

Open Letter to the Rockingham County School Board:

We, the undersigned teachers and staff of Rockingham County Public Schools, current and former, love working in this county. It is a great place to live, teach, and raise a family.

We acknowledge that the current members of the school board made promises and outlined initiatives in their campaigns. The citizens of Rockingham County decided through a democratic election that these people should represent them on the school board. This is uncontested.

There is a current member of the school board who has served with distinction for several years, and we thank her for her service.

We acknowledge the essential role that families play in the wellbeing of the students, and we are committed to a partnership with parents and the community on how to best help our students.

The school board ought to be an open, receptive and supportive place for teachers, parents, students and the greater community. It should be deferential to educational experts and professionals who have committed their careers to public education.

While many teachers do not personally agree with some of the new policies, we are obligated to carry them out according to our contracts.

What we object to is the way in which the policies have been implemented and how certain school board members conduct themselves.

First, the implementation of policies has been poorly planned and poorly executed. While establishing a new process for evaluating library books may be within the rights of a school board, pulling a select list of books that happen to [match a list from](#) a web site used to challenge books in libraries, especially when a [policy had already been in place](#), gives the unwanted appearance of the school board playing politics. This was done after citing “parental complaints” as the reason for pulling these 57 titles, despite no formal documented complaints. When formulating the new policy, the school board almost totally ignored both the [draft policy](#) submitted by librarians and [feedback from the community](#).

Second, the community is being fed a false narrative by the school board as to what is going on in schools. Teachers are being cast as part of the “unhinged left,” and part of the school board is presenting themselves as crusaders against [leftist indoctrination](#). This is not the reality that teachers see in their schools. Certain school board members are manufacturing a crisis in order to push their political agenda onto a nonpartisan elected office, and have shared [negative](#) and [dismissive](#) views concerning RCPS teachers.

Third, a member of the school board has posted on Facebook with [calls to report to the school board teachers who are suspected of sharing their political views in the classroom](#). This has

been done without any direct evidence or documentation of the alleged incidents. Such actions create a climate of suspicion, fear and mistrust amongst teachers. Furthermore, it completely undermines the [preexisting chain of command](#), as matters such as these should be reported at the building level to the appropriate administrators first.

Despite promises from a member of the school board to take down an official Facebook page, they have instead chosen to keep the page up in order to be a “[continual voice for parents](#).” While this promise [has been renewed](#), we are concerned this divisive rhetoric will continue through other means.

Fourth, the term “parental rights” has been manipulated to suggest that parents have [somehow been excluded](#) from their children’s education or that parents are prevented from knowing what is going on in the classroom. This misconception is particularly damaging to the climate of trust we strive to build between parents and teachers. We fear these actions from the school board are meant to turn parents and the community against the teachers, when they should be supportive partners.

So far, the Board’s responses to concerns have included [criticizing the media](#), [criticizing others on the school board](#), moving public comment to the end of school board meetings and [limiting the number of people](#) allowed to speak. The latter action discourages the public from sharing their comments and concerns.

We have a number of concerns about the long term effects of the school board’s conduct. These include the following:

- That good teachers will quit and look to work outside of this county. We will [lose many of the qualified and dedicated educators](#) we currently have.
- That the county will no longer attract good teachers if they do not feel supported by their school board. Student teachers have already shared that many people from their cohorts are reluctant to seek employment here in the coming year, and they have cited the conduct of the school board as their reason.
- That the actions of the school board will [garner national attention](#), reducing our county to a sideshow attraction.

We encourage the school board to do the following:

- Seek the guidance and council of experienced educators like the superintendent when implementing policies, as well as the school attorney and other education professionals. Such consultations may prevent [potential legal issues](#) like when [prayer was invoked at a school board meeting](#).
- Act in a professional manner with the dignity accorded to this elected position. This conduct should extend to social media postings.
- Be a role model for the students on how to make decisions that will benefit the community in a positive way. Seek consensus when making decisions.
- Support the teachers as you claim to do.

- Commit to maintaining public schools as a space for equality of opportunity for every student.

We sincerely hope the school board will take these suggestions seriously and cease their divisive, misleading and hurtful actions.

If any students ask us about this letter or why we signed it, we will simply refer them to the letter and encourage them to come to their own conclusions, as we have always done.

Any teachers who wish to add their names to this letter, or would like to contact us, should go to <http://www.tinyurl.com/RCPSOpenLetter> or email us at concernedRCPSfaculty@gmail.com

In Solidarity,

Jake Adams, Teacher
Travis Anderson, Teacher
Keli Andrews, Staff
Bobbie Arbogast, Teacher
Jessica Ashby, Staff
Paula Austin-Shipman, Teacher
Thomas Baker, Teacher
Carri Bardhoshi, Teacher
Nancy Bassett, Staff
Erin Baugher, Teacher
Carolyn Bauserman, Staff
Jeremy Baxter, Teacher
Holly Bazzle, Teacher
Barbara Bean, Teacher
Ashley Benn, Teacher
Kathryn Bodkins, Teacher
Kelly Brady, Staff
Peggy Brubaker, Staff
April Buckmaster, Teacher
Christina Burke, Teacher
Terri Butler, Teacher
Heather Cherry, Teacher
Lacey Clarke, Teacher
Jenny Coceano-Custer, Staff
Jami Cornwell, Teacher
Stephanie Covarrubias Palomino, Teacher
Brooke Crawford, Staff
Stephanie Dean, Teacher
Charlotte Deason, Teacher
Susan Dell, Staff

