

## MURPHY EXPOSES BOARD BIAS

*Turn-about concept by new school board member stirs ire.*



Richard Murphy suggested that the Des Moines School Board consider converting Roosevelt High into the new Central Campus instead of building a new exclusive Academy (high school) downtown, as currently projected for the location near the Pappajohn Center.

Reporters rushed to interview principals, students and Murphy's fellow board members. His proposal brought the immediate assessment as "dumb!" by Marc Ward. Board Chairman Phil Roeder emphatically called it: "Not only dead on arrival, but dead on conception!" Mary Conlow, major publicist for the sales tax levy for Schools First, also vehemently condemned the idea.

Under Murphy's proposition, the non-Academy Roosevelt students would attend two other high schools; and because many Roosevelt students leave the building every day to travel to special Academy classes at 1800 Grand, he suggested that the board consider converting Roosevelt into the center for all advanced academic and technical students from all parts of Des Moines.

Whether or not Murphy deliberately intended to rile the DMPS Board majority and Schools First proponents, he finally drew media attention to their attitudes when confronted with changes to a school they personally hold dear as compared to their fixed determination to close five buildings dear to many others in neighborhoods elsewhere in Des Moines. Parents, teachers, and others working to save good schools were pleased with this move to get real discussion on the DMPS agenda by revealing bias of the Board majority and their mode of operating.

Lack of genuine research and respect for public process by the majority of DMPS board members forced the SOS legal appeal to Iowa State Board of Education. Murphy ran for office and won on the basis of better information and more respect for those most affected by school board decision. \*



*We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.* - Albert Einstein, physicist, Nobel laureate (1879-1955)



### SOS MISSION

To return higher quality to our D.M. school district:

to add opportunities for a greater number of students in order to prepare for more productive lives in an increasingly global world;

to encourage more research and open discussion prior to all major expenditures by correcting the :

- lack of planning
- failing practices
- fiscal extravagance
- lack of oversight
- inadequate staffing
- missing curriculum.

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*(Following is the first portion of a news release which Jonathan Narcisse sent via email November 28, 2005 describing his November 7, 2005 meeting with Eric Witherspoon. Also present at this meeting were: Linda Lane, three DMPS Board Members, and community activist Fran Koontz. The text below was edited slightly and reformatted to fit space constraints. SOS)*

## NARCISSE MEETS WITH WITHERSPOON

*“An enlightened citizen is an indispensable ingredient of the infrastructure of democracy.”*

*— Hon. Barbara Jordan*

**PRELIMINARY MEETING:** Friday, November 4th, I met with Des Moines School Board President Phil O Roeder. We covered a number of issues with an emphasis on the changing nature of urban affairs in Iowa and how changes will impact our schools. It seemed to be a productive meeting at the end of which Roeder asked me to provide him with a list of suggestions about what he can do in his year as board president. I have completed the list and I'm looking forward to the follow-up meeting.

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2005:** I met, along with Des Moines School Board members Ako Abdul-Samad, Dick Murphy and Jeanette Woods, with Des Moines Superintendent Dr. Eric Witherspoon and Des Moines Deputy Superintendent Linda Lane. Fran Koontz, long-time community activist, was also present.

The first part of the meeting focused on the historic context. Only Marc Ward, of seven current Des Moines School Board Members, has served more than two years on the current Des Moines School Board. Linda Lane was not in her current position when our education efforts began. Dr. Witherspoon's presence was, therefore, essential to validate the historic context in which our criticisms of the data have existed.

At the meeting Dr. Witherspoon confirmed everything I have asserted in public meetings throughout the past year. He confirmed his testimony at Education Hearings on October 29, 2001, where he stated that General Diplomas (G.E.D.s) could not be counted in calculating graduation statistics and asserted that the D. M. District did not count them. He confirmed the changing nature of reporting testing results. We addressed other key concerns. These included the manner in which findings are currently reported to the public versus how they previously were reported. He did not dispute nor refute a single assertion. I applaud Dr. Witherspoon for acknowledging the accuracy of our assertions. It is important for board members to understand the history of our concerns we raised after witnessing Dr. Witherspoon's affirmations.

**DATA CONSENSUS:** The second phase of the meeting focused on the data concerns. Once again we arrived at a consensus. For months those in our community that have tried to dismiss the data I presented in public meetings as contrived or manufactured. With the exception of Fox 17, local media refused to report the above assertions of data as originating from district reports, but instead presented the public with the impression that the data was only mine.

Our meeting confirmed that I did not generate the data, and that the only data I presented in the various public venues originated from the Des Moines district. The willful effort to invalidate the significance of the data I presented no longer can continue nor be disputed after our Monday meeting in which Witherspoon affirmed my claims.