

**Intro:**

Good Evening, My name is Sarah Murphy, and I have four small children to consider in this discussion, and I believe this is all about our children. Our oldest two are in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade GT program at Devinny Elementary and our younger two will join them there soon. I am here tonight representing the Devinny parent community that supports keeping the **GT and 6<sup>th</sup> Grade at Devinny Elementary**. Let me give you some more background and our key recommendations and rationale.

**First, about Devinny:**

- Devinny's leadership, structure, and community support make it one of the most cost effective and highest performing schools in the area.
- Approximately 40% of Devinny's non-GT Center students (220 students) have choice enrolled into the school. Devinny has significant control over its capacity and can decrease its use of temporary buildings by managing this population.
- Devinny has the lowest instructional cost/student in the district at \$4,105/student.
- The GT program contributes to Devinny's success. Devinny leadership and parents are very involved, and supportive of keeping the GT program integrated at Devinny.
- No one wants change & we understand that some changes are inevitable given the current financial climate & budget expectations.

**We have 2 recommendations to share with the Facilities Usage Committee and Board:**

- 1) **We believe Devinny can reduce the use of temporary buildings by directing our Principal to limit choice enrollment, thus phasing out our temps over three to four years, if not sooner. We do not support shifting current students to achieve this end goal. How will we do this?**
  - i) We recommend returning to last year's kindergarten configuration or eliminating 1 kindergarten class to close 1 temp in 2010. In addition we recommend that the school limit choice enrollment to the capacity of the building over the next few years.
  - ii) We do not believe that moving ~ 90 Devinny sixth graders (5<sup>th</sup> graders now) into the Dunstan MS building with over 600 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders will produce an environment conducive to learning.
    - (1) Moving this year's fifth grade would put them in a situation where they are not in elementary school or middle school and isolate those students. They would receive a different education experience than their peers in the same Green Mountain area.
    - (2) Devinny would be the only K-5 school in the articulation area. This may decrease its appeal for parents as a choice enrollment option.
    - (3) We assume that this also means Creighton's GT program would become 6-8 and are concerned that our GT students (13) would be the only sixth graders in Creighton.

- iii) We do not believe that moving the GT Center Program is in the best interests of the students or the Devinny community as a whole
  - (1) GT students are academically, socially and emotionally at-risk. Please see JAGC Position on Proposed Relocation of GT Centers
  - (2) Devinny's long term viability would be impacted. Without the GT Center and choice enrollment, Devinny would be undercapacity. We have 324 children in the Devinny boundary who attend our school including 33 GT center students. Our school building's design capacity is 582 students.

**2) We recommend ensuring facilities utilization choices will produce predictable and substantial financial results. For this reason, we believe the best financial option is to close buildings and phase out temporary structures vs. shifting existing students from successful programs.**

- i) Moving the Devinny GT program does not produce predictable results.
  - (1) When the Moore Middle School GT Center Program moved, enrollment decreased significantly and has not reached 2/3 of pre-move enrollment four years later.
  - (2) Few Devinny students would move to Pleasant View
    - The parents of Devinny GT students responded to an electronic survey this past week (54 students of 107, a statistically significant sample size).
    - Over 80% of respondents indicated they would not send their children to Pleasant View
      - Reasons cited for low support include: unproven/untested model, lengthy commute, loss of the overall school/neighborhood community benefits, and separation from siblings
    - Moving the GT program to Pleasant View would significantly diminish participation in the GT program and not resolve the overcapacity problem at Devinny as few would move to this untested model.
- i) Closing temps alone does not produce a large short-term financial savings vs. closing a school.
  - (1) Next year's savings from closing temps will be \$2,500/temp, if demolishing it will **cost** the district \$5,000/temp. Closing schools saves \$300K to \$1M depending upon whether it is an elementary, middle or high school.
  - (2) Many other elementary schools have a significant number of temporary buildings. These schools have not been targeted for temporary building reductions, while Devinny has been. Please see JAGC Position on Proposed Relocation of GT Centers
  - (3) The excess capacity in the district is at high school & middle school levels and not at the elementary level. Cost/student is highest at the MS/HS level and these facilities should be re-evaluated for appropriate utilization.
- ii) We recommend closing or restructuring low capacity/under performing middle schools and high schools to ensure the largest cost savings

**In Summary, Our Devinny Recommendations:**

- 1. Keep Devinny in its current configuration with GT and 6th grade, and commit to eliminating temps at Devinny through reducing choice enrollment.**
- 2. If the district must shift students, focus on closing undercapacity/under performing schools and obtaining significant cost savings, not disrupting functioning and successful programs.**