

GRPS AND GREJ MEETING JANUARY 6 2020

The applied Educational philosophy and proposed methods for achievement at GRPS are radically different in many areas from those proposed by the GREJ. While there may be similar stated desired outcomes and Banal sounding goals the educational philosophy of GREJ and GRPS are vastly dissimilar in key areas. The trajectory of the GRPS propensity for so long has structured a formation contrary to that desired by the GREJ and it is difficult for us to conceive of immediate unification or agreement. Just one example of such discrepancy would be in the interpretation and implementation of privatization. Simply put there is no contemporary trepidation with school privatization emanating from this board. Another is the constant over emphasis of job preparation as opposed to the development of thinking skills, cognitive development, knowledge attainment, college preparedness and life- long learning ability. This is particularly pertinent when evaluating academic integers inherent in the lower tier GRPS schools where the spotlight has remained unilaterally on graduation exclusively. But perhaps the greatest divergent philosophy idiosyncratic to GRPS is its appreciation and reliance on corporate collusion and funding. This is not only welcomed by the district and it's leaders it is used as a mark of distinction by them. However on the contrary the GREJ has an antipathy and distrust of the ultimate objectives of the corporate world with their intrusion onto public education based on clear history and the analysis of Neoliberal educational philosophy.

With such stark schisms existing in this room we feel it best to only present a succinct list of just 3 areas for necessary change with precise methods to be implemented. We believe it counterproductive to debate the credibility of our sources as they are obvious, empirical, and easily obtained. We will list sources however elucidating key problem areas with adjoining resolutions.

#1. Teacher compensation has been chronically insufficient to attract quality educators and maintain them in this district. This is even more outlandish when comparing GRPS to other county districts where GRPS is the lowest paid teacher system with the highest paid administrators. GREJ wants to see a pay raise for teachers that would put them near the top for Kent count districts along with a restored step pay scale. Until an adequate equivalency exists for teachers at GRPS our students will be short changed. A career difference of nearly 500 thousand dollars currently exists for teachers at GRPS compared to top county districts over a 30 year period not counting the retirement disparity.

Sources: 1. See Grand Rapids area school District average teacher salaries , M. Scott Mlive GRPS lowest at 54 k.

2. 2020 Best places to teach in Kent Co. Michigan Niche Magazine

#2 – Major educational variations needlessly exist within the GRPS district. Students experience deviations in opportunity indicative and systemic to a two tier system. While a number of factors contribute to this chronic problem including building discrepancies, the closing of neighborhood schools with subsequent busing, curriculum differences/substitute teacher disparity, and general privatization, it appears to GREJ to primarily be a priority problem stemming from corporate proclivities affecting the district. GREJ insists on immediate fundamental changes to eradicate these educational injustices and move toward an egalitarian environment, stressing the preparation of life-long learners and not just diplomas. We are proposing meetings with members of this group to inculcate integration of student activities and academic exercises with upper tier schools, along with curriculum evaluations while returning curriculum development to the district public professionals. In addition there needs to be inspection of real class size and the effectiveness of the E2020 virtual programs. We also want to inspect school safety, and the veracity of unfettered accident reports need to be included in our overall ruminations along with outright teacher intimidation to whistle blowers in search of sorely needed resolutions. Included is a source that clearly indicates when you sort schools by the percentage of students of color you find that most of the theme schools have the lowest percentage of students of color and the lowest percentage of economically disadvantaged students. The theme school movement that GRPS is undertaking is concentrating poor students of color in under-resourced schools.

Sources: Ottawa Hills High School – Great Schools.org

Rick Fink: Elementary data

50 School Districts Where Fewest Students Passed M-Step Reading Test, Mlive – Brian McVicar

Mischooldata.org 2018-19

#3 The slow but insidious conversion of the GRPS public school system to a corporate funded and influenced entity titled the transformation plan has resulted in privatized curriculum, test in requirements, whole privatized school departments i.e. substitutes, bus drivers, and even the establishment of charter buildings in place of GRPS building i.e. Vanderburg building. Sadly this so called transformation has resulted in a bevy of charter like traits and aspects scattered across the district. GREJ attributes much of this conversion to the unprecedented influence of Betsy Devos through personal and Venal relationships with past GRPS leaders coupled with her now national promulgation of Charter School initiatives. GREJ wants an immediate cessation of all privatization components in the district and a review of how to restore it's public facets.

Sources: Betsy Devos and the covert Privatization of the Grand Rapids Public Schools, 3parts GRIID magazine