April 13, 2004

RE: DISTRICT BUDGET AND LAYOFFS

This year, in response to an unprecedented budget deficit — still officially but vaguely estimated to be from $40 million to $80 million — school sites have been required by the central administration of this district to cut their funds.

This has euphemistically been called “site-based decision-making,” as if it were a positive shift away from the ironclad dominance of Blueprint programs over our schools. Of course, that language is nothing more than spin designed to hide the truth.

Last year, 412 positions were cut – among them school bus monitors, landscapers, and custodians – and 211 people had their work year reduced.

This year, nurses, counselors, librarians and special education personnel have been axed.

Today, another 616 people will lose their positions, and the resulting disruption to the operation of this school district will be incalculable. Many people will lose their jobs entirely, and many others will be “bumped” into other slots, based on seniority. It is the perfect expression of what I have called “52 Pick-Up.”

This administration says that everything has been on the block during these fiscal hard times, that cuts will be kept far from the classroom, that there are no sacred cows. In fact, this is just not true.

For many months I have repeatedly requested information — public information, mind you — about positions and salaries of district personnel who do not directly affect the teaching and learning of children in the classroom. These requests from a Board member were routinely stonewalled or denied outright.

In response, I have developed a red-covered report today called “Sacred Precincts.” This report describes central office administration that, by a conservative estimate, amounts to an untouched $38 million in salaries and benefits for personnel from the Office of the Superintendent, the Office of Instruction and from a portion of non-classroom General Administration at schools.

I would like to walk you through a brief Power-Point presentation of these facts. You may follow along in a red-covered report available at the exhibit desk up front.