

McKinley H.S. SBMT
McKinley High School
1500 Elmwood Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14207

April 13, 2023

Dr. Tonja M. Williams
Superintendent of the Buffalo City School District
712 City Hall
65 Niagara Square,
Buffalo, NY 14202

Dear Dr. Williams:

In 2017 former McKinley H.S. Principal Crystal Barton was placed on leave and replaced by an inexperienced Assistant Principal, who had no teaching experience. From 2017 through February of 2022 most of the procedures, policies, and practices that Mrs. Barton had in place at McKinley, which made McKinley a safe and thriving school, were changed, modified or discontinued. This set into motion a series of events that led to the stabbing of a student and shooting of a security guard on February 11, 2022. The shooting and stabbing garnered national media attention and put McKinley in the spotlight, for all the wrong reasons. Shortly after the shooting Dr. Cash came to McKinley, with members of his cabinet to meet with the teachers. The McKinley teachers were not receptive to Dr. Cash's visit as most viewed it as a "photo op" and "too little too late." Weeks after the incident an online entity publicized and brought to light that former Superintendent Cash was responsible for the shooting as he ignored the McKinley teachers and the BTF's repeated warnings that the substitute principal, that he put in place at McKinley was grossly incompetent. The community and Buffalo Public School District Board of Education turned on Dr. Cash for not listening to the McKinley Teachers and the BTF. Dr. Cash was subsequently forced out.

Dr. Cash's departure opened the door for you to be appointed as Superintendent of the Buffalo Public School District. You promised to listen and collaborate with the teachers and the BTF and not continue Dr. Cash's pattern of marginalizing, disregarding, and ignoring the teachers. In January of 2023 we became aware of a rumor that you were recommending that Mr. Khalil be removed as Principal of McKinley H.S. We wrote a letter to BOE President Sharon Belton-Cottman, copied to you and others, expressing our concern and outrage for the move (see attached). The basic message of our letter was that we supported Mr. Khalil and once again we were not listened to and/or consulted by you prior to your decision, which was your predecessor's modus operandi. Our letter was ignored, and Mr. Khalil was removed on January 18, 2023.

After you removed Mr. Khalil, you came to McKinley to meet with and "listen to us", on 1/20/23. Although you did listen and you stated that you're meeting with us was "not a one and done", the majority of the teachers felt that your visit with us, after you already took action, was reminiscent of Dr. Cash coming to McKinley to meet with the teachers, after years of ignoring our input and after the subsequent shooting and stabbing. In short, we felt that our input was not valued and was never sought prior to any decision that was made.

You appointed Mr. Jenkins as Principal of McKinley H.S., to replace Mr. Khalil, effective 1/30/23. As of today's date, Mr. Jenkins has yet to meet with building committee to address the many concerns the teachers have, even though he was appointed on 1/30/23. On 3/8/23 Delegate Chair Andrea Augello wrote to Mr. Jenkins (see attached), "We will need to pull together an SBMT meeting very soon, as budgets need t [sic] be submitted and we haven't gotten a look at even a draft yet." At the time of Mrs. Augello's letter, Mr. Jenkins had also not yet met with the SBMT, even though he took over as Principal more than two months prior (SBMT is supposed to meet monthly).

On 3/14/23 Mr. Mahoney authored an email to Mrs. Watson (copied to you, Mr. Jenkins and others). Part of Mr. Mahoney's email (see attached) addressed the fact that Mr. Jenkins had not yet met with SBMT, but it was rumored that Mr. Jenkins had been meeting with his administrative staff and the guidance department and begun the process of discussing and finalizing the budget for the 2023-2024 school year. At the request of the SBMT members, Mrs. Steiner attended the 3/24/23 SBMT meeting and explained the benefits of McKinley having a band and chorus. At this SBMT meeting (the only one Mr. Jenkins has held since taking over on 1/30/23), the consensus of the members of SBMT who have signed this letter was that music should have 2.0 in the budget to include both classroom music and chorus/band. Furthermore, nobody agreed to, nor heard any explanation as to why this could not be included in the budget. Principal Jenkins was noticeably uneasy discussing the topic. It was obvious that there had been "other discussions" that were not in favor of band and chorus.

