

1 DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

STATE OF MISSOURI

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NORMANDY SCHOOL DISTRICT

8

PUBLIC HEARING

9

APRIL 23, 2015

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Lucas Crossing Elementary Complex

7837 Natural Bridge Road

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St. Louis, Missouri 63121

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(Starting time of hearing: 6:30 p.m.)

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A P P E A R A N C E S

Present for the Department of Elementary and
Secondary Education:

- Margie Vandeven, Commissioner
- Tim Ricker, Area Supervisor
- TJ Spalty, Director of MSIP
- Stacey Preis, Deputy Commissioner
- Maureen Clancy-May, Area Supervisor
- Sarah Potter, Communications Director
- Bill Thornton, General Counsel

Also Present:

- Dr. Charles Pearson, Superintendent of Normandy
School District
- Vic Lenz, Missouri Board of Education Member

The Court Reporter:

- Suzanne Zes, CCR, RPR
- Midwest Litigation Services
- 711 North Eleventh Street
- St. Louis, MO 63101
- 314.644.2191
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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MS. PREIS: Good evening. I want to
3 thank everyone for being here. My name is Stacey
4 Preis. I'm the -- good evening. Can you hear me
5 now?

6 AUDIENCE: Yes.

7 MS. PREIS: My name is Stacey Preis.
8 I'm the deputy commissioner of learning services for
9 the Department of Elementary and Secondary
10 Education. I want to just quickly introduce you to
11 who we have with us from the department tonight.

12 First, Commissioner Dr. Margie Vandeven,
13 State Board of Education member Dr. Victor Lenz, our
14 area supervisors for this region, Dr. Maureen
15 Clancy-May and Dr. Tim Ricker, our general counsel
16 Mr. Bill Thornton, our communications director Sarah
17 Potter and, finally, our director of the Missouri
18 School Improvement Program TJ Spalty. And you'll be
19 hearing from TJ here in just a little bit. He'll be
20 talking about the procedures and things.

21 Right now I just wanted to say thank you very
22 much for being here tonight. We love seeing how
23 dedicated you are to your school. We're anxious to
24 here what you have to say, very excited about lots
25 of things that are happening here in the district.

1 So that's pretty much all I'm going to say
2 because this is your opportunity to talk and I don't
3 want to take away from that. So we'll start with
4 Dr. Pearson and then continue on from there. Thank
5 you.

6 DR. PEARSON: Good evening.

7 AUDIENCE: Good evening.

8 DR. PEARSON: First, I want to thank
9 each one of you for coming out tonight. We have
10 community members. We also have staff. So I want
11 to take a moment just to introduce our board and
12 acknowledge any members of the staff.

13 I'll ask the board members to stand as I call
14 your names. Ms. Andrea Terhune is our board
15 president. Mr. Richard Ryffel is our board vice
16 president. Ms. Sheila Williams is our secretary
17 slash treasurer and our director is Mr. Reginald
18 Dickson.

19 And, finally, those members of the Normandy
20 School's collaborative staff, administrative and
21 teachers, others that are present I'll just ask you
22 all to stand as well. Thank you. Thank you so much
23 for coming. Thank you.

24 In March we had an opportunity to present to
25 the state what really amounted to the current state

1 of the school district and I want to frame this
2 conversation from the beginning that we have as a
3 challenge and opportunity, a possibility to actually
4 move this district forward. The amazing thing about
5 it is we have six semesters to do it. This is
6 semester two. So we have been intentional. We are
7 very focused.

8 And so what you're going to be seeing tonight
9 is really going to be evidence of the kind of focus
10 we have attempted to bring to the work across a wide
11 variety of areas, so we hope that in the end
12 questions may be provoked, you can bring those
13 questions to me and as we work forward we will be
14 able to answer any question you might have.

15 So I will just start again, one of the goals
16 of tonight was to really talk about partnerships in
17 terms of who comes alongside us to help us do the
18 work. So what we have listed on the screen is a
19 number of our partners. This is not by far an
20 exhausted list but it is a deliberate list.

21 When we began this year there were a number
22 of partnerships with the school district. The
23 district started over and what we've done is
24 attempted to be very strategic in who we partner
25 with to be sure that every partnership we had lined

1 up with the goals to turn the district around
2 academically.

3 So what you see on the screen is a small
4 list. Education Plus has supported us in coaching
5 teachers, coaching principals. Data team
6 implementation, meaning that our teachers need to be
7 trained and have to do a solid job of analyzing data
8 and making decisions and then helping us implement
9 the new Missouri Educate Evaluation System, which
10 taught principals how to give real solid advice or
11 real solid feedback to teachers to improve
12 instruction.

13 St. Louis Community College, dual enrollment.
14 We have students attending there. We acknowledge
15 the fact because we did not have AP and honors this
16 year there still needs to be an opportunity for
17 students who are focused on getting ahead, who are
18 focused and who had already demonstrated academic
19 skills that this would be a prime place for them to
20 upgrade.

21 Beyond Housing supports ACT prep, parlays on
22 whose job is really to focus on helping us do a
23 better job of parental engagement. We're going to
24 be moving ahead with the Career Pathways at the high
25 school. Monsanto and Express Scripts both provided

1 grants to support that work.

2 This summer through the STEM TQ Institute we
3 have a body of teachers, both coordinators as well
4 as teams of teachers, attending that so we can begin
5 to implement STEM throughout.

6 And then on the fine arts side the Classical
7 Guitar Society came alongside of us to provide
8 classroom guitar lessons for grades four through
9 five. And then, finally, under this particular
10 category, Special School District.

11 There's a lot of conversation about
12 wraparounds. The reality is, is that for the
13 population of students that we serve, they come
14 intellectually able to do the work but they often
15 have to have other supports in place. So what I've
16 listed in front of you in this case, again, are
17 those who come alongside us to help support the
18 children.

19 This list that is on the screen before you
20 covers mentoring, develops life skills, provides
21 health services because when we talk about every
22 child coming to school ready to learn we have to
23 understand that we must be able sometimes to account
24 from where they're coming from.

25 Teen Outreach Program, again, healthy life

1 decisions. Parent as Teachers back in the district
2 working on those early screens for children and
3 supporting parents from the beginning on how to help
4 their children become stronger learners.

5 And then, finally, the Center for Culturally
6 Responsive Teaching. It is no secret that last fall
7 our district had some struggles around classroom
8 management. Forty-three percent of the staff was
9 new. Many of them had not been exposed to urban
10 education and so there was literally a stop for a
11 moment, let's take a look, a focus on classroom
12 management was put in place and a recognition that
13 there needs to be a greater skill set developed
14 within those who come to our schools to work, around
15 how to deal with children of color, children from
16 different SES, socioeconomic status. So we have
17 this partnership.

18 While I'll talk later about the professional
19 development, I will tell you that this particular
20 center conducted two days of PD at the beginning of
21 this semester and now they're focus is in the middle
22 school on helping those teachers be sure they know
23 how to develop strong relationships with children of
24 color and, again, children from low SES standards.

25 So those are our wraparound partners. Again,

1 it is not an exhausted list but these are just some
2 key people that we wanted to mention.

3 This chart simply points out our history. We
4 have had a history in the district of low
5 performance. So when you look at the scores from
6 2012 to 2014, you see where we were in terms of a
7 declining trend. At the end of 2015 there's some
8 growth that is supposed to be predicted and the goal
9 of this process, frankly, is that we would have
10 specific and sustained growth over the next three
11 years as we move towards accreditation.

12 I will say this again upfront, when we talk,
13 we're not talking about where we're going to be two
14 years from now. We have to think about where we're
15 going to be ten years from now. We're working to
16 create a learning environment in the district and a
17 byproduct of the learning environment is going to be
18 accreditation. But that's not where we're stopping.

19 Accreditation is a bar here but we have
20 recognized from our last strategic planning we need
21 a school district that is going to have our children
22 competitive for the 21st century. So this data
23 shows where we are and how we got to where we are
24 but from this point on we talk about where we're
25 going.

1 This is the data. Again, enrollment, 1314,
2 you see the number, that was a direct result of the
3 children transferring out. This year we began with
4 3,629 students, which meant 514 students or families
5 said, yes, we'll come back to the district.

6 Student transfer is certainly a factor out
7 there we cannot ignore. Last year: 1,060. This
8 year: 424. And all of you know the reality of the
9 last surge of those who decided to leave, 639. I
10 will tell you upfront this is a fluctuating number.
11 This is a fluctuating number because once everyone
12 applies, after that we have to go through the
13 process of seeing if everyone qualifies.

