
Testimony for May 28 Board meeting

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Wed, May 27, 2020 03:49 PM

Subject : Testimony for May 28 Board meeting

To : Board of Education <SchoolBoard@philasd.org>,
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Karel Kilimnik Written Testimony May 28

First let me commend the Board for taking an active role in advocating for maintaining state funding of schools

.As a long time observer, speaker, and activist at Board meetings the winnowing down of speakers during this pandemic is deeply disturbing. Using this crisis as a way to control access to public testimony as well as asking questions is a troubling twisting of the democratic principles forming the foundation of our government. Cutting speaking time to 2 minutes along with limiting the number of speakers presenting different perspectives directly impacts community engagement, something this Board continually states they support.

Both the District and Board claim to be proponents of equity. However, Item 5 addresses this directly. Drexel with years of support from the Phila School Partnership, a private entity with Board meetings closed to the public, has been showering Powel School with funding since 2013. Now Drexel continues their support for a Math Lead Teacher, a position every school should have. Are Powel's math scores that low that a Math Lead Teacher is essential? Two private institutions determine which schools get resources? How equitable is this? Where is the District plan to ensure that every school gets a Math Lead Teacher on staff to support students?

The highly flawed CSPR process has been lurking behind the scenes. Their lack of community and parent engagement, use of an outside vendor to supply data obtained from public sources, as well as their forced consideration of options for schools that include closing have left them with little credibility with stakeholders. Both Mayor Kenney and Dr Hite have supported closing 2 to 3 schools annually. Their plans have not yet materialized. Is this crisis going to be cover for doing so? Instead of ensuring that every school has what is needed to educate students are we going to see schools being slated for closure as happened during the 2013 Doomsday Budget Era?
