

From: Gene Freeman <gene.freeman@acsgmail.net>
Sent: 2/3/2021 9:12:19 AM
To: Michele Torino Hower <michele.t.hower@gmail.com>
Cc: Shaunda Sandford <shaunda.sandford@acsgmail.net>, Joyce Brown <joyce.brown@acsgmail.net>, James Carter <james.carter@acsgmail.net>, Martha Geitner <martha.geitner@acsgmail.net>, Patricia Griffin <patricia.griffin@acsgmail.net>, S. Antanette Mosley <antanettemosley@avlcouncil.com>, Esther Manheimer <esthermanheimer@avlcouncil.com>
Subject: Re: Feb. 1 Board Meeting Understanding Concern

Thank you for your email. I do not agree with your take on the town hall meeting. I also understand the feelings you and all have for environment at APS and for the Montessori program. I don't know how to be more honest. I have stated that we are gathering data on the Montessori program and all other programs before moving forward with expanding. We are allowing the siblings of present students to provide family continuity. That is as honest as I can be. It may not be the decision you like but please do not call it dishonest. I have also given the importance of consolidating our capacity to save money so that programs such as the Montessori program can continue. That is as honest as I can be. A

Best, Gene Freeman

On Tue, Feb 2, 2021 at 1:30 PM Michele Torino Hower <michele.t.hower@gmail.com> wrote:
Dear Dr. Freeman, BOE and City Council,

I am writing in response to yesterday's, February 1st's, Board Meeting. I am a parent of 2 APS students and am committed to the endeavor to expand public Montessori education for ALL who desire it.
A A

I am concerned about Dr. Freeman's comment, at the end of public comment, that people who shared in public comment seemed confused because in fact, the BOE was not stopping enrollment into Pre-K. To be honest, this comment, made by Dr. Freeman and the Board, seems to prove that the public comments were not fully heard, in their entirety and further supports the many APS parent cries that we are not being heard and that we NEED a transparent conversational process to address the future of our school. As a core member of the APS PTC for the past 3 years, I can say confidently that the parents of APS know district wide pre-k enrollment is continuing and that the district intends to add 1 new pre-k classroom for the 21-22 school year. I am happy this is happening and hope that even more pre-k classrooms could be added to ensure pre-k for ALL, since the data shows how quality pre-k education sets kids up for success in the rest of their school lives. We, as APS parents, are concerned that new enrollment in pre-k/k at Asheville Primary School is being shut down. As many people shared in yesterday's public comment, cutting off new enrollment to APS further insulates a program that You seem, from my perspective, to deem as already too insular (ie: not supporting kids of color).

A A
(To this point, I would like to point out that our school has the same average percentage of kids of color as do the other elementary schools, with a slightly lower percentage than HFE which has the highest percentage of kids of color. Furthermore, Montessori has been proven to close the achievement gap across kids of different socio-economic and racial backgrounds, whereas traditional education, as we have seen the proof of in our own district, has not).

We, the parents of APS, feel that by cutting off new enrollment to our school (except to pre-existing siblings) and not expanding to 4th grade you are effectively and slowly, closing down our school. I ask again that you please provide a forum where the Superintendent and Board Chair can discuss with the families and staff of APS, the future of our school. (I have heard you say multiple times, Dr. Freeman, that you have held at least 2 town halls on this subject. I was at both of those townhalls and it was not a true, honest process-oriented discussion as much as a 'you talk we listen, then we talk and you listen, goodbye, meeting done'.)

Thank you for hearing what I have to say. Thank you for your commitment to bringing Asheville's community of color to center stage, making their progress a priority. One does not cancel out the other, however. We have the brains and will to work TOGETHER for ALL. A A

Sincerely,
Michele Torino Hower

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www.michelehower.com

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Best,A

Gene Freeman, Ed.D.
Superintendent

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