Elizbeth DePoy, Teacher
Jackson Dixon, Staff
Jennifer Dorman, Teacher
Jackie Dunsmore, Teacher
Patricia Evans, Teacher
Erin Eye, Teacher
Josh Eye, Teacher
Candice Flake, Teacher
Kathy Foley, Staff
Courtney French, Teacher
Joseph Fuoco, Teacher
Nikki Gardner, Teacher
Alyssa Green, Teacher
Chris Grim, Teacher
Julia Hall, Teacher
Patrick Hardner, Teacher
Heather Harris, Teacher
Mary Harter, Teacher
Mallory Hatfield, Teacher
Sarah Hayward, Teacher
Demetra Heckman, Teacher
Laura Henry, Teacher
T.J. Hindley, Teacher
Dena Hollar, Teacher
Amy Hooke, Teacher
Marianne Houff, Teacher
Alana Irvine, Staff
Margo Jantzi, Teacher
Jennifer Joyner, Teacher
Marty Judd, Teacher

Courtney Judd, Teacher
Ian Kaye, Teacher
Diana Kemper, Teacher
Sandy King, Staff
Jenny Knick, Teacher/Staff
Leanne Kreps, Staff
Gary Lancaster, Teacher
Carlene Lantz, Teacher
June Lantz, Staff
Suellen Leach, Teacher
Karen Leigh, Teacher
Kathleen Leigh-Miller, Teacher
Lynne Lent, Staff
Amanda Lingenfelter, Teacher
Laura Logan, Teacher
Tina Lonce, Teacher
Kristen Long, Teacher
Bethany Lough, Teacher
Andrew Lough, Teacher
Missy Luikart, Teacher
Miranda Lyle, Teacher
Kim Maggiolo, Teacher
Robert Mann, Teacher
Samara Mann, Teacher
Jonathan McClure, Teacher
Kate McDonald, Teacher
Jaimie McGovern, Teacher
Pat McGrath, Teacher
Elizabeth McGregor, Teacher
Ashley Michael, Teacher
Ximena Miller, Teacher
Renée Miller-Lapp, Teacher
Jennifer Monger, Teacher
Tim Mumbauer, Teacher

Kim Muraskin, Teacher
Kim Newton, Teacher
Mary Claire Pedagno, Teacher
Katelyn Pendleton, Teacher
Elizabeth Platt, Teacher
Tim Reger, Teacher
Emma Reger, Staff
Lisa Rhodes, Staff
Julie Ritchie, Teacher
Lacey Roberts, Staff
Phil Satolli, Teacher
Amanda Sauder, Teacher
Olivia Schumacher, Teacher
Anne Scott, Teacher
Megan Shepard, Teacher
Denise Shiflet, Teacher
Amy Simmers, Teacher
Katie Sisson, Teacher
Tori Smith, Teacher
Courtney Spiers, Teacher
Dana Stover, Staff
Tina Suter, Staff
Melissa Swartz, Staff
Janie Thames, Teacher
Tamara Trombetta, Staff
Suzanne Turner, Teacher
Tim Van Schaick, Teacher
Katherine Ward, Teacher
Andrea Weaver, Teacher
Beth Webb, Teacher
Erika Whetzel, Staff
Steven Whitmer, Staff
Adrienne Whiteside, Teacher
Christopher Zepp, Teacher

Retired/Former RCPS Teacher/Staff Members:

Gemma Amdendola
Susan Anderson
Harry Atwood
Melanie Bailey
Julia Bair
Carole Barber
Donna Barber

Amelia Bayer
Kim Beaty
Marguerite Botkin
Brandi Burkhart Walton
Alison Casey
Susan Clague
Brittany Colabrese

Heather Craddock
Angelea Deane
Donna Detrich
Linda Dillashaw
Linda Doherty
Jeanie Eye
Alicia Faller
Julie Foster
Laura Fox
Nelle Fox
Maureen Gallon
Cynthia Grandle
Peggy Grandle
Cheri Greenfield
Anna Grimm
Dee Grimm
Mary B. Hahn
Amy Harris
Beth Harter
Mary B. Hawkins
Holly Haygood
Tom Hayward
Karen Holl
Stacie Holzberger
Dan Horton
Hannah Johnson
Margaret Johnson
Anne Juarez
Mark Keeler
Stashia Kline
Steven Konyar
Bill Kyger
Heather Lantz
Andrea Lantz Reamer
Judith LaPera
Jessica Levine
Rochelle Long
Rob Lovell
Jenny Martin

Nancy Martin Finks
Janice McArdle
John McNaught
Ramona Miller
Mary Morgan
Cindy Moyers
Robert Nachtigall
Isima Namei
Curtis Nolley
Sally Pettit
Clay Phillips
Rebecca Powell
Katherine Quimby
Michele Reger
Martha Reish
Megan Rexrode
Krista Rivera
Mary Alice Robertson
Ann W. Roller
Stephinie Saeed
Jillian Shifflett
Susan Short
Mike Simpson
Margaret Simpson
Fran Smith
Tracy Sonafelt
Pamela Southard
Amanda Staton
Diane Stevens
Lauren Strawderman
Jamie Swartzentruber
Susan Thacker
Kley Todd
Jeanette Toohey
Michele Van Pelt
Jenny Walzecker
Anita Wayland
Rachel Whitmer
William Wonneberger
Amanda Zepp