

YOUNG SCHOOL DISTRICT#5

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Patrick O'Donnell, Superintendent

YOUNG PUBLIC SCHOOL GOVERNING BOARD REGULAR MEETING

Monday, August 8, 2022, 6:00 pm - Young Public School FFA Room (THE GOVERNING BOARD MAY CONSIDER ANY ITEM ON THIS AGENDA IN ANY ORDER AND AT ANY TIME DURING THE MEETING)

	Linda Chapman, President	James Bruzzi, Member
-	Dave Megahey, Member	Polly Hageman, Member
	Sa	ra Bunce
	AGE	NDA

- 1) Call to Order 6:01 pm by L. Chapman
- 2) Pledge of Allegiance Lead by L. Chapman
- 3) Adoption of Agenda* Moved by D. Megahey, Seconded by P. Hageman; Carried unanimously
- 4) Administrator Report Mr. O'Donnell reported: Our numbers are similar to last year PS: 9, K-2: 16, 3-5: 11, 6-8: 8, HS: 10 - Classrooms are ready, Gym and cafeteria will be ready by the end of this week, Landscape is being done; Julee has been working hard to make sure we are ready and the positive addition of Scott has helped greatly, too. - Trainee-Bus Driver ran into a small snag, so we will be relying on Mr. Muns for a few days until the new driver is fully licensed; Mr. Muns is fully licensed with the completion of his annual physical last week. - COVID positive staff member is not back yet, but we have a quality substitute ready that has many years working in the valley teaching HS Math. - I have re-connected with three potential elementary teachers that had shown interest before, but none had turned in applications because they could not locate housing. Two have taken positions elsewhere and the third is perfectly happy staying retired in Heber. – This past Saturday and Monday, I interviewed two other individuals that could serve as long-term subs: one is a math class short of graduating with an elementary degree and has successfully completed student teaching. The other has an English degree and has worked 10 years with 3rd-8th grade students in a large home-school co-op in the Phoenix area. Both have finger print cards and have applied for substitute certificates. As the Board has directed, I am still pursuing highly-qualified individuals for each classroom. I will continue advertising for certified teachers to fill our openings. - As asked by Governing Board members, I will share some about the production of minutes for their meetings. Our Board secretary has not been in the district since March 15 and we are working to prepare minutes as required. I have on occasion been able to have the administrative assistant come and do minutes and I have been doing them also. We are still working to have the position filled, but have not been successful vet. - Present tonight is our School Resource Officer, Deputy James Lahti. He is working to be more available this year. He and I have been working to develop an improved security plan as well as coordinate training opportunities with law enforcement and the PVVFD. Recent situations around the country have also lead Deputy Lahti's supervisors to encourage him to be more of a presence on campus. - I also have the Board Policies which I have been referring to the past few meetings about our FY 23 Staffing discussions. As asked, I'll read

portions of some of them to help clarify for all of us. Policy GCK, Professional Staff Assignments and Transfers says: "the superintendent shall have the responsibility for the assignment of all personnel in the district. The assignment will be based upon the needs of the instructional program," which is the teaching and learning for students. In addition, no right to school, grade or subject matter shall be inferred from a teachers' contract. It also discusses transferring from one school to another school, but we have not had to worry about that, because we only have one elementary and one high school. Policy for Resignation of Professional Staff members, you have already seen the letters, and I shared the contract, but the decision has to be made by the Board and it has to be a request in writing. Later you'll have a discussion about the delayed start of school, because of lacking two teachers and the COVID positive staff member, in addition to possible decisions later tonight. What needs to be considered is our 144 student days and that the focus of instruction should be the Arizona Revised Statutes. Also, because many of you were asked about minutes of Board meetings, I have the Policy for Minutes, written or recorded shall be taken at all Regular and Special Board meeting including Executive Sessions and shall include the information required by ARS 38-431.01. The written minutes or recordings shall be available for public inspection three working days after the day of the meeting. So for a Monday meeting, the written minutes in draft-form should be available Thursday. We are working to meet the intent of the law, but do not always complete it because we do not have personnel available as I reported to you at the last meeting. Also, copies of these draft minutes like any other public record at the district can be obtained by filing a Public Right to Know Request/Freedom of Information. It is a simple form. The district has had this policy in place for years and it requires the district to fulfill Public Records Requests in a timely manner. This "timely manner" is not spelled out, but consideration is to be given to current situations with staff and events; we strive to fill these requests as soon as possible.

