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November 7, 2008

Ms. Karen Hessel
24 North Avenue
New Rochelle, NY 10805

Re: Trinity School Lunch Period

Dear Ms. Hessel,

Thank you for transmitting the concerns of Trinity parents concerning the lunch period to us. I wanted to be able to gather some information before responding to your letter. I have reviewed the material you sent me, observed the 4th grade lunch period, and spoken with administrative staff at other City School District schools to learn their perspectives on the elementary school lunch period.

I was at Trinity School today with School Nurse Marianne Brady and our Nurse Practitioner, Barbara Ehrenreich, to observe the lunchroom during the 4th grade lunch. We were all impressed with the organization of the lunchroom. Mr. Einzinger, the building teacher who directly supervises the lunchroom, has developed bar code cards for the students so that the lunch lines move along quickly. The lunchroom monitors know the students well. Student entered the room and moved to their assigned tables. One or two students from each class bring a carton which contains lunches students have brought from home. During the 15 minute lunch period, both Assistant Principal Rolando Briceño and Food Service Director Deirdre McManus were on site observing how the lunch period was going and supervising staff.

A few 4th grade students began to arrive at 11:25, and all the students were in place by 11:30. The children were eating and socializing, and they all appeared to be enjoying lunch. By 11:38, some children had finished lunch, and these children began to dispose of their trays. By 11:40, many of the children had their coats on, and they were ready to go out to recess. By 11:42, most of the students had finished eating. At 11:43, the first students were dismissed from the lunchroom to recess. At 11:45, the rest of the students were dismissed to recess. Two students who had not finished eating remained at the "overflow" table.

During discussions about lunch, building administrators from three other New Rochelle elementary schools all shared with me that even students who are able to remain in the lunchroom for up to 30 minutes have generally completed eating lunch within 10 minutes and are ready and eager to move on to recess.

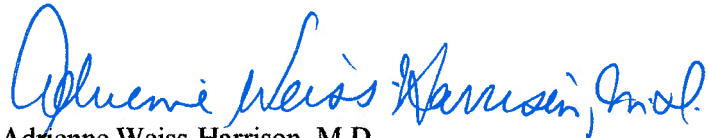
Your concern over the great competing demands on the time of our students during the school day is a valid one. The matter of programming at Trinity School would best be addressed by the building administrative team. Principal McMahon and his team are open to discussing planning changes for the 2009-2010 School Year. I would be happy to be part of those discussions if the group believes this would assist developing a solution that addresses meeting the needs of our students as well as that of the practicalities of the building schedule and physical plant.

Thank you for providing the University of Mississippi study. We can all take some comfort from the study's conclusion "that students (K-12) need approximately 10 minutes" to consume lunch, with additional minutes for time on the serving line and to return their trays. (Eating at School, p.9)

I am confident that with a collaborative problem solving approach we will be able to develop creative solutions to the lunch schedule.

Kind personal regards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Adrienne Weiss-Harrison, M.D." The signature is written in a cursive style.

Adrienne Weiss-Harrison, M.D.
Medical Director / School Physician

AWH/vos

cc: Richard Organisciak
Jeffrey Korostoff, Ed.D.
Richard McMahon
Rolando Briceño
Nadine Pacheco
Deirdre McManus