

**KANKAKEE SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 111  
BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES  
April 3, 2018**

A special meeting of the Board of Education of Kankakee School District No. 111, Kankakee County, Illinois, was held at 6:02 p.m. in the Cafeteria at Kankakee High School, 1200 West Jeffery Street, Kankakee, Illinois.

Special  
Meeting

ROLL CALL

Roll Call

Members present: Mary Archie  
Jess Gathing, Jr.  
Karen Johnston, Vice President  
Joseph Lightfoot  
Angela Shea, Secretary  
Darrell Williams  
Barbara A. Wells, President

Members absent: All present.

A quorum was declared present.

Meeting with the Board was:

Dr. Geneva A. Walters, Superintendent  
Dr. Kathleen O'Connor, Assistant Superintendent  
Robert Grossi, Assistant Superintendent  
Mrs. Sally Scott, Board Attorney  
Vicki Scott, Recording Secretary

News reporter, Mr. John Dykstra, was present from The Daily Journal.

The pledge of allegiance was led by Board President Barbara Wells.

Pledge

**Public Hearing**

Public  
Hearing

President Wells introduced the Board's attorney, Mrs. Sally Scott, who will be helping with tonight's proceedings. Attorney Scott stated that this is a public hearing tonight pursuant to the Illinois School Code regarding the proposed reclassification of Mrs. Young from principal to classroom teacher. The order of the presentation will be as follows: begin with the Superintendent presenting the reasons for reclassification, then Mrs. Young or her representative will then present to the Board and will be allowed 30 minutes, and they will provide you with notice when you have five minutes left. After Mrs. Young's presentation the superintendent may provide rebuttal. Both sides may then give closing statements with Mrs. Young going first. The presentation is directed to the Board of Education and no witnesses will be used by either side. The superintendent is not to ask questions of Mrs. Young or the Board and Mrs. Young is not to ask questions to the superintendent or the board. The Board may ask questions if it chooses. Documentation may be provided to the Board, but not distributed to the public. Attorney Scott asked that appropriate, professional demeanor be maintained at all times.

**Dr. Walters:**

Opening  
Statements

Alicia Young is currently principal at King Middle Grade School. She was hired on January 13, 2003 as a tutorial specialist until becoming a classroom teacher during the 2003-04 school year. During the 2015-16 school year, she served as a learning partner. Ms. Young was interviewed and was scheduled to be hired as an Assistant Principal at King during the 2016-17 school year. However, after reassigning the King Principal to Kankakee High School, Ms. Young was recommended and hired as the principal at King.

Her areas of strength as a Principal include her knowledge of curriculum and instruction, and data analysis. Her areas of improvement include: leading and managing systems change by maintaining positive culture and climate and building safety; improving teaching and learning by supporting all classroom teachers; living the mission, vision and belief, which includes creating a shared vision and cohesion among teachers; and building and maintaining collaborative relationships as evidenced by the division among staff members in the building. These areas are aligned with Illinois Performance Standards for School Leaders and are different from Standards associated with effective teaching.

Evidence used to determine weaknesses include 11 verbal/written statements from staff members, which include five African-American staff members, six white, and one other. Evidence also includes reports to Central Office from multiple parents across racial lines.

I will be reading excerpts from the written statements excluding as much as I can to protect the anonymity of the staff members. The themes in the statements include:

- Unprofessional body language and overall communication: eye rolling, refusing to speak to certain teachers when there is conflict, yelling
- Condescending and confrontational
- Inequity among staff members
- Accusatory and verbally aggressive tone
- Lack of accountability with students allowing them to be disrespectful and defiant
- Talking about staff members to other staff members and in front of students
- Staff members reporting being reprimanded in front of other staff members and students
- Being dismissive: described as talking over you, cutting you off or dismissing your concerns

**Excerpts from Statement #1:**

Mrs. Young and I have always had a mutual respect for each other. Therefore, until recently, we have had a positive working relationship. I have seen the way that she has targeted staff members who she does not like for one reason or another. A good example of this would be at the beginning of this year when she asked one new teacher to write lesson plans differently from all the other new teachers. Two new teachers were working together and using the same lesson plan template. Mrs. Young accepted this template from one teacher and told another teacher that it was unacceptable. Another example would be two teachers with a sick child. One teacher was allowed to care for her sick child and the other teacher with a sick child was told that she could not leave until she found someone to cover her class. It seems like Mrs. Young has a hard time being objective.

Another concern that has led to a decline in staff morale has been Mrs. Young discussing one staff member with another staff member or talking about staff members in front of a group of people. I have witnessed this happening multiple times in the office or the hallway. In front of whoever happens to be in the area, Mrs. Young will comment on what a teacher is doing wrong. She might say, "This teacher needs to have better classroom management." or "This teacher shouldn't be sending someone to the office for this." Either of these statements may or may not be true, but the bigger concern is that they were verbalized in front of students and staff. When a previous assistant principal was in our building, Mrs. Young repeatedly belittled him in front of the staff. She did not allow him to finish sentences in meetings. She talked over him and interrupted him often.

In my opinion, the biggest problem in the building has been lack of support for the teachers and lack of accountability for students. Mrs. Young is very quick to criticize teachers, however she does not have high expectations for student behavior. She has taken a student who was sent for an office time out back to his classroom and told the teacher that she should handle the problem in class. The student had thrown a chair in class and screamed at his teacher, and Mrs. Young told the teacher she needed better classroom management in front of the student and the rest of the class. Recently, there were two situations where students had pushed teachers. In one situation, the student was referred to CIPS. In the other, the student did not receive a consequence. There are many

classrooms where there is significant help needed in the area of behavior management. Mrs. Young blames teachers for all problems. However, when one teacher resigned due to this problem it was evident there were multiple challenges in that room. Mrs. Young, the current assistant principal, and multiple learning partners worked for weeks to get the classroom into some semblance of control. Had this effort been put into this class earlier in the year rather than blaming the experienced teacher, she may have continued in the classroom. Before Christmas break there was a fight in the classroom next door to me early in the morning. At 10:30 AM, I was in the hallway with my class and I saw the two students who were fighting eating popcorn in the office. One of those students still had ice on his eye from the fight and they were enjoying a treat. Another time, there was a fight on a Wednesday afternoon. The following morning when I went to bus duty, I heard one of the students involved in the fight bragging to other students about it. When they asked him if he got in trouble, he said, "No." Therefore, there are more fights occurring. Students are disrespectful and defiant. Of course, teachers are working to hold students accountable for their behaviors. However, they are not receiving support when needed, and students have noticed.

