

October 7, 2008

To: Board of Directors

Cc: Dr. Nick Brossoit

Re: Public Comments October7, 2008

I would like to clarify the comments made during the Board Meeting this evening. My intention was not to point fingers or place blame, rather, to identify what I see as a serious problem in the District and ask the board to take it seriously. Please allow me make a couple of points clear:

- 1) I do not, under any circumstances, condone, support or promote personal, slanderous statements made in an anonymous manner. These comments are unworthy of discussion and should be dismissed (or ideally removed from public discussion).
- 2) I do fully support anonymous discussion so long as the conversation is focused on the issues at hand. This is common practice in today's business and electronic world of communication. We must find effective ways to move with the changing times.

I continue to stand by my statements that there exists a significant amount of fear of making statements contrary to district policy. This does not appear to be personally directed at Dr. Brossoit, rather directed at others in the District in positions of authority.

In addition, I completely appreciate Director Paine's comment that it is a delicate situation with the board to address top down. It is, however, no less valid or important. There are many difficult things we must face and it is the obligation of the board to address them as our public representatives. There are also many different mechanisms that can be employed. What about an independent commission made up of parents and district employees that can hear issues and make recommendations while keeping confidentiality? This is completely within the Board's authority to create and can be done without budget impact. This is just one idea that might be considered. There are many others.

Changing topics to what appears to be Dr. Brossoit's recurring main concern, anonymous feedback. Quite frankly, this is an absurd concern. As a manager myself, anonymous feedback is vital to obtaining a "pulse of what is out there". The question is how best to use the information you receive. One does not use it to solve specific problems, rather to identify issues and delve more deeply into the issues using other management approaches. In addition, if staff sees that things change as a result of well considered anonymous feedback, trust will grow. This is Management 101. A common technique used in managing employees today is a "360" review which uses feedback that cannot be traced back to an individual.

Perhaps I was a bit direct this evening, but the manner in which Dr. Brossoit responded to my topic tonight could have been considered “attacking” for even raising the issue. I’m someone without a position to be affected within the District, of rather strong convictions and unafraid in speaking truth to power. Even so, I was taken aback by the force in which he responded to my concern. He did have a point that some tend to use “retaliation” as a “shield”; however, had I been a district employee and had I heard him tonight, there would be no way I would wish to approach him nor anyone in the administration regarding a position contrary to District Policy. To dismiss the concern as “I’ve been in Public Administration for 25 years and that is just the way it is” is not, in my opinion, an appropriate response. It is dismissive and offensive. Additionally, Mr. Harding’s “applause” was unbecoming of a Director in the Administration and offensive.

In our electronic age, there ARE ways in which we can better reach out and engage both the community and the employees of the District. For good or for bad, www.ESD15.org is the only vehicle in which opinions can be expressed to a wide number of people. I will continue to use my time to promote a POSITIVE utilization of the forum in sticking to the facts and sometimes legitimate frustrations with them manner in which the Administration is dealing with issues (such as this evening when I was given the “new Facility Use Policy” as the meeting started by Ms. Miller – something she could have easily emailed to give more time to absorb).

I do not condone (and will actively oppose) what I consider inappropriate personal attacks. Rather than ignore what is out there, a more appropriate response would be to make YOUR position known – no different than talking to a reporter of a newspaper. Reporters will spin the story how they like but you can be uncensored in your comments in a blog (and to believe that your comments are being censored is erroneous – I would be interested in proof of this allegation).

If the district creates an alternative of free discussion of ideas that may or may not support current policy, I will support that as well. I urge the District to create such a forum. Anonymity is not the issue – good ideas and concerns come from all different places and should be valued. If the District dislikes the “blog”, then create a forum for better communication that opposing viewpoints can be presented and discussed. This would fall under “community relations” and would be well worth the time involved in order to better engage the community.

Communication is not linear – it is a million different points melding together. The world has changed and we must change with it.

Respectfully,
Rick Jorgensen