

**Official Minutes of the  
Oak Park Board of Education District 97  
260 Madison Street, Oak Park  
March 19, 2021 Special Meeting**

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

Vice President Kim called the meeting to order at 7:47 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Broy, Liebl, Spurlock, Kearney, Kim, Breymaier, and Moore  
Absent: None  
Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Carol Kelley, Director of Communications Amanda Siegfried, Senior Director of Human Resources Gina Herrmann, and Board Secretary Sheryl Marinier.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Moore moved, seconded by Breymaier 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 8:00 a.m.

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

OPEN SESSION

**OPEN SESSION**

Spurlock motioned that the board move into Open Session at 9:42 a.m. The motion was seconded by Breymaier. All members of the Board were in agreement. The Board reconvened in Open Session at 9:42 a.m.

Vice President Kim apologized to the community for the delay and explained that the board was deliberating on the item they need to address this morning and wanted to give the topic as much time as was needed. She reported that, because of the time, the board would take action on the item before them before the public comments are read aloud for 20 minutes. She assured the public that all public comments that were received prior to the start of the meeting would be included in the meeting minutes.

**ACTION ITEMS**

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**2.1.1 ACTION ON SUSPENSION OF A NON-TENURED TEACHER**

Breymaier moved, seconded by Spurlock that the Board of Education, District 97, recommend the suspension without pay for Patrick McAndrew as a non-tenured teacher for a number of days determined by the superintendent.

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

Absent: None  
Motion passed.

Member Liebl expressed that she found the recommendation and process to lack compassion, understanding, reasonableness, and humanity, and for that reason voted against the decision.

Members Spurlock and Kearney left the meeting at 9:48 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

President Broy and Vice President Kim read the following statements aloud.

#### **Jenny A. Austin**

I'm extremely grateful that we are maintaining the five-days a week hybrid plan for the beginning of the Trimester 3 for the elementary students. But other school districts are moving to full days in person in the next week, after spring break, or have done so already. What plans does D97 have to move to full days in person as soon as possible?

Our middle school hybrid plan remains mediocre and our middle school kids deserve more in-person time and a better option than is currently being offered. What are the plans to offer more in-person instruction time for the middle school students?

#### **Wendy Roderweiss**

I am a parent of one of Patrick McAndrew's students at Beye School. I know you are getting a lot of letters, so I will keep this brief. Please vote against terminating Patrick. Our kids need him, the school needs him; the district needs him. He is a rare and special teacher and it would be an immeasurable loss to our community if he were fired. I don't know what his infractions are, but unless it is unsafe for him to be in the classroom, he should be there. We are in the middle of a pandemic, there has to be special considerations for both Patrick and our children who NEED him.

I know many of you have children. Imagine putting your children in the most tumultuous year of their lives, finally giving them some stability, joy and hope, and then taking it away because of an administrative infraction. Does that seem right? Does that seem fair? To anyone? Please vote against the recommendation of termination. In a time in our history where we feel utterly powerless, you actually have some. Please use it to save this year for our kids. This is their last year at Beye, please make it memorable for a good reason, not a bad one. Make this the year where a group of people voted with their consciences instead of the rule book.

#### **James (and Stacy) Pfluecke**

It has come to my attention that D97 is considering terminating Mr. McAndrew from Beye School over administrative matters. I would hope, during the pandemic that has put incredible stress on our families, that the District would allow his students to have their teacher for the whole of the year. If the District feels he must be disciplined, certainly that can be done after the conclusion of the academic year. Information has

been hard to come by and from what I have heard he only missed one day of instruction. If that is true than this certainly seems severe. I have several friends with children in his class and they are furious with the lock of information and the current lack of him being in the classroom.

My oldest child had a different teacher for 5th grade but Mr. McAndrew was part of the teaching team, part of the school play, and ran a film series for fifth graders once a month in the evening, and we appreciate all he brings to the Beye School community.

In sum, I hope you will consider returning him to the classroom and, if you believe you must, seeking appropriate disciplinary action in the summer that takes into consideration how hard this has been for all of us, including and especially classroom teachers with families of their own.

### **Gale Zemel**

I have been involved in Beye School for decades. Not only did my three children attend, but I spent years volunteering in lots of classrooms. Some of those years were working with Mr. Patrick McAndrew in the behavioral disorder classroom. This was not an easy class. Every student, every day, presented multiple challenges. Watching Mr. McAndrew deal with each situation with such love and respect, yet with a firm hand, was inspiring to me as a fellow career teacher. The curriculum was not "dumbed-down" in any way because Mr. McAndrew believes in the potential of every student. One set of lessons took us to the Holocaust Museum in Skokie; it was a moving experience for everyone, especially students who are sometimes bullied or become bullies. Mr. McAndrew always finds ways to reach his students both intellectually and emotionally. I continued to volunteer with Mr. McAndrew after he left the behavioral disorder class.

I don't believe you can find a teacher with more dedication, integrity, and compassion to the profession. Because I live close to the school, I always know students in his class. It is an understatement to say that the students feel confused, bewildered, and hurt to not have their teacher for all these weeks.

Beye School has always been better than this -- the community and teachers are anxious and deserve more transparency. What does the school board believe would merit this disruptive disciplinary action?

I, and many others, want Mr. McAndrew to resume his duties as a 5th grade Beye School teacher immediately, and based on his many years of excellent service to his students and their families, we would also expect his contract to be renewed.

### **Abigail Turnock**

Firing Mr. McAndrew would be a huge mistake. It would take away from our learning, and you would have to face an angry mob of fifth graders. Please take this to mind.

### **Dr. Eulàlia Abril**

I am a mother of two D97 students.

I am writing on behalf of our beloved Beye teacher 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 see him next year for our younger Bobcat. Patrick McAndrew is a huge asset for Beye and our District and was a Golden Apple finalist.

It seems like he has been disciplined unreasonably hard for his alleged offense.

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. What are the calls for compassion and grace when the administration holds those against teachers?

Please, reconsider the harsh punishment toward Mr. McAndrews.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

**Tanya Fisher**

I am the parent of a Beye School third-grader and soon-to-be kindergartener. I am writing in strong support of a one-of-a-kind teacher, Patrick McAndrews. Before my older child started as a kindergartener at Beye, I heard from parents about how Mr. McAndrews is truly passionate about teaching and about how he inspires students to make meaningful connections to the world around them, that he's especially gifted in helping students navigate and communicate the emerging complex emotions that arise in tweens, and that he is the leader of our school's fantastic theater program. Parents shared how he helped their child process the death of a parent and serious illness and helped them find their own voices. I heard from teachers that he's an incredible mentor and friend and is committed to social justice. Before I even had a face to put with his name, I knew that Mr. McAndrew was an **irreplaceable** part of the Beye School community.

Despite only being in third grade, my son knows and talks about Mr. McAndrew as a beloved member of his school community and hopes to have him as a teacher. (My son thinks he may want to be a teacher himself someday and loves having male teacher.) I obviously don't know anything about the confidential personnel issues, but baring something downright dangerous, I strongly urge you to reinstate Mr. McAndrews as a Beye School teacher immediately. All our students have lost so much over the past year to things that were outside of our control. It seems within our control to enable his fifth-grade students to get back the teacher who knows and loves them. This will help ensure his 5th graders have some consistency during this tumultuous year and our entire school community continues to benefit from Mr. McAndrew sharing his remarkable passion, wisdom, and mentorship with us. Teachers like Mr. McAndrews are the heart of our community. Thank you very much for your consideration.

**Patrick Markey**

I can't comprehend how someone can be terminated for misuse of sick days. Quality teachers are hard to come by. An incident like this one can cause quality teachers to leave Beye which has already slipped in the school ratings used by most homebuyers (Great schools, Schooldigger, etc.

**Ellen Efron Pimentel****Eligio 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.

**Kelly Simkowski**

I am the parent to a child who is currently enrolled at Beye School in Patrick McAndrew's classroom.

My son Jude is 11 and he has Down syndrome. He has been at Beye School since kindergarten and has typically been assigned a mainstream classroom teacher and a special ed classroom teacher. Jude is the first child with Down syndrome to go through Beye School in at least 15 years. When I received the email last fall indicating that Jude would be in class with Mr. McAndrew, I felt like we had won the lottery!

I knew from his reputation that Patrick McAndrew was an amazing teacher, the kind you don't encounter very often. I knew he had the ability and desire to build a community and when you are a child with Down syndrome, there is nothing more important than community. In spite of the constraints of e-learning, there was immediate community! Jude loved saying "good morning" to his teacher and friends every day!

I knew Patrick McAndrew had been a special ed teacher in the past. Not that many teachers have that added experience which can make or break a special needs child's experience in the classroom. This additional experience made Patrick aware that he needed to slow down his speech or repeat himself when talking to Jude. This made Jude confident in sharing with his class via Zoom and also in speaking with Mr. McAndrew.

I knew Patrick McAndrew loved theater and drama and singing and dancing and being silly. I knew Patrick McAndrew had won a Golden Apple Award. I knew that Patrick McAndrew left Beye School at one time to move to Nepal where he started a family. I knew he worked very hard to eventually make it back to Beye School because he loved

the community of children he could teach there and the friendships he had made many years before. These are all parts of what makes Patrick McAndrew such an amazing teacher and also an amazing person.

We need Patrick McAndrew back in the classroom. We need him to help continue to guide our children through their last year of grade school. We need Patrick to help instill the confidence our children will need to move on to middle school. We need Patrick to continue with the community that he helped to build during the pandemic. We need Patrick and our children need Patrick!

Please vote "no" to the recommended termination of Patrick McAndrew and bring him back to his class!

### **Susan Beach**

I am a former administrative assistant at Beye School. My two children attended Beye and my three grandchildren attend currently. I was so happy to have them part of the wonderful Beye family. My 5th grade granddaughter is a member of Mr. McAndrew's class.

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 unreasonably 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. Thank you for your time and consideration.

### **Kim Jackewicz**

I am a Beye parent. I am writing to you today in support of Mr. Patrick McAndrew, a Beye teacher who I understand is in danger of being terminated over a very minor infraction involving sick days.

Patrick is a remarkable teacher whose reputation has long preceded him. His dedication to the children is obvious, and his teaching skills resulted in his winning a Golden Apple. He has also been a leader at Beye in advocating for and adopting anti-racist teachings into his work. That the district is looking to terminate a highly regarded, skilled teacher during a pandemic just defies logic for several reasons.

1. The children in his class have already had so much uncertainty and stress this year. It does not serve them to remove their teacher more than halfway through the year. They are already well entrenched with him and his teaching, and to remove him will cause nothing but harm to a group of kids who have already lost so much this year.

2. Mid-year firing is a very, very harsh consequence for a minor infraction. In most industries, employers are doing away with the antiquated notion of sick time. Employees need time off for a variety of things, and I'm not sure why the district is willing to go to the mats over such an antiquated practice.

