

## **STAFF VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE**

**IN**

**DR. JANET RAZZE**

The policies of Wyckoff Township Board of Education, the New Jersey State Department of Education, and the Collective Bargaining Agreement clearly express the intent to build an academic community through shared governance and actions based upon good faith.

### **According to the Wyckoff Public Schools Mission Statement:**

“The mission of the Wyckoff Public Schools, a district committed to excellence, is to provide educational experiences, instructional strategies and processes that enable all students PreK-8 to achieve and reach beyond the New Jersey Core Content Standards.

These experiences will promote students to succeed intellectually, academically, socially, and emotionally. This will be accomplished in a supportive environment that strengthens self-esteem and motivates students to be life-long learners, enabling them to be successful in an increasingly complex world.

#### **To Fulfill Our Mission**

We are committed to a strong and comprehensive educational program in conjunction with a learning environment that enhances self-esteem, optimizes each child’s potential, develops a life- long love of learning, builds personal responsibility and fosters respect of others.

#### **Fundamental to Our Mission**

We are committed to the active involvement of a highly competent and caring staff, teamwork, shared leadership, the effective management of resources, and a safe learning environment. We pride ourselves on our dedication to our students, families, community, each other, our profession, and to continuous learning.”

### **According to Article III of the Wyckoff Education Association Constitution**

“The purpose of the Wyckoff Education Association is to work for the welfare of the students, the advancement of education, and improvement of educational opportunities for all.” (2007 Constitution of Wyckoff Education Association)

### **According to State of New Jersey Department of Education**

Per Act 18A:12-22 The Legislature finds and declares “In our representative form of government it is essential that the conduct of members of local boards of education and local school administrators hold the respect and confidence of the people. These board members and administrators must avoid conduct which is in violation of their public trust

or which creates a justifiable impression among the public that such trust is being violated.”

## **BILL OF PARTICULARS**

Through her actions, Superintendent Dr. Janet Razzo has violated the intent and spirit of our contract, state law, and our Board of Education’s governing documents. Further, her decisions have had a direct and negative effect on the academic standards, working conditions, governance, and growth of the Wyckoff School District.

### **1. Erosion of Academic Quality**

•**The interim Director of Curriculum, Dr. Razzo’s mentor**, came highly recommended by Dr. Razzo, to serve as interim Director of Curriculum. As defined by Webster’s dictionary, interim means having temporary effect; holding temporary office. His stay should have been temporary in all aspects of the job; rather he was permitted to make unilateral, permanent changes to the curriculum that began the erosion of the quality of education in Wyckoff Schools.

•Cost-effectiveness has taken a higher priority over academic excellence to the detriment of both the students and staff at Wyckoff Schools.

•Courses formerly devoted to helping students become physically fit became teacher-supervised recess. This was a major shift in the physical education curriculum. Without regard to present curriculum, training of staff, safety of students, or staff input, **Mid-day Fitness** was instituted. This is in direct conflict with Board Curriculum Policy.

After many months, and extended Board meetings filled with parents looking for answers, the elementary schools were able to construct a viable, not preferable, program under the constraints of Mid-day Fitness. The middle school, due to number of students and time constraints, found the program to be detrimental to the safety of the students. It was removed at the middle school in the fall of the following year.

•**Physical education in kindergarten** was removed from the responsibility of the certified physical education teacher and placed upon the classroom teacher. Again, cost-effectiveness took priority over excellence in education. Currently, the staff has requested a meeting with Dr. Razzo to reinstate kindergarten physical education back to the responsibility of the physical education teacher.

•**Technology instruction** was removed from the kindergarten schedule, despite the curriculum and the recommendation by the kindergarten and technology teachers. A request to go before the Education Committee of the Board of Education was denied. A request to speak with Dr. Razzo was ignored until the last week of school. Fortunately, the WEA was able to negotiate an agreement.

