

Comments from Chris Turner  
February 24, 2015

Politics is a popularity context. Leadership is about doing what's right. Ultimately, THIS is about the kids of Bradley County.

My constituents have asked me to elaborate on the differences cited by Mr. McDaniel in his public statements. I would also ask you, residents of the first district, to ask both our first district county commissioners about their personal experiences with our school system under Mr. McDaniel's leadership.

Since joining the board in 2012, I have repeatedly requested that the system engage in strategic planning. The board of education, the voice of the people of Bradley County, has been eliminated from this critical function.

I have made repeated requests for communication from the central office to the board. At best, the board receives sporadic updates.

In trying to share concerns last summer before we implemented a new math curriculum, Mr. McDaniel informed me that only disgruntled teachers would share their opinions with me. This left me and the parents and teachers who asked me to share their concerns as irrelevant.

Since ACT scores were first given to the board last year, I continue to ask for detail on how our students perform. Our central office is either unable or unwilling to share basic student performance data with our board. On the Bradley County Schools website, right now, there is a listing of school improvement plans that are at least 2 year out of date. Shouldn't we have updated plans available for the public for each school if student achievement was our priority? Results matter. Planning matters. Data matters. The board apparently doesn't need a voice on student achievement.

Bradley County expects us to be tight with their money. This board, while trying to ensure good money management, has met nothing but resistance trying to change the types of wasteful spending that TravelGate exposed. When the county commission discussed the election office's budget request of \$600 for travel, Mayor Davis strongly suggested the commission

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look at the travel expense of the school system. He was right. In our 2014-2015 budget, there is almost \$90,000 of travel. And while social media is filled with travelgate and personal vendettas, our kids go without textbooks and are pressured to sell cookie dough and trinkets.

With this budget year, the board now requires the central office to report to the board any expense over \$1,000. We ensure oversight, but we have chosen to accept the role of enforcer in an adult version of cops and robbers. I don't like to play cops and robbers. I am a professional who just wants transparency and our \$70 million spending should reflect Bradley County's priorities and I wanted Mr. McDaniel to prioritize our budget so we could make the tough choices together.

I have had growing concern over the last two years that Bradley County Schools is not a fair employer. After seeing one lawsuit completely overturned in court and settling another because we had little to no chance of winning, it is apparent to me that our system lacks formal leadership training on basic employment law. Within a \$70 million budget, this is inexcusable. This is one of Mr. McDaniel's core job functions.

Ultimately, the director of schools has a difficult task. A director must balance the beliefs of seven duly elected officials and represent their collective to the employees of the system. Teachers have been increasingly placed in the cross-fire. During the last two years I've witnessed a divide opening among our professionals. The support for the status quo is obvious. What is not obvious are the fearful communications from well-respected professionals in our system. There is a growing concern for loss of focus on our students and a recognition that public education is under attack from special interests. Meanwhile, the headlines emphasize t-shirts and misinformation dominates social media.

With a leader willing to engage with the board and together make the tough choices, we will move forward. We will support our students and teachers to the best of Bradley County's ability.

The best days for our school system are ahead of us, not behind us.

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## Christy Critchfield Resignation

Until this school year I have been extremely proud to be a member of the Bradley County Board of Education. The 6<sup>th</sup> district has entrusted this seat to me and supported me through 3 elections and I have served proudly; but now I am embarrassed and disgusted to be a member of this Board. What has happened here today not only hurts education but hurts the taxpayers of Bradley County and I want nothing to do with it. I no longer want my name or my family associated with this current Board.

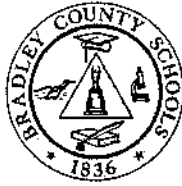
Over the past 2 weeks I feel like I have attended my own funeral; every district in Bradley County has contacted me to let me know how much they appreciate everything I have done for them whether it be speaking up for students and teachers in an open meeting or just listening to them on the phone when their own Board member would not return their calls. I thank each and every one of you for your support and prayers over the years especially the 6<sup>th</sup> district and my family.

Starting today I will do everything in my power to make sure that every unethical member of this Board is replaced. I resign from the Bradley County Board of Education effective immediately. Some will say I am abandoning the 6<sup>th</sup> district, teachers, and students – I am NOT; I am simply changing my strategy. Thank you and may God bless us all.

# Bradley County Board of Education

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Dianna Calfee  
4th District



My campaign promise was to be open and honest. And this is what I intend to do right now.

I have been on the BOE for 6 months now. My goal has been to improve the working relationship between the BOE and Mr. McDaniel's office. I have shared this goal with him and it is very obvious to me that he is not willing to move in that direction. I have asked him to allow me to participate in school improvement planning process at the 2 focus schools in 4<sup>th</sup> district. **Never happened.** I have asked him to allow me to accompany him when he visits schools in 4<sup>th</sup> district. **Never happened.** I have asked him to allow me to go to luncheons with him when he is at schools in 4th district. **Never happened.** I was finally told no. The reason he stated to me was, this is his time at those schools. He said teachers get nervous and were afraid when BOE members come to their schools. I shared my reasoning regarding visiting schools with him:

- Shows collaboration between BOE and Mr. McDaniel
- I would get to know teachers better and they could get to know me
- I could see him in action so when I completed his evaluation, I would have some reference points

