

*Please note that I sent a similar version of the following to a concerned parent as my response to her question about my position on continued funding for the language immersion programs.*

Thanks for your question about my School Board candidacy position on continued funding for the fine arts program. Your question allows me to drive right to the point that our real problem as concerned parents, taxpayers, and voters is poor customer service.

I am sure that all of us candidates as well as all of the current school board members will passionately say they want to save the fine arts programs as well as everything else and it won't be until the last minute that you will learn what gets cut and if it gets cut you will probably never get the real answer as to why. The elected officials will pass the responsibility to the administration and the administration will pass the responsibility back to the elected officials. And: the program you cherished and supported will be erased.

I know how these concerns unfold because I have had similar experiences and I have heard similar scenarios from other parents. That is why I am a candidate for this office.

If the fine arts programs are cut you will begin to feel helpless with the realization that the government and education system you believed in failed you. You will realize that you believed that you would have a legitimate voice in the process, that they have our best interests at heart and that adequate checks and balances existed. If the system fails you, you will probably feel that the administrative and elected officials patronized you and that they snookered you into trusting them and their judgment as to what was best for everyone.

You will probably get angry as it becomes apparent that your elected officials may have misled you into believing that the schools and the students were a priority when in fact their real priority was supporting the special interests that supported their candidacy such as organized labor unions.

Then you will get angrier when you realize that the County had plenty of options to continue the minimal funding your program required relative to all the money that is wasted because it protects its status quo and you will feel frustrated.

As time passes you will reconcile yourself to the new standards and slowly accept the situation. Other parents will have similar experiences and the pattern will continue regarding other issues, but your child will move on to a different school and you will be confronted with different challenges. During the next election cycle a few new candidates will come forward, the electorate will believe what they are told, elected officials will be reelected, and the status quo will be maintained.

I am explaining all of this because the County has many options to provide more school funding and an ability to put things into perspective, but those options are not on the table

and those discussions won't be initiated because of the political alliances I mentioned above. And as long as the voters don't organize and promote their own slate of candidates, the system is protected and the people in power will continue to hold the power we provide them.

At a recent candidate forum regarding the disjointed elementary school districting of the Hillwood neighborhood I explained to the parents that if they wanted different results they should immediately begin organizing with other groups in the County with similar concerns and begin recruiting candidates for the next election. I said that my experience has showed me that regulatory complexity has become the protector of the administrators and elected officials. Complexity has allowed ulterior agendas to be hidden from our view and stifled elected officials from performing the job we expect of them.

I told the Hillwood neighborhood parents that the County leadership is now full of contradictions and conflicting priorities. We hear that children are our priority and your school is being closed because we don't have any money, but we can afford to remodel the building and operate a community center in its place, have excellent salaries and pensions for our employees and fund the construction of a subway.

I explained that they should forget about school redistricting and focus on "power" and who has it. I said "You are frustrated because your ability to influence decisions has been greatly diminished and you feel powerless. You are the citizen, voter and taxpayer with legitimate concerns. You are asking why has this happened to me and what should I do?"

I advised them that the only way the people trusted with the responsibility to make the critical decisions are going to take their concerns seriously is if, "You attempt to take back the "power" you have given them."

I said, "Don't waste any more time on their diversionary tactics of analyzing facts, attending task forces and conducting forums like this. You have dealt with them in good faith only to discover that you are being snookered. Job security is where they are vulnerable and I believe that it should be your focus. Recognize that time is your enemy but the administrators friend. Recognize that organized groups of voters are your best ally and administrators biggest fear."

I apologize for sending you such a long answer to your question, but as I was quoted in the recent article in the Sun-Gazette, "You have to look at the culture before you can solve any of these little problems. Otherwise, the administrators give you lip service." <http://www.sungazette.net/articles/2009/10/26/fairfax/news/fe390.txt>

A couple of additional suggestions for you to consider:

- 1) Check out the blog "Fairfax Underground" and consider using it as a forum to help you organize.
- 2) Put together a school board candidate forum for later this week or this weekend. It

isn't too late. We had our last scheduled forum last night, but candidate Reed and Jennison should be able to attend another even it is at the last minute. And you don't need a lot of people. Typical attendance has ranged from 15 to 30 parents. You can invite parents concerned about other programs.

- 3) Contact the chairs of other groups that are worried about funding cuts and quickly build your coalition. You have to move fast. Use the proposed list of possible cuts as your target market. Form a coalition and unite with the demand for preservation of all the programs and counter the natural tendency to try and only protect your favorite program. Don't become prey to the Counties strategy of divide and conquer.
- 4) Bring your case for funding to the Supervisors. Don't let them escape responsibility. This problem has been obvious for a long time but they have been negligent in preparing for it.
- 5) Begin recruiting candidates to run for the office of Supervisor and School Board. The next election will be in two years. It is very easy to become a candidate and candidates do not need to be affiliated with a party. I will be happy to assist anyone interested in considering an independent candidacy. Campaigning is a lot of fun and candidates can scale their campaign for however they are comfortable. Contrary to what is implied, candidates do not have to put up signs, raise money, or knock on doors. VDOT specifically tells candidates not to put signs in their rights-of-way. And if the actual job was so bad, why do so many people make such an effort fighting for it.
- 6) Feel free to distribute this email.
- 7) I would be pleased to assist your efforts to preserve the fine arts programs in any way possible even if I don't win the election. Please stay in touch with me and feel free to call me anytime in the future. I share your concerns for a more responsive school system and government and I enjoy trying to solve these types of problems.

In an interview with the Fairfax Times newspaper last week I explained that I would "Eliminate half of the administrative staff and the regulations they administer. Put more money and power in the hands of the school principals so they can perform their job without worrying so much about regulatory compliance."

I wish you good luck in your fight to continue the fine arts programs at our schools. They are great programs and your concerns are valid and should not be dismissed. And can't the County come up with a little more money to keep the program going? Sounds like poor customer service to me, especially considering the high taxes all of us are required to pay.

For more information about my candidacy I have attached a copy of my candidate forum opening speech and my position regarding the SLEEP initiative to adjust the school schedules. In my explanation regarding SLEEP I explain that I think there are more important concerns regarding classroom ergonomics than adjusting

the schedule. The following link is to an article in the Connection newspaper with my personal profile and my responses to several school issue questions.

<http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/article.asp?article=333892&paper=73&cat=109>.

Thanks again for your question.

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