- The transition from **Spotlight to Balanced Literacy** was thrown into the mix, with very little research from the interim director of curriculum as to how best to proceed with the change to Reader's and Writer's Workshop. Teachers who attended the Teachers College Writing Workshop last summer were dismayed to learn that most districts implement change to a balanced literacy approach by training teachers in Writer's Workshop first. Beginning with Writer's Workshop would have provided teachers and students with the framework for the workshop model, which would have laid the groundwork for an easier transition to balanced literacy. The original timeline set forth by the district was disregarded. The "year of review" originally in the five-year plan was bypassed and implementation was pushed a year sooner. Teachers began implementation of a new curriculum without the guidance of a completed document. Classroom libraries were purchased to support balanced literacy without a reading assessment in place. Teachers felt pressured to level their existing classroom libraries. This necessitated hours of additional time, which was not scheduled. When the assessment tool was finally purchased in year two of implementation a one-day training was provided to the staff. Due to the fact that the recommended training for this assessment is normally conducted over a three-day period, a one-day training left the staff feeling over-whelmed and ill prepared to proceed with confidence in its administration. Although substitutes were hired for the first administration of the assessment, The WEA had to step in and negotiate needed time and additional staffing for the mid-year and year-end administration.

- This past year, the same frustrations were felt with **Learnia**. Training was rushed, stretching and overtaxing special education coordinators and teachers. There was no appreciation for time to successfully train and implement the program successfully.

- Block scheduling** arrived at the same time, with very little time for research or teacher input into how it would impact the student learner and/or teaching process. Research shows a change to block scheduling should be instituted only after a year of teaching instruction workshops and modeling. Once again it was implemented without regard to the staff or the current curriculum.

- In 2007/08 all **Special Education/ASP students** were grouped together in the same elementary classrooms. This led to a decline of student achievement. Such grouping allowed for a more economic delivery of services but did not allow these students to be exposed to higher level/advanced/differently abled student thinking.

- The standards for **ASP** were lowered, permitting many students to test out of the program. This was done in spite of the recommendation of the professional academic support staff.

- The **WEL** program has been extended, while the staff has been diminished. The staff has been stretched beyond acceptable limits. This is another example, like Mid-day fitness, of Dr. Raze eroding a successful program. The WEL program is now in the rebuilding process in the middle school.

- Additional changes were made in grade level curriculums without regard to teacher input, time required for implementation, and/or the present curriculum. This disregard

puts undue stress on the faculty, who are responsible for delivery of instruction. Once again, no regard was paid to Board curriculum policy.

•**Curriculum was unable to move forward** upon the arrival of the new Director of Curriculum. Much of her time was spent putting out Mid-day fires, answering questions about the changes in curriculum, implementing balanced literacy, and trying to reconstruct the curriculum history, documents, and timelines that were removed from the Director of Curriculum's computer during the interim. The information she needed to fulfill the specific expectations of her job description was erased. A job she was told would remain status quo during her interview was significantly and detrimentally changed prior to her arrival. She entered a district whose morale was devastated.

•**Schoolwires** was recommended by Dr. Razze to replace Contribute. Staff members at Eisenhower had spent the prior two years developing Contribute websites to enhance students' learning. With no regard to technology staff input, Schoolwires replaced Contribute. Money seems to be a non-issue when it comes to district-stipulated programs. Contribute has a very minimal yearly cost for upkeep, yet Schoolwires comes with a rather large yearly price tag. Webmaster stipends have always been distributed evenly among webmasters under Contribute. With the onset of Schoolwires, a much greater discrepancy was found in the district stipend versus the school stipends.

On May 13 & May 14, 2008, the staff attended Schoolwires training. Thousands of dollars were wasted when the district staff attended poorly implemented workshops. Facilities were inadequate and sessions were plagued by technical problems. This left the staff frustrated, having no viable instruction on how to complete their website by mid-August, when Schoolwires was due to go live. Staff was not given adequate time or compensation to create, transfer, and update their websites to Schoolwires. Expectations were to complete Schoolwires websites over the summer on the teachers' own time. An agreement was reached by the WEA on behalf of the staff. Teachers with a Contribute website could link it to Schoolwires and gradually change over. On October 15, 2008 the WEA Co-Presidents received an email from Dr. Razze, stating she received a request from the PTO. "They asked me to kill the old website and only go with the new one." This put everyone in an undue panic. The WEA was able to move forward and kept this from occurring. Otherwise, Contribute websites would have met the same demise as the Curriculum Director's database. The Contribute websites, representing countless hours of teachers' time, would have been wiped out. A second training was scheduled for our in-service day in January, but was cancelled due to Internet issues.

