

Dear Reinstate Dr. Siebens Listserv Subscriber,

1. Whither Goest Thou, Wilson?

I am writing this update with three weeks left before classes begin.

In my last update, I summarized why the removal of Dr. Siebens under a No Child Left Behind restructuring was a pretext and is unlawful. For these and other reasons, Dr. Siebens' legal team believes the decision will be reversed in arbitration and he will be ordered reinstated to Wilson. Unfortunately, there's a huge cost to bringing Dr. Siebens back this way and the bright light of litigation and accompanying media attention will not shine favorably on our school and reforms within DCPS, and especially on Mr. Cahall's first year. And a year's worth of students will be deprived of learning from Dr. Siebens.

On the other hand, if Dr. Siebens is reinstated in the next three weeks, he'll be back in his classroom and will contribute to Wilson's success under Mr. Cahall's new direction for our school.

My point remains that Mr. Cahall's new direction for Wilson and reinstating Dr. Siebens are not inconsistent, and the more parents have spoken with Mr. Cahall the more they tell me they see that the two have in common.

When Mr. Cahall interviewed Dr. Siebens 45 days ago for about an hour, Dr. Siebens had already been removed. There is no question that Mr. Cahall did not have as much information then as he has now about Dr. Siebens, and certainly not complete information.

Now, 45 days later, Mr. Cahall knows the strong feelings that past and current Wilson students, parents and teachers have for Dr. Siebens. Mr. Cahall now has seen the students' petition and the comments left by over 560 Wilson signatories. Mr. Cahall now knows the compelling data on how Dr. Siebens' students perform on standardized tests. And Mr. Cahall now knows that Dr. Siebens is not an AP elitist -- 64% of the students he taught over the past five school years were not in AP classes, and Dr. Siebens taught Introductory Biology just a few years ago. Mr. Cahall now knows that Dr. Siebens would be happy to teach Introductory Biology courses to 9th and 10th graders, although he would like to teach at least one AP Bio section, while mentoring the other AP Bio teacher (I understand that there are three sections this year). While it is true that Dr. Siebens had three sections of AP Biology last fall, that course load is not typical of his class schedule over the years, and in any event this is what Wilson assigned to him (teachers do not assign themselves classes). Mr. Cahall now knows that when Wilson assigned a botany class to Dr. Siebens this past spring, he taught it despite never having taught that class before, and that Dr. Siebens spoke with Mr. Shea in the Spring of 2007 offering to teach part of an overcrowded World Geography class.

In terms of minorities in Dr. Siebens' classes, Mr. Cahall now knows that for Dr. Siebens' AP Biology classes for 2007-08, 30.8% of his students were minority, ranking his classes at #8 out of Wilson's 24 AP courses. And Mr. Cahall knows that the minority students in Dr. Siebens' AP classes achieve scores of 3-5 (50%) at a rate twice the average of all Wilson's other AP courses (23%).

Mr. Cahall now knows that Dr. Siebens stepped into the disciplinary vacuum and tried to enforce school rules in the hallway when no one else would, in an effort to help maintain a good environment for learning. Mr. Cahall now knows that in Dr. Siebens' role as discipline and attendance record keeper for the School Chapter Advisory Committee, he tracked compliance of the Wilson Administration with School Behavior Management Committee (SBMC) agreements concerning enforcement of DCPS policies, and was even authorized by Chancellor Rhee to track attendance through STARS, following a meeting with her in October of last year. Dr. Siebens did this because he believes that discipline and attendance make a big difference in helping students learn. Mr. Cahall says he believes that, too, as does the Wilson Restructuring Proposal: "*high attendance, good behavior* and low course failure in math and English" are "the three things most associated with student success." We all now know that Mr. Cahall has made it clear that he will enforce discipline so teachers like Dr. Siebens can focus their energies in the classroom.

Mr. Cahall now knows that parents and many outside of the Wilson community are asking why DCPS would treat a top-performing teacher the way it has treated Dr. Siebens and, if Dr. Siebens hasn't done anything worth a personnel action, why wouldn't Wilson fight like crazy to keep him? Parents are wondering what the real agenda is behind saying that a top-performing teacher "doesn't fit in" at our school? Is the administration only interested in 10th grade as all that matters because of NCLB testing, and everything else is secondary? Does the important focus on bringing underperforming students up mean that the administration plans to turn its back on high achieving students?

As the attached letter of support from Professor Patusky of the University of Pennsylvania reminds us, "*In addition to being good administrators, the effective principals had a passionate devotion to their best teachers because they knew that the most sure way to get results from their students was to have a good teacher in the classroom. They saw it as part of their administrative duties to find ways to keep these teachers happy, a difficult task when you cannot reward them with more money, and they mourned whenever they lost one to retirement or to a job change.*"

Art Siebens loves to teach and it shows. And his students respond to what he does in his classroom. Just what does the exile of a teacher like Dr. Siebens say about Wilson's future?

It has been 45 days since Dr. Siebens and Mr. Cahall met for the first time. Mr. Cahall now has the opportunity to heal the division and move both Wilson and Dr. Siebens forward.

That would say a great deal about his vision for our school.

2. **Additional Support Letters**

A wide variety of support letters have been sent to the Powers That Be the past week since I circulated the letter from Wilson's own Joe Riener. Attached are two you may be interested in reading: one from Devorah Flax-Davidson, Valedictorian of the Class of 2005, and one from Damian Kreske, a former Wilson biology teacher.

Onward!

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.