

John Eaton Elementary School

Washington, DC

Local School Restructuring Team

January 15, 2008

4:00 – 6:00 pm

Participants: LSRT members --- Noah Steinberg, Laura Broach, Joy Carroll, Wallis, Lisa Freda, Diane Magruder, Susan Eastman, Carolyn Barnhardt, Kelley Ellsworth, David Shapinsky, Margot Berkey, Trish Berman, Claudia Withers and Lucy Mallan. Eaton parents Mary Ann Nash, and Laura Bowman and Eaton faculty member Anne Dullea also participated in the meeting.

Good News and Community Concerns

- The Eaton Spelling Bee went well --- Eaton winners are 5th graders Emiliano Munoz and Ramsey Tomasi-Carr, who will go on to represent Eaton at the next level.

Principal Selection Process

DCPS Process

LSRT members began the discussion of the principal selection process with a report from Noah Steinberg of his conversation with John Davis regarding the DCPS process for selecting principals for next year. Mr. Davis indicated that the process would be as follows:

- In February, Rhee would determine which interim principals would be eligible for consideration as permanent principals.
- School communities would, in February, designate a panel of 13 members consisting of community members, support staff, parents and teachers,
- In March --- the panel designated by the school would determine if they wish to hire Ms. Gartrell as the permanent Principal. . If there is not 80% concurrence, the panel would seek to interview additional candidates. This panel would decided whether or not to include Ms. Gartrell among the pool of candidates.
- In April/May, the panel would conduct interviews with the additional candidates.

What Eaton will Do

LSRT members discussed the extent to which its input regarding the potential retention of Ms. Gartrell would be considered --- there was acknowledgement that Rhee would make her decision in her own time. It is not clear that Eaton is on the Chancellor's radar screen as a school needing her special attention. What one parent indicated was that she heard Rhee say at a private dinner that different schools require different kinds of leadership.

Another issue discussed by the group was: What if Gartrell doesn't meet the goal of 10% increase in test scores that has been set by Chancellor Rhee as a criteria for retention? Margot Berkey noted that given that final DCCAS results would not be available until August, that factor would not be preclusive to the spring decision process. However, we do not know what role our DC BAS scores may have in her decision-making.

There was a fair amount of discussion regarding the parent survey conducted in the fall; there was a consensus of the group that whatever concerns there were about what the survey did not ask, the survey did demonstrate the community's vote of confidence in Ms. Gartrell.

The group then talked about whether LSRT wants to say to the Chancellor NOW that we support Mrs. Gartrell prior to Rhee's determination regarding her status. Some felt that we should perhaps not signal our position now before the process begins; others noted that there was no harm in having LSRT or HSA do so. It was noted that the parents, teachers and students at Cardozo HS were telling everyone that their interim principal had their support --- they communicated that at every level, including providing testimony to the State Board of Education in a hearing on restructuring and the role that a strong leader can have in turning a school around.

The group further discussed the extent to which Gartrell is hampered by her status as an interim from making the hard decisions regarding Eaton's future.

Lucy Mallan said that there have been no considerations of the costs of going through with a process that would have Mrs. Gartrell compete with other candidates.

There followed a fair amount of discussion about why the individual LSRT members felt that Mrs. Gartrell was worthy of confidence at this time. The teachers at the meeting indicated their strong support for Mrs. Gartrell, and they would like to see her stay under any circumstances. They noted that the survey indicates that they support her. They asked why the Eaton community needs to put her up against applicants we don't know. Ms. Freda noted that its not really

a vote of confidence to say “ we like you, but...” Ms. Dullea pointed out that Eaton has slipped in recent years, and that the last two years have been particularly bad. We almost lost two veteran teachers last year because morale was so bad. Now things are looking up --- there is team building, and support for the teachers. Ms. Gartrell is inspiring, and working effectively to bring this disparate community together. Ms. Freda pointed out further that even though Mrs. Gartrell was not a part of Eaton’s strategic planning conversations, she was resolving many of the concerns expressed by the community during that process.

Trish Berman echoed Ms. Freda and Ms. Dullea, and said that the staff has been inspired to work harder for Eaton. As a parent, she said that if teachers support Mrs. Gartrell, then she would trust that.

Mr. Steinberg indicated that he had been originally in favor of going through with the process in terms of having Mrs. Gartrell compete with others for the position of permanent principal at Eaton, but had come recently to feel that it was not necessary.

Ms. Magruder said that Eaton has a vision statement, which Gartrell had made operational, even though she was not a part of what had been done to develop the Eaton vision.

Kelley noted that she and fellow H.S.A. co-president met regularly with Mrs. Gartrell each Thursday, and that she was impressed by her attention to teambuilding, and at looking at the individual progress for each child --- the development of “prescriptions.”

A parent present at the meeting said that she liked Mrs. Gartrell also, but that she had no idea what Mrs. Gartrell’s vision is for Eaton, and that other parents feel the same way. While she thought it was important not to short circuit the process, it would be helpful for her to know what Mrs. Gartrell plans to achieve for Eaton.

Kelley informed the group that Ms. Gartrell had mentioned writing a “State of the School” report to give to parents. Based on the foregoing discussion the group decided to encourage Mrs. Gartrell to do a “state of the school” report, and also make a presentation to parents regarding her vision for Eaton. This would enable the broader parent community to hear directly from the interim principal and ask her questions.

After more discussion, LSRT members unanimously voted to affirm their support of Ms. Gartrell in writing now, and to send a letter to Ms. Rhee to that effect. David Shapinsky offered to do an initial draft for circulation. Members further

noted the importance of honoring the DCPS process, and of not foreclosing different decisions about strategy that might be made by the Home and School Association (H.S.A) regarding the issue of support for Mrs. Gartrell.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:55 pm.

submitted by LSRT Secretary Claudia A. Withers