

From: **Devorah Flax-Davidson** <devflaxd@gmail.com>

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Subject: Dr. Siebens, an inspiration to us all!

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To whom it may be concerned:

My name is Devorah Flax-Davidson. I was the Valedictorian and student at Wilson Senior High School, Class of 2005. I am writing on behalf of Dr. Arthur Siebens, one of the most incredible teachers that I have ever had in my student career at Wilson. I have to say, I am horrified and incensed by the actions taken by the Wilson administration to dismiss Arthur Siebens who, up until his dismissal, was one of Wilson's greatest teachers. Wilson, as you may know (or not know), has an extremely diverse student population, not just ethnic, but socioeconomic, as well. I was lucky because I was one of Wilson's students that had every opportunity and the parental guidance to help me take advantage of these opportunities. For those not so lucky, sadly a large proportion of Wilson students, Dr. Siebens was the guidance to help the most disinterested and disengaged student to take advantage of every opportunity that he or she had available to him or her. Many students didn't have parental guidance when it came to education. Many students at Wilson come from single-parent families, growing up in poverty or gang-violence. Where do you think these students find their inspiration? From their parents? From their gun-toting friends? From their community? Wilson was their inspiration, and if you have ever walked the halls of Woodrow Wilson Senior High School, you would know there isn't much inspiration to draw from when government books, when I was a student, still had the USSR going strong, or there were flooded classrooms after a storm. At Wilson, I had every type of teacher- good and bad. And from my years at Wilson, I sadly can only count on one hand the number of inspiring teachers that have helped me along my path to become Wilson's Valedictorian and an Honor Roll Student at the University of Michigan- Ann Arbor. Though I worked hard to get where I am today, I can say with no doubt in my mind that I couldn't have gotten here alone. Many students at Wilson aren't going to get here, and with the dismissal of Dr. Siebens, you are sending a message to these disinterested students that you don't expect much, especially when you are withholding valuable resources from them.

I had Dr. Siebens my junior year of high school. I am, to say the least, a humanities-oriented person. Biology has never been a passion of mine, nor will it ever be. But Dr. Siebens gave breathing life to a dull subject like Biology. AP Biology was one of the best classes that I have ever taken. It was time-consuming and it was very hard, but the subject, which at one point seemed nebulous and scary, all of sudden made sense. This didn't happen magically or by chance or with the help of my law-minded

parents. This happened due to the time Dr. Siebens spent every day in class, hammering vague ideas of genes and DNA and nephrons into our already-stuffed heads. He didn't just teach us the material, he sang it to us. Dr. Siebens, in all of his excited glory, would break out his guitar, forcing us groaning teenagers to sing to the tunes of "I heard it through the Grapevine" (The Nephrons like a Grapevine- about the adrenal system) and "Poor wand'ring one" from the musical the Pirates of Penzance (Poor Wandering Bun- a song about digestion). Junior year, Biology was everywhere- in the class, on the radio, and even in my dreams. Can you name a teacher in your lifetime that had this power?

Dr. Siebens was one of those rare teachers at Wilson who really, truly cared about his students. He would wait outside, during the rush and pandemonium of students changing classes to greet the students that he knew, and even didn't know, by name. Once Dr. Siebens knew you, look out! because there would be no way to get anything past him! Though he was, at times, strict (handing out detentions like candy), you knew that after you served your time, you would be accepted right back into the mainstream population like nothing happened. He was dedicated to his students' well-being and treated us as his own children, not just students that came into his classroom for an hour and a half every other day. His recommendation that he wrote for me for Yale, Brown, Northwestern and the University of Michigan were personalized accounts of our interaction together and were far from hackneyed and cliched phrases because he knew me as a person, not only as a student. And I can attest that the many other recommendations that he wrote for my classmates to other prestigious colleges and universities were just as personalized and eloquent. Not to mention, at the end of the course, I received a 5 on my AP exam which I took singing and smiling because I had "Stop! All That Fat You Love" stuck, annoyingly, in my head. And no one in my class could ever forget the wonderful, vegetarian barbecue that we had to celebrate the end of AP Biology at Dr. Siebens' house.

If all that I have written sounds like signs of a terrible teacher, then by all means, dismiss Dr. Siebens. But you must be crazy to think that Wilson doesn't deserve these types of teachers: dedicated teachers who fight for what they believe in, for the good of the student, against all odds. Wilson students have enough obstacles to fight against; provide them this valuable resource so that they have the opportunity to succeed! Without Dr. Siebens and teachers like Dr. Siebens, 1,600 students at Wilson will be left behind. I would have liked to think that the corruption stopped at the punishing of Erich Martel, but obviously this is not the case. It is up to you to turn these heinous actions around and give Wilson students a real education. If not, I hope you can all sleep comfortably at night knowing that you condemned the 1,600 current students and future students of Woodrow Wilson Senior High School to a less-than-mediocre education with disinterested and incompetent teachers and administrators. Congratulations, Wilson is officially on the road to degradation.

Sincerely,

Devorah Flax-Davidson