

**Testimony on School Closing and Consolidation**  
**Board of Education Stated Meeting**  
**May 17, 2006**

1

In sharp contrast to previous efforts to close schools, the conversation over the past two days has been less about the injustice of closing particular schools, but rather about the internal capacity of DCPS to administer so much change by the opening of school on August 28<sup>th</sup>. A lot of this general lack of rancor is because the school closing recommendation presented Monday is a responsible starting point for downsizing the system.

What we hope to hear before the up-coming hearings on school closings is detailed information about how these consolidations are going to be undertaken in the short time available. Hearings on the individual school closings will bring out information that will be helpful in refining plans these plans, bearing in mind that in each consolidation, DCPS is creating a new and different school.

Because of this, the most important questions that need to be addressed before the hearings are educational. Students, teachers and parents want to be sure there is a clear vision for teaching and learning at the consolidated school, a positive school climate and a rich menu of programs and activities available for students. With this educational direction in place, a detailed plan can be framed for staffing, budgeting, blending enrollment, coordinating information to parents, teachers and neighborhoods. Secondly, people need to be assured that there is a benchmarked schedule and careful scope of work to insure that the building will be ready and the move carried out so that classes can start in an orderly fashion.

Accomplishing this requires a sustained level of administrative attention at the receiving school that will have to continue for several years. Consequently, we were pleased that DCPS has placed a senior administrator in charge of the overall process with responsibility directly to the superintendent and clear authority for both academic and facilities issues.

Finally, people are relying on the Board to make sure plans are in place for the sending schools, both short term and long term so that neighborhoods have a concrete time table and neighbors know who is responsible for securing the buildings, issuing RFPs, leasing, mothballing or possibly even demolishing the buildings.

Closing schools is difficult work, but we have an opportunity here for real educational progress. There is a lot of information and energy in the community ready to be harnessed to get the job done right. Please call on us and the other stalwart advocates for DCPS; we would be glad to provide information, assistance and outreach.

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