In December, Central Administration visited our building to talk with the staff about Mrs. Young's leadership in the building. They asked us to list the good, the bad, and the ugly. Following this discussion, Mrs. Young mentioned the feedback many times, however she always phrased it in a way that the staff was to blame. She brought the feedback to the school improvement team and told us that we need to think of ways to fix the problems. Although she stated that she took the information seriously, there was no indication of her taking personal responsibility. She mentioned that she thought the statements that some people made were just retaliatory.

Mrs. Young often says that she has an open door policy, however; she does not participate in respectful professional discussions. I have heard several screaming matches between Mrs. Young and other teachers when there were disagreements. If she disagrees with you about something, she will not let you talk. She will interrupt repeatedly and get louder and more animated as the discussion progresses. Most of the staff, my self included, have resigned themselves to not speak up when they disagree with her.

I am concerned by the number of teachers this year who have expressed a desire to leave our building, our district, and some the teaching profession. The majority of the newer teachers have made these statements to me and sadly many tenured teachers as well. My hope is that this situation can be reversed.

### **Excerpts from Statement #2:**

During the 2016-2017 school year I was followed back to my classroom and confronted because of a comment I'd made to the previous assistant principal. I was struggling with a difficult student in my class and had mentioned to the previous assistant principal that I was doing everything that I could and I just didn't want anyone to think that I wasn't. Mrs. Young overheard this and back-tracked to follow me into my classroom. She was very aggressive in nature stating that I was the most supported staff member at this school, I got rid of my co-teacher and I still wasn't happy, and that I'm making myself sick. She was irritated with me for talking to her "all the time" about the difficult student who had multiple explosions each day whose parents are well-versed in IEP law. The last comment was in reference to a preexisting and currently undiagnosed stomach condition that resulted from a surgery that almost killed me. I have random bouts of illness that are intensified with extreme stress. She was yelling at me in the presence of my sign language interpreter, union representative, and unfortunately the students who were sitting in the hallway. It was humiliating and I wasn't given the opportunity to speak as she continued to cut me off. It was in this moment that I realized that our work relationship was strained.

Mrs. Young confronted me in the teacher's lounge in front of my team and other staff members. She said that she immediately thought of me when another staff member said to take behavior charts off the walls. I told her that she was the one who suggested I do that and she cut me off and told me the kids are bullying each other. I could not make my point without her speaking over me. It was

embarrassing and a few staff members left the lounge because of the tension. It was evident that a learning partner had spoken to Mrs. Young about her surprise observation as those were details that the learning partner probed a student about and wrote on her form.

Referring about two or three students in her classroom: They were working and I didn't want to disrupt everyone to take a bathroom break. I sent two boys and three girls to the bathroom directly across the hall from my classroom. I didn't see this as an issue because I sent nine students to intervention across the building every morning. The students I sent were trustworthy and I was back and forth to the door to check on them. In a moment when I returned to my desk to sort exit tickets from the day's lesson, Mrs. Young stormed into my room and confronted me about my students playing in the bathroom unattended across from my classroom and told me that I can't leave kids unattended. I called the students back to the room and they were confused about what they had done. The students hadn't done anything at all. I consistently struggled with how I was to require respect in my classroom when I was frequently corrected in front of my students. A student even commented, "You got [teachers name] in trouble." This incident was followed up with another email. The email contained her perception of what was going on, not at all what was actually going on.

**Excerpts from Statement #3:**

To whom it may concern: I would like for you to know how hard it was for me to work with Ms. Young last year. There were days when I wanted to call off, but I always came in because I love my kids in my classroom. I was having a problem with one of my students so I talked to Ms. Young about him. She made me feel like everything he did was my fault. She talked down to me, so if I had any more problems, I would ask the previous assistant principal for help. Then she called me, another teacher, and the previous assistant principal for a meeting about that student, but when we arrived, she started talking about my behavior, so I left and called my union representative.

One day she was on the walkie talkie speaking to the previous assistant principal and said, "Did he take some work to Avis Huff?" He told her yes and put it in the mailbox of the teacher. Then Ms. Young said, "someone needs to teach you how to talk on the walkie talkie."

**Question:** Mr. Gathing asked Dr. Walters for the dates of when the statements were written. Dr. Walters responded that Statement #1 did not have a date but she is assuming, based on a statement, it was written this year. Statement #2 was written on February 5, 2018 and Statement #3 was verbally given to them last school year and was written on January 31, 2018.

**Excerpts from Statement #4:** (verbally given to them last school year but written on January 26, 2018)

Please let it be known that as I write this statement I do so with great trepidation. My feelings of anxiety and fear of retaliation are a residual effect from my experience during the 2016-17 school year.

I would also like to mention that I am currently in a teaching assignment that I love with terrific leadership and amazing colleagues, this was also true of my assignment prior to 2016-17. However, I did enter this school year with feelings that can only be described as those similar to someone experiencing post-traumatic stress due to my experiences with Mrs. Alicia Young.

At the beginning of the 2016-17 school year, I felt sad to see the former principal move on, but extremely happy that "one of our own" would be leading us. I extended my support and volunteered my time to Mrs. Young as the transition was made. Initially, this was very well received. Then approximately one week before school began something changed. At the time I wasn't sure why things seemed to be different, Later on I was told that as the school year got under way, that a teacher and Mrs. Young had many negative conversations about me. These conversations were held in the school at various times and were overheard by others. This lack of professionalism quickly turned into something personal. Mrs. Young often spoke to me very aggressively and in a

confrontational tone and this was witnessed by other teachers, administrators and students.

In October, I asked for a meeting with Mrs. Young and my union representative to discuss the growing tension that was being created. Mrs. Young included the previous assistant principal and another administrator in this meeting. Instead of the meeting being a vehicle for discussion and problem solving, it quickly turned into an opportunity for her to berate and blame me with aggressive tone, words, and body language in front of everyone. I remained silent during this time staring at a spot on the wall. It became so extreme that my union representative had to stop the meeting. Nothing was remedied, instead I developed a fear of speaking to or in front of her.

