

Day, Kashonda

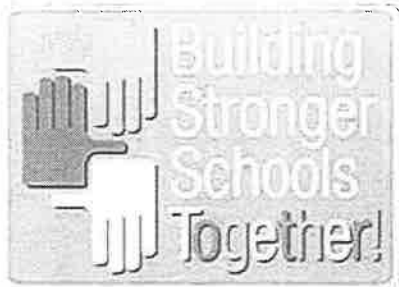
From: Shepherd, JoAnne Nelson
Sent: Monday, May 16, 2016 4:52 PM
To: Day, Kashonda
Subject: FW: Impressions

Background for Botech.

From: Gray, Cedrick
Sent: Monday, May 16, 2016 2:30 PM
To: Shepherd, JoAnne Nelson <jnelson@jackson.k12.ms.us>
Subject: FW: Impressions

“You can’t lead the people, if you don’t love the people.” – Dr. Cornell West

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Jackson Public Schools

From: Gray, Cedrick
Sent: Friday, May 13, 2016 8:58 AM



To: Brad Rowe
Cc: Walters, Wilbur
Subject: Re: Impressions

Great morning.

I'm sorry but I'm not aware of a request to meet with me. As you've noted, it's been over a year.

With whom did you make the request? If you would share the name, I can be sure that future requests are brought to my attention?

Did you also try to speak with our then Board President, Dr. Otha Burton? To my knowledge, he is not aware of any attempt to contact. In matters like these, the President speaks for the Board. I also don't recall Mr. Oppenheim sharing that he assisted you. Again, it's been over a year.

We've made great progress in even the last year. The tenor of your report sets that progress at odds.

I believe if you "mention with appreciation the huge undertaking your office has taken on in working to improve the schools" at least several times, especially as an introduction, in future presentations, the report would not deflate that work. Even with that, the report is an unfair representation of current conditions.

Our Deputy Superintendent is cc'd.

Dr. Cedrick Gray. Lead Teacher - Jackson Public Schools
You can't lead the people, if you don't love the people - Dr. Cornell West

Sent from my iPad

On May 12, 2016, at 11:13 PM, Brad Rowe <brad.rowe@botecanalysis.com> wrote:

Dear Dr. Gray

I am sorry that the BOTEC report has caused you distress. Much of the work was done by teachers who well know the extraordinary challenges and hardships faced by educators in the Jackson Public School system. The report mentions with appreciation the huge undertaking your office has taken on in working to improve the schools.

I am sorry you did not have the report prior to the briefing. BOTEC's contract with the Office of the Attorney General required us to deliver the report to that office, not to distribute copies. Nonetheless, your point is well taken, and we deeply regret that you were placed in a bad position. In the future, BOTEC will urge the client to ensure that people in your position are given advance copies.

At the outset, though I must correct your assertion that BOTEC did not make any effort to interview you or board members. I personally requested an interview with you in February of 2015. My request was denied and I was referred to your Chief Academic Officer for Middle Schools. I also met with Jed Oppenheim, a member of the school board twice, and followed up with phone calls. Mr. Oppenheim reviewed an early draft and gave me suggestions on areas that may have lacked attention. We were grateful for the perspective and implemented his suggestions. Beyond that I personally visited a half dozen schools and interviewed your PBIS specialist. My research team conducted several dozen interviews with principals, teachers, SSOs, and students.

We did our best to glean the department's perspective from the individuals to whom we were granted access. To be frank, many of my efforts to get information from your department have been stymied. My quest for spreadsheets from your data personnel has been going on for a year, now (I had to submit a timeline to the OAG to explain why I don't have JPS data). I've had about 30 letters, calls and e-mails, many of them frustrating mixed messages from the legal department who agreed and later refused to provide us public data that could contribute to finding valuable indicators of criminality.

With regard to your overall point about balanced reporting, I am grateful for your candor because it goes to the heart of the problem here. The OAG did not ask BOTEC to assess the performance of the JPS. Our mandate was quite different from any state or federal inquiry into school performance. We were asked to look into what some call the "school to prison pipeline," which is a cross-agency problem. We would not expect a school system to ferret out the correlations between criminality and school performance. Through this lens we tried to identify the factors not only at work in the JPSSD but also out in the community and beyond the schools' control, which contribute to criminogenic outcomes. By definition, therefore, the report *could not* be balanced. Simply put, there is a lot of crime in Jackson, much of it committed by local residents who attended the local schools. We were asked to look at the experiences of students that might correlate to later involvement in the criminal justice system. It's a one-sided question. You are right in saying that life in JPS is not all doom and gloom (certainly we met several students and administrators who were happy with their experience on the day to day) but there is no way to put a happy face on the precursors of crime.

Our education team believes that PBIS is the best disciplinary tool available to educators at present. The only "failures" relating to PBIS are limited implementation, some individual resistance to the concept and the paucity of resources directed to it. We mention zero-tolerance policies because of the reality that it is hard-wired into the culture (along with a nostalgia for religion and corporal punishment) so that teachers and administrators, especially the veterans, are having a harder time making the shift away from it.

This job was titled the "Capitol City Crime Prevention Study." This did not leave room for outlining the components of the districts work that are running smoothly. Our effort was to shed light on areas that could be improved and to offer suggestions on how those areas could be addressed. There are dozens of best practices being used across the nation that we pulled together so you could easily reach out to your counterparts in other parts of the country. We made special effort to offer accessible solutions that could be embraced without huge financial outlay.

On a personal note, please know that my company has not made any money on this project. We accepted work that could only be done properly by exceeding the budget for it. My colleague and I made this trip on our own dime because we were worried that these reports (to which we devoted the better part of a year) might be overlooked or misinterpreted. The reports contain solid suggestions and what we feel is a promising blueprint for positive change. Please feel free to continue this conversation with me. I am available to you and understand where you are coming from. We intend to issue an addendum with the graduation statistics that you provide and we welcome any other updated data you wish to provide. We can't change the scope of the report at this point, but as you noted, the delay in issuing the report (which we completed early last fall) calls for updated statistics, including your plans to extend PBIS.

Finally, we will gladly integrate the grades and discipline data if you can help us clear the roadblock we have encountered from the legal department.

Thank you!

Brad

On May 11, 2016, at 8:33 PM, Gray, Cedrick <cegray@jackson.k12.ms.us> wrote:

Mr. Rowe,

The more I review this report you compiled on our district, the more disappointed I become in the gross misrepresentation of Jackson Public Schools.

When we met today, I had a good impression of you. As I read the study, however, those impressions changed.

You conducted months of research and interviews right under our noses with not so much as a call or email to the Board Members or Superintendent.

I only wish I'd had it prior to the meeting so that I could speak intelligently about its contents and their lack of context.

Not surprisingly, that opportunity was not afforded me.

Researchers find balance and sincerity in their work. I felt this study clearly lacked both.

You mentioned PBIS as both a failure and a benefit. However, your stance on zero tolerance is ambiguous at best. Readers walk away from the report feeling like the district is a complete failure when we all know that's not the case.

I feel like you could've at least asked what our plans were or included more up to date data in your study.

If this were really about improvement, we should've been planning how the resources you mentioned could be garnered instead of unnecessarily lambasting our district.

You will soon leave our city but the citizens and scholars that you have depressed will have to stay and live with this negative and inaccurate narrative.

You should consider the balance in your reporting before releasing this wholesale.

Again, disappointed and unpleasantly surprised.

Cedrick Gray, Ed.D., Supt.
Jackson Public School District

Sent from my Cedrick's iPhone

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