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Sent: 12/7/2021 5:14:01 PM
To: Sivanne Lieber
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Subject: Re: Keep APS Open!!

Thank you for your feedback, Ms. Lieber. I will make sure the Asheville City Board of Education receives it. I

On Tue, Dec 7, 2021 at 2:12 PM Sivanne Lieber <sivanne@thejoyousparent.com> wrote:
To whom it may concern:

I am a parent at Hall Fletcher and a former public elementary school educator. I have been a teacher for almost two decades and now, inspired by my motherhood and experience, I work as a parent coach and tutor in order to advocate for play-based learning as the mainstream, not as the exception that is allotted to the top 1% who can afford the private schools and/or have the time and resources to work to get into one of the charter schools who offer play-based spaces and opportunities.

To me, as a former teacher in New York City, the most segregated school district in the country - who dealt with the red tape, bureaucracy, and limitations - as someone who knows all too well the disparities in different school settings - and someone who successfully placed play in the center of my classrooms DESPITE those odds - **it is an atrocity to me that we have to fight so hard to have a structure that supports the basic rights of children to learn in the way that they deserve.**

So when I moved to Asheville and began searching for school options for my daughter, discovering APS both excited me and saddened me. It excited me because I thought, "finally, here is a way to bring play-based philosophy that follows the child's lead to the public space. Here is an example for the rest. Here is a **public place hypothetically with access to all** finally doing it right!" It saddened me because the Montessori program was only there and regimented to one space. Why?

As a teacher who was able to navigate the public school system and still give my students what they deserved through experiential, projects-based learning and time and space to honor their true passion and flow while also teaching to the standards it infuriates me when incredible spaces like APS are considered an "achievement" and an "exception to the rule" for the lucky few who "get in". It also frustrates me endlessly to witness my child, who did not get into APS through the lottery - and who I had to jump through hoops for in order to give her that chance - to not have the same access to a program where I know she would have thrived. Do not get me wrong, I actually really love and respect the Hall Fletcher community. I very active at Hall Fletcher, serving on the board and as a class parent and actively sharing my voice. And it is not yet the type of environment I would hope for not only my child, but all children. So why can't all of us have the opportunity for a montessori-like philosophy that supports true learning? Why, instead of trying to close or relocate APS (once again) aren't we trying to create access and systems that support a montessori approach and environment in ALL the schools? And why are we trying to close an incredibly sought after school (once again)?

I had an APS-like classroom in a very regimented public school. I taught in a play-based way despite all of the red tape and tests and rules. I had all of the restrictions and excuses - and still always placed the whole child and play-based learning at the forefront. I know what it is like to feel like I have no choice but to teach "to the system". But there are ways to allow for the system to ebb and flow and to give children what they deserve from within the restrictions. There are ways to loosen the system and approach. **It should not be so difficult to get our children into quality schools that truly see and uplift them. It should not be so hard to find a place that values play and childhood development over worksheets, homework, tests, and bureaucracy. I have the time and resources and knowledge to navigate the system and the privilege to know that my child will be ok no matter where she goes. What about those who don't have that privilege? And so the shift should begin with uplifting a space like APS instead of trying to close it down.**

APS is a great school and should be a flagship in the district. Closing it is a bandaid on the district's financial problems. A drop in the bucket, but here we are being targeted again after getting promises after promises that we would NOT end up here again.

Keep your promise and spread the good work of APS to ALL of the schools in the district instead of trying to shut it down!


To echo and uplift the words of a fellow passionate mama whose child was lucky enough to be accepted into APS: "There is a huge demand for a montessori public education and it is needed even more than it is currently offered, not less. I know other parents personally that wanted their children to go to APS montessori and put their kid's names in the lottery and didn't get in. They are subsequently disappointed in the quality of education their child is getting elsewhere. APS Montessori is such an amazing and unique program that speaks highly of Asheville and garners the school district positive recognition and acclaim. **There shouldn't even be a question on the table about saving APS, but, rather, how can we grow APS montessori so more kids can have this incredible opportunity and the school can continue to thrive, further diversify, and make ACS and Asheville even prouder?**"

Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,
Sivanne Lieber

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Sivanne Lieber, M.S.
Founder, *The Joyous Parent*

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