Whenever something occurred that she deemed necessary to speak to me about, it was apparent that I was wrong before I walked into the room. What I had to say did not matter. Once when discussing such a matter with her she cleaned her desk and book bag while I was speaking. She had already spoken to me as if I was a child in trouble and had no interest in my account of the events I did ask her to look at me when I was speaking to her. She responded by facing me and looking above my head. The events that I was "in trouble for" were her friend's interpretation of events. I could not seem to do anything right, often the interpretation she was being told was false, but I had no opportunity to speak my side. This type of leadership that supported favoritism created a climate of distrust among the staff. No one knew who they could speak to for fear of being "in trouble."

Such treatment was not reserved just for me, although I seemed to get the lion's share early on. I often heard her speak to other teachers and even the previous assistant principal in a hostile, bullying tone. For example, when speaking to the staff during meetings we were often scolded and given little to no time to speak, process or respond to topics. Most responses were quickly shot down or were dismissed, often with an eye roll or a flick of the hand. I once overheard her say to the previous assistant principal on the walkie talkie, "What, you don't know how to use a walkie talkie?" This was in front of students. In front of teachers, she often stripped away his authority by taking over meetings that he was to be leading. He simply stopped talking and let it unfold.

I have successfully served as a team, building, and district leader for several years. Yet during the 2016-2017 school year I was systematically removed from all of my leadership roles. These roles were given to the one teacher previously mentioned at the opening of my statement. I did not object for fear of repercussions.

I watched as the cohesive well-oiled machine that I had been a part of for over 15 years turn into a building full of people that closed their doors, did their jobs and went home. By the parent/teacher conferences at the end of October in 2016, I felt defeated and depressed. I carried out all duties required of me and began to do something I never thought I would do. I looked to leave King because I knew that if things remained the same, my health and wellbeing would be impacted, which would ultimately impact my ability to continue to teach my students with excellence. I am fortunate to have been given another assignment that I love in our district. I am blessed and lucky to be a Kankakee School District teacher.

**Excerpts from Statement #5:** (written on January 30, 2017)

She explained to me during this meeting that my lesson plans look more like an agenda and not lesson plans. I explained to her that math looks that way because I do the same order every day, the topic just changes. She told me that she wanted to see specific instructional strategies and differentiation for each lesson for every day of the week and that I should look at the Performance Matters rubric when writing my daily lesson plans. She advised me to consult with my mentor. When I told her that I have talked with her and have modeled my lesson plans off of what she has done, as well as what another teacher had done, she explained to me that [mentors name] is a veteran teacher and that she has different expectations for her and she already knows that she's a good teacher so she doesn't have to have detailed lesson plans. She went on to tell me that the teacher's template that I used was not ok for me because she was now taking an intentional look at my lesson plans only and it's not ok for me to have my lesson plans written this way. I explained to Mrs. Young that I

am feeling targeted at this point because I am the only one that is being asked to rewrite lesson plans and have them this detailed. She told me that she is doing this to make me a better person and a better teacher. At no point during the 2 ½ weeks that she was asking me to have lesson plans ready for her did she ever send me written feedback on exactly what she was looking for in my lesson plans. It was all verbal during one-on-one meetings and I was trying to write it all down. The inequity between teachers is very frustrating and as a first year teacher it is very defeating and deflating.

[Staff members name] went on to tell me that Mrs. Young told the student, "Your teacher can't just kick you out for every little thing. Go back to class." There was never a conversation between Mrs. Young and I about why this student was out of my classroom. About two weeks later, on December 5, 2017, I sent this same student out of my room for screaming at me that he "will hurt me" if I keep talking to him and that I "better learn who I'm talking to before I speak" to him. He then stood up and flipped his chair into my bookshelf in the back of my room. This all came on because I asked him to please wake up from sleeping in class and start working. I asked him to take a time out with his work in the assistant principal's office again. On his way down to the office Mrs. Young stopped him again. She asked him why he was out of class, his response was the same and said that he didn't know. She brought him back up to my room and asked me to speak with her and the student in my doorway. She explained to me, in front of the student, that I cannot keep sending him out of my class for every little thing he does. I tried to explain to Mrs. Young what the student had done and that I did not see it as a part of his disability and that at no point should a student be able to talk to a teacher like that without consequence. This whole conversation was done in front of the student and in the doorway of my classroom where other students were sitting in desks near the door and heard the whole conversation as well.

With every conversation and/or meeting that I have had with Mrs. Young, her tone is always very condescending. She has never made any eye contact with me. She has been demeaning and I feel deflated after every meeting or conversation that I have had with her. As a first year teacher, she has said one positive thing about me as a teacher. This came during my post conference after my second formal evaluation. Mrs. Young told me that my lesson was good. There has not been a time this whole school year that I have felt comfortable going to Mrs. Young to speak with her about any concerns that I may have.

**Excerpts from Statement #6:** (verbally given to them last year but assuming it was written this year)

I want to start off by saying that I am so very grateful and privileged to have worked in the Kankakee School District for the last 14 years. Eleven of those fourteen years have been at King Middle School under the wonderful leadership of [principal's name] and [principal's name]. Now, I am very lucky to work under [principal's name] at a different school. I have felt, not only supported by all three of those administrators mentioned above, but valued as well. Under their leadership, everyone was considered part of a team, no matter what job title you had, you were important.