5) Call to Public – Call to the Public – Comments will be heard, but no action may occur. We have received six requests. We'll take them in the order received and limit each speaker to two minutes to make sure the other business is accomplished tonight. Heather Jackson read a statement: I'm here tonight as a community member that is concerned that we are consistently losing qualified staff members. It appears to me that systematic changes need to be put in place to improve and retain staff. I believe this could be accomplished by improving communication and putting checks and balances in place. The communication with parents, staff, and community currently comes across as untimely, unprofessional, and dishonest. I'd like the Board to consider increasing their involvement in the evaluation and supervision of the district, especially in the area of communication. The other area of checks and balances directly relates to the human resource department and the evaluation of our staff and superintendents. Over the past 4 years we have lost multiple employees and families due to unresolved problems at the highest level. I would like the board to consider a third party that could mediate in these types of situations. It seems that there are many conversations with the school attorney that could be avoided if the district focused on improved communication and relationships with the community and staff. As far as the evaluations, I feel that the district is not doing due diligence to create professional expectations. I've heard comments that this is "better than what we've had." As a parent, I don't want better than what we've had or to settle for something. I'd like to think that we are striving for the best. And again that would start with leadership. I would love to see the district continue to build on a strong foundation but at this point we will continue to rebuild every year unless there is a shift in leadership expectations.

Heidi Bernal spoke—I don't have anything written out like Heather. I am here as a concerned parent also, because this is the third year my daughter Hope will be at Young School. I've seen as well such a shift in staff and communication, organization, things offered and I'm very concerned, I went in on Friday to turn in registration and I found out the mess with teachers. I also spoke with Mr. O'Donnell personally for quite some time in his office. As a parent I found an over-whelmed, I found out superintendent, principal and business manager now. And what I

saw was very concerning, especially when we have school not starting and we have a lot of new teachers and it's a continuing issue. I've never in my twenty years of having students in school, attended a school board meeting and I'm in Young, my home town, and I feel like there's a real problem, and I've sat back for two years and watched and seen a pattern with teachers. And not quality teachers and so that's my main concern. I'm asking the board what can you do, what is your responsibility in governing the principal, the superintendent with the staffing issue? What is the responsibility of the principal to make sure that new employees are understanding of our community and the roads and housing, so that we don't have this problem the day before school?

Niki Lynch's Statement, read by Katie Clemmer - Dear Board Members and Mr. O'Donnell, I understand that YPS is in a crisis situation. My heart breaks for all of you and especially for our students. I wish so badly that I were able to be there with you as you navigate. I hope at this time of need that the school, board, employees, everyone takes this time to reach out to our community and let them know that we need them. We are surrounded by such talent, and willingness, but I feel the community in whole is unaware of the situation. I strongly believe that sharing the situation openly while maintaining professionalism could be very beneficial. We should be shouting from our rooftops, "Let's do this together!" I realize this may not be the long-term solution, but it is certainly worth a try. The efforts to retain quality employees and housing are of utmost importance in order for the school to be successful and I hope it is taken more seriously in the future and that everyone can band together to be proactive to make YPS the best school out there. So many changes are needed at YPS and this could be the beginning. I don't know if it's an agenda item but during this time. I hope the board takes great consideration in retaining Stephanie Rider's position at Young Public Schools as Chief Financial Officer. I know first hand that Stephanie is ready, willing, and anxious to get back to work at whatever capacity her injuries will allow. She has done such great things for Young Public Schools, the employees and students. YPS cannot afford to lose another employee, especially someone who has proven to be an asset. There are already so many other problems wrong, please don't let her go and allow more. Thank you for your time and consideration, Niki Lynch