14 Regarding tuition, the screen up front gives
15 an interesting profile. Seven children -- seven --
16 seven school districts have voluntarily chosen to
17 cap our tuition. Seven. And we appreciate that
18 partnership. We recognize in this climate that can
19 be politically challenging and yet they did that.
20 But that seven districts does not -- or rather only
21 accounts for 60 of our students.

22 So for the other districts where we have
23 children going in those other 11 districts you can
24 see the figures on the screen and you can see the
25 amount of money that that's costing us.

1 So the bottom line is that our total tuition
2 for this year would be \$5.3 million and that gives
3 you the profile of the impact of this year compared
4 to last year.

5 Budget overview. Again, the numbers are in
6 front of you. We anticipate ending with an
7 8.89 percent balance. That should -- well, it
8 speaks for itself. It lays the foundation for us to
9 go forth for next year.

10 And then, finally, we move into where we are
11 or rather the accountability plan. The
12 accountability plan that the school district had to
13 have in place focused on how we could in turn
14 improve instruction, how we could in turn develop
15 curriculum, how we could support principals in terms
16 of becoming better leaders, and how to help teachers
17 in turn work with data.

18 We also had to improve attendance. We had to
19 improve discipline and we're still focusing on
20 graduation rates. So what you see in front of you
21 is where we are at this point.

22 The 90/90 model simply says that 90 percent
23 of our children need to be in school 90 percent of
24 the time. The challenge for us is how we keep more
25 consistent to improve that. This number has

1 fluctuated, everything from 68 percent all the way
2 up to 72 -- excuse me -- 74 percent. But we're
3 still aiming because we're taking a look at what we
4 need to do around coding, what we need to do around
5 how we get children to come, how we influence
6 parents to not take children out early. All of
7 these kind of things are what's contributing to that
8 number. So, again, that's what our status is around
9 90/90.

10 This is the average daily attendance, a
11 different factor. What this points out is that
12 roughly 91 percent of our children are in school
13 every day. So we are in place where children are
14 here, so they can be taught. But, again, this is
15 one factor. The other factor of the 90/90 is still
16 a place we have great work to do.

17 Around discipline, again, in October, I go
18 back to that because that seemed to a be pivotal
19 month in the district, there was some severe
20 challenges that this will show you but if you take a
21 look at where October's numbers were and look at
22 where April is, there have been some changes in the
23 culture of the district.

24 Bottom line: 57 percent decrease. What's
25 that attributed to? Several buildings now have

1 in-school suspension. What that means is that
2 children who once they've been suspended can now be
3 worked with and still be in school and, therefore,
4 not be able to lose time from learning.

5 Evaluation and coaching. Principals have
6 been going into the rooms analyzing, observing what
7 teachers are doing, giving them feedback on what
8 they need to do around changing the culture, coming
9 back and monitoring that.

10 So one of the things that's really
11 interesting about our district, of that 43 percent
12 of teachers that were new, none of them were
13 first-year teachers and we have seen progress among
14 them in terms of them becoming better because of
15 feedback that they've been getting from the
16 principals. So we attribute a lot of the work of
17 the climate changing to them. The culture
18 responsiveness is also attributed to that. I talked
19 about that earlier.

20 This is a comparison of the OSS/ISS. And you
21 can see at the beginning of the year ISS was not
22 present. Those smaller graphs in November,
23 December, were when individual schools began to
24 figure out how they could implement something like
25 ISS before the formal positions were approved and

1 filled.

2 I alluded to this a moment ago around the
3 leadership teacher touches. This was a goal. The
4 word "teacher touches" just refers to the fact that
5 principals have interactions with teachers. So we
6 have some goals that were set. Two touches, two
7 interactions per teacher per week, five observations
8 per teacher by the end of the year. In our case at
9 the end of the year was when it became time to renew
10 contracts.

11 So you can see the number behind in terms of
12 how many 2015 touches, 619 of where observations
13 were done for teachers and then following that came
14 student engagement.

15 The student engagement aspect gets back to
16 the classroom instruction. There are two factors
17 that govern whether or not learning is going on.
18 One is what our children are doing in the classroom
19 and so we have some goals set. You can see the
20 initial goal, the life face and those are outward
21 numbers in terms of what we begin to see in terms of
22 improved engagement.

23 This data came from March but principals have
24 continued to still observe and give teachers
25 feedback so by the end of the year these numbers we

1 hope will continue to go up.

2 Depth of knowledge refers to the fact that
3 instruction that's going on has to be challenging.
4 I'll give you an example. If ask all of you in this
5 room to name all of the counties in Missouri how
6 many of you could do it? That's called hard but
7 that's not rigorous. Rigorous is when you talk to
8 children about how they process what they learn, how
9 they apply what they learn.

10 And so our goals here were to have no more
11 than 25 percent recall, meaning what's the capital
12 of something, that's just recall, but more about how
13 children learn how to think, how they learn how to
14 process and also how they can apply what they're
15 learning to do in projects outside of the classroom.

16 Alluded to this earlier, this is pulled from
17 that first graph and all it does is shows you our
18 goals, what we need to accomplish for this year and
19 then the earlier chart showed you what we need to do
20 for the next two.

21 I pause here to share this with you, these
22 were the four areas that our district had to focus
23 on. And one of the things we've done in the last
24 semester is we have worked on being sure that as an
25 organization we see the connection between these

1 because if there's not a connection, if you do work
2 in isolation you really don't progress.

3 So now every building, every teacher, every
4 leader is understanding that leadership means I'm
5 collecting data by instruction and that means it's
6 improving instruction. And when teachers are
7 working together in a collaborative culture they're
8 focused on instruction and then instruction connects
9 to the style of curriculum that you're teaching.

10 And the whole point of all this simply is a
11 second word, if we do all of this and have no impact
12 we have done nothing. So that's the framework that
13 the district is working on now. That's how we're
14 approaching the work.

15 Key strategies and interventions. We
16 implemented balanced literacy this year. This model
17 is a solid research model for teaching children how
18 to read and write but it is a challenging model. It
19 is a challenging model. It is a very sophisticated
20 model and so we acknowledge the fact that our first
21 semester was very much about learning how to
22 implement it and the second semester we started to
23 do a better job with it.

24 The department gave us a \$485,000 intensive
25 reading instruction grant. And this was phased in

1 and this grant laid the foundation for a lot of the
2 work that we're doing. Literacy coaches have been
3 pushing in to model to the teachers how to teach
4 this curriculum and also to help teachers learn how
5 ultimately to present the assessments in a more
6 effective way.

7 Sylvan reading, which maybe you have heard
8 about, is now a formal reading intervention in the
9 school district. This grant allowed us to develop a
10 partnership with them so that they in turn would
11 come in, train our reading interventionists on how
12 to use the Sylvan model.

13 They tested every student in the district
14 grades two through five -- excuse me -- two through
15 eight and then those students who were half a year
16 to a year below reading level are then getting 30
17 hours of intervention from now to the end of the
18 school year.

19 Sylvan also tested all of the students for
20 math and all of this information was then given to
21 teachers. But Sylvan's method, specifically for
22 reading, is what's getting implemented through their
23 studies.

24 Sylvan paid for 16,000 texts -- excuse me --
25 not Sylvan, the grant did. So that's the number of

1 books that are now in place in K-5. 2700 plus
2 placed in grades six through eight. Read 180 was
3 put in at the ninth grade level.

4 It is not a secret that in this district we
5 have a serious reading issue at the secondary level.
6 Serious. Serious. And so Read 180 was put in at
7 ninth grade. This has been a model that has been
8 proved to work fairly effectively with children who
9 are older. And then, finally, this grant also
10 covered ACT prep because all grade levels are going
11 to being taking the ACT.

12 Reading interventionists is another
13 intervention. These individuals worked the first
14 semester with supporting struggling readers and
15 they're now the ones who are serving as the Sylvan
16 coaches.

17 MyON Reading, pre-k/12. This went into play.
18 Again, had been in the district before. It went
19 into play the second semester and this is designed
20 for children to be able to access reading online,
21 which improves their independent reading skills.

22 The rest of these are, again, fairly
23 straightforward. Curriculum pacing. Teachers have
24 received pacing guides, which means that what they
25 want to teach for a whole quarter is laid out in

1 front of them. Targeted professional development,
2 not just top down but finding out what teachers
3 themselves need to know. Collaborative culture data
4 team. Frameworks, the artisan teacher meeting that
5 our teachers are learning how to do effective
6 instruction with a very effective model. It's
7 district-wide.

8 And then, finally, pedagogical specialists.
9 We have identified teachers in the district who have
10 quality skills. There is a narrative out there that
11 no one in this district has skills. That is
12 inaccurate. So what we're doing is we're starting
13 now to develop teacher capacity.