Last year, however, was a completely different story. My decision to leave King Middle School, which I called home for 12 years was the way that I was treated and the stress I often felt at the end of the day. I couldn't imagine having another year where I would feel as if I had to walk on eggshells. Another year that I wasn't allowed to have a voice or a different opinion. I was treated in a very unprofessional manner during the school year last year. In this letter, I would like to share with you a few of the times where I felt that a lack of professionalism occurred. One example was when I was called to Mrs. Young's office for a discussion, I was not allowed to talk to her without the presence of the previous assistant principal. I asked her why, and she responded that she did not trust me. I can't even fathom why she would say that or imagine what I had ever done to her to warrant a statement like that. She also would write down anything that was discussed in those meetings in her "notes." I had to constantly worry how she would twist my words or just what she would do with her "notes." I asked that a union representative then be at all of my meetings with her as well, and actually asked her to stop a meeting until one was present. She actually told me that I was not allowed to have union representation if I wasn't being reprimanded. I informed her that I had already checked with the union, and they said that I could have someone there. She insisted that was not true and

went on with the meeting. Am I supposed to walk out of the meeting? Wouldn't that be unprofessional of me? I felt constantly stressed being in situations like this where I had to make moral decisions that would somehow make me look unprofessional. How is this supposed to make a teacher feel, when her boss treats her like this? When my boss says that she is evaluating me next year, how can I feel that she will be objective if right now she is saying that she cannot trust me? I did ask HR for another evaluator at the end of the year last year, but was told the principal was adamant that she evaluates me. Although I was not opposed to two evaluators because I feel confident in my teaching ability, I did feel that the stress of the situation would get the best of me.

When my personal kids were sick with the flu in March before spring break, I naturally had to take a day off work. It was a day that was supposed to be a professional development day for [name of program], so a sub was already secured. While I was making copies to prepare my sub for the day, Mrs. Young made a comment and asked me why the grandparents couldn't watch my kids.

I witnessed a lack of professionalism on multiple occasions toward other staff members too, including support staff such as paraprofessionals, secretaries, and even other administrators. One such instance of unprofessionalism and a lack of empathy was with a co-teacher. This co-teacher had a family medical issue. She had picked up head lice from a student that she worked closely with at school and thus gave it to her children. After being up all night and treating her children, Mrs. Young would not let her reschedule her evaluation even though this particular teacher needed to treat herself and take care of the issue. Another unprofessional example I witnessed was a secretary being corrected because she said that there had been a fight in the cafeteria. Our principal overheard this statement and quickly put her in her place in a very strong tone of voice in front of other teachers. She informed her that it was a disagreement and went on to chastise her about how that is how rumors get started and she is tired of people starting rumors. Some of the other unprofessional comments I can remember hearing were "Ya'll so petty!" which was said to us at a staff meeting, and "I am not going down for you all." Also, on a walkie, I as well as kids in a hallway could hear the way that she would talk to her assistant principal in a condescending manner. She would even talk down to him during school improvement meetings in front of the other staff. She also treated the paraprofessionals badly and whatever some of them did was never right in her eyes.

Dr. Walters concluded with a review of the supports that were given to Mrs. Young.

- Turnitta Rayborn as a mentor
- Support from the District Leadership Team
- I also personally witnessed the concerns expressed by the staff members when working to resolve a conflict between Ms. Young and the co-directors of last year's Black History Program. I observed the negative body language, tone, and the attempt to talk over one of the co-directors when she was calmly attempting to explain her perspective. Initially, I attempted to calmly redirect Ms. Young. Her behavior escalated to the point that I had to ask the directors to leave. I talked with Ms. Young about the importance of watching her body language and tone when working with the teachers

We also did the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly which is very controversial. We've done this eight times in the past two and a half years and we have even done it at Central Office. Out of the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly, the staff members expressed the same concerns: not handling school discipline, interrupting, not treating staff equally, criticizing staff in front of students, and disrespect. Many of the statements I read were from last year, but five of the seven people who wrote these statements were not in the Good, the Bad and the Ugly meeting, but yet the same concerns were expressed.

Ms. Young has proven experience as an effective classroom teacher. She has struggled with managing adults. Research in education supports that negative culture and climate as well as poor teacher collective efficacy has a long-term negative impact on student outcomes. Based on themes and not to say that every single thing that every individual said is true, but based on the multiple reports that came to us from staff members, there was a theme of a challenge of managing adult behavior. One of the supports that our assistant superintendent who worked closely with her had

was a visual sign to touch her nose to redirect her whenever she saw signs of using her body language or showing aggressive behavior.

**Mrs. Young**

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as principal at King Middle School for the last two years. I would like to thank the overwhelming number of King staff who support me as their instructional leader. It is my hope that I will be able to continue to serve you in this capacity as principal of King Middle School. According to our data, student achievement is increasing and discipline data is decreasing.

I decided to proceed with this public hearing because a large number of my students, teachers, parents, and community members have asked me what is going on. Why are they trying to remove you as principal? I have stated to them, "I don't know." I have absolutely nothing to hide. On March 7, I was given a notice of proposed reclassification that listed the reasons as to why it is being recommended for me to go back to the classroom. All of the reasons given are false statements and lack documentation to support them. On March 19, I had a private hearing with the Board of Education where I thoroughly went through every false statement that was written on the proposal. I used data to discredit every single statement. Due to time restraints, as I was only given 30 minutes to speak this evening, I would like to summarize the statements and share with you some of the data that I used to discredit those statements.

The statements included the following words: "You have struggled with your administrative position. The problem is in the area of culture and climate, you have not created a safe and orderly productive environment for students and staff, you're unlikely to influence teachers to improve instructional practices, and you have not been able to facilitate and manage change effectively.

But, if you look at the several pieces of factual data that I have provided you, you will find that these statements are not true. According to my ValEd survey, which is the official survey where every principal rates themselves, teachers rate the principals, and the assigned evaluator rates the principal as well, King teachers not only ranked me high in the area of "Supporting and Communication," but they also ranked me high in all twelve areas. There is a direct correlation between teachers feeling supported and a positive climate and culture. King teachers indicated with a high mark that they feel I support them. King teachers ranked me high overall for my "Total Effectiveness." Out of five rating marks, teachers ranked me with the fourth highest rank. For one of my evaluation goals, I chose climate and culture. The agreed upon measure that was chosen to assess climate and culture was feedback from teachers using my ValEd survey. As stated already, on this survey, I was rated high by teachers, which means that I met my goal.

Another form of documentation that discredits these statements are letters from twenty of my staff members at King. Most, but not all teachers, shared their letters of support at a Board meeting in February. There are numerous letters from current King teachers in your binder. These letters not only speak to my instructional leadership, but also speak to my character and positive climate and culture that I have set at King. I have received letters from the majority of my teachers.

