

## **Foertsch Court Statement**

### **10/19/06**

My name is Deborah Foertsch, I teach fifth grade, and I represent more than 800 teachers as the President of the Champaign Federation of Teachers.

The implementation of the Consent Decree is not merely a legal exercise that is litigated in the courtroom. The actions that will ultimately lead to successful implementation of Consent Decree goals occur in our classrooms every day. We teachers of Champaign Unit 4 are the heart and soul of the implementation of the Consent Decree.

Champaign teachers are well aware of our responsibility for improving academic outcomes for African American students. And in our classrooms, teachers meet the challenge of providing a rigorous curriculum in an individualized, engaging manner. We work to create demanding curricular practices. Then we teachers make those practices effective within our classrooms. Some examples:

\*Implementation of Personal Education (PEP) Plans at the elementary level

\*At the secondary level— structured supports for students in upper level courses; and AVID classes, requiring an extraordinary commitment from teachers

\*At all levels—curriculum alignment and a new grading policy.

Champaign teachers' continuing education demonstrates our commitment to consent decree goals. We've learned to differentiate our instruction and better understand student challenges and talents through diversity training. Teachers in the district participate in staff development focused on positive behavior facilitation that requires significant commitments of time and focus. After the training, the true work begins—implementing what we've learned into our classrooms with the children.

In order to inform our professional judgments, Unit 4 teachers routinely enter and review data using the computer program Mastery Manager. Multiple assessments are given, data is reviewed, and instruction is tailored to students.

We teachers are well aware that our actions and our students' progress are being monitored in light of Consent Decree goals, and we are accountable for the success of all of our students. We document everything. And this documentation is reviewed by administration. Our lessons are observed, and work is in progress to create new procedures for teacher evaluation. Unit 4 teachers are accountable.

CFT has successfully negotiated bargaining agreements to fulfill Consent Decree goals. Among these are:

- \*Collaboration at the elementary level

- \*New positions, like mentors and AVID coordinators

- \*Reconfiguration of Stratton

- \*Processes for special minority hires and the creation of clubs to include students underrepresented in extracurricular activities.

CFT has also been part of equity audit discussions, and this year we'll be working on the Minority Teachers Retention Committee. We've promoted the "Grow Your Own" program, worked on the Stratton Oversight Committee, and donated funds annually for National African American Parent Involvement Day.

As President of CFT, I serve on the Planning and Implementation Committee, and this has been instrumental in my own understanding of the Consent Decree-- its causes, importance, and perspectives on "how to get the job done." I know first-hand of the District's and Plaintiffs' commitment to the education of African American students. I've seen the importance of trust, communication, and

community as we work side-by-side to implement the letter and spirit of the agreement. In my role with teachers, I communicate all of this—the urgency and necessity of meeting Consent Decree goals; and there's not a day that goes by in my fifth grade class that I don't think about lessons learned from PIC—about teachers' importance in this endeavor, the importance of positive human relationships in teaching kids and working with their families.

Teaching in Champaign Schools is certainly not easy. In the past four years, we teachers have simultaneously experienced the impact of new administration, the increasing demands of the "No Child Left Behind" legislation, and the realization of the responsibility we have in meeting Consent Decree goals. We are meeting the challenges. We negotiate and collaborate with the District. We collect, report, and use data like never before. We give our time and our energies well beyond the length of the school day. But, most importantly, we teach our students. The teachers of Champaign Schools are steadfast in our commitment to the children. And we are proud to see the fruits of our labors and our dedication. The achievement gap is narrowing. Our students are learning.

Teachers enter this profession because we care about children. In Champaign Unit #4, that means all children. Champaign teachers

absolutely care about African American children and strive to contribute to their success in the Consent Decree areas. But teachers also go beyond legal requirements - we are dedicated to our students' success in life; and we know that education is key.

As President of the Champaign Federation of Teachers, I am confident that the District will be achieving the Consent Decree goals by 2009, and we teachers will be instrumental in this success.