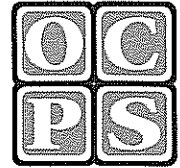


The School Board of ORANGE COUNTY, FLORIDA



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Ronald Blocker

Superintendent

February 18, 2009

Board Members:

I'd very much appreciate you giving thought to some major concerns of mine having to do with the recommendation that eight of our small schools be closed.

First, there's the on-the-record fact that in 2002, Orange County voters passed a referendum to add a half-penny to the sales tax to refurbish schools. At the time, we published a list that included every school, including the ones now being considered for closing. We identified priorities, gave a specific dollar amount that would be spent on each, and set dates when the work would begin. This community and our school board worked HARD to get that referendum approved. Voters have trusted us with their money, and they expect us to follow through on our commitments. If we ever have to go back to them and ask for more tax dollars, they're going to point out that we can't be trusted. I think we have a moral obligation to do what we said we'd do.

Second, neighborhoods and communities are emotionally attached to their schools, a fact that surely works to the Board's long-term benefit. Closing even the least-defensible school is painful for those who've come to think of it as "their" school and would generate so much animosity; the action should be avoided if at all possible.

Third, schools contribute to a sense of community in the areas where they're located. That's surely an important and positive thing to which a dollar amount can't be attached, and we ought to encourage it. It occurs to me that we might even spark useful dialogues by asking neighborhood residents for cost-saving ideas to "save their school."

Fourth, there's not a single piece of research that says larger elementary schools provide better learning environments than small ones, and common sense says they don't. This, in itself, seems to me to be reason enough not to take this action.

Fifth, refurbishing generates jobs.

Sixth, our total budget is a billion and a half dollars. Eight million is a small fraction of that. Surely we can find an alternative among our options.

OUR VISION:

To be the top producer
of successful students
in the nation

Board Members
February 18, 2009
Page Two

Please give serious consideration to halting all present and future discussion of closing down a community school.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rick".

Judge "Rick" Roach
School Board Member
District 3