Some of the other things I have done to build a positive climate and culture at King include an email that I sent to all King teachers and staff members before Thanksgiving in which I listed individual reasons of why I am thankful for each of them. The first thing you see when you walk in the building is the "Meet our Starting Lineup" bulletin board, which includes pictures of the hard working teachers at King. You have pictures of teachers posing with "Be Amazing" bags that I purchased at the beginning of the school year; pictures of teachers dressing up on "Spirit Days"; teachers playing a human scrabble game that I created to strengthen teacher morale. In January, every staff member received a picture frame with a word that teachers chose at the beginning of the year that they would use to guide them throughout this school year, of which I printed, assembled, and paid for the frames out of my own pocket. I also had an "Orange You Glad You Work at King Day." I purchased all of the items out of my own pocket to celebrate teachers and their hard work. There is a staff shout-outs bulletin board in the teachers' lounge where teachers can write encouraging words to one another. I



personally placed teacher appreciation signs on every teacher's door for Teacher Appreciation Week. All of these activities and actions directly influence a positive climate and culture at King.

Two surveys were conducted on me. Both surveys displayed the overwhelming support of my teachers. Both times, Central Office wanted to do the surveys. I told them what they were hearing was not true. After the first survey, Dr. O'Connor called me and said, Mrs. Young. the survey shows that only a few teachers do not support you. After the second survey, Felice Hybert called me to tell me that the survey was okay and that it showed there were a few management things that could easily be fixed.

This school year, two assistant superintendents and one central office administrator came to my building to conduct a Good, Bad, and Ugly survey. On the resolution, it was stated that the problem is in the area of culture and climate, but, if you listen to the good statements that the King teachers made about me on the survey, you will hear that the positive things they said about me directly speak to the positive culture and climate at King. These statements are as follows: Mrs. Young is very energetic and tries to motivate staff, she is supportive, and shares teacher materials and ideas, she has willingness and effort to try and boost staff morale, she is always available to give help and suggestions, she is very encouraging, she gives fist bumps to kids in the hallways and stops by classrooms to leave encouraging notes to her teachers, she enjoys the students, she has a cheerful demeanor in the morning, she has great ideas for student engagement and supporting the staff, she is hard working and spends a lot of time and effort on school, she is trying to raise staff morale, she seems happier this year, she is making an effort to raise staff morale, she is extremely supportive this year with giving feedback on instruction, she works hard to build team management, she understands what it is like to be in the classroom, she empathizes with her staff, teachers and admin are a team when it comes to student behavior, she is dedicated, committed, has endless energy towards King students and staff, I feel very supported by administration and that she has my best interest, she is great, supportive staff who work well together, she is supportive of my outside concerns/obligations, she is great with communication, she really wants the staff and students to be successful, the staff overall have a pretty good rapport and she works hard to try and keep building morale up, she is the best administrator I have ever had, she cares about us and works with us, she is very supportive as principal, she always gives great feedback and suggestions, she has a positive attitude and her intentions always revolve around the best interest of the students. These statements show that climate and culture is a goal that I have worked hard to build at King this school year.

Referral and discipline data from the last four years show that my staff and I have decreased the number of referrals from that of the previous administration. We've added on to the awesome leadership [former principal] provided when he was the principal at King. My staff and I helped to continue the trend of decreasing student discipline issues. During the time period in which the statements on the resolution were written and during my evaluation period, King's referral/discipline data actually decreased. You would not know that from the inaccurate statements listed on the resolution. The following activities have been implemented under my leadership: CHAMPS and Class Dojo are being used in every classroom, by every teacher at King. Both of these programs directly impact student behavior and parental involvement. I've led three student assemblies this school year on the topics of bullying, leadership, and school-wide behavioral expectations. If you take a look outside on the front of the school and throughout the building, you will notice our sign that says, "Leadership Starts Here" and leadership character traits hanging throughout the school. What you will see is that there is a vision at King that not only teaches our students about being leaders, but expects students to show leadership in all they do. Under my leadership, teachers are able to recommend students to administration for positive behavior using a positive office referral document. Administration calls parents to let them know that their child had an awesome day at school. I send positive inspirational messages to students on their Chromebooks to encourage them to have a good week and do well in school. We have a weekly VIP and monthly student of the month celebrations, and honor roll assemblies celebrating the accomplishments of students. Students have written reflections after assemblies speaking of the personal actions they will take as a result of what was discussed at the assemblies. Students complete think sheets in the classroom and in the administrative offices as a reflection of their behavior and better choices they can make. Students

participate in restorative justice peace circles where they talk about how their behavior choices directly affect others and what they can do to restore the relationship that was broken. Teachers have a pyramid of interventions that they can refer to when students are struggling academically or behaviorally. These are just a few of the things that have been implemented under my leadership. The other activities are found in your binders and red folders that I presented to each of you. How can it be said that I have not created a safe and orderly productive environment for students and staff at King when documentation and valid data show otherwise? Data shows that referrals have gone down since I've stepped in as principal at King. What documentation has been provided to confirm this and all the other statements written on the Resolution?

In the Closed Session a question was asked about climate and culture being included in teacher grievances and Dr. Walters made the statement that, "If climate and culture were to be included in the union contract, there would be a number of grievances against principals." If this is the case, then why am I the only principal who is subjected to this disparate treatment? What measurement tools has the District created to accurately measure and assess culture and climate?

It is my belief that Dr. O'Connor negatively influenced the climate and culture at King. All of my evaluation observations have been great. Last year, as a first year principal, I was two-tenths away from receiving an excellent on my evaluation. Up until my final summative evaluation conference, my scores and observations were always great. When I met with Dr. O'Connor, my evaluator, for my final evaluation conference, she gave me a rating of a "Needs Improvement." How did I go from a nearly excellent to a needs improvement? Dr. O'Connor did not complete my evaluation according to the Illinois School Code or the District evaluation school board policies. The only parts of the evaluation that she completed was my goal setting conference at the beginning of the school year and two observations. I have provided each of you with the PERA Illinois laws on principal evaluations as well as the school board policies that must be followed. These components are not optional, but required by law. Dr. O'Connor never met with me to discuss any strengths or weaknesses with supporting reasons and documentation. This is a requirement that should have happened before any observations took place. Dr. O'Connor never met with me for our formative conference where we should have discussed my goals and revised them as needed. This component is not optional, but required by law. Dr. O'Connor did not accept any of my evidence documentation which clearly showed that I met every single goal that was set at my goal setting conference. Student growth was not calculated in my evaluation. If you look at Illinois Performance Evaluation laws, you will see that student growth is a significant factor in rating a principal's performance. Once again, these components aren't optional, but required by law. You cannot bypass any of the steps stated in the law and generate your own rating. Dr. O'Connor took false statements from a survey and wrote them on my evaluation. She did not confirm whether or not these statements were true. These are the six statements written on the notice of reclassification. I have already proven with documentation and data that these statements are false, yet they were used against me as if they were true.