Members of the SBMT heard rumors that Principal Jenkins held a budget work session on Saturday 3/25/23 with members of his administration and the guidance department. Oddly, none of the SBMT members were invited to the meeting, even though they are the ones commissioned with constructing and approving the budget. This week the SBMT became aware that Mr. Jenkins and his secret group created a budget that will be discussed and approved downtown on Friday 4/14/23, without input or authorization from the SBMT. On April 11, 2023 Mrs. Watson summonsed Mrs. Steiner into the office to meet with her and Mr. Jenkins. Mrs. Watson informed Mrs. Steiner that the 2023-2024 budget would not include band but that there would be two art positions included. Mrs. Watson provided justification for the move citing a survey that was allegedly completed by the students. Mrs. Watson stated that there wasn't interest from the students in "band." Mrs. Watson's argument is invalid though. Even if "band" was included in a survey to the students, which it doesn't seem to have been, you cannot recruit band students from a piece of paper. Students at McKinley have not been exposed to a band program and thus it is illogical to assume they are able to make an informed choice, even if asked. Despite not having a band program, Ms. Steiner has recruited more than 70 students who would be interested in playing an instrument next year. Furthermore, Mrs. Watson is not commissioned with constructing and approving the budget, the SBMT is.

On 4/11/23 Mrs. Jenna Burke (Labor Relations Specialist @BTF) wrote an email to Mrs. Watson (see attached) that was also copied to Mr. Jenkins and Mr. Schwanz. In her email Mrs. Burke protested that the SBMT was being disregarded and she specifically informed Mrs. Watson "The BTF members of the SBMT are reserving all rights to pursue this matter to ensure that the proper process is used for the 2023-2024 school year budget at McKinley High School." On 4/12/23 Mrs. Janet Lopez (Parent Engagement Leader) and SBMT member, emailed Mr. Jenkins and the SBMT questioning when we would be meeting to construct and approve the budget (see attached).

The McKinley H.S. staff received an email from Mr. Jenkins on 4/12/23 (see attached), informing us that there would be a SBMT meeting on Monday April 17, 2023 at 3:30 P.M. This meeting is surely not coincidentally scheduled to take place AFTER the McKinley budget is finalized and set in stone on 4/14/23. This latest act of dismissing the McKinley teachers by Mr. Jenkins and Ms. Watson is reminiscent of the previous times we were disregarded and stepped over in the past (see page #1 of this document). Mr. Jenkins meeting with the SBMT AFTER the budget is set in stone and cannot be changed is very similar to Dr. Cash coming to McKinley AFTER ignoring our warnings for four plus years and you coming to McKinley to "listen to us" after terminating Principal Khalil despite our letter of support for him.

We are asking that you (Dr. Williams) change course immediately and stop disregarding us and allowing your staff to disregard us. Please do the following:

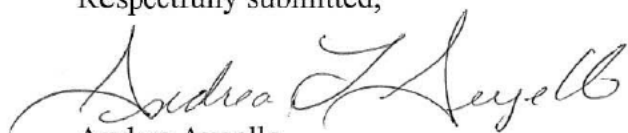
#1. Put a halt to Mr. Jenkins' and Mrs. Watson's disrespectful acts of circumventing the SBMT. Direct Mr. Jenkins and Mrs. Watson to **postpone the budget hearing scheduled for this Friday (4/14/23)**, for a minimum of three weeks. This would allow the SBMT time to construct and approve their budget for the 2023-2023 school year. Please do not attempt to schedule a SBMT meeting for 4/13/23, to get our "input." We do not want to be

patronized with a bogus meeting that INFORMS us of the budget just hours prior to the budgets approval. We need time to CONSTRUCT and AUTHORIZE the budget, according to the aforementioned agreement adopted by the BOE.

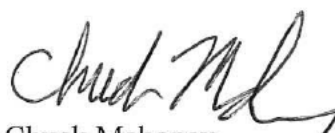
#2. Among the changes we wish to make are, we wish to include 2.0 music and 1.5-2.0 Art positions in the 2023-2024 budget. Additionally, we want to cut a minimum of one and possibly two administrative positions (Assistant Principals). We will make these decisions once we are presented with the budget and have had ample time to discuss and strategize what is best for our students and staff.

