

**Official Minutes of the  
Oak Park Board of Education District 97  
260 Madison Street, Oak Park  
March 9, 2021 Meeting**

This meeting was held in-person and virtually using Zoom during the time of the Coronavirus pandemic. One or more of the board members met in-person and everyone else were virtual.

President Broy called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Spurlock, Kearney, Kim, Breymaier, Moore were present. President Broy and Member Liebl participated via Zoom.

Absent: None

Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Carol Kelley, Director of Communications Amanda Siegfried, Senior Director of Technology Michael Arensdorff, Senior Director of Human Resources Gina Herrmann, Chief Academic and Accountability Office Eboney Lofton, Associate Superintendent of Education Felicia Starks Turner, Senior Director of Equity Carrie Kamm, Consultant Rob Grossi, and Board Secretary Sheryl Marinier.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

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Kim moved, seconded by Kearney that the Board move into executive session for the purpose of Appointment, Employment, Compensation, Discipline, Performance, or Dismissal of Specific Employees 5 ILCS 120/2(C)(1) at 6:01 p.m.

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Broy, Moore (arrived at 6:03 p.m.), Spurlock, Liebl, and Breymaier (arrived at 6:04 p.m.)

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion passed

OPEN SESSION

**OPEN SESSION**

Kim motioned that the board move into Open Session at 6:47 p.m. The motion was seconded by Kearney. All members of the Board were in agreement. The Board reconvened in Open Session at 7:02 p.m. President Broy and Member Liebl participated remotely.

**PROCLAMATION IN RECOGNITION OF THE SCHOOL NURSES**

SPECIAL REPORTS

President Broy read the following proclamation in honor of the District 97 school nurses.

**Whereas**, the ten District 97 nurses help to educate staff and students on mitigation measures and proper use of PPE during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

**Whereas**, the ten District 97 nurses collaborate with the Oak Park Public Health Department through weekly meetings; and

**Whereas**, the ten District 97 nurses monitor CrisisGo and follow-up with staff, families and administration as indicated; and

**Whereas**, the ten District 97 nurses serve on the Superintendent's Advisory Panel, offering their expertise and knowledge; and

**Whereas,** the ten District 97 nurses provide guidance in the development of the district's Return to School Framework and plans; and

**Whereas,** the ten District 97 nurses provide mental health support to students along with our school psychologists, social workers through mental health check-ins; and

**Whereas,** the ten District 97 nurses volunteer to support the Oak Park Public Health Department to provide vaccinations against COVID-19.

**Now therefore,** the District 97 Board of Education recognizes Shilpa Advani, Andrea Rossi, Anne Marie Guerrier, Jamie Peterson, Georgia Donovan, Catherine Cronin, Ayhessa Pryor, Hilary Winkelhake, Nancy Radagno and Lauren Giorango for their dedication and support to the district, students and staff.

Dr. Kelley celebrated the nurses noting that they are not only helping District 97. She shared that every weekend the nurses have been vaccinating other community members. She jokingly questioned when they are finding time to sleep, and told them that they are appreciated, and shared that the nurses are our heroes.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Vice President Kim read the following statement.

The Board of Education received 149 public comments via email regarding the same subject, a teacher at William Beye Elementary School. These public comments were provided to all Board members in advance of this meeting for consideration. In accordance with Board Policy 2:230 and to preserve sufficient time for the Board to conduct its business, the Board President [or designee] read the public comments on this one subject for a period of 20 minutes. The public comments were read in the order in which they were received. [All public comments on this subject are included within these minutes, for informational purposes only.]

#### **Ariel Schick**

Addressed the board regarding Patrick McAndrews. She shared that he has been missing from class since winter break. She understands that he is being considered for termination due to a punitive issue related to his use of sick leave. The families have not been given any information about his absence, and there have been problems with the substitutes in his classroom. Schick noted that the first substitute kept removing her mask to speak. The students are concerned for their teacher. Her child now has a stomach ache and does not want to do homework. Schick reported that early on in the pandemic, her grandfather died. In her child's eyes, he simply disappeared, and now her teacher has disappeared too. She expressed concern that these actions are harmful to her child and could lead to mistrust of adults. Schick suggested that this has been a shameful handling of a routine personnel issue, and noted that Patrick McAndrews is a kind teacher who will not be easy to replace.

#### **Tom and Ariel Schick sent in the following written statement**

This is not a public comment. We will be sending one of those as well. This is a personal plea for help. Our daughter is a 5th grade student in room 5M at Beye. We are writing in support of her teacher, Mr. McAndrew. We have had some great teachers at Beye but Mr. McAndrew really stands out. In spite of all the difficulties of remote learning, Mr. McAndrew was able to overcome the challenges and create a wonderful learning environment for our daughter and the other students. As parents, it was a relief to know that 5th grade would not be lost to the pandemic. Patrick cares about his students more than any other teacher we have dealt with at Beye. We are writing you in the hopes that you can help expedite his

return to the classroom. We have reached out to both Principal Schemidt and Superintendent Kelley but are extremely disappointed with how they have dealt with the situation. Our daughter was so excited to begin hybrid learning and finally be in the same room with Mr. McAndrew. Unfortunately she was denied that opportunity. 5M is now on its 3rd substitute teacher and our daughter has become completely disheartened with school. She doesn't understand why her teacher isn't allowed back in the classroom and she is very sad and upset. As parents, we are having a hard time understanding how a school with such a great reputation seems to care so little about the emotional and academic needs of its students. Especially during a pandemic. Mr. McAndrew is a wonderful teacher and a highly respected member of our community. Any help you can give us in getting him back in the classroom sooner rather than later would be greatly appreciated. This pandemic has taken so much away from these kids. Please do not also take away their much loved teacher.

### **Chris Miller**

Spoke in support of Patrick McAndrews, a teacher at Beye School who is facing disciplinary action and possible termination. He told the board that McAndrews is a wonderful teacher who has worked tirelessly for his students. He is caring and kind, and works hard to build relationships with the students and staff. McAndrews seeks out families and is receptive to their feedback. McAndrews has been consistent. Miller explained that the details around the infraction are murky and parents are told that information cannot be shared. They can only assume that it is related to his recent trip to Nepal to visit his family. That could not be a criminal action. The students have had several substitute teachers, which is distressing. They didn't know if their teacher was alive, or perhaps had COVID-19, and the concern grew. The principal told them that he was alive and safe at home. Miller expressed concern that termination might be too extreme and asked the board to make a decision that is practical for the families at Beye School.

### **Chris Miller sent in the following written statement**

I'm writing to seek clarity on whether or not the Board will address the charges and recommended disciplinary actions against Beye 5th grade teacher Patrick McAndrew at this week's D97 Board Meeting. It was my understanding that this issue would be taken up during the March 9th meeting; however, in looking over the agenda generally and the proposed personnel actions submitted to be discussed by Human Resources, I do not see his name included anywhere. As a current parent of a 5th grader in Mr. McAndrew's classroom it was my hope and expectation that a decision re: Mr. McAndrew's situation would be made and delivered at this meeting, ending weeks of uncertainty, administrative silence, and a revolving door of substitute teachers. The lack of communication and inconsistency of instruction has been difficult for everyone involved, but especially our students. I hope that the Board will be able to address this issue immediately and decide to reject recommendations for Mr. McAndrew's termination and allow him to return to his classroom. In light of the accusations made against him, terminating him- especially at this point in the school year- feels overly punitive and disproportionate to his alleged misdemeanors. More importantly, it punishes the children who have counted on him for stability, community and instruction in the midst of an incredibly difficult year of remote learning. Many Beye school families, past and present, are waiting on a decision, and advocating for Mr. McAndrew's return. We hope that one is reached that is just, timely, and in the best interest of everyone involved. Thank you for your service, and for your consideration of this matter. I look forward to your response.

### **Samina Hadi-Tabassum**

Shared that she is a Beye mom who moved here for the school culture and for Patrick McAndrews. She loves him; he is kind, well read, and smart. The school is so fortunate to have him. He is an asset and the Beye families want him back in the classroom. She explained that his identification with Nepal makes kids comfortable with their own culture. This has never happened to them before in their life. She taught at Dominican and now at Erikson Institute. It is rare to find someone like him. She shared that her son is under treatments for leukemia. The children miss the teacher who knew them and would listen to them. He is a strong, stable force in their life. She encouraged the board to do what is best for the children.

**Samina Hadi-Tabassum submitted the following written statement**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew, my children's remarkable teacher at Beye School. We love Patrick--he is a kind, smart, well read and positive human being. We are so fortunate to have Patrick as a teacher in our district. He is an asset and I want him back in the classroom as soon as possible. My twins Salma and Yusef, who are South Asian, LOVE their teacher. His identity with Nepal let my children feel safe about their own Asian American identity. My children talked about how their teacher recognized their culture, what they wore and ate, and celebrated their cultural backgrounds. This has never happened before in their life--to see a mirror of themselves in their teacher. I am currently a professor of education and have taught many teachers in the district at Dominican University and now at Erikson Institute. It is rare to find a teacher like Patrick who is a true intellect--who can have deep conversations with children about the BIG ESSENTIAL IDEAS, who is an avid reader, who loves to travel and share his love of culture, and who is competent to handle all sorts of social dynamics in the online and onsite classroom. The majority of teachers in D97 do not have these traits. My son Yusef is currently undergoing cancer treatment for leukemia. He loves Mr. McAndrew as a male role model, who allowed him to show emotions, that a young boy can be vulnerable and it is okay. My children miss their teacher, a supportive adult who knew them and who would listen to them. In this crazy pandemic, the district has taken away a strong stable force in my children's life. Please bring back Mr. Andrew - now is the time to be flexible thinkers, to think outside the box, and do what is best for the children.

One board member expressed concern that all the comments were not being read aloud, and questioned how the ones that were read aloud were chosen. It was explained that the comments were being read in the order in which they were received. One comment had been elevated to the top because the sender specifically asked that the statement be read aloud during the meeting.

**Deborah Levine**

My child Ben is in Mr. Patrick McAndrew's 5th-grade classroom at Beye. This is my second time writing about this matter. When I first wrote, I believed that the situation with Mr. McAndrew would be before the board this Tuesday, March 9th and I was looking for a resolution. Now that the agenda is out and there is no indication that this matter will be on the agenda, it is very concerning. Plenty of time has been allotted for an investigation and for determining any possible appropriate consequences (and termination does not seem appropriate considering the impact on the kids or what we understand to have happened with Mr. McAndrew which is perfectly reasonable in a pandemic and having been a year away from his family). This issue needs to be resolved immediately and we must see Mr. McAndrew back in the classroom as soon as possible. Any further delay causes further uncertainty and harm for my child, the other children in the class, and for the morale of the other teachers in the school. Beye is a wonderful community; it's not perfect, but there had been a genuine level of trust and respect for students, parents, teachers, and staff. This situation has undermined that trust and I fear that we will lose some of our best teachers, impacting many students down the road.

I've pasted my original email below. I would appreciate it if this email and the email below were read in their entirety at the meeting as a public comment.

**Grace Tipton**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. In the few months I have been at Beye School and this district, Patrick has been a beacon of positivity and collaboration. Patrick has volunteered to use his planning time to support and teach other classes when guest speakers are needed. The students beam when they hear his name, and many, if not most, of these students have never had him as a teacher yet. Patrick welcomed me as a new staff member, and offered many resources and tips upon our first interaction. To be frank, with most of this school year being on Zoom it has been a challenge to get to know my colleagues and learn who is who and what they do. Patrick is not in my grade band (as I am the

K-2 instructional-teacher), yet I have collaborated with him many times and benefitted from his positivity and ability to bring groups of people together.

The world needs teachers like Patrick McAndrew. The world needs teachers that are so inspirational, that their students grow up to be teachers because of him. I have heard multiple staff members that work in OUR DISTRICT that have made that exact choice because of Patrick McAndrew. We need teachers who advocate for their school hard, and would move mountains for his students and colleagues.

### **Sean Lane**

My name is Sean Lane and I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. Patrick McAndrew is an amazing teacher whose drive, energy, and understanding towards his students is frankly unparalleled in any teacher I've had since. He is a huge asset to Beye and our District.

### **Samantha Weeks**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. Though he was my 5th grade teacher nearly 10 years ago, Mr. McAndrew is one that I still remember fondly to this day as one of the best teachers I've ever had. I will never forget his equal parts of passion and playfulness that made learning so fun. He made me so excited to go to school every morning, and I know I am far from alone in that sentiment.

One of my favorite memories of being in his 5th grade class was when he set us up with pen pals in Nepal. I had never been more excited by something in my young years. It's that extra stuff that he would always do for us to connect us with the world that took him beyond just a teacher, and turned him into a mentor and a role model.

Patrick McAndrew is a HUGE asset to Beye, and to our District as a whole.

### **Marya Peters**

I am writing on behalf of Mr. Patrick McAndrew. Mr. McAndrew was my son's 5th teacher while we were at Beye School. Not only was he compassionate, engaged, and enthusiastic as a teacher he was also my son's favorite teacher he ever had while at Beye. Mr. McAndrew is a huge asset to the Beye community. Not only is he a great 5th grade teacher, but he also is the director of the school musical - an activity that so many kids beyond grade 5 can enjoy. I was so thrilled when my son opted to do the school musical while at Beye, it opened him up to a whole new way of learning. Without Mr. McAndrew, he may not have had that experience. I am so glad my son had the opportunity to learn with Mr. McAndrew.

### **Carrie Cotter**

My daughter is a current student in Patrick McAndrew's classroom. We have had children at Beye for the last 13 years, this is our last year there, and it has been, without exception, an amazing place for our kids. We have, frankly, been kept in the dark about Mr. McAndrew's absence so I don't entirely know why I'm writing except that we're hearing that something regarding Mr. McAndrew is being presented to the board. In my 13 years at Beye, I have never had to write to the board. That the current families in his classroom are being kept entirely in the dark when an issue ostensibly serious enough to be presented to the board is being addressed is pretty shocking to me; however, I would like to write on Mr. McAndrew's behalf. What I can tell you is that Mr. McAndrew was a champion for his kids through the first months of e-learning by truly prioritizing their social and emotional health through a strange learning environment. The kids in his classroom are now disoriented, hurting and missing him. These kids have had multiple different subs and aides in their class which, in addition to not keeping a COVID safe environment, has been chaotic during an already chaotic time of trying to transition to hybrid learning. Keeping Mr. McAndrew out of the classroom for any more time this year is not prioritizing the best interest of the kids in his classroom. Please keep in mind that these are kids who are already grappling

with leaving their beloved Beye at the end of this year and have already had the last year of their time there turned on its head. A return to some level of consistency and normalcy by returning their trusted teacher to the classroom for them to finish out their fifth grade year would be helpful and so very appreciated.

This has been a strange and difficult year for everyone, so I would implore the board to review whatever is being presented with regard to Mr. McAndrew through the lens of understanding that the pandemic and the restrictions it has imposed has impacted every person and family situation in extremely unique ways. For this same reason, I would ask that extra consideration be given to what is best for the kids who are currently in Mr. McAndrew's classroom. Kids should be allowed to think of school as a place of consistency and structure. This last year has been challenging, but in the absence of extraordinary circumstances, there are limits to the amount of resilience we should require of 11 year olds, and they should be allowed to finish the year with their teacher.

### **Cathy Cerniglia**

I am a former Beye School parent of 2 children who attended Beye from 2002 to 2011. My older daughter benefitted immensely from being in a shared classroom with Mr. McAndrew and Ms. Fogg. We found Mr. McAndrew to be passionate about teaching and to care deeply about his students. In addition, both of my daughters participated in the Beye School drama club, an organization which was, at that time, unique to Beye within District 97 and in which Mr. McAndrew played a major role. Mr. McAndrew is a committed teacher who brings many talents to Beye School.

### **Lynda Ficca**

I met Patrick Mc Andrew in an NIU graduate cohort of Oak Park teachers in 2001. Patrick and his teaching partner at Beye, Karen Fogg, were legendary in the district for their dedication, creativity, and passionate teaching style. We became great friends thru the cohort, and still are. Patrick has dedicated his life to teaching and caring for others, and he's been an inspiration to me as a former 5th grade teacher.

### **Karen Berman**

My children attended Beye School from 1999-2008. Both my daughters were in the 5th grade double classroom with Patrick McAndrew and Karen Fogg. My daughters were very lucky to have Patrick McAndrew as their teacher. I was always impressed by Patrick's passion for teaching and for his students, as well as his skill. He showed care and compassion for each student and their specific strengths and challenges. It is teachers like Patrick McAndrew that make Oak Park a special place to live and raise children.

### **Alan Hoffstadter**

My three grown children were educated at Beye Elementary. An extraordinary facility. There is a nexus of educators there that make it unique in the Village. Patrick McAndrew is among the luminaries that give our children a leg up in the world. His energy, creativity and dedication, and his care for his young charges, are the reason I STILL "follow" him, his colleagues, and Beye School, decades after my children have grown and have begun to have children of their own. I have been a resident for 42 years. And I wish to make a declaration: The Board, the school, and my neighborhood are honored to have Patrick. Just ask any Beye School family, current, or as in our case, "ancient!"

### **Julie Macino**

I am writing on the behalf of Patrick McAndrew: As a former student of Beye Elementary I was lucky enough to get to know Patrick. He is one of the most loyal and compassionate people that I have come across. I respect his integrity and endless drive to provide a quality education for his students. His teaching style has always provided a broad and unique perspective that was a privilege to come across. I would not have been able to hold the world view that I do today without the guidance of this special

teacher in my life. Remember, the teachers that have graced us with their knowledge help shape who we are and therefore impact the future of our community.

**Elizabeth Rexford**

I am writing in support of Patrick McAndrew. I have worked on a professional level with Patrick. His boundless energy and concern for students are his hallmark! It's rare to have a teacher like this --one who cares about each student and devotes himself toward helping them develop their talents and concentration. What a terrible loss to Beye School and a loss to the District if Patrick should suffer any penalties over some kind of misunderstanding. I'm hoping that he will be treated fairly and with compassion.