If you look at the dates on the statements collected from seven people, the dates are within two weeks of my final evaluation. Only two of the seven statements collected are from current King teachers. Five of these people did not work at King this school year. These statements are misleading. Teachers were approached and asked to write statements. They were handed to me at my summative evaluation conference. I was never asked or questioned about anything said in these statements. During a meeting with Dr. O'Connor, Felice, and Dr. Walters, when I wanted to address the issue in one of these statements, I was told that I could not comment nor ask any questions. I could only ask for clarification. What's most disheartening about these statements is that this was not done to any other principal for their evaluation. This would be okay if this were the norm for every principal and a part of every principal's evaluation. No other principal had statements collected from teachers to be used in their evaluations. No other principal had statements collected from teachers who previously worked for them. No other principal sat through a meeting where a teacher's union representative read statements against them and received no due process for statements that were gathered and written against them. This would be okay if the survey was an evaluation tool approved by the State of Illinois, but it isn't and it was used to evaluate me and only me. Show me another principal where culture and climate is being used against them even when Dr. Walters stated that all principals would have

grievances against them in this area. It would have been okay if Dr. O'Connor had asked me about the content in these statements, but she didn't. She simply used them against me in my evaluation without ever giving me the opportunity to redress or resolve. As a principal, I would never gather statements from teachers about other teachers and never ask them about what was written. This is what Dr. O'Connor did to me. If I had concerns about a teacher, I would go to observe that classroom, not simply take hearsay as factual evidence. If there were concerns about my leadership, why didn't Dr. O'Connor come to observe the various settings? According to School Board policy, an evaluator has to conduct at least two observations, but they are not limited to just the two. Dr. O'Connor could have come to King to observe me during the school day, at staff meetings, grade-level meetings, evaluation conference meetings where I provide feedback to teachers. Why did she not come to observe for herself? If Dr. O'Connor had concerns, why did we not meet to develop a remediation plan at the beginning of the year? I stated to Dr. O'Connor several times, that what she was hearing from a few teachers was not true. And when she conducted those surveys, she found out some of the truth.

As Dr. Walters often states, everyone has their stripe on the beach ball. Everyone's stripe matters. I've had to question whether or not my stripe matters. These statements were gathered and I was never asked about the content in the statements, although I can point out the inaccuracies and inconsistencies in each one of them. Dr. Walters came to King to speak to one of my teachers during the school day. I knew I was the topic of conversation because Dr. O'Connor told me that she received a phone call from one of my teachers confirming why Dr. Walters came to speak to this teacher. One of the seven statements used against me is from this teacher, yet I was never questioned or spoken with about the concerns this teacher had. Dr. Walters has stated that she's heard good and bad things about every administrator and how she shares the concerns only if she has a question about what was shared with her. Why have I not been afforded this treatment? If it is going to be used against me, then I should at least been informed and allowed the opportunity to address these concerns. An effective and respected administrator is not based on your ability to be liked by everyone. It's an evolving process and a work in progress. An instructional leader has to hold individuals accountable so that our students can succeed and our teachers are supported. For a few, that accountability is not wanted nor welcomed. There are a few who will reject change and there are others that will embrace change.

It was said in the Resolution that I have not been able to use my leadership skills to facilitate or manage change effectively. It was also stated that it is unlikely that I will influence teachers to improve instructional practices. As the data reflects, I have already begun to influence teachers to improve their instructional practices and facilitate and manage change effectively, as indicated by the following data: Out of eleven schools, King had the highest percentage of students meet their expected growth targets in reading this year. According to our AIMS data, every grade level in both reading and math increased the number of students in Tier I, students meeting and exceeding standards, and decreased the number of students in Tier 3, students who are below standards. All of the teacher letters speak to the feedback that I have provided, which has helped shape those individuals into the teachers that they are today. I have directly influenced student achievement by the feedback/coaching that I provide to teachers. As indicated by the Illinois State Board of Education School Report Card data for King, King student scores increased on their overall performance on State assessments. Dr. Walters confirmed in her statement to The Daily Journal, I have strong instructional skills. As I said earlier, discipline data has improved and discipline referrals are down. The data in the folders and binder that you all received represent the positive changes that continue to be made under my leadership. The statements from King's staff members who support me speak volumes to my leadership.

I have provided you with a copy of the State law in regard to the reclassification of a principal. According to State Law on the reclassification of principals and assistant principals, it states, "Within ten days of a principal's or assistant principal's receipt of this notice, the School Board shall provide the principal or assistant principal with a written notice of the facts regarding the reclassification." The Superintendent must ensure that the principal's failure to meet designated standards and performance criteria is clearly documented in the principal's evaluation. You have before you a signed Resolution that does not state any facts nor provide any valid documentation, nor was a written statement of facts

provided to me within ten days according to Illinois Law. The reclassification should be based on inadequate job performance as outlined in the job description as evaluated through the evaluation instrument associated with my contract, not a Good, Bad, and Ugly survey that is not a part of my contract, nor my evaluation and has not been used to evaluate any other principal. The reclassification must be based off clearly documented facts.