Katie Clemmer read a statement - Dear YPS Governing Board and Community Members, on June 30th 2022, I resigned from my position at Young Public School as Payroll Clerk. I wrote a letter to the board soon after turning in my resignation that explained to them the reason I was leaving was because I was questioning the legality of some of the decisions that Mr. O'Donnell was making and decided that I was not comfortable putting my signature on payroll and other financial documents anymore. I went on in my letter to explain some of the policies that I believed Mr. O'Donnell had violated. I gave this letter to the board at the June 27th board meeting. Unfortunately, my letter did not make it into the board minutes, so I brought it to read after this one tonight. Since the board changed job roles in March 2022, Mr. O'Donnell is in charge of HR, so he is the one we are supposed to go to with grievances. However, when I have gone to him with something I am concerned about, he assures me that he would be the only one to suffer the repercussions of his actions and I would not be accountable even though my signature is on the document. This did not make sense to me, as my signature would not be needed on the document unless I was held accountable for its accuracy. Therefore, I resigned from my office position. In order to dispel some rumors I have been hearing about the YPS CFO, I would like to state that she was in contact with myself and Mr. O'Donnell frequently during her medical leave. I was copied on emails from her reminding us of upcoming deadlines, bills that needed to be paid, and updates on her health with doctor's notes attached. Her intent to return to YPS was very clear in her correspondence. Whenever I had questions about anything, she was easily reachable by text message or phone call. When Mr. O'Donnell showed up at my house to ask me questions regarding her contract, I asked if he had contacted her personally and he told me that he had not and gave excuses for not doing so. Ms. Rider is a huge asset to YPS.

Christy Rider spoke- Hi everybody, board, I know a lot about Stephanie Rider, but the thing that I'm troubled about was last week. Our kids were excited to go to school, they're ready to go to school, then all of a sudden, we're telling them they're not going to school. It just so happens we're telling them the same day that two people draw their names out saying they're not going to teach. So we're even shorter on teachers than we were before. But we send a message out to the public saying it's COVID. We have to explain it to the kids somehow, the teachers at the school found out it was COVID by the same letter that went out. From the grandmother perspective it's just looking like a bad message to be sending. It's that we can't get our act together and start school when it should be starting. There were no surprises, we knew what was coming, nobody shook COVID over the school. So, how does this impact us for the rest of the time? How does my preschooler get his special services in when Heather's teaching three classes instead of doing that? How does this back up our year? And the COVID protocol in itself. We were all under the page last year with COVID. We couldn't decide what our protocol was and it changed with every case. So, now that is a very stringent protocol that we're going to, because somebody who is not at school and not around the people now has COVID we're going to close down school for a week and see if more people surface. And then what, move back another week and another week? I mean if that's the protocol then, because we might, my brother commented on there that it will take four years to get out of a grade. He might be right. As grandma of school kids, I'd kind of like to see us have a protocol that is followed no matter what is convenient or not. My things is around the schedule and respect of kids.

Stephanie Rider read a statement- I'm going to go really fast, if you want to see this after, please let me know. On August 3rd I received a letter dated August 2rd saying dear Ms. Rider, this letter is to clarify understanding of consequences to your actions or inactions since March 14th. On March 7th and again March 14th you and the Governing Board discussed and negotiated your employment contract. The Governing Board took action to approve the contract and offer it to you. You did not sign and return the contract. Your employment with Young Elementary School ended at midnight, June 30th as you did not take action to accept the contract offered. The non-renewal of your employment caused your insurance premiums to no longer be paid as of June 30th. Mr. O'Donnell will coordinate with you within seven days. It ends with the district is bewildered by what is construed as your choice in lieu of real communication. We wish you the best and anticipate your professionalism as this situation is completed. That same day I emailed the board and Mr. O'Donnell. I am writing in reference to the letter that Mr. O'Donnell saved as Rider Goodbye. I dispute your assertion that I did not sign or hand in my completed contract. To support my position, I've attached two copies of my contract: one that was completed and signed by me. This one was given to Mr. O'Donnell to sign. I've also attached a copy of the fully executed contract with all signatures, as well as a statement from Mr. McGill who was present at that meeting and witnessed me signing it. I have heard a lot of talk from people in the community and in Gila County government about Mr. O'Donnell saying throughout the last month that he was planning to fire me. The rumors included a lot of different reasons I was supposedly getting fired, but the question about my contract wasn't one of the rumors I heard until this past week. As these were rumors I was hearing and not direct communication, I chose not to engage in these false accusations. I have had numerous positive conversations with Mr. O'Donnell about my contract and my intent to return as soon as my doctor released me. There was never any communication to me about concerns with my contract or concerns about me returning. There were no calls, emails, or any other communication. I can provide phone records as proof as needed. I sent doctor notes, frequent updates on my medical status and am happy to provide copies of those to the board. I had no concerns because I had signed and returned my contract to Mr. O'Donnell on March 14th. If there were concerns about my contract, I am confused and would like to know why I was treated differently than other employees. For example, during this last school year, an employee did not sign their contract and Mr. O'Donnell followed up with them over 10 times and they finally signed their contract in September. I do not understand why there was no