14 Those teachers who have been shown to have
15 skill, who have been doing it for a while, have now
16 become identified so they in turn can become models
17 for others. They're going to lead the process for
18 curriculum development over the summer and so this I
19 think, candidly, is one of my favorite options for
20 the year because we're going to slowly, slowly,
21 slowly build up our own capacity so we don't have to
22 go outside the district for our PD.

23 Key interventions. I put this here because
24 when you talk about as many things as I've discussed
25 the question has to be raised: How in the world do

1 we work together? So reading is a focus. Balanced
2 literacy helps children to become stronger readers
3 and writers. The literacy coaches came in and they
4 supported teachers in implementing that particular
5 curriculum.

6 The interventionists from Sylvan, again,
7 targeted children and helped them to be strong --
8 become stronger readers because they're struggling.
9 Read 180 I already mentioned.

10 Close reading PD. One of the things that
11 comes out of the literature is that many children
12 who struggle simply don't understand what they read.
13 They read it and it sounds good but they don't
14 understand what they read. So what one school here
15 did is they took one of their own experts and led a
16 PD around close reading to help children understand
17 how to read more effectively.

18 And then, finally, customized reading
19 intervention. The middle school itself had to go
20 through several reiterations of what to do around
21 reading. They ended up creating their own reading
22 program at the middle school to address the needs of
23 the children after the first initiative they started
24 did not work.

25 So I bring this up to say that all of these

1 things tend to work together and that's how we're
2 trying to make things work in the district more
3 systemically.

4 As a result then, this is the data so far.
5 We can show -- if you look at the green, that was
6 the first test given which gave baseline of what
7 children knew how to read or what level of
8 difficulty they knew how to read because our
9 benchmark assessment just focuses on how difficult
10 text is.

11 So this shows you that in grades three and
12 five there was significant growth between what
13 children took -- at least presented as what they
14 knew, what level they could read on in the beginning
15 of the year and where they are now. There will be a
16 third benchmark at the end of the month, roughly the
17 end of May.

18 Short end, this is what is happening with
19 reading. Grades three and five are direct results
20 of the balanced literacy. Grade eight is a result
21 of what has been going on with the middle school's
22 particular program. Grade ten, Read 180 and then
23 those kinds of things that teachers are attempting
24 to do on their own in the classroom.

25 And then the last bullet comes from that

1 website myON. Since myON opened 27,712 books have
2 been read by the kids in this district. That's
3 independent reading. They go to the website. They
4 can identify their own library and they can pick out
5 what books they're going to read and then the
6 computer system logs it. And the computer system is
7 smart. If you just open and flip through, it
8 doesn't count. It doesn't count. You have to read
9 over the text for a while and then it counts it. So
10 we're proud.

11 Independent reading is critical. The truth
12 of the matter is that if you read good -- read good
13 -- if you read good writing you become good writers.
14 That's just the theoretical truth. So we're excited
15 about that particular data.

16 Mathematics benchmark. The green indicates a
17 benchmark that was given at the beginning of the
18 year and then the purple indicates the benchmark
19 that was given just after spring break, if I'm not
20 mistaken. So we can say today that the growth that
21 has occurred at the elementary level is as a result
22 of the PD, as a result of the pacing guides, as a
23 result of the work that those teachers have been
24 doing.

25 Algebra one, high school, 7 percent of

1 students have demonstrated proficiency. Geometry
2 showed a huge jump with the third benchmark.
3 Honestly, I'm putting up here scores of those
4 children who exceeded, so I would not argue, I would
5 tell you we still have work to do in the high
6 school. We still have work.

7 State assessment preparation. I know some
8 people in the community have been asking what
9 exactly we are doing in order to get ready for the
10 upcoming state test, so I popped this list up here
11 just for you to see.

12 Processes begin in November and particular in
13 February a whole -- a whole collection of the
14 meetings of the district got together to be sure we
15 were clear about if our network was ready, hardware
16 was ready, whether or not our children would
17 actually be able to manipulate the instruments that
18 are now part of the online assessment.

19 Our teachers are mirroring what they have to
20 answer on the online session in their own work in
21 the classroom. The new test may ask a child not to
22 choose one answer but to choose the three or four
23 best of seven answers. Children can't do that
24 unless they're having the same kind of practice in
25 the classroom every day.

1 So, to finish, next steps, we are committed
2 to moving our instructional -- moving to an
3 instructional budget where 40 percent of the budget
4 is going to be around operation. Sixty percent of
5 the budget is going to be around instruction. We
6 have all of those wraparound services. Already have
7 someone who has volunteered to coordinate all of
8 those.

9 We have children getting help here but we
10 don't know if the help they're getting helps them
11 achieve. So one of the things we want to be doing
12 is putting together a model where we can actually
13 look at this child getting these services, this
14 child getting these services, correlate it to the
15 kind of grades that they're making and see if, in
16 deed, all of the things we're doing for wraparound
17 really are making a difference.

18 New teacher orientation did not happen last
19 year. Did not happen. New teacher orientation,
20 we're going to have an opportunity with those
21 individuals we're bringing in to begin at the top
22 talking about the Rutherford model of instruction,
23 helping them to understand content, helping them
24 understand what it means to be culture responsive.

25 Professional development. We are listening

1 to what principals -- teachers have told us rather,
2 about what worked and did not work this year and
3 we're going to be moving around, changing that model
4 for next year.

5 Faculty meetings that take place now, again,
6 one candid thing I was going to put in there the
7 other day and I just did not, but I'll say it to you
8 publicly, that means I'll have to do it, we
9 currently have two 90-minute sessions of PD. We did
10 needs assessment and recognized that if we take the
11 PD days that are at the end of the year and weed
12 those throughout the year it allows teachers the
13 opportunity to get trained, give feedback, come back
14 trying new techniques.

15 So we're going to be restructuring that for
16 next year just to make it more effective because
17 that's the approach you take to do what's called
18 high-quality PD.

19 And then, finally, community engagement. We
20 had a community forum in October and people told us
21 how horrible it was. I hated the picture of me in
22 the paper but the one thing we did in March is we
23 had another session and we worked as a group and
24 generated solutions. We acknowledge we have a
25 problem. We need people with ideas. That kind of

1 engagement we are going to continue.

2 Career Pathways at the high school. This is
3 a model designed to support students that are
4 identifying where they can go to work, what programs
5 they need. Every child is not a four-year college.
6 Every career doesn't require a four-year college but
7 every career will have something. So we're putting
8 in these four pathways at the high school as a way
9 of generating student interest. Core courses will
10 still continue but then children can begin very
11 early to see -- to at least identify where they want
12 to go.

13 We'll have coaches. We'll have mentors.
14 They're already identified. There's already a place
15 in the budget. We formally have a partnership with
16 Pattonville and Clayton because they've been doing
17 balanced literacy for a while. They can come in and
18 coach our people on how to get better at it.

19 We have an informal relationship with
20 Jennings and Riverview Gardens, so we're learning
21 from those around us how to move this ship forward.

22 And then, finally, Read With Me. The
23 research says that teachers have the greatest --
24 well, that's not true -- teachers have the second
25 greatest impact on children learning, then comes

1 principals. But the number one impact on children
2 learning is -- what do you think?

3 AUDIENCE: Parents.

4 DR. PEARSON: Say it again, I'm sorry.

5 AUDIENCE: Parents.

6 DR. PEARSON: I just was checking. Read
7 With Me. Every child needs to be reading every
8 single day. No Christmas off. No Thanksgiving off.
9 No 3 p.m. off. None of that.

10 Read With Me. This coming Saturday at Barack
11 Obama we're going to be hosting, from ten until two
12 o'clock, a read-a-thon. I have a team of teachers
13 right now who are preparing strategies to share with
14 parents who come on how to support reading away from
15 school.

16 I want to say home -- a friend of mine has
17 pointed out to me for many places, for many
18 families, them reading to the child can be tough but
19 the thing we pose is how -- who else can read to the
20 child? I see it happening. This can happen. If we
21 do this combined with effective instruction in
22 school then our children's reading scores are going
23 to go up and if their reading scores are going to go
24 up then that means they're understanding more and if
25 they're understanding more that means they're

1 learning more and then accreditation is a byproduct.

2 Then finally, school configurations. There
3 is no secret that our middle school has had some
4 challenges. I will tell you something. Middle
5 schools all over the nation have had some
6 challenges. So we're going forward really thinking
7 what other configurations could happen in this
8 district? Nothing is laid out yet. Could K-6 work?
9 Could K-8 work? Could a partnership with UMSL work?
10 Could the middle school seventh and eighth grade
11 become a lab school that works with a university?

