



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

BOARD OF EDUCATION PUBLIC HEARING MEETING

AGENDA

OCTOBER 5, 2023; 4:00 PM

Call to Order - Reginald L. Streater, Esq., President

Roll Call - Hannah Girer-Rosenkrantz, Associate General Counsel

Opening Remarks

Written Testimony

- Written Testimony

Registered Speakers

- Speaker:
Topic: Student
Speakers List
- Speaker:
Topic: General
Speakers List

Adjourned

Board of Education Meeting Date: 10/5/2023

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

Written Testimony

Type

Supporting Document

ORIGINAL MESSAGE

My daughter is a student at Franklin Towne charter high School. She is in 10th grade and in the life skills class. She has a diagnosis of autism and intellectual disability. Before franklin towne, she had such a hard time with school. She was severely bullied. She has PTSD from being bullied in her previous schools. Franklin towne has made it top priority to make sure my daughter Oliviah feels comfortable and gets an education. They are for sure a family at Franklin Towne charter. My daughter oliviah is finally okay with going to school! She used to want to stay home every day. Give me a hard time, crying about anxiety and not feeling well. Now, she doesn't like missing a day! Without franklin towne charter, I don't know where we would be right now. Her mental health was declining fast. They all have gone out of their way. The entire staff, to make sure Oliviah is feeling safe and comfortable in her environment so that she can learn and become a successful adult. My daughter would be losing so much if we lost Franklin Towne charter high School. More than anybody can understand. I would have to homeschool her. She would not be getting all of the social interactions that she is getting right now and an upbeat learning environment. No other school has ever done what franklin towne charter high School has done for Oliviah.

Subject: Board comments

Original Message:

Hi my name is Amy Egrie, I have 1 student attending Franklin towne as a junior now, and 1 student who wishes nothing more than to attend the same high-school as his older brother and sister in 2 years. While I understand what was done was wrong it is however been addressed and new steps are in place to assure this will not happen moving forward. At this point you are taking it out on our children and that I am not ok with not 1 bit. You can not tell me that closing this school and forcing out 1300 innocent children into our failing public school environment is the answer. I for one do not want my children in the public school system that has failed our family on more than 1 occasion in the past. My children more than excel at Franklin Towne and I do NOT want them put in harms way in another school. I beg you to reconsider for the students sakes, after all they are our future and closing this school could have long negative lasting affects on their lives.

ORIGINAL MESSAGE

To Whom it may concern,

I am writing to urge the members of the board to vote against revoking Franklin Towne Charter High School's charter, allowing them to continue to educate the students in Philadelphia. I am a child of two retired high school teachers, a graduate of the School District of Philadelphia, a public schoolteacher, a spouse of a former public school student, and a parent of a Franklin Towne Charter High School student. Please take the time to listen to my back story and take my perspectives that many people share into consideration before making your decision to vote.

As a child of two high school teachers, I watched my parents lose their love for the profession as negative student behaviors in the classroom increased and discipline procedures and consequences became obsolete. As a graduate of a public school, I look back at my high school years. I can recall always feeling safe in an environment conducive to learning, and having positive relationships with my teachers. At the same time, I made lifelong memories with my friends and pride for my alma mater. As a public school teacher, there is a wealth of amazing, dedicated teachers. My spouse is a High School drop out who attended a public high school that specialized in trade programs and firmly believes that had he been allowed to make choices and have his choices honored, he would have stayed in school, but despite many failed attempts and requests to have his programming changed he dropped out of high school.

As a parent of three boys, it has been my everlasting goal to ensure my children are raised to become happy, safe, responsible, and productive members of society. I have instilled these values in my children, and I have the power to provide them with consequences for their actions. However, I can not control the environment in which my children are expected to learn, but the school has that ability and responsibility. At Franklin Towne Charter High School they consistently provide my child with an environment conducive to learning. Their policies regarding student behavior inside and outside the walls ensure that all students have every opportunity to learn. Often, teenagers who lack the motivation to attend school get lost in the system. I can speak as a parent of a teenage boy that there is never a day where I have

to motivate my son to wake up and go to school on time. His motivation is a direct result of the everyday experiences he has at Franklin Towne Charter High School.

