Last year, I made a painful decision. I left a job that I loved: special education teacher with Muncie Community Schools.

I had been entrusted with educating some of the most emotionally and physically fragile kids in Muncie. I poured hours into my lesson plans, IEPs, classroom activities, and professional development. I applied for grants, and I was successful in securing thousands of dollars in funding for my training and opportunities for my students.

Lots of teachers at MCS are just as dedicated. As professionals, we expected to be treated as we deserve. We were hopeful that our opinions would be sought on curriculum, school calendars, student schedules, building needs, and technology.

Sadly, our professionalism was not reciprocated. The culture under Dr. Steven Baule became an “MCS vs. teachers” workplace. The superintendent made school visits to meet with teachers but seemed more concerned with talking than listening. A poorly-worded school calendar survey was sent to teachers and then completely ignored.

Those of us who brought in grants were not recognized by the administration, not even with a simple thank you. Technology repair requests seemed to disappear into thin air, and our school bathrooms were constantly running out of paper towels and soap. Teachers were buying their own copier paper. Heating systems were not being repaired in school buildings, despite the millions of dollars in bond money for building maintenance. I am sure every teacher who left MCS in the past year would join me in voicing these frustrations, plus many more.

Believe it or not, that was not the toughest part of teaching at MCS. What finally drove me away was the disrespect shown by the leadership of MCS to my students. One example: It took eight weeks to have a communication app installed on the iPad of one of my nonverbal students. She was unable to write and possessed no way of telling us if she was in pain, hungry, or cold. It had become too difficult for me to serve the needs of my students.

I was quickly able to secure a position with another school system, and I love my job again. I still worry about my former students, though.

I have been encouraged by the statewide interest shown in MCS and the desire for solutions. Imagine my delight when I read about Ball State University’s offer to assume responsibility for Muncie Community Schools! As a Ball State graduate (MA, Special Education) and former employee (Teachers College and Office of Admissions), I know that wise, forward-thinking people who value students and teachers will be in control. The vast resources of a world-class university will be at the disposal of MCS and allow teachers to fully serve their students, especially those with special needs. Who better to turn around a troubled system than an organization that has grown and prospered for 100 years?

I encourage teachers who share my beliefs to advocate for Ball State assuming responsibility for MCS and do the right thing for the students of Muncie.
Jacquelyn Vegh is a special education teacher.