

Dear Editors:

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the CCSD 180 Board of Education and Referendum Committee, to thank the 540 voters who showed their support for community schools by voting YES on our referendum on February 5. They demonstrated their belief that quality community schools are fundamental to our success. I would also like to thank **Doings** reporter, Jane Michaels, for her fair coverage of our district. She has taken the time to truly understand the unique situation of CCSD 180, and her pieces reflect that understanding. Sadly, your support was not quite enough to pass this referendum.

We will be back in November, to once again ask for your commitment to the children of CCSD 180. But by then, things will have changed drastically.

At our February board meeting we will begin addressing the cuts that need to be made. With the tremendous diversity of our school population, this will be especially difficult. The children in our community will return to school in September and face changes that may include: increased class size/decreased assistance in the classroom; reduced academic programs – including those at both the remedial and gifted/talented ends of the spectrum; curtailed extracurricular offerings; and decreased fine arts programs.

In the past several years, changes in our community base have required us to implement programs and interventions, and hire staff. We are a public school and must provide for the academic and social needs of ALL of our students; we must continue to meet “No Child Left Behind” standards. Our thoughtful, conservative approach to spending over the last two decades – including saving our constituents literally millions in mortgage interest by refinancing bonds -- had put us in the position to be able to continue to serve the needs of all of our learners. But we knew that the point was coming where we would need to ask for more.

Rather than acknowledging a difficult job done well, the **Doings** Board declined to endorse our referendum. Instead they chastised us for coming to our voters proactively, before we were in dire need; before our academics had slid to an unacceptable level; before we cancelled all of the “extras” that make the lasting memories of school; before we became the shell of what a fine school really is. This careless, run-it-into-the-ground approach that they seem to encourage is not how you would run your household or business finances, and is **not how a school should be run**.

Whether or not you send your children to our schools, you **will** be affected by our cuts.

Those who previously sent their children to CCSD 180 for any length of time would surely want other children to have the same opportunities which their children were afforded – the ability to take high school-level math; the opportunity to be the star of a play; the chance to try volleyball; the chance to receive individualized instruction in an area of need. Your children are and were able to compete effectively in the high school arena. Will you deny today’s grade schoolers the same opportunity?

Even if you don’t have children – you have property! It’s tough to sell a home now, but it will be an infinitely harder sell when the public school offers no sports, no arts, large class size, and lesser academics.

If you supported us on February 5th, please continue to support us in November -- and tell your neighbors! If you voted NO, please consider why – and change it to a YES, for your community and for all of our children.

Thank you,

Paula Dupont
President, CCSD 180 Board of Education