

Original Message

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Created at: Thu, Mar 28, 2013 at 9:33 PM (Delivered after 0 seconds)

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To:

Subject: County Executive Takeover of PGCPS

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28 March 2013

To: Honorable Members of the Maryland House of Delegates, State Senators,
Prince Georges County Executive, Prince Georges County Council, the Prince
Georges County Public Schools Board of Education, Maryland State Board of
Education, Members of the Press, Citizens of Prince Georges County,
Whomever It may Concern

Re: County Executive Proposed Takeover of the Prince Georges County Public
Schools

Dear Concerned Citizen:

The proposed takeover of the Prince Georges County Public Schools by the County Executive is a reaction and not a response. While it is true that the elected Board of Education needs improvement, it is unfair to take choice out of the hand of the voters. If there is some kind of hybrid Board of part elected and part appointed members, the voter representation is diluted. It would not be possible for a handful of members to represent the huge districts in this county. As we witnessed from the last appointed Board, the voice of the citizens were not freely heard, because appointed members do not feel the same responsibility to the citizens. The type of corruption that currently exists in the PGCPS would not be eliminated by a County Executive takeover, since political appointments can be equally as corrupt. One has to wonder about the timing of this urgent takeover attempt. From a Political Scientist standpoint, it seems unethical to put forth such an effort right before spring break and ask the voters to get onboard with limited information. One town hall phone conference is not true citizen discussion and involvement. In light of the turmoil in places like Washington, D.C. and Chicago, where the mayors control the Board of Education, citizens should want much more time to consider such an action or put it on a referendum in the next general election. No one wants to see school closures or furlough days to cut budgets. Even if the current County Executive does not have ill ideas for the PGCPS, if the change takes place, it will be available for the next County Executive to manipulate.

Based on the County Executive's statements in years past, he believes a longer school year will help the school system. This shows a total lack of understanding of the problems in the PGCPS. The County Executive states he is already held accountable for something that he has no control over. One can empathize with that because it is exactly what the School Principals deal with daily. They are being held accountable for things they cannot change, while the Central Offices call the shots and micro-manage. The teachers can only teach the population they are given. Continued efforts to tie teacher compensation to student performance on State Tests, is an invitation to the type cheating accusations we have seen in other jurisdictions. Thus, the problem has no single answer.

Prince Georges Public schools are often unfairly pointed out for being at the bottom in certain statistical categories by the Maryland State Department of Education. There seems to be little effort to highlight all of the students and schools that are excelling. Often the MSDE is guilty of comparing apples to oranges or using biased data. For example, when one looks at PGCPS placement on a list, no one asks about things like poverty, crime, or family dysfunction. After looking over some average data from 2006-2011, the numbers look as follows. One in four murders is committed in Prince Georges County, one in five rapes is committed in Prince Georges County, one in seven aggravated assaults is committed in Prince Georges County, close to 60 percent of the students receive free or reduced lunches, and nearly 12 percent are in special education. Now, if you are a teacher or principal in PGCPS, all you can do is teach while the student is at school. You cannot control the environment outside of school, but the home environment can affect school. Therefore, just throwing out statistical numbers without explaining the numbers makes Prince Georges County Public Schools look substandard. Some other rubrics by the MSDE are tailor-made to isolate and punish school districts like the PGCPS that have this mixed bag of circumstances. For example, a new Maryland School Assessment (MSA) GAP measurement rubric would measure the difference between the highest scoring group and the lowest. How fair is this going to be for a school that has a large special education population? This makes

one wonder why special education is even taking the same test.

With all of these points in consideration, let us look at some positive things that Prince Georges County and the State of Maryland can do to reform the PGCPs and how they are measured:

1. Stop MSDE statistical ranking of schools.
2. Eliminate the new MSA GAP Measurements.
3. Stop central office micro managing of each school and let the principals do their jobs.
4. Allow teachers to teach in a manner that will empower them to use their gifts.
5. Reduce class sizes to no more than 25 per class.
6. Adequately compensate employees, to include the removal of mandatory union or association membership or representation fees.
7. Discontinue the foolish Student Based Budgeting and fund each school properly.
8. Eliminate the over-zealous curriculum requirements that have students sitting for hours at a time without a break or stretching. No adult wants to sit on a hard chair for over an hour and neither should any child. Sixty minutes is more than enough for continuous instruction in one subject.
9. More focus and funding needs to be directed to elementary schools, which are the foundation of the public school system. If students love education at this level, it will make them better students at higher levels=
.
10. Breaks, breaks, breaks are needed to keep the minds of the elementary students stimulated. Building into the schedule at least two daily recesses of about 20 minutes is a must.
11. Discontinue social promoting. If a child has not done well, it is a travesty to promote them.
12. Bring back summer school for elementary and middle school students that have grades of D in classes.
13. The County Executive should appoint an Education Liaison to attend all Board of Education meetings and be an active advisor to the Board of Education. This does not have to be a created position to burden the taxpayers. It can be any current member of the County Executive=92s staff.
14. The current unions should be disbanded because of improper connections with the PGCPs. New unions should be allowed to petition the employees.
15. An Inspector General should be considered to look at corruption and nepotism in the PGCPs.
16. The Board of Education should move swiftly to appoint Dr. Becoats in

the next week as the new Superintendent of the PGCPS, to show voters they are serious about reform and moving ahead quickly. Having interim personnel in the top two spots is not acceptable.

17. If the Board of Education really wants to think outside the box, they could offer the vacant Deputy Superintendent position to Mr. Peters or Dr. Crawley. This would mean a team could be assembled, and groomed for the future.

18. Parenting skill classes must be required for guardians of students with behavior issues.

In conclusion, the plans and ideas in this proposal are intended to stem the political battles that do not benefit the children of Prince Georges County. This proposal will give the County Executive the right level of input and connection he desires with the PGCPS. This proposal also gives the Prince Georges County Board of Education the benefit of expert advice from the County Executive Liaison. This proposal will empower principals to administer, teachers to educate, and students to learn. Finally, this proposal is intended to make the MSDE and others look at the Prince Georges County Public Schools in a different light.

Respectfully,

Billy W. Bridges

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/howard/laurel/ph-ll-baker-budget-0319-20150317-story.html>

<https://wtop.com/prince-georges-county/2018/04/prince-georges-schools-ceo-unauthorized-raises-board-members-say/>