



## Racine Unified School District

2220 Northwestern Avenue, Racine, Wisconsin 53404-2597

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**RACINE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Board of Education  
Communications Committee  
Listening Session  
Racine/Kenosha Urban League Office  
714 N. Memorial Drive  
January 11, 2007  
7 p.m.**

### MINUTES

Present: Board of Education Members: Don Nielsen and Tony Baumgardt  
Community members  
Also present: Recording Secretary, Darlene Gallup

#### **Welcome – Board Member, Don Nielsen**

Mr. Nielsen and Mr. Baumgardt were introduced. Mr. Nielsen reviewed and explained the scenario and questions for the session.

#### **Questions and Discussion**

Mr. Nielsen presented the following scenario and related discussion questions:

1. **The year is 2015. During the past 9 years, the Racine Unified School District has transformed itself, and has been recognized by the US Department of Education as one of the 10 most exemplary public school districts in the United States. New neighbors have asked you to describe RUSD to help them decide whether to enroll their children here. How would you describe that exemplary school district in 2015 in terms of the following:**

#### **A. Student academic preparation**

##### Responses included:

- Issues we address tonight would not exist. Regardless of race, background, etc., all would get top education at any school. Now, where you place student says how they get educated. On the color line, we are on the bottom of testing.
- Any school in Racine would be a quality school. Students would be doing their best at their level.
- No Mack Achievement Center. No necessity because issues that bring them there would not exist. Some principals would have to be fired.
- Students be able to walk to a specialty school. A high tech school available like in Kenosha. Jefferson Lighthouse would not be the only specialty school. New schools would be where they need to be – Lincoln and Memorial – and have the same things as Jefferson Lighthouse.
- At high school level, prepare students for a job when they leave school.
- When they get to high school, they have already been exposed to a foreign language.
- Nice to have it said throughout that RUSD has stood up for every student in the district, racially, socio-economically, ect. for at least the last eight years. Schools that work.
- Equal amounts of money spent for each student. Better teacher, administrative salaries. Students achievement at or above grade level.
- Concerned about overcrowding in the classrooms. More schools and downsize class size (15-20). Open campus for students. Cafeterias not large enough and its not good enough reason to have them running in the streets.

#### **B. The District's operational efficiencies**

##### Responses included:

- Not discussed.

### **C. The state of the District's facilities**

#### Responses included:

- Not discussed.

### **2. In order to fully prepare our students to live and perform well in the world they will inherit in 2015, what will they need beyond academic preparation?**

#### Responses included:

- Knowledge of self. African American history should be just as important as any other history. Not just slavery. Need to know the contributions through history.
- Not just whites assigning the textbooks.
- All classes for all students. Colorblind textbooks.
- Learn about each other.
- Extra curricular activities reflect African American students (songs, music, theater)
- Increased African American participation in extra curricular activities (provide transportation)
- If you want to be Cinderella in a play, and are African American, you can.
- Transportation will not be an issue.
- Sports in middle school will exist.
- Get rid of outdated books.
- School-age children out and involved in what is happening with their schools. More emphasis on things that will affect their lives (civic involvement, political education, taxes, voting, referendums, etc.).
- Can't educate them segregated and expect them to live in a world that is different.
- Understanding that the system works for the student – they have ownership in their education and their community.

### **3. What would be required to make this vision of the future a reality?**

#### Responses included:

- Commitment on part of school board for realistic policies toward this. I don't see decisions being made. Need new capital and revenues.
- Not just commitment from the school district, African American men have to step up too.
- A broader color spectrum on the school board. Need African Americans to run for seats on the school board.
- Have numbered seats on the school board for equal representation.
- Have a supportive community.
- Let senior citizens and baby boomers know what is up with education and not oppose our students. Get them involved in the schools.
- We don't need numbered seats on the school board. We once lost the city and won the county. If you have an informed and involved community, they will elect the people who have their values. Would like to see RUSD set up a mechanism for the community to have the information they need to make the right decisions in voting.
- People on the board are not from the inner city and can't relate to those issues.
- Have seats with more accountability to the public.
- Need to look at the more global aspect. Institutional racism needs to be addressed.
- Means district turning to the community, to achieve its goals of equality, to come forward and get on board to make changes happen. Bring people together.

### **4. What are the barriers we must overcome in order to succeed?**

#### Responses included:

- How much do school board members know about educating children instead of just money. Focus on education.
- No union/school board battle.
- Tell the truth about finances (busing, neighborhood schools).
- Better communication.
- Think now about the second and third graders now.
- Trust in school board members and their decisions.
- Have visionaries that are all-inclusive.
- Look to the future one day at a time.

### **5. What ideas or suggestions would you like to bring forward that were not discussed during this session?**

#### Responses included:

- Not discussed.

### **Other Comments**

- Help where it is needed – kids that are failing.
- Have kids get credit for community service – that is an education (i.e., help the elderly).
- Let the seniors tutor in the schools. Bring the whole community together.
- Encourage people to come back to the inner community.

### **Adjournment**

The session ended at 8:25 p.m.

### **Review**

Not done.