

April 19, 2020

Dear Board of Education,

The grade 5 team is concerned about the effect that eliminating the school social worker position will have on our students. As a school system, we are dedicated to servicing all of our students' needs. These needs are not simply educational. Emotional needs, social needs, and advising parents during stressful times are essential to the development of our students. Beecher's school counseling team has been building communication systems and supports for teachers and parents for years. Pulling away one of these supports impacts parents, teachers, and students at a time when our students need emotional support.

Mrs. DeManche has developed and maintained lasting relationships with Beecher students and their families as she services them year after year. She has built a positive rapport with parents and classroom teachers who look to her for guidance and depend on her support. Fifth grade teachers have seen the direct result of her hard work as our students become more confident and responsive to learning. Even during this crisis, Mrs. DeManche has reached out to fifth grade students through Google Classroom and has participated in parent conferences with teachers. In order to ensure that her students know that they can still get the support they need, she has continued to provide students with activities and a means to communicate with her. She has continued to support the staff as well by providing online resources to support our emotional well-being during this difficult time. Even before this crisis, she has participated in parent conferences in order to make sure parents understand the types of support their children and their families will need and how they can access them so their children can succeed at Beecher Road School and beyond.

In the original budget, a part time social worker was being replaced by a full time school psychologist. This change seems to be available for one main purpose: to alleviate testing caseloads in special education. Testing students is not the same as servicing all students' needs. Having a full time social worker working hand in hand with our school psychologist would allow them to balance their time so both regular education students and special education students are given the small group support necessary to have the emotional and social growth they need to thrive in the classroom. Now that the position has been reduced to a part time school psychologist, replacing Mrs. DeManche feels even more short sighted. Mrs. DeManch already has a strong rapport with students, parents, and faculty at the school. She will be able to begin working with students right away when the doors of Beecher Road School open again having already earned the trust of students who will desperately need a familiar face.

Mrs. DeManche is willing to continue working with our population and is capable of extending her learning and availability to meet the needs of the community. If the eventual goal of the school is to hire a full time person, why wouldn't we invest in someone who already knows our students and community? Kristen is capable of full time status, has the trust of the staff and students at Beecher Road, and already has developed communication systems and strategies to support everyone in the Beecher Community. Beecher Road School will be worse without her.

We are requesting that the Board of Education will reconsider this decision to eliminate any positions, especially the position of school social worker.

Sincerely, Grade 5 Teachers