

BOE Public Comment April 5, 2010

When I was in college in the late 70s, I took a Statistics class. Part of our required reading was a book by Darryl Huff called *How to Lie with Statistics*. He opens the book with a quote some attribute to Twain; some to Disraeli, *“There are 3 kinds of lies: Lies, Damn Lies and Statistics”*.

It brings to mind statements made last September by Mr. Tedesco who pointed to the 46% EOG passing rate of lower SES elementary students as proof that busing didn't work. He neglected the data that showed a 20 point improvement for the same SES class of students by 9th grade, but instead isolated one number and drew a misleading conclusion from it.

Once again certain data-challenged members of the Board are cherry-picking data for use in spurious ways in a blatant attempt to “prove” the validity of their segregationist and classist policy changes. The March 23rd response to the Office of Civil Rights uses selected data on student achievement and falsely concludes that “busing for diversity” (5% of busing) is the root cause of poor achievement for the disadvantaged.

Hence ‘neighborhood schools’ is touted as the panacea for our school systems ills.

We must not make claims about student achievement without accounting for other pertinent factors: our extraordinary growth, declining per pupil expenditures, and POVERTY. Had we been funded at the rate of Charlotte for the last 7 years, we would have an additional 205 million dollars for students plus another \$20 million from Eli Broad himself.

The sad truth is that high poverty, racially identifiable schools do not become schools of choice and do not achieve without

substantially more resources than middle class schools. Take Walnut Creek and the Renaissance Four. A short-term spike in funding may deliver a short-lived boost in achievement. Then what?

Think beyond a quick fix. How happy are suburban, middle class parents going to be if you move strong teachers and programs from their schools to schools with greater needs? Will this be a zero-sum game where there are winners and losers? With Wake's shrinking budgets, it's not only the disadvantaged families of Wake County that will lose; all taxpayers will make tremendous sacrifices to keep high poverty schools afloat, a fact that suburban parents will be up in arms about... and the privatization movement is salivating over.

Another quote from Disraeli...

"Ignorance never settles a question."