

Remarks to the School Reform Commission

March 26, 2015

Good evening. My name is Barbara McDowell Dowdall. I am a graduate of Philadelphia public schools, retired English Department Head, great aunt and god mother of students attending C. W. Henry School and grandmother of a future Jackson Elementary School youngster (his enrollment there a mere 3 and a half years away) and a member of the Alliance for Philadelphia Public Schools or APPS.

Although the difficulty I had yesterday in registering to speak was ultimately resolved, I would suggest that my experience was emblematic of an attitude and atmosphere that serves neither school district staff nor the public, nor, ultimately the children we are all committed to serve. Though I placed my call to the long-established telephone number for speaker registration within the long-established time frame, and following within the hour a colleague's routine accomplishment of the task, your primary staff person in charge of establishing the speaker list found it entirely plausible that the SRC had, for some unknown reason and with no prior notification to the public or to her, but entirely within their power because "They can do whatever they want," had posted a change in the required one-day-in-advance signup to two days on the district's website and thus she, once she became aware of the change, not only had to enforce the rule, but could not possibly write down my name for subsequent verification of my attempt, as that would give me in erroneous impression that I might still appeal

the decision and secure a place on the speaker list today, as that would cause the SRC to be “very angry” because they “don’t like that.” Once the new date for signup on the website had been determined to be a mere electronic typo, signing up was quite simple. With my three minutes thus slightly diverted, I offer the following questions regarding the budget for your thoughtful consideration and response.

How will Action Plan 3.0 be reflected in the budget, since most actions require funds.

Where does your responsibility and loyalty to the school system taken over in 2001 primarily reside?

Oughtn’t we restore the nurses, counselors, secretaries, school ops, security personnel and teachers who were cut over the last several years before we run to some shiny “innovations” and “new ideas.”

Do our children not deserve the resource of fully-resourced and professionally staffed school libraries which have been documented to establish, enhance and ensure literacy and yes, pure joy in learning.

Have schools that been or proposed to be closed, converted, transformed, turned around or turned over been provided the resources they needed before such action? Once these processes have been applied to 100% of our schools, what exactly would your job be.

Shouldn't we restore the salary steps, seniority rights, and in fact the entire PFT contract items that were abrogated in the name of fiscal emergency.

Have any of you spent a day in the newest Wissahickon Charter School followed by a day in Roosevelt Elementary, formerly Middle, formerly closed, formerly Junior High School up the hill and then said: "Equity is our primary goal."

Isn't it time to appoint Mark Gleason of the Philadelphia School Partnership at least honorary Associate Superintendent?