

As a former employee of the Carmen Network, I am in full support of the Organization of Carmen employees. Leaving Carmen was a hard decision for me to make, but I ultimately left for a couple reasons.

The first reason was the lack of equitable and sustainable systems for teachers. The work day was at least 9 hours long, and there was no contract so additional work could be added without respect for teachers' time. A piece of evidence that the workload is not sustainable is a huge lack of female teachers with children. Having a family is not even an idea I was able to entertain while working at Carmen unless I chose to pursue an admin role. The workload was something I was willing to do until I, an inexperienced teacher, was doing leadership roles that I was ill equipped for, like being department chair. The students were also weaponized to justify the workload. **Many times people in leadership implied to me that if I didn't do the workload then I did not care for the students.** When I had concerns that I brought up, I was often met with defensiveness about the new "systems" that were placed, even though my concerns were about the lack of teacher AND student voice. I believe this stems from the lack of experience of administration and staff.

The second reason I left was the lack of competitive pay and benefits. **For my fifth year of teaching I was offered \$43k per year plus "stipends". The local public school district pays starting teachers \$44k.** When I would ask for more pay I was always told there was no money in the budget. I was willing to take a pay cut if I just would've been offered a more sustainable work load but that also was not guaranteed. The benefits also don't make up for the lack of pay, in my four years there we switched benefit providers 3 times, which means you have to search for new care providers every time to ensure you stay within network.

The final reason I left Carmen was the advisory program. While I loved being an advisor I couldn't picture myself giving as much as I did those four years to another group of students. The only way to be able to do that is if I stopped teaching and only focused on advising those students. This is also evidence of the lack of systems because I was doing the job of a guidance counselor while also teaching two different classes. I loved my advisory but my true passion is teaching math, and I was often balancing between being a good teacher and a good adviser which truly destroyed my mental health. The reasons good teachers like myself leave can be solved by better collaboration between teachers and admin, along with better treatment of teachers, because **if we truly care for the students of Milwaukee they need experienced, happy, and healthy teachers.**