



JOINT STATEMENT FROM SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS REGARDING THE RIVER CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL REZONING DECISION

Cheryl Burke
Liz Doerr
Nicole Jones
Dawn Page

On Monday night, the school board crossed the line.

Here are the facts:

- River City Middle School is over 100% capacity, overcrowded by 400+ students jeopardizing students' safety and education.
- The principals of the affected middle schools – Boushall, Brown, River City and Binford ALL approved the rezoning plan.
- A rezoning committee consisted of students, parents, staff and Board members met for five months, hosted numerous community meetings, and knocked on 4,000 community members' doors to solicit feedback. All meetings were livestreamed and translated in Spanish and remain on the RPS website [today](#).
- Board members had ample opportunities to ask for additional information from the administration but waited until the day of the vote to ask their questions.
- Despite the recommendations of the committee, all principals and the superintendent, the board voted no on the committee's recommendation.
- There is no time before the new school year to run a different rezoning process.
- After the decision principals were in the hallways crying with the administration left in the room choking back tears.
- The reason cited for voting no, is that this decision will add 40 additional students to Binford Middle school and "take away" open enrollment seats from families that school choice into Binford for its specialty arts program through open enrollment. Based on [a report](#) commissioned by this board earlier this year we know that open enrollment seats disproportionately advantage white families and families that have greater access to information and transportation. The board covertly made excuses for the real reason why the decision was voted "No".
- The school board prioritized school choice that advantages white and affluent families over the safety and security of Black and Brown students on the southside.

We must fight the ugly stain of racism and inequality that interferes with the decision-making of this board. Often, leaders have to grapple with difficult choices in order to balance the world as it is and the world as we wish it could be. We may all wish there were unlimited open enrollment slots to provide access to popular programs like the one at Binford, but is that wish more important than the day-to-day educational experience of the entire River City student body? We



may agree that smaller schools are often beneficial for students, but does that exempt us from our responsibility to provide safe educational environments for the "actual" number of students we serve? In a dream world with unlimited funding, we might decide to build additional smaller schools rather than engage in rezoning, but in the world *as it is*, we are responsible for ensuring the resources our district does have are equitably deployed to benefit all of our students.

Often, we can't do everything we wish we could do, and choices must be made. The choice made by five school board colleagues on Monday, effectively abandons 400+ children to overcrowding in River City in order to preserve ~40 open enrollment spaces in one of the better-resourced schools in the district is a clear dereliction of that duty we have to make hard choices. It's overt resource hoarding, and people who purport to be about equity but refuse to make decisions based on the reality of our physical spaces and budgetary constraints are engaging in political theater and nothing more. The entire River City community will pay the price of this unconscionable decision.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cheryl L. Burke".

Hon. Cheryl Burke

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liz Doerr".

Hon. Liz Doerr

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicole Jones".

Hon. Nicole Jones

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dawn C. Page".

Hon. Dawn Page