

November 6, 2009

Dear (addressees: M. Scott/C. Muñana, N. Bobins/T. Butt/A. Carrero, Jr./P. Davis and R. Ward. Copied: R. Huberman/B. Eason-Watkins

As you are aware, in my remarks before the Chicago Board of Education on October 28, 2009, I once again called for a moratorium on implementation of the Renaissance 2010 plan. I did so for the very same reasons I have put forth in numerous previous appearances before the Board: because Renaissance 2010 has not improved the opportunity for students in the Chicago Public Schools to gain a fruitful and valued education, and because it has added unnecessary tension to the overall educational process in Chicago's public schools. With this letter to you, I am formally reiterating my call for an immediate stop to Renaissance 2010. I do so with the best interests of the students, the parents, the teachers, and the staff of the Chicago Public Schools in mind and I ask for a clear "up or down" vote on the matter immediately.

The evidence that Renaissance 2010 is not working as the citizens of Chicago were told it would is irrefutable. The recently released study by the Consortium on Chicago School Research shows with clear evidence that students transferred from schools closed under Renaissance 2010 have been moved to other schools that were themselves academically weak. As a result, those students have shown little – if any – improvement in their scholastic performance. Additionally, this research clearly illustrates that the promise made to parents and citizens of Chicago, that no student would be placed in an academic setting that was of lower standing than the one from which he or she came, was blatantly untrue.

Furthermore, again as I have stated before, moving students from one institution to another, without addressing various and numerous community problems that are the underlying causes of violence among young people in our city, is an invitation to disaster. Like it or not, gangs do exist in the City of Chicago; this is not a school problem, but rather a municipal problem. Law-enforcement officials across the nation are consistent in their warnings that the mixing of members of different gangs into one setting is an invitation to disaster. Yet, CPS has done just that by taking students from one school where Gang "A" has been prevalent and moving them to a school where the presence of Gang "B" was dominant. This was done with Wells High School and met with violent consequences; this was done at Hyde Park High School and met with violent

consequences; this was done at Fenger High School and met with violent consequences. How many examples of this failed policy do you, as a Board member, need to see before you take action?

The decisions on planning and implementation of Renaissance 2010 were made without the involvement of the persons who have the strongest and most important role in the education of the children of Chicago: the teachers. Instead of listening to teachers – who every day deal with the issues of students coming to the classroom hungry, and students who come to the classroom without adequate sleep the night before because of problems in their homes that kept them awake, and students whose emotional composure is rattled because of violence they witnessed on their way to school – the Board chose to listen to bureaucrats and consultants far removed from the everyday problems of our schools. At this juncture, it is your moral obligation to admit the failure of Renaissance 2010, to bring it to a halt, and then to sit down with the true educators – the teachers – and develop a reform model that brings benefit to all students without placing any in harm's way.

With heartfelt urgency, I plead with you to listen to those who see the problems of our schools from the closest vantage point, who are best prepared to design and implement true educational reform, and who have proven by their dedication and commitment that they have the best interest of all the students of Chicago at heart. Those persons are the more than 30,000 members of the Chicago Teachers Union whom I represent.

End Renaissance 2010 today, before one more student of the Chicago Public Schools becomes its victim.

Yours most sincerely,



Marilyn Stewart
President

MS/alm

Cc: Ron Huberman/Barbara Eason-Watkins