

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Teacher's dismissal shows D.C. failures

The dismissal of Art Siebens from Wilson High provides those uninitiated with both the policies and procedures of the American educational system and the heretofore nonspecific "Green Track" proposals of Chancellor Michelle "Trust Me" Rhee a window into a world that is fatally flawed ["Protest builds over dismissal at Wilson High," Aug. 27].

By any measure, Art Siebens is an effective teacher. I taught Advanced Placement English and Economics at Wilson from 1999 to 2003. Dr. Siebens was well-respected by colleagues and parents, and in a realm where union rules are very specific in regard to the time a teacher must spend in the classroom, Art would often tutor his students before class, during his lunch and after class.

His problem? Art is serious about education and wouldn't participate in any of the "pass the trash" scenarios that take place on a daily basis in our public schools. As mentioned, Art was serious about data collection, and that included attendance and time on

task. His class time was sacrosanct; you didn't waste his time, and he didn't waste yours.

In his demeanor and knowledge of his subject, Art was adult and realized that things like the mowing of grass during class time could completely ruin a class period. Being late to class once in 18 years? Please. There are teachers who are late every day, but they don't attempt to hold administrators accountable for their part in the educational process and therefore go unnoticed.

I'm not sure, given the amount of corporate and community support that Dr. Siebens has received over the years, how Chancellor Rhee could sit down with the Gates Foundation or any external source of funding and justify this situation. Art Siebens has been working successfully for almost two decades without the "Green Track" and no doubt would have profited handsomely had it been in place. Nevertheless, he, without any type of economic incentives for either himself or his students, is AP Biology in Washington, D.C. That cannot be denied.

Instead of attempting to institute an educational "cult of personality" in the D.C. Public Schools, one of the first things Chancellor Rhee should do is to look at those who are successful and the reasons for

that success. I'm certain that Dr. Siebens would be most generous in sharing his data, and if Ms. Rhee would develop a coherent set of criteria upon which teachers are to be judged and rewarded, she would find a much more compliant workforce.

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