

Duncan humiliates Farren, Sherman

By Michael H. Brownstein

“The announced timing of the school’s closing is inconsistent with all of the known research and policies of the Chicago Board of Education,” explained Sandra Fisher, a teacher at the John Farren Elementary School.

Fisher feels this way because the ISAT test is coming up in just a few weeks. The ISAT will be used by the board to identify schools that are failing as well as schools on the road to success. Furthermore, the board has stated a section of the ISAT will be used with the current promotion policy. Students in the third, sixth and eighth grades can be retained in their grade if they do poorly on this high stakes test.

“The timing is not good for the teachers or the students,” Fisher continued. “This puts a cloud over the Farren School. How can they talk about closing the school—or any school for that matter—just a few weeks before the ISAT.”

Fisher went on to explain that the students, teachers and administration have prepared long and hard for the coming standardized tests and now she feels it was all for naught. “No matter what,” she said, “I think the timing was set-up to help us fail.”

Don Stahked of Sherman School agrees with Fisher. “The board has made a policy that does not take into account the betterment of a school. Closing a school is bad for morale in general, but closing it so close to the ISAT is the same as stating all of our hard work was for nothing.”

Sherman is closing as part of the Renaissance 2010 program. It will reopen as a performance of the arts school, not a charter school, but as a part of the Renaissance 2010 project.

“When I was in high school, I was assigned to read THE PRINCE. I remember how that book showed divide and conquer as a viable strategy,” Stahlked said. “That is the policy of the board. Divide and conquer. Break the morale of the teachers and students.

“The board simply does not care.”

Another teacher who wanted to remain anonymous claimed that the charter schools and the Renaissance 2010 schools were just another way for the Chicago Board of Education to get additional money. “Everyone knows the charter schools have to give ten percent from every grant they receive to the Board.”

The Chicago Teachers Union did not return this reporters phone calls, but a representative from the Board did. Lyn Klikuszewski, New School Support (this includes charter and Renaissance 2010 schools), said, “I have never heard this.

“I have worked with the charter schools for five and a half years and I’ve never heard this statement from anyone. Charter schools get one hundred percent of all grant money they receive. They never have to give any money back to the board.”

Can a teacher working at Sherman reapply for a teaching job?

“I don’t know that answer,” she stated, “but it is a publicly funded school and it will be staffed with certified Chicago Public School teachers.”