

October 09, 2010

Ms. Kristen Miles
Program Manager
PPS Charter Schools

BESC
501 N. Dixon St.
Portland, OR 97227

Dear Ms. Miles:

We are writing to voice our concern regarding the Portland Village School (PVS) charter's recent announcement of its' intention to purchase the Waverly School in SE Portland from Trillium Family Services. We reside a block from the school and our children attend our neighborhood elementary school, Grout, which is a Title I district program. There are four other district Title I programs nearby, including Hosford Middle School, Creston K-8, Atkinson Elementary and Lewis Elementary. PVS charter intends to increase its' enrollment to 440 students (nearly a quarter of all current public charter students within the district) by 2014 at the Waverly site. A PVS representative indicated this is required by their charter agreement. We worry this will have a significant, detrimental impact on neighboring Title I schools, drawing away neighborhood children, thus negatively impacting neighborhood catchment rates, and further eroding services and staffing in these programs. We also worry such hemorrhage of students could leave existing title schools less diverse, both racially and socio-economically.

We are active in our schools PTA and programming and have worked with our building administration to raise community awareness of Grout amongst our neighbors and friends these last several years. We are saddened that other families in our neighborhood don't choose Grout for their children. We already lose significant numbers of students to other district focus programs that are located nearby. We worry the proposed addition of the PVS could intensify this loss.

After reviewing PPS charter state testing data, we noticed the PVS charter currently enrolls a limited number of minority, low income and special needs children. If this pattern were to continue in future years at PVS, we could see increased disparity along socio-economic and racial lines in our neighborhood title schools.

Does the PPS charter office review proposed charter school site selections for impact on neighboring district schools? Does your office review the financial plans of a charter school move, including purchase price, relocation costs, and remediation expenses (for example, lead and asbestos removal and earthquake readiness), to determine fiscal viability of a move? Also, does your office determine if the purchase is fiscally prudent if it requires a near doubling of the student body?

We have begun discussion with parents and administrators at our local title schools and we seek information from your office whether the district has a role in the proposed move by the PVS and if so, what elements make up such review of this particular purchase and move-in.

Thank you for your courtesy and we look forward to receiving further information from the district charter office as this process moves forward.

Sincerely,

Brian and Thayna Baker
Grout Elementary parents

cc: Carole Smith, Superintendent
Jollee Patterson, General Counsel
Cynthia Gilliam, Deputy Superintendent
Susan Kosmala, Funded Programs Director
Judith Brennan, Family Support and School Choice Director
PPS School Board Members