

Remarks by Dr. K

Town Council Meeting: 12/1/16

- Good evening Mayor Daniels, Council Members and members of the public
- One of the challenges that we are faced with in AZ is the lack of a clearly defined policy structure and guidelines for charter schools
- In some states, there are clear policies that define
  - The information that a charter school must provide to the local district about its application
  - A review process of the local demographic study that shows that there is a real need for additional seat capacity
  - An opportunity for a charter and a district to affiliate around an identified academic need or to provide a unique school design
  - And so forth
- What you should see is a concerted effort toward a policy structure that helps to define the value add of a new charter and the appropriate location of a charter to meet a specific need
- The challenge that both Gilbert and Higley public schools come to you with is informed by the following data:
  - We are both A level districts
  - We are part of a group of East Valley districts that collectively out-perform the rest of the state academically
  - Our schools pull up the State's performance average
  - We graduate 90% or greater of our students within a traditional 4 year high school period
  - Our teachers and schools are consistently award winners
  - Our Performing Arts programs are well known throughout the state for their excellence

- We are known for quality and for our significant contribution to the economic development of the East Valley
- This year In Gilbert we are celebrating 100 years of graduating classes: we have a long, proud tradition of academic excellence
- We are partners with the Chamber of Commerce, local businesses and industries and local government
- GPS and HPS collectively are the largest employers in this community
  
- But here is the data that raises confounding questions:
  - We have the highest number and growing number of charter schools in our community; yet we have seats available in our schools- so there is no unmet demand
  - The last two years of demographic data show that we have an increasing school age population in our community, but a decreasing enrollment in GPS because we are dividing the student enrollment pie over and over again
  - The last ten years of state financial data shows that GPS has a cumulative loss of over \$70M in the state's capital funding formula
  - Student enrollment, specifically average daily membership or ADM, is a critical factor in determining the level of resources available to educate our students and operate our schools. Over the past **six years**, we will have experienced an ADM loss of over 3,000 or 8 ½%, while I am asked, why we don't give more money to teacher pay! (\$3681 base pay)
  - GPS and HPS proudly educate the **majority** of English Language Learners and Special Education students in our community - that happens by a student cost share because the state does not provide us sufficient funds for each child's special needs - We embrace every child
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- Recently, we made the difficult decision to consolidate two schools on one campus- Mesquite Junior and GCA- so that we are fiscally responsible to taxpayers and fully utilize our buildings and campus- yet here is a proposal to add another school building and take away more students, and once again de-stabilize our budget.
  - Yet, GPS and HPS have not had to close a school building and leave it empty after a promise of a school, as a recent charter school has had to do
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- We have compelling data that indicates that we are your model school districts; we are supporting your economic development plan; and our building and facility infrastructure is part of Gilbert's vibrancy.
  - So why are we finding ourselves in a continual deficit mode as decisions are made that impact our financial health, our ability to maintain diverse programs, and our ability to maintain safe and healthy buildings?
  - I ask that you seriously consider the significant negative impact to GPS and HPS if another charter school is approved in our districts.