12 These are the ideas we're talking about doing
13 because as our board members say often, we cannot do
14 anything the way that we used to and get where we
15 need to go. So that last bullet is strictly about
16 school configurations, that we have nothing, but I'm
17 putting it out there to you now start thinking about
18 how we can do things differently.

19 That concludes my update of what's going on
20 in the district. Thank you all for coming. I
21 appreciate it. Hope it made sense. This will be
22 posted certainly on the website so you can come back
23 and visit it and we invite the conversation and the
24 dialogue with you about how we're doing with this
25 challenge and whether or not it's really making

1 sense. Thank you very much.

2 MS. PREIS: Thank you, Dr. Pearson, very
3 much for sharing that information with us. Now
4 we're going to move on to the part of the program
5 that is the public comment. I'm going to let TJ
6 Spalty just give you an have overview of how this
7 will work and this is your opportunity to come and
8 speak with us.

9 On a technical -- which microphone would you
10 like them to use, this one or pull the other one
11 into the middle?

12 MS. TERHUNE: They can sit up here at
13 the table.

14 MS. PREIS: Sit at the table?

15 MS. TERHUNE: Right.

16 MS. PREIS: Okay.

17 MS. TERHUNE: I'm sorry, I'm referring
18 to the DESE.

19 MS. PREIS: No, no, I meant your
20 community members, where would you like them?

21 MS. TERHUNE: Do we have another mic?

22 MS. PREIS: Okay. Perfect. Thank you.

23 MR. SPALTY: All right. As we move into
24 public comment many of you have already had the
25 opportunity to grab a speaker card. If you would

1 still wish to grab a speaker card they are available
2 up here at the front. Once you complete those we
3 will go through one by one and have the opportunity
4 to make public comment.

5 When you come up to speak you will have the
6 opportunity to share for three minutes, at which
7 time we also do have a timekeeper up here just to
8 keep you aware of how much time you have remaining.

9 So, if you would also additionally like to
10 make written comments, we have that opportunity up
11 here too with comment cards.

12 Also, there is daycare downstairs if you
13 would like to have your children go downstairs
14 there, that is available.

15 All right. First -- our first speaker:
16 Crystal Washington.

17 MS. WASHINGTON: Yes, I'm here on behalf
18 of the students who are the 3,000 students whose
19 parents aren't here, probably will never be here,
20 probably will never read with their kids because we
21 are obligated to help them. And I know that
22 Normandy has a great plan and everything and I want
23 them to succeed because really when it comes to
24 educating African American students in a culture of
25 gang violence, prison, slave mentality and all of

1 that, Normandy is at the top of the list.

2 That's why on this sheet right here "black
3 lives matter in education" you see that Normandy is
4 out performing STL, Riverview. Really the only
5 school that's like all black in this poverty-filled
6 culture that's outperforming Normandy is Jennings.
7 Normandy was even doing better than
8 Ferguson/Florissant when it comes to educating
9 African Americans.

10 But when you take it out to schools like
11 Clayton, like say if you look at this bottom sheet,
12 the data is kind of misleading because it only has
13 proficient and if the students in Clayton drop from
14 advanced down to proficient then they would be
15 outperforming Normandy in proficient, you know, like
16 a good couple of 15 or 20 points.

17 On here it looks like Normandy is
18 outperforming Clayton when it comes to African
19 American students but they're not. Clayton had
20 advanced students. So you get what I'm saying, if
21 they dropped, if all of a sudden all of their
22 advanced students went down to proficient then the
23 number would be higher. So I just wanted to make
24 that clear.

25 And then also, for the 600 students that are

1 fluctuating, that Dr. Pearson talked about, I would
2 like that number to not fluctuate. I would like for
3 those students to actually have the opportunity to
4 receive an accredited education like the
5 constitution promises and let's stop doing things
6 like I have parents saying they're calling up here,
7 they're telling them they can't transfer, they're
8 telling them they can transfer and they're telling
9 them they need a permit. And then, you know, it's
10 just all these games they're playing. I mean, this
11 is politics for a lot of us. This is jobs for a lot
12 of us.

13 But these kids, these parents that are real
14 life -- real life situations of having to come to a
15 school where they feel unsafe or they feel unwanted
16 or whatever, let's give them that option. Let's
17 have people at Normandy actually fighting to give
18 them that option rather than trying to bring that
19 number down.

20 You know, maybe that 600 -- that 600-number,
21 we can get that to come down. So those kids or
22 those parents who want to leave out, you know, let's
23 stop them from leaving out so our numbers will be
24 higher. And those 600 students who came back, most
25 of them didn't want to come back. They were forced

1 to come back. It was made so difficult for them to
2 continue to transfer that they gave up and came
3 back. So I just want -- I'm fighting for those
4 kids. Thank you.

5 MR. SPALTY: Our next speaker is Sharon
6 Owens.

7 MS. OWENS: Good evening, everyone. My
8 name is Sharon Owens and I'm a resident from 1966 to
9 today for Wellston. How many minutes do I have?

10 AUDIENCE: Three.

11 MS. OWENS: I actually don't know where
12 to start at because I'm so full. I'm, first of all,
13 disappointed that there's not more parents here.
14 I'm always disappointed that there's not more
15 parents here. I am disgusted with DESE because I
16 don't feel like they have our back.

17 I don't know if you all knew how Wellston
18 School District was stolen from us residents right
19 before our eyes. When we blinked it was gone. When
20 Normandy School District took over the Wellston
21 school they were -- I think it was like a million
22 dollars in the account to help take care of the
23 schools or whatever. We still never even got the
24 schools boarded-up or taken care of, not even an
25 effort was made to like sell them or do anything

1 until recently. And I think Beyond Housing and
2 somebody else bought those up but there's schools
3 now that the windows are broken out.

4 My problem is that money has never went where
5 it was supposed to go in the first place and that's
6 on these kids. I don't care if you have a good
7 parent or a lousy parent, it still comes back to
8 DESE because we were set up in Wellston and now
9 Normandy from the school board that we had, that I
10 was not proud of at Normandy, to watch this stuff
11 happen.

12 Eventually it's going come out that we're
13 going to have to pay for our kids to go to school
14 just in our own neighborhood. That would be fine
15 too if DESE helped and helped us get some decent
16 teachers in here and keep them qualified and updated
17 on everything that they had to know to share with
18 these kids.

19 Then we don't have books or computers. The
20 list goes on that we have been neglected on purpose
21 because if you already see something going on, why
22 would you let years and years conglomerate and just
23 add on and just add on?

24 And we're being set up to fail. My
25 grandkids, my great nieces and nephews, myself, I

1 went to the Wellston School District and then they
2 were transferred into Normandy. It was a lot of us,
3 my friends, that were very good participants and
4 still are. I don't have any kids in Normandy School
5 District or they've graduated or they've transferred
6 out and they went to tech schools and stuff like
7 that but you can't -- you can't force a parent to be
8 a parent. You can't -- a parent can't make DESE do
9 their job.

10 I'm not happy. I have not been happy for
11 years because we just apparently got a couple blacks
12 on the board that's going to help us out but now
13 we've changed names and we still don't have
14 accreditation. I'm tired of being talked about like
15 the City of Wellston is so crooked, which my
16 politicians are over there. They didn't help
17 either. I don't mind saying it. It's all true.
18 I've been on the news enough. I ran for the school
19 board. I lost by just a little bit.

20 But we need to find out why don't we get any
21 true answers on what's going with the money, why
22 don't we have the qualified people and DESE doesn't
23 send people to help us get everything under control.
24 I do not appreciate us being made out to be
25 stupider, that's what my grandson calls it, than we

1 are. We're not. There's a lot of us parents out
2 here that do care. There's a lot of teachers up
3 here that --

4 MR. SPALTY: Thank you. That's time.
5 We do have our next speaker, Dryver Henderson.
6 After that, on deck, could we have Paul Davis.

7 MR. HENDERSON: Good evening.

8 AUDIENCE: Good evening.

9 MR. HENDERSON: I wish there were more,
10 as Sharon said, but at least I'm glad to see as many
11 as are here and please know this is 20 times the
12 usual turn out to a board function.

13 Can you put up the website on the screen? Do
14 we have that capability? Isn't this an important
15 meeting? We think it is. Why isn't it on the
16 website? Why have you people allowed the website to
17 be so poor, to be so uninformative? Not even this
18 meeting is posted on the website. Where do we find
19 the minutes? How would we find out and know that
20 the Sylvan money came from DESE and that it was
21 earmarked for reading? It's not in any minutes, no
22 minutes that I've seen posted.

