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Scott Milder, President & CEO
Friends of Texas Public Schools (FOTPS)
4000 McEwen Rd. North
Dallas, Texas 75244

Dear Scott,

I have several copies of the Steve Blow article, "One Couple's Radical Suggestion: Focus on what schools do *right*," Sunday, December 12, 2004, *Dallas Morning News, Metro B*. I congratulate FOTPS heartedly on stepping up to leadership in this area of public service. I decided to share the following testimonial with FOTPS with hope that my successful matriculation in an "urban, low-income school" may inspire and prove the FOTPS mission.

In the late 1980s, I debated another African American female on a local, Dallas radio station about the differences between public and private education. Also in her junior year of high school, we spoke for an hour, contrasting realities that community psychologists and educational policy researchers call social competencies, environmental socialization and child development. Although I was only a 17 year old, I knew that my high achieving, award winning performance at Lincoln High School Humanities/Communications Magnet was not an anomalous accomplishment. Academic excellence, acceptable behavior, personal accountability, and service characterized my entire tenure in Dallas Independent School District (D.I.S.D.) Area 5 schools, i.e. South Dallas. My friends and schoolmates knew the rules and exemplified self-respect; consequently, our pride in ourselves, school and neighborhood made us similar much more than our socio-economic conditions.

I need to know what became of the young woman from the private, all girls school. I graduated valedictorian, completed a double major from Wellesley College on a full academic scholarship in 4 years, finished my Ph.D. in August 2003, and launched a for-profit grant writing and funding research business in South Dallas. On my way to "give back," I passed up Princeton as my undergraduate option and turned down faculty teaching jobs up north. However, I returned to South Dallas to find a public school system which had more than adequately prepared me to compete and excel, constantly riddled by polemics that overshadow strengths and sensationalize struggles.

I write this testimonial to you, Scott, because I know that public schools in "urban, low-income" areas work hard to foster and promote intellectual growth in African American students. Unfortunately, too much time is spent on comparative complaints ranging from budget woes to disgraceful tactics employed to raise test scores. Most importantly, my testimony is relevant because I know that poorer performing schools eclipse the culturally resonant, community-based strategies that facilitated my positive preparations in D.I.S.D. Area 5. In my opinion, the treasure at stake has less to do with academic testing reputations or which schools have legitimately earned recognition for their test scores. The real story is that public schools in African American communities have traditionally been bastions of extended family. In these treasured institutions, committed and personally vested leadership have protected children, helping them become intellectual beings who are socially responsible, productive citizens. For that I reason, I am happily casting my lot with FOTPS.

Sincerely,

LaTrese Evette Adkins, Ph.D.
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