

While our city and nation were celebrating five triumphal decades of school desegregation and the dawn of a new era of civil rights in education, I'm afraid the wine was clouding our vision of the realities in DC.

Here the *de facto* fulfillment of ***Brown v The Board of Education*** is still being decided. Only this time the **Board** will rule and **not** the **courts**. That's why I have become a candidate for the presidency of the DC Board of Education this year where the civil rights action has moved and why I need your help to fulfill these rights. In stark reality public education is in dire danger of being dismantled by both sophisticated stupidity and callous neglect. Community outrage must come out and mobilize the vote for a change!

About this time last year a distinguished panel of lawyers wrote a wake up report for a public interest group devoted to the preservation of public schools, BUT still in denial, nobody listened. They called their 2005 report, "Separate and Unequal: The State of DC Public Schools Fifty Years After Brown and Bolling." As you know *Bolling v. Sharpe* was the companion DC case folded into the *Brown* decision by the Supreme Court with all of the same evidence of educational neglect and abuse.

Shockingly the Report's findings were that "in many fundamental respects, the programs and course offerings in the District's public schools have deteriorated since the decision in *Brown and Bolling*." It went on to document that foreign language study has all but disappeared in elementary, junior and senior high schools along with classes in music and art. Unlike the past, more than a third of the District's schools are without team sports, coaches or physical education teachers. Vocational education is a mere shadow of its former self at all levels with all schools previously dedicated to such training now closed or decimated with the work preparation courses collectively offered now city-wide at less than those in a single high school fifty years ago.

The Report cited the US Army Corps of Engineers conclusion that 70% of the District's school buildings are in poor or hazardous condition with athletic facilities nonexistent or compromised by health and safety risks. Without an adequate corps of nurses, school health suites lack running water, cots and refrigerators for storing required medications or the necessary computer access to student health records.

The causes are revealed in the newspaper headlines of the past two months: *Heads Should Roll--Pre-Paid Eastern High Parents Locked Out of Commencement by Seating Error, Special Education Eats Up Public School Budget, School Overtime Pay Affords Staff Six Figure Salaries, Why DC Can't Read, NAACP v Vouchers, FBI Raids Seek Evidence on Charter School Board Spending, Candidates Quarrel Over Education the Number One Voter Concern in DC Mayoral Contest, Teacher Union Officials Sentenced for Embezzlement, School Board Gets D for Dysfunctional*. And the battle goes on over school closings, charter school failures, dropout rates, and graduate illiteracy, etc. etc., etc. And the DC Board of Education is virtually the same today as when that lawyers' report was issued.

And throughout this spiral of decline school budgets have expanded and student enrollment has contracted, with residents and students fleeing by the tens of thousands since the days of *Brown* until we now face a stark crisis and a choice. Unless our system of public education is turned around sharply, it will soon be lost as a source of economic opportunity, hope, community development and social stability.

But our past need not be our prologue. Failing school systems are being reinvented by a new breed of educational entrepreneurs, who know the old factory assembly line no longer works in schools. We believe quality public education is a right not a privilege. We are at war with both waste and excuses. We support the early introduction of technology in education coupled with individualized adult caring. And we will not surrender to dysfunctional behavior as the new norm.

Such solutions are not rocket science, they require more than that. They require a collective commitment to pursue what works and the courage to discard what has repeatedly resulted in failure.

It is my purpose as candidate for president of the DC Board of Education to restore the promise of *Brown* and *Bolling* in practical educational practices and policies. Smart schools require smart and experienced policy leadership.

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