

**From:** Thomas Donnelly  
**To:** Cindy Schofield  
**CC:** ebaran@MEA.org; Kevin Marchi; Nancy Strachan  
**Date:** 9/25/2008 2:25 PM  
**Subject:** Response to your remarks of 9/22/08 at Board Meeting

Dear Mrs. Schofield:

I am Tom Donnelly, in my 39th year in WWCSO. My four children all attended WWCSO schools K-12.

I applaud your involvement in the Bond Issue that gave WW the funds to upgrade our facilities. Your account was quite accurate that a lot of deterioration had taken place from the mid-seventies to the mid-nineties. So, we agree that improvement was needed and the bond issue provided those funds.

But, somewhere along the line, the bond funded changed from repair and replace to Keeping Up With The Joneses. One year, the district installed a sprinkler system for JGHS's football field. The following year, to keep up with the Plymouth Schools who bought Astro-turf for their football fields, WW spent a fortune to buy Astro-turf for our ball field and that of WMHS. At the same time, students and teachers on the first floor of JGHS were sweating it out in Sept-October and April May June, without A/C or decent air flow.

The State Department of Ed and the NCLB require continued upward performance in test scores at all levels, yet we spend bond money to buy Astro-turf for our ball fields and leave our classrooms roasting.

Classrooms are places of instruction where the skills and talents of the students are improved in order to be more successful on these State and Federal mandated examinations. So, someone made a value choice: it is better to have a flashy ball field than a classroom comfortable enough for students to concentrate on their lessons.

If we were Birmingham and had upward of 11-12,000 dollars per child in state aid, we could probably afford Astro-turf for the ball fields and air-conditioning for our classrooms. But we are a blue collar community, where parents aspire to build a life for their children better than what they had in their own youth.

So, these extravagant purchases have been made with dollars that could upgrade classroom facilities, yet our leaders have opted for flashy, showy, non-instructional purchases because they look good. Not unlike the Astro-turf millions misspent are the field-house upgrades that cost a fortune to build. There are no MEAP tests nor MME tests nor ACT nor PSAT nor SAT tests for field house activities. Curriculum in areas that are tested for NCLB should come before pricey show palaces that we want to Keep UP With the Joneses.

Teachers deserve respect. Children deserve smaller classes. Teachers deserve a decent rate of pay, given the higher prices for gas and food. Children deserve to be taught by teachers with good teeth and good eyes and over-all good health.

So, I hope that you understand that teachers supported the bond issues to get the facilities into good state of repair, but we are disturbed that money is hidden in the budget and later pulled out of the budget by magic to fund these extravagant show palaces. And Board members who go along with the decisions to put glitz and glamor ahead of more important educational needs are just as responsible as the administrators they employ.

So, keep up the good work of keeping our educational facilities nice and workable for our children, but don't spend money on lavish baubles that don't raise test scores. The citizens who voted for you, like I did in the last many elections, expect that you and your fellow Board members would exercise true oversight in approving expenditures that raise test scores and not waste district dollars on flashy extravaganzas.

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