During Dr. Razze's tenure, the perceived pattern of behavior is that the staff is given little or no time to learn the trade before implementation, little or no research is completed prior to implementation, and teacher input is disregarded. This shows a lack of respect for the staff and the lack of understanding for the time it takes to implement a new program. It also demonstrates a disregard for school policy. This is a prescription for failure at worst, and poor and inadequate implementation at best.

## **2. Deteriorating/Disregard for Working Conditions**

## **Construction Issues**

During construction many issues were corrected only after the WEA insisted on proper standards for a safe work environment. These examples went unaddressed by Dr. Razze until the WEA took action in the following areas:

- Improper clean up of asbestos at Sicomac School
- Notification of staff members in the area that asbestos was removed improperly
- Health exams for staff members in the building
- Air quality tests
- Removal of construction dust prior to staff/students entering building
- Removal of construction rubble prior to staff/students' first day of school
- Clean up of construction areas on a daily basis when school was in session
- Limiting construction to non-occupied areas during school hours

## **Heating and Cooling**

- Heating and cooling of our classrooms continues to be an issue in both old and new wings. Univents do not work and classrooms are cold in the winter and are extremely hot in the fall and spring.
- Air conditioners purchased for the classrooms in the old wing of Eisenhower School are too small for the square footage and do not do an adequate job. The architectural plans called for the new construction at some schools to be air-conditioned. Ventilation in those rooms is not adequate and produces poor air quality. Requests for air conditioners have been denied and heating and cooling issues ignored or not followed up. If a contractor did work like this in our homes we would be demanding new systems. This is unacceptable.
- Space heaters were provided in classrooms and offices where heat was not working after the completion of construction. This is a potential safety hazard.

## **Safety**

- Communications systems in some buildings are not working and non-existent in others, creating a safety issue for both staff and students.
- Although the business administrator would not issue a building key to the present Director of Curriculum to allow her access to the side door of Eisenhower School, master keys were distributed to substitute custodians, thus jeopardizing the safety of the students and staff. We thank the Board for agreeing to re-key the buildings; hopefully this will occur sooner rather than later, as the safety of our school secretaries and other summer staff is at risk.

## **Cleanliness**

- During custodial privatization discussions, current unacceptable conditions of some our buildings were discussed as a reason for privatization by the business administrator. Presently, it is the responsibility of the Director of Buildings and Grounds to assure that our buildings are clean. We are unclear why the administration would continue to

employ the present supervisor if unhappy with the conditions of the buildings. When this question was posed to Dr. Razze, she explained he is being kept on because he is a licensed electrician. It was suggested, but ignored, to move him to maintenance to save the district over \$30,000. With two full time supervisors, we have been assured the privatized custodians will be constantly supervised and there will be minimal cleanliness issues. The Administration is taking full responsibility for the custodial privatization, going against both staff and public input and pleas.

- Dr. Razze's only communication to the staff pertaining to this issue was to request that each teacher maintain cleanliness in the classroom and assist the replacement custodians by placing trashcans at the classroom door.

- Classrooms used to be painted every five years. Carpets used to be replaced. Neither has occurred in the older sections of the schools under the current administration.

### **3. Violations of the Contract and Governance System**

#### **Contractual Rights**

##### **•Personnel Files of Teachers - Article T-4B**

“A teacher will receive a copy of any material that might have adverse effects on his/her status before it is placed in the teacher's file.” Board policy states the chain of command pertaining to a parent concern is parent, teacher, principal, superintendent, and the Board of Education. Many complaints go directly to the principal without any face-to-face meeting between parent and teacher. It is perceived by the Association that parents have rights over staff members. Teachers are rarely shown the letter of complaint given to the principal and placed in the teacher's file. Requests to view these documents have been ignored by the administration. It is becoming common place that non-tenured teachers have not been rehired after letters are placed in their files without due process.

##### **•Personal Days – Article T-10**

- A new personal day form, with proper guidelines, was cooperatively completed by Dr. Razze and the Co-Presidents of WEA in early 2009 but has yet to be implemented.

- Dr. Razze has altered fully executed personal day forms and placed them in staff personnel files without their knowledge.

- As reported on the district website (March 09) and on the monthly sick/personal days reports (fall 08 and winter 09) the district has arbitrarily given Association members ten personal days, in conflict with Article T-10 and has denied contract A.1.h. category to a staff member. The Association has filed a grievance.

