

Public Comment Business Meeting -- December 12, 2022 (Staff Surveys)

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To: public comment <public.comment@springfield.k12.or.us>;

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Members of the Springfield Public Schools Board of Directors and Superintendent Hamilton:

As a retired teacher from SPS, I know how important it is for staff to feel respected and valued as part of the district team of care takers and educators who put their students and families first daily, not only when planning but also when putting those plans into action. The reality of teachers' lives is that they spend much of their time working without positive or any feedback from the folks higher up, unless there is something big or attention-grabbing from media or elsewhere. During my last year as a teacher, I spoke to the board twice sharing why I was leaving the profession which I loved 3 years earlier than I had planned. As there are no "exit interviews" now, nor were there then, this would be the only way for the district to know the reason that staff might be leaving their positions. We know that many people have left employment with SPS in the last 3 years.

When the people doing the daily work of educating and caring for students feel like they are working in isolation from district leadership, without support or interest in their feelings or input, it isn't surprising that many of the teaching staff have been moving on...going elsewhere to teach or leaving teaching all together. So when I heard about the "Stay Interviews" which took place not long ago, I was hopeful that teachers and other staff members would finally get to have some input by sharing their realities with district leadership. Multiple members of the community, staff, and others have spoken at numerous board meetings to ask for the results of those interviews. All of these requests or complaints have fallen on deaf ears, as nothing became of all of the time and energy spent on this effort to 'take a pulse' from staff. It could have been very useful to administrators in doing planning for professional development, dealing with the new realities for teachers since the pandemic began, as well as hearing and valuing the opinions of those in the trenches. However, the data which could have provided useful staff perspectives to district leadership, appears being held hostage by those who could have used it for the intent purpose which everyone was told was the reason for taking their time to talk about things.

Instead of making use of the information which was shared during these "Stay Interviews", and despite multiple requests to do so, the many hours spent on this effort were wasted. Working under unbelievably difficult conditions during the pandemic and afterwards, staff were asked to give input which went nowhere. As if that wasn't bad enough, now teaching staff are required to complete a commercially produced survey product :UPBEAT. More harmful than the monetary costs involved, is the inability of people to openly react to any of the questions. It can not provide any useful data about teachers' and other staff members' true feelings which could have been helpful, but alas..."throwing good money after bad" or in this case, making employees feel worse about being ignored and undervalued. I implore members of the board to request sharing of the results from the original "Stay Interviews". It is truly priceless information...which should be respectfully looked at by all involved parties: teaching and other staff, district leadership and members of the school board and community. Please be a brave group of school board members and ask for leadership accountability to all stake holders in the SPS community.

I appreciate your work on behalf of the students, staff, families and community members.

Respectfully,

Colleen Hunter
Member of Community Alliance for Public Education (CAPE)

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