3. As we are all very aware, there are not ton of qualified, equally skilled teachers out there waiting to take this job. D97 parents are aware of the challenges the district has faced around subs and staffing this year. It makes no sense to exacerbate that issue over a minor infraction. Treating teachers this way is a huge morale downer in an already troubling year for teachers. If we want district 97 to remain a district where talented, sought after teachers want to work, we need to treat our teachers like the talented, sought after employees that they are.

4. In a district that is emphasizing restorative justice to its students and to the community at large, how is this action in keeping with that principle? It seems as if this would be a great example to show students restorative justice in action. What are these kids going to learn from this example? The punishment being proposed here in no way fits the crime. That isn't a lesson I would want kids to learn.

I hope the board will take all of this to heart and make the right decision, which is keeping Mr. McAndrew in the classroom with these kids where he belongs.

### **Jennifer Dunk**

I am writing in regards to one of my 5th grader's favorite teachers, Patrick McAndrew.

Mr. McAndrew has been a bright spot during this very difficult period of remote learning, always putting his heart and soul into teaching. 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.

Mr. McAndrew takes the time and makes the effort to connect with his students of all backgrounds which makes him extremely 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. They have been confused and saddened by his absence, discussing it amongst themselves, and asking about him daily.

Please take this testimonial into consideration as the future of Mr. McAndrew's job is decided. Our family feels it would be a great disservice to terminate him. He is of great

value to Oak Park students and families.

### **Jennifer Hall**

We wanted to add our voices to the list of students and parents who have been touched by Mr. McAndrew over the years. Our current sixth grader, Torie Hall, had Mr. McAndrew for her fifth grade experience when Covid broke out in the spring. He was an incredibly engaged and passionate teacher who seemed to find the best in each and every student. He fostered a love of learning - and somehow managed to make the Covid-tainted end of elementary school still meaningful.

He is a truly impactful educator. I hate to think that the Beye School and scores of children to come could lose the opportunity to learn from him.

### **Denise D. Turcotte**

This letter follows an earlier letter sent for public comment prior to the scheduled Board meeting Tuesday, March 9<sup>th</sup>. We learned the following day that the item regarding Mr. Patrick McAndrew's employment had been pulled from the agenda to be rescheduled at a future meeting. This was announced at the 3/9/21 meeting.

Now we learn, with less than two days' notice, that a meeting to discuss only Mr. McAndrew's employment has been scheduled this Friday morning, not on the usual Board meeting day and time. Was any attempt made to notify people who sent letters to the Board to be read at the 3/9/21 meeting? I received no such notice.

It is my understanding that most parents of current Beye students, and parents of students who previously had Mr. McAndrew as a teacher, support finding a solution to this disciplinary problem that doesn't result in termination.

Because personnel matters are discussed by a Board committee and communicated to the Board in executive session, we are surprised to see articles in the local newspaper that Mr. McAndrew's fate has already been sealed. It seems he is to be terminated period, full stop. Has Mr. McAndrew been represented by someone from the teacher's union? Does he have a lawyer representing him? How will the District deal with the cost and negative publicity if a lawsuit citing unfair labor practice is brought against them.

Citizens of Oak Park put a great deal of trust and confidence in their elected officials and expect them to deal with serious problems – budgets, curriculum as well as maintaining an excellent teaching staff. It is my opinion that the controversy over Mr. McAndrew's employment is bad for morale and will be detrimental to students for the remainder of the school year.

### **Carrie Cotter**

I am writing in support of Patrick McAndrew and in utter dismay at how this matter has been handled. It is true that we don't know all of the facts, but we have been assured by several authorities in this matter that there's "nothing to worry about" as the matter relates to students and "it's just an HR matter." If that is the case, then I am having a hard time understanding why paid administrative leave which necessarily results in the paying of two teachers and also leaves a classroom full of kids in limbo seemed like the



right call. At this point, I just feel that we are screaming into the wind - and have been since February 1. That's 44 days as of this writing. My daughter is in Mr. McAndrew's class and those 44 days mattered to her. Having stability heading into hybrid mattered to her. At this point, it STILL matters to her. After multiple subs (one who instructed the kids to pull their masks down to speak . . . ), the current substitute is doing a great job; however, she is not who the kids identify as their teacher which necessarily results in a diminishment of learning in the classroom - made even worse by the weekly notes indicating "when Mr. McAndrew returns".

IF this is just an HR matter, then it was disastrously handled and negatively impacted a group of kids who didn't deserve to have their school year disrupted both by forces that couldn't be avoided AND by those that could have been. IF this is just an HR matter, then consequences that did not directly impact the kids should have been prioritized - there are myriad options. IF this is just an HR matter, then how is it that the option most detrimental to the students is the one that we've landed on? IF this is just an HR matter, then why couldn't it have been decided on March 9 rather than add ANOTHER 10 days of delay and uncertainty to the kids in Mr. McAndrew's classroom (in fact - this question applies to all scenarios - how is it possible that it was allowed to slip for an additional 10 days?)? My understanding is that this discipline being imposed on Mr. McAndrew is in relation to his trip to Nepal. I understand that there were likely many valid concerns about that travel and, it definitely didn't unfold the way he had intended it to - on a school break - for reasons beyond his control. And while I supported it, I am also aware that it was not supported by every parent of kids in his classroom. But I would ask every person involved in this matter who is a parent - what would you have done if your kid needed you? Would you move heaven and earth to help your child? And when your child is hurting, is that taxing on your own wellbeing? Have you ever taken a sick day to help your kid? Or to spend time with someone who matters to you? I sure have. Mr. McAndrew's family does not look like mine or many of those in Oak Park. But that is one of the things that we value about our community. In the midst of a pandemic that has been hard for so many in so many ways, I am shocked and saddened that we cannot find a way to understand and work with a member of our community in a unique situation.

We ask the kids to be peace makers and problem solvers. I am asking that the adults in this matter live up to the same standard. I would ask that the kids in Mr. McAndrew's class be prioritized in Friday's decision and that he be returned to his classroom.

Due to time constraints, and in accordance with board policy, the following comments were not read aloud during the meeting.

### **Adam Hirsch**

I am writing this public comment in support of Mr. McAndrew, Beye teacher. I have been a Beye parent for the past 7 years. I am writing to ask this Board not to make a mistake.

This past year has sucked. This past school year has been a rolling nightmare for administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Each person's challenges have been

unique, and we still do not know the lasting effects of a year-plus of remote learning. It feels like no one has had much control over anything for quite some time. But the decision facing the Board this morning is different. The choice and the consequences are entirely within your control. You can choose to help a traumatized community heal, to help a distinctive neighborhood school retain its high character, to give parents, teachers, and students who have suffered apart and alone for more than a year a moment of grace and hope.

I, like every other commentator, am writing with imperfect information. I do not know the nature of Mr. McAndrew's alleged transgressions, or whether termination is even within the ballpark of being an appropriate choice. What I do know is this: Beye school is an exceptional place, and Mr. McAndrew is an indispensable part of it. He opens students' eyes to the world beyond our immediate community, and to stories and values from around the world. His experience and his relationships with his students are irreplaceable.

If the facts are at all uncertain, or if this Board feels like it has any discretion at all in its decision, I implore you to allow him to return to his classroom. Firing him, this year of all years, rips apart a fabric that is already tattered and worn. Each morning Beye students are told over the loudspeaker to be "peacemakers," to find a way to treat each other with kindness and empathy, and to let their senses of curiosity and justice guide them. If this Board heeds these directives, its choice is clear.

### **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.

### **Rob Latham**

My daughter had Mr. McAndrew for fifth grade last year.

A year ago, when we all went home "for a week or so" teachers and students had to come up with a new way of schooling in a matter of days. Mr. McAndrew met this unprecedented challenge.

While I worked from home, I could overhear Mr. McAndrew's morning and afternoon check-ins and lessons. His warmth and affection for the students came through clearly. He engaged the class, prodding when needed, cheering when warranted.

In this disaster of a pandemic that has disrupted two school years, Beye's 5th graders have always been able to count on Mr. McAndrew. His constant devotion to Beye

School and his classrooms should count for something. Indeed, it should count for everything.

**Kaitlyn Hwang**

Hello. My daughter, Audrey Latham, was Mr. McAndrew's student last school year. He helped her immensely with her education during the beginning of COVID. 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.

I am sure Mr. McAndrew is an integral part of his current 5th grade students lives.

I do not know what happened but I do ask you to think what firing Mr. McAndrew will achieve. Will the Oak Park community be better for it? I don't know why the board is considering his termination. As we continue to live through the pandemic, I am sure everyone hearing this letter has made many mistakes and we have not been our very best version of ourselves. But someone has forgiven us. It may be our kids, our employers, or our friends or our family.

Consider who we are punishing by removing Mr. McAndrew. Will his current students be better? Will the community be better? We are all doing the best we can.

**Cassandra Miller**

I am a parent of two children currently attending Beye elementary (a second grader and fifth grader).

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 unreasonably hard for something that is NOT related to students' safety, unprofessionalism with students or parents, or harassment, abuse, or neglect of any kind. The students are the ones suffering as a result of this harsh response. It is hard to reconcile D97's message of compassion and understanding with this type of decision. Our children are confused and I personally cannot explain the District's decision to remove him and possible recommend him for termination in the mid-school year in the middle of a pandemic. Please, think of our children, our Beye community and the parents when you vote on this matter. It is of grave concern.

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. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Deborah S. Levine**

Thank you for your service on the board. I am the parent of a Beye School 5th grader in Mr. McAndrew's class. I am writing again, to urge you to vote AGAINST the recommendation of HR to terminate Mr. McAndrew at the special board meeting on Friday, March 19. And I ask that you read my comments for the public record. Here is why:

- The district should be working to hire and retain excellent teachers. Mr. McAndrew is an excellent teacher. A Golden Apple Award winner, he earned tenure during his first time working with the district and then was rehired when he returned from Nepal. There were 150 letters sent to the board for the last board meeting from current and past students, parents of current and past students, fellow teachers and staff, community members, all attesting to his wonderful qualities. Students who were long gone from Beye speaking to how much he had impacted them and helped them be lifelong learners. Do you want to lose even one teacher of such quality? Won't many future students benefit from such a teacher remaining at Beye?
- Mr. McAndrew's colleagues at Beye and other schools that are part of the district will surely take close note of what happens at the Board meeting on Friday. Already, they must understand that as much as the district has said that teachers should give themselves grace and be flexible, the district is not doing that for Mr. McAndrew, and doesn't really mean what they've said. Terminating Mr. McAndrew will undermine teacher morale and ultimately lead to more current teachers leaving and fewer excellent teachers choosing D97. The district should be working to retain excellent teachers, not lose them. Having the board vote against this will restore some trust that has surely been lost.
- The district says they are looking out for the students. If that were the case, they would have kept Mr. McAndrew in the classroom teaching his current students, providing the stability that they need, especially in this year of all years. My child has a great rapport with Mr. McAndrew, one that was helping to overcome his general dislike of school and his struggles with focus. Now, with the three substitutes we've had so far, he's been significantly less engaged and I fear that the rest of the year is a wash, as the past few weeks have been.
- It seems as if Mr. McAndrew has been recommended for termination, maybe the highest possible punishment, for something that is NOT related to students' safety, unprofessionalism with students or parents, or harassment, abuse, or neglect of any kind. This is unjust and unfair and even more so during a pandemic. When our students make mistakes, they are provided with positive behavior supports in elementary school and restorative justice in middle school. And at Beye, they are taught to be problem solvers and peacemakers. This year, our teachers have shown such flexibility in adjusting expectations of our children. But what of the teachers? Do they not deserve the same? What

lessons did this teach our students when they saw that he was removed from the classroom; what lesson will it teach them if they see that Mr. McAndrew is fired for what is a relatively small infraction - missed school days (especially when he taught remotely from Nepal and brought so much richness to the classroom)? How am I supposed to teach my child principles of justice and providing room for mistakes as a part of learning if the school system he is supposed to trust doesn't apply them to teachers? How can my child trust that system?