**Judy Yang-Murawski**

I am writing in support of Patrick McAndrew. I worked with him when we both taught Special Education 25+ years ago. He is a person of integrity, professionalism, and empathy. Along with being an accomplished teacher, he is a dedicated and loving father to his family. I know the emotional stress he's been under has never stopped his resolve to see his family. We would all do the same under similar circumstances. Please reconsider any action taken against Patrick. District 97 cannot afford to lose an outstanding teacher for loving his family too much.

**Beth Mrkvica**

Both of my children attended Beye School (2000-2006). While neither one of them had Patrick McAndrew as a teacher, both were in the Pod with him (Karen Fogg was their teacher). We primarily came to know him through the spring musical, in which he was involved. I know Patrick to be a teacher of great compassion and energy; someone who cares deeply about every one of his students and someone who provides a stimulating learning experience whether it be in the classroom or state. He is a wonderful asset to Beye School.

**Katie Holmes**

I am a former Beye student, who attended Beye School from 2000 - 2005. I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. Patrick McAndrew is one of the highest regarded teachers at Beye School. He is the kind of person that always puts a smile on your face, no matter if he knows you personally, or not. He cares deeply about each one of his students, and for all students at Beye School. Though I did not have Patrick McAndrew as my teacher when attending Beye School, I remember his thoughtfulness and care to all students through participating in the Beye School Musicals that he helped direct when I was in 4th and 5th grade. Patrick McAndrew made participating in the musicals one of the highlights of each of my 4th and 5th grade years. He is an integral part of the Beye Community, and I feel so lucky that I was able to be at Beye when he was there.

**Jeremy Kahn**

I've lived in the Beye School district since 1993, and both of my children attended that wonderful school. One of my sons was lucky enough to have had Patrick McAndrew as his teacher, and Patrick's passion for education was abundantly clear. My late wife and I thought so much of Patrick that we engaged him (along with Karen Fogg) to stay with our kids for several days while we attended a friend's wedding out of town. I don't know the details of the District's dispute with Patrick, but I do know that it would be a mistake to part company with such a positive educator and role model without exploring less severe options.

**Rebecca Bloch**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. Patrick McAndrew is a phenomenal and inspiring teacher at Beye School. As an adult now, I would hope that my children would have as dedicated, ethical, and passionate a teacher as Patrick McAndrew. He is an invaluable asset to the Beye School community.

**Debbie Weeks**

My daughter, Samantha, had Patrick McAndrew as her teacher in 5th grade at Beye School many years ago as she is now 23 years old! Mr. McAndrew was a dedicated teacher who cared about his students. You could tell he had a passion for teaching and for his students. He had a lot of energy and enthusiasm for his job. He was a definite asset to Beye School.

**Miranda Conley**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. He is an amazing teacher at Beye School. He brings enthusiasm and creativity into the classroom. The students he teaches leave his classroom with amazing memories. Patrick McAndrew is an important part of the Beye School community.

**Chloe Pimentel**

I am a former student of Beye Elementary. I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. Mr. McAndrew has had an incredibly positive impact on the Beye community, so much so that I remember what an incredibly kind and caring teacher he is even though I was not in his class. My brothers and I all wanted to be in Mr. McAndrew's class, and I still remember how disappointed I was when they had him as a teacher and I did not. It's unbelievably disheartening to hear that Mr. McAndrew was treated this way, especially during a global pandemic. The school should be looking out for its teachers, especially during this unprecedented time. The Beye School community is not the same without Mr. McAndrew. Please consider what a positive light Mr. McAndrews has been for so many.

**Jennifer Costanzo**

I am writing in support of Ms. Jean Walsh-Kallay, a 3rd grade teacher at Beye. The bottom line is Ms. Walsh-Kallay is beloved by her students and the parents of her students, and we want her to continue as their teacher. This is true for both "roomers" and "zoomers." We were all greatly relieved when a solution was created to allow her to continue teaching remotely after Feb. 1 when hybrid began, and were given no indication that that arrangement would not simply continue. There has been no further communication on this matter until last Thursday evening. Parents of her class conducted our own zoom meeting to try to better understand the situation, and found that we do not have enough information to do so. What we do want to make clear is that despite the 70% of D97 parents who have selected the hybrid model, we are not wanting or demanding our teacher to be forced to physically return to the building. We are respectful of her personal decision to do what she feels best and safe for her family, in the same way D97 is allowing parents to decide if hybrid or remote is best for our families. We feel that the current situation has been working well since Feb 1 - actually better than expected. We have just met for parent-teacher-student conferences where we learned that our children are showing progress and growth. And it was clear the bond Jean has with the students - as the students were present at the conferences. How fantastic is that given the circumstances? I am struggling to understand why D97 would make things more difficult for the administrators and teachers with a situation that is successful, when there is so much else to focus on during this time. Why would a school district jeopardize the social-emotional well-being of students and disrupt their stability, when they are already bearing a load greater than they should this year? Why is it better for these students to lose their teacher after 2/3 of the year? And, if Jean is not allowed to continue, what assurances do we have that there won't be a string of different substitute teachers? There is an unfortunate precedent for this now. Our request is for Ms. Walsh-Kallay to be safe and to continue to teach our children as she has for the past 5 weeks.

**Jeffery Roberts**

I would like to comment regarding Ms. Jean Walsh-Kallay proposed leave of absence from Beye. We are the parents of twins in Ms. Walsh Kallay's 3rd grade class. We requested that both boys be put in the same class for the first time this year to simplify some of the challenges we knew we would face. Ms. Walsh Kallay has enabled our kids to successfully grow as young learners this year despite the non-conventionalities caused by the pandemic. Our kids adore and respect her. We do not want to compromise



this learning scenario after making it this far into a difficult school year! If Ms. Walsh Kallay has individually made the decision to step away from teaching for outside personal reasons, then we whole heartedly support her. IF her personal leave stems from short-sited inflexibilities of the administration's rules then it is inexcusable that she would have to make this choice. Furthermore, it was our belief that this issue was already resolved and that she would continue remote teaching (as she is doing today!). The kids in her class are succeeding! It would be ridiculous to choose to tear down these teacher/student relationships and restart after six successful months. If Ms. Walsh Kallay is willing to continue to teach remotely and stay with the class, she must be allowed (and encouraged) to do so.

### **Sylvia Zepeda-Westmeyer**

I have heard that Trimester 3 will have the same Hybrid schedule as Trimester 2. If this is the case, my questions are as follows- Why can't the Middle schools implement a daily attendance similar to the elementary schools where the students attend every day? Allowing kids to have a "home room" would allow the reduction of kids through the hallways For those parents that do not want to do this, they could follow a homeschool curriculum As a comment, I think the time is now to try something different. We have tried virtual learning for a year. Private schools and other nearby schools have implemented full time without any major outbreaks.

### **Lisa Peloquin**

I would like to start by thanking you for all your hard work, especially during these unprecedented times. I'm grateful for all you've done to make learning possible this school year. Thank you. I would appreciate hearing more about your process for finding our next superintendent. How will you be getting input from teachers, school leaders, students, families, and community members about what qualities we should be looking for? I am interested in how you will balance finding someone who both understands our community and our commitment to true educational equity and who is also able to participate in national ed conversations. I think given the upheaval of the last few years, we have all learned some things that are working well in D97, and received data about changes we need to make to further meet the needs of all our students. As you work on this task, I encourage you to look for a leader that has a track record of success in transforming the adult culture in school buildings and fostering a district that is united in putting the needs of students first. I would appreciate a response to my questions and comments. Thank you

### **Elizabeth Cook**

District 97 should offer the option of free on-site afternoon learning support for elementary school students. This has been available at other nearby school districts, such as LaGrange, from the beginning of this school year. Even though afternoons consist primarily of specials, and not core subjects, the children will benefit from sharing that learning time in the company of their classmates, with the supervision of their teachers or other staff. Already attendance has dropped off for the afternoon portion of school because when children arrive home for lunch, they feel that their school day is over. Having them remain in the school building will ensure that they are focused and engaged for the entire school day. In addition, the experience of children attending the full-day programs at Hephzibah has demonstrated that the lunch hour can continue safely in the school building. The possibility of additional recess time during lunch will have the added benefit of social-emotional support for children who have been isolated for much of the school year. The full-day would not need to be required. District 97 could offer the afternoon supervision portion as an option for those families who prefer it. Other families could continue to pick up their children before lunch and have them continue with remote learning at home, if they prefer. The district has received a mandate from stakeholders. The vast majority of students want in-person schooling. With the success of teacher vaccination in the district, there is no reason not to offer a full school day.

### **Dominique Betancourt**

First, I want to express my appreciation for all the hard work that has gone into building the train on the track as it's moving. The task since last March has been tremendous and although it was difficult to adjust, the transparency and open communication has been much appreciated. I write to express a hope to reimagine the livestream, every kid on an iPad setup. My observations are that it has been difficult for teachers to manage kids in class, technical difficulties, get through curriculum AND give online kids the attention they need. I can imagine how draining that has been on teachers mentally. Yet, I understand the want to maintain consistency and see this challenge getting harder as classrooms grow to 10+ kids and less than 5 kids online. How do we balance what is more beneficial? Maintaining their teacher or getting 100% attention from a potential new teacher, and better connecting with kids in an engaging way instead of fighting for classroom kids attention? There is no way a human can give a 100% of their focus to two different areas at the same, and be the most effective in delivering the content they need to. I do hope there is consideration of how to readjust and to explore how other districts have created balance in this area.

### **Ron Stark**

I am a parent of both elementary and middle school children here at D97. We are approaching 1 year since D97 schools were closed for full-day in person learning. My expectations, and I am sure that of many other parents, caregivers, teachers, staff and most importantly children, was that by the start of the 2020-21 school year a viable plan for in person learning would be possible. I understood the need for the administration and school board for keeping the buildings closed for in person learning from mid-March to the end of school last year. None of us knew what to expect when COVID-19 hit the world and USA. We know more now!! It took much longer than expected but the current elementary hybrid option that started in early February for half day 5 days a week has been a good next step. The current middle school hybrid option is lacking. It is giving students a very limited in person teaching experience in what I call a three-and-a-half-hour study hall. I and I am sure a majority of parents/caregivers cannot accept that the 2021-22 school year will start with this same hybrid option especially for middle school. It has been reported that at least 90% of teachers and staff in D97 will be fully vaccinated by end of March 2021. The goal of the Federal Government is for the ability for all adults to be vaccinated by May 2021. These are all positive events and should provide the green light to have full in person all day school and end remote learning for both elementary and middle school learners starting in the fall of 2021. Schools are not super spreaders of COVID-19 as has been shown by the overwhelming data, including our schools here in Oak Park. It is a disservice to our children to postpone waiting for full in person learning until children can be vaccinated. This will likely not happen until 2022 and we CANNOT wait until then to get kids back in school full time, at which point it will be 2 years since school closures in March 2020. Kids need to be in school to interact in person with their teachers and classmates not only to learn but to socialize and grow as individuals. I challenge the district and school board to make as the #1 priority to have in-person full-day school for all grades. If continued safety precautions are required, (ie-mask wearing, temperature checks and hand washing/extra cleaning), then of course keep that in the guidelines. Schools both locally, statewide and nationwide have been doing in person full day learning for the entire 2020-21 school year and Oak Park D97 should be as well. I urge you to look at other schools for how they have accomplished this and try to incorporate their best practices into what can be used in Oak Park schools. This has to be done!! The surveys from last summer and during this school year clearly show there is a strong desire from families for in person learning. Parents and caregivers want kids back in school. Kids want to be in school. It might not be perfect or ideal, but you have to move away from remote. It is now on the leaders of the district, schools and board of education to work to get this done. Anything less than in person all day school when the 2021-22 school year begins is unacceptable and a failure for the children and community. Thank you for the time.

### **Emily Dagostino**

Last Thursday, our son came home from school and told us his teacher had been vaccinated. “Maybe she’s coming back to teach soon!” he said, his eyes glittering with hope. Although our son had returned to the classroom when the hybrid schedule began, his teacher was permitted to continue teaching remotely for a time. Only hours after our son shared his hope last Thursday of finally getting to meet his teacher, his teacher shared that her time of teaching remotely was coming to a close; she has chosen not to return to the classroom and has requested a leave of absence. Our son is adjusting, again, to another change and another loss in a year rife with losses — most of them, for him, stemming from school. Yes, kids are resilient. No, this is not easy for him. And too few of the grown-ups in this school district — his teacher included — are making it easier. He needs to be in a classroom with a teacher. He needs to not be on a screen all day. His needs matter. All these kids’ needs matter, more than anything. Our son’s teacher is lucky to have choices. Our son, who is 8 years old, does not have a choice. It’s our job, as the grown-ups, to protect him. My husband and I wish we were not so completely alone in that.

Whatever you choose tonight as you consider all the decisions you will be considering, we wanted simply to share our experience and let you know: first, how grateful we are that you’ve given our children an opportunity to go back to school to learn in the environment they need to learn in with their classmates; second, to express how disappointed we are that so many of their educational needs continue to not be met — with them continuing to be forced to have screens on in front of them all day, with them not even yet receiving a chance to meet their teachers — and how disappointed we are that so many of the grown-ups who are making the decisions that impact our children are still not looking out for their needs and best interests. Tonight, as you make your decisions, I just ask that whatever you decide you please put the kids’ needs first.

### **Susan Raphael**

I hope that you will look into the possibility of having D97 opt out of any IAR Testing this year. While over 700 school districts in Illinois asked the federal government for a waiver for the testing this year, the Biden administration at this point has not chosen to grant this waiver. However, even though this is the case, it makes sense for D97 to consider opting out on its own for IAR Testing this year. Our kids have just begun to return back to school and what a waste of time it will be for them to take a test that has no value for any teacher or administrator this school year. I could understand if it was MAP testing and the results were available right way for teachers to determine reading group and math skills to focus on, but this is IAR testing in which results are not available for a while and no use to the teacher currently working with the students. Why take away this precious in-person time, especially at the middle school level in which kids are only in the classroom for 4 mornings every three weeks. This will likely take up a whole week of in person learning time, messing up with schedules and impacting remote students. Why take away critical instruction from a test that nobody wants to give this year, especially in a district that has just returned to school. I hope D97 will look into opting out, especially since there is so much support from the Illinois Department of Education for this waiver. We can be a leader and explain how IAR makes no sense this school year. Let’s wait until next year to implement IAR.

### **Jen Stringfield**

I’m writing for fourth time this year asking that Jean Walsh-Kallay be permitted to continue to teach my Beye third grader remotely. The district has repeatedly threatened to remove her from the classroom due to inane policies that are adjusted or renegotiated at the last minute.

It hasn’t been communicated what policy is forcing teachers to take leaves of absences rather than be permitted to teach remotely. Parent frustration with the district centers on failure to communicate. This needs to be remedied immediately.

We learned last week Jean was going to be forced to take a leave of absence. This is unconscionable. She wants to teach our kids and has done the most amazing job possible. Families were allowed to select

remote or in person, teachers should also be afforded this option (See Chicago public schools and district 200 for examples of how this has worked!). Why are teachers not allowed to make this decision? If it centers on family preference, why haven't we been asked. Every family in Jean's class would agree to having her teach remotely rather than have a sub. We've made this work for 2/3 of the year. Let our kids and teachers have consistency and not fear for their stability in a pandemic.

The following board comments were received, but due to time constraints and in accordance with the Board of Education policy, were not read aloud during the board meeting.

**Ellen Efron and Elligio Pimentel**

Our three children all attended Beye School. Patrick McAndrew was one of the most popular and beloved teachers at the school when we were a part of the Beye community. Parents admired his dynamism, his obvious love and care for our children, his creativity, his integrity, thirst for life, cultural awareness and so many other qualities. Kids just knew they wanted him for a teacher. He has been an amazing asset for the school and for the community for so many years and we support him 100%. We hope you will too.

**Samuel Barnett**

I'm a former student of William Beye and Patrick McAndrew. Patrick McAndrew was and is an amazing teacher that has all his students' best interests always in mind. He stepped up big for me when I was a kid while my mom and I struggled with the loss of my brother. I to this day every time I visit Oak Park show my kids my school and remind them where my classroom was and remind them I use to bring them to the park when they were smaller. I always bring up stories of my childhood with Mr. McAndrew and the things we did in and out of class. One of my favorite memories was camp Edwards. Patrick McAndrew looked out for me when all he was responsible for was to teach me. Mr. McAndrew will always be a part of my childhood and my family as he played a role in my life to help form who I am today. Patrick McAndrew is a huge asset to the Oak Park community especially for students that is having a hard time at home or school.

**Melissa Schnyder**

This email is in regards to Patrick McAndrew, a wonderful teacher at Beye School. I would like to have Mr. McAndrew back in the Beye School classroom as soon as possible. He is an amazing human being and teacher who brings a much-needed international and cross-cultural perspective to the classroom. I am a professor of international relations and would like to see more teachers bring a personal, international perspective to their students as Mr. McAndrew does. He is rare among his peers in this regard. He stands out in terms of his ability to offer a cross-cultural perspective and in his love of the world's different cultures. He inspires students to want to learn more about other cultures, customs, and places in the world. We need more, not less, of this.

**Laura Shapiro**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. Patrick is an amazing person and one of a kind teacher. His commitment and passion for teaching is exemplary. Patrick's connection to the children is extraordinary. Patrick is a huge asset to Beye School and the district 97 community.

**Christine Binotte**

This email is on behalf of my child's teacher, Mr. Patrick McAndrew. My daughter Lola was fortunate to be placed in Mr. McAndrew's class this year and we were very excited to have such a dedicated and compassionate teacher to guide her through the challenges we've all faced over this last year. Mr. McAndrew is an asset to the D97 community and a positive influence in Lola's life. Through the course of the school year, he has demonstrated a willingness to be creative and think outside of the box when frankly this type of thinking has been lacking under D97 leadership. He has challenged my daughter both

academically and socially by showing her that growth happens on the other side of your comfort zone. She has excelled this year despite these difficult circumstances and we owe much of her newfound confidence to Mr. McAndrew. We need to show some compassion during these challenging times and not penalize our teachers for the difficult choices they must make. By punishing him, our children are the ones who really suffer. Bring back Mr. McAndrew now. By doing so, it will demonstrate to parents that the needs of the children come first. And it will allow D97 to fulfil its mission and promise to create a positive learning environment for all D97 students that is equitable, inclusive and focused on the whole child.

