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# Co-headmaster of O'Bryant High School resigns

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT    JUNE 16, 2012

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The co-headmaster of the John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics & Science in Roxbury has resigned after a television station in Memphis, where he was the finalist for a job, reported that he was on probation in Boston for a year-old charge of assault and battery against his wife.

Rodney D. Peterson, a 36-year-old Memphis native, resigned last week from the position he had held since April 2011, said Matt Wilder, Boston schools spokesman. The O'Bryant is one of Boston's three exam schools.

On Tuesday, Peterson also withdrew his candidacy to become principal of Westside Middle School in Memphis, according to Jeremy Jones, spokesman for the Tennessee Achievement School District.

Peterson ended his run for the Memphis job several days after WHBQ-TV reported the Boston battery case and said he was in the running to lead the Westside school, starting in the fall.

Jake Wark, a spokesman for the Suffolk district attorney's office, said Friday that Peterson was arraigned in Dorchester District Court on June 20, 2011. He was charged with assault and battery on his wife inside the Dorchester apartment they shared.

Around 11:15 p.m. on June 17, 2011, officers responded to a phone call from a neighbor who overheard the couple arguing. When they arrived, according to the police report, Peterson's wife told them he had cornered her in the kitchen, screamed at her, and punched her in the abdomen. She said she had given birth to their son, by caesarean section, about one month earlier.

Peterson told officers he did not hit her, only that he held her as she tried to walk away. Both husband and wife said she bit him on the shoulder to get away. Both declined medical treatment.

Peterson "admitted to facts sufficient for a finding of guilty" on Aug. 8, 2011 and his case was continued for a probationary period of one year, Wark said. As a condition of the probation, Peterson was ordered to complete a batterer's intervention program.

Peterson did not respond to phone messages left for him Friday.

The controversy in Memphis was first reported locally by the Universal Hub blog.

At the O'Bryant, Peterson led the school alongside Steven C. Sullivan. The Boston School Department will determine this summer whether to hire another co-headmaster to replace Peterson, Wilder said.

He declined to say whether the district had previously known about Peterson's assault and battery charge, saying that it is a personnel matter.

When asked whether the discovery of such a criminal charge would prompt disciplinary action from the school department, Wilder said that it would depend on the circumstances, including whether the allegations occurred in school and whether the case led to a conviction.

Peterson began his teaching career in Tulsa, Okla. He then worked for eight years in the Memphis public school system, including a stint as an assistant principal at an exam school. That school district was

formally led by Boston's current school superintendent, Carol Johnson.

In June 2009, he became headmaster of Odyssey High School in South Boston.

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