My son, who is now an eleventh grader at Franklin Towne High School, has an IEP for a comprehension and auditory processing disorder, which greatly impacts every aspect of his learning. He requires not only specially designed instruction but also an environment without distractions and disruptions. As a student with a disability, he is at an even greater risk of becoming a high school dropout. Still, his teachers, both regular and special education, go the extra mile to make sure that he always has everything he needs to succeed but also make regular appointments with him before and after school to make sure he is confident and successful. They are consistently proactive rather than waiting for his grades to decline.

Students at Franklin Town Charter High School are allowed to make choices in many of the content areas to ensure that they are invested in their learning and are provided with options that interest them but also lead them on the path to their future. Students who take any courses will be more successful and motivated if they are learning something that interests them and not sit and wonder, "Why am I learning this?".

My vision and dream as an educator and a parent is for my children to attend a high school where they genuinely love, are happy, educated, and held to the highest expectations. High school is an important part of life that leads them into adulthood. Our children deserve to attend a school where they can be proud of where they come from and not something they simply survive. We want our children's high school years to be memorable.

As a parent in the world today, especially in Philadelphia, where we see violence and danger on the news, we worry about the safety of our children every day when they walk out the door. There are so many things we can control as parents, but we can not control the world around us. Many public schools can check the boxes of everything I mentioned above however, the interactions, altercations, and dangers that students have to face traveling to those schools are frightening. As I write this letter, I am pleading with you to vote against revoking Franklin Towne Charter High School's ability to remain a place where current and future students are safe in school, on the way to school, after school, can learn, and have fun.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A Parent of Franklin Towne Charter High School Class of 2025

ORIGINAL MESSAGE

I wish to object to the revocation of the charter at Franklin Towne Charter. This is harmful to the community, children and educators. Our voices as parents must be heard. Especially, in light of the mismanagement of the school system and lack of pursuing dangerous schools like Abraham Lincoln High School or Catholic Schools for that matter.

ORIGINAL MESSAGE

I'm writing this on behalf of my son and myself my son started in 9th grade and I wanted you all to know what this would do to these kids of your close and school base off the poor decision of employees who are no longer apart of the school our children shouldn't have to pay I also want to come on here and say my son came in Franklin towne struggling academically coming from a public school and when I tell you I felt as though he was just being push through his grades he was struggling he also had a iep then came Franklin towne they are amazing academically since 2nd grade he has had a iep now with the help of Franklin towne teachers he is only needs help for math he was taking off iep for reading now in 11th grade all I ask is take into consideration our children think about if they were your children going through this. Thank you

Thank you.

ORIGINAL MESSAGE

Dear Board Members,

I am a concerned parent of a student currently enrolled in 10th grade, and one who had just graduated in the class of 2023 from Franklin Towne Charter High school. I feel as though that it is unfair to all of the 1,300 students and 130 staff members to revoke the charter of this fine school due to the alleged actions of one person. Also, this vote was unfair because it is still under investigation.

My recent graduate was fully prepared for higher education. She was challenged and was able to explore other courses that helped her decide what major to study in college. She has received The Presidential Scholarship and is pursuing a major in criminal justice and minoring in forensic science. She was allowed to choose both forensic science and criminal justice while attending Franklin Towne. My graduate also excelled with sports being the MVP in her senior year in both cross country and track and field.

My other daughter a 10th grader was enrolled into all honors classes. She was challenged, however her teachers seen her potential and knew she would do well in all honors classes. I have an older daughter that graduated in 2021 from another special admission Philadelphia Public high school. She was not prepared for college and struggled her first year. I also am a product of the Philadelphia public school system. I graduated from Mastbaum in 1995. I was a White Williams Scholarship recipient (meaning I had all A's and B's) and still was two years behind when I attended college. I spent two years getting myself academically prepared for college. I went to Community College of Philadelphia and should have received my degree in two years however, I spent four years there. Franklin Towne is a school that prepares the students for life. The school holds them accountable for their actions, treats them like young adults and offers courses that will allow them to decide what they want to do once they graduate. Plain and simple, Franklin Towne knows how to educate young adults and prepare them for college.

Let's be fair here, I feel as though it is unjust and unwarranted to jeopardize the high-quality education of 1,300 students, disrupt hundreds of families, and endanger the employment of 130 dedicated FTCHS teachers and staff members. I kindly request that you work with Franklin Towne Charter so it can continue to send children to college. Especially My daughter who would be displaced and forced to go to her neighborhood school in her senior year.