attempt to discuss with me. If there had been, I would have happily shared my copy of the contract I signed and returned as I am doing now. Please advise whether the district and the board would like me to return to work or if you plan on terminating me without cause. I still have not received any response to that. I am hurt, I am confused at the lack of response. I am hurt and confused at the hostile treatment, of my locks being changed, of my email password being changed all prior to any communication to me at all. As well as two Executive Sessions that I was informed were about my employment without any executive session notices at all. So, I'm hurt and confused and asking the board to take the time to address this and to consider my email. And let me know if they are going to honor the fully executed contract I have for this year so I can get back to work or if they are going to terminate me without cause. Thank you. Christy Rider commented-It seems sad that the same week we're having staffing issue, combining classes, and losing teachers, were doing this, too.

6) New Business:

- a) Discussion/Action Voucher Ratification: Payroll Vouchers 1&2* - Motion to Ratify Payroll Vouchers 1 and 2 by S. Bunce, Seconded by J. Bruzzi; carried unanimously
- b) Discussion/Action Approve Minutes for Special Meeting August 1, 2022*- Motion to approve Minutes from 8/1/2022 Special Meeting by D Megahey, seconded by P. Hageman; carried unanimously
- c) Discussion/Action Governing Board consideration to go into Executive Session Pursuant to ARS 38-341.03(A) (1) For the purpose of Discussion or Consideration of Personnel Matters* Motion by J. Bruzzi, seconded by P. Hageman; carried unanimously at 6:31pm Governing Board re-entered Open Session at 7:28 pm with a Motion by J. Bruzzi, seconded by S. Bunce; Carried unanimously
- d) Discussion/Action Governing Board consideration of personnel status as requested by two employees* as requested by Amy Curtiss, Board allowed her to read her resignation letter Motion to Approve the resignation letters by D. Megahey, seconded by P. Hageman; carried unanimously
- e) Discussion/Action Ratification of New Employees hired to facilitate th start of school: Two (2) Instructional Aides, One (1) Maintenance/Custodian, and One (1) Business Clerk- Payroll* Motion to Ratify by S. Bunce, Seconded by P. Hageman; Carried unanimously
- f) Discussion/Action Approval of Donation of Hot Dogs, Buns, and condiments for Open House/Meet the Teacher event* Motion by J. Bruzzi, Second by D. Megahey; Carried unanimously
- g) Discussion/Action Approve the revocation of Temporary Payroll Clerk Work Agreement* Motion by P. Hageman, seconded by S. Bunce; Carried unanimously
- h) Discussion/Action Approve the latest Volunteer/Substitute Listing* Motion to approve the addition of three people to the substitute list by L. Chapman, Seconded by J. Bruzzi; Carried unanimously
- i) Discussion/Action Approve an Adjusted Calendar for FY 23* Mr. O'Donnell requested that he be allowed to ask for staff input before drafting a revised calendar. He suggested there were a few possibilities for making up the four missed days due to the delayed start: 1) Use Fall Break, 2) Use Spring Break, 3) Use two snow days and find two other days, 4) add four days after Memorial Day Motion to Ratify the Delayed Start and the concept of making up the four days on the Academic Calendar by L. Chapman, seconded by P. Hageman; carried unanimously
- j) Discussion Personnel Situation for FY 23 Mr. O'Donnell explained that with the action taken earlier in the meeting, we still need to address the need of Elementary Teachers for our students. Mr. O'Donnell shared that he has interviewed two potential employees to fill the 3-4-5 and the 6-7-8 positions, but neither is a fully certified teacher. One of them would be a long-term substitute. She has an English Degree, but does not have an education degree. She has more than a decade of experience working with student 3rd 8th grade in a large Home-school Cooperative in the Phoenix area. She has