I have asked Mr. McDaniel to make a statement to teachers regarding the tough questions the board is asking in reference to the new budget. I pleaded with him in November to tell teachers and staff that the BOE is trying to get a clear picture of what 3 million, 2 million or even 1 million out of our budget would look like. I asked him to share with teachers, administrators and staff that we are not cutting teaching positions or programs. I asked him to encourage everyone to "calm down" and let us go through the process of answering the tough questions. **Never happened.** In November, I asked Mr. McDaniel if he knew what the Bradley County Education Alliance was posting on social media about him. I asked him to view the web site and decide if that is what he would condone. We both agreed that teachers have the right to free speech but I assured him this was more. I feel the Bradley County Alliance web page is nothing more than a platform for bullying. I asked Mr. McDaniel back in November to address this issue. **Never happened** and it has only gotten worse. Mr. McDaniel has no intention of tackling any of the above issues which would show a collaborative spirit between him and the BOE.

During my tenure, I have become really concerned about the climate and culture within Bradley County schools. Teachers have reported that they have been bullied by other teachers. It has been reported that teachers are forced to sign documents to cover problems at their schools. Teachers are promoting their own agendas during school time and using students to assist with these efforts. Teachers are afraid to say anything for fear of getting fired. Teachers are transferred without just cause. There is an underlining discontentment in Bradley County Schools.

Mr. McDaniel has been given ample opportunity and direction regarding his personal goals during my tenure. On page 4 of 6, in Mr. McDaniel's contract, it requires- establish a system of obtainable and measurable goals and objectives for the ensuing school year as well as an implementation plan. Mr. McDaniel's Personal Goals that he submitted have been exactly the same for the 2013-14 and 2014-15 with the exception of 1 word on 3d. (PARCC was removed) The goals do not address the requirement to be obtainable or measurable and there is no implementation plan. It is very difficult to evaluate Mr. McDaniel's performance without measurable expectations. Measurable goals and expectations, developed in collaboration with the BOE, define exactly the direction for both the BOE and the Director's office. Everyone is on the same page. Evaluating him is easy with this documentation. I am very concerned that this has not happened.

Mr. McDaniel has a fiscal responsibility for tax-payers dollars. Excessive expenditures and large amounts of dollars have been spent without cause. These are the ones I have heard about in my 6 month tenure on the BOE.

- A estimated cost to attempt to fire a teacher- 250,000. Judge Brown in Chattanooga Chancery Court, overturned every claim made against this tenured teacher.
- Over 50,000 dollars to establish a new teaching position for reinstated teacher.
- An **undisclosed insurance settlement** with another teacher.
- An out of court settlement with a parent, over 50,000 dollars.
- Approving travel that is unsubstantiated over a 3 year period. Estimated over 33,000 dollars.
- Staff development trips, travel reimbursements and hotel costs should reflect appropriate fiscal responsibility. These trips, especially out of state, should be supported by documentation that shows benefit the school district.

My concerns regarding academic achievement and graduation rates:

- Graduation rate is 93.1 but our score for preparing students to be college

and career ready is 13 percent. State benchmark is 16 percent.

- Our ACT scores are up to 18.9 but still below the state benchmark of 19.3 and we are below the state benchmark in every content area measured on the ACT
- 2013-14 SCORE (State Collaboration on Reforming Education) Report shows Bradley County Schools are **least effective** in both reading/LA and math. This means our students are making less progress in both content areas.
- Bradley Co is a **district in need of improvement** deemed by the SDE.
- The two focus schools are in the 4th district and I have some real concerns at specific grade levels regarding academic achievement in all content areas over the past 3-4 years
- District wide our students score lower in math and this should be an area of attention.
- We should expect more from some students that think credit recovery is an avenue to graduate.
- Data should drive all decision making,
- I am not saying we aren't doing some thing well, we must address our concerns openly and own them.

Inconsistency across the district with regards to:

- Employment Practices-
- 1. Principals, especially new hires, should have strong back grounds in curriculum and instruction
- 2. Teacher transfers should be at the request of the teacher or supported by documentation from principal or other administrator
- 3. There should be a rubric for employing teachers and staff , especially when the candidates are equally qualified.
- 4. There should be consistent consequences for not following system procedures. Example: signing out when teachers or staff leave the campus.
- 5. There should be an expectation that all employees have and follow job descriptions.

Mr. McDaniel stated after the November BOE meeting that I could just buy him out of his contract. I told him at that point I did not want to buy him out, I just wanted him to do the right thing for the district. I was shocked and my confidence in him was broken. I wondered how can we continue to employ Mr. McDaniel when he doesn't want to be here? Since that time, I have concluded that he wants to leave and have Bradley County buy out his contract.

Most everyone in the field of education: love students, care about

teachers, respond to parents and promote student successes. This is an expectation. But when you are in a leadership position like Mr. McDaniel, it is also about having strong leadership skills, promoting a cooperative relationship with the BOE, showing and expecting fiscal responsibility, promoting high academic expectations in all areas, insuring a positive climate and culture within the school district, condemn bullying at all levels, and practices consistency regarding hiring practices and discipline issues. **True leadership is beyond charisma.**

We have a tough decision to make today.