### **Susan Beach**

I am writing on behalf of my friend and former colleague, Patrick McAndrew. I was employed as administrative assistant at Beye when Mr. McAndrew was hired in 1997 and worked with him until I left Beye to work at Julian in 2001 and continued to be a D97 employee until 2012. We have remained in contact with each other over the years, and now, my grandchild is one of his students. Mr. McAndrew is an excellent and beloved teacher. I am sure you have heard from many other families of current and former Beye students just how much he is revered. The work he does in the classroom exemplifies everything you want in a teacher: True love of learning, Respect for the dignity of each student, the ability to teach across a wide spectrum of abilities, Extraordinary creativity in both the teaching process and extracurricular activities, a strong ethical belief in the value of education, someone who always does MORE than is expected, and a true professional and master teacher. While I am not aware of accurate details of what is going on with Mr. McAndrew, I know he has been out of the classroom for over a month and his students miss him dearly. I would be simply astonished that the board will not do what is necessary to put Mr. McAndrew back in the classroom where he belongs in this, the most difficult year for everyone, especially these stressed out and anxious 5th graders. I am also sure that this has been very trying for a new principal, but cannot believe she could really support further sanctions against him.

### **Hannah Shapiro**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. Patrick is an amazing person and one of a kind teacher. His commitment and passion for teaching is exemplary. Patrick's connection to the children is extraordinary. Patrick is a huge asset to Beye School and the district 97 community.

### **Ana Garcia Doyle**

I am submitting this public comment on behalf of Mr. Patrick McAndrew, who served as my daughter's 5th grade teacher in the 2019-2020 school year. Mr. McAndrew was a marvelous teacher to our daughter, and beloved for a very long time at Beye School for his integrity, character, and creative, inclusive approaches to teaching. Our daughter loved his class, and she thrived under his tutelage, where he helped guide her in her goal to succeed with more challenging math curriculum. Mr. McAndrew was also a force on the drama club, where he and Karen Fogg exposed students to performance opportunities -- and he led the children's international film club at Beye as well, where he provided students the opportunity to learn about other cultures through family movie nights. Mr. McAndrew is a long-time dedicated teacher, and I am happy my daughter had the chance to experience his somewhat legendary (at Beye for so long) leadership and talent for teaching before she left Beye School. Our family, which has had 3 children come through Beye (one a sophomore in college and one headed there next year), believes that Mr. McAndrew is a strong, caring, and dedicated educator and an asset to Beye School and District 97.

### **Joey Tesch**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. Patrick is a remarkable teacher at Beye School. My oldest son was fortunate enough to be part of the 5th grade pod last year, of which Mr. McAndrew was one of 3 fantastic teachers. He is an enthusiastic, energetic, empathetic, and caring teacher. Patrick McAndrew is a huge asset for Beye and our district. To remove him during a time when stability is lacking for our kids is

not in the best interest of his students. Now is the time to be flexible. Please reconsider and bring him back.

**K.T. Sullivan**

I have heard that Beye School teacher Patrick McAndrew's position may be in jeopardy and wanted to send my strong recommendation that the district not let this excellent teacher leave the District. My kids are long grown but they still talk about Mr. McAndrew and the values he instilled and the time he put in to help them navigate learning differences. And, his amazing commitment to the arts and giving kids a taste of live theater and performance, had a life-long impact on my daughter who works in the arts after being part of Beye School after school theatre program. Teaching is very hard and this year has been extremely challenging. Please do not let this veteran teacher leave the Beye School community.

**Randy & Jennifer Hajduk**

I am writing this letter on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. Mr. McAndrew is currently my son Andrew's teacher and his absence in the classroom has been felt in many ways. Mr. McAndrew is thoughtful, generous with his time, structured, and fair with his students. He has done a tremendous job supporting his students during remote learning and I know Andrew was certainly excited to have him in the classroom when hybrid learning became an option 3 weeks ago. In addition to helping our kids academically, I believe Mr. McAndrew helps the kids learn to think in a global perspective. In these uncertain times I don't think it can be underestimated how important it is for our young kids to think about events from not only an American perspective or how things can only affect our immediate neighbors. My older son Matthew was a student of Mr. McAndrews' 2 years ago and I know he certainly counts him as one of the best teachers he has ever had and I sincerely believe some of his continued academic success can be lessons and habits developed by Mr. McAndrew. In closing my wife & I both work in Management positions. While we understand that there can be a need for privacy in certain employment situations, we feel that the communication as to when Mr. McAndrew may or may not return has been unacceptable. We have been asked to make decisions regarding remote/hybrid learning without knowing who will be leading the classroom. We respectfully ask for Mr. McAndrew to return to the classroom as soon as possible. Our kids and families have been through enough this year. Let's help them finish their time at Beye School with their teacher and their best chance for success.

**Morgen Alexander-Young**

I am writing in support of Patrick McAndrew, fifth grade teacher at Beye. It is rare to find a teacher who is such an incredible champion for his students, particularly those who may be more easily overlooked. In my son's fifth grade year, he made a special effort to encourage my son to build on his talents, to find value in his contribution to the classroom, and to the world community. He has taught my son what it means to be a global citizen, which is a privilege and a gift to have in a teacher. I would encourage the board to ensure that Mr. McAndrew is able to get back into the classroom as soon as possible.

**Kaitlyn Hwang**

I am writing on the behalf of Mr. McAndrews. He was my daughter's 5th grade teacher last school year. He was there for all his students the very start of the pandemic and taught them well. He made sure everyone's needs were met. He helped them mentally and helped the kids excel in school. Before the school closed the kids were preparing for the school play. He was one of the teachers involved in putting the play together. You can imagine the angst and the frustration the kids felt when they were told they could not perform. He was there for their frustrations and helped them cope with the loss. Mr. McAndrews is an asset to the community. This is an unusual time we are living in. The kids need a strong teacher. Mr. McAndrews is that teacher that has guided the kids and will continue doing so. The community needs Mr. McAndrews.

**Cassandra Miller**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew as a parent of children attending Beye Elementary. Mr. McAndrew is an amazing teacher who is able to make amazing and engaging connection with the children he teaches. Mr. McAndrew is a remarkable teacher and an asset to our school. Losing Mr. McAndrew would be a tremendous loss to all the children and parents of our school. He is an honest, hardworking and passionate teacher who is dedicated to teaching and a critical member of our school's community.

**Charity Anne Caldwell**

I have been looking forward to the possibility of my Beye kids having Mr. McAndrew in the coming years. We have 3 male teachers at our school and I would love for my son to have the chance to have Mr. McAndrew when he gets to 5th grade. The experiences I have heard about over the years from other parents have been wonderful. He is an important part of our school community and I am devastated that he is apparently suddenly not there?!

**Audrey Latham**

I am now a 6th grader at Julian Middle School. Mr. McAndrew was my 5th grade teacher. Mr. McAndrew was a good teacher. He had rainbow lights so that we wouldn't get distracted by the bright lights. He did drama club for the 4th and 5th graders and made sure that we all knew what to do. If we didn't understand something in class, he would guide us through it. He also had stools made out of bags that we could sit on. During remote learning he was a good teacher also. He checked in twice a day and made sure that we got to see the other 5th graders over zoom. Mr. McAndrew was understanding and made sure we were mentally ok.

**Andrew Murtha**

I am writing on behalf of Mr. McAndrew. I was a student of his and Ms. Fogg in 2007-2008. He was one of the best teachers I had at Beye School. He was caring, fun, and professional. He made school exciting and brought his passion for teaching and for children with him every day. He is such an asset to Oak Park, to the district, and to Beye School. He is a fundamental figure in my own and so many other's education.

**Sandy Richter**

I am writing because I have heard that there are some issues relating to Patrick McAndrew and I wanted to send a letter of complete support for him. Our daughter had Mr. McAndrew last year and thrived. He is compassionate, a great listener, understanding, and a great problem solver. My student struggles with school anxiety and he helped her to feel seen and heard and to develop coping strategies to navigate the school year expectations. Especially when we went hybrid, Mr. McAndrew went the extra mile to maintain contact with students and ensure that they were learning and thriving personally. Although I don't know the extent of the issues surrounding this situation, I want to affirm that Patrick McAndrew is one of the best teachers we have had the privilege to have and we would like to see him fully enabled to teach again.

**Evan Kindler**

Patrick McAndrew was one of the best teachers I've ever had. I went to Beye from 2003-2009, then Julian, then OPRF, and just graduated from Brown University. I've had spectacular teachers for my entire life, yet Patrick McAndrew sticks out as someone truly special. He brings such joy and care into his classroom. I've never had a teacher more patient and understanding, ready to meet you where you are and take you where you need to be. I'm tearing up as I write this, thinking about the impact that he had on me, my classmates, and generations of students at Beye and abroad. Patrick McAndrew taught me sex Ed, and looking back, I don't know how he did it. We were a bunch of 11 year olds who laughed at the word 'boob' and he managed to bring a level of maturity that allowed us to actually engage with crucial sexual health material. This was only possible because of the profound respect and love that he showed us and

that we reciprocated. I hold Patrick McAndrew in the highest regard as both an educator and a person. Firing him would not simply be a mistake, but a tragedy. He is the gold standard of what an educator should aspire to be and I would be proud to be half the person he is.

### **Cole Sheridan**

I'm a 2009 graduate of Beye School. I am deeply upset to hear that Patrick McAndrew has been fired after decades at the school. Beye School and its community have always meant so incredibly much to me. Even after having just completed my undergraduate degree this past spring, Beye School remains the most positive, nurturing, and fun educational environment I have ever had the privilege of being a part of. Mr. McAndrew was unquestionably fundamental to my exceptional experience at Beye. The fact that I have such a wealth of incredible memories of him, without ever being in his class, is testament to the breadth of his impact on the school and all its students. He helped nurture my first true creative outlet in Beye's Drama club (one of the schools greatest assets that he was instrumental in establishing). His classroom shared with Karen Fogg is a place truly beautiful and unique to any elementary aged child. The energy in that room is consistent, calming, and enchanting. Though neither of my sisters, nor me had ever been in his class, he remembered my name, my parents, and the memories we shared while I was at Beye over 10 years later! I couldn't tell you 75% of the names of my classmates any single year of any grade of school I've ever had. Beye is a truly remarkable school and I love it dearly, but seeing the district treat such a remarkable educator this way during a national health crisis is genuinely painful. The most generous reading of this decision is that it is callous, unfeeling, and immensely disrespectful. More honestly, it reeks of discriminatory behavior against Queer people and people who experience mental health crises. This is a devastating thought to ponder as my reality would be in direct contradiction to the lessons I learned as a student at Beye. You MUST bring Mr. McAndrew back after delivering an adequate apology.

### **Robert Latham**

I, Robert Latham of Oak Park, am writing to share my appreciation for Patrick McAndrew. Mr. McAndrew taught my daughter in 5th grade. I could tell immediately he had a remarkable enthusiasm for teaching. He provided my child both praise when she did well but also a firm "you can do better" when she needed a little nudge in the right direction.

### **Isaac Murtha**

I wanted to write to you today because I heard you were thinking of firing the best elementary school teachers I ever had— Mr. McAndrew. He was brilliant as a teacher— someone who encouraged a love of reading that has continued in the decades since I knew him. He created and nurtured a love of international film, of acting, and of theater. But more importantly, Mr. McAndrew was a model of decency even when it was unpopular— I vividly remember him telling kids who'd taunted others by calling them "gay" that they shouldn't, and why. (This was long in the early 2000s, when homophobia was still accepted on the playground.) Such was Mr. McAndrew's stature that kids listened to him. That mattered a good deal to me, personally, since I learned not long after that I was bi. He cared about kids individually as well. Once, worried that I would hurt myself leaning back in my chair, he gave me an exercise ball to sit on. He cared. He taught us we mattered. There's a reason he won a golden apple award. He is a great teacher. Please don't fire him.

### **Ariana Bachecki**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew, who is my step-son's 5th grade teacher at Beye Elementary. I have rarely met a teacher half as motivated, engaged, or enthusiastic as Mr. McAndrew. Even through unprecedented hardships, he has been there for the students in a way that is honestly astonishing. In a virtual environment, he has still found ways to get to know each student personally and keep them actively engaged in school work. He also prioritizes giving each student the tools to become advocates for their own education by supporting their goals and including them in important schooling decisions. He is



grounded and reminds the students to expand their social lives and to make time for family as well. Mr. McAndrew is a true blessing to the Beye community. My step-son met him last year during Drama Club, and I am so glad that he got Mr. McAndrew as his teacher this year. In his class, he has learned how to prioritize his time, balance school and outside activities, and the importance of trying even when it seems difficult. If only we all got so lucky with our teachers right before heading into middle school. We all miss him in the classroom, because even in such strange times, Mr. McAndrew has made the effort to keep everyone informed and involved. My whole family looks forward to welcoming him back to the classroom.

### **Wendy Roderweiss**

I am a parent of a student at Beye School in Patrick McAndrew's class. I am also a professor at DePaul University, so I am no stranger to academia. I am writing this letter in support of Patrick, who is not just a good teacher, but an extraordinary one. He is the kind of teacher that inspires, encourages, and guides his students. He brings them a world view beyond their own. The depth of his cultural knowledge is unmatched in the district, and we are frankly lucky to have him. He is the kind of teacher that we hope our son knows beyond his time at Beye School. He is also the only reason we have been able to function this year. We find ourselves in a unique situation, with the pandemic, and stability is in short supply. Patrick created an environment for our kids that was stable and nurturing, but he also never refrained from challenging them. He has been "missing" for weeks now, and we have no idea what is happening. We have no comfort to give our son. We have had no ability to set expectations for what school will be like for him in the coming weeks. All he wants is his teacher back. Frankly, the district's response has been unacceptable, the lack of transparency abhorrent, the lack of empathy, astounding. We want to know why the district has decided to disallow Patrick from being with his students. If there is a concern about his ability to teach, we should know what that is. We also should know if and when he will be returning. This has gone on too long, without a single word to the families about how we move forward.

### **Jeannie Affelder**

All three of our (now young adult) children attended Beye School. Only one had Patrick McAndrew as a classroom teacher, but all three knew him well through the Beye School plays, the trips to Camp Edwards, and Patrick's leadership in the Beye Community. I'm sure you've received many wonderful letters from parents who can speak about Mr. McAndrew's academic creativity, his love of teaching, his skill at coaxing amazing performances from reluctant actors, and his commitment to inclusion. I could write that letter, but today I offer you a story about the day Mr. McAndrew made a big mistake. Our son, Daniel, was a student of Patrick's. At dinner in September, Daniel reported that Mr. McAndrew had held student council representative elections on the day that Daniel was out of school in observance of Yom Kippur. Even though Daniel, the only Jewish child in the class, didn't care about being student council rep, my husband and I thought it was important to let the teacher know that he had excluded a child from an activity that should have been open to all. I showed up after school and told Patrick what had happened. He listened carefully. He was mortified. He explained it was his own ignorance that allowed this to happen. He apologized. He explained with an open heart that he was part of a group that had often been discriminated against, and that it was never his intention to exclude Daniel — or anyone else — from the election, or from anything else. He later had a long talk with Daniel about how to remedy the situation. He listened. They agreed on a solution. Everyone learned something. We all make mistakes. Some of us, like Patrick McAndrew, learn and grow from them, and go on to be better people. Thank you so much for standing behind this wonderful educator.

### **Kathryn Hempel**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. I am also a parent of two former Beye School kids who are wonderful young adults! As a frequent volunteer in the Beye School art awareness program and as a Camp Edwards field trip chaperone I had the pleasure of witnessing Patrick McAndrew's passion for

teaching first hand. His love of learning and enthusiasm for reading, storytelling, travel, music, art, and more is evident and contagious. I witnessed the dedication he has for his students and also saw the commitment he has for safety and adventure. He makes learning fun. Our family is very grateful for Patrick McAndrew and the positive influence he has had on all of us!

### **Claire Berman**

I am a former student of the District 97 system. I attended Beye School during which time I was a student in Patrick McAndrew's fifth grade classroom from 2007-2008. After hearing about the unfair treatment he has received in recent days, I felt it necessary to share my thoughts about him. I can say that Mr. McAndrew was a caring, enthusiastic, impassioned teacher who created one of the most unique and enriching educational experiences I've had to date. He dedicated himself to the job wholeheartedly and went above and beyond to make our class a welcoming, inclusive, and creative learning environment. He's a gifted artistic educator: I can remember him teaching us dances and incorporating words about Beye into the lyrics from popular songs on a regular basis. He read us stories by authors from disparate cultural and ethnic backgrounds to broaden our horizons, something of critical importance at that age. During the few months of the year when the fourth and fifth graders put on a musical, he worked into the evening sharing his love of musical theater to myself and all my classmates and would never leave until the very last student was safely picked up. Patrick McAndrew is a pinnacle of the Beye community, and the greater Oak Park community. I can't think of a more archetypal figure than "Mr. McAndrew" to represent the quality of Beye and District 97's teachers. I implore you to reverse your decision.

### **Caroline Berman**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. My friends and I had the great fortune of having Mr. McAndrew as a 5th grade teacher over 15 years ago and still look back on that year with happy memories. His enthusiasm for teaching and passion for directing the musicals put on at Beye Elementary School are incredible and I feel lucky to have had him as a role model during my elementary school education. I believe he is a great asset to Beye Elementary School and District 97.

