



NAACP - SAINT PAUL CHAPTER #4052

375 Oxford Street North

Saint Paul, MN 55104

651-649-0520

March 15, 2011

Elona Street-Stewart, Chairperson

St. Paul Public Schools Board of Education

360 Colborne Street

Saint Paul, MN 55102

Madame Chair, Directors, Superintendent Silva, Senior Staff members, and members of the community good evening.

The Saint Paul Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (“NAACP”) and African American Leadership Council (“AALC”) are here to demonstrate our support and commitment to African American students. We are respectfully requesting tonight that you table the aforementioned proposal for at least 90 days, in order to assemble the appropriate stakeholders around the table to resolve the issues we will outline in three primary areas: Segregation, achievement, and inclusion.

Each of our organizations support Superintendent Silva’s efforts to provide more opportunity for all our students, to hold everyone within her organization accountable for the performance of the students within their care, and for finally focusing on African-American children and other children of color and the inadequate education that they have been receiving as a whole. However, based on a preliminary assessment of the plan against national research, the St. Paul Public School’s reorganization causes concern locally and nationally for the NAACP and AALC, because of the potential re-segregation and achievement disparities. With that being said, our organizations recognize that the current system is not meeting the needs of all students and something has to be done.

The remarks we have prepared to share with you this evening and the attached requests (being respectfully submitted) specify the urgent necessity that the Board of Education table the administration’s proposed Saint Paul Public Schools, Strong Schools—Strong Communities Plan. This request is being jointly submitted by the St. Paul NAACP and the African American Leadership Council. Contrary to media reports and statements by St. Paul Public School staff members, we stand before you this evening, firmly united in our commitment to Saint Paul Public School students and families and ever hopeful that you will agree to work with us to resolve the concerns we are about to share. We stand here tonight firmly united and committed to our common agenda.

To begin, the district's proposed plan raises many legal issues. Having not received the background data requested by the NAACP (which was promised by the district) and with all of the details of the plan not yet determined, we are unable to support the plan as presented and we clearly acknowledge that it is difficult to make specific recommendations or analysis on limited information. At the same time, it is possible to ascertain from what has been made public (and from several meetings between our respective groups and the administration) that the proposed plan before you could be seen as intentional segregation of our schools in violation of federal constitutional law, the Minnesota State Desegregation Rule and in violation of state constitutional law that requires the state to provide an adequate education—as a fundamental right—to every student.

For many years, the school district has blamed segregated housing practices for school segregation and said that the district has no control over housing segregation... yet this proposed plan may limit equal access to educational opportunity and in fact worsen housing segregation and lower property values in a number of our city's neighborhoods, if it limits educational choices and options to preference boundaries within "yet to be determined" school attendance areas.

Additionally, one of the strategic plan items the district has touted over the past five years is creating a welcoming and respectful environment. However, because we continue to hear complaints from African American parents, students and staff about their experience in Saint Paul Public Schools, it appears this priority either remains unfulfilled or that it existed only on paper. We wish to address this as part of our areas of concern and our request before you this evening.

We request that you table the aforementioned proposal for at least 90 days, in order to address these issues and concerns. Not doing so, we fear, could result in unnecessary and costly litigation, loss of the district's Integration Revenue Aid, further erosion of the student base in the district, could seriously jeopardize the credibility of this policy board, and could dampen the possibility of the district being able to successfully renew its excess levy referendum in the coming year.

We want exactly what you want—strong schools and strong communities. We can't afford to wait until 2014 to achieve these results or to take the steps we propose this evening--and we do not have the luxury of failure. We are mindful that the matters we are about to share with you are not new ones. They have repeatedly been presented to this board for your consideration and action for more than 25 years now, by numerous individuals and organizations in our community. The time to commit, the time to act, and the time to move forward on behalf of our children is now. No more empty promises, no more "trust us—we know what's best for your children." Be the leaders we elected you to be and show your support for our superintendent and for our community by tabling this proposed plan tonight.

The issues we place on the record for your consideration tonight are as follows:

Segregation and Achievement Issues:

SPPS is a racially isolated district and we are concerned that this proposed plan could worsen that situation and educational outcomes in the process. From our preliminary analysis, students of color in St. Paul who attend integrated schools perform better academically than students of color in St. Paul who attend segregated schools. Other districts that have returned to community schools and abandoned meaningful integration plans have had the achievement of their students of color and low-income students decline significantly. Community/neighborhood schools plans across the country (and across the river in Minneapolis) have predictably created more high poverty schools and more racially segregated schools. Students of color in these types of schools across the country have generally had lower achievement than their counterparts in low poverty and less segregated schools.

We are asking the district to:

- 1. Convene a work group of stakeholders (including school administration, teachers and administrators of color, parents, community members and representatives of community organizations) to specifically discuss the issue of inadequate achievement of students of color and poor students and make recommendations to the district on proposed changes to address this issue.**
- 2. commit to immediate corrective action and measureable change, if any existing, individual school, or the district as a whole, falls 5 percent below proficiency goals;**
- 3. commit to immediate corrective action and measureable change, if any existing, individual school, or the district as a whole, becomes 5 percent or more segregated (white students or students of color) than it was on 10/01/10;**
- 4. commit to immediate corrective action and measureable change, if any new programs or schools increase their racial concentration by 5 percent (white students or students of color) or if their proficiency goals fall short by the same amount from year to year after they are established.**
- 5. We are further requesting that the district make public the data showing the projected impact of the plan on the demographics of each individual school.**

Inclusion Issues:

The State of Minnesota requires school districts to have a multicultural curriculum plan, yet there is no evidence that Saint Paul Public Schools has one. While we are pleased that the district has a Latino Consent Decree and that there are numerous schools focused solely on American Indian, French, Spanish, Hmong and Chinese language, history and culture--there is little or no evidence that the contributions of African Americans and other protected class groups in business, literature, the arts, science,

technology, culture or history are present, taught or valued across the school district--at any grade level.

The eradication of segregation and educational inequality requires true integration of curriculum, teaching and support staff, decision-making, resource allocation, consideration of race and socioeconomic status, housing policy, regional strategies, and other important considerations.

We are asking the district to implement the following by 9/01/11:

- An inclusive curriculum policy (including the contributions of European Americans) at all schools and programs, at each grade level throughout the district (regardless of the school, program or subject focus).

- A measureable and inclusive recruitment, hiring and retention policy for teachers, support staff and administrators, with continuous monitoring and semi-annual public reporting.

- Implementation of an equitable allocation/ placement process to insure that high quality, committed teachers with high expectation are present in schools that face significant academic challenges.

- A measureable and inclusive procurement policy that involves outreach, education and participation by WMBE vendors, contractors, sub-contractors and consultants, with continuous monitoring and semi-annual public reporting.

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