

QUOLKE'S CORNER  
WHEN IT'S BROKE DON'T FIX IT – THE RETURN OF SBB

As we enter a very busy season of PARCC testing, we unfortunately are also about to begin a second year of top-down mandated, central office driven, Rhee-form minded Student Based Budgeting (SBB). Last year after SBB was announced, we had hundreds of our members at Board Meetings displaying red signs that showed the devastating cost and cuts that SBB was bringing to most of the schools throughout our district. Now, almost one year later, I think we all hoped that the district would come to the realization that SBB is not the solution to the district's problems rather it was more a symptom of their problem. We hoped they would have listened to the hundreds of educators and not their few high paid consultants. We had hoped that in this year, the district and the Board would consider many of our questions.

**Questions like.....**

**WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN AT SCHOOLS IF SBB IS UTILIZED?** Is this going to be another spring of cuts? Unless you were living under a rock, you knew last year SBB meant that most schools had to make draconian cuts. Hundreds of angry CTU and community members stood in solidarity at Board Meetings month after month to stand for their students and their schools. Our efforts forced the board to do the right thing and restore money where it belonged....in the schools not at central office. However – it was done with the district stating outright – that the money had to come from somewhere and that there would be cuts again in the spring of 2015.

**DOES SBB PROVIDE FOR THE BROAD CURRICULUM AND CLASS CHOICES THAT STUDENTS NEED AND DESERVE?** What happens when our State and CMSD continue to be infatuated with over testing our children and less focused on what they need? What happens when a school has to make dramatic cuts to balance the budget and the school is faced with tough choices? Often choices come down to more math or career tech? Science or art? Music or reading? In the end we know what wins out – the classes that have the high stakes remain and slowly but surely the classes that students enjoy, need, and that provide alternative career paths or motivation to even come to school continue to disappear. It is disastrous what SBB does to student choices. That is not autonomy. Let's not kid ourselves...we do not live in an evidence-free world....Student Based Budgeting as means to force principals and their teams to gut their schools can NOT be considered a viable, even reasonable plan for improving schools and increasing academic achievement.

**WHY IS SBB NEEDED FOR SCHOOLS TO HAVE AUTONOMY?** Student based budgeting and autonomy is not interlinked. Can a school develop a plan and move allocations from K-3 to middle grades without figuring out an entire budget? The answer is yes. They just have to be allowed to do it. Schools do not need to build a whole budget to do this. It is absurd. Saying that you cannot have one without the other is just wrong.

**WHAT HAPPENED THIS FALL WHEN TRADITIONAL STAFFING WAS UTILIZED & WHAT HAPPENED TO ALL OF THE BUDGET PLANS THAT WERE WRITTEN LAST SPRING?** In the fall of this year, schools waited for a new budget to be sent out so that they could add or reduce allocations in accordance with how SBB worked in the spring. Surprise, surprise – no budget came and the District did staffing in a “traditional” way. They looked at how many kids were actually in each grade and each school and based allocations on that and not a complicated formula. Does this mean that autonomy is gone? Does this mean there has been no principal autonomy all year? This says one of three things to me – SBB does not work or SBB(does not work) & is not sustainable or SBB(does not work) & is not needed – or maybe it is all 3.

**And maybe a final question....**

**WHAT IS HAPPENING IN OTHER DISTRICTS THAT HAVE ABANDONED SBB OR ARE ADDING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO FUND SBB? IS THIS SUSTAINABLE?** There are pioneering districts of SBB that have abandoned SBB for staffing and planning that makes more sense and is more efficient. If you

look to Chicago – a school district with a strikingly similar SBB plan, that district has added \$24 million in the fall of 2014 and \$20 million the year before to make sure that school budgets did not see dramatic cuts. **If you** talk to AFT leaders, as I have, SBB is more of a disaster than a solution.

CEO Gordon, Mayor Jackson, Chairperson Link, and the district knows the position of the CTU and our members when it comes to SBB and that we see that SBB is wrong for our schools and wrong for the students that we teach. That has been expressed on numerous occasions and throughout this school year. Schools making plans to improve educational opportunities for kids should be a good thing. Designing a plan to help retain and recruit students in our schools should be a good thing. Forcing schools to make choices of dramatic cuts is not a good thing for anyone. That is what SBB does and that is all that it was shown to do in CMSD. I hope that lessons are learned and the district chooses to move forward in a more pragmatic way. 39,000 students; their parents; and over 100 school communities are count on this district to do what is right for them.

Yet what is right is not going to happen. School principals will start receiving their budgets this week. School teams will have a few weeks to pour over the budget and make plans based on the dollars that are doled out. CTU will again work with our schools to try to improve and fix situations as we become aware of them. The next Board Meeting is on February 24. Be ready. Our collective voices last year restored funding and benefitted schools and thousands of students throughout Cleveland. Your voice will be called upon again.

In Union,

David