### **Hannah Floody**

I am a former student of Patrick McAndrew. He was my 5th grade teacher all the way back in 2007. Mr. McAndrew's commitment and dedication to his students is unparalleled. I remember the first day I walked into The POD, it was not decorated like most classrooms, with math posters and inspirational quotes on the walls. Rather, there were paper stars, flags, pillows, and other Indian/Nepalese memorabilia decorating the room. The room smelled like incense, it was the first time I had ever smelled it; now, whenever I smell it I think of my childhood and my 5th grade class. I was telling my mother only a few months ago how much I learned in Mr. McAndrew's class, not only about science, reading, and math, but of the outside world. Mr. McAndrew's commitment to teaching his students about other cultures and religions changed the way I think even to this day. I stand by the statement that I have not learned more about a non-western religion or culture (it would not be a stretch to specify even more and say non-American, either) in the entirety of my studies than I did in his class. This has held true even through my newly obtained bachelors degree (I majored in history...). We spent months learning about India, Pakistan, Nepal, Islam and Hinduism along with its deities and holidays. We also learned about Mahatma Gandhi and his peaceful fight for an independent India, as well as the migration of Muslims and Hindus between India and Pakistan. It was not sugarcoated like most of the history we are taught in school, we learned about the sadness, death and destruction that resulted from this period of time. The history and culture we were taught was followed by and reinforced with pictures and personal stories about Mr. McAndrew and Mrs. Fogg's travels. This was the only instance in my entire public school education that I remember specifically learning about another culture and country (except for in language classes) and without an American/Western lens. I cannot stress how important those teachings were to me and my classmates. I have remembered most of what I was taught about said religions and cultures to this day. One of my favorite 5th grade memories was when Mr. McAndrew took us to Little India a few weeks

after Valentine's Day. Beforehand, he and Mrs. Fogg had taught us a few songs to put on a performance at the restaurant we were to have lunch at. Some of those songs were 1,2,3,4 by the Plain White T's, On Top of The World by The Carpenters, and Ishq Kamina (along with a Bollywood-style dance.) On this field trip we were also introduced to Indian foods such as my favorite, Gulab Jamun, a type of sweet donut in syrup. Once again, I cannot stress how important it is to introduce young people to other cultures and foods. When I was a student at Beye Mr. McAndrew was also one of the Drama Club teachers. He and Mrs. Fogg worked tirelessly for months at a time to put on fabulous performances year after year. Despite their actors and stage crew being nine and ten year old children, the plays were always a huge success. Participating in Drama Club with Mr. McAndrew at the helm helped spur my love for both musical theatre and plays and I continued singing and acting throughout high school. While I have stopped to pursue other passions, my love for the arts has continued to this day. I remember simply sitting on the carpet in The POD, listening to Mr. McAndrew (and Mrs. Fogg) reading to us, telling us stories, and feeling truly at peace. There was never a day I did not want to go to school. Every day was an adventure with Mr. McAndrew and Mrs. Fogg. Our teachers (especially those we have when we are young) are some of the most important people to ever come into our lives as they begin to shape us into the people we will become. I am immensely proud to call Mr. McAndrew my former teacher and I know hundreds of other children and adults can say the same. Beye School would not be the same without him.

### **Matt Nicksch & Karen Migneault**

We're writing to express our sincere appreciation for Patrick McAndrew, who taught our oldest son at Beye School. We have two younger children at Beye and would love to have them taught by Mr. McAndrew as well. He is a kind and thoughtful teacher who goes out of his way to both ensure strong educational outcomes as well as feelings of deep connection and belonging in the classroom. When our son required surgery and was away from school for two days, he enlisted the class in writing individualized and heartfelt notes wishing him well. Later and separately, when he injured his knee and could not walk downstairs for lunch, Mr. McAndrew dedicated his lunch hour for the better part of two months to keeping him company. He sees ALL of his students as unique individuals with dignity and, importantly, helps them see that within themselves as well. He is also, of course, an exceptional teacher who oversaw strong growth in our son in core academic subjects while inspiring him by sharing his love of other people and cultures. There are many strong teachers at Beye, but Mr. McAndrew has played a special role in making it an exceptional school for our family. We hope that he remains a fixture there for many years to come.

### **Thea Schiet**

I grew up in Oak Park, graduating from William Beye Elementary School in 2009, Percy Julian Middle in 2012, and OPRFHS in 2016. Today, I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. In fifth grade, I had the wonderful opportunity to be taught by Mr. McAndrew. He helped build my self-confidence, awareness, and honesty. Without him, I would not be the person I am today. I would like to briefly highlight three core attributes of Mr. McAndrew: integrity, passion, and charisma. Firstly, Mr. McAndrew always has integrity. Regardless of the student he was talking to, you could tell he respects them. From adult to student, he treats everyone with respect. He wears his heart on his sleeve and leads by example. He has taught me the value of not only being honest with others but also myself. In addition to his integrity, Mr. McAndrew's passion is apparent in everything he does. It was so clear, even as a fifth grader, that he wanted to be teaching us. There are plenty of teachers who just see teaching as a job, but Mr. McAndrew is different. He sees teaching as something deeper. He invests into each of his students, and I could really feel that. When I was with Mr. McAndrew, I could tell he was listening to me and engaging with me in a way that no other teachers have. I'm currently in my senior year of university, and the only teacher I have kept in touch with from Oak Park is Mr. McAndrew. His passion is strong, contagious, and genuine. Lastly, his charisma is undeniable. He cares for his students, colleagues, friends, and family immensely. I know that he goes the extra mile at work and at home. His positivity and kindness inspire others to be better. Mr. McAndrew is incredibly selfless and always puts his students first. Mr. McAndrew is one of

the strongest assets to Beye School. He embodies everything the school stands for: diversity, community, education, and growth. I hope that my previous statements emphasize how valuable and irreplaceable Mr. McAndrew is for not only Beye School but also the Oak Park community. Thank you very much for your time. I hope you have the opportunity to speak with Mr. McAndrew and experience his integrity, passion, and charisma.

### **Julia Nash**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. Although my kids were not fortunate enough to have Patrick McAndrew as a teacher, they were fortunate to know him as an incredible advocate for the arts and an inspiration to the children he taught. In the years that I have known Patrick McAndrew he has never ceased to amaze me with the infectious energy, love and enthusiasm he has for teaching. Patrick McAndrew's dedication is an asset to District 97 and the Oak Park community.

### **Amy Yates**

I am a former Beye School parent and I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew, a former teacher of my 3 sons, Max, Will and Caleb Drickey. Patrick taught all of my sons when they were 5th graders at Beye School. To this day, I consider him to be one of the most impactful educators they ever had as young students. I will share a personal story to illustrate how amazing Patrick is. When our eldest son Max was in the 4th grade, he was one of two boys who was really bullied by a more aggressive clique of boys. We discovered this late in the 4th grade because boys don't generally complain about this type of treatment by other children. It was just horrible to learn about how he suffered. When Max entered 5th grade, I shared this experience with Patrick - who very unobtrusively kept an eye out for Max and the other child just to ensure that they were doing ok and not suffering from further bad behavior. As the semester progressed, we could see Max's confidence increase and his sparkle return. Then the most amazing thing happened near the end of the school year. Patrick and his co-teacher, Karen, worked with the 5th grade kids to put on a musical. Max had the confidence to try out and secure a principal role in the musical -- but that is not all. Imagine my surprise to see all of the 5th grade boys from the musical sitting in Oberweis after the performance eating ice cream and laughing - and who should be sitting next to Max and sharing the experience but the same boys who bullied Max the year before. Patrick brought the best out of Max and my other sons and he brings the best out of all of his students. He is a valuable asset of Beye School.

### **Cam Niederman**

I worked for District 97 for 20 years as a nurse and team facilitator. Patrick McAndrew worked at Beye while I was there and I got to see what kind of person/teacher he is. He is respected and loved by all that know him. He has changed lives. He is a good honest human being. Patrick exemplifies the type of teacher D97 wants and needs.

### **Molly Lane**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. Patrick McAndrew is an exceptional human being and an asset to the school and the community. My son entered Beye School and was immediately diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. 5th grade was a turning point for him and he couldn't have done it, (I couldn't have done it!) without Patrick McAndrew! He is true teacher, mentor and friend. Invaluable to say the least.

### **Kim Becker**

My child Ben is a student in Mr. Patrick McAndrew's 5th grade class at William Beye Elementary. I am writing to express my profound disappointment and concern with Mr. McAndrew's absence. When we learned Ben had Mr. McAndrew for 5th grade, we felt pretty lucky. There had been a buzz about him. Many kids hoped to have him as their teacher. He is known to be engaging and compassionate and deeply invested in his students. He is fun and animated, well read and dedicated to working with kids who may

have some special needs. He reassured us at our first meeting that he would address Ben's focus challenges and did so with humor and faith that Ben will do fine with some guidance. That guidance has been stripped away and we have watched our child become even less engaged. During this difficult time of the pandemic, what our students need most is some stability and consistency and love and compassion. Bringing Mr. McAndrew back would give them that while also giving them the quality education they deserve. Please know that Mr. McAndrew is a deeply loved and respected teacher with a long history at Beye. He told us with a choked up voice in that first Zoom meeting how hard it was to not be in person with his kids but went on to say that it was the kids that kept him going and made him feel happy again. A teacher with this kind of dedication and history should not be so easily expendable. Please find a way to bring him back to the classroom.

### **Kelly Simkowski**

I am writing to let you know about my child's amazing teacher at Beye School, Patrick McAndrew. Patrick is a warm, funny and engaging educator. Patrick has done an amazing job of forming a community within his online classroom. Patrick has done an amazing job of forming a community within his online classroom. Patrick takes the time to acknowledge and listen to each and every student, each and every day. Patrick is kind, caring and compassionate man. Patrick is a fantastic teacher who brings his cultural experiences into the class. Patrick is an amazing asset for Beye School and for the entire district.

### **Brett, Sarah, Ethan and Ava Williams**

We are a Beye School alumni family, writing to share our experience with the exceptional Patrick McAndrew, Beye School teacher. Mr. McAndrew was an extremely positive influence on our children. Leading the way at Camp Edwards (the outdoor Ed experience) and encouraging artistic growth through theater (the annual Beye School musical), Mr. McAndrew led by example and truly put his heart and soul into his work. His selfless dedication to his job was a true boon to Beye School. His influence on the community cannot be underestimated, nor can it be replaced.

### **Theresa Jurgus**

I am writing in support of Patrick McAndrew. I first met Mr. McAndrew in 2009. There are some teachers whose lessons you just carry with you through life. My child learned the basics very well, sure, but our family, all of us, learned much more about learning, about community, and about the world we live in. This is not hyperbole. Patrick is a generous teacher in every sense, creating an environment where you grow in knowledge and spirit. Please know how important Patrick is to this community, and what a gifted teacher he is.

### **Jennifer Dunk**

I am writing in regards to one of my 5th grader's favorite teachers, Patrick McAndrew. He has been a bright spot during this very difficult period of remote learning, always putting his heart and soul into teaching his students. He is one of the most passionate teachers we have encountered and clearly has a very solid work ethic and is deeply dedicated to his profession and our unique village. Mr. McAndrew takes the time and makes the effort to connect with his students of all backgrounds which makes him so valuable to our diverse community. This connection overflows to the families of his students as well. My son and his peers miss him dearly and have been awaiting his return, discussing and asking daily about it. Please take this testimonial into consideration as the future of Mr. McAndrew's job is decided.

### **Sandra Dawson**

I am writing in behalf of Patrick McAndrew. Patrick is one of the most dedicated teachers I have ever known, and after working as an art teacher and raising three kids I've known many teachers. Many teachers just go through the motions after years of teaching. Many just put up with the kids they teach. Patrick loves his work, he cares more about his students than any other teacher I have known. He

is a passionate, caring, qualified, dedicated teacher and every student who has had Patrick as a teacher, every parent will back him up. Please reconsider, the kids need him and so do we.

### **Lynn Pautler**

I am writing to share my respect and admiration for Patrick McAndrew. He is an amazing teacher and human being. My non-white daughter, who is adopted and currently attending St. Andrews University in Scotland, still swears that Patrick McAndrew was the best teacher that she has ever had. All through Beye she never felt that any teacher “got her” like Mr. McAndrew. His energy and inclusion of all students finally made her feel an equal member of a community at Beye. It was extremely important towards her development to have her adoption and minority status actually embraced by a teacher. He boosted her confidence while inspiring and encouraging her to live a BIG life including service to others. His ongoing influence shows up every day in her decisions and successes. That is a great teacher!

### **David Minnix**

I am a former student of Patrick McAndrew. I've just heard that he has been put on disciplinary leave for taking too many personal days and that his contract may be terminated. I am writing in support of Mr. McAndrew, who was one of the best teachers that I have ever had. I remember him as someone who goes out of his way to bring his students experiences that will enrich their lives for years to come, someone who is kind, and who creates a real feeling of safety in his classroom. I remember the international films and new foods. I remember the calm and measured way he handled 9/11, how he made space for us to process what had just happened. I remember how he taught us to talk through our problems with each other and resolve conflict. These things changed my life in more ways than I will likely ever be aware of. He should be in front of students, where I believe his leadership is being sorely missed.

### **Alice Cottingham**

I am writing to voice my very strong support for Patrick McAndrews, an outstanding, long-time teacher at Beye School. He is one of the very best teachers my son had in D97. My son was fortunate enough to be in a combined class that was taught by Patrick and Karen Fogg. They individually and together were fine teachers: exceptionally creative, sensitive, justice-oriented, engaging, and pedagogically sound. Their students loved them, learned from them, and were well-served by them. Parents were welcome in the classroom and a lot of us made time to be involved. The time I spent there was enjoyable and impressive. I admired and was grateful for their commitment and ability to nurture and teach every child. They very much deserved the Golden Apple award, and it is burnished by them. Patrick is a warm, funny, and down to earth person and teacher. His teaching skills are phenomenal. He is a teacher I'd want any and every elementary student to have. I very much hope he will continue to teach at Beye. If I can provide additional info, please let me know.

### **Mary Lynn Everson**

I am writing this letter as a testimonial to Mr. Patrick McAndrew in regards to his stellar character and his exemplary teaching style. I understand there is a possibility of him being terminated which is really quite shocking and frankly, questionable. My daughter was in his class “graduating” from Beye School in 2007 and although my son was only in 2nd grade when Mr. McAndrew left to teach in Nepal, he remembers him well. Tonight I asked my daughter Kari, who will be receiving her MFA in graphic design in May from Boston University, what she remembers about Mr. McAndrew. She immediately said “He told me at graduation that I had a heart of gold. It made me feel so good and so happy.” This is 14 years since she had him for a teacher! She went on to say how honored she was to be asked to speak at graduation, especially because she was pretty quiet. It too made her feel good. But throughout the year she said “He always made us feel cared about.” She recalled that once she brought him a chocolate bunny and she said not only did she feel appreciated by him then, but he mentioned it again at graduation. He didn’t forget. And she loved the school musicals that he and MS Fogg led and that Kari participated in both years. Kari said he was really nice, super funny, and a teacher who inspired learning. He was her favorite teacher. My

son Jamie, who is a student at Western Washington University, remembers him being really nice and always saying hello to him in the hallway. Who goes out of their way to say hello and know the name of students not even in his class? I remember Patrick McAndrew as someone absolutely devoted to the teaching profession and to giving students the most enriching learning experience possible. As a mother to an Asian daughter and a LatinX son, I appreciated the multicultural atmosphere of the classroom. I loved his boundless energy (many and long nights preparing for the musicals) and I could see how much he cared for his students. He knew them well and communicated this to parents as well. I am so grateful that Kari had him for her teacher. I honestly can't imagine what Mr. McAndrew would be terminated for. I imagine he has years of positive evaluations. Where I worked you had to establish a track record of poor performance as well as written warnings before termination was considered. I have to wonder if that was done in this case. In any case, he has given his heart and soul for many, many years and I hope the board members will look carefully to see that they have a gem of a teacher to keep in this community.

### **Millie Frankel**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. He has been a committed teacher at Beye School for 15 years, and everyone I know who has been his student in this time has loved him. I was a student at Beye school from 2002-2008. While I didn't have Patrick McAndrew as my classroom teacher, I was lucky enough to work with him for two years in the school musical. These are some of my favorite memories at Beye School, and even at that age, I could tell his enthusiasm was a driving force behind its success. I am certain that the musical would not have been able to happen without the time, commitment, and energy that he devoted to it. He is energetic, welcoming, kind-hearted, and creative. I remember being so jealous, because his class put on an "opera," where they performed a very abridged version of a famous opera. The one I remember in particular was *The Marriage of Figaro*. Everyone in his class got a part, they made costumes and props from things they had at home or around the classroom, and then they lip synced the arias. Somehow, he even got the kids who were shy or cynical to ham it up on stage. It was so fun, funny, lighthearted, and a wonderful learning experience for everyone involved. It would be a huge loss to District 97 and the students at Beye School to terminate Patrick McAndrew, someone who has dedicated his career to bettering Beye School, the District, and the lives of his students.

### **Richard Cameron**

I write here to express my support for Patrick McAndrew, an excellent teacher who has worked at Beye School for many years. How did I come to know Mr. McAndrew? I am a Professor Emeritus in Linguistics from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Both of my children, Kyra and Nina, went through Beye. Neither had Mr. McAndrew. However, I had the opportunity to observe his teaching, along with Karen Fogg in the fall of 2003 and some in the spring of 2004. During the late fall and early spring of 2003 and 2004, I gained access to the Oak Park school as part of a larger research project aimed at gathering interview data on English across the Chicago metropolitan area. In early 2003, I sought advice from the school principal, Jonathan Ellwanger, on how I might do dialect research among the second and fifth graders of this kindergarten through fifth-grade elementary school. With his informal approval, I then sought approval from the school board. The Oak Park School Board requested that I provide a written report on the English dialects spoken by the children and discuss any possible educational implications that these findings suggested. During this time, I spent approximately two months interacting with children in the classes of Ms. Fogg and Mr. McAndrew as well as talking with both teachers about the children, about teaching, and many other topics. The classes taught by these two teachers provided a remarkable and special place for the fifth grade kids. Remember, these fifth graders are the "elder" students in the school. They have reached a place where they are beginning to express and receive a degree of autonomy and intellectual development that is important both for their personal development and for their transition to Middle School. But, they are still kids. During my time in the class and with the kids, I found Mr. McAndrew to be highly professional in his classroom management and in his understanding of what the children needed to learn. He was friendly and honest and comedic with the kids. He was very prepared for every class that I saw him teach. And, he was insightfully aware, as are all

good teachers, of kids who may need some extra help. When I say he was aware, I mean that he understood that children are part of a larger community and his knowledge of the children included knowledge of their families and their families' circumstances. Thus, his concern for the children extended to the community at large. Patrick McAndrew was, and is, an excellent teacher who contributes to the intellectual and emotional culture of Beye School. He is the kind of teachers that make schools good.

