

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 2.

*"I ran and I worked at the YMCA After-school Program [a program that is free and no longer at 166]. After that role, I started helping out the PTA as cafeteria and recess help. Mastriano immediately asked me if I would like to be a teaching assistant. I accepted. I was a T.A from 2012 to 2017. Then I became the head of T.A's. I enjoyed my job; the students as well as the parents. My last year I worked in the main office as the Community Associate. Most of the time I had nothing to do. If I went to the bathroom, left to help a teacher or other staff member she would call me on the loud speaker to come to the office. I had no work waiting for me. I saw a different Debra. Everything is okay until you don't agree with her, you question something, you have to take a day off, or she is disrespectful and you let her know you don't like it. I saw her do things that she would call others out for doing. I began to regret working for her. I didn't have time to take lunch and she replied "I don't get to take lunch either". I was refused doctor's appointments and written up for not following "protocol". I wasn't paid for staying late. I never called off unless my child was sick. During COVID, she had me come in to throw away garbage and old unused science kits that she ordered a dumpster for (against the DOE garbage disposal rules). **She physically tried to hold me in her office by pushing the door closed to prevent me from leaving. She continued to block the door so I couldn't leave as she continued to berate and yell at me.** She started yelling at staff who communicated with me and shut down my PS 166 Gmail account prior to the end of the year to prevent me seeing [emails from] staff wishing me luck or telling me they will miss and love me. She yelled at staff up to a year after I left if she heard them say my name in the building. **We built a work family that I saw crumble under Mastriano.**" -Tiniquea Louden who left in 2019 after 11 years*

*"I worked at PS 166 for 5 years. It was my first teaching job. Through the years I realized what a toxic work environment DM created for her staff and for the students. She only seemed to care about test scores and would take away fun activities or enrichment activities from students so that more time could be spent on academics. DM took one student's math notebook from my classroom and went down to her office. The next day, my co teacher and I got called down to the office to speak with her. DM calculated the percentage of recordings in the one student's notebook and how many "days we must have missed" of ECAM games. We explained that often the students work on dry erase boards so it is not documented in their notebook. She would not allow it, stating it needed to be in the notebook (so she can track what teachers are doing). We then received letters on official letterhead that we were not following the curriculum correctly and Debra reserves the right to put a letter in our file for 90 days. Just about 3 months later, DM wanted to move me from 2nd to 5th grade even though it was not on my preference sheet. I decided to file a grievance with the Union. While she is allowed to force me to teach a grade not on my preference sheet for one year, I **needed** to file a grievance with the Union so that the following year I can teach a grade on my preference sheet. The day after I filed the grievance with the Union, I got called down to the office by DM and was told that I will be receiving a letter in my file from the incident 3 months earlier that I mentioned above. I was on day 89 of the first "warning letter" and once I filed a grievance THEN I was officially getting a letter in my file, which stays there for 3 years. This was clear retaliation and was honestly the tip of the iceberg. I knew I needed to leave PS166. It always made me sad because the students, staff, and parents are all amazing, but DM creates an incredibly toxic work environment. It is not healthy for the staff or for the students." -Anonymous former teacher who left in 2019 after 5 years*

"DM lied in an email to parents about how much our math coach, Nicola, costs. Nicola is Debra's old friend whom she brought to the school when DM started. Most schools have Nicola for maybe a year or

two. She's been at 166 for 11 years. DM refuses to listen to staff complaints about her curriculum and her twice a month (once even twice a week) visits. Nicola does not cost \$120; she costs \$1200 a day. There are additional meetings [for about 6 staff members, once a month] at her house, which also cost a significant amount per staff member. The visits keep teachers out of their classrooms and are used as "gotcha" for not doing something in the math curriculum, "correctly." -Anonymous Current Staff Member

"In January of 2022, there was a black student who had a difficult time adjusting to our new school and was dealing with a significant amount of trauma. DM told a group of us to meet. DM began the meeting by referring to him as a problem and our meeting was to begin the process of removing him from our school. We each attempted to appeal to her humanity by divulging some of the struggles he was going through. We were screamed at for wanting "to give him a chance" and she demanded to know what we were doing to "hold him accountable." DM then shouted "**When are we going to start suspending him? He is not allowed to have crayons. You cannot be nice to him.**" It was the most demoralizing meeting I have ever been a part of. It was reported to SCI under the leadership of Christine Loughlin. To my knowledge it was never investigated." -Anonymous Current Staff Member