Thank you for your time.

Subject: Franklin Towne charter High School

Original Message:

My name is Janet Gillich, I am the parent of 2 current children and 2 former students from Franklin Towne Charter High School. I understand what was done with the lottery was totally wrong, but now you are punishing the kids. The new administration has been taking steps to rectify what was done. Closing Franklin towne will result in displacing 1300 students along with over 100 staff members. That's is a lot of people to displace over one official who is no longer involved in the school. Please reconsider revoking the charter. My kids will be devastated not to finish high school in a place they love.

Thank you.

Original Message:

I am a parent of a sophomore at Franklin Towne Charter High School, a parent who is terrified of an unsure future for my son, who for the first time in his educational career is thriving. I attribute that fully to the atmosphere of the high school and the dedicated faculty and staff who work there. I am aware of the allegations against the school and I condemn those whole heartedly, however, I struggle to grasp with the “punish the whole for the actions of a few” mentality. Yes, the allegations against them deserve repercussions, but instead of making all of the great staff, admin & students suffer, isn't there a better alternative? Can't we look at monitoring the admissions more strictly, and allowing them time to prove that they are STILL a blue ribbon school regardless of any circumstances? Please, I ask as a mother who bided my time advocating for my son just to get him to this school where I was assured he would be in a great place, please don't strip that away from him because a few bad apples chose to do wrong. Please allow him to continue to thrive and enjoy the best 4 years of his life with a truly caring staff.

ORIGINAL MESSAGE

I am reaching out as the Executive Director of the West Philadelphia Alliance for Children (WePAC). We open and operate - through our volunteer network - school libraries in 13 District elementary schools. We (along with many other folks who volunteer their time in District school libraries) are frustrated to learn that the District has not yet renewed its license with Follett-Destiny to keep student lists up-to-date in this system. Up-to-date student lists are necessary for us to do our programming in the libraries. WePAC pays the annual cost for Follett-Destiny licenses in our 13 partner schools at an expense to us of over \$18,000 per year. We need the cooperation of the District to do its part so students in WePAC partner schools (and others in the District) can have seamless access to books.

Thank you, Jennifer Leith

Subject: BOARD COMMENTS

Original Message:

Franklinton Charter school is an absolute gift to our city's children. We are lucky to have a school with an amazing and dedicated staff, students and volunteers. The school's staff goes above and beyond to help make its students responsible, educated people who are prepared for adulthood. It would be an absolute detriment to the current students and all potential future students to close it down.

Subject: Board comment- leveling

Original Message:

I am writing to express my disapproval of SDP's teacher "leveling" process. My son is in Kindergarten at E.M. Stanton. Over his first month of school, we have seen him thrive learning phonics and little rhymes to help him correctly write numbers (amongst other things). I was thrilled to learn of his small class size in a public school. We are so disappointed to now learn that his teacher is being moved to another school. This teacher earned our trust and addressed all of our concerns in sending our first child to elementary school. I wish I had the time / knowledge to identify all the reasons why this process is flawed and detrimental. However, it just is plain wrong to up-end classes of young students one month into their school year and to remove a teacher from their community. Children need and thrive from stability. My son spent the past month developing a relationship with his teacher who is now being taken away from him. Our school is losing two wonderful teachers. There has to be a better solution. I hope this will change.

Subject: Revocation of Franklin Towne Charter High School

Original Message:

I would like to start by thanking the board for allowing me to share my experiences with you all.

My name is Liz Miller and I am a parent of an 11th grade student who attends Franklin Towne Charter High School. To say that I am saddened to hear of the board voting to revoke their Charter is an understatement.

Franklin Towne is not just an educational institution, and far beyond the assumptions being projected. Franklin Towne has in more ways than one changed my child for the better. When she was in 8th grade during Covid she was doing schoolwork at home and I had seen a decline in her grades. She was enrolled at Franklin Towne Charter High School with C's in her grades. She was a very quiet child who kept to herself. Today she is in 11th Grade and thriving. She was given two honors classes her freshman year. By her sophomore year she was enrolled in three honors classes. This is not just because of her hard work, but the work of the teachers as well. These teachers give so much time and dedication to their students each and every day. They want nothing but success for them. My child who just 3-4 years ago cried over schoolwork is now looking into colleges, offered to become a part of the National Honors Society as well as become a student ambassador. These are factual things that cannot be overlooked. This school is like no other.

