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RPV principal in flap over guns leaves job SCHOOL: Leader who drew parents' anger takes district role to advise new teachers across the South Bay.

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The Rancho Palos Verdes principal who asked fifth-graders to remove the plastic rifle tips of 2-inch army men on mortarboard caps has left her post for personal reasons.

Denise Leonard, who has not been on campus at **Cornerstone Elementary** School for a couple of weeks, accepted a staff position Thursday with the Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District.

As a principal on special assignment, Leonard will provide support and assessment for first-year teachers, said William Franchini, the district's director of human resources.

"Due to personal and family considerations, Denise Leonard will be moving from her current assignment at **Cornerstone Elementary**," Franchini said. "To protect her privacy, that's all we have to say about it."

In addition to working with teachers in her district, Leonard will also coordinate efforts with a consortium of six local districts providing support to new teachers in Manhattan Beach, Hermosa Beach, El Segundo, Hawthorne and Redondo Beach.

District administrators met with teachers and staff members of Cornerstone on Thursday morning to inform them of the move.

The opportunity was presented to Leonard, who accepted it after ongoing discussions. Leonard did not return calls to the school or her

Torrance home.

Paula Boothe, the school's PTA president, also couldn't be reached for comment.

Leonard drew the ire of a group of fifth-graders' parents in June, when she forced at least 10 students to cut off the tips of plastic soldiers' weapons during a promotion ceremony. She said it violated the district's "zero-tolerance" firearms policy. In August, the district issued a public apology.

Todd Mirsky, a retired district principal, took over the school Thursday. On Wednesday, former Cornerstone Principal Jody Pastell will return in an interim role until Leonard's replacement is found.

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