#3. Please provide us with your written assurance that you have met with Mrs. Watson and Mr. Jenkins and that they will no longer circumvent, marginalize, or disrespect us as professionals. Forcing us to take action, in the form of writing this letter is uncomfortable for us and we should not be put in this position. Please give us your word, in writing, that this type of conduct from your subordinates will cease immediately and never happen again.

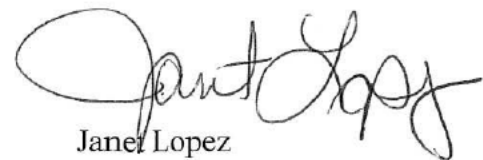
Respectfully submitted,



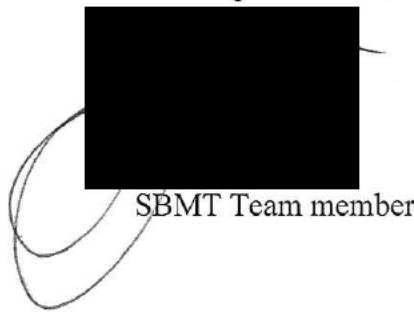
Andrea Augello
McKinley H.S. BTF Delegate Chair
SBMT Team member
Building Committee member



Chuck Mahoney
McKinley H.S. BTF Delegate
SBMT Team member
Building Committee member



Janet Lopez
SBMT Team member
Parent Engagement Leader



SBMT Team member

Cc:
Mrs. Sharon Belton-Cottman
Mr. Philip Rumore
Mrs. Jenna Burke
Mrs. Charlene Watson
Mr. Terrance Jenkins

McKinley H.S. BTF Delegate Chair
McKinley H.S. BTF Delegates
McKinley H.S. SBMT Team
McKinley H.S. Building Committee
McKinley High School
1500 Elmwood Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14207
January 18, 2023

Sharon Belton-Cottman
Board of Education President
Buffalo Public Schools
801 City Hall
65 Niagara Square, NY 14202

Dear Mrs. Belton-Cottman:

We are writing you this letter on behalf of a large number of McKinley High School staff who are concerned about the impending removal of Principal Khalil, which is scheduled to be voted on at your board meeting today and effective as of 1/30/23. Many of us endured several years at McKinley where our repeated pleas for district leadership to remove incompetent building level leadership, fell on deaf ears. Our school was lawless, without order and unsafe for staff and students. This led to the unfortunate events of February 9, 2022, where one student was stabbed multiple times and a school security guard was shot outside of McKinley H.S. This incident traumatized our students and staff and vaulted McKinley into a national spotlight, for all the wrong reasons.

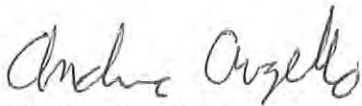
Shortly after the tragic February 2022 incident, Mr. Khalil was dropped into McKinley at one of the worst times in the school's history and since that day, he has been scrambling to create a sense of family and some semblance of order in a school that had seen repeated administrative turnover. Mr. Khalil has taken the time to listen to input and suggestions from all of the stakeholders. He has worked to hold students *and* teachers accountable in an effort to change the school climate and restore the order that existed while Principal Barton presided over our beloved McKinley H.S. While there is still a lot of work to be done, as getting the building to a place of stability and true order has not yet been achieved, Mr. Khalil has worked hard to move us in that direction.

This letter has been signed by The ELECTED McKinley H.S. BTF Delegate Chair, every ELECTED McKinley BTF Delegate, every ELECTED McKinley H.S. SBMT member and every ELECTED McKinley H.S. Building Committee member. On 1/17/23 approximately 50% of our staff participated in an online survey. Of those that participated, 95% voted replacing Mr. Khalil is not in the best interest of our students and staff, especially at this time (January, in the middle of the school year, right before regents exams). We feel that replacing Mr. Khalil at this time will lead to instability within our school and undo any gains that we have made over the last year.