### **Gabe Girson**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. During my time at Beye Elementary, Mr. McAndrew helped me find my passions. He gave all of his students the chance to explore, have fun, and grow. He is one of the most generous people I've ever met, who makes tremendous sacrifices for his students and family. Please be aware of the positive impact he had.

### **Dr. Eulàlia Puig Abril**

I am a mother of two D97 students. I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. Patrick McAndrew is a remarkable teacher at Beye School. He is an enthusiastic, energetic, and collaborative teacher. Many students have been fortunate to learn with Mr. McAndrew already, and we are looking to have or interact with him next year for our younger D97 student. Patrick McAndrew is a huge asset for Beye and our District. It seems like he has been disciplined extra hard for something that is NOT related to students' safety, unprofessionalism with students or parents, or harassment, abuse, or neglect of any kind. The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting us all in many different ways and more compassion is needed to understand how some of us decide to cope, especially in the midst of few available resources. Please, reconsider the harsh punishment toward Mr. McAndrews.

### **Ellen Barton**

This comment is in support of Patrick McAndrew, who has been a teacher for both of my children, Lorie Lavigne (age 31) and Patrick Lavigne (age 29). We loved having Patrick as a teacher, and also as a member of the Beye School community. He has always given all of himself and inspired many children to love different cultures, places and ideas. He has always been kind to the children in his classes. He has approached his work with dedication and honesty. I am very disappointed that Patrick McAndrew has been on disciplinary leave and has not been able to teach his class. He truly a gifted teacher and his classroom needs him, especially in this pandemic. If you wish to discuss this further, please contact me. Thank you for your consideration.

### **Karen Fogg**

I am a 5th grade teacher at Beye Elementary School. I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew, an extraordinary teacher and human being who epitomizes integrity, selflessness, humanity and empathy .A man who demonstrates honesty, cooperation and professionalism. A man who is my colleague, but more importantly a man who I call my friend. We are currently living through a global pandemic, and our lives have forever been changed. We are seeing people suffering physically and mentally as a result. We recognize it to the point of having professional development on trauma and how to teach children who have and are experiencing it. We are told at every professional development to allow ourselves grace. We are told to give our students and their families grace. Where is the grace now for our colleague? Where is the grace for my friend? Where is the grace for Patrick McAndrew? Is District 97 void of grace for a seasoned teacher with an unblemished and distinguished career of inspiring others. A teacher who has a passion for teaching that deserves to be recognized and celebrated. We are in the business of caring for other , but not to the exclusion of ourselves and our fellow teachers. We cannot afford to lose a teacher like Patrick McAndrew. We cannot afford to lose a man like Patrick McAndrew. His current students need him, his future students need him, his colleagues need him, his community needs him. District 97 needs Patrick McAndrew.



**Laura Knitt**

I am a parent of a student in Patrick McAndrew's current 5th grade classroom. For the sake of my child's education, and because Mr. McAndrew is a caring and dedicated teacher, I would like to see Mr. McAndrew back in the classroom as soon as possible.

**Sarah Rodriguez**

I write in support of Patrick McAndrew, a 5th grade teacher at Beye School. My daughter attended Beye all 6 years and was lucky to have Patrick as her teacher last year, her final year at Beye. Patrick is an engaged, caring, and devoted teacher, one who welcomes parental concerns and questions. As a room parent for his room last year, I was lucky to be in his classroom a few times before the pandemic shut-down, and I got to watch his enthusiastic engagement with students, which included his impressive capacity to redirect some students while also keeping pace with those who did not need redirection. Patrick is an excellent, caring teacher, and Beye is a stronger school because of teachers like him. Teachers like Patrick should be supported by the D97 school board, especially during these stressful and trying times for both teachers and students.

**Laurie Myers**

I have become aware that Patrick McAndrew, a teacher at Beye Elementary School, has been threatened with termination from the school. As a former Beye School parent and great admirer of Patrick McAndrew's teaching, I am registering my concern about this situation. I know that Mr. McAndrew has been a teacher at Beye for many many years. In that time, he has always been regarded as one of the best teachers the school has. My children attended Beye School for a total of 9 years (2002-2011) and we were always aware of and grateful for the positive influence he had on the students and the school community. In total, Mr. McAndrew has taught students for 35 years, and in all of those years he had always been highly regarded by students, parents, teachers and principals wherever he has taught. I ask you, in the name of fairness and doing the right thing, to reassess this situation and put Mr. McAndrew back in the classroom at Beye School. We need teachers like Mr. McAndrew for our children!

**Monica Saydah**

I am writing to express my support for Patrick McAndrew. Mr. McAndrew is the kind of teacher every parent wants their kid to have. He is kind, compassionate, and empathetic, taking the time to meet students where they are and encourage them to expand and grow. In my experience, Mr. McAndrew demonstrates passion and professionalism with boundless energy and enthusiasm. To lose his multicultural perspective would be a loss to the Beye community.

**Melanie L. Minnix**

I am writing in support of Patrick McAndrew. My son, David Minnix, was one of his students at Beye in the early 2000's. When I told David, who will soon turn 30 years old and who lives in Michigan, that Mr. McAndrew was having some difficulties, he didn't hesitate to stop what he was doing to send you a letter of public comment. I think that in and of itself should send you a very strong message about the impact and legacy of Mr. McAndrews through time. There are not many teachers I remember from that time, but I do clearly remember Mr. McAndrews. As young mothers in the neighborhood, we felt so incredibly grateful to have such fantastic teachers for our kids who instilled a love of learning and curiosity and enthusiasm and creativity and a worldwide perspective. I can tell you that my child became an incredibly wonderful adult and some of that in part is due to his very fine education and role models like Mr. McAndrews.

**Ben Bloch**

My name is Ben Bloch, Beye School class of 2005. I was fortunate enough to have Patrick McAndrew as my teacher in my fifth and final year at Beye. I am not exaggerating when I say that he cares more about students than probably any other teacher I've had in my entire life. Even 16 years later I recall instances

where he made us feel significant, empowered, and most of all respected, whether he was addressing issues of bullying in and outside of the classroom, patiently answering tangential questions stemming from whatever reading we had that day, or telling us stories from his own life when the inevitable "Why does this any of this matter?" question would pop up about some bit of coursework. As an admittedly difficult and skeptical child, I can say with confidence that Mr. McAndrew is the reason I put effort into my schoolwork as a fifth grader, rather than just the bare minimum; he motivated me to take pride in my work because I knew he was genuinely paying attention to every word I would write or every line of a speech I was giving. I often felt that there was no point trying hard with "busywork" assignments, but with him it never felt like busywork. In the case of the school musicals ("The Music Man" and "Seussical the Musical," two shows I would never have given a second thought to otherwise but now as an adult brag about my performances in), he was attentive and empathetic when we had stage fright or were embarrassed about being unable to learn choreography. I can trace my like of musicals back to those performances and the gusto he passed on to all of us with each reading and dress rehearsal. To fire Patrick McAndrew is not only a disservice to such an exemplary teacher, it is a disservice to all of Beye School present and future. If the school board's responsibility is to the children of its district, then I implore you to recognize that his absence does nothing but rob students of the most supportive and inspiring teacher they might be lucky enough to have. Speaking from personal experience, meeting him at such a young age is what changed my outlook on schoolwork going forward, and I am certain that it was his presence that inspired me to reach my potential.

#### **Jeff Tesch**

I had the privilege of being a chaperone for the Beye School 5th grade trip to Camp Edwards in 2019. That weekend at camp allowed me a cherished opportunity to bond with my son Oliver, better than his friends, and meet his other fellow classmates. It also provided up-close and intimate insight at just how the Beye School faculty interact, relate, and mentor their students. One of those teachers was Patrick McAndrew. Mr. McAndrew was by far the most inspiring teacher on this trip. His enthusiasm for learning and his ability to relate his own life's work to the lessons at hand was amazing. He not only taught, but listened emphatically to all the kids. He treated them as equals on a social/emotional level that included dignity and respect. To see the way they responded to him, left me feeling inadequate in my own work as a parent. Beye School, and D97 as a whole, needs more career professionals like Mr. McAndrew. He is part of the fabric that makes my community a great place to raise a child. I'm am so very glad that Oliver had the chance to receive instruction from him and I hope that my youngest will have the same opportunity.

#### **Matt Cotter**

I have a daughter in Mr. McAndrews class this year. He has proven to be a calming influence in what has been a chaotic school year marked by the loss of many milestone events for the fifth graders. He has been open, honest and caring with the kids, and is a bright spot for my daughter in an otherwise dark year. I have no interest in school politics. My sole concern is the quality of my daughters experience and instruction. At this, Beye School has failed recently. In the interest of salvaging some modicum of normalcy, safety and sanity, restore Mr. McAndrews to the classroom.

#### **Mike Stumbras**

I had Patrick McAndrew as my sixth grade teacher in 2001. Patrick has followed up on my career as a ceramic artist and was an excellent and compassionate teacher. I can personally vouch for Patrick's competence and care as a teacher. Patrick led extracurricular activities including family movie nights that absolutely influenced my worldview in the most positive of ways. I remember, and continue to know, that Patrick's competence as a teacher fulfills curriculum goals and equips students with a framework for learning that extends beyond the immediate classroom.

**Olivia Nash**

I am a former student of Oak Park's District 97. I am writing to you today on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. Although I never had the opportunity to be a traditional student of Mr. McAndrew, I have been lucky enough to observe and learn from him in his home of Kathmandu as a teacher, a parent, a role model, and a friend. Patrick welcomed me into his family's home in Nepal from 2011 to 2014. During my visits, I was fortunate enough to spend time with his family, his students, his neighbors, and his friends. Patrick's kindness, energy, enthusiasm, compassion, and honesty are unique and unfounded and should be celebrated by anyone lucky enough to be in his room. Patrick McAndrew's family is not one that many here in Oak Park may understand, but is one that he cares deeply about and includes young adults who would not have the opportunities they have today without him. He has given them the space, support, and freedom to become the best versions of themselves they can be. This is the same effort and attention he gives to the children of Beye School, District 97, and Oak Park youth as a whole. He is a man who I celebrate daily for his impact on myself and those around him, and should continue to be celebrated by Beye School, District 97, and the community of Oak Park. Please reach out for any further questions or anecdotes, as I am happy to share anything supporting Mr. McAndrew and his impact on all of us who have been fortunate enough to be in his presence.

**Evelyn Schick**

I am a fifth grader in Mr. McAndrews class. I've been at Beye School for six years now and Mr. McAndrew is the best teacher I've ever had. He is so kind and welcoming. He makes everyone feel at home when you're around him. He teaches in a way that everyone can understand. But lately we have been having sub after sub after sub. But none of them could ever replace Mr. McAndrews kind and loving spirit. When Mr. McAndrew was on zoom every day, I would be so excited to go into class and learn. Now it is hard to even care. I am starting to lose hope that he'll ever return. Please don't take the best teacher I've ever had away from me and my fellow classmates.

**Christine Fisher**

I am the parent of three boys that attended Beye Elementary in which Mr. McAndrew was teaching in that time. One of my sons had Ms. Fogg and Mr. McAndrews class was right next store in the pod, so I got to know him just as well. Mr. Mc Andrew was one of the coolest, engaging, compassionate teachers I have ever met in my lifetime. He cared about the teaching, but also how he and his students were a part of a larger, global community. One of the projects the children did was to have pen pals in Nepal, a special place to both Mr. McAndrew and Ms. Fogg who visited on summer breaks. My husband and I planned a trip to India/Nepal and I met with Mr. McAndrew ahead of time who told me all about what to do there. We told him that we would visit the school in Nepal where the Beye kids had their pen pals. We brought a stack of letters from Beye School and once we got to Nepal we spent an hour or so giving the Nepalese children letters, talking with them and taking photos. It was incredible. Once back in Oak Park, I set up a time with Mr. McAndrews and Ms. Fogg's class to bring them the letters from the Nepalese children. It was so memorable to see their faces spark up to read the letters. There are not enough positive adjectives to describe Mr. McAndrew. I am so grateful he is a teacher and I know for a fact, he is and has been an amazing mentor to many.

**Holly Saunders**

I am the co-director for the Drama Club at Beye Elementary School. It has been my privilege to work with Patrick McAndrew every year since 1997 as we work with 4th and 5th graders to prepare and present the spring musical. Patrick McAndrew is a person dedicated to the highest standards of education and is gifted in expressing his love of teaching through complete engagement of himself as he helps empower children to find their strengths. His love for students in the classroom is matched by his dedication to his family which nurtures and supports him. Especially during this incredible time of uncertainty, fear, and change, we need to depend upon our strengths and the structures we have in place that work. Patrick McAndrew is dependable and trustworthy, always going beyond what is expected to support each student

as an individual and promote group participation, equality, and respect through joyous engagement of self, in work that is much more than a job. One would be hard pressed to find any student whose life has not been positively affected by having Mr. McAndrew as a teacher, as he is one of those who change people's lives. As a mother of four children who are now grown, I have personal experience on how my children have benefited from his having been in their lives. As a District 97 employee, I have personally benefitted by working closely with Patrick throughout these 23 years, as we bring each production of the Beye School Drama Club to life. Not only is Patrick a co-worker and a friend, but he is a brother to me.

**Susan Gibson, Beye School Principal 1987-2002**

The Beye Community has a long history of proactive support for the Board of Education and Oak Park. It works hard for elections and referenda, it has a high level of community participation and leadership and it has broad loyalty to the faculty and administration of Beye. This faculty is comprised of strong and vocal teachers, and such action against a highly regarded colleague will create extreme tension and distrust toward the Board, the administration and the principal. The personnel issue regarding Patrick McAndrew, a very experienced Oak Park teacher, seeks to undermine the trust of and loyalty to its new principal and the administration. I understand the misuse of sick days is part of the issue with Patrick. From my 15 years in the District, I know he is not the first to do so. The action against him seems arbitrary to many because it is so inconsistently applied. It does not make such action right but there may be a more reasonable solution. I reflect the creative and compassionate solutions applied to personnel issues developed by Human Resources. The parents and students are confused by the situation. Even my emails are full of inquiries and I am years away from Beye. Bad feelings and stress are everywhere but one hopes schools don't have to be the source. Patrick McAndrew is documented to be a superior teacher. Do his evaluations reflect notice that he is on the path to abrupt dismissal? Has there been intervention? Mr. McAndrew goes well beyond to the classroom to advocate for students. Parents solicit his advice and are delighted to send their children to his class. He is trusted, respected and well-liked by his colleagues, parents and students. I know the value of the superior teacher. I think what he brings to Beye School and District 97 far outweighs what he has taken from the system.

**Abigail Turnock**

I am writing to support Mr. McAndrew. I am a fifth grader at Beye School in Mrs. Bauman's class and the fifth grade teacher's team teach. Mr. McAndrew is an amazing teacher. Not letting him come back takes away from our learning. Because the other teachers do the best they can but it's harder to learn reading and social studies because he isn't here to teach them. Also he is the teacher that knows most about technology. He helps Mrs. Bauman and Mrs. Fogg trouble shoot things when we have problems. Also he is really funny and makes reading and even social studies a lot more fun with his jokes and his playfulness. He really is an awesome teacher and the whole fifth grade wants him back. Please let Mr. McAndrew come back.

**Yumi Lee**

I write this statement to express my full support for Patrick McAndrew. I was a Board member of Lincoln School in Nepal from 2009 - 2011 when Patrick was hired as an elementary school teacher. Lincoln School was formerly known as the American Embassy School, and the school of choice for expatriates to send their children to during their posting in Kathmandu. I was actively involved in the Parent and Teachers' Association and spent many hours in school supporting the community, including running cooking classes for elementary students. I therefore have an intimate knowledge of what goes on in the classrooms and its surrounds. It is through this relationship with the school that I base the following observations. Patrick is an exceptional teacher. His classroom is always filled with information which sparks innovation, creativity and engagement of his students. Most importantly, he values every child and demonstrates this through his interactions. One of my dear friends has a child on the autism spectrum who found joy of learning and self-worth after attending Patrick's class. He had a completely different

experience in Patrick's classroom compared to his experience in his home country of Thailand. This is one of many, many examples of how Patrick inspires his students. Patrick is a real professional who takes great pride in his work. While other teachers slouched around in their sweat pants and T-shirts, Patrick is always well-presented and a great role model for his students. He is firm but kind, creative but recognizes what the children should be competent in, humorous but able to set boundaries of respect and is completely dedicated to his students. Patrick also lived in my neighborhood in Kathmandu, so I had the privilege of knowing his family in Nepal. He is a devoted father to his adopted children, giving them the support and opportunities to blossom. I hope the Board recognizes the enormous value Patrick brings to his students, and to the school community. During the pandemic, we have come to realize the importance of family and friends, and how our wellbeing is so closely bound to them. No teacher should be penalized for taking care of their wellbeing. In fact, it should be made a fundamental principle that all teachers are respected enough to permit them to take care of their wellbeing. Teachers who are well are able to teach better. Teachers who are able to teach better will result in students who understand their classes better. Students who understand their classes better will remain engaged and have better outcomes. This simple equation should be understood by all responsible school Board members and administrators. I hold Patrick in the highest esteem, and only wish I had teachers like him when I was a child. I trust the Board will put the welfare of teachers first, so the welfare of the students will automatically come equal first.