Although I understand that the allegations if found to be true are egregious, please take into account that these actions were not done by 1300 students. The decisions were not made by 1300 students. The only decision these students and their families made was to be a part of Franklin Towne and the education provided. I have never before seen a group of more open-minded and accepting students than I do at Franklin Towne. Every single day I am thankful that my child goes to the school that she does.

Please do not let these students down. Please do not show them that the allegations and actions of an adult can destroy their teenage years. The grades, the achievements, the dedication, the future of our children are in your hands, and I am asking that when you are considering whether revocation is necessary that you also consider the 1300 students, their faces, their hard work and their future as well.

Thank you for your time.

ORIGINAL MESSAGE

Franklin Towne Charter Highschool I has maneuvering and targetting certain students for years. Maneuvering what makes the school looks better. They have friends of friends, higherups are friends of students parents. They pick and choose students who they want to let get away with certain issues. Its always the student and not the school.

Thank you,

Michelle Hoffman

Subject: Board Comments

Original Message:

To whom it may concern,

Recently I received an invitation to the first of two public hearings of the Board of Education where I was provided with the opportunity to share a testimony. I appreciate this opportunity and am submitting my written testimony below. For context, I am a Southwark School parent.

As I am sure you are well aware, during the first week of this academic schoolyear Philadelphia experienced a heat wave. Considering the lack of air conditioning in some school buildings, the School District of Philadelphia chose to have a number of schools dismiss early due to unsafe temperatures in the respective buildings. Firstly, I would like to note that I appreciate the pro-active approach of the School District of Philadelphia in considering which schools should dismiss early ahead of time with safety of students and staff in mind. Additionally, I am grateful for the fact that all of the spaces that are considered classrooms at Southwark School are air conditioned (and Southwark School therefore did not dismiss early during the days of extreme heat).

That being said, I (as well as other parents) have concerns regarding the temperatures in Southwark School in spaces that are not considered classrooms and are not air conditioned, more specifically the spaces that are used as the auditorium and the gymnasium.

I have laid out the concerns (and their reasons) extensively in an e-mail to Dr. Watlington and Mr. Hill on September 11, 2023. In that same e-mail I also requested a meeting with Dr. Watlington and Mr. Hill and a few Southwark School parents to discuss the issues further and talk about possible solutions. On September 12, 2023 I received an invitation to a (virtual) meeting with Mr. Hill, as well as a number of other School District of Philadelphia representatives, scheduled for September 22, 2023. For completeness, I replied to the invitation by e-mail that same day confirming I would be joining the meeting with a few fellow Southwark School parents. On September 19, 2023 I received a message that the

meeting scheduled for September 22, 2023 was canceled until further notice without any further explanation. Since then I have reached out multiple times to have the meeting rescheduled as well as to find out the reason for the cancellation, but I have not received any replies. Seeing as the concerns I have expressed in my initial e-mail to Dr. Watlington and Mr. Hill have not been alleviated (to the best of my knowledge) , I (as well as a number of other Southwark School parents) would like for the meeting that was initially scheduled for September 22, 2023 to be rescheduled.

I was hoping that at this point in time we would have already had this meeting, or at the very least have this meeting on the books. Unfortunately this has not been the case. I am therefore using the opportunity to submit a written testimony to the Board of Education to bring this to your attention and am requesting your assistance in scheduling a meeting with Dr. Watlington and/or Mr. Hill.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Olga (Southwark School parent)

Subject: Charter Revocation of Franklin Towne Charter HS

Original Message:

Dear Board Members,

I write to you as a mother of a FTCHS freshman of the disappointing beginning to the school year in knowing that you are planning on revoking this school charter.

First, I want to inform you that not only now my son but also my daughter who graduated in 2015 attend this school. She was the first child in a household of seven children to attend college and this, in itself achievement was due to the hard work of this school and its members. They have provided a stable, safe and high quality education that otherwise they wouldn't have received attending schools elsewhere.

