Monday, February 21, 2011

Dear parents:

By now, you are likely aware of the recent suicide of a Providence District FCPS student that was profiled on the front page of the Washington Post on Sunday, February 20 http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/19/AR2011021904528_Comments.html

This is a tragedy for our whole community.

As your School Board member and Board liaison to the Fairfax County Partnership for Youth, I recognize there are many facets to student discipline, mental health and suicide. The issues that have been brought to the forefront by the recent tragedy must be addressed by our community, FCPS and your School Board.

Some of these perspectives include:

* A perceived excessive use of expulsions from base FCPS high schools for first-time, non-violent offenders, with no student emotional support services for impacted students.
* Belief that a parent should be present when a student is questioned and/or charged with a violation.
* Support for existing policies that protect the health and safety of each and every student.

**Clearly, it is time for a review of FCPS discipline policies and practices for fairness and effectiveness. The review process should be transparent and should include many perspectives.**

Two weeks ago, the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution encouraging a partnership between FCPS and county services to assist our troubled youth and to solicit input from the public to seek improvements to the disciplinary policy. I support these collaborative efforts and believe that we need to have an open and honest dialogue with our community about how these -and other--policies and issues are affecting mental and physical health of our students.

I campaigned on the pledge that “Your Child is My #1 Priority” and I take that pledge very seriously. I value your input and I want to hear from you; I will represent your views in this important discussion because it impacts all of our children and our community as a whole. I can be reached at: Patricia.Reed1@fcps.edu.

Sincerely,

Patty Reed
Fairfax County School Board Member - Providence District