- And, as a taxpayer, I am concerned about a possible lawsuit. As I've spoken to other parents about this matter a few have voiced their concern - "well there must be something else." This has created an air of defamation. But there isn't something else. The principal of Beye said that there wasn't anything criminal. There has not been any police report. There is no pattern or history of ANY issues. The only explanation that I can fathom is that this is a wrongful termination done in a way that impugns Mr. McAndrew's character. And that leaves the district at risk of a lawsuit.

This is a gross injustice for Mr. McAndrew, for students past, present, and future, and for the school district. I implore you to vote against Mr. McAndrew's termination.

### **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 grew in confidence as a result of participating 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.

I understand that Mr. McAndrew has been kept out of the classroom due to a matter which appears to be administrative and he may, in fact, be facing termination. I believe that this is unfair treatment, not only for a Golden Apple recipient who has served the Beye community for many years, but also to his current students who are missing out on his enthusiasm and energy every day he is gone.

Beye School students deserve better than this and so does Mr. McAndrew. Please do not terminate Mr. McAndrew and instead, allow him to return to the classroom. Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

### **Tom Schick**

I am a district 97 parent. My child is a 5th grade student of Mr. McAndrew.

Mr. McAndrew is an incredible teacher and a wonderful person. He has dedicated his life to teaching and has been a beloved and highly respected member of the Beye community for many years. What is being done to him is very unjust. Terminating a

Golden Apple teacher in the middle of a pandemic over sick days is a harsh overreaction. This is not only unfair to him but a needlessly cruel thing to do to his students. They have lost so much over the past year and now their favorite teacher has been taken away without any explanation. The academic damage that has been caused by his removal is bad but the emotional and psychological damage is even worse. I wish the administration would think about what's best for the children. Teachers as special as Mr. McAndrew are extremely rare. He is not replaceable. Please consider the students when you make your decision. Mr. McAndrew is one of Oak Park's best educators. Letting him go would be a terrible loss for the community. Thanks for listening.

### **Karen Fogg**

It has come to my attention that an action regarding 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher Patrick McAndrew has been removed from today's agenda.

I am writing this on behalf of Patrick McAndrew, for he is my colleague and my friend. He is being recommended for termination due to an accusation of "fraudulent use of sick days" an accusation which was determined weeks ago, and prior to that determination he was placed on administrative leave. During this now month long leave he has been unable to contact, or communicate with his class, their families, his colleagues and friends regarding his predicament. His isolation is compounded by the fact that we have been living a life of isolation for the past year. Many of us have families that live with us, thus providing comfort, company and support during these times, while others, like Patrick, have been more isolated. His family lives in Nepal. I know the toll that the pandemic has taken on my friend and I know the toll this new torture is taking on my friend as well. He wants to be back in his classroom. He wants to teach the children he has created a community with. He wants to continue the good work he has been doing.

Patrick McAndrew is a man who lives to teach. A man who sees teaching as a vocation. A man whose dedication to his craft knows no bounds. His 35 year career is one to aspire to and yet, he is now silently fighting for his life, for his good name, for his career because he has been accused, and basically convicted of the crime of taking care of himself and his family during unprecedented times. And he is unable to speak on his own behalf. This decision was made by whom? Discussed with whom else? And why? Nobody understands how or why this could have happened. And I know all of us teachers are wondering where the support is from the district? People are scared and angry, worried that their own jobs are on the line and who will be next?

We emphasize in our district, empathy and compassion and self-care. We teach the students, through the Second Step program, that the quality of empathy is one we want to cultivate and nurture. We sing songs about it, we have posters in our rooms reminding students of it; we discuss it and celebrate it when we see it in action. Why is the district not exhibiting and modelling empathy? Why are we not practicing what we preach?

Patrick McAndrew deserves to be heard. He deserves an opportunity to speak publically and repair the damage that is being done to him. Prolonging this process for no good reason other than to put it off is cruel and inhumane. Whoever put this in motion to begin with needs to question their own motivation. Whoever felt that his actions should lead to a leave of absence, pending a recommendation for termination needs to question their motivation. And whoever is putting off the opportunity for Patrick McAndrew to be heard needs to question their motivation. Is this in the best interest of children? Is this in the best interest of the community? Is this in the best interest of our profession? Is this in the best interest of Oak Park District 97?

I am including the mission statement of our district below, for I think it is applicable to Patrick McAndrew and all that he is and represents.

The mission of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 is to guarantee that each student achieves optimal intellectual growth while developing socially, emotionally, and physically through a system distinguished by:

- Exemplary instruction focused on each student
- Commitment to the needs of a diverse population
- Meaningful partnerships with families and the community
- Celebrations of the power of art, music, and language
- Confident students challenged to be educational risk-takers

Patrick exemplifies all of the qualities in the above mission statement. Please do the right thing and allow Patrick McAndrew to return to his classroom.

### **Lisa Kitzman**

Beye School was a wonderful place. When we moved here 18 years ago, our real estate agent told us that everyone from outside of Oak Park wants to live in the Mann School area but people who live in Oak Park want to live in the Beye School area. We took her advice and never regretted it. My two kids spent their entire elementary school years at Beye - the youngest is now a senior at OPRF. I served on the PTO, was co-chair of the school's 135th anniversary celebration and capital campaign, and was the originator of the school's famous "Beye-In Parties." With Jonathan Ellwanger leading the school (and I hear Susan Gibson before him), we built a strong community filled with wonderful teachers and parents supporting our kids that was the envy of friends at other D97 schools. I am heartbroken about what has become of our beloved school. I still have friends and neighbors with kids there and have been hearing horror stories about what a toxic environment it has become for our teachers (and more importantly the kids). I still follow the Beye Parent page on Facebook. It used to be filled with uplifting updates about events happening at the school, teachers winning awards, and kindergarten parents looking to meet other kids - it was always a nice respite from the stressful Facebook pages at OPRF and Julian and other local groups. Before this month, I never saw a negative thing on the page. Now it is filled with parents coming together to try to support their beloved teachers. It shouldn't be like that and you as a board have let this go on far too long. The kids, the parents, and the teachers at the school deserve better. Our community deserves better.

I sent the email below to you on February 25th. As expected, I received no response. When I wrote this email, I had no idea why Patrick McAndrews was being held out of the classroom but trusted you as a board to make a fair and just decision that was in the best interest of the kids at Beye School. And then I started hearing what seem to be pretty substantiated rumors about why he is facing firing. If they are true, he should have been back in the classroom weeks ago!! We are in the middle of a global pandemic and the kids in that classroom are being failed by you as a board. And now I am hearing that he is not the only teacher at Beye facing discipline. What is going on?

I understood from friends that this matter would finally be discussed by the board on March 9th. I have been curious ever since about what was happening and surprised there was no official communication or update in the paper. And now I just read in the Wednesday Journal that it was not even discussed then. I'm sorry but you as a board and administration are utterly failing the kids at Beye School. The lack of communication or a path forward on this situation is unacceptable. It has been going on for months. You are the elected school board. Your utmost responsibility should be to the kids in D97. Get Patrick McAndrews and Jean Walsh-Kallay back in the classroom now. And please make sure every other Beye School teacher feels supported because they are wonderful and they deserve it.

### **Linda Robinet**

I am the Beye School Union Representative for Patrick McAndrew. The purpose of this e-mail is to implore you to listen and digest all the information you have received and will be receiving during your Executive Session on Friday, March 19. In all of my twenty-two years of teaching at Beye School and the past ten years serving as the building's Union Representative, have I ever been a part of or witnessed such an unconscionable and unjust situation as the one that is presently before the Board.

This is an opportunity for the Board to listen to all of the facts, from the District and from Patrick McAndrew himself. I know that you have been inundated with e-mails and letters from Beye community members, teachers, current students, former students, current parents and former parents who all advocated for the District to recognize what a remarkable asset that Patrick McAndrew has been and is currently to Beye School. But, having said that, you also have all of the accusations from Gina Hermann and Jennifer Schemidt to weigh, along with registering Patrick McAndrew's impeccable thirty-five years in education, with over twenty of those years being at Beye.

You have an opportunity to listen very carefully to everything that Gina Hermann and Jennifer Schemidt will present and finally, to listen to Patrick McAndrew. I was in attendance with Patrick McAndrew during his investigatory meeting with Gina Hermann and Jennifer Schemidt. I am sure you are wondering how termination is appropriate and warranted for a teacher who used a sick day to deal with his own mental health and his family's medical emergency, all with the required doctor's documentation, and even with a FaceBook posted video as proof of his responsibility for his son's medical emergency. Please listen to all of it and make your decision without bias.



The struggle has been real for all of us during this pandemic. Patrick is not the only one who has had to juggle work, health and family responsibilities. I know all of you are valiantly struggling: the evidence is that you are volunteering your time; your expertise; your energy on this Board during one of the most difficult years in District 97's history. This situation regarding Patrick McAndrew is difficult and has become personal. Emotions are high. You all are the objective few who have new eyes to see all sides in this matter. I implore you to be fair and just. Please listen to Patrick McAndrew and give him a chance to be heard. I will be in attendance for the Executive Session on Friday, March 19 at 8am to support Patrick McAndrew.

### **Richard Deptuch**

It is my understanding that you are considering dismissing a Beye school teacher for misuse of sick days off. I served as a teacher, department chair, and administrator (Assistant Superintendent) at OPRFHS for 38 years. There is no way that we would ever have dismissed a teacher for misuse of sick days. Yes, we would have made him repay us for the misused time and put a letter of reprimand in his file. But dismiss him? No way. I suspect that there is more behind this than what head become public. If there are other more substantial reasons for dismissing this teacher, admit it without going into detail because it is a confidential personnel issue. But right now, the way you are handling this situation is eroding any trust that the citizens of Beye School have in you. I don't know this teacher but have only heard great things about him from neighbors whose kids have had him.

