

Message from the Superintendent

Setting the Record Straight. By Gary W. Meier

A Detroit-based group known as By Any Means Necessary (BAMN) has made allegations that the Ferndale School District is engaging in an act of segregation through its establishment of University High School which is a regional magnet school of choice in partnership with Lawrence Technological University, while not offering regional schools of choice opportunities to students at Ferndale High School. The group specifically calls for the establishment of a regional metropolitan school district designed to fully integrate all schools in Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb Counties, and has targeted Ferndale as a starting point for such a consolidation.

BAMN makes untrue claims of segregation and separate, but unequal educational opportunities between University High School and Ferndale High School. Their claims are not based on facts. Rather, they represent an ideological belief that the formation of a regional school district and full integration of all schools is more important than our current system of local control (policies established by local Boards of Education) and the state's legislated schools of choice laws and regulations. They also believe their mission is worth fighting, even if it were to compromise quality educational programming for students.

More specifically, BAMN is demanding Ferndale partner with them in this broad regional initiative, but concurrently indicated that if we do not partner with them they will use tactics of intimidation, including "60s style protest" efforts such as boycotting and picketing. It is not the intent of the Ferndale Schools to be intimidated by BAMN or to concede the right to make school district policies at the local level on the basis of what is best for our students and our community.

Most importantly, the Ferndale School District has faced many challenges throughout its history – racial ten-

sions in the schools in the early 1970s; a federal desegregation order in effect for nearly 25 years was lifted in 1995; a comprehensive restructuring of the school district in 2002, and being inaccurately hitched to the "dropout factory" label in 2007 by Johns Hopkins University. Throughout all of these challenges and others, the Ferndale Schools have remained strong, with parents, community members, and alumni demonstrating great pride in their schools and the education they received in Ferndale. This pride was evidenced by the huge turnout and supportive comments of our alumni at the 50th anniversary homecoming event in October, 2008. "You Can't Hide that Ferndale Pride" is a phrase often used to describe the feelings of many about the Ferndale Schools.

While it is unfortunate that our district must face the challenges associated with this BAMN attack, it is also an opportunity as a school family to rally around our outstanding Ferndale School District and the importance of ensuring the continuation of local control in determining the programs and policies of our schools. The outside influence of BAMN is an unacceptable intrusion on the Ferndale Schools. Our parent community, including the parents of UHS students, is strong in their support of our schools. We are committed to them and their children in continuing to provide outstanding educational opportunities in each of our schools.



Visit the Ferndale Schools website for links to the following documents:

1. FAQ about BAMN
2. The Truth about BAMN and FPS
3. What is UHS?
4. BAMN's petition against UHS

www.ferndaleschools.org/districthighlights/districtnewsletters.html