

SRC testimony March 26, 2015

My name is Lisa Haver. I am a retired teacher and member of the Alliance for Philadelphia Public Schools.

At last week's meeting, I asked that the SRC members clarify two resolutions in which the Philadelphia School Partnership and the Wm Penn Foundation— organizations whose influence over district policy has grown since 2011— offered grants for Early Childhood Education programs in district schools. But the SRC passed both resolutions with no discussion or clarification.

In the past two years, since February 2013, PSP has been the subject of 12 resolutions, all of them approved by the SRC. That averages to one every other month. Many of those resolutions have resulted in major changes in many schools—elementary, middle and high schools. In some cases, including Blaine and Kelley elementary schools, More than 80% of the faculty was replaced after the same teachers who applied for the grant were forced to reapply for their own jobs. (speaking, as we do at every meeting now, of trauma).

Yesterday's Inquirer reported that PSP had awarded Roxborough H S a grant to change its entire academic structure to an Academy System. But last month, the SRC approved a grant from Philadelphia Academies, Inc.

to implement an Academy system beginning February 2015, which was last month.

An obvious question is “How does this all work?” My question is: Where does this all work? Resolutions pop up from PSP every other month, and they are all approved without discussion. Faculties are changed, curricula are changed, entire academic programs are changed—yet the SRC feels no responsibility to deliberate on them before the parents, teachers or students who come to these meetings.

As I said last week, there has to be some way for people at SRC meetings to ask for an explanation of what is being voted on BEFORE the SRC votes and to get an answer. In a free country with an open system of government, I don't know why we have to keep saying that.

Ms Neff, as the new SRC chair, will you give people a chance to understand what the SRC is voting on? Will you make one part of the agenda at every meeting a time for people to ask questions on the resolutions?