -Anonymous Former K-2 Teacher who left in 2022 after 3 years

“DM uses observations for retaliation. She observed me immediately after I was two hours late due to an emergency with the pipes in the subway. I asked if she could come back another time given the circumstances and she said no, although another teacher told me that DM gave her 3 chances to re-teach a lesson that had not been going well. Another teacher said that DM volunteered to leave when the lesson was not going well and said she would return later in the afternoon to give the teacher another chance. She observed another teacher the day she returned from maternity leave and another teacher got observed the day after returning from a week-long hospital stay. All received negative feedback for their observations, besides the staff members she showed favoritism to.” -Anonymous Former Teacher who left in 2019 after 18 years

“On my second day back from maternity leave DM pulled me into a meeting on my prep with the math coach, Nicola. When I told her I needed to pump breast milk she asked if I would do it in the meeting with the math coach. It was extremely uncomfortable. I was never given time or a room to pump breast milk upon returning from maternity leave.” -Anonymous Former 1st Grade Teacher who left in 2019 after 7 years

“DM abruptly and randomly entered the room in a rage, screaming and yelling about the disorganization. She began ripping off labels from the cubbies and ripping sheets off of the walls. The kids watched horrified as I was demanded to clean this up...move this there... put that here etc. I held back tears as I followed her directions. After the ordeal ended, I had to excuse myself so I could get myself together- I did not want my kids to see me upset. When I came back, a student came up to me and said “I love you. I think you are amazing and she is just mean!” I couldn’t even believe that a student so young could see how harassing this situation was” -Anonymous Current Staff Member

“There were six assistant principals in Debra’s first six years at PS 166. Her first AP lasted for the 2012 school year, her second AP lasted for the 2013 school year, her third AP lasted for the 2014 school year, her fifth AP lasted for the 2015 and 2016 school years, and her sixth AP lasted only a few months, from October 2017 to February 2018. We had no AP after that until Ms. Cohen in September 2018. The numbers speak for themselves. It is not easy to get an assistant principal job.” -Anonymous Current Staff Member

“During the quality review on November 28 and 29, 2017, where our school/DM were observed, DM directed a couple of staff members to take a group of around 8 students out of their classrooms for two days and keep them in a hidden room. These students were in grades K-5 and whom she considered to be our school’s “most troubled children.” This tactic was meant to control the observation by the quality reviewer in case he was to enter a room with one of these students who could possibly be misbehaving or in need of support. She directed the staff to lie to these students and tell them the reason they were out of their classrooms was because they were becoming an ambassador for our school. They missed two whole days of instruction and the majority of these students she hand picked were minority students.” - Anonymous Current Staff Member

“In January 2019, a 3rd grade student had an incident where he kicked another student. DM saw this as it happened during arrival. She angrily brought him up to her office and screamed with the door open (so the 8 year old student heard her) “he is a terrible kid and I am disgusted with him.” The little boy began to cry as he waited for her to yell at him. He was a young black boy. A few days later there was another incident with the same child and DM loudly screamed in the hallway (where he could hear her) “he’s disgusting.” I saw him crying again and tried to encourage him. He transferred schools the next year.” -Anonymous Current Staff Member

"DM asked me to stop speaking up at meetings when I was just asking clarifying questions. She claimed "I was negative, argumentative and that I was spreading negativity amongst the staff. She told me if I had any further questions to ask her directly rather than in a meeting forum- essentially she silenced me"
-Anonymous Current Staff Member

"DM made a comment about two minority students who she claimed lived at 589 Amsterdam Public Housing. When it was mentioned to her that they did not live at 589 Amsterdam, she said "Oh well, then they probably live above the Duane Reade. You know that's public housing too." -Anonymous Current Staff Member

*"In 2022, the former deputy superintendent called DM at her reporting time and asked why she wasn't in her office. DM said she was with the custodian. The deputy then called the custodian and he of course said he was not meeting with her. When the deputy came to the school to talk to DM about some concerns, DM screamed at her and said "I don't f*cking care what you say." This is how she spoke to her BOSS. So imagine how she speaks to the rest of us,"* -Anonymous Current Staff Member

"DM has lied and blamed teachers for throwing out the supplies that were mentioned in the 2019 Post Article. In reality, the supplies were thrown out in July when teachers are not present. The only staff member present at that time was Debra Mastriano. She has no regard for the truth, she only cares to defend herself." -Anonymous Current Staff Member

"In 2019, when the PTA offered to buy the staff coffee, DM responded with "What? We are going to give them a prize for doing THEIR JOBS?!" -Anonymous Current Staff Member

"I told my class "Now on Friday we get to have choice time!!" And they said "What's that?" "Does that mean we can read whatever we want?" It absolutely broke my heart that they had no idea, as elementary students, what choice time even was!" -Anonymous Current Staff Member

"DM frequently moves staff members to different grades as retaliation. If teachers appear too knowledgeable of curriculum, or too close as a grade team, she feels threatened because they do not require her input (which is often lacking in its curricular understanding) and she has a pattern of disliking when staff are too friendly. When staff and parents bring this up, she just says "it's good for people to teach different grades." But shouldn't teachers want to teach the grade they are put into? That is something that would make parents and teachers happier here." -Anonymous Current Staff Member