School Boards and Administrators cannot lose the trust of the taxpayers over this kind of an issue. If all this teacher is guilty of is misusing sick leave then reprimand him and re-instate him. If there are more serious charges, admit it without going into detail and then investigate these more serious charges before you take action.

I send you this as a 51 year resident of our beloved Oak Park and an advocate of fair treatment of all of our dedicated teachers.

### **Amanda Miller**

I'd like you to imagine for a moment a kind man who is separated from his beloved family, his pets, his home and his three children. He eagerly awaits his upcoming return trip home, during spring recess of 2020. His plane ticket is purchased and only a week separates him from his home and loved ones.

Meanwhile a once in a lifetime global pandemic is silently spreading throughout the world. The world locks down. This dear man is alone and isolated thousands of miles from home.

His two dogs: Imani and Rafiki, do not understand why their man is not coming home. The man's three sons and devoted spouse understand but worry constantly for him, miss him desperately and count the days until he returns home to them. The collective grief across the ocean is hard to bear.

As the pandemic rages on, the man works as hard as he can to continue to provide for his family from afar. He teaches school and shepherds other families' worried and anxious children through the pandemic. He makes their lives better. He is a constant presence for them. He teaches with passion and enthusiasm. Yet, each and every minute passes with his heart afar and his body here, alone.

Months and months pass, seasons change and finally there is an opportunity to reunite! An effort is made to secure a Visa. The passport is mailed off and a plane ticket is secured. Finally after a year the man and his family will be together!

Then days of searching the mail for the passport and Visa turn into weeks. The passport and Visa have been lost.

The man does what he must for him and his children, and travels to secure his passport and Visa in order to see his beloved family: to embrace his spouse, hug and kiss his children and scratch his pup's ears.

He does what all of us would have done in the midst of a global pandemic: our absolute very best, with whatever we had left.

He travels. With passport and Visa in hand, and after more than a year apart from his family - they are together!

The children who he taught were thrilled that their dear teacher would be with his family again! Every one of them had been with their families throughout this last year- held at night, soothed, loved, played with and reassured, as best as possible.

But, while he was away, he taught them! He stayed up and taught them from his home! He took them on virtual field trips and shared his experience of his life abroad. He made their lives better and richer. He overflowed with happiness to be home with his family!

Before long school started again. Finally the children would be able to meet their teacher in person! They were so excited! He was coming back to be with them!

But he didn't come back to teach them. There was only silence. Where was he? Did he stay with his family? Was he sick? Alone? Dead? The children and their families were not told anything. They started to become very worried! Many substitute teachers came into their classroom. Not one sub knew them, their routine, their strengths, or their vulnerabilities.

Many tears and tummy aches resulted. Where was their teacher? There was no reason why he was not in touch with them! Did they do something wrong? Was he okay? When was he coming back?

Months passed. The children know that their beloved teacher may be fired for his choice to be with his family. They and their families are confused. This cannot be real! There

must be a mistake. Who would ever do such a terrible thing to another human being?

This is not what our school or our community is like. We are loving, we care for each other. We support each other. We help each other. We choose empathy and understanding.

We hope that you will represent our community and restore the dignity of this man, Mr. Patrick McAndrew. In so doing you will restore in our children the faith in adults to do what is right for them.

### **Ariel Schick**

Parents of Patrick's McAndrew's fifth grade class at Beye have written and written to everyone we can think of because this is important. It's important to our children, to the entire staff at Beye and to the reputation of D97 as a fair employer. I know my daughter has lost hope and still cries when she thinks about him returning to the classroom. She's full of anxiety for her teacher and doesn't understand how adults can make such cruel decisions when they should be leading with empathy. That is what this fiasco has taught them that adults make decisions that negatively affect them and then hide behind smokescreens.

An entire trimester has passed with Patrick McAndrew's students missing him. When my daughter and I discuss Patrick, his positive energy and talent for making every child in the classroom feel valued, we always end up wondering, "How could this have happened?" This is not fair. Yes, I have a privileged child who has not been exposed to much injustice in her life but this was not the main lesson I hoped she would learn in fifth grade. With creative problem solving, empathy and understanding this could all have been avoided and the lessons learned would have been so much different for these kids.

Please do the moral, empathetic thing and return Patrick McAndrew to his classroom.

### **Rajani Raghavan**

I am a parent of two D97 students attending Beye (2nd and 5th grades). I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. While he is not my son's primary 5th grade teacher, ALL 5th grade students are negatively impacted by his absence. The lack of acknowledgement from Principal Schemidt and D97 is creating a toxic environment.

None of us know the facts around the circumstances for his termination being considered. Midyear termination is a serious disruption to our students in a normal year, and warranted for very serious offenses. During a pandemic, this is devastating.

Please note, we are not suggesting the District is taking any actions outside the scope of the law. Rather we question whether this is wise (even assuming the District is within its rights). Public education is a shared governance project between a school and its community. The legitimacy of any action is not strictly contingent on whether it is formally valid but whether it is viewed as legitimate in the eyes of the community. This is

a very vocal and tight-knit community. And actions like these, even if formally justified, destroy both legitimacy and trust.

**Gabrielle Stormo**

I am a parent of two D97 students that attend Beye School. I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. Patrick McAndrew is a remarkable teacher at Beye School and Golden Apple Award recipient. He is an enthusiastic, energetic, and collaborative teacher. Many students have been fortunate to learn with Mr. McAndrew already, and we are looking to interact with him through the remainder of this school year and then again next year for our younger D97 student. Patrick McAndrew is a huge asset for Beye and our District.

My son is a 5th grade student attending Beye and while Mr. McAndrew is not his assigned classroom teacher, he is his social studies teacher. Mr. McAndrew is very good at making social studies an engaging and fun subject--my son considered it his favorite subject until Mr. McAndrew was no longer in the classroom teaching it. Mr. McAndrew also worked on Drama Club at Beye, which my son was fortunate to participate in last school year until Covid interfered with the program. My son enjoyed the Drama Club in large part due to Mr. McAndrew engaging him to participate.

It seems like Patrick McAndrew has been disciplined unreasonably 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. McAndrew. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Mindy Setzler Kolodziej**

I am the parent of 4 children who attended Beye School. I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. Patrick McAndrew is a compassionate and caring teacher who truly embraces the idea that school is community. My husband died while all four of my children were attending Beye School. It was sudden and a shock to all. As soon as school let out for the day, Patrick and Karen Fogg were at my home, and checking on my children. He attended the funeral and sat with my children during calling hours. The empathy and concern that Patrick reflected, particularly toward my youngest child (then in 1st grade special education) who was his reading buddy was moving. Patrick just knew how to talk to my kids and let them know that they would be supported no matter what. My oldest was in Mr. McAndrew's class at the time.

Patrick McAndrew and other teachers at Beye School helped our family heal. He gave my children a safe space as they continued on a journey that no child should have to experience. His values and respect for children are qualities not every student experiences - and for this I am truly grateful. The ways in which decades of children

have benefited from Mr. McAndrew as a teacher, counselor and mentor are not quantifiable.

Patrick McAndrew has always placed others before himself and the welfare of children before all others. It seems his is being disciplined excessively for something that does NOT appear related to student safety, quality of work product, and conduct toward students or parents.

During a time when COVID-19 is impacting all our lives in ways that are unimaginable to some, flexibility and forgiveness are requirements to help us recover. Mr. McAndrew has the skills needed to help the Beye Community heal. His personal outreach to children cannot be underestimated even when he cannot be physically available. The one thing that our children are learning is that we can use technology to stay connected. The only way they benefit from that connection is by interacting with a truly empathetic and caring individual.

Whatever your punishment is for Mr. McAndrew is or will be - consider that the punishment must fit the crime and that above all, our children are suffering during unprecedented times. Please, reconsider the harsh punishment toward Mr. McAndrew.

**Jodi Walker**

I am writing to express strong support for Mr. McAndrew and dismay at the decision to terminate his employment at Beye School.

Mr. McAndrew taught my daughter much more than just academics: he taught her how to critically think about civic engagement in a way that has fundamentally changed her. He is an outside of the box thinker and encourages that sort of creative learning in his students, as well as radical mindfulness of who they are in the context of the world.

The decision to terminate his contract over a ridiculous rule (teachers should have the ability to manage their paid time off without explanation) is short sided and harmful to his students and the community.

**Meghan Strubel**

I write in support of Patrick McAndrew, who taught my daughter (now 27) 5th grade years ago at Beye.

Patrick is a fabulous teacher, instilling curiosity and confidence in his students. It would be a shame to lose him.

From what I've read in the Wednesday Journal, the Beye community continues to think highly of him and is unhappy with the lack of information about his absence. This must be having a negative effect on students, which is never good, but especially on top of the pandemic.

**Barbara A. Kahn, J.D.**

I write to reiterate my opposition to termination of Patrick McAndrew. I am a 30+ year resident of Oak Park with three (now adult) children, all of whom attended Beye School under the leadership of Susan Gibson and Jonathon Ellwanger. Two of my children had the privilege of being in Patrick's class and to this day remember him as an outstanding teacher. Patrick is remarkable for his long years of service, his teaching record, awards, and the overwhelming support of parents and students. Given the circumstances, termination would be unjust, inappropriate, and damaging to Beye School and our community. I vigorously object to such a sanction and hope and expect the Board to reach a better conclusion to this matter.

**Jeremy Kahn**

As a resident of the Beye School district since 1993, I (along with my neighbors) have always taken great pride in the school's wonderful legacy while Mrs. Gibson and Mr. Ellwanger were the Principals. My boys have great memories of the great teachers they had, including (of course) Patrick McAndrew.

So it is with dismay that I learned of the new Principal's attempt to terminate Patrick on what appear to be dubious grounds. If some sort of disciplinary action is indeed necessary, surely there must be something short of termination that can be implemented.

Instead, it would seem that the new Principal's legacy will start with a "scorched earth" approach that will only serve to alienate many of the school's fine teachers.

Last, and far from least, should be the consideration of Patrick's students. The damage that the pandemic has done to all young students will be substantial when all is said and done, but (in particular) to deprive Patrick's students of his unique gifts, only to be taught by substitutes strikes me as downright cruel. Please, please consider a more sensible solution to this situation.

**Joey Tesch**

I'm the parent of two D97 students, a 2nd grader who attends Beye and a 6th grader who attends Julian and is a Beye alumni. I'm writing to you, again, on behalf of Patrick McAndrew.

I'm asking the Board to help in healing the spirit of so many children and teachers at Beye School. There is no question that this past year has been impossibly hard for our teachers, students, administrators, and our school Board. I do not envy your position and the thankless job that you do in serving our community. The Board has faced much backlash in the face of having to make impossible decisions. So much is out of our (parents, kids, teachers, admins, Board, etc.) control.

The decision the Board is facing today and the consequences for Patrick McAndrew's alleged wrongdoings ARE within your control. Terminating Patrick McAndrew will

further break down a school whose cracks have been exposed in recent weeks.

