

25 December 2019  
Youngstown City Schools  
474 Bennington Ave.  
Youngstown, OH 44505

Dear Justin Jennings, CEO Youngstown City Schools:  
Youngstown City Schools Board President Brenda Kimble:

I am declining becoming a member of the Youngstown City School Board. I believe that the School Board has and always has had a significant role in the success of our schools in educating our children. However, I have to accept that I, and those who believe as I do, are out-numbered on the present Board. We are out-trumpeted by certain leaders in the community and the present members of the Board who believe that it is only by wresting all control from the Academic Distress Committee that they can play a role in helping our schools succeed in educating our children.

Those who wish to see the end of public education have developed an ingenious strategy for winning: get teachers, parents, administrators, the public, and those who represent them to play the blame game. First, however, the myth that public schools are failing was created. So, whether the desire was for religious education paid for by the public, money making, racism, or political beliefs that choice was all important or that public education was socialism, the public education attackers drew the public to support their so-called reform efforts by labelling our schools as failing. They employed test and punish as a mechanism for achieving their goal. They blamed the professionals and created alternative schools to train educational leaders; they attempted to replace teachers with computers and with teachers who have neither teaching certificates nor educational training. They took away public control through state takeovers, creating charters, and putting educational dollars into supporting vouchers that pay for students to get a religious education. Not only did they label students as failing but also their public schools.

Our present board accepts that the Youngstown City Schools are failing. They say it is not the Youngstown City School Board's fault and we should look elsewhere to place the blame: the Academic Distress Commission; the leaders, whether labelled superintendent or CEO; or the teachers. Others in the community want to blame the parents. Neither the Board or their community supporters question the system itself and therefore they do not provide leadership in how to address the needs of our students to improve their education and quality of life.

What we do know is that

- 1) The state report card that labels our schools with an F is so flawed that the legislature has a committee to redesign it yet again.
- 2) The tests in reading and mathematics are so flawed that they are redesigned and replaced ad infinitum.
- 3) Twenty plus years of educational reform has not produced improvement—it has gamed the system, reduced resources for true public education, and done little if anything to address the real issues:
  - a) What support do those who come from families whose children do not enjoy the resources of a stable home, books, adequate food need?
  - b) What role does public education play in preserving “our more perfect union”?

- c) What do we know about the role of cultural differences in our understanding of what words mean and therefore of the numerous factors involved in producing a “reading” of a text?
- d) Is knowledge best measured by a standardized test?

We must have positive leadership if we are to save the Youngstown Public Schools and the Ohio public education system.

Regards,

Barbara Brothers  
Dean Emeritus Youngstown State University  
Former High school English teacher and Upward Bound Instructor  
Recipient as Chairperson of English of Awards for High School/College Partnerships (Council for Advancement and Support of Education, Mitau Award, National Council of Teachers of English)  
Recipient of \$2.5 million Title II Teacher Enhancement Grant

Cc. Mahoning Matters  
Dr. Eugene T.W. Sanders, CEO & Superintendent, Sandusky City Schools, President, Ohio Mid-Sized Urban Leadership Collaborative  
Ohio School Boards Association