### **Stephanie Walquist and Jason Patenaude**

First, thank you for your service to our community during these challenging times. You spend so much time thinking, reading, writing, and speaking about how best to serve the needs of all of the elementary and middle school students in Oak Park. I appreciate that and am awe of that type of commitment. I am, therefore, somewhat hesitant to add to the many demands on your time to advocate for the return of my child's teacher, Mr. McAndrew, but I feel that I should at least try. Our son had a difficult couple of years as a 3rd and 4th grader. Now, in 5th grade, we are starting to get a little bit of traction finally in his learning and capacity to navigate challenging situations for him at school even if through remote learning. Mr. McAndrew has beautifully nurtured my son's strengths through Remote Learning, which is no easy task. There were days where my son wouldn't want to get up and go to school on Zoom, but we would remind him of who was waiting for him there. Mr. McAndrew even at times offered to make a call to get our son to school. Our son's attitude toward learning is becoming confident and positive. I am very unclear as to the circumstances surrounding Mr. McAndrew's leave, and I am further confused about why we would want to introduce so much instability and uncertainty into our children's lives during a Pandemic. Our son wants to try hybrid 3rd trimester, and we were supportive of that and felt confident in the decision because we believed Mr. McAndrew would most likely have returned from his mysterious leave by then. Our son needs someone who understands how to respond to him in an effective manner. With his background in Special Education, Mr. McAndrew would have the knowledge and experience to help our son navigate the challenges that inevitably come up in learning at school with other students--particularly with all the rules around COVID. Without the certainty of Mr. McAndrew returning, we are unsure now if having our son go to hybrid is the right decision. He still wants to try but is deeply missing Mr. McAndrew, a true and certain cheerleader for all his students. Mr. McAndrew deeply loves and values his students in all of their many glorious ways of being and supports their developing identities so that they feel safe in being themselves. He does all of this while challenging their thinking, pressing them through problem-solving, and looking at mistakes as an opportunity to grow. Please help expedite the return of this beloved teacher to his students.

### **Patricia Ehlert-Abler**

I am a parent of 29 year old twins who were students of Mr. McAndrew. He is and was the best role model. As a nurse I remind you, never even assume to be able to judge the appropriateness of a sick day. Please be the smart, compassionate, appropriate district I know you to be. Please reinstate Patrick McAndrew.

**Nat Pozorski**

My son William is in Mr. McAndrew's 5th grade classroom and he has been a good teacher. William has enjoyed having such a thoughtful and considerate teacher as Mr. McAndrew.

**Augustus Goodman**

I just wanted to ask why Mr. McAndrew has been absent. I have heard you are not letting him return. All of his students miss him. Some of them I know are talking to their parents about being homeschooled because they feel they are not getting their best educations. Substitutes can't amount to everything that a real teacher can. Please let him return as soon as you can. Beye school fifth graders are counting on you.

**Corin James**

I am writing today on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. Mr. McAndrew is a wonderful teacher. His enthusiasm, energy, and dedication to the children he teaches is remarkable. I was one of those students decades ago, and went on to become OPRFHS valedictorian, attend an elite liberal arts school on a half-tuition merit-based scholarship, serve as a Peace Corps volunteer, and attend law school on a full-tuition merit based scholarship. I attribute my academic success to teachers like Mr. McAndrew who inspired a love of learning in me from a young age. Mr. McAndrew is a huge asset for Beye School and District 97.

**Jamee Kelly Cichosz**

I would like to go on record to attest to the fine character, integrity, and work ethic of Mr. Patrick McAndrew. I am a retired employee of District 97. One of the positions I held early in my career at the District was that of a Teaching Assistant at Beye School. I had the opportunity to spend time in Mr. McAndrew's classroom on a regular basis and found him to be an extraordinary teacher. He consistently modeled kindness, fairness, and integrity to his students. In my opinion, he went above and beyond in helping to insure that his students were being supported in their learning goals, doing so with great enthusiasm. I feel it would be a terrible loss to District 97, Beye School students and families in particular, to lose a teacher who possesses such admirable qualities.

**Jude Simkowski**

Mr. McAndrew is my teacher at Beye School. I miss Mr. McAndrew. I love Mr. McAndrew. Mr. McAndrew come back to school please.

**Cate Cotter**

I'm a student in Mr. McAndrew's classroom this year. Mr. McAndrew is the life of the classroom. He makes all of us feel like we might know something more than him on any given subject. He treats us like his equals. Even though that's one of the most important values of an outstanding teacher, it's something you don't find every day. Mr. McAndrew is special. One in seven billion and some change. I miss his voice. The way he understands if any given student needs a minute. The way he's not afraid to show emotion, how he's not just a blank face. He made all 24 of us feel united, not alone, understood, and most importantly loved. Fifth grade has been hard enough this year. We need our teacher back.

**Tye Johnson**

During my first year of teaching, I was fortunate enough to be placed at Beye School, in the building with Patrick McAndrew. Patrick taught 5th grade, while I taught 3rd. I remember seeing him in action and thinking that he was the type of educator that I aspired to become. One who genuinely cared about ALL of his students, who took extra time out of his day to make sure his students felt loved, appreciated, and respected, and one who displayed what it meant to be a collaborator for the betterment of the school. I emphasize ALL because, time and time again, I saw other colleagues mistreat and disrespect students based on their own biases- whether that be due to the color of their skin or their academic ability. Patrick always made sure his students always felt welcomed and protected. Patrick moves and operates with a

passion that many people aspire to have. His passion is contagious and, honestly, makes you believe in the goodness of people. I rarely see teachers (or people for that matter) with as much heart as he has. His heart extended beyond the classroom and into the entire Oak Park community. He has always worked to make sure his students are globally minded and that they live lives of authenticity and integrity... characteristics in which he embodies overwhelmingly. Mr. McAndrew is truly a lifelong educator, dedicated to this profession, and we in D97 are all better because of him.

### **Judy Roth and Steve James**

We are writing on behalf of Mr. Patrick McAndrew, a teacher who has long been regarded as a District 97 treasure. We are 36-year Oak Park residents and raised three children here, all of whom attended Beye School. Our family came to know Mr. McAndrew over a period of several years and during that time, we experienced him as a gifted, committed, and joyful teacher who went above and beyond to ensure that ALL students received an excellent educational experience. Having spent countless hours at Beye School as volunteers, we observed Mr. McAndrew first hand, long before he became our youngest son's teacher. As a special education teacher as well as a teacher in typical classrooms, he was a tireless and enthusiastic advocate for his students, working with the children, staff, and parents to maximize educational success. Mr. McAndrew communicated a genuine love of teaching and modeled respect and compassion during interactions with students and parents. His enthusiasm for learning was infectious and his energy seemingly boundless. His commitment to teaching was not confined to school hours either. For example, Mr. McAndrew regularly volunteered an enormous amount of after-school time to organize a yearly theatrical presentation at Beye. Once our son became his student, we learned that Mr. McAndrew was not only inspired and creative, but also firm in his expectation that students consistently bring their best effort. We have always experienced Mr. McAndrew as an unquestionably professional teacher who embodies integrity, an invaluable role model for all our children. Given this, we are bewildered by the decision to terminate Mr. McAndrew from his teaching position. While we understand that some administrative rule-breaking/conflict may be in question, it is unimaginable that termination could be a reasonable response considering the alleged offense and his years of service to our children. We all need to be celebrating and supporting our gifted and caring teachers right now instead of looking for ways to demoralize them - and their students - even further. The loss of Mr. McAndrew would be tragic, short-sighted, and would send a message to our children about what we as adults value — administrative rules over continued access to a dedicated, remarkable, and beloved teacher.

### **Barbara A. Kahn**

I am writing to voice my concern regarding the termination of Patrick McAndrew. I want to acknowledge at the outset that I do not have all the facts concerning that decision. However, in light of what I know personally about Patrick, his outstanding record at D97, and his invaluable contributions to thousands of students - including two of my children - I cannot imagine a scenario in which his termination is an appropriate response. I am the mother of 3 (now adult) children who were students at Beye School under Principals Susan Gibson and Jonathon Ellwanger. My younger children, Becca and Ben Bloch, were lucky enough to have Patrick for a teacher. I was always impressed by Patrick's enthusiasm, creativity, patience, and empathy he expressed in the classroom and to his students. In short, from my perspective he was a fantastic teacher and both Becca and Ben loved being in his class. In my nearly 30 years in Oak Park I have heard nothing but high praise for Patrick and his commitment to teaching. I am not aware of any past bad actions by him and, as far as I know, he has a previously unblemished record. Parents and children at Beye were lucky to have him as a member of that community, were saddened when he left, and thrilled when he returned to teach at Beye. I cannot imagine what could possibly merit terminating him. I am aware that Patrick had compelling family obligations, as a result of which he missed a day of required in person teaching. I also am aware of the extenuating circumstances, i.e., the embassy lost his passport, which required him to reschedule his original plans. I can only hope that the decision to terminate him is the result of insufficient communication between Patrick and the administration AND the administration and Patrick. I am hopeful that the Board will use this opportunity to open more effective

discussion of all the circumstances and reach a more just decision to better serve the Beye community, parents and their children, and, of course, Patrick. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions concerning this letter or my support for Patrick. Thank you for your attention to this very serious matter.

**Gina and Mark Bazer**

We are writing in support of Mr. McAndrew, who has been an important presence in our son's life this school year. It takes time to establish a classroom rapport and our son is missing that special chemistry Mr. McAndrew had achieved. Whatever happened before this quarter began, we feel it is time to move on and bring our child's teacher back to his classroom for the sake of all the kids who want to end their last year at Beye School with the teacher with whom they started the year. There is also a larger lesson here: practicing compassion and empathy. During a difficult time, we all seek grace and understanding from our community. Isn't that what we try to instill in our children? Let's set a positive example and not take away a good man's livelihood because he made a mistake (out of a deep need to see his family; we can all relate to this!). We all make mistakes, and we learn from our mistakes. And we all deserve a second chance. Let's show how empathy can make us better. Let's remember what's important here: supporting each other in times of crisis and providing our kids with a calm, consistent learning environment — along with demonstrating an excellent lesson in showing fairness and good will.

**Ruthann Fogg**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew, a teacher at Beye School. I have known Patrick McAndrew for over 20 years as a friend of myself and my daughter, Karen Fogg, also a 5th grade teacher at Beye School. Patrick is a kind, charitable, caring and smart human being with a good sense of humor. He is passionate about teaching and all together a person of impeccable character - the teacher every loving parent wants to share their children's education with. I don't understand these charges brought against him. I've tried to understand how anyone could bring such unwarranted and egregious charges against his excellent character, his professionalism and his dedication to educating our children. I moved from Dallas, Texas to Oak Park forty years ago in response to an ad in Ms. Magazine "Oak Park is looking for people interested in diversity." My husband got a job in Chicago (he was an architect) and we bought a home in Oak Park. My five children and I packed up and moved here where they attended schools in D97 and D200. I've witnessed and participated in the hard work and successful integration of race, religion, culture, intellect and all kinds of human differences \_ a place where people of good character want to be accepted and raise their children. Until now. Forty years later and I feel like I am stepping back into an abyss of ignorance and unjust intolerance with the persecution of a stellar teacher and human being. I hope the Board represents the best of Oak Park's ideals, intelligence and intellect in assessing these charges and while you can't take away the nightmare and injury done to Patrick McAndrew, you can stop this madness and make it right. His job should never have been in jeopardy. Selfishly, now that I am 80 years old, I would like to attend the graduation of my grandchildren, especially the one that came to us from Hephzibah Children's Home ten years ago, and is just finishing his first year in college. That's a success and a testament to the best of Oak Park. Just think where we can go from here.

**Nicole Katonah-Murphy**

I'm writing to you to tell you a little bit about a wonderful teacher at Beye School named Patrick McAndrew. Patrick and I started teaching together in 1998 at Beye School. It was my first teaching job and Patrick was one of my role models. I have never forgotten the lessons I learned from watching him teach and I continue to use them in my classroom to this day. It was from him that I learned how to truly care about my students. He never gave up on his students, even the most challenging ones and was constantly advocating for them. He brought laughter and fun into the classroom all the while pushing his students to excel and reach his/her full potential. Patrick is a passionate and creative educator who instills a love of learning in all of his students. Not only is he a very talented educator, he is also an incredibly supportive and collaborative colleague. As an experienced teacher, he did not have to take the time to mentor and befriend a brand new teacher all of those years ago, but he did. I consider myself lucky to



have been able to teach with him. He is an incredible asset to the District 97 community. Thank you for taking the time to hear my comments.

### **Laneta Johnson**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. I have worked in Mr. McAndrew's classroom in the past 4 months as his Teacher Assistant. I know the content of his character and he has always been professional. He is an awesome teacher and very honest. Mr. McAndrew always was passionate in making sure the students in his classroom were learning what he was teaching. Mr. McAndrew is a dedicated teacher to Beye Elementary School and his students.

### **Phoebe Sullivan-Bing**

I graduated from Beye Elementary School in 2005. It has come to my attention that Mr. McAndrew, Patrick McAndrew was terminated from Beye School earlier this year. I am writing not only to encourage you to change your decision but to stress the profound positive impact that Patrick McAndrew has on the Beye School Community and his students. I, Phoebe Sullivan-Bing, attended Beye School from 2001-2005 and was in Patrick McAndrew's 5th-grade class in 2005. I don't have many early memories of entering elementary school, but I do vividly remember hearing whispers in and outside school, that you wanted to be in Fogg/McAndrew's class. When I was in the class, I understood why. When you are 10-11 years old, nothing makes sense in the world. Your emotions are changing, your body is changing, and your perception of the world and yourself is changing. And yet when you stepped foot into Patrick McAndrew's classroom, everything felt calm. He understood just how formative those years were and were able to focus on each student individually to ensure they were getting the education/assistance they needed. For me specifically, he recognized my struggle with spelling and approached me about the issue without diminishing my intelligence, stressed that there was nothing to be embarrassed about before helping me come up with tactics, that I still use today, to help with it. I know the topic of spelling seems so minor, but when you're 10 years old, you lack the ability to see the big picture. And when an adult is telling you that the thing you are insecure about is nothing to be embarrassed about, it can truly shape who you are into adulthood. I know it did for me, how else could I remember that story 16 years later. During my time at Beye, I performed in two of their musicals, both directed by Patrick McAndrew and Karen Fogg. The arts at Beye School have always been very formative, I am very grateful that you, the D97 District Board, understand the importance of the arts. Though, I would be remiss if I didn't discuss the impact it had on me as well as the community. Being in the musical at Beye was cool, it was the cool thing to do – I haven't experienced that deep appreciation for theatre until my theatre art college. My time during *Seussical the Musical* gave me a newfound confidence in myself, a passion that I would go on to do professionally and it was because of Patrick McAndrew's joy and love he brought into every room. All of this is to say, Patrick McAndrew's generosity, passion, humor, joy, and kindness make him a remarkable teacher and an asset to Beye School and our District. Terminating him would be a detriment not only to the school but also to all the children who won't be reminded that just because you are different doesn't mean you're wrong.

### **Sarah Feldman**

I am now 26, but when I was in elementary school, Beye was a second home to me. I just finished reading the article on Oakpark.com about Mr. McAndrew. If the story is true, that he may be terminated because of an administrative infraction, that would be a grave mistake. I am sure you have been made well aware of the exemplary quality of his teaching. My comment has to do with representation. Mr. McAndrew is an out gay man. How many male teachers do you have employed at Beye? Boys need to see men in roles that are traditionally filled by women. They need to see these career paths as options for them. I am a social scientist, men being in traditionally female roles, unfortunately legitimates the profession. As messed up as that is, it is important. Girls also need to see men as role models. They need examples of good men to understand the standard men should be held to. As far as Mr. McAndrew being gay, I myself am queer. I didn't come out until college because there was a lack of representation growing up. Oak Park

progress itself of being a liberal bubble. I have seen many ways in which this narrative is false, and if Mr. McAndrew is let go because of a minor infraction, it will be yet another example and a major injustice.

### **Ben Levine**

I'm in Mr. McAndrew's class. I really like Mr. McAndrew because he is always very nice and I want him back. If Mr. McAndrew were to come back I would be very happy.

### **Tricia McVicker**

My daughter is a former student of Patrick McAndrew. Patrick taught my daughter at Hauser Junior High in 2017. I have to be honest and say that I am shocked that I have to write a letter in support of Patrick in an attempt to save his teaching position at District 97. However, here I am writing to you supporting Patrick McAndrew and everything he stands for and believes in! Remember, I have ZERO skin in this game. My daughter is a sophomore at Riverside Brookfield High School. The decision you make regarding Patrick McAndrew will not affect me in any way. That's why I believe my email is one you should truly pay attention to. I have nothing to win or lose by sending this email. There have been two teachers in my daughter's educational life that have made unexplainable impacts upon her and Patrick McAndrew is one of those teachers. The first day she walked into his 7th Grade English class he handed out silk scarves from Nepal. Patrick told the story of the meaning of the scarf and wanted them to know that the scarf represented his true commitment to each of his students and how much he already cared about each and every one of them. My daughter told me the story when she got home that day. That scarf is tied to the head post of my daughter's bed where it has been since the day Patrick gave it to her class. My daughter touches the silk scarf that had such an impact on her every night when she gets into bed. Kids grow and their "toys" change. She no longer plays with barbies, or roller skates in the alley behind my house. Now she has dreams of a new car and college. But the one thing that hasn't changed is her memories of English class at Hauser Junior High with Mr. McAndrew and the scarf and its intense meaning to her. Here's another example of the effect Mr. McAndrew has on his students. My daughter lost her father suddenly during her year with Patrick. She didn't want to stay home from school and she really didn't want me to even share it with the school. I insisted that at least one teacher know in case she needed someone to talk to during the day. Of course I let the school know, her teachers know because of the significant loss. However, the only person my daughter wanted me to share it with was Patrick McAndrew. When I asked her why Mr. McAndrew, this was her response..."Mr. McAndrew would move mountains for his students. I know he would take time out of his day if I needed to talk or cry." She was in 7th grade at that time!!! And that was her view of Mr. McAndrew. COVID has been awful for everyone. We have all given up so much for things to get back to some sense of normal. I cannot imagine that Patrick did something so egregious as to be removed from his position. There are two things Patrick loves: (1) His sons in Nepal and (2) The students he shares his gift of teaching with on a daily basis. To take either away from him would be a tragedy for not only Patrick but for his current students and the students that have yet to have the opportunity to receive his gift of teaching. I hope you seriously consider the impact Patrick McAndrew has on your students on a daily basis, but also those students that still sing his praises on a daily basis like my daughter does every night when she touches that silk scarf from Nepal - a gift from Patrick McAndrew.

### **Brian Stemley**

This is to provide my request regarding district's pending termination decision of Patrick McAndrew: In these unprecedented times, please be fair in your decision on the consequences Patrick McAndrew should receive. I don't know all of the facts and perspectives from everyone involved, but I trust that you will take into account Patrick's past performance, achievements, contributions, and future potential as you decide what is an appropriate and fair response to any violations to rules. And that you will also consider the impact of the global pandemic and what is in the best interest of his students.

