

Mr. Chairman, Superintendent Tata, Members of the Board:

I'm Neil Riemann, from Raleigh. My children attend your schools. I'm here tonight to talk about the use and abuse of data.

You cannot properly consider the relationship between two sets of data without thinking about why that relationship exists. And once you have a thought about that, you have to test it against alternative explanations to see if your thought is right or wrong.

The Board's recent response to the Office of Civil Rights avoids that responsibility, and the arguments it makes deserve some criticism.

Heather pointed out to you one affirmative and material misstatement that counsel and client alike have an obligation to correct.

The response also argues that the diversity policy has failed because minority students at magnets perform worse than minority students elsewhere. If these minority students were similarly situated, they should perform the same, but they probably aren't. More likely, the minority students in our magnet schools are poorer than minority students elsewhere, because they are mostly base students, and the base population of our magnets usually includes a poorer minority base than our average school. On average, poorer minority students perform less well than affluent ones, just as poor whites perform less well than affluent whites. So the correlation does not show the causation that the response implies.

When you claim to be driven by data, you have a responsibility to present data fairly. When you fail to do that, you have a responsibility to admit it. What was presented here, and repeated in and by the media, was misleading, wrong, and shameful in a number of respects.

Thank you for your attention.