

Dear Reinstate Dr. Siebens Listserv Subscriber,

I wanted to share with you a few responses from the public in reaction to how the administration has mistreated Dr. Siebens. Here are two quickies, and the third is a tribute to him.

So sad to think that this is how Principal Cahall implements his vision of "the model urban high school", how Chancellor Rhee implements her vision of supporting quality teachers and doing what's best for the kids rather than advancing adult agendas, and as for Education Mayor Fenty, well, just where is the education, Mayor?

1. New York Times Blog Comment

<http://kristof.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/03/21/when-the-rebel-becomes-chancellor/?page=10#comments> (Comment #250)

While I agree with the idea that great teachers are the key to improving DCPS, I do not think [Ms. Rhee] is really doing the right thing for DC. I offer the case of Dr. Art Siebens as an example.

Dr Siebens is probably the most effective biology teacher in the district of columbia - this statement is based first on his students' achievement records on AP exams and other tests. It is also based on my own experience as a former student of his. He did a great job, I am now a phd student at duke university in genetics, due largely to his inspired teaching.

Yet amazingly, Dr Siebens was released from wilson last summer, for no apparent reason. If Ms. Rhee is truly interested in retaining great teachers, why would she fire the best biology teacher in the school system? You might ask if the chancellor is really aware of Dr Siebens case? I can assure you she is, as there is a very angry and vocal group of wilson parents pushing for Dr Siebens reinstatement.

There website, and much more information is here:

<http://www.reinstatedrart.com/>

Why would Ms Rhee refuse to intervene in this case? Perhaps she is not truly as interested in students welfare as she says, or more likely she is too stubborn to admit she made a mistake. Either way it seems to me her judgement is flawed, and she is not the best custodian of the DCPS.

— Dan

2. **edWIZE**

<http://edwize.org/kafka-on-the-potomac>

Kafka On The Potomac

Recently at the Quick and the Ed, Kevin Carey resurrected for criticism a late summer Edwize post on the case of Dr. Art Siebens, who was removed from his position at Woodrow Wilson High School in Washington, D.C., despite a remarkable 18 year record of success as a teacher of Botany, Anatomy, Physiology and Advanced Placement Biology.

Carey faulted our argument — and later arguments by Eduwonkette's Jennifer Jennings and Sherman Dorn — that the Siebens case demonstrated how Washington School Superintendent Michelle Rhee would abuse her power, if she was able to eliminate tenure and treat Washington, D.C. public school teachers as at will employees. He argues that we can't really know if there were good reasons to remove Siebens, "because the necessary information is being withheld due to privacy provisions inherent to school personnel processes. These are provisions that I assume Casey, Jennings et al endorse."

Now, if established due process procedures for tenured teachers had been employed to remove Siebens, Carey might have a point. But unfortunately for the argument Carey wants to make, Siebens was removed from Wilson as a result of a No Child Left Behind mandated restructuring of the school which was conducted like something out of Kafka's *The Trial*. No charges were ever laid and no case was ever made against Siebens; no opportunity was given to him to defend his professional work and career. A verdict was simply delivered. The only reason ever given for his removal by secret tribunal was the statement by the Chair of the Wilson Local School Restructuring Team (LSRT) that the teachers who were not reappointed "were seen not to fit in with the restructuring plan."

To clear his professional name, Siebens released his entire personnel file to Washington, D.C. City Council Chairman Vincent Gray. After reading the entire file, Gray concluded that "I know firsthand there is nothing in that file which even remotely approaches justification for a decision not to reappoint him. He is a first-class teacher, a real gift to our children."

This is precisely the abuse of power that happens under the system of at will employment Rhee wants to enact: teachers would lose their jobs, without so much as even an honest explanation, much less a fair hearing. Rather than hiding behind a due process procedure which was never applied in the case of Siebens, Carey needs to own up to the reality of the Siebens case, and what it tells us about how a tenure-free Washington, D.C. school system would function under Michelle Rhee.

If Edwise readers would like some insight into how excellent D.C. teachers feel about Rhee's efforts to eliminate tenure, take a look at Elizabeth Davis' most recent post, Good Teacher, Bad Teacher: How Do We Decide?, at a new blog on Washington, D.C. education reform well worth following carefully — Teachers and Parents for Real Education Reform.

3. YouTube Video

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nM-L6q8u_58

When you click on the link above, you will see a young biology teacher performing one of Dr. Siebens' songs, MEIOSIS ALL RAPPED UP, which Dr. Siebens uses to teach students complicated concepts and vocabulary.

Sadly, thanks to the administration, the only way Wilson students can learn from Dr. Siebens is through the link above, listening to Dr. Siebens' three CDs, or attending the Wilson AP Bio Center during lunch, where former students of Dr. Siebens are volunteering to try to tutor students this year in preparing for the AP Bio exam in May.

Some model urban high school, huh?

Best,

Paul

Paul Mahon

Wilson Parent of Maddie ('07) and Hanna ('09)

Maddie had Anatomy & Physiology with Dr. Siebens

Hanna had AP Biology with Dr. Siebens

Please visit our website <http://www.reinstatedrart.com> to learn more about our cause and to access resources in support of the

students' petition which can be seen at:

<http://gopetition.com/petitions/reinstate-dr-art-siebens.html>