

Statement to Swampscott School Committee June 5, 2007

SEA President Paul Maguire

Recent transfers made by the superintendent are breaking up support teams and learning communities that benefit our students in so many ways.

The superintendent wants to create team building but is unaware how much team building we have already created ourselves and which so much of modern educational research supports.

All of this top-down management from crisis reflects not only a serious lack of financial planning but apparently an educational philosophy overly attracted to the latest theory or educational experiment rather than grounded in an understanding that the tried and true essence of education is what happens between good experienced teachers and the students, families and community they know and love.

The proof, as always, is that when asked later, adults feel most influenced not by educational structure or even particular course curriculum, but by individual smart, caring, enthusiastic teachers who demonstrated a love of life, of their subjects and of their students.

The result of all these failures, of all of this confusion and arbitrary decision-making with so little input from teachers, of all of the money spent on new administrators instead of teachers and of all of the bad publicity which has increased for the past two years has been that too many of Swampscott's best teachers in the prime of their careers

have reluctantly left us and that Swampscott has become less and less able to attract and keep what any school system needs most: experienced, passionate teachers who want to stay and establish their careers here.

AND NOW...

Elementary teachers are being involuntarily transferred in ways we find arbitrary, illogical, often unnecessary and contrary to what provides the best education for the elementary students.

At first the superintendent refused and then agreed, under some pressure from the SEA, to speak individually to any elementary teacher who wants to discuss his/her transfer. (Their right under our contract)

Some teachers have met with the superintendent. Some others are reluctant and feel uncomfortable meeting with the superintendent. These meetings are meant to be a positive and productive part of the decision making process.

Teachers in Swampscott, to say the least, are unhappy, dismayed, and angry; some feel penalized.

Once again, the superintendent has failed to include teachers in the process.

It is time for the superintendent to take another look at these transfers.

It is time, it is ABOUT time, to listen to the teachers.

