



# AKRON EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

REPRESENTING AKRON TEACHERS SINCE 1946



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## AEA Membership,

We read with interest the ABJ 1-11-21 article entitled, "Concerns raised as Akron schools face issues," and are puzzled by some of the inferences made through statements by those interviewed for the article. During the many years AEA has worked with and observed any number of past school boards, we believe the current board to be one of the most collaborative, transparent, and community minded school boards in recent past.

It appears that some Akron corporate and political community members are concerned that new board members are not making their priorities known and may wish to dismantle programs which are currently in place. We disagree. Even through this pandemic, we have seen board members reach out to parents, teachers, students, faith-based groups, community partners and many community members who have felt disenfranchised in the past. They have made it possible and much easier for community members to address the Board directly at each of their meetings, which is something that was overly burdensome and incredibly difficult to do in the past.

Rather than allowing only a few well-connected stakeholders to have a voice at the table, we believe this current school board has made it possible for all community members to have their voices heard. Some of those interviewed in the article raised concerns about the Board having longer meetings and split votes. Far from looking at these things as a negative, we believe that we should be celebrating this open, democratic process. We should be viewing longer meetings and split votes as evidence of professional, thoughtful, and equitable review of important and impactful topics prior to a vote being taken. Some might even say that concerns should be raised if every vote in any organization is unanimous. Such votes could be viewed as evidence that voices are being stifled for the mere appearance of unity. It should be noted that AEA has only seen courteous, reflective, and professional discussions at Board meetings. Does that mean that AEA has agreed with every decision the Board has made? No. Have Board members and community leaders disagreed during their discussions? Certainly. Have those disagreements been overly contentious? No; not at all.

Some corporate community members interviewed for this article raised concerns about new members on the Board not valuing past practices or programs which have already been implemented. We could not disagree more. We have seen support and enthusiasm for many of these programs, most importantly, College and Career Academies.

Finally, a corporate community member stated that, "the nature of the dialogue has been somewhat different than in the past. In past years, the community has benefited from the healthy working relationship between the Board of Education and the district leadership team." She goes on to state, "This is not to say that they have agreed on everything, but it is to say that they have conducted themselves with professionalism, respect, and civility that stands as a model for APS students and community stakeholders alike." "In these trying times, with so many tough questions facing the Board of Education, we believe that a healthy working dynamic between the Board and district leadership is paramount." Are these statements suggesting that new Board members are *not* professional, respectful, or civil when dealing with district leadership and community members? If so, we disagree.

The Akron Education Association is dedicated to working with the Akron Public School Board through open discussion, collaboration, and a dedication towards doing the very best work for our students, staff, and the Akron community. The Akron Education Association has confidence in the current Akron Public School Board and is dedicated to working with them as we all tackle the challenges our students face now, and in the future.

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