

October 5, 2018

Dear Board of Education Member,

It is with a heavy heart that I compose this letter. Having worked in District 304 for 18 years, I find the current climate between the school board and the teachers extremely disheartening. I always thought the Board of Education was a bridge between teachers and the community and that their role is to *partner with us* in educating Geneva's youth. When I began my career in Geneva, I felt this support and it helped me grow and thrive in the classroom. I fear the current climate adds an extra burden to our new teachers and pushes them out. This leads to constant staff turnover instead of growth. Growth and experience lead to the excellence we tout in CUSD304.

As a young teacher in Geneva, I benefited from the opportunity to grow through advanced degrees. As I pursued my first masters, in literacy, I was able to bring knowledge back to Geneva and work with administration to incorporate what I learned into our middle school. I was able to share with the middle school staff strategies to boost the literacy of our students across content areas, and I was able to work with administration to meet the needs of our struggling readers by adding a reading specialist and reading intervention at the middle school level. Over the past ten years, numerous students have benefited from our reading intervention programs, developed a love of reading, and found success in the classroom because of the support we were able to provide. The investment the district made in me has been returned tenfold. Without investing this same way in our younger teachers, what opportunities are being missed for our current and future Geneva students?

I became a teacher to make a difference in the world. I wanted to share my passion for English, literature, and writing with future generations. I wanted to mentor students as my teachers mentored me throughout my education. I knew this career would not make me rich, but that I could raise a family comfortably while doing something that I love. Education is a noble career; our nation cannot thrive without talented educators. When I first began this noble career, I felt the appreciation and respect that should come with it; the current climate does not include that same support or respect. This recent comment in a statement from the CUSD 304 school board, "The Board strongly believes in and respects our teachers," seems like a slap in the face. If this is the truth, much work needs to be done to make it evident.

I love my job. I love my students. I work hard every day to contribute to the tradition of excellence. That tradition is not sustainable without talented educators. I urge you to work towards a resolution that respects our students, our teachers, and our community.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Hollis  
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