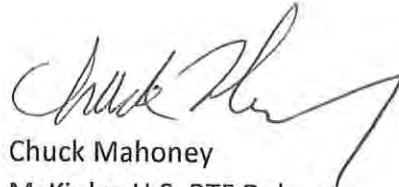
Not one of us was consulted for our input from the BPS Board of Education or any member of your Administration prior to your impending action being slid into the board agenda. As written above, our pleas for the Board and administration to remove previous incompetent school leadership were ignored for years. It was Dr. Williams who promised, that after the shooting, the district was going to be spending a lot more time

listening to the needs of the teachers. She promised that the district would support us in any way possible; that they would consult us, ask for our input and work WITH us to make McKinley a stronger place. We are asking that you STOP disregarding our input as we are the ones inside the school who actually know what is transpiring. We are officially requesting that the Board cancel (or at a minimum table) any plans to replace Principal Khalil. If you feel that change is necessary, we ask that you get our input prior to making such a move. We are convinced that replacing Principal Khalil, especially mid-school year, will lead to disaster at McKinley H.S., which will fall squarely on your shoulders, if you continue this course of action. Please consider our letter carefully before you proceed.

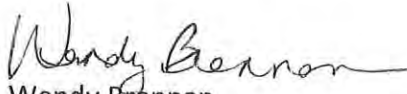
Respectfully submitted,



Andrea Augello
McKinley H.S. BTF Delegate Chair
SBMT Team member
Building Committee member



Chuck Mahoney
McKinley H.S. BTF Delegate
SBMT Team member
Building Committee member



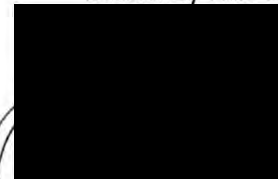
Wendy Brennan
Building Committee member



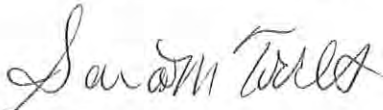
Michael Sorrentino
McKinley H.S. BTF Delegate



Ryan Sajdak
McKinley H.S. BTF Delegate



SBMT Team member



Sara Torres
McKinley H.S. BTF Delegate
SBMT Team member



Zaire Dorsey
SBMT Team member

Cc: Dr. Kathy Evans-Brown
Lawrence Scott
Terrance Heard
Teresa Schuta
The remaining members of the Board Et Al.
Dr. Tonja M. Williams
Mr. Phillip Rumore

SBMT Meeting

Augello, Andrea <AAugello@buffaloschools.org>

Wed 3/8/2023 8:30 AM

To: Jenkins, Terence <TJenkins@buffaloschools.org>

Cc: Torres, Sara <SMTorres@buffaloschools.org>; Mahoney, Charles F <CMahoney@buffaloschools.org>; Yager, Joseph M <JYager@buffaloschools.org>; Dorsey, Zaire <ZDorsey@buffaloschools.org>; Sorrentino, Michael <MSorrentino@buffaloschools.org>; Michlin, Randy K <RMichlin@buffaloschools.org>; Sajdak, Ryan <RSajdak@buffaloschools.org>; Zimmer, Emily <EZimmer@buffaloschools.org>; Barbara, Nicholas <nsbarbara@buffaloschools.org>

Good morning,

I have also CCed in our alternates so we can all be on the same page.

We will need to pull together an SBMT meeting very soon, as budgets need to be submitted and we haven't gotten a look at even a draft yet.

Please advise,
Andrea

P.S. On an unrelated matter, you indicated at our meeting with the superintendent in January that among the reasons Mr. Khalil was replaced was because you didn't think he met frequently enough with SBMT. We have not met with Principal Jenkins since he took over, more than two months ago. In fact, McKinley Delegate Chair Mrs. Augello wrote an email (see attached) to Mr. Jenkins and the SBMT on 3/8/23 requesting that we meet to work on the budget. Mrs. Steiner also wrote to McKinley administration on 3/8/23 requesting a meeting regarding music/arts staffing for next school year (2023-2024). Neither Mrs. Augello nor Mrs. Steiner have received a response from Mr. Jenkins or the McKinley administration. We have heard that the administration has recently met, regarding the budget, with the guidance department and others, but not SBMT. For some odd reason, the guidance department at McKinley is considered "administration" and given special powers, but this is not proper. On behalf of SBMT I am requesting that Principal Jenkins call a SBMT meeting this week so that we can decide budgetary matters. It is my personal opinion that our students and school community have an amazing opportunity to have a band and orchestra directed by one of WNY's most highly respected music directors, Amy Steiner. I firmly believe that Mrs. Steiner will help transform McKinley from a spiraling, out of control school, to a cultural destination for many BPS students. The McKinley staff members elected the SBMT members to handle these matters, not the guidance department. Please scrap anything that administration and guidance decided during the aforementioned clandestine meetings and schedule a meeting with SBMT for THIS WEEK, so that we can decide these budgetary matters.

