

4 Corners News & Views for Ohio's Cradle of Education

Common Sense Where Main Meets Wooster
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An Open Letter from the Publisher

BG Schools Lose Students; Need Enrollment, Not Building

Lost amid the hoopla surrounding the Bowling Green Board of Education's big plans to build a new junior high school is the persistent and pernicious loss of students in the public schools.

While Superintendent Hugh Caumartin leads the charge to indebt the community's taxpayers for millions of dollars and the five lapdog board members nod approvingly, the biggest problem in the school district is swept under the rug.

Let me put it succinctly: Parents are taking their children elsewhere.

Look at the chilling facts from the Ohio Board of Education web site (www.ode.state.oh.us/data/):

In 1993-94 school year, BG schools had 3,612 students enrolled.

By 1997-98, enrollment had fallen to 3,416.

By 2001-02, enrollment had tumbled to 3,231.

By 2004-05 (last school year), enrollment was below 3,200 at 3,191.

In other words, the Bowling Green school district has lost 421 students in 11 years or nearly 12 percent of its enrollment (the equivalent of closing 20 classrooms and eliminating 20 teachers). This in spite of overall population growth in the district.

In the past nine years, BG's public schools have been averaging a loss of 46 students a year. If trend continues, the schools will fall below 3,000 total enrollment before by 2009-10.

So the community grows and the public schools shrink.

What is causing this?

First, last year parents of 525 students sent their children to other non-public schools within the boundaries on the BG district -- BG Christian Academy, BG Montessori, Plan Do and Talk, St. Aloysius and St Louis.

Second, the public schools are losing students to home schooling and to private schools outside the district such as Maumee Valley Country Day, St. John's and St. Ursula. I am in the process of obtaining a complete breakdown of enrollment and the trends.

What is the leading cause of this exodus? I fear the biggest reason is a growing perception that Bowling Green's public schools are mediocre, no longer special.

Caumartin and company seem preoccupied with closing buildings (starting with South Main) and building buildings, not promoting the program. I still believe BG has pretty good public schools but the light is being kept under a bushel.

If present enrollment decline trends continue, there will be enough space for the eighth grade at the senior high school and the seventh grades could be dispersed to the larger elementaries, especially if South had been kept open and operating as a historic (over 100 years old) elementary instead of its current fate as an arts center (courtesy of the BG taxpayers, I fear).

I attended the hearing earlier this year when the future of South was discussed. I joined other interested citizens in asking that the venerable building be saved. At minimum, I asked that the BG taxpayers be allowed to vote on South's fate. I and others were ignored. South is gone. At least under the present regime.

During that meeting Superintendent Caumartin handed out certificates to the five board of education members and told them what a great job they were doing. He works for them, but he treated them like he was their employer. Maybe he is. See what I meant about lapdogs.

Best regards, John K. Hartman, publisher, *4 Corners News & Views*,
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Letter writers assail Sentinel cover-up of Noe scandal

On June 15, the *Sentinel-Tribune* published three letters to the editor taking the newspaper to task for downplaying the Coingate scandal involving BG native Tom Noe.

Jim Litwin wrote that editor David C. Miller, who in my opinion ran a lame column defending his cover-up on June 8, should rename his "Behind the News" column something more appropriate like "Avoiding the News" or "Protecting the Locals."

Wally Pretzer wrote that the lack of coverage "lessened the impact of the scandal."

Russ Frye followed up his letter of June 8 (the one Miller took off on) with a second one stating "journalism is about the search for truth with the potential consequences and ramification of a story determining its value. The Tom Noe story

would certainly qualify in this regard.”

Wise readers of the *Sentinel* appear to know more about journalism than its editor.

Miller (or one of his employees) took me to task in an “Editor’s note,” pointing out that the newsletter (no mention of the newsletter’s name or of my name) credited his lucrative appointments to the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission to Republican Gov. Bob Taft when, in fact, they came from former Republican Gov. George Voinovich. I stand corrected, but let the record show that Miller was appointed by a Republican and that Miller serves as an apologist and cover-up artist for the Republicans.

The Editor’s note also stated that Miller never has contributed to a political candidate in his 25 years as editor. Maybe no monetary contributions, but lots of publicity and public relations “contributions” for which Miller has been generously rewarded.

Obviously concerned about offending Democrats and fair-minded people among its customers, the *Sentinel* is having a “Readers call-in night” from 5:30-7 p.m. Wednesday July 13. Just call 419-352-4611 and tell the *Sentinel* that its readers deserve better than pro-GOP bias.

Stay tuned. As the *Sentinel* Saga of Republican favoritism turns.