

Good evening, members of the Tier Two Committee,

I hope to be present at the June 9th meeting to give voice to a shorter version of these comments, but I also wanted to provide a more detailed context.

In short, I am very concerned about the size of schools the committee has been considering. I firmly believe we need to focus more on student-centered approaches to education, and I fear that without proper preparation and focus on positive relationships, larger school sizes will make existing challenges even harder to address.

In 2012, then doctoral student Lisa De la Rue executed a literature review on how school size affects achievement. Her final conclusion was that the research did not agree, but she did mention that in regards to a highly diverse student population, perhaps a secondary school size of 600-900 might be best. (refer to pages 11-12 of "School Configuration and Considerations"

[http://www.boarddocs.com/il/champil/Board.nsf/files/8UZHXM4AA0C9/\\$file/CUSD%20School%20Configuration%20Report.pdf](http://www.boarddocs.com/il/champil/Board.nsf/files/8UZHXM4AA0C9/$file/CUSD%20School%20Configuration%20Report.pdf)

and page 6 of a report made by the 2012 Educational Programming Team

http://www.champaignschools.org/sites/default/files/news/files/2012-09-13_Final_%20Educational_Programming_Committee.pdf)

One of the reasons why the research does not consistently point to a universal optimal size is that no such thing exists - there is no specific size of school that will always be best under all circumstances. A well-trained and stellar teacher can effectively connect with a much larger group of diverse students than one less trained and/or less able to cope with the demands of a larger class size. We have a wide variety of students and teachers.

Unit 4 has been a long-term client of Dr. Edna Olive's "Rocket, INC". As such, Unit 4 follows her "Positive Behavior Facilitation" (PBF) methodology, an example of which is evident by the ACTIONS staff, and will be more widely taught in teacher Professional Development this coming year. The basic idea behind PBF is that relationships matter.

Larger schools may scale well in regards to offering more academic and athletic opportunities. However, I would contend that larger schools are prone to suffer from the ability to connect and relate to students due to fact that teachers' time is consumed with many other tasks (testing, reporting, etc).

Right now, we have many positives and many negatives. On the positive side, we have been very progressive in the way we handle discipline - I believe that when Senate Bill 100 was passed, Unit 4 was already in compliance with a majority of the changes

(<http://www.champaignschools.org/sites/default/files/meetings/minutes/Sept10Mins.pdf>).

However, on the negative side we have a history of racial prejudices, indicated by disproportionate numbers of minorities being disciplined and missing from advanced classes. Not to mention the current OCR investigation.

If Unit 4 is to move forward with a facility plan that emphasizes large schools (over 1000 students), it seems imperative that we must also have programming and highly trained staff that can adapt to the needs of all students, especially those for whom the traditional system is not working well. If such programming and commitment to highly trained staff is not made a priority, it would be foolish to pursue and support a facility plan that calls for schools with large student populations.

I applaud your commitment to Unit 4 and the addressing some very serious facility issues due to decades-long delays in what should have been regular maintenance and planning. I acknowledge the tasks before you are not trivial by any means. Thank for your service to our community.

Respectfully,

Charles Schultz