

**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](mailto: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

Elizabeth 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 Burkhardt 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