

**The First Question: Can Seattle Schools afford to undermine any successful high school and if they had good reason to do so wouldn't you announce it Monday morning instead of Friday afternoon?**

Response: In these days of “leaving no child behind”, it has become practice in all too many districts in this country to fix that which is not broken. The four period day at West Seattle High School offers one such set of circumstance. The four period day has brought incremental improvement to the much venerated WASL scores, and has answered the challenges posed by high stakes testing. More importantly, it has created a learning environment that students actually feel a personal investment in, and which most parents at West Seattle High School stand behind unreservedly, is the genuine face of education reform in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The program is driven not only by the teaching staff at West Seattle High School, but by the community that attends the school. The central irony of the current drive of the Chief Academic Officer of the Seattle Public Schools to “standardize” and “build continuity” at West Seattle High School, it appears to us, is that the **internal reform effort** which Ms. Santorno seeks to displace is an **organic development within public education** that the CAO and her superiors could learn much from. It is entirely possible, after all, that the senior officers of the Seattle Public Schools have something to learn about the dynamics and the contradictions of urban education themselves. One size may fit all in the haberdashery business, but it’s a poor fitting when it comes to the matter we ask young people to mull *inside* their heads.

As regards the “continuity” concern, which charges that the four period day stands in the way of the graduation schedule of some seniors, here are a few facts for public attention. First, the WSHS system has worked quite well for several years now, and any “fixing” of an in-house problem such as scheduling ought best to be managed by the academic house which knows these students well. Second, the district would do well to adjust its software, such as the ESIS system, to the teaching and accreditation needs of the students they serve, instead of expecting the learning curve of students to adjust to the technical schematics of the district’s scheduling software. And third, the timely graduation component as expressed by the CAO reads as a canard while the state continues to struggle with the WASL graduation equation for every district

Lastly and in the spirit of honoring contracts, it has been brought to our attention as responsible stakeholders at West Seattle High School, that the site based management decision making that Ms. Santorno and new superintendent Dr. Goodloe Johnson wish to sweep from the table in this instance is itself a provision of the legal contract which this city school administration has signed with this body of educators. In fact, when this provision of the contract was negotiated with the union that represents these educators, the Seattle Education Association, seniority rights were conceded by teachers in order to attain site based decision capability. It is testimony to the good faith of this group of teachers at West Seattle High School that they have been so patient with the arbitrary quality of the orders coming from downtown. We wish that the District itself could display a similar good faith, but the truth of the matter is that all we’ve seen so far, as both parents and students, is an arrogant display of top-down authority which flies in the

face of an agreement which may have been signed by the predecessors of the district officers, but which remains binding for the next two years.

It is for all of the above that the CAO delivers her unwelcome news Friday afternoon on short notice. It is not unreasonable to believe the district wanted as little light shed on this decision as possible.

As a coalition of parents, students and concerned citizens, we do not seek to attack anyone personally. But we will not be stiff-armed by the officers of the school district, or critics of this program who fail to note or uphold what has been accomplished by the academic strategies employed by educators at West Seattle High School.