

Friday, July 25, 2024

Dr. Corrie Shull, Chair
James Craig, Vice-Chair
Jefferson County Board of Education
Van Hoose Education Center
3332 Newburg Rd.
Louisville, KY 40218

Dear Chair Shull and Vice-Chair Craig,

I write to notify you that I am resigning from the Jefferson County Board of Education, effective immediately. The reason I am doing so at this particular moment is that I am seeking to become a JCPS teacher, ideally to begin before the first day of school. As you know, I am not legally permitted to work for the district as a member of the Jefferson County Board of Education.

Being entrusted by voters to serve on the board during some of the most tumultuous times in the history of JCPS is a privilege for which I will be forever grateful. Over the last seven and one-half years, I have had the honor of helping to:

- bring an end to the disastrous administration of Dr. Donna Hargens,
- hire the best superintendent JCPS has ever had,
- successfully fight the all-out assault on JCPS by former Gov. Matt Bevin and the Republican-led state legislature,
- eliminate school roles for outside police agencies unequipped to work with children,
- implement restorative practices to foster safer and saner schools for teachers and students,
- spearhead work to significantly increase JCPS' main source of revenue (property taxes),
- guide the district through a global pandemic in a way that ensured academic success while saving lives,
- provide meaningful pay raises for staff,
- adopt a more equitable and fair student assignment plan,
- provide unprecedented levels of funding for high-poverty schools,
- adopt needs-based budgeting to further support students with more challenges,
- repeatedly stand up for LGBTQ+ students and staff, and
- bring about many more changes that will positively benefit children, families, teachers, staff, businesses, and the broader community for decades to come.

However, two other accomplishments stand out above all this. During my time on the board JCPS has invested more resources in school board district one than we have in the other six

board districts combined. While this does not make up for decades of underinvestment in West Louisville, it is an unprecedented level of commitment to this community.

Secondly, in adopting the recent goals and guardrails, the board has officially stated that we believe state test scores are a fundamentally flawed metric and all but useless in determining student success and future life outcomes. I don't know any other school district who has taken such a bold and unambiguous stance against a state testing model whose main purpose is simply to further stigmatize kids who grow up in poverty and the schools that serve them.

I initially sought a third term to further entrench this work, to fight for more revenue and higher wages to stem the staffing crisis, to ensure JCPS more rapidly implemented restorative practices to eliminate the school-to-prison pipeline, and to improve services to multilingual learners, who are the future of JCPS.

As you know, over the last few years I have been extremely frustrated by the board's failure to raise the revenue needed to address the staffing crisis and by the board's refusal to take responsibility for the challenges this has created, including the transportation debacle on the first day of school in 2023. Instead, the board has sought to lay sole responsibility at the feet of Dr Pollio despite Dr. Pollio warning the board of the staffing crisis for several years.

After four years of work, I led the effort to raise the property tax rate to 80.6 cents in 2020. The two of you deserve credit for voting for this increase. We then had to fight a months-long court battle to collect this revenue. Sadly, since that time, and during the most significant staffing crisis JCPS has ever faced, the board has lowered the tax rate to only 76 cents. While we have maintained a commitment to four percent revenue growth, I hope you realize that, as the [Office of Education Accountability pointed out in 2007](#):

when school districts' property assessments from existing real estate property grow by more than 4 percent per year, but their property tax collections are limited to 4 percent growth, districts' state SEEK funds will decrease by more than the districts are allowed to collect in local taxes from this property. [p. 4]

I remain deeply troubled that the two of you in particular, the current chair and vice-chair, put your own political aspirations above the needs of JCPS students by going against Dr. Pollio's recommendation and preemptively lowering the tax rate in 2023 rather than taking action to address the staffing crisis. In challenging times, children, staff, and the community deserve leaders willing to fight difficult battles on their behalf rather than making their individual political careers their top priority.

Moreover, during my service the board has never, not once, evaluated Dr. Pollio based on specific student outcomes we asked him to achieve. Instead, the board uses the evaluation process to criticize Dr. Pollio for not pursuing the desires of individual board members that these members know would never be endorsed by a majority of the board. I find this unconscionable, and it has been deeply detrimental to progress in JCPS.

I realize now that I will not be successful in convincing this board to focus on student outcomes or to raise the revenue needed to address the staffing crisis, so I am choosing to do what I can as an individual by becoming a JCPS teacher. However, I am just one person and the board itself has only three choices in the face of the staffing crisis: raise the revenue required to attract and retain staff, join me and resign from the board to work for JCPS, or admit to yourselves and the community that you don't care that much about the future of the district.

Even if I was not seeking to become a JCPS teacher I simply cannot be on the board any longer under the current board leadership and so, as I stated at the outset, I am resigning effective immediately.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Kolb". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Chris Kolb