

Campaign aims to save Irvington schools from 'constructivism'

To the Editor:

During the fields vote last year, parents who opposed artificial turf were afraid to express their views. I know this is true because I have emails from parents saying so.

The same one-sided process is set to unfold again this fall, as the District hosts a new set of forums to discuss a strategic plan. Now, as then, the superintendent knows what he wants, and parents who disagree will do so at a cost.

This week a friend came up with a way for residents to speak freely.

I'll write a series of letters explaining the kind of schools my family and friends value.

Everyone who shares our educational values — parents, empty nesters, people who've never had children in the schools — should cut out the letters and mail them to SOS - Save Our Schools, PO Box 183, Irvington, NY 10533. The envelopes will be hand-delivered unopened to the school board at a public meeting.

It's important to weigh in because the superintendent has hired a specialist in "constructivism" (peer editing, flipped classrooms, learning stations, etc.) to oversee the strategic planning process — before finding out whether the community wants constructivist schools.

In constructivist classrooms, students teach themselves and each other. They choose their own books to read, and work in groups to "discover" and "construct" their own knowledge while the teacher circulates the classroom working one-on-one with students having difficulty.

Is this what parents want?

Is it what taxpayers want?

Unlikely.

Several years ago, Main Street School created a constructivist class. All subjects were to be taught as projects, with math, English, science, and social studies rolled into one.

We parents were given the choice to enroll our children. So few of us did that the principal was forced to call parents personally to sell the class, which filled only because parents or friends enrolled their children in tandem. Overwhelmingly, parents preferred the structure and coherence of a teacher-led classroom.

Our schools are public schools. By law and custom, the community sets the vision, the board sets the mission, the superintendent executes the mission.

Yet for far too long our central administrators have done what they wanted to do, not what we want them to do.

If you agree, send a copy of this letter to SOS - Save Our Schools - PO Box 183, Irvington, NY.

For the price of a 49-cent stamp, your voice can be heard.

Catherine Johnson
Irvington