"On May 21st, 2019 as I returned back from being on a trip with the class, DM denied me my lunch. Not to mention I was 4 months pregnant. She said the union has a new policy that says, "no lunch on trip days". I contacted the union and they told me that was not true. Additionally, when I was pregnant and just beginning to show, she told me "you don't look as skinny as you used to". Lastly, when my grandmother passed away and I emailed to say I would be out for 4 days because [the funeral] is out of the country, instead of being given condolences, I was told "This is a long time to be out of school" -Anonymous Former Teacher who left in 2019 after 9 years

"I arrived to work about an hour and a half late after being stuck in traffic. DM came to observe me shortly after I arrived. I was just starting my writing lesson and I was reprimanded by her for not following my Program Card (my schedule—showing we had Reading scheduled). This was all while my students watched, which is another unprofessional habit of hers (reprimanding staff in front of students, parents, or other staff). When I tried explaining to her that I was thrown off of my usual schedule because of the difficult morning that I had, she became agitated and said she was there to observe a reading lesson and refused to leave. When I again asked for her to give me the courtesy to return later that afternoon, she refused and I was forced to stop my writing lesson, regroup my students and gather my materials for my reading lesson, all while she stayed there, taking notes for her observation. I received less than desirable feedback for this observation." Anonymous Former Teacher who left in 2019 after 9 years

"During the height of COVID, I had gone to the urgent care to get myself tested due to a severe body ache and sore throat. I had gotten a rapid and a PCR test and at the time, was required to wait for my PCR results to come back in order to go back to work. Due to obvious symptoms of COVID, I could not go back to work until I got my negative PCR result back. Just for clarity, I let the principal know of my situation, since I didn't know what my next steps should be. Without considering how I was feeling, she guilt tripped me into going to work. She said my absence was too last minute and that finding a sub would be impossible. Out of fear, I had no choice but to go into work, even though I was very sick. I felt threatened and afraid to go against her. She disregarded my well being and out of her own convenience, felt the need to make me come in. Furthermore, she completely disregarded the DOE protocol and didn't even consider helping at a time of emergency." -Anonymous Current Staff Member

“Ever since the 2019 NY Post article, DM hasn't let staff throw anything out. Taking care of unwanted, unused items is the teacher's responsibility. One year, I placed some items in the hallway to donate after school. DM burst through the door, screaming “EXCUSE ME! WHAT IS THIS? MOVE THIS ALL INSIDE NOW!” She then watched as I carried everything into the classroom, and continued to scream at me in front of all the children, not lifting a finger to help me. After she left, she called my classroom phone and lectured me all over again until I finally assured her I'd get rid of the items myself.” -Anonymous Current Staff Member

“All the scooters that were left out during covid she repeatedly told the head custodian to throw away. When parents called upset that their child's scooter was thrown away, she lied and said “I don't know why she did that!” -Anonymous Current Staff Member

“All the kids she wants to get out of the school to go to District-75 or a 12:1:1 class are all black or brown students. She puts immense pressure on staff by screaming, making condescending remarks, constant meetings, emails, etc. to agree with her and try to illegally “get rid of them.” -Anonymous Current Staff Member

*“A child with medical issues, with proper doctors notes and the parents in contact with the school about his absences, worked with the teacher and were told their son was still academically caught up with his peers only to be called by the principal saying she had “decided that the G&T class was the problem and she was putting him in general education”. When the parent said that no one, teachers, doctors, felt that was an issue and that in fact taking him away from his friends in the G&T program would cause further distress, Debra Mastriano yelled at them. **Only when the parent made it clear they would fight the decision were they told the child could stay in G &T for his last year at school.**” -Anonymous Current Staff Member*

“I have worked at PS 166 for nearly 15 years and have had four children attend the school. I was comfortable with the previous five principals that oversaw the school. My feelings towards the school changed when DM came. She was able to get away with everything when she got here because Ilene Altschul was the acting superintendent. Meanwhile, the NYCDOE got rid of Altschul as well and replaced her with Christine Loughlin, who was then replaced this past year. I urge you to google Ilene Altschul and why she was removed from acting superintendent. Years later, our sixth A.P. only lasted 3 months because her baby was sick and DM wouldn't allow her to leave to check on her infant while her husband had a medical situation. DM stopped her from going home to check on him as well, telling her, her responsibilities were there at the school. She had two family emergencies in her time here and couldn't leave for either of them, which is why she only lasted 3 months.” -Karmishi Juman, a former paraprofessional who left after 25 years