

Parents of Paul Junior High Public Charter School
Press Statement
5800 8th St. NW
Washington, DC 20011
March 2, 2000

Support for the conversion of Paul Junior High to a Public Charter School

Paul Junior High has received approval to become a public charter school, and we would like to express our continued support for this conversion. There has been much discussion concerning parental involvement in this process. As parents, we want to clarify our position and explain why we have chosen this route to education reform.

More than a year ago, the parents of this school overwhelmingly endorsed the move to become a charter school. We were informed of what it means to become a charter school by the principal and staff of the school. They did a thorough job of reaching out to the school community and explaining the reform that charter schools represent. Petitions were distributed that invited parents to approve or disapprove of the conversion to a charter school. At that time, more than 500 of us signed individual petitions endorsing the conversion. Since then, we are aware that the school is nearly fully enrolled for the 2000-2001 school year, with more than 400 parents registering their children for Paul Junior High Public Charter School. That represents a clear parental endorsement of the conversion.

We continue to support Paul because of the improved educational opportunity this conversion affords us through local control. We endorse the idea of local control for schools because it promotes more parental involvement in the direction of the school. Every year two parents will be elected by the parent body to serve on the Board of Trustees of the school. Parents will have the chance to be involved in every aspect of the school's operations. Also, because the school is controlled locally, there will be less bureaucracy to burden the school's administrators; the school will be run more efficiently. As parents we are more inclined to get involved if we know our involvement will make a meaningful difference in the education of our children. Paul's conversion provides parents the opportunity to become significantly involved.

We also support the conversion because we know the school has strong leadership. Mrs. Middleton has demonstrated her skills as an educator to the community; she is a first rate educator. This is evidenced by the fact that the school is filled to capacity every year, while other schools in the area are only half full.

As parents, we welcome the superintendent's proposed MAST magnet school. This addition to the school system's offerings will provide more choices for parents seeking the best education for their children. We are confident that the superintendent will find an appropriate location for such a creative program.

We are disappointed by the efforts of some in the school system to discredit the school and the role the parents played in the conversion process. The parents of this school are informed and helped make the decision to apply for a charter. We look forward to the increased role we will have in guiding Paul Junior High Public Charter School to become an outstanding learning institution. The parents of this school community have made their decision and we support the conversion.

Lastly, we call upon the school system to end its efforts to deny this conversion and obstruct the will of this school community. The superintendent should direct the Realty Office of DCPS to immediately engage in negotiations with the charter school to lease the building. Time is running out for parents to make a decision about where to send their children to school next year.

If you have further questions regarding this press statement, please contact:

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