

**Nov. 17, 2010 - Principal's Coffee at Leesville Road Middle School (LRMS)
With Special Guest Deborah Prickett**

About 35 - 40 people in attendance including the principals of LRES and Hilburn. There were about 10 Hilburn parents present and several from Sycamore Creek. Also in attendance was some of the women who worked on her campaign and were behind the calendar changes on the campus.

Principal Hamler started the meeting by saying they have 1325 students. (FYI, bricks and mortar capacity is 899 and adjusted capacity is 1205) Because of that and the resulting class sizes they have been given 14 additional months of employment for the year. She will be hiring additional staff to reduce class sizes.

She also mentioned that there have been no in-school suspensions during the past two years.

Prickett was introduced. She talked about how she worked at LRMS for five years, and how she'd received lots of support from Leesville families via emails, calls, etc., noting that, although Leesville is just one of 15 schools in her district, Leesville is very important to her.

DP said she's no longer a character consultant but is in a new job with a program called 21st Center and she travels around the state assessing after-school programs.

Re: SAC and Oct. 5th directive

DP claimed repeatedly that, until the Oct. 5th directive from Debra Goldman that halted its work, the Student Assignment Committee was doing well and making progress, always referring to John Tedesco's plan as a "community zone" plan. But she also repeatedly said that "it was just a draft" and they didn't have a chance to give the community what they wanted. She repeated the phrase "All of a sudden on Oct 5th a directive came out..." Made the point that while Goldman presented it, it was written by Hill and Sutton. She said the directive said we "can't have a community zone plan."

In trying to explain why Goldman brought the resolution, DP said Goldman was not happy about being excluded from the SAC and she didn't like the concept of no base schools. Now that the zone plan has been stopped, there is no plan after the 3-year plan ends next year.

Regarding Prickett's "brainstorm" to make Hilburn Elementary a 6th grade center, she said they "tried a couple different things..." but it's still under-enrolled. Didn't mention what they were. Said that both it and York (also under-enrolled) were struggling to keep parents involved. Response to Hilburn being a 6th grade center has yielded "mixed response" from parents.

At one point, on a tangent about open meeting laws, she stated that Chuck Dulaney's assignment committee – since it didn't involve BOE members – was not subject to open

meeting laws so they could make decisions in private. She talked at length about how the node system pits neighbors against neighbors, trying to make the case that having 16 zones would lessen the fighting between parents over assignment “because the lines would be fluid.”

She mentioned the idea floated at the Nov. 16 BOE work session to move SE Raleigh kids out of LRMS to ease overcrowding. However, these 78 students would have the option to grandfather and remain; it DP telling these families – or anyone else – that? She said she put LRMS’s overcrowding “on the radar,” but presented that as one of the suggestions that was made, and the implication was that it didn't come from her; she said that it would "help those kids go to school closer to home, and still maintain diversity." (yes, she said that!) No mention of what MS these kids would attend, nor whether that would be a long-term solution. When Sycamore Creek reaches capacity (they’re almost there), the additional rising 6th graders coming over to LRMS will likely negate the additional seats vacated by SE Raleigh students.

Questions

The only questions DP acknowledged receiving in advance (as she requested), dealt with “housekeeping” issues like cell phone use and crossing guards. We know there were at least two other questions – related to meatier topics – that were sent to her, but she did not mention them. She then took questions from the audience.

Most of the questions were from Hilburn parents. They wanted to know if the idea of converting Hilburn into a 6th grade center is a serious proposal. Hilburn’s PTA president pointed out that if the justification for that is that Hilburn is under-enrolled, there would be even fewer kids there if it becomes a 6th grade center. She said that using it as a k-2 center for Hilburn and Leesville made more sense and would "keep the community together." When Prickett moved on to the next question without answering hers, she said "can I get an answer?" Following the meeting Hilburn’s PTA president, principal and other Hilburn parents were huddled together.

Another parent asked what the directive (Kevin Hill’s) that passed at work session meant. It seemed like the question was fed to DP by a supporter to give her a chance to divert the audience after some previous negative questions and comments. DP gave a long rambling answer. She characterized the directive as a “stall tactic.” She claimed it wasn't Hill's idea but that he got it from some training they'd gone through. DP said it was supposed to build consensus, but "we don't have any consensus!" she laughed. DP basically belittled the whole thing and (again) stated that Tedesco's zone plan is not allowed because of the Oct 5 directive. Then she rambled on about her objection to using student achievement in assignment, mentioning this is what the Alves plan will do. She said that testing (EOGs, EOCs) are at the state level and only measure how well a student is able to test on a specific date, and that that was not a good indicator of achievement/basis for determining a school assignment.

Another question had to do with middle school electives and how magnets have so many and LRMS has none (which is not quite true, and of course that decision is made by the

principal). DP said, “now that the zone plan was dead,” she didn't know how they would be able to address the equity issue of electives across the district. She also said now that we are "going back to nodes" we would have the same problems as before, implying a move to zones would somehow result in more electives at LRMS. Marguerite raised her hand to ask DP to explain how that would work, but was not acknowledged.

Another Hilburn parent with a 1st grade, special needs child praised the program her son is attending. Her concern: “How can I be sure he will continue to have his needs met if Hilburn becomes a 6th grade center?” DP said the hope would be that her son would have his needs met at any Wake County school, but hopefully everything at Hilburn would stay the same and “we won’t need to close the school.”

One interesting comment from a teacher, who is also a Sycamore Creek parent; he is concerned with the additional costs that would result from making Hilburn a sixth grade center. He talked about how two buses would need to go to each neighborhood to pick up the 6th graders and 7/8th graders, or that one bus would have to stop at both places, and wouldn’t that add to costs? He also noted that he'd emailed DP about buses arriving late. There was one bus that was late every day due to the tight schedule on the 3-tiered bus schedule. The implication was that she didn't respond. He said he got in touch with Kevin Hill and within two weeks the problem was solved.

Overall, there were not many difficult questions raised, and none were answered.