

School Board Meeting 4 December 2014
Public Comments by Ramee Gentry

Good evening. My name is Ramee Gentry, and I have had the pleasure of serving as the Co-Chair of the Honors Review Committee.

At the February 20 School Board meeting, the board approved the transformation of the middle schools. Along with complete restructuring of the two campuses, this plan included the following directive:

“A committee will be formed to review student eligibility and supports in Honors classes, and options for students outside of Honors. This committee would convene in September – November 2014. Committee recommendations would be used to inform the Program of Studies and budget for FY16.”

I am pleased to report that Honors Review Committee did convene. A diverse and dedicated group of people have come together because they felt called to work on improving the honors program at our schools. The committee includes representation across the city, all secondary levels, teachers, administration, parents and students.

We hit the ground running, knowing that we would need to work fast if we wanted our recommendations to be submitted in time to be part of the discussion related to the Program of Studies.

While meetings were long and discussions lively, it was gratifying to note the widespread consensus across the committee as it came time to formulate recommendations.

However, the committee has not yet had an opportunity to submit its report for the Board, though I believe we will be able to do so after our next meeting scheduled for Wednesday.

You the School Board are now being asked to accept a Program of Studies document without the benefit of viewing the entire list of the recommendations, and the rationale behind those recommendations, that was identified by the Honors Review Committee.

I would welcome the opportunity to formally present the committee’s findings to the School Board, and answer questions as part of a School Board meeting or work session.

It is understood that there might be concerns or objections to some of these recommendations from ACPS staff (though it should be noted that ACPS staff was strongly represented in our Honors Review Committee). Ultimately the School Board could decide not to adopt some of these recommendations. I would only ask that the hard work of this committee be given a full viewing, and recommendations be adopted or rejected in an open, transparent forum.

ACPS staff and the School Board have repeatedly stressed the vital role that the community plays in the success of our schools. You the School Board specifically voted on a plan that included the creation of an Honors Review Committee, with the specific directive that it formulate recommendations that could be implemented in the Program of Studies. Please demonstrate your commitment to the ideal of community engagement and improving our honors program by seeking the full report and recommendations of the Honors Review Committee before approving the Program of Studies.