23 Madam Commissioner, I have documentation of
24 more than ten requests online to you to meet with
25 you to discuss confidential information, to talk

1 about the lack of progress in Normandy. I am
2 reporting to the world and to the reporters that I
3 have been disrespected by you. You have blown me
4 off every time. You have acknowledged "thank you
5 for your concern" but you have not met with me.
6 That's no way to run a ballgame or a railroad, let
7 alone an educational school district.

8 After -- you know, three minutes is not
9 sufficient. I invite, I ask, I have 16 questions
10 and 19 suggestions. I will certainly see to it that
11 you get, Madam Commissioner, those suggestions but
12 I'm prepared to, ready to, answer questions.

13 I'm the chairperson of the Normandy Schools
14 Town Hall Organization. I receive calls almost once
15 a day from a parent or a community person who says,
16 "What's going on? What's wrong this school
17 district? Why are the police, the security people,
18 so disrespectful? Why can't we see information?"
19 Why, why, why. And we don't get answers, Madam
20 Chairman -- Madam Commissioner.

21 Press, media, my private comments meant for
22 the commissioner are that this board, the JEGB, the
23 Joint Executive Governing Board, has conflicts of
24 interest. They sit on the board, same people, three
25 of the four are or were chairpersons or directors of

1 Beyond Housing. They bought all of our school
2 buildings. They have been funding to all of our 14
3 positions within the school for the last years. We
4 give them tax credits because of their association
5 with us. They are lovely people.

6 MR. SPALTY: That's time. That's three
7 minutes.

8 MR. HENDERSON: They're fine people.
9 And I would be happy to have lunch and dinner with
10 those people and drink beer, go to the ballgame, but
11 they're not doing the job. They're not qualified.
12 The only one of the members who has prior
13 experience doesn't want to look at me. I understand
14 that --

15 MR. SPALTY: Three minutes has elapsed.
16 Thank you.

17 MR. HENDERSON: -- she has a
18 questionable background. And we'll give this to the
19 press. Thank you.

20 MR. SPALTY: Our next speaker is Paul
21 Davis. On deck we have Sandra Abron.

22 MR. DAVIS: Good evening, everyone.

23 AUDIENCE: Good evening.

24 MR. DAVIS: I'm a parent of a transfer
25 student. My son had some difficulties in the

1 Normandy School District. He had some success. But
2 when the transfer program came up I thought it was a
3 great opportunity for him to get a new experience in
4 the educational world, so we signed up for the
5 transfer program and went to Francis Howell.

6 On June the 19th I got a call saying that the
7 transfer program was no longer in effect and that my
8 son had to come back to Normandy. And I was totally
9 destroyed, to make it easy. I was determined to not
10 allow that to happen. I used all our family savings
11 to rent an apartment in St. Charles County.

12 Here's a copy from the Post-Dispatch about
13 our story. There's also a copy in here from the
14 Washington Times about our story, that some parents
15 will go to any extent to make sure their child gets
16 the best education possible.

17 And I'm happy to see the success that you're
18 having in Normandy. I believe in red and green.
19 Anybody here that knows me from the past, my son
20 started in kindergarten and went through the
21 eighth grade.

22 But, anyway, I hope Normandy do well and get
23 better but my son is having tremendous success at
24 Francis Howell. He was just the recipient of the
25 Golden Helmet award. He's on the honor roll. He's

1 just been nominated to be a mentor his junior and
2 senior year there.

3 So all I'm saying is Normandy, Francis
4 Howell, Clayton, Ladue, wherever your child is going
5 -- yes, sir, I got one minute -- matter of fact, I'm
6 going to give my minute back. I've said enough.
7 Good luck to Normandy though, okay.

8 MR. SPALTY: Our next speaker is Sandra
9 Abron. And next --

10 MS. ABRON: Okay. Good evening,
11 everybody --

12 MR. SPALTY: One moment. On deck we
13 have Marvaldo Jones. Thank you.

14 MS. ABRON: Good evening. I'm a former
15 alumni and also my son is a student at Barack Obama
16 Elementary. He's in kindergarten, so I'm, you know,
17 starting out with this. But the question that I
18 have for the DESE staff, what I, you know, cannot
19 seem to understand is, as a former employee of DESE,
20 okay, there are area supervisors, okay. What I
21 don't understand is you're supposed to provide
22 technical support to all of the schools that are
23 under -- in your region, okay.

24 So what I'm not understanding is what's the
25 problem? Like at some point you all need to be held

1 accountable because as an area supervisor in my
2 division, I worked in nutritional services, okay, in
3 my division in southeast Missouri I was able to help
4 schools get funding for different kind of food
5 service -- food service grants, kitchen equipment,
6 just a lot of things.

7 So I'm just failing to understand why you're
8 not able to help your district officially. Like
9 maybe someone needs to look into your job abilities
10 to make sure that you're doing what you're supposed
11 to be doing because it should not have been going on
12 this long.

13 Like this school should not be still
14 unaccredited. It's -- it's ludicrous. Like what
15 are you all doing? Like what are you doing? Like
16 what are you all -- what are the area supervisors
17 doing to help Normandy? What are you actually doing
18 to try to help Normandy? That's what the question
19 is.

20 And so hopefully when you all get up there
21 tonight you'll tell us what you're doing, what your
22 plan is because as of yet it looks like you all
23 haven't done a damn thing.

24 MR. SPALTY: Our next speaker is
25 Marvaldo Jones. On deck we have Nancy Hartman.

1 MS. JONES: Again, my name is Marvaldo
2 Jones. I'm also an alumni, 1975 graduate of
3 Normandy Senior High. It disappoints me so much
4 that I see over and over again as I've grown up and
5 I'm alderman of Northwoods. So many times do I see,
6 Kinloch, I've worked there. I've heard and read
7 about Walnut Park, how school districts are taken
8 out. The children are no longer walking to school.
9 They leave at 4:30 or 4:00 in the morning to be
10 bussed out and then come back late. There's some
11 that do that.

12 And I read an article recently about a little
13 girl who's going out of the district to another
14 school. I don't mind parents getting what they
15 consider better education for their children. I
16 don't mind that. I just don't mind -- well, what I
17 do mind is it's costing the city -- well, costing
18 the school, the Normandy School District. It's
19 taking our tax dollars to benefit other schools and
20 that education that the child or parent wants for
21 that child.

22 All I'm asking of DESE is to realize that we
23 really take pride in our area, the Normandy area,
24 and we really want to know -- we pay a lot of taxes.
25 We voted for the school district to have more money,

1 \$17 million, then turned around and asked for a
2 \$7 million bond issue. We passed that. We didn't
3 pass it because we have all of the money but we
4 passed it for our children to have a better
5 education.

6 And so I'm pleading with DESE that please
7 understand our district. I don't want it to be a
8 Walnut Park. I don't want it to be and I'm not
9 trying to call it bad, but what it is, is desolate.
10 You have driveby shootings and drugs infiltrating
11 into areas. It's so bad that Mayor Slay asked for
12 walkers, foot patrol and more patrol in Walnut Park.

13 I don't want to see Normandy School District
14 in such of a deteriorating state because it affects
15 so many -- it affects all of us really. But when
16 you all can go back to your homes and sit down and
17 not feel the effect that you will leave us in, then
18 that's what makes me angry, if I could say, or very,
19 very concerned. And the question comes: Do you
20 really, really understand and feel for the children
21 and where they live?

22 I plead with you, let the school remain open
23 and not to continue to allow it to be going out and
24 not -- Thank you.

25 MR. SPALTY: Our next speaker is Nancy

1 Hartman. On deck is Terry Artis.

2 MS. HARTMAN: Good evening.

3 AUDIENCE: Good evening.

4 MS. HARTMAN: The Missouri state
5 accreditation system is corrupt. All the people who
6 work for DESE are part of a corrupt system. It is a
7 system that has allowed the people in power to treat
8 districts like Normandy, meaning African American
9 and high poverty, the way they have treated us.

10 The 4-page sheet that I handed out, I have
11 more for anyone who came in late to get one, has
12 statistics that came right off of DESE's website.
13 So the system is corrupt. It needs to change.

14 And my question is: When is DESE going to
15 start requiring so-called high-performing and
16 distinctively-performing districts to educate their
17 African American children to the level that they
18 expect their other children?

19 And why since children in those -- African
20 American children in those so-called high-performing
21 districts don't score better, why are you picking on
22 Normandy? It is inequitable. It is unconscionable
23 and you have -- you have caused more harm than you
24 may ever know.