From: Jenna Burke

Sent: Tuesday, April 11, 2023 5:13 PM

To: Watson, Charlene <charlene.watson@nysut.org>

Cc: Jenkins, Terence <terence.jenkins@nysut.org>; Schwanz, James C <james.schwanz@nysut.org>

Subject: McKinley Budget Process

Ms. Watson,

I am writing about reports I have been receiving that the proper budget process for McKinley High School is not being followed. As you are aware, the attached document outlines the agreed-to process for school-based management teams to develop the building budget for the following school year. The document was approved by the BOE in 2015 and requires, among other things, decisions to be made with "consensus" of the team. I am told that, without consensus of the SBMT, it has been determined that all music will be cut from McKinley's budget for the 2023-2024 school year. Upon information and belief, the consensus of *all* of the members of the SBMT, including parent representative(s) is that music, *including* classroom music and chorus/band should be in McKinley's budget for the 2023-2024 school year. Additionally, while I understand that the budget process requires decisions to be made in order to fit within a set amount of money, the SBMT team has been explicitly told on several occasions that there is money available for McKinley to best serve its student population next year. Therefore, there is no practical need for these cuts to be made.

If true, it is unacceptable that the SBMT process is being disregarded and flouted and that instead, the will of a select few is being unilaterally imposed. The BTF members of the SBMT are reserving all rights to pursue this matter to ensure that the proper process is used for the 2023-2024 school year budget at McKinley High School.

It is my hope that a correction can immediately be made and the proper SBMT process can be used prior to McKinley's budget being finalized.

Thank you,

Jenna Burke
Labor Relations Specialist @BTF
NYSUT
271 Porter Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14201
716-881-5400
716-881-6678 (fax)
jenna.burke@nysut.org

SBMT Meeting

Lopez, Janet <jlopez@buffaloschools.org>

Wed 4/12/2023 9:10 AM

To: Jenkins, Terence <TJenkins@buffaloschools.org>; Dorsey, Zaire <ZDorsey@buffaloschools.org>; Torres, Sara <SMTorres@buffaloschools.org>; Yager, Joseph M <JYager@buffaloschools.org>; Mahoney, Charles F <CMahoney@buffaloschools.org>; Augello, Andrea <AAugello@buffaloschools.org>

Good morning,

I hope everyone is having a great morning. It has come to my attention that we have got an extension on our budget and was wondering when we will be having the SBMT Meeting to agree on the budget. I have been to another schools SBMT Meeting when they were discussing the budget at the meeting, and they went line for line on the budget and agreed. From what I remember from the last SBMT Meeting we were informed that the budget wasn't even looked at yet and the Admin team will be discussing it on Saturday. Did this meeting occur? We were also informed that everybody will be getting what they want as they expanded our budget for next year which included a Consulting Teacher for SPED, Music to be expanded to band and chorus, an IT Coach, 2 teachers for CTE Programs, and another Art teacher. We also proposed a Bell Schedule that wasn't completely discussed. If I'm wrong in what I remember from the meeting, please let me know as I didn't receive minutes from the meeting. Please let me know when the SBMT Meeting will be held. Thank you for everything!

Janet Lopez
Parent Engagement Leader
McKinley High School

SBMT

Jenkins, Terence <TJenkins@buffaloschools.org>

Wed 4/12/2023 1:48 PM

To: McKinley Macks 305 <School305@BuffaloSchools.org>; Lopez, Janet <jlopez@buffaloschools.org>

Good Afternoon.

We will be having our next SBMT meeting Monday April 17th, 2023, at 3:30pm.

Any questions, please let me know.

Thank you.

Terence A. Jenkins

Principal, Buffalo Public Schools

McKinley High School

1500 Elmwood Avenue

Buffalo, New York 14207

Office: 716.816.4480

Fax: 716.871.6086

Nelson Mandela once said, "What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead."