

I am troubled as I stand before you today, having examined the list of new schools that the Board is identifying as Renaissance 2010 schools. As an officer of the Chicago Teachers Union I was at the bargaining table when Arne Duncan submitted an application in November 2006 to the Federal Government for a \$27.5 million dollar TIF grant to support the implementation of a Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) in Chicago. This was the largest competitive grant received by CPS.

The Union subsequently signed a MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING with the Board, with substantial assistance from our parent organization the AFT. This research based model for school improvement focuses on professional development opportunities for teachers and principals, along with professional compensation. The first co-hort of 10 schools was selected to begin this program in September 2007. Two of those schools are on the list of schools to be consolidated. They are now in their 3rd year of implementation. These schools are McCorkle, which will be consolidated with Beethoven, and Wells Elementary, being consolidated with Mollison.

Before any school signed on to become part of the TAP program 75% of the faculty had to vote to participate. They “bought in” to this model. What happens when a research based program with such specific training is combined with another school? Both of these schools are currently in their third year of implementation. Is this a good use of our limited dollars and is it fair to the students, teachers and staff?

This past September two other schools, Deneen and Gillespie, joined this program. They are in the third group (Co-hort 3) of 10 schools and, by the way, also had a 75% staff buy-on. Tens of thousands of dollars have been spent on training and professional development and now, before they have even been able to test their students and post gains, the schools are being “turned around”. Is this a good use of limited dollars? These teachers realized that their students needed help and sought out the program that could help them and their students realize positive change.

In a “turn-around” everyone loses his job, although the students stay. The strong relationships formed by the current staff will be forever lost. How is this sound educational policy? We believe students deserve safeguards and support under the “School Closings Student Bill of Rights”.

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