

Board of Education,

My name is Chris Smithson. I live in Southern Pines and attended Moore County public schools for nine years.

We're here tonight to discuss new school districts for several schools. I am here because of the new West Pine Elementary and the new proposed districts for West Pine and Pinehurst Elementary schools.

Frankly, there's not a whole lot you can do with the new West Pine district as it was your choice of its location that acted as your de facto adoption of an attendance district for the new school. You pretty much went halfway to West End Elementary to the west and then went as far to the east as you needed to in order to get the numbers.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the proposed boundaries is what areas still remain in the Pinehurst Elementary district or why they were even drawn that way in the first place. When a student in the gated CCNC community is literally a stone's throw away from Southern Middle and is closer to Southern Pines Primary and Elementary than to Pinehurst Elementary, one wonders why on earth they were ever assigned to the overcrowded Pinehurst Elementary or the long drive down NC211 to West Pine Middle.

Some of the same questions apply to students living in the gated National Golf Club community. They're just up 15-501 from Southern Middle, but they have to get through the mess at the traffic circle then go all the way down 211 to get to West Pine Middle.

I have spoken to you before about the disparities in school performance and reputation between Southern Middle and West Pine as well as other similar comparisons between elementary and primary

schools. Several years ago, when you were working towards your new facilities plan, I, along with others, reminded you that by choosing wisely the locations and districts for new schools you could go far towards reversing the mistakes the Board made during the last construction phase.

Over the years, I have spoken individually with several of you as well as some who are no longer on the board. To a person and in private it seems pretty clear that you understand and usually agree with concerns over issues like the resegregation of our schools or seemingly gerrymandered attendance districts. Unfortunately, you won't address them in public and don't seem to be making decisions aimed at addressing them. You'll take a stand on honor cords at graduation and be mocked on national talk radio, but you seem uninterested in addressing real injustices in our county school system.

Very soon, you will be choosing the location and attendance district for the County's fourth high school. Its purpose is to ease the overcrowding at Pinecrest and Union Pines. I encourage you to do the right thing and make very careful and informed choices. The choice of where the new high school is located and who goes there should not be based on something as simplistic as where the cheapest piece of land may be. If you don't get your demographics and feeder patterns right, the consequences could be huge.

When choosing the locations of new schools and their attendance districts, please don't take the easy way out. Please do what is right to ensure that our schools perform equally and that their student bodies are better reflective of our community overall.

I have heard some of you speak about fairness. We must disagree on what that word means or how it should be measured. This Board's stance seems to rest on the easy definition. I've heard you say it is not fair for one school to have a program if they all can't have it. Fair is fair, right? Even if one school one student has more needs than another, you can always be safe by falling back on the argument that you divide funds equally. Heck, some of y'all didn't think it was fair that students who went the extra mile could wear honor cords at graduation. That one got you mocked nationwide on talk radio.

As I have said before, fairness should be defined by outcomes, not by some flimsy excuse that everyone, regardless of need got the same funding. How is it fair that an only 39% of economically disadvantaged students at Southern Middle pass both end of grade tests that same group achieves a 61% passing rate at West Pine?