

MEETING: BOE Meeting 10/7/2021

Comments are listed in the order submitted via the electronic form.

Name: Dena Lichterman

Dear Board of Education Members and Dr. Isoye,

I am writing to you this evening as a teacher and parent in the D219 school. I know that we are living in unprecedented times, and that so much changes as a result of this, but the stuff that remains the same, as far as our school goes, is the commitment of the D219 faculty and staff to ensure that our students are well-educated and challenged.

What feels vastly different this year is what propels me to write to you all. If you were to step into Niles West for even an hour, you would see how much disarray we are in. This year feels more chaotic than the last, and we all know how much chaos there was last year. Any structure that has been implemented in the past is mostly gone, and it is not only the teachers who are feeling it, but many of the students have commented on this as well. Students wander the hallways during class, come to class tardy--or not at all--masks as worn below chins, and bathrooms have been vandalized. While some might say that this is just typical for a school, it is not. It has not been this way at Niles West, and it is discouraging to see it this way now.

So here is my request and plea to all of you Board members, the people who have been elected to oversee this school and purport to want the best for our students: come walk our hallways. Come visit our school. Not for an after school sport or other event, but during daytime hours, when our school is fully functioning with students, faculty, and staff. Watch as students wander all over. Stay for the last bell as school is dismissed to see how parents berate our dedicated, and minimally staffed, security staff as they try to direct traffic. Walk into a bathroom to see students hanging out without consequence. Or wander the cafeteria to see student upon student eating next to each other, unmasked. Our deans, social workers, and security are beyond stretched. With over \$1 million in Covid funds distributed to our district, when will the Board and Superintendent provide proper support so that we can stop feeling so chaotic?

Again, you are invited to come to our schools to see for yourselves. Have conversations with faculty, staff, and students. If you are not willing to, or do not want to pull back the curtain on our district, then perhaps being a Board member is not the right place for you.

Sincerely,

Dena Lichterman

Name: Lia Sosa

Good evening.

On September 7th, teachers at Niles West received an email concerning “general supervision needs.” Within that email, staff members were asked to help with study hall coverage throughout the day due to both the need to open up additional study halls throughout the building and security staffing shortages. Prior to this, staff had not supervised study halls since 2013 when administration found our free periods were better spent planning with grade level teams, meeting with students, or doing the planning and grading necessary for our classes to run more smoothly.

After filling out a survey that indicated the preference for my study hall, I was assigned to supervise the auditorium during one of the busiest periods of the day. On my first day there, I politely asked students to raise their masks which was received poorly, to say the least.. I asked a student not to throw a full water bottle from the back of the auditorium at a group of students sitting rows ahead. I was also laughed at when I asked a group of students to keep their voices down since other students were starting to work. I was shocked at both the number of students in the space and the complete lack of basic and COVID safety protocols. During my second day in the auditorium, 177 students swiped in with two adults supervising. An administrator commented that he thought there were between 3-4 classes in the auditorium. In truth, there were more than 6.5 classes of students present. Furthermore, the lack of COVID protocols was jarring. Since students can eat in the auditorium, masks are off nearly the entire period. They sit closely in small groups; there is no distancing.

It has now been a full month since staff has been supervising study halls. Problem-solving people that we are, these supervision assignments have led staff to ask questions about the way in which we run our study halls. Why are there students in our building with 2-4 study halls each day? With all that we’re doing to keep our students safe in our own classrooms, how can we still enforce protocols in such a large group setting? That says nothing about the problematic ways in which staff, especially those in security, are disrespected by students when thrust into adversarial relationships with them.

Due to staff concerns, the auditorium study hall was split into two spaces--the auditorium and South Lobby. Security staff still supervise the auditorium with teachers in the South Lobby. So while some of my concerns have been assuaged, larger issues still pervade. While some may see supervising one study hall period a week as a small sacrifice to help the greater community, I would argue that this request by administration is impacting more than just that one period of our day. As a freshman English teacher, I am already part of a team that meets bimonthly to problem-solve a course currently running. Before the addition of this study hall, that alone would have been my “sixth assignment.” Then there are my students who would like to meet with me or the work I need to complete in order to be ready for class. I need time to do my job well. Staff members have been working at an unsustainable level for the last three years, and now we’re being asked, again, to give more.

Name: Sharon Swanson

The teachers and staff at Niles West are extremely concerned about the violence and vandalism, rudeness and complete lack of respect exhibited by our students. Because there are no consequences and because teachers are not getting any support from much of the administration, this is gotten completely out of control.