### **Jackson James**

In my time at Beye School, I was lucky enough to have Mr. McAndrew as my teacher. I knew him long before I had him as a teacher because he was always such a magnetic and nurturing figure at the school—I remember seeing him as just another friend when I was in the second grade. He was able to foster a sense of family that really was unique to an everyday school experience—I remember (as an extremely hyper-active kid) being allowed to be myself, in its entirety, in that classroom, and that whatever I had to offer was not only welcomed but valued. It was a quality that I would come to realize as a rare one in other classes. I recently transferred a ton of old video tapes that my parents shot as we were growing up. It can be a bit of a monotonous task at times, since every tape has to play back in real time to be transferred. One that unexpectedly stuck with me was the tape of my 5th grade graduation. Mr. McAndrew would have students come up one by one and tell them (and not the audience, he would look at the student) what it was he saw in them; what he saw as their strengths, their gifts, what they brought to the class that he wouldn't forget. For just about every kid, they'd look away nervously as they're standing in front of an audience, but he'd maintain eye contact. Watching that footage, it was clear to me that it was very personal; that he loved each kid, he really cared. I look back at my time so fondly at Beye School, and a lot of the memories I have taken place in that room at the top of the building with the divider, the one that Mr. McAndrew and Ms. Fogg share. I've never had an educational experience like that one since, one grounded so deeply in friendship and compassion, in encouragement and creativity. They'd bring us treats back from their worldly travels, they'd decorate the classroom for poetry slams (I think my poem was titled "rollerblading"), they had put themselves into the job fully. It was evident then, to me, as an 11 year old.

### **Sage Pope**

I was a student in the Penthouse with Patrick McAndrew in 2007-2008. I have only extremely positive memories of my time in his class and I am still grateful for the education I received. Patrick is kind, enthusiastic, quick, fun, and most importantly completely dedicated to his students. His commitment to arts education was especially impactful. Without all the theater, music, multimedia, and fine arts that he brought into every lesson, I would not have known how much I love music and gone on to study opera. Patrick is a wonderful educator and a sweet, caring man who brings out the best in the people around him.

### **Hasti Kosari**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew—an exceptional teacher at Beye School. From the flags and artifacts of nearly every country in his classroom, to the rapport he builds with his students—Patrick never ceases to impress me. He's a dedicated teacher who not only covers the standards but also emphasizes multiculturalism and diversity. Patrick shows his students every day the value of love and empathy in a functioning society. All the years Patrick has contributed to district 97 assisted in the cultivation of hundreds of open-minded, successful adults. Patrick McAndrew is a gifted instructor and an asset to Beye School and District 97.

### **Mandy vonBokern**

The amount that I learned from getting to know and work with Patrick ever since, has helped make me a better teacher and person. For this I am extremely grateful for. There is no way to quantify the powerful impact he has had not only on my teaching career but for all the lives that he has touched as well. Patrick is one of the reasons why I ended up staying to teach in District 97 since first observing his classroom a little over 12 years ago. I hope everyone at some point is lucky enough to have a "Patrick" in their life because it will make them or a child, a better person because of it.

### **Mariko Kaczowski**

I was a part of Mr. McAndrew's 5th grade class in the 2007-2008 school year. I was also involved in two of his plays in both 4th and 5th grade and on his Olympic team in 5th grade. I'm sure you have read many

letters so far detailing how extraordinary Mr. McAndrew is, and I would like to add a letter regarding my personal experience with him. When I was in 1st grade, I remember very vividly thinking to myself "I hope he is my teacher when I get to 5th grade". His personality came off as extremely cheerful and welcoming in the hallways of Beye School. Luckily, my wish was granted and I was a student of his during my last year before entering middle school. I remember him creating activities to be engaging and unique for us. He also had a chime he would tap whenever he needed us to quiet down and whenever he would tap it he would say "Act like a mime when you hear the chime". It was such a genius idea because whenever we heard the "ding" we would all pretend we were mimes and become silent instantly. Plus, we all thought it was hilarious! I also remember his classroom being decorated beautifully. There was always the smell of incense and pictures of Nepal and India. It was warm, inviting, and many people, including me, chose to eat lunch with him in his classroom a few days out of the week. I don't remember him ever being upset and I'm not quite sure how that is possible being the teacher of rambunctious 5th graders. He always had a patient and understanding aura about him which made me never feel afraid to ask him questions or confide in him. Mr. McAndrew always went out of his way to make his students feel special. For me, he attended one of my plays at Circle Theatre to cheer me on. It made me feel important because, of course, my teacher was visiting me outside of school! But also, it was a way to connect through theatre for our school play. I have stayed connected with him even to this point. A few years ago, he asked my mother and I if we could attend his class to discuss the Japanese incarceration after WWII. My grandma was born incarcerated and it was amazing to share her and my great grandparents' experience at Manzanar. He did not have to go out of his way to teach this history, as it is not written in our textbooks. However, Mr. McAndrew strives to give his students a full grasp on the world. He is the epitome of what Beye School represents. He teaches equality, forgiveness, and acceptance, all vital for students to become warm, loving individuals. I am positive that the students taught by Mr. McAndrew will change the world we live in to be a better place. Mr. McAndrew inspired me to follow a similar path as him. Just last year I spent a year in Japan teaching English to 3rd-8th graders. I graduated from college and studied TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). I plan to teach children whose families recently moved to America and have troubles speaking English. I can only hope that I become as influential as Mr. McAndrew someday. To let Mr. McAndrew go would be a great loss not only to the Beye community, but to all of his future students. I only hope that everyone in this world can come across a light as bright as Mr. McAndrew. Just seeing his smile will brighten your day! Please contact me if you have any questions.

### **Samina Hadi-Tabassum**

We are now a month into not having Mr. McAndrew teach our children, Salma and Yusef, at Beye School. It saddens me that we have an administration that is willing to ruin a man's career and all the years he has given to our community. Mr. McAndrew should be judged on his strong teaching performance, evident in his performance reviews. He should not be denied tenure, which seems egregious. I also want to question the relationship between the current principal, Jennifer Schemidt, and the HR Director, Gina Herrmann, who have known each other for over a decade. Does this sound nefarious to you? We have two white suburban women outside of Oak Park who are going against decency and at a time when we lack leadership at the top. Why are we undermining good teachers and what message is it sending to the other teachers in the district? What is propelling this populist attack? Do we have chaos-loving leaders in place now at the district? What ideology is driving this dangerous precedent? Please bring back Mr. McAndrew. Be good. Be rationale. We depend on the board to restore order and justice.

### **Sara Neuner**

I am writing in support of Patrick McAndrew as a teacher at Beye School. Our son had Mr. McAndrew during his 5th grade year at Beye (2018-19) and we were thrilled with how inspired our son was by him as a teacher. Mr. McAndrew's dedication to the students and to teaching, as well as his passion for

learning and for life were palpable. We loved that our son had such an amazing final year at Beye. We are concerned about Mr. McAndrew's future at Beye. Mr. McAndrew is a gem of a teacher.

**Patrick B. Markey**

I read the news piece about Mr. Patrick McAndrew at Beye School. It's hard to comment on something with little information. However, the optics of a former tenured and Golden Apple Award winner getting terminated over something like paid sick days IS REALLY BAD.

**Richard P. White**

I am writing in support of Patrick McAndrew. I have known Patrick since I was on the District 97 Board of Education from 1994 to 2002. I know he is a well-respected teacher and until recently as the teacher for my granddaughter Cole Daly. I am saddened when any good teacher leaves District 97 but even more so given what I know about the current circumstances I also have some familiarity with making hard decisions in support of education in Oak Park. I ran for the District 97 School Board in part because of an issue with a principal. I was on the Board that removed two principals, demolished two junior high buildings, and built middle schools. The trust of the teachers and parents is essential for a good school system. There is an erosion of that trust happening now. As a member of the Board I strove to do right thing. My board was also aware that being seen as doing the right thing by parents, teachers and the community was very important. If it is possible, please consider some remedy short of termination. Please get Patrick McAndrew back in the classroom where he and my granddaughter want him to be.

**Wendi Ralaingita**

I am writing this letter in support of Patrick McAndrew. I have known Patrick since he had my daughter as a 5th grade student, six years ago. We stayed in contact after that because of the great impact he had on her. I can honestly say that Patrick was one of the best teachers my daughter has ever had. He is a teacher who cares about and nurtures the whole child. Beyond helping my daughter to succeed in her academics, he encouraged her and supported her to develop her leadership skills, helped her to explore and strengthen her artistic talents, and acted as a mentor to her – someone she could go to when she was having any academic or emotional struggles. Beyond his talent and skill as a teacher, which would benefit any school lucky enough to have him, I know Patrick be a hard-working, dedicated, and honest professional. He is a man of integrity who always has his students' best interest in mind and works tirelessly to teach and inspire them.

**Eleanor Trenary**

I am writing to you in support of Mr. McAndrew and to ask you to reject his termination from the administration. I learned of this issue when I was scrolling Instagram this morning and saw someone who also went to Beye post Mr. Burke's op-ed with a plea for other Beye alums to speak up. That is the kind of lasting impact Mr. McAndrew had on students who were in his classroom 20 years ago. There are few teachers who I would rush to defend 20 years later but Mr. McAndrew's impact on my education and personal development will last much longer than that. He is everything Oak Park wants in its educators-- he models kindness and compassion, creativity, dedication to learning, and true intellectual curiosity. He taught me about how to be more myself, and love myself, while also extending that same kind of generosity to others who were different than me. My most vivid memory, however, was being in Mr. McAndrew's class during 9/11. I think back on the role he played that morning, experiencing a terrorist attack himself while being surrounded by children who were old enough to know something serious had happened but young enough to be confused about what "terrorist attack" meant. I remember us questioning "but planes crash, right? What's the big deal with this particular plane crashing?" and Mr. McAndrew explaining that sometimes adults do bad things, intentionally, on purpose. This wasn't an accident. I had a pretty privileged childhood, so this concept was brand new to me. I will never forget that he allowed all the time and space required for our questions, anxieties, fears, confusion--all of it. Please, I

ask you to consider the incredible value that Mr. McAndrew has brought to generations of Oak Parkers and Beye alums. He taught me to extend grace, generosity, and compassion to others. I hope you will show that to him in your decision.

### **Lourdes Nicholls**

I am writing about Patrick McAndrew. Patrick was my daughter Mariko's 5th Grade teacher from 2007 - 2008. Even though that sounds like a long time ago he has continued to be a shining star in our family because of his dedication to teaching, learning and his undeniable happy spirit. It is because of Patrick McAndrew that my daughter is now a teacher in Oak Park. He was her inspiration and driving force in opening her mind and life to teaching and helping others. As a parent I watched his ability to engage the classroom as well as the parents. In 2017 Patrick McAndrew was teaching at Hauser Junior High School and asked me and my daughter to present my family story (on Manzanar/The Japanese Incarceration during World War II) to his students. It was very apparent that the students respected him and loved him even though he had been at the school less than a year. On the day I visited the students were planning a goodbye party for him. In the last few years I have presented my family story to Patrick McAndrew's classes at Beye. Each year I have witnessed his honesty, work ethic and passion for his students. He is and will always be a dedicated teacher who deeply loves and cares about his students and families. District 97 is fortunate to have such an impactful, life changing teacher in their school district.

### **Kim Jackewicz**

I am writing in support of Mr. McAndrew at Beye School. I understand Mr. McAndrew's employment has been recommended to be terminated due to a very minor infraction regarding paid sick days. Mid-year termination is a severe punishment in a normal year, but in a pandemic year? I cannot believe that the district can't find another solution. In this year where you've claimed that emotional health and stability for our children is your first priority, I do not see how firing a beloved teacher accomplishes either of these things. It is not like there are a ton of wonderful teachers out there waiting to be hired. Cycling these kids through various subs for the rest of the year is a very poor solution to this problem and will cause them nothing but harm. Please, reconsider this decision.

### **Lisa Sorensen**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. I have had four children attend Beye, and Mr. McAndrew taught my eldest son in 2005. He was an enthusiastic, energetic educator who taught my son to think deep and ask questions. Two of my other children got to know him through the annual play, a huge highlight for all 4th and 5th graders at Beye. Mr. McAndrew motivate them and pushed them in ways I never thought possible. When my sons reminisce about teachers at Beye, Patrick McAndrew's name is one that ALWAYS comes up. Mr. McAndrew belongs at Beye; he is part of the fabric of that school community.

### **Judy Leary Scoville Compton**

As a former Beye school teacher, I had the pleasure of knowing Patrick McAndrew. He showed me great empathy when I lost a very close friend who died tragically. I knew then what a powerful influence he must have in his classroom. Empathy is a valuable asset especially with emerging teenagers.

### **Caroline Reinwald**

I am a former student of Mr. McAndrew's. I live in Milwaukee, WI. When I learned that he could be losing his job over a minor administrative infraction, I couldn't believe it. Mr. McAndrew is one of the most important teachers who helped shaped my young adult life. He and Ms. Fogg - who shared the floor and the classroom next door - were the ones who taught me how to be comfortable in my own skin, be myself, and be the best me I could be. Mr. McAndrew is the first person I think of when I think of learning multiplication tables, he's the first person I think of when I think of public speaking and he's the first person I think of when I imagine traveling the world. I'm an investigative reporter now for local TV news. A journalist. Something I never would have been - had I not had teachers like Mr. McAndrew

helping me grow my individuality, my self-esteem, my grit and my own drive to hold others accountable and give a voice to those in the community who need it most. Firing Mr. McAndrew over a minor infraction would not only reflect poorly on the values Oak Park and Beye School prides itself on, it would be a shameful disservice to every current and future Beye student. Please consider the value you place on an incredible education with invaluable educators. Listen to the voices of those supporting Mr. McAndrew.

### **Janice Roberts**

I write in response to an article from this week's issue of Wednesday Journal. I cannot imagine any reason my friend and former colleague, Patrick McAndrew, would be relieved of his teaching position at Beye School. I have known Patrick since the mid 1990's when we both taught at Beye. As I think of Patrick I immediately smile, knowing his passion for so many wonderful things in life. He has been a role model not just for his many students over the years but for the adults who've shared life with him. Patrick is a man full of compassion and love, quick to laugh and lighten any situation. His generosity of spirit and celebration of diversity have been pillars of his teaching, as important as his pedagogy and respect for the educational process. Please listen deeply to those who know Patrick and truly consider what's best for District 97.

### **Rachel Schmidt**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. Mr. McAndrew is an effervescent, engaging, and compassionate teacher. He is the kind of teacher you remember for the rest of your life. I know this because here I am, 20 years removed from his class, recalling his infectious love of the arts and the way he built my confidence in my math abilities. I am a teacher now and doing this job has only made me marvel more at teachers like Mr. McAndrew, who has such verve and care. He is irreplaceable. Losing Mr. McAndrew would be terrible for the students at Beye and the community as a whole. The idea that the district would inflict that kind of pain on this community and Mr. McAndrew is shameful. I implore you to make the right decision and allow Mr. McAndrew to teach his students again. They deserve the best and that is what he is.

### **Grady Roderweiss-O'Brien**

I am writing about my 5th grade teacher, Patrick McAndrew. As you are most likely aware of, he has recently not been present in the classroom. Now that we have a permanent substitute, things have smoothed out slightly, but not having a teacher that you are familiar with at the start of a new system of education is very difficult for me and my classmates. Mr. McAndrew was very unique, being a very interesting person, and also being a teacher in Nepal, being able to speak sign language, and most importantly, his wonderful personality. I'm sure a large number of my classmates will agree with what I am saying. It's not my liberty to ask you to tell me what is going on, but all I want is for you to consider this: 24 kids are waiting for their teacher to come back.

### **Annie Darley**

I'm a fourth grade teacher at Whittier. I have known Patrick McAndrew as a D97 colleague for over twenty years. In that time, I have known him to be an enthusiastic, dedicated, and hard-working staff member. I have participated in many D97 course offerings, workshops, and Institute Days and have been inspired on numerous occasions by his passion and dedication to the students in our community. Furthermore, he is the beloved fifth grade teacher and theater director of my own nieces and nephew while they were at Beye School. I place trust in the organization that values and believes in the character of its members.

### **Jean Walsh-Kallay**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. As a Beye School teacher, a long-time Oak Park resident, and as a parent of children who attended Beye School, I have had the privilege of seeing Mr. McAndrew

teach and interact with students, and each time the experience is inspiring. His passion for education and children is evident and at the center of his being. He strives to get to know the strengths inside each student and honors those talents while challenging them to grow, all while instilling a love of learning. Patrick inspires everyone to respect and celebrate the differences among all people. His hard work and dedication to his students is truly astounding. He also gives selflessly of his free time to guide students academically and to inspire a love of the arts which is often a way students learn to love school! Every student and colleague at Beye School learns and grows because they know Patrick McAndrew! He is an incredible asset to Beye and District 97.

### **Robyn Steele**

I was the administrative assistant at Beye School for 14 years. I was also a Beye School parent from 1998-2006. I was fortunate to work with Patrick McAndrew and always found him to be extremely professional. He is a very caring person and has always gone the extra mile for both staff members and students. Patrick is a fun and engaging teacher and his students truly love him. His multicultural and multidimensional approach to teaching fosters a love of learning in his students. They are always excited to go to school. Both of my sons were fortunate to have Patrick as their fifth grade teacher. To this day they both say that he was the best teacher they EVER had. That includes college and grad school. Mr. McAndrew is gem of a teacher in district 97 and Beye School.

### **Carrie Kovach and Jay Schulman**

We have second and fourth graders at Beye School so have not had the opportunity to have Patrick McAndrew as a teacher yet. Still, we feel compelled to support him and the Beye family by writing to ask you to allow him to keep his job. Teachers, students, parents and administrators have adapted to our new lives. Companies have transformed. Policies that worked prior to March 2020 need to be modified for the changing times. As we go to enforce policies, whether to a teacher or student, we shouldn't apply the pre-pandemic standard but the current reality. Teachers have been constantly adapting this past year to an ever changing work environment. We should be showing them flexibility and compromise not termination. What point are you making or goal are you achieving by losing a valued educator and further disrupting a classroom of students in their last year at Beye? As a board, you've faced many difficult decisions this year often weighing vastly different viewpoints from the community. This is your chance to represent and stand up for a community united behind supporting Patrick McAndrew in remaining a teacher at Beye School.

