

Amelia Lumpkin's Speech to the BOE during Public Comment March 3 2011

Transcription:

Hi, my name is Amelia and I attended Wake County Public School System from the time that I was in kindergarten—and this is Mrs. Yarborough, my kindergarten teacher—all the way through twelfth grade and I graduated in 2009. I am here today to respond to a couple of statements and ideas put forth by a couple of the board members in regards to student achievement.

First of all, Superintendent Tata stated that he refuses to *trade* student achievement for diversity. While I am definitely a fan of student achievement, I think that this is a *false choice*. I don't believe that student achievement and diversity are diametrically opposed. You CAN have both. In fact, I believe that diversity is a part of a well-rounded achievement plan.

Second of all, another statement that troubled me a bit was when Mr. Tedesco asserted that concentrating low-income students into a high poverty school would create a colossal enough crisis that the county *couldn't* ignore it and would better allow us to concentrate services for "them" over "there" as if this is the *only* way for these students to achieve. AGAIN, I think this is another false choice. Who says that you can't provide services to free and reduced lunch, low income, or at-risk students in a diverse school? The detection of this problem is good. I think that we need to pay more attention to students who tend to slip through the cracks. However, I think this solution is proven to fail. High poverty schools all over the country—especially in Charlotte-Mecklenburg as another colleague pointed out—fail all around the country. No one advocates for these students and we can't ensure high quality programs and teachers for these students. Instead of changing the entire program, tweak it.

I think that diversity can *fuel* achievement by providing knowledge, awareness, and understanding of other cultures and perspectives, which give students intellectual curiosity and a well-rounded education. Second, it gives students skills of interaction. When they have teamwork, group work, and interpersonal interactions with students that are different, they prepare to be citizens of the world and not just of their own backyard. Third, you can find resources within a diverse student body, like the Eagle Buddies program provided at my old high school in which students in AP classes tutor students in standard level classes. Please consider these thoughts, thank you.