25 MR. SPALTY: Our next speaker is Terry

1 Artis. On deck is Harriett Gladney.

2 MR. ARTIS: Wow, those were powerful
3 words by Ms. Hartman. I applaud her. Technology
4 and corruption and racism, actually that's my line.
5 I don't carry a sign that reads "black lives
6 matter." If my existence doesn't illustrate that
7 fact then there's something wrong with me, not you.

8 I never needed the validation of those who
9 perpetuate a system that is ready to extract
10 whatever profit they can from the criminalization
11 and dehumanization of black people. It means you,
12 DESE.

13 All I want is for you to get out of my
14 community so that those of us who are of a mind and
15 will may build a system that loves our existence and
16 nurtures our growth. I'm sick to death of your high
17 stakes testing based on trickery that you use as a
18 method of controlling our people and telling us that
19 we're stupid. The only stupidity is that the people
20 are not standing up and making clear that your mess
21 will not be tolerated any longer.

22 I'm here to start that movement. And when
23 the people come to the clear realization that that
24 is what is the best for all of us then we will be
25 ready to reach that next level of existence where

1 respect will abound. But now get out of our
2 community, DESE. Thank you.

3 MR. SPALTY: Our next speaker is
4 Harriett Gladney. On deck we have Barbara A.
5 Wright.

6 MS. GLADNEY: I want to say this quick
7 and fast. My daughter came here when she was three
8 years old, went to the preschool. It was okay.
9 Went and was passed to the first grade and between
10 me and the teacher, we did not want her to go. Due
11 to a divorce that happened in our family my daughter
12 was not ready.

13 Then when she got in the first grade year,
14 excuse me, I'm not being prejudice but a white
15 teacher told me that she knew how to handle it. And
16 I said, "No, she needs to go back to kindergarten
17 where she needed to be." At that time she had a
18 very difficult time in her life. And then she went
19 and got passed to the second grade, again.

20 Are you all going to start hiring African
21 Americans to teach African Americans with good
22 education? Because it seems like that's the
23 problem.

24 My daughter has now been a transfer student
25 and I thank God for it even though I do pay taxes

1 here in Normandy School District but the gas money
2 for me to get my kid back and forth to school ain't
3 no joking. And she has been doing excellent.

4 But I also had a teacher tell me here that it
5 was something that I was not doing, took a book bag
6 up to the superintendent's office of my homework
7 that my daughter does that I call "home-homework"
8 and show him the little bit of homework you all gave
9 her from the amount of home-homework she was doing
10 and plus her African American studies that Normandy
11 doesn't teach, keeping us out of the situation.

12 So when are you all going to get African
13 American teachers in this district, which might pull
14 us back into this district so that our children can
15 learn?

16 MR. SPALTY: Our next speaker is Barbara
17 A. Wright. On deck we have SAANS, Inc.

18 MS. WRIGHT: Good evening, everybody. I
19 am Barbara A. Wright. I can fill you in with
20 everything everybody is saying because I'm from the
21 60s. Transportation, very bad move. Like Marvin
22 Gaye said, "What's going on?"

23 In the 60s they transported us to an all
24 white school. I still hurt. I told my grandkids, I
25 said, "Lord, have mercy on us." That was the worst

1 thing they ever could have did because we were not
2 treated nice. We went in. We got off the buses.
3 We went into the school, Gardenville, over on
4 Gravois, Classy Miller (ph) downtown off of Grand I
5 think he got an academy or something down there.
6 But, like I said, we got off the buses, we didn't
7 have no kind of contact with these children. We got
8 off the bus, went into the school. At recess, we
9 had recess -- they had recess at different times.
10 Like I said, no kind of contact. And it was
11 horrible.

12 When I heard, I said, "Don't let them do
13 this," but they did it anyway. And, like I said, it
14 hurt a lot. They didn't need to transfer those
15 children to nobody else's school because the
16 knowledge and understanding is here. They give you
17 just as much here as they can at other schools. You
18 know, and like bring everything here. Help.

19 And what I'm hearing tonight from my
20 grandson, he goes here, I know there's a lot of
21 grandmothers here taking the role of taking care of
22 their grandchildren. I'm one of them.

23 And I told a teacher the other day, I said,
24 "You know what, you all need help. You need help
25 with the children." Help the teachers to help these

1 children get to where they need to be.

2 And they're talking about Wellston. They're
3 talking about Normandy. Do you know, I don't know
4 how many years ago, a student from Wellston came to
5 Normandy and you know when it came time to graduate
6 you know what he got, a million-dollar scholarship.
7 Nobody ever says anything about that. A child from
8 Normandy, million-dollar scholarship.

9 Help. Don't downgrade them, you know,
10 under-grade them. Help. There's a lot of teachers
11 here, a lot of good teachers. Help them to get the
12 children where the children need to be. Don't
13 transport them no more. Like he said, "What's going
14 on?" Think about it.

15 MR. SPALTY: Our next speaker is SAANS,
16 Inc. On deck is Bill Monroe.

17 SAANS, INC.: Good evening. I want to
18 first of all say that --

19 AUDIENCE: We can't hear you.

20 SAANS, INC.: Sorry. I want to say
21 first of all that I'm from Scholar Achievement --
22 still can't hear me? Can you hear me now?

23 AUDIENCE: Yes.

24 SAANS, INC.: Okay. I'm here on behalf
25 of the parents and the students of SAANS Academy. A

1 lot of parents are not here today but they wanted me
2 to come and speak for them. One of the -- there are
3 a lot of questions. I'm not here to beat anyone up.
4 I'm just here to address some of the questions that
5 parents are having.

6 Number one is: Why are students getting put
7 out of school? Who is going to supervise my child
8 while I work? Why isn't my child reading on grade
9 level? How is my child supposed to learn at home?
10 Who is going to help my child with homework?

11 And my question is: What do you have in
12 place for students that have been put out besides
13 Homebound, ACE, Homework Hotline? And that is
14 pretty much what parents are asking because they
15 want to know.

16 My program is free for this district because
17 I live in this district. I've been trying to get in
18 touch with Dr. Pearson so he could pretty much talk
19 to me. I would like to keep the kids in the
20 schools. I have strategies to keep them in school.
21 I have been a teacher for 22 years, special
22 education, so I know what our kids need. Just give
23 me a call. Thank you.

24 MR. SPALTY: Our next speaker is Bill
25 Monroe. On deck is John Phillips.

1 MR. MONROE: Good evening. I'm Bill
2 Monroe and I just left a board meeting. I'm a
3 member of the St. Louis Public Schools elected
4 board. And this gathering right here is a direct
5 result of the incompetency of those people lined up
6 right there. Right there. They are the reason why
7 you're here now. When Ms. Nicastro decided to send
8 the children from Wellston into Normandy everybody
9 knew what was going to happen. She knew what was
10 going to happen.

11 And don't -- and don't -- and never forget
12 DESE is managed out of Branson, Missouri. And I
13 look at these white faces, you're looking at me,
14 many of you have no clue as to how to educate black
15 boys and black girls and you being here is an insult
16 for the last several decades.

17 No one can go before the state board with a
18 public comment. You don't want to hear it and you
19 do us an injustice by coming here, coming here to
20 placate black folks. It's ridiculous.

21 The reason why Normandy has failed is because
22 of the incompetency of that board and the people who
23 stay on there like they got a right to it. You are
24 the reason. And disrespect black folks because you
25 don't give black educators the opportunity. Are

1 there any black educators that are capable enough to
2 fill those seats? I see the same faces that I saw
3 at Harris-Stowe some eight or nine years ago when
4 you took the -- you took over the St. Louis Public
5 Schools and I ran for the elected board.

6 You're being shammed. You're being shammed.
7 And I'm talking to the lot of you. You're being
8 shammed and they're going to sit up here and they're
9 going to shake their heads and they're going to give
10 you nothing.

11 And when they go back to Jefferson City, when
12 they go back to Jefferson City or wherever they is,
13 they don't want to hear from you. That's why we
14 have a state board. You cannot go before the state
15 board and make a comment. And here we got schools
16 fallen.

17 Let me tell you something, black lives
18 matter. And the reason that the crime is so high
19 and death in the city is because our children are
20 lacking an education and structure based on a
21 foundation of black educators know what's best for
22 these children. And you're going to go back, you're
23 going to go back and you're going to sit up on your
24 rump and you're going to do nothing.

25 And I saw Ms. Nicastro and she trained the

1 young lady here, the new president I guess, and the
2 only thing that's happening now is a continuation of
3 the same old crap and if you stand for it, you
4 deserve it.

