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January 10, 2017

**MEMO TO:** Dr. Kriner Cash, Superintendent, BPS  
Members, Buffalo Board of Education

**FROM:** Philip Rumore, President, BTF 

**RE:** McKinley High School Vote of No Confidence - - Principal

Enclosed please find a copy of the vote of no confidence for McKinley High School Principal, Marck Abraham. Fifty-eight (58) of the ninety-five (95) teachers (four (4) left for other jobs – three (3) are on medical leave) support the vote of no confidence.

We have been informed that most of the remaining thirty-seven (37) support the vote; however, they fear retribution if it became known that they had, in any way, indicated support for the vote of no confidence.

I have reviewed the vote of no confidence documentation with one of the teachers who circulated it and I am in possession of fifty-eight (58) statements of support.

As stated, there is such great fear of reprisals that the individual teacher-support documents will not be released.

The dedicated teachers at McKinley High School look forward to swift action by the District to ensure that the teaching and learning conditions are restored and their students' safety is ensured.

PR:ls

cc: Teachers at McKinley

Encl: Vote of no confidence document

We, the undersigned, members of the Buffalo Teachers Federation, and faculty of McKinley Comprehensive High School, Buffalo Public Schools Building #305, submit this vote of no confidence for Acting Principal, Marck Abraham, for fostering a negative and unsafe school culture resulting in faculty, staff, and administrators being disrespected, intimidated, and threatened by students, and for teachers being intimidated by and threatened with punitive measures by administration for not complying with administrative suggestions when no directives have been put in writing. Acting Principal Abraham has requested teacher feedback about many building issues (during faculty meetings and common planning meetings, Tier I Intervention meetings, building committee and SMBT meetings, and in conversations with individual faculty members) only to deny or ignore many of the suggestions offered in the spirit of collaboration. Acting Principal Abraham has paid lip service to teachers by asking for their input and ideas toward solving building problems, yet he has summarily dismissed teachers' suggestions by stating that he needs input from more teachers and the issues are never revisited. He has made significant policy decisions unilaterally and without heeding the requested input of experienced faculty members. Acting Principal Abraham has had over four months to establish his leadership style and to support an existing school culture that was supportive of teaching and learning. Many of our teachers feel that McKinley has become an unsafe environment for teaching and learning as a result of the Acting Principal's leadership.

Acting Principal Abraham has been made aware and/or should be aware of the following concerns:

Acting Principal Abraham is frequently out of the building and unable to be contacted for extended periods of time (arriving late, leaving early, days off) often without replacement coverage.

Unacceptable student behavior, unsatisfactory or no resolution to student discipline referrals.

- Lack of consequences for disruptive or unsafe or threatening behaviors, offenses not taken seriously and dismissed as "just playing," progressive discipline rubric not followed for repeat offenders.
- Students returned to classrooms after being removed by security or administration with no conference held and no consequence handed down after teachers have requested them.
- Discipline referrals left open (and not closed in Infinite Campus) that may not be reported toward school discipline data (\*Documentation available via Infinite Campus screenshots of unresolved discipline referrals dated weeks or months prior. Teachers' follow up communications to administrators have not been acknowledged, administrators replied verbally or via e-mail that they would "take care of it," or concerns have been dismissed as trivial.)
- Acting Principal Abraham has charged teachers with decreasing discipline referrals by 25% from first marking period numbers. (This statement was made by the Acting Principal, during a 12/5/17 morning faculty meeting.) If current numbers of discipline referrals are not being adequately addressed, this request is unreasonable.

Lack of student supervision in hallways and staircases.

- Many students constantly in the halls during instructional periods.
- Students cursing out and trying to verbally and/or physically intimidate faculty, staff, security personnel and administrators who ask them to return to class or identify their purpose for being in the halls.
- Students refusing to identify themselves when asked to do so by adults in the building.
- Students yelling and running in hallways and stairwells from adults trying to usher them toward classrooms regularly disrupts instruction.
- Students knocking or pounding on classroom doors while passing through the halls frequently disrupts instruction and distracts from learning.
- Students wander the halls during instructional periods and walk unauthorized into classrooms where instruction is taking place seeking peers to engage in personal business or social interaction. These students then curse out teachers who ask them to leave. Teachers are often unable to identify such students and are thereby unable to follow up with discipline referrals, resulting in no consequence for disruptive students.

Principal's multiple requests had large numbers of student targets indiscriminately changed to meet the Acting Principal's suggested targets and percentage pass rates for high stakes Regents exams. This was done with no regard for correlation with students' baseline data points.

**Security presence and response inadequate to provide support to teachers.**

- Long standing security team was removed by Acting Principal Abraham at the beginning of 2017-18 school year and those personnel ended up elsewhere in the district. Since then, there has been a constant rotation of new security personnel through the building on what seems like a weekly or even daily basis. It is never clear how many or which officers will be present from day to day, or what their particular assignments or locations are within the building.
- Many security personnel sequester themselves inside closed or locked offices during the school day and are not visible or available to students, faculty, and staff. Due to new security staff being unfamiliar with the McKinley campus, and their lack of availability, teachers have no idea where or whom to call upon for assistance.
- \*While this involves personnel who are members of another union, the Acting Principal is responsible for providing leadership to the security team by communicating expectations for where and when security officers should be available and on duty throughout the building. The issue of inadequate security presence has been addressed by teachers at every faculty meeting this year, yet Acting Principal Abraham continues to make excuses about the lack of experience of security staff newly hired by the district, or needing more security personnel.
- \*McKinley doesn't need more security officers, it needs those that we do have to be visible, present, and to actively engage with students, faculty, and staff to help establish a safe school culture and to support the behavioral expectations for students set by teachers and administrators. This would be possible if the Acting Principal provided the leadership and communication needed to achieve these goals.

