



January 15, 2010

Re: Motion to support "A Community Value Statement"

Dear PTA leader,

It's something we all want, to give every child a great education. But while Seattle Public Schools serves many students well, this ultimate goal eludes us. The reasons for this are complex, varied and intertwined.

But there are actions we can take to improve schools and help kids learn. PTAs do them every day. And we're not alone. Seattle Public Schools staff and a slew of volunteers and organizations are dedicated to making sure our schools do right by our children.

Last year, many PTA leaders asked if these organizations could work together. So we are. For the last several months, representatives from groups across the city have been meeting to find common ground and unite in a constructive manner. Heidi Bennett, one of the council's vice presidents, and I represented SCPTSA, drawing on feedback we hear from members across the city. We joined friends from CPPS, the League of Women Voters, Stand for Children, The Alliance for Education, Save Seattle Schools blog, the League of Education Voters, Successful Schools in Action, Campaña Quetzal, Vietnamese Friendship Association, College Success Foundation and Social Venture Partners, along with one or two just plain "community members."

We talked about the New Student Assignment Plan and school equity. About the Strategic Plan and what it didn't address. About changes going on at the state level and President Obama's Race to the Top challenge. "Reform" is a loaded word and conveys a particular, often controversial, agenda, but we discussed it, too. Turns out there is collaborative, innovative work going on – locally and nationally.

In the end, though, we talked most passionately about problems we ran into on a personal level. Kids not getting access to programs. Great teachers being let go. A frustration that even though they are public schools, and even though we pour our time and resources into them, parents often feel shut out. **We want to encourage improvements underway** – particularly around changes to performance management. But we also want to assert the importance and relevance of making community part of the process.

The result of all this is the attached document, "Give Every Child a Great Education: A Community Value Statement in Support of Public Schools." The individuals at the table are now taking it to their organizations and seeking endorsement. The groups that sign will then present the document to the district, school board, and principal and teacher associations.

Heidi and I presented this document to the Seattle Council PTSA Board earlier this week. Our board supports, but **we want you – the PTA and PTSA leaders -- to decide whether to endorse.** We will present the value statement this **Thursday, Jan. 21**, at our general meeting, 7 p.m. in the Roosevelt High School Library (networking, 6:30 p.m.)

The document centers on one overarching principle, All Schools Must Be Quality Schools, and the four elements that are needed to make that happen. Because we want ongoing engagement, we also included

recommendations on how the district can support these elements. These are by no means the only suggestions participants had. These aren't the only problems we need to fix. They do, however, touch on issues that came up repeatedly in our group discussions and that reflect our priorities. Some involve bigger policy issues, some are changes in practice. The district may offer alternative solutions. That's fine.

Our goal with this document:

- To share our perspective: We stand behind our schools, we like a lot of what we see and hear about improving them, we want to make sure students and families stay front and center.
- We want to reach our goal – give every child a great education – and that means tackling some tough issues.
- We want to give the district a document they can respond to. There needs to be ongoing engagement – and that means looping back – with the community. Ultimately the district and the board represent us, and the success of the schools reflects the public's priorities.

Because district policy and practice are intertwined with contractual agreements, the organizers group also intends to share this with the principal and teacher associations. We want them to understand our concerns and see how we view this “reform” process.

So ... please read the document. **Weigh in with your board**, and help us voice the community's values around great schools. This document is thumbs up or down. (The groups that met all agreed to present and seek endorsement of the same statement so we could speak in a unified voice.)

The bulk of our council meeting this Thursday, Jan. 21, will be spent discussing this statement and what PTAs and PTSAs can do as a coalition to make sure every child gets a great education.

We need to hear from you.

Sincerely,
Ramona Hattendorf, Seattle Council PTSA president

Seattle Council PTSA general meeting

Thursday, Jan. 21

6:30-8:30 p.m. (agenda starts at 7 p.m.)

Roosevelt High School Library

1410 NE 66th St., Seattle, WA, 98115

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Ed reform, Race to the Top... There's a lot of discussion about improving schools, but what does all this mean for Seattle? And what's the community's role? The Seattle Council PTSA Board will present “Give Every Child a Great Education: A Community Value Statement in Support of Public Schools” and ask if the council wants to endorse. **Also on the agenda:** Does the council body endorse the school levies? We also need to elect a nominating committee for next year's SCPTSA board, and we need to vote on standing rules. WE NEED QUORUM, SO PLEASE COME. (Each PTA gets 3 votes. You MUST vote in person. Each PTA board designates their voting delegates.) PLEASE NOTE LOCATION. WE'RE AT RHS, not district headquarters. See you Thursday!

Give every child a great education

A community value statement in support of public schools

We are leaders of non-profits, school volunteers and community members working to ensure the success of all children in Seattle Public Schools. We want an opportunity to share our perspective and to speak to what we believe is in the best interests of public schools and their students.

While recognizing the financial constraints placed on the school district, we support the following recommendations as important factors in improving the quality of education for Seattle children.

We believe:

All schools must be quality schools and the district should ensure:

- Every school is led by a principal who is an effective instructional leader and manager
- Every classroom is led by an effective teacher
- Every student is provided equitable access to core academics, enrichment opportunities and services as needed
- Every family is given the opportunity to work in collaboration with educators

In support of these values, we propose the attached and request an ongoing dialogue.

Signed:

Supporting recommendations
for Seattle Public Schools policy and practice

All schools must be quality schools and the district should ensure:

- Every school is led by a principal who is an effective instructional leader and manager
- Every classroom is led by an effective teacher

Our recommendations:

- Define principal and teacher effectiveness using clear criteria and benchmarks.
 - Evaluate principals and teachers using multiple measures that include student performance.
 - Identify ineffective principals and teachers. If benchmarks are not met after appropriate support, develop a timely exit plan.
 - Consider teacher effectiveness and cohesiveness of school teams, in addition to seniority, when hiring or reducing staff.
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- Every student is provided equitable access to core academics, enrichment opportunities and services as needed

Our recommendations:

- Ensure appropriate programs are available to meet the needs of all students.
 - Ensure all students receive the state's requirements for instructional time.
 - Ensure all students have access to curriculum and supplemental online materials.
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- Every family is given the opportunity to work in collaboration with educators

Our recommendations:

- Define district-wide parameters for building leadership teams, design teams and interview teams, ensuring that parents and community members have a voice and representative vote.
- Document and respond to family and student concerns.
- Require all teachers to use the Source to post grades and assignments in a timely manner so that families can monitor student status.

In closing, we would like to thank Seattle Public Schools staff and school board directors for partnering with us in so many areas and for considering our perspective on how Seattle schools can improve.