

April 21, 2020

To The Members of the Board of Education,

As educators, we are constantly faced with challenges and strive to overcome them to help our students succeed. However, there is a burden facing our students that we alone are unable to address. That burden is their social and emotional well-being. Research states that, "Nearly 1 in 5 U.S. children are diagnosed with a mental disorder. [However only] 20% of those with a mental disorder receive care from a specialized care provider for mental health" (CDC). Additionally, we know that anxiety and depression are on the rise. Students are in need of counseling services for individual stressors and struggles.

Students at Beecher Road School are still working to strengthen their emotional intelligence and social skills and require lunch groups and small group counseling. We have observed a decline in students' ability to resolve conflicts, taking time away from learning as it is requiring teachers like ourselves to intervene. Additionally, students are managing negative influences from social media and decreased personal connections to peers and adults. These online social interactions are finding its way into the social dynamic of the school and affecting peer interactions. Therefore, students need more social and emotional support than ever before; these needs continue to increase, not decrease.

Our grade level has discussed the increased demands and needs in the area of emotional support and needs of families at length. While our efforts during PLC are to plan for curriculum and learning, we cannot ignore the pervasive rise in cases of students that impact our classrooms. We continue to struggle with how to address academic needs when children are not available for learning because of the strains on their mental health. We would argue that this is currently our most time consuming and greatest area of need as teachers. The amount of time spent addressing student emotional needs and interpersonal conflicts greatly diminishes our ability to address academic needs. Without proper care, support, and treatment, students are unable to achieve their potential and make appropriate academic growth. Knowing all of this, we cannot remain quiet at the news that our district intends to terminate a position of a social worker.

We challenge you to make the decision that most benefits the students. At a bear minimum, we urge you to maintain the current position of the social worker. This would allow our school psychologists the time to attend PPTs, perform necessary testing, and meet the continued demands on their time, while providing additional counseling and small group time with the social worker. Additionally, we know how unique our district and its community are and know that a staff member that already knows how to navigate its intricacies is best equipped to address the needs of our students. We therefore, respectfully request that you reconsider the recommended cut of a social worker position as this will negatively impact our students and go against the beliefs of our school's mission and vision statement - that Beecher Road School - is "Meeting academic, artistic, behavioral, social, emotional, and physical needs is essential in educating the whole child."

Respectfully,

Mrs. McCollom

Mrs. Franklin

Mrs. Echeverry

Ms. Greene

Mr. Ngov

Mrs. Smerekanicz