5 MR. SPALTY: Our next speaker is John
6 Phillips. On deck we have Gwendolyn Buggs.

7 (Noise from audience.)

8 MR. PHILLIPS: Whatever, whatever, you
9 had your time to talk. You had your time to talk.

10 Listen, hey, great segue, brother Monroe, I
11 appreciate it. He's telling you you're being
12 bamboozled. Listen, this is an experiment. They're
13 getting ready to experiment. Yeah, they're going to
14 send you a couple or your one child out there and
15 that one child or ten or the 657 that they're
16 talking about might come -- some of them will come
17 away with a good education on the individual basis
18 but at the same time they're destroying your
19 community.

20 They're taking tax dollars and sending them
21 out to Clayton. 8,000 -- \$8,000 more, \$8,000 more
22 Clayton is taking out of our district for every
23 student. We pay twelve grand. They want twenty.
24 We got to pay the extra eight. How can we get back
25 on our feet if we're taking -- we're giving them an

1 extra eight grand per student? That's ridiculous.

2 That's a transfer of wealth. That's ridiculous.

3 This is an experiment.

4 If you were to ask anybody on DESE what's
5 going to happen if we become unaccredited, if we
6 become -- if they dissolve our district, they have
7 no idea. They don't know. They don't know if
8 they're going to piece us out to other districts.
9 They don't know which charter schools are going to
10 come in, which won't. And charter schools fail
11 every day, everywhere. So that's no guarantee of
12 success. They have no idea what they're going to
13 do. It's an experiment.

14 They're going to try to see what might work
15 and then, oh, well, that's not going to work, let's
16 try this. Exactly what they've been doing the last
17 couple of years. Okay, well, that didn't work,
18 let's change the name of the district. Okay, let's
19 get rid of the school board. Okay, let's -- they
20 have no idea. They don't know.

21 But once they have control of the purse
22 strings, your tax dollars, then they start
23 manipulating things. Don't let -- one minute,
24 cool -- just because the food tastes good right now,
25 doesn't mean that it doesn't have poison in it.

1 While you eating today, while you eating today, you
2 going to be dead in a few years.

3 But they're going to take everything and your
4 one individual child or two or three, how many you
5 have, they're going to have their education but your
6 neighborhood will be decimated. You will have kids
7 on the same street who don't know each other. You
8 will have kids on the block over -- I'm sorry -- I
9 didn't introduce, myself, John Phillips. I'm a
10 Normandy alumni. I still live in the district,
11 still live in the district. I work in St. Louis
12 Public Schools. I deal with kids every day.

13 I know -- I grew up in Vinita Park on the
14 southwest part of the district but I got friends to
15 this day from Pine Lawn, from Northwoods, Pagedale,
16 all over the place. When you start divvying up
17 districts and sending kids here and sending -- you
18 got kids who won't even know each other. That's
19 when you have more violence because you're going to
20 have one kid that can go to the next block. Check
21 Chicago. That's what's happening in Chicago. Thank
22 you.

23 MR. SPALTY: Our next speaker is
24 Gwendolyn Buggs. On deck is Henry Watts.

25 MS. BUGGS: Hi, I'm Gwendolyn Buggs and

1 I was an elected board member before the
2 collaborative had taken over. I was on the board
3 for approximately two months, so I didn't really get
4 a chance to get my feet wet. However, I have been a
5 resident of Normandy for over 37 years. All of my
6 children graduated from Normandy. I have three.
7 And my grandchildren is attending Normandy.

8 Normandy School District, I just hate to see
9 the disruption. Like everyone is saying, I agree
10 with a lot of things that I heard here this evening.
11 The DESE, I think, and I mean this, is setting
12 Normandy up to fail.

13 From children being into classrooms where sub
14 teachers are coming in because teachers that are put
15 into the classroom is not equipped or cannot handle
16 the children in some of these classrooms, therefore,
17 you have disruption going. They can't teach because
18 of the disruption.

19 Something needs to be put in place where if
20 you have twenty children in a classroom, if ten is
21 trying to learn, you have ten children that's all
22 over the place, the ten children that until they can
23 find their place or maybe someone to work with them,
24 I don't know if it should be on the individual
25 basis, I can't say ISS helped, something needs to be

1 put in place to try to help these children that are
2 dealing with issues or have disruptions maybe going
3 on in their lives and it's spilling over into the
4 classrooms.

5 You have students -- and my feet is on the
6 ground. I walk the halls of Normandy High School.
7 I try to find out what's going on because I have
8 children in the high school, as well as the middle
9 school. If you go into some of these classrooms you
10 will see that help is needed for these teachers.
11 They can only do so much but to have a student sit
12 in a classroom all year where they're always having
13 a sub this week, a different sub next week.

14 They have a sub -- or they have to go into
15 the library where they're playing games on the
16 computer or they're going into another classroom.
17 They're supposed to be in math and they sitting in a
18 science class. These children have been with the
19 whole year without any type of math or any type of
20 continuous math to help them through the year. Who
21 is failing them now?

22 This is a program that DESE put into place or
23 teachers that they put into place. So you're still
24 failing our district and our schools. I'm not
25 saying it's happening in every classroom but I know

1 it's happening in a quite a few. But the only thing
2 that you hear is, "We're working on it. We will try
3 to find something." well, the year is almost over
4 with and they're still working on it. That needs to
5 change.

6 MR. SPALTY: Our next speaker is Henry
7 Watts. On deck is Rhonda Roberts.

8 MR. WATTS: Good evening.

9 AUDIENCE: Good evening.

10 MR. WATTS: As I sit and listen to
11 everyone else speak I changed quite often what I
12 wanted to say. But I'm currently trustee of the
13 Village of Bel-Ridge. I've served on the board and
14 been part of the district since 1985. I have two
15 daughters that graduated from here. Now I have a
16 grandson. So I come to you as a parent and as a
17 grandparent.

18 And he's ready to graduate now. He's 12th
19 grade and this has been a trying year for him. My
20 family, the Watts, we've been working through a lot
21 of things but I, along with my family, were
22 dedicated to this district. What bothers me, no
23 matter what I say to DESE I believe they're going to
24 do what they want to do anyway. I feel like it's
25 deja vu when I was sitting in this same room when we

1 were introduced about what was going to happen to
2 Wellston. I feel the same thing is going on.

3 I say to DESE, there are families within this
4 community that want this school to remain. We know
5 we have ups, we know we have downs but I can tell
6 you when the downs come the community gathers around
7 this district and we bring ourselves out of it.

8 We talk about a cap. We all know that if we
9 don't get the cap what's going to happen is that
10 you're going to come back and say, "Well, you're
11 bankrupt now, so we can't keep you open." And
12 that's what's going to be.

13 But you guys sit on the board and I'm just
14 being frank with you, you don't live in the homes of
15 these black families that live in this area. We
16 have a lot of issues going on and we need the help.

17 I will make a cry out to all the parents and
18 grandparents who still have kids in this district
19 and will continue to have kids in this district,
20 let's talk about legal action against DESE in terms
21 of not closing this school down. We can file a
22 legal lawsuit because we were told when it became a
23 collaborative that we were accredited. Judge
24 overruled that. He said we're not. And believe
25 that you have to know that they would say that.

1 So I'll step back now but my family and the
2 families that have been in the communities in this
3 area hearts is still in this district and we do not
4 want to see our last predominantly black school
5 dissolve.

6 MR. SPALTY: Our next speaker is Rhonda
7 Roberts. On deck is David Jackson.

8 MS. ROBERTS: My name is Rhonda Roberts
9 and I am very upset. Just listening to everything
10 has made me even more upset. I have a son that
11 graduated from Normandy High School three years ago.
12 He's an A student in college now as an engineer in
13 California and I have a seventh grader and she's at
14 the middle school. I have been in St. Louis now
15 eight years and I am truly a parent. I truly
16 believe that parenting is so, so important.

17 I keep hearing "DESE, DESE," but I would like
18 to say parent, parent, parent. Because it do take
19 more than DESE to handle the things that we really
20 need done. And we can't just say "DESE" all the
21 time.

22 And I am a parent. I volunteer for tenth
23 grade lunch -- excuse me, I'm going back over to the
24 middle school now -- I volunteer for sixth grade
25 lunch at ten, seventh grade lunch at eleven and

1 eighth grade lunch at twelve. I have been here with
2 these children every day since school started.

3 It gets so overwhelming to see. I volunteer
4 right now in the science class, which we have not
5 had a science teacher all year. Every time they
6 come they leave. We just had a young black lady. I
7 was so happy to see a black science teacher. Come
8 back the next week, "Girl, call me, I'll come up
9 here, I'll be supportive, whatever you need me to do
10 I got you." She gone. I come back, we don't have
11 no teacher.

