

Thursday, December 9, 1993

Re: Recommendation for District Restructuring, and its public process.

Dear Board Member:

I step outside of my neutral role in decision assistance and resume my role as parent to make a few biased observations about the process.

I have heretofore been committed to this process because I believed that in the end, rationality and balance would prevail. Frankly, I have been so antagonized by the antics of some loud-mouth parents, *and their apparent decisive effect upon the board*, that I cannot coolly contemplate what good there might be in this outcome.

Arts Magnet has had three weeks to mobilize its entire parent population to lobby the board. The location of the third public workshop, in the back yard of Arts Magnet, was ideally suited for a massive turn-out by their forces.

Contrary to the boasts of Arts Magnet parents, they are not the only ones in the city who care about the quality of their childrens' education, who have a vigorous parent community, nor the only ones who cherish the role of the arts.

Malcolm X has learned upon the final day of the public input period that it will be closed. (And since the radio broadcast failed, and it's too late in the week to get into the paper, it is not clear how and when parents and staffs will learn of it.) This is an outcome that will shock. I expect that the belief among Malcolm X families was that of all conceivable outcomes, this one was beyond possibility.

Malcolm X now has *no* opportunity to turn out six hundred families, complete with bands of children reciting Gilbert and Sullivan and playing music, etc., in its defense. You may laugh at the prospect. Regardless of money spend on strategic communications and assurances of equitable decision-making, *such tactics plainly prevail*.

The recommended plan is declared the best possible solution. But it is inconsistent with the opinions overwhelmingly expressed in the house meetings: that grade configuration is not the problem, and that choice is not preferred.

The recommended plan is supposed to offer equity and improvement to the whole city. This is true, *if so*, only in the long run. The purported benefits will arrive only after our children are gone.

In the short run the South zone is devastated. The popular programs of Malcolm X, so long in the making, begin unravelling today. The stable communities of staffs and parents receive a total re-shuffle which will debilitate them. With the future unknown, parent outreach efforts cease.

The activist parents in the South have put a great deal of energy into this process for the past year and a half. We faithfully played the successive games the district asked us to play. We attended meetings beyond number. We spent many hours on projects to inform our fellow parents. Now, to pick up the pieces as best we can, the same activist parents are going to be called upon to shoulder the new and time-consuming burden of a major transition.

Bruce Wicinas

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One option for us is to mobilize. We could muster at least as much board intimidation as Arts did. We could undermine consensus, divide the city, and sabotage implementation of a decision.

Another option is for us to resign ourselves to this, but to demand from board and administration a plan that guarantees that our children, who are directly in harm's way, are not going to permanently suffer.

We demand fair treatment for the South zone. There is going to be no patience for anything less.

Sincerely,

Bruce Wicinas