In conclusion, the performance evaluation laws were not followed in the evaluation process. The steps in the evaluation process were not completed in accordance with State Law or School District Policy. False statements were written on my evaluation and on the reclassification notice. No documentation that supports the reclassification was provided. I provided facts and documentation to dispute all the statements that were written against me. According to the Illinois School Code, "Failure to evaluate a principal is evidence that the principal is performing duties and responsibilities in at least a satisfactory manner and shall serve to automatically extend the principals contract for a period of one year under the same terms and conditions as the prior year's contract. I ask that you take an analytical look at my data and documentation and show me in my evaluation and Resolution where I have not met the requirements of my job description and the rubric that should have been used in my evaluation. Culture and climate has not been proven to be poor at King. Documentation says that culture and climate is good. I tell my students every day to have courage. It took a lot of courage to get up here to address this Resolution and the allegations of this Resolution. Accurate documentation should be mandatory. What cannot be disputed is that student achievement has increased and discipline data has decreased. The investigator that you hired asked me what would I like to happen from all of this. Most importantly, I want to continue making a positive impact that I have made on the students and the staff at King Middle School. I want the false statements to be removed from my evaluation. I would like my evaluation to be completed with integrity and include accurate data. I want to be treated like all other principals.

#### **Robert Ellington-Snipes**

I believe she has eloquently spoken to each and every one of your concerns and as a member of the Kankakee County Board and as a member of the taxpayers' body in this community, as a member and representative of Operation Push and the African American Improvement Association, I have been wrongly accused before, anyone in leadership has been wrongly accused of something. I have been at the forefront of supporting people in duress, no matter who it has been. As a supporter for many years for the underdog, I've become a voice of reason for them because a lot of times power tends to quiet the voices of those who don't have the strength to speak up for themselves.

I call upon the Board of Education to take into consideration as elected officials the first being your oath. You need to review that oath because you answer to the people that elect you, that is why they are our constituents. If we just rubber-stamp everything, then we don't have a voice. Today I heard statements that were read and none of them were attached to the Resolution. Nothing was attached, no affidavits, nobody swore to a document and if you go into a court, it would be dismissed; you would have to have a sworn affidavit. How do you prove these statements are true if no one verifies or validates them?

Twenty-four years I've been in this district and I know what has happened to an individual when lies or half-truths spread or if somebody doesn't like you and how they will rally against you. We are in school 180 days, or at least 175 days, I've been at King and my attendance is unquestionable, you can check my background.

I have been in the private and now the public meeting, Ms. Young has been denied the opportunity to confront or cross examine these allege witnesses, Ms. Young was denied the opportunity to present witnesses in the private and public hearings. Ms. Young should have the ability to call witnesses! Where are the affidavits of these witnesses? Why wasn't any witnesses or their statements attached to the "Resolution"? We spoke on the issues presented in the Resolution with factual data.

You took an oath to uphold the law and to abide by the law of the United States. The letter of the

law suggests that you have affidavits or its hearsay. You had nothing attached, nothing! Every teacher at King has two time out slips to use at their discretion, to say that there are no supports in place, or that Dr. King School's climate and culture is unsafe, somebody lied. You have a moral obligation to obey the laws. You talk about stuff that happened last year. Only two of those statements were from staff this year and you're making a decision based upon last year? Ms. Young is a straight A student with two masters, one in educational leadership and one in curriculum and instruction from Olivet. It appears you're calling into question Olivet's integrity and quality of education.

#### **Dr. Walters Rebuttal**

Rebuttal

There are just a couple of things I would like to clarify. First, this is not a court of law, this is about students and developing an opportunity for students to grow in a culture and climate that is conducive to learning. All of our research says that school culture and climate makes a huge difference and teachers are the most important difference in the lives of students in terms of their student growth. Now initially, you may not notice the gap between King and the other schools is closing, initially you won't see the impact of the negative culture and climate, but you will eventually see it over time. The other thing to clarify is that this is not a court of law so there is no reason for a superintendent or assistant superintendent to collect affidavits. There was a question on the contractual language that if the teachers were so unhappy why didn't they file a grievance. There is no contractual language that they can file a grievance on culture and climate. That is not to say that there have not been other principals that had issues with culture and climate; I can name a few of them. They basically went through the same process, but the difference is that after their first year they turned around the issues with culture and climate. The other thing is why were some of these statements taken last year when it happened this year. Last year we knew Ms. Young was following a principal that had probably above average ability to develop collaborative relationships with the staff. We had no union complaints from King and maybe one parent in the time that I was here who complained about an issue at King. There were absolutely no concerns coming out of King about culture and climate so when complaints the following year came, we did think there was a possibility that there was an issue with transition, which I did have a conversation with Ms. Young that there might be a problem with transition. At that time I felt she would be O.K. Many of those staff members actually went to other buildings so we felt that was an opportunity for her to turn some of those issues around. We also offered for Ms. Young to go to Mark Twain where there was initially an opening and she assured us that there were only a few staff members that had concerns and her second year would be fine. Many of those staff members left and different staff members came up with having concerns. So there was still a consistent pattern of yelling, disrespect, reprimanding people in front of staff and students that continued. The other comment that was made by Ms. Young was about me visiting a teacher in her building. I went to visit that teacher because I heard she was a cheerleading coach at another school and we were looking for another cheerleading coach. I went in and talked to her for about 45 minutes about the possibility of coaching at Kankakee High School. I did not think to talk to Ms. Young about that because it really had nothing to do with King or her issues at King or any concerns. I do find it interesting that the assumption was that the teacher was telling me things about Ms. Young. The teacher never said anything about Ms. Young as she was not the topic of conversation. In fact, I know some of the Board members knew we were trying to recruit a cheerleading coach for Kankakee High School and I heard that she was a successful cheerleading coach in one of the schools in Kankakee County.

A lot of things that were discussed in terms of leadership and activities, leadership goes way beyond doing superficial things to make teachers feel good. The way you treat teachers in terms of your body language, in terms of yelling, in terms of your tone actually does have an impact on the way teachers feel about their leadership

Again, Ms. Young does have strong instructional skills. She does have a strong ability to analyze data. The issue is managing adults and over time it will have a negative impact on student performance.

**Mr. Snipes Closing Statement**

I am going to respond to the fact that this is not a court of law. I love when people challenge me. It might not be a court of law but it is an educational institute governed by the law and you have to follow the law. So, I want you to know that whether you like it or not, you broke the law. Laws are still governed and we have an Illinois School Code that we must follow. So, I agree, this is not a court of law but it is still governed by the law. If you don't take the law into consideration, you can be held accountable for that.

