

Dear State Legislators,

I accept your apology. On behalf of Brunswick City School District Board of Education, I accept your apology. While no formal apology has yet been given, I am confident that one is forthcoming so I thought I'd be proactive with my acceptance. It's one of the most difficult things I've had to do as a board member, but I do forgive you. I know that you could not have realized that you used a broken report card system to make major decisions for our students. There's just no way that you would use a broken thermometer to gauge the weather, so I know that you would never use a broken reporting system to judge our students or teachers.

I know that you were tired or having a really bad day when you passed major legislation that put five of our district's schools on the naughty list. Certainly, you would never determine that a school is failing having never met any of its students or teachers, right? It has taken me months to come to a place where I can forgive you for insinuating that the dedicated professional educators in our district are failing in their pursuit to help our students grow into happy, healthy, productive adults. Again, I am sure you didn't really mean to point your finger at our schools and our teachers when you looked for schools that were not providing a fantastic education to their students. So I forgive you for insulting our students, teachers, staff, and administrators by mistakenly telling them that they are failing our students.

Our schools are not failing. Our teachers are not failing. Our students are not failing. You are failing by using flawed data to make major decisions. Surely, you would never want to accuse a school of failing if that were not the case, right? Surely, you would love to see all public schools succeed in helping their students learn and grow, right? Then stop telling our students they are not good enough because your flawed data spit out the wrong information. Let's look at one of our community's elementary schools, Huntington Elementary. On this year's report card, Huntington scored a C in Achievement, an A in Progress, an A in Gap Closing, and an Overall grade of a B. Does this sound like a failing school to you? Huntington made the list because in 2014 they scored abnormally low in K-3 Literacy. It's 2020 and this school is being punished for test scores from 2014 even though it has shown tremendous improvement. The teachers and students in this school are fantastic, not failing. If you don't believe me, why not come and see for yourself?

I also accept your apology for pitting neighbor against neighbor in our community. I forgive you for the embarrassment that is caused when a board member is approached in church and thanked for having failing schools. I forgive you for causing otherwise rational people to root for the schools in their community to make the failing list so that next year's tuition to their child's private, and oftentimes religious, high school is \$6000 less. Families who never intended to send their students to our schools, and who have had no trouble paying for their private schools in the past, are planning to take this money and run. Many private schools in our area are actively marketing to their families, equating the EdChoice expansion to winning the lottery. Once you put the incorrect thought in our community members' minds that our schools are

failing, you caused many to doubt our schools. Where I come from, that is slander. However, I forgive you because my Catholic upbringing and my public school education tell me to do so.

I had a lot of trouble coming to terms with the obvious misuse of public funds for religious education. In my opinion, this is a clear violation of the separation of church and state and it really does put us all on a slippery slope. Still, I forgive you. Incidentally, since we are now funding religious education, may I expect a voucher from the state to pay to send my own children to their religion classes?

Lastly, I forgive you for misleading Ohioans into thinking that you are doing what is fair and right for their students. Fair would mean that all schools that are eligible for public funds are held to the same standards. Even though private schools get to choose which students are worthy of their education, there is still no proof that private schools are outperforming our public schools. If testing is going to be the benchmark we use to judge students and schools, then we should all be taking the same tests. (Here in Brunswick, we tend to value our students more for their problem-solving skills, citizenship, and teacher created assessments, but if you must use standardized tests graded by computers, so be it.) You have set criteria for how to get on that list of failing schools, but you have no standards for private schools to receive public dollars. How is that fair or right? The state requires public school teachers to be certified to teach their area of expertise, no such rules are in place for the schools receiving public dollars from EdChoice. Many of our teachers have advanced degrees and they are required to continue their education to renew their licenses. There is no such rule for the schools who are receiving EdChoice dollars. Public schools are continually tasked with trying to keep pace with unfunded state mandates, while private schools have little to no state oversight. Why would we fund schools without holding them accountable?

I accept your apology, with one reservation. As my own children learned in their elementary school, there are two parts to any apology. Saying you are sorry is not enough. You must now work to right the wrongs. Eliminate the failing schools list until we have an accurate way to identify those schools. Please support the current version of Senate Bill 89.

While you are hard at work trying to agree on a fair solution, we at Brunswick City Schools will continue to support our students and to help them grow into the best citizens they can be by continuing to deliver a superior education. Rest assured that we will go about our business of doing what is right for kids, while quietly compiling a list of our accomplishments, a few of which are listed below.

Respectfully,

Mary Weinhauer
Parent
Brunswick Board of Education Member

Did you know that in recent years:

- BCSD schools have been honored by the state for our PBIS initiatives
- BCSD's Memorial Elementary was visited last year by the State Superintendent who was there to commend us for our PBIS program
- Brunswick High School Offers over 20 AP Courses
- BHS had 59 AP Scholars
- BHS had 23 AP Scholars with Honor
- BHS had 37 AP Scholars with Distinction
- BHS has 5 National AP Scholars
- BHS has earned the Silver Recognition for PBIS
- BHS had a National Merit Scholarship Finalist & four Commended Students
- BHS Class of 2019 students are at Harvard, Ohio State, Cincinnati, Purdue, Loyola, Case Western, University of North Carolina, University of Notre Dame, Hillsdale College, Lake Erie College, Miami of Ohio and University of Dayton, just to name a few!
- BHS had three State Champions in Swimming, Wrestling and Gymnastics
- BHS for the first time, all four choirs competing in OMEA States all received top marks
- Band and Orchestra have earned a superior ratings at OMEA
- BHS supports the Arts with musicals, plays & participates in Shakespeare competitions
- BHS Academic Challenge Team has placed first in the county tournament and qualified for nationals
- BHS students have competed and won awards for developing APPs
- BHS hosts Special Olympics in May for school districts around our community
- BHS designed a work program called PRIDE Bites at the Brunswick Recreation Center
- BHS has been identified as a PLTW Distinguished School
- BHS has donated food items to Feeding Medina County & Brunswick's Food Pantries
- BHS VOFT supports & adopts many families during the holidays
- BHS donates full meals at Thanksgiving to our community
- BHS excels in the Arts, Academics and Athletics
- BHS has a partnership with Lorain Community College to offer CCP classes in our building
- BCSD student BEAT reporters have their work published by local news outlets weekly
- BCSD's dedication to provide early childhood education and intervention is shown in our fantastic preschool program.