

Testimony: Ray Moreno – Impact Silver Spring

Good evening President Brandman, members of the Board, and Dr. Weast. My name is Ray Moreno with Impact Silver Spring and I am grateful for your efforts to come out into the community to hold these Community Forums. It's these sorts of efforts that continue to set this school system apart.

Tonight, I am here to speak about an exciting effort in the Piney Branch E.S. community in partnership with Eric Davis & John Landesman from the DFCP. Most of you are familiar with this wonderful school and the amazing progress it continues to make under Principal Generlette leadership. But things hadn't always been that way at Piney Branch Seven year ago, 70 percent of the minority students, some 200 students were below their reading and math level and there was evidence of inequities in what is considered one of the most progressive communities in this nation. But much has changed, the achievement gap is being eliminated, teachers have a greater capacity to support the diverse needs of its students and the community has a greater commitment to helping create a school where every child is successful. Let me say it again, the community largely wants what's best for every child and not just what's best for their individual child. There are still lots of challenges but there is also a strong will to creating a culture of inclusion, equity and success for every child.

Last month, a group of 15 diverse parents, teachers and administrators went away on an overnight retreat and have committed to continue meeting every other week over the school year to build deeper relationships of trust, increase cultural awareness and take action toward creating a new school culture. They'll invest more than 75 hours of time together and spend time examining how each of them experiences school, look at practices like the Parent Teacher conference and assess how current school leadership structures like the PTA meet the needs of every family. They'll lay the foundation for creating & sustaining a school culture that truly meets the needs of all its children, educators and families.

I leave you with the lyrics of a of a song sung by the great Reggae singer Jimmy Cliff, ***Many rivers to cross and it's only our will, that will help our children find their way over!!***