Recently, while I assisted my 8th grade son apply for more than 20 schools including the districts high school selection we were encountered with lottery results from all school of either denial or waitlisted: all 20+ schools to include charters. This process in itself was not only frustrating and infuriating but unfair and messy as you may recall having to amend it to be more inclusive and allow more students to apply and attempt another shot at applications all over the city. Meanwhile Franklin Towne was the only who responded and offered a seat and accepted him as part of their community.

I ask that you look and think about decision long and hard before making another costly mistake that not only will affect hundreds of students but also affect their families and school community that they so much love.

Please ensure that you look at this road block with fairness and impartiality and allow the school to continue while rectifying their processes. God knows other charter schools with more problems have been allowed to do so.

Thank you for taking time to read this writing and allow my son, along with others continue their education without having to worry about where will they have to go the following year of the next.

Respectfully

Sandra M Roman

Mother and FTCHS community member

ORIGINAL MESSAGE

I am writing this comment in support of Franklin Towne Charter High School. My son is a freshman there and I cannot speak highly enough of the school. In his first couple weeks, he was struggling with fitting in and getting adjusted to a new environment. As his mom, that was difficult to watch, knowing there wasn't much I could do. To my delight, his guidance counselor reached out to him immediately. She offered him suggestions and got him in contact with other students who could show him around and watch out for him. She follows up with him to make sure he is ok and really made him feel like he was cared about. Now he is on the cross country team and meeting new friends daily. The HS has done a great job of getting the students involved by hosting the Freshman Social and Spirit Week activities. If FT closes, where will these students go? To an already overcrowded high school that doesn't come close to the standards set by Franklin Towne? I kindly request your intervention in this matter. Not one person in the Franklin Towne community had any part in the allegations. Why are we punishing innocent students?

Hi my name is Tina Dorwart and I am hear to tell you Franklin Towne is a exceptional school and deserves to stay open . My Son Ethan Dorwart is a Freshman there and for the first time he loves school , he loves going to school. Just in this short time I have seen a difference in him . He's more positive with everything. Franklin Towne does so much for their students , they genuinely care about their students . Please Vote to keep them open , they don't deserve to be shut down when their doing such good things for our students.

Thank you

Sincerely

Tina Dorwart

Board of Education Meeting Date: 10/5/2023

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

Student Speakers List

Type

Supporting Document



Registered Student Speakers

1. Whitman Dougherty, Friends of
Philly Aquatics
Topic: Swimming
2. Phoebe Dougherty, Friends of Philly
Aquatics
Topic: Swimming

Board of Education Meeting Date: 10/5/2023

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

General Speakers List

Type

Supporting Document

**Registered Speakers**

1. Megan Eskuchen, Parent/Guardian
Topic: Franklin Towne Charter High School Revocation
2. Keisha Nicholson, Parent/Guardian
Topic: School Nurses at Every School
3. Shackarah Vera, District Staff/Parent
Topic: Safety Concerns for Students and Staff
4. Lenny Usher, Community Member
Topic: Parents Presence in Schools
5. Horace Clouden, PCAC
Topic: Education
6. “Mama” Gail Clouden, Community Member
Topic: Communication
7. Leah Clouden, Community Member
Topic: Education
8. Julie Lam, Parent/Guardian
Topic: Charter School Revocation
9. Susan Lin, Parent/Guardian
Topic: Lack of Teachers and Communication from Administrators
10. Lisa Haver, APPS
Topic: Board Spending Priorities
11. May Freida Watson, Community Member
Topic: Cursive Writing
12. Lynda Rubin, Community Member
Topic: School Libraries/Neighborhood Schools
13. Alyssa Schatz, Parent/Guardian
Topic: Leveling
14. Charisma Presley, Friends of Philly Aquatics
Topic: Marcus Foster/Pickett
15. Ariel Presley, Friends of Philly Aquatics
Topic: Pools
16. Maria Davis Bellamy, Phila. CeaseFire/Philly HUB
Topic: Violence Prevention & Intervention Services and Need for Collaboration
17. Kirstin Britt, Community Member
Topic: Pools
18. Emily Pugliese, Parent/Guardian
Topic: Leveling
19. Christina Jackson, Parent/Guardian
Topic: Leveling/Houston Elementary School
20. Alison Cohen, Parent/Guardian
Topic: Request Board to Review Leveling and End it for 2024