

SOS Reporter

“ Save Our Schools By Supporting Our Schools “

October 4, 2005

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES NEWSLETTER

Vol. 1 Num. 8

Martha Stewart Learning Academy (AKA: the Pappajohn Center)

By Jim Patch, (former Des Moines School Board Member)



It is a mystery to me why we would move our Central Academy students from the 1800 Grand facility to the Pappajohn Center when so many issues appear to be drawbacks. Safety, scheduling, parking, and the financial cost all indicate the need for far more discussion and planning before decisions are made and contracts are signed.

The predominant color of the Pappajohn building is gray; constructed with cold concrete and glass all around. Imposing iron shades dominate the south side, hence the Martha Stewart reference (my apologies to Martha). This is a see-through building with almost no place to go for tornado drills or more importantly - tornados. One set of restrooms per floor will not contain all students from the classrooms during such an event. No wonder they haven't had a tornado drill (as is required by Iowa Law).

While there is a parking problem at the current Central Campus, there is an even larger one connected to the Pappajohn Center. Street parking is severely limited and once the Public Library opens in the Spring, it will be virtually non-existent. School buses have to deal with street traffic from all directions, creating huge safety concerns.

Many of these issues might have been addressed if there had been any discussion before students were moved there last spring semester. Most Central Academy teachers are opposed to being physically separated from the Central Campus facility. There are up to 10% of their students that are in World

Language or Career and Technical instructional programs and they are now chronically late to class. Mr. Ward remarked that it was “only 10%” of the students in that situation. I think that if 10% of the people in his law office were 10 to 15 minutes late everyday, the boss might take issue with it being “**only** 10% who are affected”.

Most Academy teachers I have spoken with have found teaching at the Pappajohn Center to be less effective than at Central Campus because they are basically itinerant teachers where nothing can stay on the walls, nothing can stay on the white board. Students may not realize what they are missing because they have never had the class before. Academy teachers still at Central Campus all hope they retire before they have to move there.

A while back, one teacher expressed negative feelings about the Pappajohn Center and always

said, “but don't use my name.” I told the teacher, “you need to use your name.” The response was, “I did use my name last year, and have suffered for it.” It is things of that nature that make me regret not being a current Board member.

\$8,000,000.00 at \$300

per square foot will buy about 27,000 sq. ft. of building space. The Wallace Homestead building just west of Central Campus could have been bought and remodeled for about \$4,000,000.00 just 2 years ago. I proposed this as a board member, and it was also presented to the Board by the Blue and Gold Alumni Association last January. The facility has 93,000 sq. ft., and is in excellent repair which will probably outlast the Pappajohn Center. That is three times the building that the Pappajohn Center is, for half of the money.

The superintendent and Duane VenHemert were taken on a tour of the Wallace Homestead building



Is It True;

Teachers at the Pappajohn Learning Center now have to arrange to get rolls of quarters to plug meters all day?

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Adams Elementary



Cowles School



Edmunds Elementary

LEGAL UPDATE

by S.O.S. Legal Team

NOTICE OF HEARING;

re Challenge to School Closings
October 5, 2005 8:30 A.M.

Grimes State Office Building, Second Floor
(Building due east of the State Capitol)
Des Moines, Iowa.

Department of Education — State Board Room

The S.O.S. challenge to the Des Moines School Board’s July 12th decision to close Adams, Cowles, Edmunds, Howe, Moore, and Central Campus attendance centers will be heard by the State Board before an administrative law judge. **Please plan to attend.**

Visitor parking is available in the parking lot (shared with the Lucas State Office Building — parking lot is north of Lucas and West of Grimes). See you there.



Howe Elementary



Moore Elementary



Central Campus
(Tech High Building)

Nutrition Policy: Isn't this where I came in?

By Suzette Jensen (former Des Moines School Board Member)

In September of 1979, I appeared before the Des Moines School Board to speak in protest to a newly approved nutrition policy. The “new” policy was about “good nutrition” but failed when it came to common sense. Many of the building principals placed their copies in the “round file”. At the time the board was trying to implement a policy that would require all snacks provided at school have specific nutritional requirements the school lunch program started selling “sugar cookies”.

Now, over 25 years later, the School Board is, once again, trying to legislate good nutrition. The new policy has merit but is too strict and does not allow for “exceptions” (i.e.: “Halloween” and “Valentine Parties” and school concessions) and it does not take into consideration products currently sold in school cafeterias.

Martha Stewart Learning Academy

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2 years ago. The building is within a block of parking lots the district owns and also has 180 parking spaces of it’s own. It has since been sold to a developer. However no significant work has yet been done to change the building. I am sure it could still be purchased for 5 - 7 million dollars with Eminent Domain leverage. Purchasing this site would be a better use of tax money and a better educational value for Des Moines than offered by the Martha Stewart Learning Academy.

The biggest problem with the new policy is that the School Board approved the policy at a meeting where it was a “discussion” item on the agenda. Their argument that the policy had been discussed in many public meetings is not palatable, as those meeting times, places and agendas are not readily available to the public.

In addition, there is no “administrative procedure” to accompany the nutrition policy. Employees and parents are now in limbo as to how they are to implement the new rules.

The policy is another example of the Boards failure to use basic common sense when it comes to our kids.

Facility Failure Factors

- ◆ How many of the reported “2000” vacant spaces in elementary buildings can be filled with all day Kindergarten and pre-school children as the district expands early childhood education to meet the educational priorities of Governor Vilsak?
- ◆ If Dr. Witherspoon and Mr. Van Hemert are telling the truth when they repeatedly profess that all School’s First Projects have come in on time and under budget, **then** how come;
 - 1) Goodrell has been sitting tore up and untouched for more than a year?
 - 2) Hubbell Elementary has been completed (and therefore their dollars spent according to their site team priorities) but is now receiving another million dollars for a gymnasium and additional classrooms?
 - 3) East High School (who’s remodeling projects were completed under the “Schools First” plan) is now receiving an additional \$1,537,250?
- ◆ How did an original estimate of \$11 million to renovate Central Campus stretch and grow to the now reported \$39 million with no significant change in the structure or quality of the building?

Is there anything we have missed? Do you have an issue that we have not covered. Do you know something that has just happend that we should report on?

If so, please e-mail us at Editor@DM-SOS.org. We appreciate your keeping us informed about things in your area. Confidentiality Guaranteed

“The great thing about this town hall format is that it allows us to hear what's on the minds of Americans. Tonight, it was clear - voters have quite a few questions about the direction in which the current administration is headed.”

Janet Napolitano
Governor of Arizona

Please Support Our Efforts

Even with all the volunteer effort there are expenses including attorney fees related to any legal action and donations toward these efforts are most welcome!

Plese send a contribution to help us Save Our Schools.

Save Our Schools
P.O. Box 1358
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SAVE OUR SCHOOLS

Our Mission

To achieve the highest possible quality educational system in the Des Moines Schools by reforming current planning processes, fiscal management, and oversight conditions and also by developing local|state|national networks of support and expertise to prepare all our students for their best possible lives in an increasingly global world.

This Week's SOS Reporter

- M. Stewart Learning Center
- Nutrition Policy
- Support Our Efforts
- Legal Update

- Upcoming Issues;
- SOS Profiles
- Legal Report

Chair: Linda Westergaard • Coordinator: Nancy Stillians

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