

MPC SPEECH FOR 5/26/2011 BOARD MEETING

I am as surprised as everyone that Dr. Freund has chosen not to complete his three-year term, as he said he would. That being said, I wish him success in his future endeavors.

We need to move forward as a community, and focus on the pressing need to improve academic achievement for all children in the Greenwich Public Schools.

At this juncture, I believe we need fundamental reform, not incremental change, in the delivery of education in our Town. The fundamental reform may be as simple as getting back to basics, *absent agendas*, with renewed dedication and rigor.

Current results and student performance speak for themselves. The last set of test scores was unacceptable. That is not to deny that there are pockets of true excellence. The status quo is unacceptable; the children of the Greenwich Public Schools deserve far better.

It is imperative that the Board takes on the responsibility of providing strong guidance and leadership during this crucial time.

Moreover, we must meet our challenges transparently; the whole community must be involved. We have special challenges, and we have to be able to make the best decisions with the best information for the sake of all children, as well as the Town.

The work of the Board of Education must not occur behind closed doors.

In my one term on the BOE, the Town has not been well served by the Board's lack of transparency and accountability. At least one other Board member and I have made numerous attempts to discuss in depth at the Board level, in full public view, the causes of academic underperformance.

In addition, it came to light that, in 2009, the Board chair and the superintendent entered into significant long-term commitments without prior public vetting and Board approval. No Board member should have to find out that an employee and fellow Board member entered onto an important commitment without informing the public or the full Board.

Much has been said recently about too many questions and emails. It is every Board member's fiduciary responsibility to ask questions and get answers in order to make informed decisions on issues that affect our schools and children.

In my view, the Board of Education's proper role is not to rubberstamp initiatives whose efficacy in Greenwich has not been adequately demonstrated by the administration.

If I asked, apparently for some, too many questions as, for example, when I discovered that long-term commitments had been made without Board approval, then I would point out respectfully that others asked too few questions.

The Town is at a crossroads.

If our children are to be well-served by the GPS, the BOE must encourage and support open and robust discussion of critical issues. The Town as well as the children in the Greenwich Public Schools will be the losers if those who ask questions as part of their fiduciary responsibility are effectively silenced.

MPC

May 26, 2011