**Alicia Young Closing Statement**

I just want to say a few things. In a court of the law you might not have to collect affidavits, but professionally you should provide me with the opportunity to respond to the statements. There are hearsay things and opinions in every statement. In every one of those seven statements Dr. Walters read, I can go through, point out, and show you what the rationale is and what actually happened, but I wasn't provided an opportunity to do that. That could have taken place behind closed doors. But had I known those statements were going to be used against me today, I would have prepared something to say here as some things in these statements aren't true. Let me provide evidence, as you can see you have a binder with 250 pages of evidence and as you can see I have absolutely nothing to hide from anyone. Dr. Walters also talked about the teachers that left. There were five teachers who left last year. Let me tell you that one moved back to Michigan, another teacher was placed at King from a kindergarten position to fifth and she expressed an interest in wanting to go back to kindergarten and she went back to a lower grade level instead of staying at King. Another teacher accepted a promotion at another school, another lady accepted a promotion and she is now the bilingual director at another school district. There was one teacher that I would say we had a difference of opinion. Had I known these statements were there, I would tell you that there are a few teachers in my building who are going around creating a hostile working environment for other teachers who are saying do not support Ms. Young, do not do this, they have gone to them. There are teachers who have come to me and said these teachers are creating a hostile working environment for them. They are going around talking about you, things are on Facebook and those are the things that we could have talked about behind closed doors. We could have called those teachers in. There are other teachers who will tell you that there were three teachers who met last year and said we have to do everything we can to get rid of Ms. Young because she does not do what we want her to do. There are teachers who will testify to this and do sworn statements that say that these people who wrote these statements, some of these people wrote these statements out of things they wanted to do and a hidden agenda that they had against me. This is why I decided to go forward with the public meeting and private meeting because I knew I had absolutely nothing to hide. If you want to go into Closed Session and you want to talk about those statements and you want me to point out the inconsistencies and inaccuracies and you want me to show that to you, I will. I work hard at my job, hard at my school. I worked hard to build climate and culture this year, extremely hard. There are several teachers here who will tell you that at King Middle Grade School how hard I've worked. There are things that teachers have said but I have kept those things inside because I'm sure every principal goes through that, every leader, especially when you are new and you've had a beloved principal in the building for how many years, [former principal] was there and you have to come in and step up under his leadership. That's tough and challenging but I've worked very hard to create culture and climate and it's not superficial things that I've done, these things are from my heart. Just today, I've put up in the teacher's lounge "Egg a Teacher," where I've put up plastic eggs and candy and I had teachers write personal notes to staff members that have helped them get through the last nine weeks of school, that you've been egged by a co-worker or you're a great co-worker because of this. Those are not superficial things, I'm not a superficial person. I did those things because I care about my teachers, I love my teachers, I love my job, and I love the opportunity that was given to me and I work extremely hard, you cannot dispute that. Even when all this started and the things, there is so much I can say, but I am not into airing dirty things out in public because I don't think it should be taking place that way. If you can speak to me behind closed doors, there is so much more that you will find and hear that there is a personal agenda attached to this.

**Dr. Walters Closing Statement**

You may ask why culture and climate is more important because we do not dispute that Ms. Young has a strong knowledge of curriculum/instruction. Teachers' relationship with students is one of the most important single factor that influence positive student outcomes. Our responsibility as leaders is to support the teachers in the instruction of students. Let's assume that only 10 teachers are concerned about leadership and culture and climate that number alone can impact 280 students. Research also shows that collective teacher efficacy (meaning that the teachers work together as a team) is one of the top 10 factors influencing student performance. Our primary responsibility as a district is to support positive student outcome that includes behavior and academics. It is not personal to reassign any staff member when the staff member is not effective in their position. We do what's ultimately best for kids. I also want to point out that when I came to this district, King was consistently the second highest performing school in the district. That gap is just slowly closing; it is not completely closed, but slowly closing. If we don't recognize the concerns from the teachers in terms of culture and climate, which does not mean all teachers, there is actually a definite division at King than in the past. If we don't recognize that as a concern in terms of supporting students then we would be remiss if we wouldn't be supporting students. The other thing I did not discuss was there were multiple concerns from parents that were not an issue in the past. We have to do what is best for kids and what is best for kids is to have a positive culture and climate and not have two groups of teachers who are at odds with each other because that negatively impacts what is best for kids.

**Closed Session**

At 7:18 p.m., motion was made by Gathing, seconded by Williams, to adjourn to the Teachers' Lounge for closed session to discuss the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity. ROLL CALL VOTE—Ayes: Archie, Gathing, Johnston, Lightfoot, Shea, Williams, and Wells. Nays: none. Motion carried.

Closed  
Session

The closed session was adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

At 7:55 p.m., the meeting was reconvened with the following members responding to roll call: Archie, Gathing, Johnston, Lightfoot, Shea, Williams, and Wells. All present.

Reconvened

**Public Comments**

A person in the audience asked for permission to speak during public comments and President Wells stated that she consulted with the district attorney and we are in order to continue in the matter that we are proceeding.

Public  
Comments

The following public comment was made:

Name	Topic
Robert Ellington-Snipes	<p>Wanted the record to show that the Board is in violation of the open meetings act because people can speak up until the time of Public Comments.</p> <p>Spoke in support of Alicia Young, Principal at King Middle Grade School. Asked the Board to deal with the facts and do the right thing.</p>

**Action Item**

Resolution

1. Approval of Resolution Authorizing Reclassification of Principal Mrs. Alicia Young to a Classroom Teaching Position (See Insert A.)

President Wells asked if there were any questions and hearing none asked for a motion.

Motion was made by Johnston, seconded by Gathing, to approve the Resolution authorizing reclassification of Principal Mrs. Alicia Young to a classroom teaching position as presented. ROLL CALL VOTE—Ayes: Gathing, Johnston, Shea, Williams, Archie, and Wells. Nays: Lightfoot. Motion carried.

At 8:05 p.m., a motion was made by Gathing and seconded by Johnston to adjourn the meeting. All ayes; motion carried.

Adjourn

SIGNED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Barbara A. Wells, President

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Angela F. Shea, Secretary

**Approved: May 14, 2018**