

Dear BOE Members,

I am Patty Soracin, a Region 14 parent for the past 7 years. My name may be familiar to most of you because I have been an active parent in the schools, at BOE meetings and am one of the faces behind the "get out the vote" effort during every budget season for the past 3 years. I am writing to you and breaking my silence concerning the new direction this region is taking because I believe it is time for me to do so.

Following the BOE workshop where Dr. Cronin proposed the K-2, 3-5 configuration, I spent countless hours researching and formulating what I perceive to be the benefits and disadvantages of this reconfiguration as a parent, community member and teacher. I articulated any concerns I had to Dr. Cronin before the BOE meeting that was held in the auditorium. I continue to attend and listen to all comments, questions and responses. However, I must tell you that I have significant reservations regarding this plan at this point. Placing my personal opinion aside, I feel we have a greater problem than just animosity toward this reconfiguration. When I sat through the last meeting in the cafeteria, I realized that history was repeating itself. The argument might be different, but the problem surrounding the process remains the same. I can't imagine that any one of you feel that the way in which this was done was the best at this time given the history in this region. So many plans have come and gone, not because people didn't believe they had merit, but because the process failed them. Dr. Cronin doesn't have that history simply because he hasn't lived in our communities, but all of you do. So my frustration is directed toward the 8 people who had the opportunity to help Dr. Cronin heal this region and develop a process that, although slow to most, would allow the people of this region to have buy-in for once.

There was no trust in this Region and now that problem is worsened. We have always had voting issues in this region that were slowly beginning to turn around, but we now have a significant population of angry parents/community members who have become this year's "No" voters. The BOE and superintendent have had credibility issues during the past 5 years and I am not seeing that change at all. Why is that? I imagine it is because for the past three years, we have been expected to buy three different plans that each, we were told, was the best fix for our region. I literally have three different packets in my possession and the packets now negate one another. The first plan was the fifth grade move as a permanent solution. I will remind you what happened as a result of that proposal. The

anger that surrounded the fifth grade move cost us a much-needed piece of land and 5 budgets. Those of us who care about education remember; our kids remember. They were with all of us on the town green in Bethlehem the day before school opened holding signs that begged people passing by to vote in favor of the budget so they could have their teachers for the next day. Nothing will ever be worth that again. I understand the general perception is that the large mass of opposing parents will get tired and eventually go away. Each time the process fails us, the opposition lingers for longer periods of time and I honestly do not believe it is going to go away this time. The consequences to that misperception are becoming obvious. There are no signs or movements large enough to fix this one.

I am asking that you acknowledge the mess we now have in this district. Adjust the proposed timeline and remedy the process. Let the district heal, allow the parents who are directly impacted (for the long term) by this plan to ask questions, get proof of answers and have input in the future of their children by allowing a referendum to take place, let Dr. Cronin attend to the other issues that plague this district and gain some credibility. So many important discussions need to happen that can't because all focus is on this plan and the lines of communication have shut down. It is these issues that are hurting the education of the kids. My children are becoming proof of that. This district is a barren wasteland compared to the resources, staff and program possibilities we had 7 years ago. We have become a runaway locomotive heading for a mountainside. I feel I deserve to have the confidence that my children can remain here without sacrificing their education in doing so. I am no longer sure that I can.

My hope is that on December 5th all of you will speak to the process and how it needs to be and will be adjusted to place us back on track. I will be there, I will be listening and this will be a defining moment for us all.

Sincerely,
Patty Soracin