You have the opportunity to extend grace and understanding to this beloved teacher and restore hope for our school community.

Grace, which has been repeatedly asked of parents for the past 365 days, is needed in this moment. I implore you to dig deep.

Do what is right. Do what is in the best interest of our children, who have suffered greatly and lost so much over the past year. Mr. McAndrew's students, in particular, are being dealt a terrible hand. During a year of uncertainty, I can't imagine a more awful decision than to remove a wonderful teacher who gives SO MUCH and to rip him from his students. Thank you for your time.

### **Joe Berton**

I was very sorry to read about the issues concerning Mr. McAndrew. It is strongly hoped that whatever the issue is about, that it can be resolved to the benefit of Mr. McAndrew, the administration and the children of District 97.

I worked with Mr. McAndrew. I am a proud retired teacher of District 97, spending most of my career teaching Applied Arts at Julian, from 1977 to 2000. I got to know Mr. McAndrew as a friend, and from his own peers, hear of the high respect with which they thought of him and his creative and dedicated work with students. During that time, I also served many years as vice-president of the Oak Park Teachers Association. At times, that work involved carefully working with administrators and with specific teachers to thoughtfully correct or modify patterns of behavior. This was, in almost all cases, resolved with better communications between all parties involved, with clear expectations given, and a degree of satisfaction reached by all. At times, letters of reprimand or remediation were given, but improvement was made, to the benefit of everyone concerned. Only in extreme situations was someone terminated.

I was also a student with Mr. McAndrew, Yes, as District 97 teachers; we were both students in a Master's Degree program. Our cohort group met every Saturday for a year and a half. In that time, we got to know each other pretty well. With our classmates, we shared ideas about education, much of it based on our own experiences in District 97. Patrick was always a strong and passionate contributor to our class, expressing his ideas to the rest of us, and we learned from each other, becoming better teachers.

And finally, my son Philip was a student with Mr. McAndrew and Ms. Fogg. When class assignments were made for that grade level at Beye, and Philip was assigned to that class, I was excited as a parent and a teacher. I knew Philip would strongly benefit from the learning experiences offered from Mr. McAndrew. And Philip did, he flourished. That year, working with Mr. McAndrew made a strong impression on him. Philip's willingness to recognize the value of everyone, to study various religions, to have a desire to travel, to enjoy nature, to be a life-long learner, to be a serious student and still allow time for some fun, were all ideas instilled by the talented educator Mr. McAndrew. They are ideas that still guide my son, now a college graduate.

It is hoped that this situation can still be resolved, with Mr. McAndrew given the option of returning to his Beye School classroom, with clear expectations, to the benefit of the children of District 97 and the Oak Park community.

### **Cameron Phillips**

It has come to my attention that you will be holding a special board meeting this Friday to discuss the firing of Patrick McAndrew for misuse of sick days.

How very strange to use this argument amidst a global pandemic when teachers have already been mistreated and disrespected to an exponential level.

What a terrible and rather sickening precedent to set for our students and other teaching staff that, as I hope you know, serve as the front line leaders of our children's futures. I ask you to reconsider this meeting and the intention of your actions.

### **James Poznak**

I understand you are considering firing Patrick McAndrew, evidently for allegedly misusing a few vacation days. Firing him for this reason would be a gross mistake and would be terribly unfair. Mr. McAndrew has been a terrific, loyal teacher for many years. If Mr. McAndrew did breach a rule, surely there is a suitable disciplinary procedure less harsh than firing him.

### **Elizabeth Rexford**

I am greatly concerned about the matter of Patrick McAndrew. I worked with Patrick as a colleague during the after school Drama Club program.

I have experienced firsthand his devotion to the students and his tireless efforts to help each student reach his or her potential. He is an exceptional teacher, treasured by students, parents and by his colleagues.

He has honored District 97 and Oak Park by winning the Golden Apple Award. I fervently hope that this outstanding teacher will be treated with compassion and fairness.

### **Jane Vishneski**

I am writing to support Patrick McAndrew, teacher at Beye School, who should retain his job despite the District's accusation of misuse of sick days. My four children attended Beye from 1996 through 2012, and had many wonderful teachers; Mr. McAndrew stood out among them all for his dedication and excellence, in and out of the classroom.

It is ridiculous that the District should let him go over an overly strict policy of sick days, especially during a pandemic. We urge the District to reconsider its stance and reinstate Mr. McAndrew's good standing as a teacher at Beye. Otherwise, you will not lose only one terrific teacher—this will affect ALL of Beye's, and indeed the whole District's, excellent teaching staff to the point that we will lose many of them, I am



afraid. District 97 cannot afford to make such a mistake which will negatively affect its schooling for years.

**Amy Daigler**

I am a parent of a 4th grade Beye Student. I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. Patrick McAndrew is an excellent teacher who has received Golden Apple recognition for his work. Removing him from the classroom and the Beye school community seems an error and a loss for his class and the school.

I fear that he has been disciplined unreasonably harshly for what appears to be a relatively low-level infraction given the context of the situation and this pandemic. It seems to be well accepted that we need to provide flexibility and compassion to students at this time. I believe that we need to extend flexibility and compassion to teachers as well.

D97 has coped with the pandemic and resulting challenges of e-learning and a hybrid schedule. I appreciate the many ways the District has been responsive to parents' concerns and write this with the hope that parents' concerns will also be considered in this case. In addition to the changes related to learning in this time, Beye School as has also coped with a change in leadership with the retirement of the much beloved Mr. E. It is hard to imagine that Mr. McAndrew's students have benefitted from having three substitute teachers in his absence. It is hard to imagine that the threat to Mr. McAndrew's employment has improved the morale of teachers at Beye. Student require consistency as do the teachers of D97 who care for and educate our students daily.

I urge you to reconsider & permit Mr. McAndrew to return to Beye School and his class.

**Colleen Burns**

I am a parent of two current and two soon-to-be Beye students. I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew, a Beye 5th grade teacher. While we have not yet had the pleasure of being a member of Mr. McAndrew's class, we understand the deep, deep concern of the greater Beye community about his potential removal.

Great teachers (with Golden Apple distinction!) are an asset to our community and to the District. While we may not be privy to all the details surrounding the recommendation for his removal, something that is NOT related to students' safety, or unprofessionalism with students, seems unreasonably harsh. For our beloved school to lose a beloved teacher in the middle of an already chaotic year makes no sense. We hope you have the sense to reconsider. Thank you for your consideration.

**Samina Hadi-Tabassum**

I am writing this email after a day of mourning the violence in Atlanta. The world does not need any more grief and discord. We need to find a peaceful solution and bring Mr. McAndrew back to my children's classroom.

It is the ninth hour. We need the Board to make the ethical decision and save a man's life.

I beg you to do what is just. We cannot set a precedent for uncompromising behavior. Please bring back a teacher who is beloved. Thank you

**Steve and Audrey Dormanen**

We are prior Beye parents whose daughter had the joy and privilege of having Mr. McAndrew as her 5th grade teacher last year (2019-2020).

While we are unclear of what possible circumstances could result in the drastic measure of termination of a beloved teacher, person of great character and Golden Apple winner of D97. However, we are compelled to share our experience of a man who has been an incredible asset to our school, our community and educator of our children. We feel termination of Mr. McAndrew will not only result in a disappointing experience for his 5th grade families and colleagues this year, but also have a lasting impact on the morale of our strong Beye School community and belief in our actions speaking louder than what we teach our children - to be problem solvers and be peace makers.

It goes without saying that last year was a year like no other for us all. The school year disappointedly ended with all the anticipated, fun year-end events were either made into a zoom meetings (Graduation Celebration, Olympic Day, Mr. E's retirement party, the Theater Club Spring Musical, etc.) or cancelled altogether (Middle School Tour, 5th Grade Graduation Party, Fun Fair and more). This came especially hard for kids finishing their time at the school they have been attending for over half of their lives. To say the least, it was challenging. As a parent of a thoughtful, sensitive, smart and introverted child, this was challenging time as a parent to address all her feelings ranging from sadness, confusion, frustration, fear, loneliness and disappointment.

Despite these challenges in looking back, we have a lot to be thankful for related to our daughter's 5th grade experience. In fact, numerous positive reflections are in part due to Patrick McAndrew who we owe massive appreciation and gratitude.

From the first day of school on the Beye School blacktop, Mr. McAndrew was welcoming and inclusive. Our daughter still proudly displays the Nepal scarf Mr. McAndrew gave to her that first morning before school. Mr. McAndrew's sincerity and passion was palpable as he presented each of his students with a scarf and told each one that the scarf was a symbol of prosperity. That moment of giving a scarf was the beginning of his unique and special way of welcoming, engaging and teaching. His passion for teaching and energy in the classroom was apparent as the school year went on. Without our asking, our daughter would excitedly tell us about the things she had learned in class with Mr. McAndrew. We also could see it first hand in the limited interactions we had in our parent teacher conferences. In those brief meetings it was clear Mr. McAndrews knew how to connect with nearly any child and how to get the most out of them. In our case, he had the perfect blend on how to challenge our

daughter and set high expectations for her while providing the encouragement and support for her to meet those expectations.

When in-class learning came to a halt in March, Mr. McAndrew's passion and availability to his students did not miss a beat. It was clear to anyone within earshot of our daughter's iPad Mr. McAndrew's concern and care for his student's was stronger than ever. Mr. McAndrew made sure to personally connect with each and every child in the class, twice a day in their virtual sessions. He asked how each child was doing, remembered the names of his students' pets and other odd home-facts, and was genuinely concerned for each child's emotional, mental and academic well being. I can close my eyes and still hear his voice over those virtual sessions "Cameras on! I miss you and I want to see all your smiling faces!". And all the while, he kept his students accountable. No one got off the hook easy during those afternoon sessions if they did not complete assignments he gave out in the morning and did not reach out to him with questions.

Outside of the classroom Mr. McAndrew encouraged our shy, introverted daughter to come out of her shell and thrive as a member of the Beye Theater Club. This experience not only opened our daughter's eyes to a new passion, the encouragement of Mr. McAndrew in her role on stage crew grew her confidence well beyond just Theater Club. Her confidence soared academically and opened her mind to trying new activities she previously would not have had the confidence to explore.

As a parent chaperone for the 5th Grade Camp Edwards outdoor learning and overnight trip in fall 2019, I was exposed to Mr. McAndrew outside of the classroom. Mr. McAndrew was very mindful and tuned-in to kids being out of their comfort-zone in this environment. Yet through his enthusiasm, inquisitiveness and good humored approach these kids excitedly participated in the various Camp Edwards activities.

Patrick McAndrew's dedication to his students and love of teaching is apparent. He has the unique ability to nurture and develop kids to be their best selves. We have the utmost respect for Patrick McAndrew as an educator and an all-around incredibly inspiring human being. We hope this is taken into account with your decision making process.