### **Dan Burke**

I am writing to make you aware of my serious concern with the proposed removal of Patrick McAndrew. I realize that in personnel matters there are always more facts than those that become public and that the Board is confronted with a difficult choice in such matters. I am hoping that the full palette of Patrick McAndrews' career will militate against a decision to remove and that if discipline is warranted that something from the Table of Penalties less severe than removal can be applied. You will have to look long and hard to find a parent or child who came into contact with Patrick McAndrew who does not consider him an elite teacher. If he is removed I feel confident in saying that there are long odds that whoever comes behind him will touch as many lives in a positive way in the course of their career that Patrick has in his. The gap that will be created in the Beye community will be a substantial one, and one that is hard to close. I hope that if discipline is warranted that a sanction less severe than removal can be applied.

### **Jaime & Jared Lewis**

We are writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew, our daughter's 5th grade teacher at Beye School. It's important for you to know that the quality of the student's education as they prep for Middle School has completely diminished in the time since he's been removed from the classroom. Their mental health has also been affected. Kids that used to love the classroom and engage freely now no longer want to go to



school. The amount of disruption that is being caused is simply unacceptable and without additional information, seems very much avoidable. Mr. McAndrews is kind, patient, smart and an overall positive influence on his students. His students adore and miss him, and desperately want to see him return to school. As parents, we want to see him return as well. We want our daughter's d97 education to be what it was prior to him leaving the classroom. She deserves someone who knows what's ahead in Middle School, prepping her for what's next and not a revolving door of substitutes that, while well intended, lack experience. The amount of disruption that has taken place this year has been a challenge for all. Finding a sense of normalcy felt all but impossible at the beginning of this school year. However, Mr. McAndrews was able to create strong connections with his students, provide them a sense of belonging and guide them through Remote Learning. Mr. McAndrews cares a great deal for his students and his students for him. The 2020/2021 school year has been a challenge for these kids and we simply cannot understand why the administration and the district would endorse an action to make it even harder. When we asked our daughter how she felt about the situation she was quick to point out that she felt as if she was the one being punished. Please enable some much needed stability for our 5th grade students by allowing Mr. McAndrews to return to his classroom.

### **Maggie and Dave Testore**

Thank you for your service to our community. We are writing in support of Mr. Patrick McAndrew. We know we speak for many current and former Beye parents when we express our deep respect and admiration for Mr. McAndrew's commitment and devotion to educating children. It is difficult to put into words the positive impact Mr. McAndrew has had on the children of Beye School and, specifically, our three children. Here's one example: Our oldest, Matthew, who recently graduated from college, was in Mr. McAndrew's class in 5th grade. Matthew struggled with organization and executive function skills and he was having trouble completing homework assignments. Mr. McAndrew offered to meet with Matthew every day after school, look at his assignment notebook to make sure Matthew had written everything down correctly and sift through his backpack to ensure that he had packed everything he needed to complete the day's homework assignments. They did this together. Every day. They partnered in creating new habits for success. After a while, Matthew had learned and adopted these new skills and they no longer needed to meet daily. Mr. McAndrew sees his students and meets them where they are to help them become their best selves. When Matthew graduated from OPRF, we told Mr. McAndrew that his efforts were integral in Matthew reaching his full academic potential. Another example of Mr. McAndrew's professionalism and character is his involvement with Drama Club at Beye School. Together with Ms. Karen Fogg, they have created and sustained a tradition at Beye that remains in the hearts of Beye students for decades. All 4th and 5th grade students are welcome and encouraged to participate in Drama Club. Somehow Mr. McAndrew and Ms. Fogg take a herd of cats, the vast majority of whom have never participated in anything like this, and help transform them into a cohesive, confident and competent cast and crew. Our three children all participated in Drama Club and their experiences are a highlight of their time at Beye School. We cannot convey how many endless hours and hours and hours Mr. McAndrew and Ms. Fogg dedicate to this month's long labor of love every year with joy and enthusiasm. If you've never attended a Beye School Drama Club performance, we highly recommend it but good luck getting a seat. We have shared just two examples of the countless gifts Mr. McAndrew brings to Beye School in an effort to help you understand why he is such a cherished and highly respected member of the Beye School family. We thought you would want to know.

### **Luke Kahn**

I am writing to express my full and unwavering support for Patrick McAndrew. The reasons given for his termination are insensitive and do not reflect the values of this man who gives his life every day for the benefit of other people and especially children in his life. They misinterpret his actions as self-serving when in fact he did what he did so he could be his best self and give that to his students at this time when they have never needed it more-- the Patrick I remember as my 5th grade teacher always organized his life around his students. Unless you have spoken with and heard from every family in Oak Park that

Patrick has positively affected in the last 30+ years, you cannot understand how grave a mistake this would be. Please listen to a community that values education over all things and work this out to keep this brilliant, kind and generous soul where he belongs. The importance of familiarity and continuity in early education cannot be overstated as I'm sure you are aware-- and it is needed now more than ever.

**Mike and Jen Kellogg**

We are writing to voice our support for Patrick McAndrew who is our son's 5th grade teacher. Our son has had an excellent experience with Mr. McAndrew this year. He was able to make a real connection with him despite working remotely via Zoom. Having Mr. McAndrew out of the classroom since January has made a difficult school year much more difficult. The recommendation to remove him from the classroom has made the education of the kids suffer and therefore was a poor administrative decision. Unless there was criminal activity or reason to believe the kids would be unsafe, it seems ridiculous that a teacher would be removed from the classroom while disciplinary action is being considered. In addition, the lack of communication regarding the situation and timeline for return further exacerbated the situation. Our son has been genuinely worried about his teacher. While there has been no official communication from the school, it is our understanding that the disciplinary action was taken due to an issue with paid sick days. In our opinion, this is not a significant enough issue to warrant termination of a well-respected teacher. Further, it is not a significant enough issue that he should have ever been removed from the classroom. Why are we letting the education of the children suffer over an administrative issue? We urge the school board to step-up and right this situation. Mr. McAndrew should be back in the classroom immediately.

**Quinn Testore**

I am writing in support of Mr. McAndrew and his fine character, professionalism and years of dedication to the students of Beye School. He was a great teacher to me during Drama Club, supporting me and pushing me to try harder.

**Linda Robinet**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. I am a fourth grade teacher at Beye and Mr. McAndrew teaches fifth grade. Many of my former students, who were currently learning with Mr. McAndrew have been so delighted to have him as their teacher. Those students speak about Mr. McAndrew's remarkable enthusiasm and energy. They talk on the playground about his creativity and the things they have learned. I ask many questions about their favorite parts of fifth grade. The overwhelming answer is their love for their teacher. I have taught at Beye for over twenty years. I have seen teachers come and go. I have always been so inspired by Mr. McAndrew's passion for his "calling". Mr. McAndrew embodies what it means to be an educator. He is constantly striving to support and motif his students to be their very best. Mr. McAndrew is a profound teacher and he changes the lives of his students. He isn't just teaching: he develops a love for knowledge and understanding; he fosters work ethics that resonate for life; he creates a community of empathetic, caring humans; and I am honored to be his coworker and friend.

**Lindsay Smith**

I have known Patrick McAndrew for three years as a colleague at Beye School. In that time I've seen the kind of person and teacher that he is. Patrick is the kind of teacher who takes the time to build trusting relationships, not only with his students, but my students too. Patrick is the kind of teacher who I go to talk about curriculum and modifications for students - his experience and expertise make him one of my most trusted colleagues. Patrick is the kind of teacher who gives his time and energy to ensure that students have access to a quality drama club and film class after school. Patrick is the kind of teacher who asks critical questions and seeks to clarify directives from administration. Then Patrick is ready to implement them, even when other teachers may be resistant. He is a team player and does what is right for the school community. Patrick McAndrews is the kind of teacher we need more of. Our district has

prided itself on the moves we've made to be more restorative. We've talked about self-care, prioritizing health and wellness and giving ourselves grace due to the stress and trauma all around us. Why, in this moment, would this district want to cause further trauma to this person, his students, their families and our Beye School community? Please understand what a valuable part of our school community Patrick is. Please build bridges to bring him back to our school community. His students need him. We need him.

### **Matthew Testore**

I am writing in support of Mr. McAndrew and his character, professionalism and years of dedication to the students of Beye School. I joined the Beye school community as a fifth grader. My family had just moved to Oak Park and I entered my first year at Beye without having met any kids my age. My first day of school Mr. McAndrew assigned another student to stick by my side for the first week or so of school to show me the ropes. This fellow student ended up becoming one of my best friends and after a week I felt like I had been at Beye for years. He also encouraged me to join the theater program at Beye and his passion and energy inspired me to explore something I never would have considered otherwise. As a shy kid something as daunting as acting was impossible without his encouragement. I went on to join CAST at Julian after finding I immensely enjoyed acting. Mr. McAndrew is an amazing person and someone who was born to teach. Beye would be a much drearier place without him.

### **Brendan Burke**

I am a Beye alum. Patrick McAndrew was a formative teacher in my youth and opened my mind to global consciousness and a love of learning. His infectious enthusiasm for his subject matter and for world exploration made me want to engage with school, encouraging me to be an independent learner that has been able to attend an elite liberal arts college and work for global companies abroad. The stories and decorations from his trips to Nepal inspired me to visit the subcontinent and study abroad in Bangladesh. Any experiences he gained there can be passed onto his students to open their minds as well. I urge you to reconsider removal as this is the type of teacher we need for young minds in today's global society.

### **Denise D. Turcotte**

My husband and I have lived in Oak Park, in the Beye School District, for the past five years. Our neighbors with elementary school children have made many positive comments about the teachers and administration at Beye School. We have supported school board referendums when they are on the ballot at the recommendation of the same parents who are attending the Board meeting tonight, March 8th. But now we see long articles in the Oak Park newspaper about a quarrel that has festered to the point that people are choosing sides, the District #97 School Board against an individual teacher. It's hard for us to understand how well-educated people of good will could let this situation devolve into such a personal controversy. While we do not know the specific details of this disagreement, nor should we, since personnel discussions should not be discussed in public. But there are enough negative comments in the newspaper articles regarding Mr. McAndrew that I feel he is being portrayed as the villain in this piece. I urge you to step back and see how this difference of opinion has affected teachers, parents, children and administration in the Beye School community. During this difficult year dealing with a pandemic, school closings, economic downturn and virtual classrooms can't we try to demonstrate some negotiating skills to resolve the difference of opinion that has unsettled this community? Let's employ some understanding and compassion so that the children in the 5th grade at Beye School can return to the classroom to the undisputed teaching skills of Mr. Patrick McAndrew. Thank you for the courtesy of listening to my opinion.

## **SPECIAL REPORTS**

### **BACK TO SCHOOL UPDATE**

Jeanne Keane explained that the classroom spacing has been analyzed and desks have been left six feet apart as much as possible, and there are no classrooms where the desks are less than four feet apart.

Amanda Siegfried reported that the Tele-Town Hall had 1,500 people in attendance. She explained that it was a live conference call that lasted only 15 minutes. Everyone in the district was called and invited to participate, The Tele-Town Hall was designed as a quick update using a method that had not been used before. She noted that the district will continue to try new ways to reach the community.

Eboney Lofton updated the board on the recent focus group directed at families of color. The event was held on March 4, 2021. Participants were polled, and their responses indicated that they believe that adequate safety practices are in place for onsite learning, and they indicated that additional connections are needed. Parents requested time to reflect on decisions before the decisions are implemented. The next step is to continue gathering feedback and inform everyone about overall strategies.

Jim Hackett reported that Northshore PCR testing is being offered to staff. Although the service is not being rapidly accessed by staff, he has not received any complaints about the results. He took the test himself, and received his results in just over 24 hours, which is well within the results window. Hackett suggested using Northshore for student testing and the greater community.

Regarding travel, Hackett reported that the district is following the Chicago travel guidelines. He reminded everyone that states can change their safety level during their travels, so people will need to check during travel to make sure they are in compliance. He reminded everyone to continue masking and social distancing. He encouraged parents to make sure that their children have everything they will need at home prior to spring break just in case they need to quarantine after traveling. To summarize, Hackett explained that if someone travels to an orange state, the district would expect them to comply by quarantining for 10 days or test negative 72 hours after travel.

Dr. Vishnu Chundi, the Infectious Disease Specialist in Oak Park joined the meeting. He shared Dr. Daniel Johnson's recommendation which advocates for in person learning at three feet for students under the age of 11 years old. He reported that there have only been 247 deaths of children from COVID-19.

Dr. Chundi shared an example of a school district in Wisconsin. The positivity rate at the time was at 41 percent. The schools were open full-time and there were zero staff members who became infected. He suggested that the schools were the safest places to be at that time.

He explained that having primary schools open does not lead to exposure in the community. Exposure that was spread in Wisconsin was due to mitigations not being followed. He explained that if you wear a mask you will not transmit the virus.

Dr. Chundi indicated that closing the schools is a problem. Many children cannot effectively learn, grow, engage, socialize, eat healthy food or get support until the school reopen. Children staying home may experience depression and isolation, and loss of learning.

He shared that many countries and states are recognizing the three foot distancing, and explained that just opening one window in the classroom makes a significant difference.

Dr. Kelley announced that she just received the revised guidance from IDPH that indicate that classrooms can go down to three feet separation. Dr. Chundi explained that the guidelines will probably change once everyone has been vaccinated because the vaccines will also help to prevent transmission of the virus. He noted that lunches, switching classes and bathrooms are still an issue because of the limited space. He offered to share data related to students in the 11-14 age bracket at a later time. Dr. Chundi told the board that schools can be run safely, even with the variants being present within the community. He suggested that students with usual learning disabilities should be treated like every other child.

Concern was expressed about children sharing playground equipment. Dr. Chundi explained that the COVID-19 virus is not transmitted via touch, it is by droplets and airborne.

It was reported that the district's team will be meeting with Dr. Daniel Johnson on March 16 and will update the board after that meeting.

Interest was expressed in knowing if a child would be allowed to switch to remote learning after spring break even if they did not travel to protect themselves and their families. It was recommended that each family discuss their concerns with their teacher and principal.

#### TECHNOLOGY PLAN UPDATE

Michael Arensdorff celebrated the success of the technology plan and recognized those who were involved in the process. He shared the history of technology in the district since 2007 to present noting that financial stewardship is always part of the decision making process.

Arensdorff shared the 2021-2024 technology recommendation noting that the \$2,141,343 plan would only cost the district about \$450,134 because of the savings that his department were able to identify. He noted that the cost is dependent on the middle school and staff device refresh, and will include professional learning, learning walks, and the fiber arrangement with the Village.

This item will return to the board for action on March 23, 2021.

Board comments included appreciation for all that has been done in this area, noting that the district's technology has made remote learning possible.

#### ACTION ITEMS

ACTION ITEMS

#### **4.1.1 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE FEBRUARY 23, 2021 BOARD MEETING**

Kim moved, seconded by Kearney that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the minutes from the February 23, 2021 board meeting as presented.

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Spurlock, Breymaier, Moore, Broy, and Liebl

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion passed.

#### **4.2 APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA**

Kim moved, seconded by Breymaier, that the Board of Education, District 97, accept the consent agenda as presented.

4.2.1 Bill List

4.2.2 Personnel

Ayes: Kim, Breymaier, Spurlock, Moore, Liebl, Broy, and Kearney

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion passed.

**4.3.1 APPROVAL OF SERVICE AGREEMENT WITH SAFEGUARD**

Spurlock moved, seconded by Kearney, that the Board of Education of Oak Park District 97 approve the Services Agreement with SAFEGUARD SURVEILLANCE, LLC. from March 15, 2021 through June 4, 2021 at a cost of \$58,740.00.

Ayes: Spurlock, Kearney, Breymaier, Broy, Kim, Moore, and Liebl  
Nays: None  
Absent: None  
Motion passed.

**ADMINISTRATIVE ITEM**

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

**RENEWAL OF THE FOOD SERVICE IGA**

Rob Grossi explained that the food service IGA with the high school is being presented at no additional cost. The one year extension will be presented to the board for action on March 23, 2021.

It was noted that the Food Allergy committee does not typically review the agreement with the high school, but they do review some of the menu items. A board member asked if the committee could review the IGA in the future.

**APPROVAL OF THE BOILER BIDS**

Jeanne Keane reported that the two boilers at Lincoln School were installed in the late 1990s or early 2000s, and have developed leaks. She recommended that the boilers be replaced as soon as possible to avoid an emergency situation. Bids have been received for this need. The bids have been reviewed by FAC and the committee recommends accepting the bid from the lowest bidder. References have been checked. This item will return to the board for action on March 23, 2021.

**BOARD ASSIGNMENTS**

BOARD ASSIGNMENTS

**STANDING BOARD COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORT FOLLOW UP (as needed – FAC, FORC, CCE and CLAIM)**

**COMMITTEE FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION, INTERVENTION, AND MONITORING (CLAIM)**

It was reported that the data bill has been assigned the number SB2434. Senator Harmon will be sponsoring the bill.

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL LIAISON REPORT FOLLOW UP (as needed – IGOV, PTO council, CEC, OPEF, and Self-Evaluation)**

**OAK PARK EDUCATION FOUNDATION (OPEF)**

It was reported that the foundation is creating a sub-committee on safety. Member Spurlock will participate on this committee. Base Camp registration will be opening soon. It was noted that the Park District has not opened registration for anything yet.

**PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATIONS (PTOC)**

The PTOC met recently and discussed the superintendent transition and trimester 3.

**CLOSING ITEMS**

**AGENDA MAINTENANCE**

The draft agenda for the March 23, 2021 meeting was reviewed.

CLOSING ITEMS

**ADJOURNMENT**

Breymaier moved, seconded by Kearney that the meeting be adjourned. There being no further business to conduct, President Broy declared the meeting adjourned at 9:52 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

\_\_\_\_\_  
Board President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Board Secretary