

22 October 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

I have known Jake Mull for seven years, and I am absolutely appalled that he would be treated the way he was at the recent meeting. I can honestly say I have never met a teacher who is so involved and cares so much about his students. I cannot believe that the Board of Education took such a personal approach and attacked him.

According to Bruce Scruton of the New Jersey Herald, "The board's response also took on a personal tone, pointing out the association's president 'made \$132,503 in salary and stipends alone for a 10-month job.'" I am not sure you are aware what this "10-month job" entails. During my time at Newton High School, I took three of Dr. Mull's classes and was on the track team which he coaches. Dr. Mull gets to the school an hour or earlier before classes start in the morning to be available for extra help. He teaches multiple classes throughout the day. I had the pleasure of taking Honors Chemistry, AP Chemistry and AP Physics with him. His day does not end at 2:35. He coaches girls' soccer in the fall and track in the spring. I know from experience that sometimes we would be getting back from a meet at 7:00 or 8:00 at night, or leaving at 7:00 in a Saturday morning. He also coaches the science league after school. Even though he is involved with multiple commitments, he puts his all into everything of which he is a part. I would not be able to fathom the amount of time he spent helping me understand difficult chemistry or physics concepts, or helping me excel in my track events. He dedicates so much of his time to all his students and athletes.

Also reported in the recent Herald article, "[The board's written response] pointed out that in the last contract, negotiated in 2012, the settlement included an additional salary increase for teachers who attain a doctoral degree. 'How many teachers benefited from that at the time? Just one ... the Association president/lead negotiator,' the statement said." Do you honestly think that Dr. Mull conspired against the other teachers to get a salary increase? He should be applauded for attaining his Ph.D, especially while teaching and coaching, and not attacked. I personally think this is an incredible achievement. I think it is inspiring, especially when I feel overwhelmed commuting to college while holding down a job.

Now, I would like to ask what does our superintendent do? Is he involved in the community? Does he help students? Does he inspire them? I can say that in my experience, the answer has been no. The teachers at Newton High School are dedicated to the success of the students. They should be respected, appreciated, and not taken for granted. Why does Newton High School have high SAT scores? Why does Newton High School have a high percentage of students passing AP exams? It is the teachers. Who benefits from these scores? The superintendent and school administrators. Does that make sense? Why do they get rewarded for the hard work the teachers do?

Please respect our teachers. They put their heart and soul into their work. They do everything they can to help their students get where they need to be. You may call it a "10-month job," but it is much, much more than that. The teachers at Newton High School have done so much more for me than the school administrators or the superintendent ever had, and I think other students would say the same.

Sincerely,

Veronica LaBrie

