

March 14, 2014

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Board,

On behalf of the parent representatives of the PTCA executive committee, this month I report to you our concerns in this letter. While some of what we have to report is painful, we stand ready and willing to offer our help, our advice, and our talents to work together for the benefit of our children. To achieve this goal, we strongly recommend the development of an institutionalized process for parents and the administration to collaborate and communicate with each other to make the decisions that affect our children's academic growth, their health and safety, and the future of our school.

We want to partner with the Board and with the administration to undo the damage which began when the two schools merged and the Board makeup changed. Since that time, the decision-making process has failed to adequately include parental involvement, and the results are now untenable.

As elected officers of the school's PTCA, we represent parents who are passionately concerned about the educations their children receive at ANCS. Parents attend our meetings, our coffees, and other events to support the school's mission and be part of the school community. They volunteer their time and give their money, and our school cannot continue to be the wonderful place it is without their efforts. They are *the* stakeholders; they built our school and their input must be valued within the community and among the leadership.

Tuesday night it became abundantly clear that the continuing communication failures have significantly impaired our ability to work productively together and now threaten the mission and vision of who we are. The PTCA meeting that night underscored for us just how close we are to losing the engagement of the parent community. Parents feel shut out; their concerns ignored. That loss of connection makes our job of supporting collaboration between parents and teachers much harder. This meeting was another major lost opportunity, and the unfortunate result is many parents feel even more alienated than they did before.

We have to do better than this.

We cannot believe this is your intention; that the Board would support processes that erode parental involvement is antithetical to our dearest values. We understand that parents are messy, that their suggestions may be unworkable or unrealistic, or that they may not have the expertise of professionals or the depth of knowledge to grasp the nuances of school governance. But collectively, they are the advocates for their children. As parents we want to trust that the people making decisions value our concerns, welcome our input, and appreciate our contributions. We must build a process that fosters consensus to arrive at a common ground.

This cannot be a meaningless exercise of a promise to improve communication that results in no real change. Parents cannot be swept aside with platitudes and excuses. They will not be satisfied with empty choices, nor will they accept unilateral decisions that affect our children's academic success or change our school's culture.

We remain committed to our children and to the school. We trust that you feel as strongly as we do that our school is the best place for children to learn anywhere in the City of Atlanta, and we look forward to working with you to continue that mission. There is a lot of work to do, and we remain positive that in the end we will emerge as a stronger school community for it.



Rebecca Hudson
PTCA President