### **Emi Preys**

Mr. Patrick McAndrew is a gifted and beloved teacher at Beye School, and a 2008 Golden Apple Teacher of Distinction. Although neither of my daughters had the opportunity to study with him (Natasia Class of 2011, Sophia Class of 2012), we still heard about how wonderful he was, through his colleagues, as well as other parents, who had children who were in his classroom. It is unheard of, to hear about a teacher who isn't currently around, and what kind of impact he had on his students and fellow teachers. When we heard that he had come back, we were extremely happy for the Beye School Community, and subsequent students.

I've heard from multiple parents, distraught from the possibility of losing Mr. McAndrew. Their children love this teacher, and dismissing him, especially in the middle of the school year would be very distressing for them, multiplying their already very stressed out lives, due to the online and hybrid learning and the pandemic. School is already tough enough during this time for all involved. Is it really necessary to fire someone who is so admired by colleagues and the families he serves?

Also, being a teacher myself, I can imagine how negatively this will be affecting teacher morale. In dismissing Mr. McAndrew, you would be in fact, not just be punishing him for whatever infraction he has made, but also his colleagues, and his students and their families.

Please reconsider your decision to terminate Golden Apple Teacher, Patrick McAndrew.

### **Karen and Karl Emanuel**

We are writing on behalf of our family's support, alongside the countless others in the Beye Community, to speak out against a potential termination of Mr. Patrick McAndrew from Beye Elementary.

While our oldest child was not in Mr. McAndrew's 5th grade class, she still had interactions with him. She had nothing but positive feedback of him saying he brought a worldview lens into his teaching. He did the same by sharing with the Beye community various cultures through events and films at the school.

We don't know Mr. McAndrew's circumstances and the situation at hand.

However, we DO appreciate that there are so many people in the community that are supporting him because of how tremendous and genuine of a teacher he was to their children.

Our hope is that the Board recognizes the importance of retaining those teachers that truly care and make long lasting and positive impacts in our children's lives, including those that also happen to be Golden Apple Teachers of Distinction.

And we also hope that our youngest child will have the opportunity to have Mr McAndrew in two years' time.

### **Chris Thomas**

I'm the co-president of the Beye School PTO, and me and my family have been in the Beye community for 25 years. In addition, I've been working in the HR space for the past 11 years, an entrepreneur for 20, and own 2 companies, one focused on youth empowerment, and the other focused on human-centered engagement around hiring, onboarding, and training. I say all that to say, in all my years of HR and living in this community, I've yet to see something like this situation with Mr. McAndrew. The optics/politics have allowed for such a convoluted narrative, encompassing all manners of digression. This is a time when teachers and kids need our support most, yet

because everyone's "hands are tied," we've actually gone the opposite direction, with not only a lack of support, but a lack of demonstration of empathy for all parties involved. This includes Principal Schemidt, who in her 1st year, I'm sure is feeling very unsupported due to the circumstances.

What I hope can become of this is a swift adjudication in which **appropriate** consequences, not termination, can be applied that don't jeopardize the entire Beye School climate. While the students have finally been assigned a permanent substitute, unfortunately at this point, that is being blinded by the fact that the parents and students feel like their teacher has been taken away from them for no good reason. Regardless of what is confidential or not, I believe it is our duty to put the needs of our kids and teachers first, and at this point, it does not seem that has been the case by any stretch of the imagination.

I have heard from many parents of Mr. McAndrew's students and I urge you to hear their words too. I want to share one short comment from Wendy Roderweiss:

"I am a parent of one of Patrick McAndrew's students at Beye School. I know you are getting a lot of letters, so I will keep this brief. Please vote against terminating Patrick. Our kids need him, the school needs him, and the district needs him. He is a rare and special teacher and it would be an immeasurable loss to our community if he were fired. I don't know what his infractions are, but unless it is unsafe for him to be in the classroom, he should be there. We are in the middle of a pandemic, there has to be special considerations for both Patrick and our children who NEED him.

I know many of you have children. Imagine putting your children in the most tumultuous year of their lives, finally giving them some stability, joy and hope, and then taking it away because of an administrative infraction. Does that seem right? Does that seem fair? To anyone? Please vote against the recommendation of termination. In a time in our history where we feel utterly powerless, you actually have some. Please use it to save this year for our kids. This is their last year at Beye, please make it memorable for a good reason, not a bad one. Make this the year where a group of people voted with their consciences instead of the rule book."

Hoping that you will do as Wendy and the other parents and students of Beye have asked, I make one more request as the co-President of Beye's PTO. Please consider ways that the District can communicate more effectively during times of crisis. Mr. McAndrew's removal from the classroom and the threat of termination have been damaging to the students, the teachers, Principal Schemidt, and the District, and more importantly, it has undermined the level of trust between all parties. I fear that we will lose some of our best teachers, impacting many students down the road. Mr. McAndrew has built a strong community this year with his students, despite the remote nature of school. He has focused on building relationships, which takes a high level of trust, one that we hope we can bring back very soon to our community. I appreciate you taking the time to hear my concerns, and pray the Board makes the right decision.

### **Samantha Behensky**

My daughter, Kalissa, is a current 5th grader at Beye in Ms. Fogg's class. She says that Mr. McAndrew is different from all of the other teachers, because he made every day feel special; it never really felt like school, it felt fun. He is different because of his travels. He is always showing things from his travels, so you can learn about other countries. She misses him.

As a parent, I met Mr. McAndrew when he was working with Kalissa after school on Seussical. I told him she didn't want to audition for a lead role, and his eyes grew wide. "But she has such a big personality!" She sure does, and he saw this right away. Throughout this experience, Kalissa learned so much from Mr McAndrew and Ms. Fogg. They go above and beyond with this musical each year.

The one thing I know for certain in this situation is that Mr. McAndrew belongs back in the classroom with his beloved students and Beye School family. This is the best solution for all parties involved.

### **Jay Schulman**

I am a parent of 2 Beye students. Last night in regards to Mr. McAndrew, I received an email to all parents from Principal Schemidt saying:

**we hope that everyone can work together to avoid any disruptions or negative impacts to our students**

I would suggest that this isn't only for parents but for the board and administration as well as you make your decisions. Thank you.

### **Ana Garcia Doyle & Jim Doyle**

We are submitting once again another comment in support of Patrick McAndrew, who is an immense asset to our community and to the children of our community.

Please allow Mr. McAndrew to continue employing his deep experience and demonstrated commitment for the benefit of his students and families.

If there has been some sort of administrative misstep, it seems some appropriate (not outsized) remedy could be employed. In addition, Mr. McAndrews' long legacy of bringing excellence to teaching, and meaning to a generation of young learners in Oak Park should outweigh some kind of administrative lapse.

We urge you to do the right thing. Thank you.

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

I am writing to express my increasing distress regarding Mr. Patrick McAndrew and the recommendation from District 97 administrative staff to terminate him from his teaching position at Beye School. My husband and I have submitted an earlier general public comment for your consideration and have also expressed our concerns in a letter that

was published in the Wednesday Journal last week. I am a former Beye parent who spent countless hours volunteering at the school. My children went to Beye when Ms. Gibson and Mr. Ellwanger were the principals. Mr. McAndrew taught throughout the ten years my children attended the school and he was my youngest son's 5th grade teacher. It is inconceivable that he is facing termination in light of what he has contributed to the Beye School community and it is clear from current parent letters and remarks that he continues to be the inspired, dedicated, and remarkable teacher he has always been. I am very concerned that a new principal and an HR administrator are allowed the power to upend this respected and beloved teacher's career because of a concern about "misuse" of sick days.

Honestly, as an outside observer, when I look at the fact that this principal has "written up" several teachers this year (compared to NO write-ups during Mr. Ellwanger's 10-year-tenure), it seems clear to me that this is a far more complicated situation than misuse of sick days. While it may be easy to oversimplify the situation and dummy it down to "the rules," the consequences of such an approach will be enormous, significantly impacting teacher, student, and parent morale. As I have said before, the administration should be working hard to support District 97 teachers as they are asked to meet the enormous challenges of hybrid teaching. I urge you to be guided by compassion and understanding, to ask questions, and to give some credence to the fact that those of us who truly know Mr. McAndrew as a teacher and a human being view the prospect of his termination as abhorrent and tragic.

### **Randy Hajduk**

I am writing in support of a great teacher - Patrick McAndrew.

Mr. McAndrew needs to be in school teaching our kids. He has a gift that he has proven over and over - he is an incredible resource to Beye School and the community as a whole.

Can we please take a moment and prove to our 5th grade students that adults can be problem solvers? We have an opportunity to show our kids that their voices do matter - exactly the kind of lesson Mr. McAndrew would undoubtedly teach them in his own unique and effective way. There is still time to get Mr. McAndrew back in front of his kids for the last 3 months of school. I urge you to do this.

### **Jaime Lewis**

I am the parent of three D97/Beye students. I am writing to advocate for Patrick McAndrew. Up until 7 weeks ago, he was my daughter's 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher. A teacher that she has learned a lot from throughout this school year. A teacher that created a fun, collaborative and engaging classroom when the outside world was hard to understand. A teacher that has "gone missing" and is "being punished" because he needed to see his family. These are her words, not mine. Unfortunately, I don't have a different narrative to offer.

Patrick McAndrew is a kind and caring teacher. Despite the challenges he has personally faced this year, he showed up for these kids every day. He made a difference in their lives and provided a quality education. An education that has been negatively impacted over the last 7 weeks when he was no longer allowed to oversee it. Not only have the kids been asked to navigate the churn of subs and lack of transparency, but they've also had to navigate the emotional aspect of wondering why their school feels the need to punish Mr. McAndrew and his students.

I know your inboxes are flooded with letters. It has not been hard to garner support for such a loving and dedicated teacher. This isn't about parents making noise to get their way or attempting to get in your way. This is about parents making sure you truly understand the impact Mr. McAndrew has on the Beye community. This is about making sure you truly understand that Mr. McAndrew is a great teacher, and one we should ALL be advocating to be a part of this district.

I understand that as you vote on what's next for him and what is next for his 5<sup>th</sup> grade class, you do so with detailed knowledge of his infraction that I do not possess. You have the responsibility of making a decision without firsthand knowledge that I possess of the incredible impact that he's had on his classroom of students and the Beye community. Which is why I implore you to read and to study the letters that are being sent on his behalf -- get to know the person behind the alleged infraction. Throughout this year I have been in awe over the resiliency the kids have demonstrated. It goes without saying that there will come a breaking point where we have simply asked too much of these kids. Please do not allow an administrative infraction that is not related to students' safety, be their breaking point.

### **Chris Patrick**

I am writing in support of returning Mr. McAndrew back to the classroom as soon as possible. Given the limited details that have been provided to parents, specifically that this issue with Mr. McAndrew does not relate to our children's safety or educational quality, the fact that you, the school board, and the District 97 administration allowed this issue to spiral out of control and drag our children into this, is deplorable.

Whatever disciplinary actions that needed to be taken for this issue needed to be resolved quickly and without adding additional stress and challenges to children already dealing with maybe the most challenging school year they will ever have.

