

Let me start off by saying, I am not here to take sides for any bill, person, or group of people. I am here to share my experience of being a part of a struggling school district that has gone through many changes in leadership, programs and initiatives. I am here to ask that your decision, whatever it may be, is truly in the interest of helping our students of Lorain, who are in need of, and deserving of the best education we can give them.

I am what we call in Lorain a “lifer”. I attended Lorain City Schools, graduated from Lorain Schools, began my teaching career in Lorain, had my child attend and graduate from Lorain Schools, was the LEA vice-president in Lorain, worked in administration with the RTTP grant and now am a principal in Lorain. My career spans 24 years in this school system. Needless to say, my heart and soul lives with the students and families in Lorain. That is why I choose to stay. That is why I am here today.

We, in education, are always good at quoting research. We treasure research studies and try desperately to mimic success. My research, I admit, is very limited. It is limited to the students I see, and have seen, every day in Lorain. It is limited to the teachers I see, and have seen in Lorain, who are truly the ones that make the difference in kids lives each and every day. While that research data may be limited, it is real. And the conclusion I make and will make each day, is that the best we can offer our students lies in the belief that rigorous curriculum, resources, strong instruction, and the belief that kids from our city can, will and deserve to achieve as much and more than any others in any district.

There is direct evidence in our district that with those things in place, our students can be successful. We have evidence of teachers providing data on a consistent basis that show our kids can achieve. And yet, have we ever stopped to ask them how, or what they do in their classrooms every day to show that success? Or when we do, are we brave enough to look at the naysayers who want to make excuses or want to dismiss those success as “not everyone can be them” and challenge them to be different? Are we brave enough, as adults, to look at those we work with, are friends with, or who even those who may be family and say “we need to be better, you need to do better, we need to change our practice because what we are doing isn’t working?”

I’ve seen success in my own buildings, where instructional rounds and feedback has lead to a’ha moments for teachers. I’ve seen teachers create common assessments to discover new nuisances to standards that led to deeper meaning for students. I have seen weekly data meanings bring out talents of teachers that otherwise would have gone unnoticed. All of this, leads to what makes a difference in the classroom.

So this leads me to the other part of my reality. I have witnessed, through many of the leadership changes, leadership entities that contributed to the decent into academic distress are because the decisions, discussions and arguments that focus on everything, and anything, but what will make our kids successful. I have seen people charged with making decisions in the best interest for kids, not be brave enough to make changes because of adult relationships which sometimes come from local control. I have seen programs and people dismissed because

we challenged our adults to reflect on themselves and their practices and that made us uncomfortable. I have seen much attention paid to “why” our students are not successful and blame put upon everything else, but not on how we can be better. I have also witnessed state oversight with the first ADC in place and attended many meetings where transparency was not always evident and where the priority of “looking good and saving jobs” was the goal. Where the only voices that were listened to were the ones in charge, but not the ones who lived in the reality. I have seen where the mistakes of the past were not reflected upon and the same mistakes occurred again. I have seen time and time again, with every leader, omit the importance of empowering our teachers with a rigorous, reliable curriculum.

Please understand, I do not discount all the factors that make education a difficult profession. I know there are hurdles and things beyond our control that make all of our jobs more difficult. But I do know, we control the most important things: what we do everyday in our classroom to make our students successful, who we put in front of kids and how we empowering them to be successful.

So my ask for you again, is to make a decision that truly put our kids 1st. A decision that focuses on how are we all, and I mean all, going to ensure that we are truly making change in the things that affect the education of our students. A decision that aligns with the belief that they ARE able to achieve despite their circumstances and socio-economic status and all of their hurdles. A decision that truly listens to all stakeholders (even those who don't agree with the narratives), involves many individuals that believe in our kids and most importantly, a decision that truly holds us accountable for making the right decisions despite making our adults uncomfortable.