

Written Testimony of Kejuana Jefferson, Principal within Lorain City Schools

Below you will find quotes from teachers in my building, with whom I have had the privilege to work with this year.

“We have never had coaching, and I have been in the district for over 30 years” “So this is new”

“No one has actually used this rubric with us before, so yeah it’s scary for us”, stated one teacher referring to the OTES Rubric

“Kejuana, I have never had a principal come into my room and coteach or model in all of my years in the district, thank you”

“It’s not us, its poverty”

“Why are teachers being blamed for scores, it is poverty, don’t you understand that they are failing because they are in poverty”

“We’ve never been obligated to write lesson plans, but since that’s a thing this year, I guess I will just have to do that”

“Ms. Jefferson, the Title One Services here at GJW were horrible, Mr. Hardy got that one right, the title one teachers were not providing the intensive interventions that were needed. They would take one kid at a time, and if that kid was a discipline issue, they would just send them back. It had no consistency, and it was a total waste of money.”

Improvements this year:

- I am the principal of General Johnnie Wilson Middle School, and we have implemented the school turnaround strategies required by the district. We have seen an increase in our writing from 0.4% to 29% proficiency in one school year.
- Our (OELPA) Assessments from this spring’s administration indicated that four students scored proficient in all four domains (Listening, Reading, Speaking & Writing). This has never happened at GJW, last year’s results indicated that we had 0 scholars who were proficient in all domains. 68% of all ELs made growth in, at least, one domain of English (many made growth in multiple domains)
- Our TNTP data indicates that we have improved in the number of standards aligned lessons from last year to this year. I do believe that this will transfer into higher achievement on the OST this year.

Should HB 166 be passed, it could possibly remove Academic Distress Commissions. This would be devastating for the children of Lorain. Restoring this district to local control would be a grave mistake for these scholars. They deserve a real chance to succeed. Local control reeks of political moves, power plays, and arrogance. I have personally witnessed and been a victim of the small-town politics, but I must speak for the children who are affected by these moves and political plays. Local control allowed our scholars to live in failure for a decade. Can you imagine the economic repercussions of this longitudinal failure and oppression? The movement has the face of children on it but lacks the agenda to ensure that our scholars will have the opportunity to escape generational poverty. My fear is that we will still be having this conversation 10 years from now, and poverty alone will still be the conversational lead-in. It will be the

reason why we should just accept failure and expect less from the “urban districts”. The children from these failing urban districts, deserve to be educated by people who believe that they can and should achieve. We need the academic distress commission in Lorain because we need people who understand the process of school improvement and can provide the necessary insight to improve educational outcomes for our kids. I personally appreciate Lorain’s ADC because most of the members don’t enter the space with some political agenda. Most of them are there to protect the interests of the kids, instead of the adults. We should not be gambling with the educational futures of so many kids!

Egos have been bruised, and because of this bruising, the board has worked in conjunction with a few parents to organize against state control so you are hearing the screams of politics, but what is also screaming is low ACT Scores, low performance on state assessments, and the lack of basic reading, writing, and mathematical skills that our scholars will need as they matriculate into the work force or throughout their college experience. Someone must speak for them, and I have chosen to be their Sojourner Truth. Sharing this testimony is not easy, I will be target of attacks due to the political power arm of Lorain, but if me sharing this testimony will even possibly change outcomes for my scholars, then I am willing to continue to take those attacks. Local control cannot be an option for our kids, because the agenda is all wrong. I serve some of Ohio’s most vulnerable children, please keep Lorain City Schools out of the hands of its current school board, save our children! They have failed long enough, let’s not pretend like there won’t be life-time repercussions for this open display of subpar education.

We are on the right track in Lorain. I implore you to hear the heart of an administrator who see the faces of the next generation, and who also sees that while many of our scholars live in poverty, it is not the final determinant. The children of Lorain deserve a quality education. It is their fundamental human right, and the conduit of establishing a society of lifelong learners and the next generation of thinkers and innovators!

Research indicates that it takes a minimum of 3-5 years to turnaround a failing school/district. We must allow the current law to work. We are already seeing vast improvement within our data, but I am afraid that removing the current ADC will result in the district losing its momentum and back-pedaling on its progress. Our teachers and our scholars are improving, and we need more support from the state level to ensure that this momentum continues here in Lorain. Don’t allow this distraction to stifle progress for our scholars. They deserve a quality education and that has not been afforded to them over the last decade, why would anyone consider returning control to the system that has massively failed our scholars?

Thank You,

Kejuana Jefferson

Kejuana Jefferson, Ms.Ed, MBA