

Cleveland school reform - Old Brooklyn area fares well

by Robyn Sandys
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On January 5, 2010, Chief Executive Officer of the Cleveland Public Schools Eugene Sanders made an announcement that there will be a major transformation initiative affecting the school system. He stated that the plan being proposed would close eighteen city schools. It will most likely be voted on by the School Board on February 23rd.

Within the Old Brooklyn and Brooklyn Centre areas, there will be no school closings. One K-8 school, Charles A. Mooney on Montclair Ave. in Old Brooklyn, is on a "watch list", meaning that there will be a review again next year of schools placed on this lists to determine their future viability.

Councilman Kevin Kelley, who represents most of Old Brooklyn, recently said, "I am reviewing the Cleveland Metropolitan School District's plan and am keeping an open mind. But I have concerns about closing two high schools because this could lead to increased demand on Rhodes High School which is already overcrowded. We are fortunate to have several high performing K-8 schools in our area and Rhodes has been taking positive steps as well. I don't want anything to disturb this progress."

The new plan, entitled *Whatever it Takes*, has at its core goal to improve the schools' academic performance. A management consulting team was hired to evaluate each school according to a specified evaluation system. They put the schools into various categories.

"Growth Schools" is the highest rated group. These schools, eighteen in all, will be given more freedom when it comes to the overall management of the schools. Two schools in Old Brooklyn fall into this "growth" category — Benjamin Franklin School on Spring Rd. and William Cullen Bryant School on Oak Park Rd.; they are both K-8;

The next tier in the plan is "Refocus Schools"; these are improving schools that

will get added attention, such as leadership training and help with continuing their progress. One school in OBCDC's service area, James Ford Rhodes High School, falls into that category.

The next category is "Repurpose schools". They will include possible staff changes or they may be converted to charter schools. The last category is schools that will close. Old Brooklyn/Brooklyn Centre does not have any schools that are in either of these two categories.

Councilman Tony Brancatelli, who also represents areas within Old Brooklyn, recently said, "I understand that we have excess capacity in our school system. It is of the utmost importance that we keep in mind that children come first, and when we close schools we must be sure we are able to provide transportation and access to high quality schools.



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Ben Franklin is a wonderful example of a high quality school with a good administration and faculty that has been rated as a Growth School. Further, we must be sure that the closed schools do not become 'low-value' charter schools. That is why I am advocating that A.B. Hart be demolished immediately and that we put the appropriate checks and balances in for any closed school and that they adhere to guidelines that do not undermine our teachers or school system."

Future updates regarding this plan, including the "watch list" school, will appear in subsequent issues of the *Old Brooklyn News*.

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