

# PGE

## Parents For Gifted Education

### Survey Comments after Two Public Forums

Below are written comments from the PGE survey form. We have forwarded copies of all originals to the administration and board members as well. We have tried to include all issues raised by the comments and not repeat too many. Therefore, the frequency and, consequently, public intensity or priority of opinion is not represented.

#### **Definitely in Favor of Move to Auburn Freshman Campus**

"We need a Rockford public school that is recognized as the equal or superior to local private schools..."

"It's Long overdue. We don't control our own publicity. Auburn gifted schools were seperated for 30 years and no one knew them. Greatschools.com rates Washington a perfect 10 , but Auburn a 4."

"...I am sure there would be bumps ... along the way, but it would be great...especially if the Academy scores were separate."

"Definitely a good move for the district. We need to retain students who are motivated to learn above the norm. Program needs a "focus"- not a school within a school- neither school benefits. They need to do a better job communicating about our program."

" An expanded program would make it attractive for students outside the district to come here."

"...after what I have heard tonight, I would lean to the proposed move."

"Excellent idea- make a gifted high school to be a great high school."

"The success of Washington Gifted Academy has paved the way for a gifted-only High School. ... We already have a "world-class" program at the Academy, but nobody knows it. As a gifted only school, we could easily make the Sun Times list as the Top 10 high school in the state. And, currently the High School program has weaknesses(drop off, quality teachers, fewer offerings, no awareness of the program outside of Rockford...). The proposal will only bring only good things to the High School Program.)

"Right now the students that are a year ahead of their grade in math don't have a class to go to when they reach 8th grade. If we move grades 7-12 to Wilson, then the sixth graders won't have algebra. If Wilson had grades 6-12, they would get to take their advanced classes at school. Another solution would be having a small algebra class at Washington."

"...this move will potentially be very good for academically gifted minorities..."

" It will make life easier... I won't have to go to two schools... My 10th grader has a harder time in Auburn than the rest of his life. I think the peer support will help him in grades. ... I do like the proposal...The sports is the biggest issue for me..."

"I am sure that there are many other parents who will not look at the ...program at Auburn because of the stigma of Auburn High School."

### **Definitely Against the Move**

"It's a bad idea to mix middle school with high school students"

"The program and proposal is discriminatory. I think the district is using the gifted program to further segregate the children of this school system..."

"Do not rush this move. If rush is made to move... the high school will not have full classes for several years. ' Time and thought must be taken before a change is made. Will the change influence even more of the "best and brightest" students to leave the gifted program?"

"How do we know that the drop-off from 8th to 9th will decrease with consolidation? We have neglected to get exit interviews from these parents."

"There is a lot of drop off from 9th thru 11th grades with students who stay at Auburn and take some AP and CAPA classes. This is not related to consolidation."

I don't see any reason for this move. If there is a cost/budget benefit, that would make sense. The lack of focus on the curriculum and attention paid to the location issues does not improve the program.

"I have a sophomore ...her class has changed buildings 5 times in 10 years...I find this constant change disruptive...the current status at Auburn seems fine...Why are gifted changes made so hastily?"

"Poorly thought out ... and poorly researched..."

"Moving the Academy to a separate building just makes it that much more easy to point out the program, and eliminate it."

"Some gifted students feel like they are being punished for being in the program (my daughter being one of them). She is enjoying being in high school and it is not fair to "have that taken away from her.

I am against the move to consolidate the campus from 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade until we see the actual \$\$\$ that it would save, and the opportunities for additional classes that it would provide

"Don't try to fix what isn't broken... the so called "gifted" kids get to interact with students of all races and socio-economic backgrounds..."

"Why can't many of the program's weaknesses be remedied in the present facility-singular dedicated AP, counselor, report scores separately, minority recruitment..."

### **General Comments and/or concerns:**

Many comments referring to whole "high school experience"- "It is essential for children to experience the total high school experience."

"I am concerned about the necessary commitment needed to do this right"

Gifted kids are scared away either by rumored work load or ...problems with Rockford Schools

An exception must be made to offer classes at less than maximum capacity for the first several years"

I worry a bit that setting up a single separate "gifted" school - will set up an easy target for a single-line-item budget swipe...My current Auburn Academy student worries about "regular/ex-honors" Auburn kids-will they be left with no teachers/AP classes?"

