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CER Memorandum

TO: Marion DiBrienza
Unity Charter School
Morristown, New Jersey

FROM: Jeanne Allen 

DATE: February 1, 1999

RE: THE UNITY CHARTER SCHOOL DILEMMA



Per our conversation, here are some formulated thoughts regarding your situation.

- 1) Your Battle: Is political, more than legal. You will be doggedly pursued no matter what you do. Your solution, therefore, is also political. You must develop and execute a plan, which sends a clear and overwhelmingly positive signal to the school board that both you, and the majority of the community, want choices and Unity is one of them.
- 2) Education: You must recruit a large number of parents throughout your own community, as well as invoking other neighboring communities, that will become strong allies. Amongst these folks you also need designated letter-writers, spokespeople, etc.
- 3) Public Relations: You said you have someone, and it's time to go on the offensive. Securing speeches at Lions, Kiwanis, VFW, whatever the venue that exists. Has anyone conveyed concerns to local area religious leaders? Bring them onboard too.
- 4) National Attention: We do need to secure at least one big piece (print or broadcast) that illuminates how big, bad school boards are beating up teeny, tiny parent groups over a major, popular reform as innocuous as charter schools. Given that you are not alone, and there are more than a few dozen others in your same boat, I am wondering whether both Tom Mayer and I could revisit Paul Gigot for a Wall Street Journal piece? I will speak to Tom about it, but you might see what other media connections you have among your resources, and I will pursue some other colleagues on this end.

5) Enclosed: There are some background materials that might help inform you, provide some hope, and offer some instructive material. After you have had a chance to review these, I would like to talk again to you, and perhaps your Governing board chair, as to how best to proceed. In the meantime, I would like you to get a sense as to just how pro-active parents and neighbors are willing to be. I think it's your only hope.

(That said, who is your local state Representative, and Senator in Trenton? There might be strategies to employ there, too).

I hope these thoughts are useful. Please keep me apprised of any developments, and let my office know when would be a good time in the near future to talk again.

Best of luck in your battle, and my best regards.

JA/bhb

Enclosures

cc: Thomas Mayer - Kramer, Levin, Naftalis & Frankel, LLP, New York, NY
Bob Howitt - WKBJ Partnership Foundation, Denville, NJ

bcc: Robin Coblyn
Cara Putman

MARION DiBRIENZA MEMO
UNITY CHARTER SCHOOL
ENCLOSURES:
1. SRH -
mark section III
2. Charter piece on
obstacles
3. work book!
4. - MAG