

Parent Pleads to be Heard at School Board Meeting...Again

Wednesday – 6 March 2019

Board members and Dr Smith, good evening. My name is Brenda Marks, I reside at 54 Marina Road. I have a nine year old daughter who attends Hunter B Andrews School.

In regards to my last attempt to discuss with you issues unresolved at the school and administrative office levels, I state the following. My first and 14th amendment rights were violated by the board. To that extent you were sent a letter today requesting review of three board policies/agreements (one on tonight's agenda for deliberation) for the revision of their construction and/or application. The board's selective inconsistency in enforcing the public comment policy on that particular night was to censor my comments and restrict me from stating publicly that Hampton City Schools does not mediate in good faith and when mediated agreements are reached, the district makes no effort to honor them. As the violations of these rights are legally actionable, the same letter has been sent to the clerk to meet statutory requirements.

That having been said, I would like to address the concerns closest to my heart-our special ed kids. Well written IEP's and 504s and their compliance are key to our children succeeding. It is my opinion the board does not care about the education our kids get. I say that based upon the response I received to my FOIA request for the number of complaints filed against the district at a state and federal level as to compliance with IDEA and the equivalent state statutes. That response stated simply that you did not collect statistical data regarding these complaints. It would seem that if the boards concern was providing the best education for every child, every day they would monitor complaints that had risen to these levels in order to develop goals and strategies to prevent them. I believe the fact you do not request the numbers, if the response is true, is because you are aware

there are many and you choose not to deal with the problem. The district has hired a new sped director, whom I believe, if not drowned by the mess she walked into and lack of support, will do a great job for our kids. She cannot do it if sped positions are abolished and moneys for those positions are removed from her budget to go to "the academies" I am quite sure Ms. Judge could find many uses for that 4 hundred thousand dollars you removed from her budget this fiscal year. Our children do not get "whatever it takes" from this board, they get whatever their parents fight for, dragging you kicking and screaming to whatever agency that finally convinces you to agree to follow the law. And once that agreement is made, this board makes no effort to ensure that the division honors its word. Gen ed parents do not have to invest one 10th of the effort we do in getting their children educated. When you have to call or email schools daily to get answers to the simplest of questions; when you spend hours reviewing iep's and 504's walking away believing that things are right, only to find them not being followed You have no choice but constantly supervise your child's education every single day. We as parents should not have to hire attorneys and facilitators to get the needs of our children met. That is not how the law says it is supposed to be. I would challenge you to put as much of your focus on our kids, the most needy of your population, as you do on the "academies", your primary focus.

Finally, I would like to make this observation- Bullying is alive and thriving in Hampton City schools. Teachers are so overwhelmed and underpaid and administrators so focused on passing that test and staying accredited they cannot keep their finger on the pulse of the population of their schools. The atmosphere in the schools is such that there are children who would rather die than face another day in attendance If you doubt me, I dare each and every one of you to seek the data from each school on the number of instances this year alone of children who have either spoken or acted on self harming behaviors. The numbers will surprise you. I can

personally assure you I am not talking about just middle and high school students, this problem exists at the elementary level.

Your motto, "every child, every day, whatever it takes" is a lie until every child is given the tools necessary to gain an education and thrive in your schools. Until the time your actions match your words you are continuing the perpetration of that lie.

Thank you