I ask you to please reinstate Mr. McAndrew, let our children get back to what they are supposed to be doing, learning.

### **Christine & Nick Binotti**

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.

### **Laurie Myers**

My children both attended Beye Elementary School. I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. I have become aware that he has been put on leave and not allowed to return to teaching in over a month, and that he has been threatened with termination.

As a former Beye School parent and great admirer of Patrick McAndrew's teaching, I am shocked that he has been treated in this manner, and I feel the need to register my concern with this situation. 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 rather school has. My children attended Beye School for a total of 9 years (2002-2011,) and we were always aware of the positive influence he had on the students and the school community.

Beye School is a very special place that my kids still talk about with affection. Our kids need teachers like Mr. McAndrew with his love of teaching, enthusiasm, energy, and cheerful and encouraging attitude. Please, reconsider this harsh punishment towards one of Oak Park's finest teachers. Thank you for your consideration.

### **Laurie Myers**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. I have become aware that he has been put on leave and not allowed to return to teaching for over a month, and that he has been threatened with termination.

As a former Beye School parent and great admirer of Patrick McAndrew's teaching, I am shocked that he has been treated in this manner, and I feel the need to register my concern. 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 the positive influence he had on the students and the school community.

Beye School is a very special place that my kids still talk about with great affection. Our kids need teachers like Mr. McAndrew with his love of teaching, creativity, enthusiasm, energy, and cheerful and encouraging attitude. Please, reconsider this harsh punishment towards one of Oak Park's finest teachers. Thank you for your consideration.

**Elaine Pierce**

For several years I was privileged to work at Beye School as Patrick McAndrew's Teaching Assistant. Every day I watched him teach the children with joy, enthusiasm, and compassion, modeling to them not only respect for others but respect for themselves. He brilliantly managed a classroom of students who spanned the academic, emotional, and social spectrums. While he was patient and supportive, he nevertheless expected his students to always work toward high standards, encouraging them to do the best they could.

I hope that Mr. McAndrew and the Board will be able to resolve whatever issues have arisen so that he can return to the classroom and continue to exercise his exceptional gift as an outstanding teacher to the children in our community.

**Sarah Shirk & Matthew Girson**

While we realize that personnel issues are by law confidential, and we are not aware of the details for Mr. McAndrew's case, as parents of a Beye graduate we are moved to share a story about Mr. McAndrew's dedication to the Beye School Community. In addition to his teaching duties, Mr. McAndrew for many years directed the after-school theatre program, a program that had profound influence on our son Gabriel Girson who was a fifth grader in 2009, struggling to find his talents, not knowing what he could share with the world. Today Gabriel is pursuing a career as an actor in New York City, a dream that began on the Beye School stage when he was cast as Tevye in Fidler on the Roof, co-directed by Mr. McAndrew and Ms. Fogg. This story may seem like ancient history to the issues currently on the table, but Mr. McAndrew's display of contagious enthusiasm and professionalism in the theater program planted a seed that is still growing today. Please consider the reach and impact of a gifted teacher before making any final decisions today that will impact our world tomorrow.

**Colette Morrow**

I am shocked to learn that the administration of District 97 has recommended that Mr. Patrick McAndrew be terminated from his position as fifth grade teacher at Beye School. My daughter, Adelita Odell-Morrow, was one of Mr. McAndrew's students when he first joined the faculty at Beye. Frankly, she was not an especially strong student and certainly was not enthusiastic about school. Despite these challenges, Mr. McAndrew caught her attention and kept her engaged. Proof of that is the fact that at the end of her sixth grade year, she and I spent a week in Washington, D.C.

I was lobbying our Congressional representatives to increase funding to Belarus, a former Soviet Republic, and Adelita attended many meetings with me. At one that opened with a rather long commentary on standardized testing in public schools (this

was during the Clinton Administration, if I recall correctly), she perked up, raised her hand, and before I realized what was happening, Senator Durbin called on her. She gave us an analysis of standardized testing based on a debate about it in Mr. McAndrew's class. Her comments were more insightful than those of the adults in the room.

The kind of teaching that catalyzes such moments is rare and critically important to foster in our schools. And here, I am not speaking solely as a parent. I am the assessment coordinator for the English Teaching Concentration at Purdue University Northwest, and, additionally, teach all the English Teaching Concentration candidates in the secondary program.

Perhaps Mr. McAndrew made an error in judgement by, as rumor has it, taking an international trip to visit family in Nepal. I don't know. What I do know is that he is an extraordinary effective teacher whose students learn how to engage in critical analysis and communicate their conclusions clearly, despite their young age. Do not terminate this teacher. The community will lose a treasure if you do.

### **Jen Bonhard**

First and foremost, thank you for your service on behalf of students and staff within District 97.

I have two children who have attended Beye Elementary School for the past 6 years. I am writing in support of reinstating Mr. Patrick McAndrew as a 5th grade teacher at Beye School immediately.

It is devastating to witness this public and disruptive disciplinary action against Mr. McAndrew, especially during a time of uncertainty and transition at Beye School due to the pandemic and the retirement of Mr. Jonathan Ellwanger. What parents and students need now, more than anything, are to be surrounded and supported by consistent, positive, caring, and capable educators at school. Mr. McAndrew embodies these qualities. I have experienced his enthusiasm for learning and teaching, his amazing talent for appreciating each child and each family's unique qualities and for striving to meet those individual needs, and his commitment to providing leadership opportunities for students to feel empowered in their own learning. One small example of this is when he learned of my daughter doing a report on Nepal and reached out to her 5th grade teacher to see if she would be interested in presenting that information with him and another student to a younger class. She loved the experience of helping to educate younger students and it meant a lot to her that he had confidence in her ability to present in front of another class.

While I understand the need for workplace rules and natural consequences, I also understand that there can be a wide array of contextual conditions and exceptions, as there should be. And while I appreciate the transparency, to some degree, of personnel matters within the district, I would more greatly appreciate an honest look at what is most important for the families and students at Beye School, a sensitive appreciation for

what Mr. McAndrew and teachers like him mean to our children and families, and an agreement to have certain issues worked out in private (unless related to issues of safety or well-being) without disruptive consequences such as removing a teacher from his/her classroom.

We are a community who cares for one another, and it would be a caring decision to allow Mr. McAndrew to be reinstated to the students and families who need and support him as an outstanding educator at Beye School. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

### **Christina and James Darley**

First of all, we would like to thank each and every one of you for your service to our village. We imagine there have been many Zoom hours and pressures from the community that you have had to balance with your own lives. Because Dr. Kelley is leaving, we want to thank her especially. She has formulated and fostered a culture of equity, truth and understanding that we hope will live on in D97. Thank you Dr. Kelley. We wish you continued success in your future endeavors!

In that spirit, we would like to address the troubling events of this spring in regards to Patrick McAndrew and the recommendation to terminate his employment. We urge you to listen to your constituents, who are overwhelmingly in favor of reuniting him with his students at Beye. It is our understanding that this is over sick days that he took. We ask you to consider if this is right? Is this fair? Ultimately, is this something worth tearing apart and upending the Beye community? It already has had an effect on the children and created a climate of low confidence and morale among the teachers. In the midst of a pandemic, we implore you to think about the human thing to do, about the human beings and human families all affected by your decision today. You don't have to rubber-stamp a recommendation by the administration. Indeed it is your right to listen to us first, and then vote accordingly.

Our family has lived in Oak Park for 23 years. For 15 continuous years, our four children attended Beye School and we count ourselves extremely fortunate to have been a part of the Beye community. Only our last child was lucky enough to have Patrick McAndrew as a teacher.

Patrick McAndrew taught Jasmine social studies and directed her in her in the 5th grade play, which was canceled on opening night because of the pandemic. During the entire year, even on Zoom, Mr. McAndrew led his classes with absolute dedication, optimism, and compassion. It was clear to our child and to all the others that his top priority was educating and leading them through what proved to be a very challenging and disappointing time. We believe that the year ended on such a positive note because Patrick listened to the kids and was able to help them thrive, not just adjust.

Patrick's passion and energy for teaching are infectious and inspiring. His experience and abilities with global history and cultures is immeasurable, and we know for a fact, changed how Jasmine looks at the world. That is priceless. And so is Patrick. He not

only teaches our children about social justice, he lives it. He is honest. He is kind. He is extraordinary. And he is one of the best teachers our children have ever had.

### **Gina and Mark Bazer**

We are writing (a second time) 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.

### **Students at Beye School**

Several Beye School students submitted a video in support of Mr. McAndrew. In respect for their privacy, the video will not be made public.

### **Laura Knitt**

I am the Beye School PTO's room leader this year for Patrick McAndrew's 5th grade classroom. This volunteer role brings parents together to help with classroom holiday celebrations and other supports for our children and their teacher.

While I'm a working parent and haven't followed every detail of my child's or the classrooms' remote or hybrid schooling experience, I did maintain contact with Mr. McAndrew until shortly before he left for Nepal. I observed how he strived to find ways to engage our group of 5th grade students, kids at Beye who in a regular year would enjoy extra benefits and responsibilities earned because of their seniority at school.

In the earliest part of the year, Mr. McAndrew and other teachers didn't have classroom assistants. Each was managing Zoom-learning for as many as 2 dozen students, all at once. Imagine the challenges of celebrating Halloween, Thanksgiving or the party before pre-winter break via Zoom. No physical games, prizes or snacks, just an iPad screen and whatever items a student had at home. And everything had to be done by people authorized to use district Zoom accounts--not parents. So extra energy and effort was required of our teachers beyond meeting basic education requirements, if

they wanted to help students have a positive experience during an upside-down time. And Mr. McAndrew did.

All the heartfelt expressions of support you've read or heard about Patrick McAndrew have surfaced because he is a special teacher. From his enthusiasm, commitment and compassion for our kids, it's easy to see why he is a Golden Apple Teacher of Distinction. I looked it up online and found his name among the 2008 awardees. I also noted that Golden Apple recognition is rare, even among Oak Park teachers. It is painful to know that Patrick McAndrew as a person is suffering, probably feeling very lonely, while we families want him back in our classroom. If he broke any rules, I can understand there may be consequences for him, but termination is beyond reasonable.

We can't forget that this year requires adjustments. Our lives are changed and brushed with uncertainty, and many of the things we do in life are more difficult, especially travel. This is a time for understanding and empathy, not excessive punishment.

Please take this under consideration and allow Mr. McAndrew to return to teaching his 5th grade class at Beye School.

### **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. Moreover, since I was a chaperone, I got to witness his engagement and strong connection with students (as well as with parents) during the school's annual 5th grade trip to Camp Edwards. 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.

### **Gale Zemel**

I have spent many years at Beye School as a parent and long-time volunteer.

Gina Herrmann has assured parents it is NOT a criminal case recommending the termination of Patrick McAndrew.

Other than, "There is more to this case than you know," there is no other information being given to the students, families, teachers and community at large.

