

Waters Elementary School Local School Council
Principal Peter Rutkowski
4540 N Campbell St. Chicago, IL

Dear friends,

As the parent of two Waters School graduates and a former two-term member of the Waters LSC, I was shocked to learn the Waters School ecology program director, Mr. Pete Leki, was offered a new contract cutting his hours and salary by one-third.

It appears that Mr. Leki, a community treasure, is being forced out of his job.

I think the LSC and school administration are making an egregious mistake. Pete has been the foundation of the ecology program, a program he built from scratch, and a community builder and leader for over 30 years, beloved by students and parents alike.

I'd wager that Pete puts in far more than his allotted work day to do everything required in the program and garden. His actual unpaid time reflects his love of the work, the school, the students, and community.

Primarily because of Pete's work, the ecology program is recognized citywide for its innovation and, in many ways, distinguished Waters School. The ecology program and garden are enormous sources of pride for the community. The action by the LSC and school administration are threatening all that now.

The ecology program and school garden are not only great educational, ethical, and moral resources. They are community and relationship builders, not just for the school but with residents of the surrounding neighborhoods.

When deciding where to send our children in 2001, we had a choice between Bateman and Waters elementary schools. All things being equal, the decision was easy because of the ecology program and the loving environment cultivated around it by Mr. Leki.

My children are among the hundreds of students and parents, including me, the ecology program who benefited deeply—the program instilled in the children a deep sense of environmental justice and a love of nature. The program taught them, and me, responsible stewardship of our planet and to celebrate the diverse Waters community.

I hope the school administration and LSC will reconsider this action. Mr. Leki's departure from the school would be a loss for the students, parents, and broader community.

Sincerely,

John Bachtell