worked with multiple grades and content areas in groups of 10-20 students during this time. She has a fingerprint card and would work on a Substitute Techer Certificate. Her family is currently purchasing a home in Young and they are planning to live here beginning in October. The other possible candidate is one class away from completing his Elementary Education degree at ASU. He has student taught at the younger elementary grades and also Special Education. He came up on Saturday, August 6 and saw Young. He is about 95% sure he wants to be here. His hesitancy is the potential social life for a single man. He has a fingerprint card and Substitute Teacher Certificate which he used while taking college classes. His plan is to complete the needed class to complete his degree and then become a fully-certified Elementary Teacher. While this is not the ideal situation, we will be able to separate students into workable groups and provide quality substitutes, while continuing to advertise for Highly-Qualified Elementary Teachers. If only one of them comes to Young, we can adjust that one to be our 3-4-5 class and adjust the 6-7-8 students into the high school side. This keeps our Special Education situation covered.

- 7) Discussion Future Board Meeting Agenda Items A draft Academic Calendar for approval by the Board, a school-wide security plan
- 8) Adjournment* Motion to adjourn by P. Hageman, Seconded by J. Bruzzi; Carried unanimously at 7:48 pm

*Action Item

As authorized by ARS 38:431.O3, this public body, upon majority vote, may choose to convene in an executive session for the purpose of discussing items allowed by law. **Upon official notice the officer, appointee, or employee may choose to hold discussion and/or consideration in open meeting.** No final action can or shall be taken in the executive session. Items of business suggested by employees and patrons of the District will notify the Superintendent of the particular item of business at least four working days before the Board meeting (Young Public School Policy Manual-Policy **BEDBA**).

Attendees:

Approved: 9/12/2022;

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Mr. Patrick O'Donnell and Members of the YPS School Board.

Please accept this letter as formal notification that I am resigning from my position as Curriculum Instruction, and Assessment Director as well as Teacher for the 2022-2023 school year. I am requested that I be released from my contract without liquidated damages. The reasons for my resignation are as follows:

- 1. At a faculty meeting on August 2, 2022, I was informed that additional duties have been assigned to me that are not included in my current contract including being responsible for writing all Title grants as well as the duties of special education teacher, gifted, and director of special education. I do not have experience or training in grant writing, or a gifted endorsement and this decision potentially opens the school and me personally to liability. I had made clear in several communications that I did not want to come to YPS to fill a role that was already being appropriately filled by existing staff. I also felt this announcement, in front of all staff without first meeting with me, was inappropriate.
- 2. Lack of honest and open communication on the part of the district. I have sent emails and asked direct questions that have remained unanswered. On July 21st, 2022, I met with Mr. O'Donnell, Mrs. Jackson, and my husband Mr. Curtiss regarding the lack of teachers for elementary. At this meeting, Mr. O'Donnell communicated his possible intention to move Mrs. Jackson into an elementary classroom. We each shared our concerns regarding this decision and requested that the staff meet to problem solve and discuss all possible options as soon as possible. We were told that we would meet August 2nd. However, at this meeting on August 2nd, there was no opportunity for any discussion. Instead, the announcement that the decision was made was done in front of all staff.
- 3. In all my 18 years I education, I have strived to uphold the ethical standards of my profession. However, the current environment at YPS is toxic and unsafe. Information has been shared with me directly regarding conversations held in executive session. Although I kept the confidence, I believe this is highly inappropriate and puts me in a very uncomfortable position. In addition, in the conversation that took place on July 21st, Mr. O'Donnell confirmed that he was "still" talking negatively about a staff member around the town. This makes me question what will be said about me and what false accusations I may be forced to defend. As a new member to the community, I do not feel safe working in such an environment. I communicated this at the staff meeting on August 2nd. Knowing what is happening, the current environment, the gossip, and how staff is being treated, I feel unsafe and do not trust the leadership to look out for the best interest of staff or of students. Based on the current conditions at YPS, effectively educating children to the standards they deserve is untenable.