As far as anyone knows, nobody "in the trenches" has been asked for their opinion or thoughts. How is this possible when every board member ran on the premise of listening to the needs of our students?

After all these years of award-winning service, how could Mr. McAndrew suddenly be persona non grata?

### **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.

### **Jonathan Campbell**

I understand there is a recommendation to terminate Mr. McAndrew's employment due to a minor infraction regarding paid sick days. Termination as we begin the third trimester is a severe punishment in any year, as it has the effect of punishing the students as well. This nation is in the middle of a pandemic. While Oak Park's teachers were recently given their immunization, some do not yet have the second dose required for optimal protection. It also required a great deal of public pressure for those immunizations of our teachers to become a priority.

The district previously said the emotional health of our children is the district's first priority. How does the termination of a Golden Apple award winner accomplish the district's goals? Teachers are not commodities and we do not have an inventory of talented teachers ready for hire. Using substitute teachers for the rest of the year is not an acceptable approach and it is not in the best interest of these students. Keep Mr. McAndrew teaching in Oak Park, Do not terminate his employment.

### **Kathryn Ashton**

I have been a William Beye Elementary parent from 2009-present. Given my many years at Beye, I have a deep understanding of its rich history of educational excellence, and exceptional teachers. I have never felt compelled to delve into the politics of the school or the Board, and this is the first time I've written to address the D97 Board.

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. I have seen him in action with students, and he really is a standout for his ability to inspire and educate. Patrick McAndrew is a huge asset for Beye and our District.

It seems like he has been disciplined unreasonably 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. McAndrew. In no circumstance should he be terminated based on the few facts that the Board has been willing to share. We elect members to this Board based on their ability to provide sound leadership. This is a time when we could really use good judgment, compassion and folks willing to do the right thing. Thank you for your time and consideration. This is an incredibly important issue to the entire D97 community.

#### **Carrie Kovach**

I'm writing to ask you to show empathy and compassion and allow Mr. McAndrew to return to his fifth grade classroom at Beye School.

This year has been difficult on so many levels, but this...this did not need to be so difficult for our Beye students. You have a choice. You don't have to accept the recommendation to terminate him. We've all had to show flexibility and compromise this year. Now is your chance to do that for a community asking for your help. There's nothing to be gained from terminating a beloved teacher in the middle of the school year and causing further chaos in his already suffering classroom.

**Consider how you would feel if this was your child's classroom and your child's teacher - your child's last year of elementary school, already in disarray due to the pandemic and now disrupted even more. And you, as a parent, writing and calling for compassion and compromise and getting no response from the board or administration. Would you try to find a way to work things out for your child?**

As a board, you've faced many difficult decisions this year often weighing vastly different viewpoints from the community. **This is your chance to stand up for a community united behind supporting Patrick McAndrew in remaining a teacher at Beye School.**

#### **Jessica Daly**

My daughter is a student of Mr. McAndrew. The last two months have been extremely difficult for her and her classmates. I am asking you to vote against terminating Patrick



McAndrew. You have the power to turn this year around for these kids, in their last year at their grade school.

As you know, we now have a permanent substitute, but this in no way, solves the problem of these kids missing out on high-caliber education from a teacher who knows them. A substitute is not a replacement for Mr. McAndrew, and my daughter gives me reasons why EVERYDAY when she comes home from school. I am furious at our principal and Gina Herrmann for their handling of this and for letting it go on for this long.

While I completely appreciate the difficult decision before you and know that I can't have all the details. I want to ask (rhetorically, of course...):

Does the punishment fit the crime?

Did the administration handle this in the best way possible?

Did they take the well-being of our children into consideration?

Should the handling of this be looked into to avoid this in the future?

Is terminating Mr. McAndrew in the best interest of the future of Beye School?

If this was your child's school, would you feel comfortable terminating this teacher?

Please consider that you have the power to send a message to our district -- that you value great teachers and the well-being of students over office politics and rigidity. Thank you for your service.

### **Lynn Olson**

I am a parent of two D97 graduates. I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. Mr. McAndrew team-taught my son's 5th grade class with Karen Fogg. He was a steady, positive force in my son's life before and during 5th grade, and even after my son graduated high school.

Mr. McAndrew is one of those once-in-a-lifetime teachers that I am grateful my son had. He is a kind, gentle, creative, intelligent, and good-humored teacher, an excellent role model who has the rare gift of being able to see and reach the whole child. His calm and steady ways encouraged my son to identify his own personal strengths and how to bounce back and learn from mistakes and work through problems. This, I believe, has helped my son survive and even thrive during this horrible pandemic.

From what I have read and heard, it seems Mr. McAndrew has been disciplined overly harshly for an administrative infraction. Mr. McAndrew is, and always has been, devoted to Beye school, and to the physical, emotional and academic well-being of Beye students. I think that D97 should be doing everything they can to retain talented teachers like him; to let him go would, in my opinion, be wasteful and rash. And it would do great harm to his current students and the students of all ages at Beye who know and love him. Please reconsider the harsh punishment for Mr. McAndrew. Thank you for your consideration.

### **Stacy and James Pfluecke**

I am a parent 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. Our oldest son enjoyed having him as his social studies teacher in fifth grade, learning his understanding of the world grew as he learned about Nepal from Mr. McAndrew. In addition, our son truly enjoyed participating in the drama club and international movie nights Mr. McAndrew led. He describes Mr. McAndrew as always helpful. Patrick McAndrew is a huge asset for Beye and our District.

It seems like he has been disciplined unreasonably 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. The pandemic has been trying for everyone in a variety of ways. However, throughout this year I keep asking how and why so much pressure, stress and lack of compassion has been given to teachers. There is disregard for the unbelievable work teachers have done for over a year. Teachers have families and their own pandemic mess and are expected to only be thinking about and working for our children. This is a time to care and support one another. Let's take the time to ask "How are you doing?" "What do you need?" and understand the perspective of others. Isn't this what we ask our children to do? Please, reconsider the harsh punishment toward Mr. McAndrews. Thank you for your time and consideration.

### **Anne Huston**

My children went to Beye School in the 1990s. My son was in Mr. McAndrew/Ms. Fogg's combined class. My daughter did not have Mr. McAndrew as a teacher but as a mentor in Beye School drama shows.

Why in the world would District 97 want to terminate a long-beloved teacher, an Apple award winner, an ambitious, out-of-the-box creative adult role model who can understand students of all abilities, interests and needs. Shame on you.

Are there no alternatives to termination? Is a minor infraction always dealt with so severely? We the public do not know all the details of the case, but surely, a teacher who is so valued by the students, their parents, the community at large, deserves more than abrupt dismissal.

We are all facing unprecedented hardships during this pandemic. To add to the misery and uncertainty of Beye School students (not to mention Beye teachers and staff) already experiencing mental anguish due to these hard times, you intend to fire their teacher (and colleague) following more than a month of uncertainty as to Mr. McAndrew's situation and sending substitutes in to fill his very large shoes. Shame on you.

What kind of explanation does the District intend to give his students? Do you tell them that Mr. McAndrew went against the rules and therefore does not get a second chance? That surely isn't the lesson you want the students to take away from this situation, is it? At Beye School if you make a mistake, then you won't get a chance to show that you can "do better." Shame on you.

I kindly request that you do not go ahead with the termination of Mr. McAndrew. Give the guy a warning or a reprimand but don't dismiss him from the Beye community. It's a pandemic for god sakes. Sometimes, you have to bend the rules and develop alternative ways of dealing with difficult situations. This is the time to stand up for what is right.

We sincerely hope you won't let Beye students, Beye staff and the Beye community down—

### **Kelly Cerniglia**

I am writing on behalf of Patrick McAndrew. I am writing because I want to share my own personal story about how Mr. McAndrew's presence and teaching have impacted and inspired me. I am a recent college graduate and a former student of Mr. McAndrew via his shared classroom with Ms. Fogg in 2008.

When I was an elementary school student, as many of my old teachers could attest to, I was painfully shy, and extremely self-conscious. I would cry over the smallest things, and I had so much anxiety about being noticed by my classmates for the wrong reasons. Unfounded though my worries were, my confidence suffered horribly from my insecurities, and I remember as a child frequently being immensely sad. However, I specifically remember when all this changed for me, and it was in my fifth grade year, specifically because of the influence of Mr. McAndrew.

About halfway through my fifth grade year, auditions were happening for a silent show, where the students would act to the soundtrack of a famous opera, and Ms. Fogg and Mr. McAndrew would act as directors. That year, the opera was set to be Cinderella, and of all people, Mr. McAndrew decided to cast me as the lead. It was specifically through this play, through Mr. McAndrew's guidance and teachings about acting, stage presence, and confidence that I went through my own "Cinderella transformation", as it were. Mr. McAndrew saw and drew out a happy, excited, and confident performer in a girl who was previously sad and full of self-doubt. I would not be the person I am now without Mr. McAndrew's guidance. His presence in my life was integral, as he showed me how to find myself through theater, and my confidence through acting.

Mr. McAndrew helped me develop my own voice, and even more importantly, inspired me to share it. This confidence is something that no other teacher had been able to bring out of me quite like Mr. McAndrew. Elementary school is the very first point in a child's life where they begin to fully explore and discover who they are. To take away a man who has helped so many children find themselves through theater, a man who has taught children how to make their own power and give themselves a voice, seems a

hugely cruel disservice to children like me, who are desperately needing a Mr. McAndrew in their lives. Especially now, with the pandemic changing so much about school and childhood itself, children need confidence now more than ever to navigate the world ahead of them.

Please don't take away a man who inspires confidence in so many. Please, reconsider this punishment of Mr. McAndrew.

**Nathan Pimentel**

As a former student of Beye School I am extremely disappointed in the district's decision to terminate Mr. McAndrew's employment. I was a student in Karen Fogg's 5th grade class back in 2005. Ms. Fogg commingled her class with Mr. McAndrew back then and I considered him my teacher as much as Ms. Fogg. Mr. McAndrew is, to this day, one of my most instrumental teachers/mentors in my life through elementary school, middle school, high school, and college. I have quite literally had over 100 teachers and he is still one of the top 5 I've ever had. Let that sink in. I have been through the entire education system and a 5th grade teacher was one of my most influential educators. As someone with a diagnosed mental health disorder, I find it abhorrent that the district would penalize Mr. McAndrew for "inappropriately using sick days" to care for his mental health. I expected better from this administration. Oak Park is one of the greatest places in the state of Illinois for young childrens' learning and development and it is because of teachers like Mr. McAndrew. People like him are few and far between. The disappointment I feel from this decision cannot be overstated. I implore the board to reverse this decision and reinstate Mr. McAndrews employment immediately. I have always been proud to say I am from Oak Park, please do not give me or any other residents of this amazing town reason to question that.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Breymaier moved, seconded by Broy that the meeting be adjourned. There being no further business to conduct, Vice President Kim declared the meeting adjourned at 10:09 a.m.

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Board President

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Board Secretary