

Resign with forethought

Taking on a new role is exciting, so it's not surprising that too often people fail to take the care necessary to depart with dignity and grace. These are important tips.

Prepare Think of resignation as you would a job interview. Put time and thought into it. Prepare what you are going to say, in what order, and to whom. Remember, you can offend board members and other influential supporters if they learn the news second hand.

Resign in writing Carefully compose a resignation letter; it is likely to be shared and may even be published by the local media.

Be honest and succinct Clearly explain why you are leaving. Be sensitive to feelings and use tactful language.

Be diplomatic If you absolutely must express be negative, do it face to face. Do not do it in writing. Prepare your comments, rather than risk off the cuff, particularly if you might become emotional.

Be flexible If necessary negotiate a finishing date that works for your current district as well as you. Hand over all files and documents prior to leaving.

Be realistic If your resignation is coming "out of the blue," expect a reaction from your board members and district stakeholders. Allow time for the reaction to your news. If anyone

becomes aggressive, confrontational or upset, never respond in kind. Stick to carefully prepared comments.

Be positive and be appreciative Thank your board for all the opportunities. Thank your colleagues for their good work and what you learned from them. Find something good to say and say it as many times as you can.

Remember your career Request reference letters from board members and senior administrators before you depart.

Do not burn bridges You might need to rely on your current district for references, advice or even a job. You also never know where people from your current place of work may end up in five or ten years' time.

Safeguard you and your family Make sure you know what you are entitled to when you leave, such as unused vacation or sick time.

Keep in touch Be proactive about keeping in touch with the valuable contacts and friends.

Avoid a counteroffer Resigning from a district you have been with for a long time can be very stressful. Once you accept a new position, resign with clarity by emphasizing that the decision is final and you would prefer that matters not be made more difficult and complicated by a counter offer from your current board.