

Former Martin County special education director to head FAU autism center

By Tyler Treadway



Maryellen Quinn-Lunny, former director of exceptional student education at the Martin County School District, has been named director of Florida Atlantic University's Center for Autism and Related Disabilities.

Part of the university's College of Education, the center provides free support and services for people with autism and similar disabilities, their families, schools and community agencies. The center has offices in Boca Raton

and Port St. Lucie to serve Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River and Okeechobee counties. The staff of seven clinicians works with more than 2,500 families.

Quinn-Lunny worked for the district from 1994 until her resignation July 5, when she filed a complaint with the district's internal equity officer alleging, among other things, that Schools Superintendent Nancy Kline had forced her out of the job after Quinn-Lunny voiced concerns over Kline's proposed budget cuts.

A report commissioned by the Martin County School Board and issued Sept. 16 found that Kline violated school district policies by creating a hostile work environment for Quinn-Lunny. The report by attorneys at a Jacksonville law firm said there was "sufficient factual and legal basis" for Quinn-Lunny to "successfully bring a Florida Public Whistle-Blower action against the school district."

Kline said she "strongly disagree(d)" with the report's finding.

In a prepared statement, Quinn-Lunny said, "I look forward to working with (the FAU center) and being a part of the beneficial services the Center offers. Many communities are affected by autism and related disabilities, and (the center) is here to be proactive and useful to those in need."