

DRAFT

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Dear Cragmont Community,

I am a board appointed member of the Superintendent's Task Force on School Organization. I am grateful for the questionnaire which went home with the Cragmont students on Wednesday. We need publicity and an open debate. However, I fear conclusions could be drawn from some of the questions which are not true.

The Berkeley Unified School District, as represented by the Superintendent and the Board, is committed to an integrated school system. Any changes which the Task Force recommends will enhance integration not take away from it. In 1968, Berkeley was the first major school system to voluntarily desegregate its school. It is a proud legacy, a legacy we will not give up.

The task force is working under a deadline. Communication with the community has been difficult but for once the rush job is for a good reason. Berkeley stood up for education and voted in Measure A. We have money to spend. Should we rebuild our schools along the current model (K-3, 4-6) or should we take the opportunity to reexamine our system and make some changes?

In the last 12 and a half years I have had children in the district. I have seen state money steadily cut. I have also seen an erosion in confidence that our schools can educate all the children in its care. This concern has been expressed by Black, White, Hispanic and Asian parents. We are all worried. Our current system of a paired neighborhood sharing the burden of busing had a lot of merit in terms of promoting integration. But educationally it has weakness. The educational virtues of a K-5 are many and impressive. I believe we must take this opportunity to examine our system and come up with a new more flexible means of achieving integration, one which enhances our educational plan. I am very interested in a system based on the Cambridge plan of controlled choice where parents shop around and pick a school most suited to their child. In Cambridge, kindergarten parents list their first five choice of schools. Children are admitted under racial guidelines (1/3 Black, 1/3 White and 1/3 Other). This system is much less rigid than one working to achieve integration through zoned boundaries.

It is time for us to be bold in our thinking, reach out not only for the stars but for each other. We need to be energized by the possibilities of forward thinking change. And, I believe, as a community, we can move forward.

If you are interested in talking to me, my phone # is 527-1130.