**Inadequate # of teacher aides for student supervision duties (i.e. bathroom access and hall duties) has resulted in inadequate access to student restrooms, and a lack of support for teachers' efforts to keep the hallways clear during instruction.**

- We have been informed that the lack of teacher aides is a result of action by Acting Principal Abraham. McKinley's teacher aides used to be assigned to hall duties and restroom supervision (among other duties, when they were not required in classrooms).
- Inadequate restroom access for a population of over 1000 students. At some times ALL restrooms are locked. Most of the time only ONE male and ONE female student restroom are unlocked and available for the entire building.
- Restrooms are not adequately supervised when open and students will congregate there to gamble, smoke cigarettes or use other banned substances, socialize, bully and harass other students, vandalize school property, physically attack other students, or avoid going to class.
- Restrooms have been repeatedly placed out of service due to students spreading fecal matter on walls and in sinks, repeated intentional clogging of toilets with paper towels causing them to overflow, starting fires, pulling paper towel dispensers and toilet paper dispensers off the wall by kicking or jumping on them. This places undue health risks and burden on the engineering staff who clean up and/or repair the mess/damage. Adequate supervision of restrooms would prevent these issues and allow the school to hold students accountable for their actions.
- Other restrooms throughout the building have been unlocked and available only sporadically and without regular notice, so teachers and students do not know which restrooms are available at which times. As a result, students spend instructional time wandering the building looking for an open restroom and often arrive late or return to classes without having been able to relieve themselves.

- The school has received multiple complaints from parents about the lack of bathroom access provided to students. Discipline incidents and formal suspensions have arisen when students with documented medical needs have been denied bathroom access.
- **This issue has been addressed at multiple faculty meetings, building committee meetings, common planning meetings, and through direct conversations with the Acting Principal. Teachers' suggestions offered to ameliorate the problem have been summarily dismissed and no action has been taken toward a solution.**

**Special education teachers are regularly pulled from integrated co-teaching classes to provide substitute coverage when there are not enough substitute teachers in the building.**

- This results in students with disabilities not consistently receiving their state mandated co-teaching services, as stated in students' IEPs. This not only a noncompliance issue, but it is negatively impacting students' ability to be successful in these classes.
- Regular education teachers are pulled from NON-TEACHING duties to provide the same coverage, but only special education co-teachers are being pulled from TEACHING duties in direct noncompliance with state mandated special education services.
- \*While providing sufficient substitute teachers is a responsibility of the Buffalo Board of Education, it is the Acting Principal who has been authorizing the removal of special education teachers from their assigned teaching duties to act in the capacity of substitute teachers.

**Student arrival times are currently recorded on the attendance record for homeroom/1st period only, to artificially inflate attendance data.**

- This makes it look like students are present all day, regardless of what time they sign in. When period by period attendance records are printed for students chronically tardy to school, this pattern is apparent. Arrival times may or may not be recorded, but a student will be marked "Tardy" for the homeroom/1st period, then appear as "Absent Unexcused" from periods 2, 3, 4, etc. until they arrive and will be marked present by teachers for the rest of the day after they arrive.
- Students are sent to class without admit slips or passes and teachers have been told to "just mark them here." Students are aware of this "loophole" and find ways to sneak into the building, telling teachers they "just got here" to avoid a detention slip for signing in at the late desk or attendance office. (\*Specific examples have been documented with by period attendance reports for individual students to provide substantial evidence of current attendance practices.)
- \*When this was brought to the attention of the Acting Principal during direct conversation with multiple teachers, he said that State and Federal aid formulae are based on a school's attendance data for period 1 ONLY. He side-stepped the issue of inaccurate attendance reporting and claimed that period by period attendance data reports were not available. It was suggested to him to contact Mike Hume for a tutorial in how to run the reports or to request an adjustment to the reporting options available. Teachers were able to provide period by period attendance reports in contradiction to the Acting Principal's claim that they were unavailable.

We, the undersigned, members of the Buffalo Teachers Federation, and faculty of McKinley Comprehensive High School, Buffalo Public Schools Building #305, by signing this vote of no confidence for Acting Principal Marck Abraham, request that formal action be taken to remove or transition him from McKinley High School if all of the above issues are not addressed and corrected by 29 January 2018, which is the start of marking period 3.

We sign on the condition that the Buffalo Teachers Federation will not release any name to the District or any of its agents. Names will be collected individually and secured in confidence until hand-delivered to the BTF office. All signatures and any copies of the petition will be surrendered to BTF President Phil Rumore upon delivery. President Rumore will verify and tally signatures upon receipt before reporting the results. A copy of the petition document will be provided to all teachers at such time as the results are reported.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

By copying the statement below, I attest that I am a member of the Buffalo Teachers Federation and faculty of McKinley Comprehensive High School, Buffalo Public Schools Building #305. I am in support of this vote of no confidence and my colleagues who have signed it.

***"I am unwilling to sign my name to this petition because I fear the consequences of retribution by administration should my name be discovered."***

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Date \_\_\_\_\_