

SRC Testimony 11/20/14 Karel Kilimnik

Where to start: Thoughts on Comparing an elected government body to an appointed one

Where to start? I begin with yesterday's hearings in City Council on Standardized Testing & the Parent Opt-Out Movement that was packed with parents, students, teachers, concerned community members, a superintendent from a suburban district, legislators, and university students. I want to compare how an elected governing body operates with the appointed board sitting in front of us this evening.

Yesterday there were no police surrounding City Hall with barricades erected to prevent access into the building, no banner was snatched from my hand, no food or drink taken as happened at the 10/16 SRC meeting. Yesterday there was respectful listening by City Council members. They asked questions and conversed with those testifying. We were invited to sign up on the spot to speak. There was no flashing light or person announcing that your time is up. During a break we were welcome to come up and speak with City Council members. They treated participants with respect, whether they agreed with you or not.

Tonight we have three minutes to speak before a panel of appointed, un-elected people, accountable to no one except the mayor or governor, staring at us. There is no discussion, no answering of questions. Our words fall down a massive hole from which there is no return. This is why we need a democratically-elected school board with representatives accountable to us, the voters. We need an elected school board that does not hide behind closed doors when making decisions. An elected school board that does not collude with private agencies bearing millions of dollars to influence policy such as Resolution B-2.

So, while I am on the topic of lack of public access to decision-making bodies about public education let me turn to the Great Schools Compact. The Great Schools Compact is managed by the Philadelphia School Partnership. The Great Schools Compact came into existence with the awarding of Bill Gates money in 21011.

The Great Schools Compact is another undemocratically-run entity composed of the school district, some SRC members, a representative of the mayor's education office, the archdiocese, several charter operator groups, and a representative from the state department of education so where are the voices of parents, school staff, students, and community members?

When is the next meeting? We want to attend.