##### **Definitions – Article G-2**

- A teacher, as defined in Article G-2 “shall not include Administrators or other personnel who are required to perform any evaluation of instructional personnel or who devotes more than 50% of their time to administrative or supervisory duties...or substitute employees.” Dr. Razze has been reminded numerous times that the district is in violation

of Article G-2 naming the Director of Special Projects in the violation. WEA honored Dr. Razze's word this would be rectified. Please note this will be grieved in the fall 2009 if the contract is not followed.

#### •District Aides

In the spring of 2007, Dr. Razze held a meeting of all Instructional Aides informing them they would not be rehired. This announcement created panic district wide, much like the recent situation with the custodians. Instructional Aides all received letters stating the above. Accurate information was not disclosed at the meeting. Not all Instructional Aides would be let go, only full-time General Instructional Aides receiving Health Benefits. All part-time Special Education Instructional Aides were ultimately retained. Undue stress was placed on ALL Instructional Aides, which was inappropriate and unprofessional. Once again this demonstrates a lack of leadership and sensitivity to the staff's morale.

#### 4. Professional Core Values

Quoted below are the professional core values which are mandated by the Board of Education and stated on the district website. Dr. Razze, as the leader of the district should be a model of these values. The Association has found her to be lacking in the following areas.

##### **Honesty and Respect**

“Honesty and open communication are the foundation of our professional relationships. We respect, support, and value each member of our educational community.”

Open communication means you must be willing to listen to other options, look outside the box, and have verbal communication with staff members. Dr. Razze has been absent from our schools, our concerts, our special days, and has not accepted invitations by teachers to attend special events in their classrooms. Yet, we constantly hear how she wants to be in the classroom. Her goal this year was to visit math classes. That has not happened on even a small scale.

##### **Responsibility**

“We are responsible for the success of all students, the support of each other, and the support of our educational community.”

Dr. Razze is absent from our educational community and does not provide the support that is needed. On a few occasions when she was present and had the opportunity to support staff and praise students she chose not to, again sending a negative message and demonstrating a lack of leadership.

##### **Optimism**

“We are committed to positive attitudes and enhancing self-esteem for students, staff, and families.”

We believe that if you think you can, you can. We strive to instill that in our students every day. Most students of Wyckoff have no idea who Dr. Razze is and some that have had the opportunity to meet her have a negative opinion because of how she presented herself in their classrooms during QSAC. We need a role model, not someone for whom we have to make excuses for.

### **Honor**

“We value and honor individual diversity within our staff, students and their families.”

We honor individual diversity in our staff and our students. To hear a superintendent put-down students’ work is not acceptable. We welcome the superintendent to see what we do in the classroom. Please honor the hard work of our students and the hours of preparation teachers put into their lessons.

### **Commitment**

“We recognize that our obligations go beyond our professional responsibilities. We regard fellow staff members and students as part of our extended family.”

We treat each other as members of our extended family. We know them by name and we greet each staff member that we meet with a smile and an encouraging word. That is the least that we ask of the superintendent, but unfortunately few staff members have been acknowledged even when passing her face-to-face.

## **5. Failure to Administrate the District**

### **Chief Executive Officer of the Board**

- Dr. Razze does not communicate to the public or staff even when directly spoken to. Dr. Razze has no eye contact with speakers or the public during Board of Education meetings. The public and staff perceive that her mind is made up and it does not matter what is being said.

- Dr. Razze allows the Board Administrators to move as a “fait accompli” before a public vote takes place. The two most recent occurrences were placing the ad for custodial privatization bids in the paper and the signing of the contract with Edvocate for supervision of the custodial privatization, both prior to the BOE vote. This seems to be a clear message to her staff and the public that their opinions do not matter.

- During the past few months, during both the privatization of the custodians and the redistricting, Dr. Razze has neither acted in a professional manner nor provided or aided the Board in providing full disclosure during public meetings. To think at any time that the privatization of the custodial staff would be a non-controversial item is astounding. These uncoordinated and poorly articulated processes create an atmosphere that continues to prevent viable communication with the parents and within the district.

“Good governance does not mean that we all agree with one another all of the time. But good governance does suggest that open lines of communication exist across key constituencies. A vote of no confidence points out that communication has failed.” (Dr. Bill Tierney; Director of the Center for Higher Education Analysis, The University of Southern California)

It is with regret that the Wyckoff Education Association is forced to take a vote of no confidence in the district’s superintendent, Dr. Janet Razze.