

TO: Principal Michael Paolino, Assistant Superintendent Tonda Dunbar  
CC: Superintendent/Receiver Marguerite Vanden Wyngaard, Ph.D  
FROM: Katherine Malle Sipos, Parent on CET at Hackett Middle School  
RE: CET Concerns/Questions asked at 10/28/15 for 11/23/15 mtg.  
DATE: November 15, 2015

I am writing to (1) share specific concerns about the CET process and (2) reiterate questions asked October 28<sup>th</sup> which we expect will be answered either before (via email) or at our next meeting November 23, 2015.

**CET Committee Overview/Climate:**

The make-up of the CET is stifling the opportunity to speak openly about issues and come together to reach positive votes on change, that challenge staff in the building. Our email has 75 names, but fewer than half show up with any regularity. Our committee's primary make up is (1) a strong group of unionized teachers and administrators regularly in attendance, (2) a strong group of older community members most without children in Albany schools who publicly support the Receiver, (3) a small group of community members who don't have an agenda, (4) core group of parents (smaller than #1 & #2) whose only agenda is to get Hackett out of receivership. One Hackett student came once.

Few speak up for fear of offending someone, especially teachers. The imbalance hampers the CET's ability to put forth real dramatic ideas. Furthermore, because majority rules, and the majority are #1 and #2 members, many ideas put forth by group #3 and #4 are voted down. Thankfully, we were able to submit a minority report for ideas that didn't reach group consensus, they there were not completely dismissed. Still, it isn't clear that the minority report will be read and considered by SED.

**Questions asked at our last CET meeting:**

At our last meeting on October 28th I asked five questions, but don't feel that I got a comprehensive response. I hope that with a little bit of time to reflect and collect information, clearer answers will be provided by our next CET meeting.

**Questions #1 - Curriculum:**

I asked at the meeting about the status of the curricula at Hackett -- by grade -- which classes do, and don't, have a 100-percent, fully-developed, complete curricula? When can we expect curricula not yet fully fleshed out -- to be complete?

When we drafted our plan, I disagreed with the use of the phrase "Timely Manner" in our document. It is too vague. As someone who attends BOE

meetings, I'm aware that our District does not have a *fully developed K-12 curriculum across all grades and across all subject areas (core and non-core)*. This District spent large amounts of money hiring teachers at \$37.50 per hour to write curriculum for the past two or more summers. Where are we?

**Question #2 - Teachers Contracts:**

At the meeting I also asked about the details of the Memorandum of Agreement between the District and teachers effective until June 2016. Principal Paolino described several concessions both ways, but since it was an unexpected question, he may not have remembered all elements of the agreement. Please let the CET know all elements of the most recent Memorandum of Agreement.

**Questions #3 - Salary Increases:**

I also asked if teachers received any salary increases as a result of this Memorandum of Agreement and was told that teachers received increases to cover the longer school day. Please provide specifics about these salary increases for teachers. Are teachers receiving their hourly rate for each of these extra hours each week? What is the total sum of money going towards salary raises for this lengthened school day? I understand that these dollars are coming out of the \$2.75 million grant is meant to cover two years of receivership. How much will be left after this salary increase is subtracted from the whole?

**Questions #4 - Professional Development:**

I also asked how the required PD is going. Please provide specifics about each Friday's professional development opportunities these past two months. And please show how each PD session connects to the goal of helping our teachers be more effective in the classroom. Also, have any outside professionals come in to provide support? Are any planned?

**Questions #5 - The Receiver:**

We often talk about the importance of parental involvement in our schools. I believe Receiver involvement at this juncture is equally, if not more important, given the precarious position of our school right now. In that vein, I asked at the meeting how many times the Receiver has personally come into Hackett Middle School since school started in September? Specifically: (1) to attend how many meetings? (2) How many visits into classrooms? (3) How many times has the Receiver met with teachers? (4) Has the Receiver ever met with *all* Hackett employees? (4) How many times has the Receiver met building principals? For each of these questions please provide dates. This question is important as it will indicate to the CET the level of commitment and support the Receiver (aka the Superintendent) is giving Hackett Middle School principals, teachers, staff, students and ultimately parents and taxpayers.

I look forward to your responses to my questions. Thank you.