

Joan M. Seifried Taylor

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen of the Board, Dr. Weast, members of the audience.

I would like to pose some questions tonight that might better be placed before the MCPS staff. Hopefully you will find the questions intriguing enough to ask them yourselves.

~ Has the Montgomery County Public School system filled all of its special education teacher vacancies yet?

~ How many of these are long term substitutes who are not qualified as special education teachers?

~ Will newly-included students coming from Learning Center placements have a second special educator or general educator in their "co-taught" classes, or will they have something akin to a Teaching Assistant?

~ Do you consider placement in a co-taught class of thirty students to be equivalent to the teacher-student ratio and specialized services Learning Center students had in their previous program?

~ What is the average size of an inclusion class: is it significantly smaller than so-called regular classes, as promised?

~ What is the maximum size of an inclusion class?

~ Does the maximum inclusion class size vary by grade?

~ By what date will enough teachers be hired to accomplish the class-size goal in each class in each grade in each school?

~ Are Special Education students being counted when class size is being determined?

~ Do Special Education students count as whole numbers or fractions when you are tallying students in a class?

~ In co-taught classrooms, what is the average student-to-teacher ratio?

~ What is the maximum student-to-teacher ratio?

~ Which schools have the highest student-to-teacher ratio?

~ What percentage of teachers in co-taught classrooms are highly qualified in their subject, as required by federal law?

~ What percentage of co-taught classrooms have two highly qualified teachers?

~ By what date will the remaining non-highly qualified teachers become highly qualified?

~ What percentage of aides in the classrooms are paraeducators with appropriate training in inclusive classroom methods?

~ By what date will the remaining aides become trained and certified as paraeducators with

inclusion training?

~ If the Learning Centers were such a dismal failure, why are so many parents fighting tooth and nail to keep their children in them, from elementary through middle and high schools?

~ And finally, I have a comment to make as the parent of a fully-included special needs student in the 8th grade. My daughter has been on the honor roll every quarter; she is thriving in general education classes due to the accommodations, modifications, and support she receives from her teachers, paraeducators and most of all, her case manager, Mrs. Lisa Stephen, and our Principal, Kim Johnson. She is, however, the pariah of the school, and can't buy a friend. The stigma of being in Special Education has plagued her since 2nd grade, and the student body has both a long memory and wagging tongues. It is for this reason that I find the claims of complete acceptance of and love for the incoming Learning Center students at their home schools to be highly suspect.

Thank you for your time and patience, and may your offspring never have special needs.

Joan Taylor