

Save Our Schools

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STATEMENT FROM *COALITION OF PARENTS OPPOSING SCHOOL CLOSINGS & CUTS IN SUPERINTENDENT'S PROPOSED BUDGET*

Save Our Schools, a coalition built around a group of concerned LRSD parents, is releasing the following statement:

We, the members of the Save Our Schools coalition, want to firmly denounce the proposed closure of any of the schools on Superintendent Poore's list. These schools are part of the bedrock of the neighborhoods where they stand. They are more than just buildings. They educate students while providing essential services and connecting neighbors. Closing them will hurt students by disrupting their education, forcing them to move, and contributing to overcrowded classrooms where teachers are continually forced to do more with less. These impacts will be unevenly felt by those in predominantly African American neighborhoods and we know this is not right.

We vehemently oppose Superintendent Poore's proposed cuts to the LRSD budget. There has been no democratic process for making these critical decisions, and the outlets for community input have been a farce with no real opportunity for parents or community members in the affected neighborhoods to have a voice.

We have many questions about Superintendent Poore's proposed budget due to the false and unsubstantiated information that has been presented to us. According to him, staffing at the closed schools will be maintained and most of the buildings will be repurposed. We question how a reported savings of over \$5 million will be realized without significant cuts to staff or facilities.

Superintendent Poore reports that population in the neighborhoods around these schools is declining. Yet, the Little Rock business community, Little Rock Chamber of Commerce, and real estate developers are targeting these same areas for redevelopment based on growth projections. We question the math in this equation.

The suggested closures will not improve conditions conducive for effective teaching and learning. We know that class size, especially in early grades, makes a huge difference in students' achievement throughout their time in school. We question the efficacy of decisions that increase

class size and disrupt students' learning environments.

While Superintendent Poore continues to insist the budget shortfall is a district issue, his proposed budget cuts will not be equitably shared across the LRSD. They will, once again, egregiously and disproportionately place the burden of impact on the African American community. The proposed closures will aid the ongoing destruction of neighborhoods and communities, particularly the African American neighborhoods south of I-630. We question the rationale and the ethics of forcing certain groups of students to suffer academically, and of forcing certain neighborhoods to bear the rest of the city's burden.

Finally, we question the leadership of those who are making decisions for our students.

Neither Mr. Poore, as the superintendent of LRSD, nor Mr. Key, as the head of the agency charged with governing LRSD, has lifted a voice to advocate for the most vulnerable students in this district. We know that many powerful interests would rather see charter schools and private schools as the only viable choice in Little Rock, and it would seem that Mr. Key and Mr. Poore are putting those interests ahead of the students currently enrolled in the district that they are charged with managing.

Our campaign's mission is to restore local control of the Little Rock School District by a democratically elected school board and to ensure that parents, caregivers, and the local community have a voice in determining the future of our city's public schools. We believe free and equitable public education is a foundation of democracy and essential to our communities' ability to survive and thrive. We believe in all students' right to and need for an equitable and excellent education. In the tradition of the Little Rock Nine, we are determined to eliminate injustice and inequity and replace it with fairness and equality.

Today, we call on everyone, especially those who took the time to plead with the State Board of Education to takeover LRSD, to raise your voices against the injustice of closing our schools rather than addressing the matter of academic distress. We call on you to help us save our schools. Let our local and state officials know that regardless of what happens this day, this month, this year, we will be here, and we will stop at nothing to ensure that every student in Little Rock receives the highest quality education we can provide.