Failed Again - Twice!

by Mark R. Adelman, Chair, MCCF Education Committee

The Board of Education (BoE) has numerous Policies (all posted to their website) and continually revises them, in an effort to articulate the principles that guide their programs to provide the best possible education for all of our kids. When such policies are in the final stages of revision, a draft version is posted to the website, along with a request for public comment. Some of us have even received autographed invitations from the CS (Current Superintendent) soliciting our feedback. The MCCF Education Committee welcomes this opportunity for input into the process and, while we do not attempt to follow all such policy revisions, we HAVE offered comment on some.

In a recent column (May 18, 2006) we expressed our frustration at repeatedly failing in our efforts to educate the BoE. In particular we asked for help in improving the attitudes of certain BMs (Board Members). Unfortunately, we have become aware of at least TWO more failures on our part.

1. First, many of you will recall our (frustrated) efforts regarding Policy FAA (and the associated FAA-RA Working Group). More recently, we have been tracking the ongoing revision of Policy BNB on Board Staff Management and Operations. We were pleased to report to MCCF delegates that the BoE committees conducting this revision were having serious and insightful discussions of the issues involved and had even hired an external consultant to advise them on staffing needs. In mid-April we submitted a carefully worded set of recommendations regarding the proposed revision of Policy BNB. [Our recommendations, as well as the draft revision are available on the MCCF website.] On May 22, the BoE approved the proposed draft BNB with minimal changes from what had been posted for public comment. BM2 characterized our recommendations as *"...stylistic in nature and do not address the substance of the policy"*. The only other public comment that BM2 reported was one by another citizen who was clearly articulating a common perception that the BoE lacks adequate staff to operate independently of the staff of the CS. BM2 responded that *"BoE has final authority over Board Staff. Additional statement not necessary"*. Although BM2 has clearly failed to understand the attitudinal issues here, we believe that even failed examinations should be educational experiences and offer BM2 the following make-up exam opportunities: Please define "stylistic". And please define sarcastic.

2. The second example of our failure to educate BMs concerns BM1 who, in a recent article (June 1, 2006) in the Washington Post, had such an unfortunate lapse in self-control as to to repeat the discredited assertion that those who opposed relocating Seven Locks ES to the Kendale Road site were motivated by the desire to "keep out undesirable lower-income people by blocking the possibility of having affordable housing built on the Seven Locks site". BM1 is well known to have surpassing knowledge in these matters and is also an admiring student of the County Council member who sagely advised citizens not to attribute motives, unless they could read

minds. We, of course, are not mind readers, We find it hard to understand how BM1 can persist in denigrating the motives of citizens, many of whom do not even live in the Seven Locks vicinity. Citizens who have repeatedly questioned why MCPS and the BoE should be so desirous of surplussing school sites at a time when so many of our kids are in "temporary" classrooms. Citizens who have a hard time understanding why a County government that has allowed so many lapses in enforcement of MPDU guidelines should be trusted to expand the stock of affordable housing, using "unneeded" school sites. Especially since many of these citizens would probably be eligible for such affordable housing IF it were in fact built. Again, we hope that BM1 will recognize that even failure on an examination can be a meaningful learning experience. And again, we offer a make-up opportunity. Our questions for BM1 are somewhat less subtle (and thus perhaps more difficult). Please define scorn. And please define (or have you already defined?) obnoxious arrogance.

Many of you would argue that our column of May 18 "said it all", and that we are simply flogging a dead horse (maybe even more than one). But flawed process remains flawed until it is corrected. And unacceptable attitudes remain unacceptable until they are altered so as to meet accepted community standards. Sometimes one must state the same points OVER and OVER again to assure that even the smartest student gets the message. And once again, we ask your help in educating certain BMs. For the good of our children.

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