I am truly saddened to have to write this letter at this time. I applied to work here in Young because it is a truly special community and I believed that, as a doctoral level school psychologist with 18 years of experience working in education, I have a lot to offer the students

and families of Young. I have worked the past 4 years as a psychologist and consultant for YPS and have gotten to know some of the students, families, and staff. Although very difficult for me personally, I left a district where I have lived and worked for the past 14 years as a dedicated and loyal employee in order to move to Young and help meet the needs of the children and community here. However, I cannot, morally or ethically, work under the current conditions. It is against my own morals and beliefs and the reasons I work in public education.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me should you have any questions or concerns. I will be in Young until Friday, August 5th.

Respectfully, Amy Curtiss, PsyD, ABSNP and families of Young. I have worked the past 4 years as a psychologist and consultant for YPS and have gotten to know some of the students, families, and staff. Although very difficult for me personally, I left a district where I have lived and worked for the past 14 years as a dedicated and loyal employee in order to move to Young and help meet the needs of the children and community here. However, I cannot, morally or ethically, work under the current conditions. It is against my own morals and beliefs and the reasons I work in public education.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me should you have any questions or concerns. I will be in Young until Friday, August 5th.

Respectfully, Amy Curtiss, PsyD, ABSNP Attacked to approved minutes.

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Mr. Patrick O'Donnell and Members of the YPS School Board.

Please accept this letter as formal notification that I am resigning from my position as Teacher and Director of Project Based Learning for the 2022-2023 school year. I am requested that I be released from my contract without liquidated damages. The reasons for my resignation are as follows:

- 1. Lack of honest and open communication on the part of the district. On July 21st, 2022, I met with Mr. O'Donnell, Mrs. Jackson, and my wife, Dr. Curtiss regarding the lack of teachers for elementary. At this meeting, Mr. O'Donnell communicated his possible intention to move Mrs. Jackson into an elementary classroom. We each shared our concerns regarding this decision and requested that the staff meet to problem solve and discuss all possible options as soon as possible. We were told that we would meet August 2nd. However, at this meeting on August 2nd, there was no opportunity for any discussion. Instead, the announcement that the decision was made was done in front of all staff.
- 2. In all my 20 years in education, I have strived to uphold the ethical standards of my profession. However, the current environment at YPS is toxic and unsafe. Information has been shared with me directly regarding conversations held in executive session. Specifically, that Stephanie Rider would be let go because she did not sign and return her contract. We were then directed to keep that information to ourselves, which seemed like a test of loyalty. Although I kept the confidence, I believe this is highly inappropriate and puts me in a very uncomfortable position. In addition, in the conversation that took place on July 21st, Mr. O'Donnell confirmed that he was "still" talking negatively about Heather Jackson around the town. This makes me question what will be said about me and what false accusations I may be forced to defend. As a new member to the community, I do not feel safe working in such an environment. I communicated this at the staff meeting on August 2nd. Knowing what is happening, the current environment, the gossip, and how staff is being treated, I feel unsafe and do not trust the leadership to look out for the best interest of staff or of students. Based on the current conditions at YPS, effectively educating children to the standards they deserve is untenable.

I am truly saddened to have to write this letter at this time. I applied to work here in Young because it is a truly special community and I believed that, as a teacher with 20 years of experience, a master's degree in special education and Educational Leadership, I have a lot to offer the students and families of Young. I have worked the past 2 years as a consultant for YPS and have gotten to know some of the students, families, and staff. However, I cannot, morally or ethically, work under the current conditions.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me should you have any questions or concerns. I will be in Young until Friday, August 5th.

Respectfully,
Ben Curtiss, MSE – SPED & Ed Leadership

Respectfully, Ben Curtiss, MSE – SPED & Ed Leadership