

From Amy Hodgson (read at the December 13, 2021 Board Meeting)

I didn't think I had it in me to say anything tonight, but the more I thought about it, I decided that my silence is not helpful to our Aggie Family. I want to share a few thank yous and a few parts of my retirement letter (which was first written in my office after the October 4th board meeting) as I feel like these words express my love for our Aggie Family, some hard truths, my gratitude to all of you and my hope for what lies ahead:

Over the past sixteen years, I poured my heart and soul into this school and our community. One of the greatest joys of my thirty-year career in education has been the time I have spent at Dansville Schools with some of the best educators and humans I have ever known. These amazing teachers and Aggie staff members truly LOVE our students and they literally pour themselves, sacrificially EVERY DAY into the lives of our students and into this community. I described it as magical before, but maybe it's more accurate to describe it as **miraculous** the way they find the energy to give and give when they are running on empty- **and just to be clear- this is not just teachers- we're talking about EVERYONE who works here.**

You have no idea how much our students are loved here- and it's ALL students... people can say whatever they want, but you don't know. You don't know about the time, the money, the energy and other resources that are given quietly, without fanfare, day after day. Instead, many of you have decided to not trust, to be quick to judge, to send harsh words, to make undermining and critical posts on social media and to expect everyone here to just keep giving and to keep going as if nothing has happened.

And if you think that these behaviors have not spilled into our school, into our classrooms, you are sadly mistaken. We are seeing a level of disrespect that has jarred even our most seasoned staff members, as our school has always prided itself on the behavior of our students. It's so disheartening... all the way down to the elementary... and just be clear, these behaviors are not relegated to the students who come here schools of choice, as some like to mistakenly purport.

It's very hard for staff, even our gritty, gratitude and joy-choosing Aggies, to keep pouring into students and families when their cups are constantly getting poked with holes and their energy drained by the very people they are trying to love and serve. While it's not everyone, believe me, I know we have some amazing parents and community members here- it's too many and it's too much. It's too much to ask of these good good humans who have their own stories and personal challenges on top of everything else they do here.... and it needs to stop.

I do want to thank you all for the opportunity I've been given to serve here. I sincerely hope this district and community are able to find what they are looking for in a new superintendent... to say that I want nothing but the best for Dansville Schools is a gross understatement. This Aggie Family is so dear to my heart... and deserves nothing less than the very very best.

I myself had hoped to be here for many more years- it's been heartbreaking over the past few weeks to flip through pages and pages of ideas and plans I had hoped to work on here for years to come, but that is no longer what is best for me and my family... that energy will have to be invested into a new adventure of some kind that I trust God has for me somewhere else.

With that being said, I truly hope that these amazing, selfless Aggie staff members get the encouragement from this Board and community that they need in order to stay here, so the miracles that happen in our Aggie Family can continue for years to come.

Finally, I would like to thank those on the Board who have served so faithfully for so many years and have created the healthy environment OR soil, if you will, that allowed the many seeds that have been planted in our district to grow so beautifully into what it has become today... Our district is rare, it is infinite in its value, but please remember that it requires careful and loving attention. Complacency, by the board or the community, can cause even the most robust garden to die over time.

Hopefully now you believe me as I share what I have said multiple times with the Board in the past: **nothing we do here in this school can be accomplished without first having a Board that supports and trusts those who serve here, particularly in this role of superintendent.**

Trust is the foundation upon which healthy partnerships are built. It is with both great hope and eagerness that I look forward to watching how this community and this Board will build back this trust within our Aggie Family over the days and weeks ahead.

Educators and "school people"- in general, are, by their very nature, rule-followers and kind-hearted, but they also love fiercely and look out for another. They are smart and resourceful and can read people and situations deftly, as they have thousands of human interactions each day. I believe that our staff will put all of these super powers to work over the coming months as they carefully watch to see exactly what this Board and this community are made of and what they discover, I believe, will determine to a great degree, the future of this school.

Thank you for allowing me to share my heart with you, this one last time.