



Pittsburgh Public Schools Morrow Special Public Hearing Testimonies
July 22, 2025

#1

John Canning

Community Member, Other Grandparent

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#2

Jennifer Dresmich

Teacher/Staff

Good evening,

I am writing to respectfully express my strong support for keeping Mrs. McNamara as the principal of South Brook Middle School for its final year. I have been a teacher at South Brook for the past 20 years and I have personally witnessed the positive impact she has had on our school community in her 10 years as principal.

Under Mrs. McNamara's leadership, our school has experienced significant improvements in both academic performance and school culture. She is not only a strong administrator but also a compassionate and approachable leader who takes the time to connect with every student, support the staff, and engage with parents. She has fostered an environment where every student feels valued and supported. Families trust her and know she makes herself available for all their needs. Our staff depends on her structure, support, guidance, and strength every single day.

I cannot express how much anxiety and trauma the news of Mrs. McNamara being transferred has created already among the staff at both schools. I cannot imagine what it will do to our students and families when they walk into the last year of their school being open expecting to see their trusted principal and they are blindsided by this transfer. I can assure you they will be devastated. The staff will be the ones who will have to console them when it should be the people making these reckless decisions. Kids need stability. Bringing on a new principal to change everything up in a school's final year of existence is irresponsible, damaging, and thoughtless. This current administration has created the tag line for PPS stating, "Students first, always, in all ways." I must question if this is just a line or if it truly is the mission of the district to put the students first. Moving Mrs. McNamara and not allowing her to close South Brook with her students and staff is NOT putting students first.

Mrs. McNamara being replaced would not only be a significant loss for our school, but would cause further trauma to students, families, and staff. Our school community is facing so much uncertainty in the coming years and we need the security of Mrs. McNamara leading our school especially through our final year. Moving Mrs. McNamara now will also disrupt the progress and stability we have built together as a school community and will not allow closure to students and staff. Many of our students struggle with severe loss and mental health. Taking Mrs. McNamara away will be detrimental to them. I cannot find any logical reason as to why there was a switch of principals when both schools close after this year. There is absolutely no justification of this that outweighs the negative impact it will have on our students. I can't understand how anyone would think this is beneficial. I understand changes will be made in the future, however, you, the board, owe it to the dedicated students, families, staff, and principals both at South Brook and Morrow to allow the principals to remain with their school communities for their last year. I urge you to

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consider the voices of those who have benefited from Mrs. McNamara's leadership and to allow her to continue serving our school for its final year.

South Brook was always a good school and place to work, however, under Mrs. McNamara's leadership, creative ideas, drive, and positive influence it has truly flourished. She is an inspirational, passionate, and dedicated leader who never stops trying to improve our school for her students and staff. She is always out and about in the building engaging with students and staff. She holds everyone to high expectations while maintaining an approachable friendly demeanor. She builds relationships with even the most difficult students and helps them find their place in our school. Her students and staff know they have a voice in our building, and they are not just a part of a school but part of a family. It is clear every day when she enters the building that she truly loves the students and staff at South Brook. Mrs. McNamara is the heart of our building.

I was only 22 years old when I started my teaching career at South Brook. It has been my beloved home for the past 20 years. During the first ten years I feel as if I grew up as a person. In the following ten years, thanks to Mrs. McNamara, I grew up as an educator. She has pushed my thinking, introduced me to new teaching techniques, encouraged me to take risks, and provided me the freedom to do what I know is best for my students. Mrs. McNamara's door is always open to her students, families and staff. Over the years I have sought out her advice so many times. She never tells me what to do or directly gives me the solution to whatever issue I am facing. She simply does what an amazing teacher would do, she questions me until I find the way on my own. When I thank her for her help she never takes credit. She responds by saying, "I didn't do anything but ask a few questions, you came up with the solution all on your own." She is my principal, my teacher and my friend and I am not done learning from her. I don't know how to process losing my school and the family we have created at South Brook. We all need her in our final year to teach us how to move forward. We need her strength, we need her heart, and most of all we need her at South Brook for its final year.

Thank you for your time and your thoughtful consideration. Please put the students, staff, and families of both South Brook and Morrow first and keep Mrs. McNamara at South Brook.

Jennifer Dresmich
8th Grade Math Teacher
South Brook Middle School



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#3

Anne Farris

Parent

#4

Kristine Tidrick

Teacher/Staff

Statement to the School Board

By Kristine Tidrick, Teacher at Pittsburgh Morrow

Good evening, members of the board. My name is Kristine Tidrick, and I'm a teacher at Pittsburgh Morrow. I'm here tonight as both an educator and an advocate for our students, staff, and families.

I understand that managing a school district involves difficult decisions, and I respect the weight of the work you do. That said, I want to express serious concerns about two proposals that directly impact our school community: the plan to consolidate all Northside middle schools into one building, and the decision to remove our principal, Mr. Watson, from Pittsburgh Morrow.

The consolidation plan is deeply concerning. Middle school is a critical and often vulnerable time in a student's life. Merging all of our Northside students into one large school risks creating an overcrowded, impersonal environment—one that undermines the relationships and sense of belonging that help students thrive.

But even more troubling to me is the decision to move Mr. Watson, who has only been the principal at Pittsburgh Morrow for three years and is doing an exceptional job. He has built trust, formed strong relationships, and fostered a sense of stability and community. The staff respects him. The students respond to him. Our families feel heard and supported. These things matter. They cannot be easily replaced.

The reasoning behind this decision has not been made clear, and that lack of transparency has left us confused and disheartened. From where I stand—as someone who works in the building every day—it simply doesn't make sense. We are losing a leader who is making a real difference, without understanding why.

I respectfully urge the board and district leadership to reconsider both of these decisions. Our students and our community deserve thoughtful, transparent leadership that values the people and progress already in place.

Thank you.



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Allie Petonic

Community Member



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#6

Valerie Webb-Allman

Parent, Community Member



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#7

Lily Allman

Student



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#8

Nick Petrillo

Parent, Organization, Community Member



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