As long as the calibre of teaching remains high, grades 7-12 at Wilson is fine... but ultimately the only issue is how to keep the Gifted Program strong and progressing.

Size of building to accommodate the growth for future middle and high school. Limited class offerings for electives at the high school. 7th needs to be kept at Washington-the rigor of that year and the stress of a bigger atmosphere is too much!!"

"7th grade was super tough for my kids- that would be even worse if they had to do 7th grade at high school"

I want my kids to have a well-rounded normal high school experience with opportunities for extracurricular, AP, electives. Whatever proposal achieves that- I am for that.

## **General Comments and Concerns (continued)**

CAPA is integral to a large number of Academy students.

"Need separate 6-8 , 9-12 if in the same facility. Need computer labs and classes.

"I think it would be wonderful if my daughters could come home hopeful from school instead of dejected."

"I see pros and cons for both sides..."

The cost of the move has not been addressed...

There are so many of the kids that stay in gifted but want to take Kappa classes. I Hope that those programs stay together.

What about extracurricular activities?...There are too many unanswered questions...

"Can you roll up the program so 7-9 starts the move, then rollup the next year 7-10th (etc)..."

"What a wonderful mentoring opportunity if all gifted adolescents were under one roof.."

"Can West be used -- better H.S. facility..."

"Having enough students to fill classes so they can be offered."

" I have mixed feelings... great to expand, but only if the rigor is maintained... (and) thorough analysis"

"Making sure AP/Honors classes are available"

"Number of classes, shortened day..."

"The dropout/lower grades of gifted high school students"

"Not allowing all the "gifted"(qualified) kids (into the gifted program) in the lower grades"

"I think the program... is discriminative"

"Quality teachert understand gifted students."

"Class size and scheduling restrictions"

"Too many changes too fast"

## **What are the most pressing issues in the gifted program in general?**

"Lack of focus on program..What about an assistant principal and counselor ...(assigned to the program) in the interim?"

"Quality of staff..."

"That it gets more publicity."

"That it grows and serves even more students."

"Recruiting best gifted-specialized teachers"

"Drop-off rate as the students get older"

"Keeping gifted-specialty teachers"

"Resoureces-textbooks, computeres.etc..."

"top notch teachers-very good junior class teachers presently"

"Expand the number of seats to all who qualify"

"maintain the rigor in the curriculum"

"Poor counseling..."

"communicating the opportunity to Rockford"

### **What are the most pressing issues in the gifted program at the Middle School level?**

Quality homework instead of busy work

"More training in writing.."

Access to higher level courses

Making sure the students are adequately prepared for the rigors of the Academy.

The (inaccurate) image that it is only for the rich, elite or brilliantly smart when it's really for anyone who wants to be a high achiever

"Having enough spaces for students who meet the standards"

No Continuity

"Write curriculum for all grades in gifted"

Lack of actual gifted education. Remedial course work. Time in Jr. High spent coloring and making flash cards, which are not educationally value added activities

"Quality of staff..."

### **What are the most pressing issues in the gifted program at the High School level?**

**Several mentioned this specifically--** (Need) gifted -specific counselor and administrator

"Need to keep kids in the program"

Retention of quality teachers

"...we a principal and counselor that is passionate about Gifted."

Class size restrictions/scheduling restrictions

lack of counselors and support at the administration for the high school program

My Sophomore has a harder time as she goes thru school

Recruiting good teachers for all subjects

Image- some people just don't want to go to Auburn...

Not enough classes

Change them to be great, not just good.

Teachers Forced into Academy positions...who are not experienced with teaching gifted students

"Counselors who don't seem ... knowledgeable about Academy curriculum"

Keeping the focus on education without distractions

Losing gifted kids to ... private sector

"Many capbale kids are never tested...also for the entire program"

"Having a counselor who can help the students with the college application process"

"Losing students going from 8th to HS(Auburn)"

"Isolation of the Freshman program"

"What happens if the student is not gifted in everything..."

"Reputation (perception) as a whole..."