12 The kids are animals. I'm sorry, but if I
13 leave my children at home by themselves they're
14 going to tear my house up. They're not going to cut
15 my grass. They're not going to dump the trash.
16 Matter of fact, they're going to eat all the snacks
17 and not even cook a healthy meal. So I'm not
18 leaving that just up to DESE. It's the whole entire
19 community.

20 And DESE, you too, because all of this has
21 been created through trials and tribulations that I
22 have totally not agreed with. I would not want to
23 take my children out of their home and take them to
24 someone else's house and just drop them on the
25 couch. No, no, no. I wouldn't do that.

1 Right now I'm at school every day with my
2 daughter. When I can't get there and when I'm not
3 at work and when I do have free time for her just to
4 let her know I am going to support you. I believe
5 in the fight.

6 And we cannot afford financially to do what
7 this man just said, get an apartment so she can go
8 to a better school. I don't have that kind of
9 money. I have a disabled husband. I have two
10 children in college and I have a middle schooler.
11 My kids are eight years apart. What should I do
12 other than be active?

13 I'm so willing to be active but if DESE has
14 other options and opportunities that will be greater
15 for the community, please tell me what that's going
16 to be because we need that right now and you're
17 right, I don't see how no white folks can raise
18 black children. I don't see that.

19 I'm from California and I've been in white
20 homes with Arabs, Koreans, African, every single
21 race. I went to a diverse school. So, yes,
22 (speaking gibberish), I had to go through all that.
23 All my class pictures are only me.

24 MR. SPALTY: Your three minutes has
25 elapsed.

1 MS. ROBERTS: One dot. And I am 40
2 years old. So I do have to stand and fight this
3 fight with my child if nobody else does.

4 MR. SPALTY: Our next speaker is David
5 Jackson. On deck is Gerald Higginbotham.

6 MR. JACKSON: Going to do these three
7 minutes quick. My name is David Jackson and I'm
8 currently the president of the Board of Education
9 for the City of St. Louis. And I came here tonight
10 to talk with you, the public, because of what
11 happened to the St. Louis Public Schools, because of
12 what happened to Wellston.

13 What you've seen in those two school
14 districts, Normandy is done. This is just a
15 formality that DESE is following, a protocol.
16 Normandy is done. I strongly suggest that you
17 consider, as parents, and work with this gentleman
18 that has been fighting for Normandy so long, to look
19 at a lawsuit for an injunction to stop whatever DESE
20 is getting ready to do, whether it's moving the
21 district to a charter school district, to marry the
22 district with another school district, it's going to
23 happen.

24 The St. Louis Public Schools took DESE to
25 court and we took DESE to court because of the

1 accreditation process. That's a killer for school
2 districts. Even though they are continuing with
3 MSIP5, which is one of the most horrendous grading
4 systems ever for a school district, that currently
5 there is about 22 school districts throughout this
6 state that are going to be unaccredited at the end
7 of the school year.

8 One of the things that the elected board did
9 was went to lobby the legislature about accredited
10 individual schools. Everyone in government and
11 power tried to stop us from doing that but while we
12 was in the legislature we found out that most of the
13 legislators were retired administrators and retired
14 teachers and they understood the accreditation
15 process and they agreed with us to start accrediting
16 school buildings and not school districts to keep
17 the kids in the district. Once their school is
18 unaccredited they can move to an accredited school
19 within that same district and the money stays there
20 and DESE will be forced to give you resources to
21 keep your school surviving.

22 The St. Louis Public Schools should be
23 unaccredited but it's not. DESE knew because of the
24 Clayton Turner law that the school was going to
25 become unaccredited and thousands of kids would have

1 transferred out of St. Louis Public Schools. That's
2 why they changed the designation accreditation name
3 in Wellston. If you remember, when they first went
4 into Wellston, they changed it. It wasn't
5 accredited and it wasn't unaccredited. They came up
6 with a whole different name just to keep that school
7 alive until they decide what to do with it.

8 Normandy is gone. Please, as parents, as
9 community members of this community, get together,
10 file this lawsuit. You have to use the system. And
11 doing talking, doing this listening is not going to
12 do any good.

13 DESE has refused to talk to the elected board
14 of St. Louis since they took over. Even though the
15 Commissioner Nicastro met with our board three
16 times, the new commissioner will not meet with us
17 and she's sitting here today. We asked to meet with
18 her when she comes to St. Louis. She said her
19 schedule wouldn't accommodate it and she's here
20 today.

21 Normandy is gone.

22 MR. SPALTY: Your three minutes has
23 elapsed.

24 MR. JACKSON: As other folks said, they
25 are going to do exactly what they're going to do.

1 And you need to file this lawsuit. It's so
2 important to do that. Thank you.

3 MS. GLADNEY: Because you all know, you
4 all know because -- turn around. We want to see
5 your faces. Turn around.

6 MR. SPALTY: Tonight's final speaker is
7 Dr. Gerald Higginbotham.

8 MS. GLADNEY: We want to see your faces.
9 You all know this.

10 AUDIENCE MEMBER: The cat's out of the
11 bag.

12 MS. GLADNEY: This is not fair. All
13 we're going to do is come out to your kid's school
14 and you and your kid's school and they're going to
15 lose their accreditation.

16 DR. HIGGINBOTHAM: Good evening. I have
17 been watching this from afar and I live in the
18 county but I'm a businessman here on Goodfellow but
19 also I'm a commercial airline pilot. I'm also the
20 vice president for the American Slave Nation and the
21 spokesperson for the Descendents of American Slaves.

22 And we've been off course for a while. This
23 has been part of an industrial-age system. As I see
24 here on the wall and with the paperwork when I got
25 here, we keep calling ourselves "black" and "African

1 Americans," which is nothing. That's not us. Black
2 is a color. It is -- it's an adjective. It is a
3 description. It is not a culture. We're not
4 African Americans.

5 I'm going to give you a quick strategy to put
6 us in place in a whole other different zone. We're
7 not African Americans because that's a United States
8 immigration term that was given in 1952 for those
9 whites and blacks that immigrated here from Africa
10 that wanted the American dream, wanted a better way
11 to live and once they got the immigration card they
12 were awarded the term "African Americans."

13 The American slave was born on these
14 plantations here in the South. They are Americans.
15 We are descendants of American slaves, which puts us
16 in a whole different category. Now, I want you --
17 I'm giving you something that I want you to begin to
18 think about because we were America's firstborn
19 descendants. We have firstborn rights.

20 America owes no one but the slave culture and
21 President Obama is probably going to drop something
22 next year for reparation for the American slave
23 culture, which is what you are. There really is no
24 shortage of money as it relates to the American
25 slave culture because America for 247 years got paid

1 and our ancestors got played.

2 So I'm just sharing this with you that
3 although slavery was legal, it was a crime against
4 humanity and the debt is still out there right now
5 and they're going to have to pay. So I want you to
6 begin to think slavery. The word "slave" is illegal
7 terminology because America is a corporation and it
8 operates off contracts laws, proper legal
9 documentation.

10 I encourage you to file a lawsuit but at the
11 same time I want you to begin to start thinking
12 about you adopting the slave -- American slave
13 culture because the whole civil war America did not
14 pay the American slave culture and she has been
15 struggling ever since. They didn't give her no type
16 of leadership, guidance or how to enter into
17 mainstream America.

18 So things are now being put in place for you,
19 for this group, your culture, American slave
20 culture, that will help take us to whole other
21 level. There is no shortage of money when it comes
22 to the American slave culture. Things are going to
23 be happening pretty quickly here so that we can
24 begin to create our own schools and create
25 community-based schools to educate our people about

1 our heritage, really who we are, because we have
2 been misidentified in American pecking order.

3 This country operates off culture. Culture.
4 If you are without a culture you have nothing.
5 There's no such thing as black Americans or African
6 Americans for us. And I thank you.

7 DR. PEARSON: This concludes the
8 community meeting portion of the board meeting. At
9 this point we will return to the Board of Education
10 meeting, if I'm not mistaken, is that correct?

11 MS. VANDEVEN: That's correct.

12 DR. PEARSON: So, yes, this concludes
13 this portion. So we would ask the board to come
14 back up front.

15 (Whereupon, the record ended at 8:00 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I, Suzanne Zes, within and for the State of Missouri, do hereby certify that the witness whose testimony appears in the foregoing deposition was duly sworn by me; the testimony of said witness was taken by me to the best of my ability and thereafter reduced to typewriting under my direction; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this deposition was taken, and further that I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties thereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.

Court Reporter

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