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Full text of letter submitted to *Grayslake Times*.

Parent input valuable to shape curriculum

Last week's commentary by Michael Landers, "Curriculum vote misguided effort", discussed Friends of District 46 and its proposed advisory referendum on Core Knowledge. I think the author misunderstands the intent of the Friends group and the point of the proposed referendum.

Last March, a letter from then Board of Education President John Karol and Superintendent Dr. Kurtis Anderson stated: "...the constituents of District 46 are the ones who will create the future for our schools." At the time, Dr. William Spady was guiding that future. It soon became evident that the community and Dr. Spady did not share the same vision. But the offer for the community to shape the future of our schools continues to have merit. Friends of District 46, of which I am a member, formed as a result of that offer.

I am thankful to live where anyone can openly bring forth an idea. That is the essence of a democracy and one of this county's founding principles. As such, I disagree with Mr. Landers that bringing this to an advisory referendum is "undemocratic and just plain dumb". What could be more democratic than to put an issue to vote? If the community doesn't support it, the referendum reveals that. The Friends group has repeatedly stated that it has no desire to force Core Knowledge on the community. This decision cannot be made by a "small group" as Mr. Landers suggests. Only our elected Board has the authority to set direction. As our representatives, they should welcome the input gained from a referendum obtained at no expense to the district.

Mr. Landers also believes education decisions should be left to education professionals. Clearly, we must rely on professionals to provide guidance. Note that over 200 education professionals developed Core Knowledge. However, it would be a mistake for parents to abdicate the responsibility for their children's education solely to professionals.

There are many philosophies on education. It is a parent's right and responsibility to provide input about which philosophy they believe is appropriate. Mr. Landers implies that parents are not qualified to make education decisions and likens it to a lawyer telling a surgeon how to do open heart surgery. We don't blindly allow our doctor to make critical decisions about our health. We get second opinions and must ultimately make our own choices. Similarly, the education of our children is far too important to leave to others. The responsibility rightly rests with us as parents. Involved parents equate to better schools.

Mr. Landers points out that he is no fan of Dr. William Spady and was glad when the public rose up to squelch his involvement. Yet he now asks parents to butt out and leave curriculum decisions in the hands of the same administrators who brought us Dr. Spady and the similarly minded Edward T. Clark. The question is, do these controversial philosophies represent the views of the majority of parents in District 46?

Lastly, Mr. Landers suggests that we put Core Knowledge to a teacher vote. It is true that teacher support of Core Knowledge is important. But is it realistic to expect an objective vote from our teachers when their employer is clearly opposed to the idea? Also, it would be premature to ask for their final

opinion now before they have had adequate time to fully consider the program. It is noteworthy that the American Federation of Teachers has put Core Knowledge on their short list of most promising programs. Mr. Landers asks how our teachers would feel about working in a district where parents are involved in decisions about curriculum. I believe great teachers prefer involvement to indifference.

It's too bad that Mr. Landers did not take the time to look into Core Knowledge. If he didn't like Bill Spady, he might really like Core Knowledge.

Greg Kveton
District 46 Parent

Link to the letter from Michael Landers.

<http://www.watchd46schools.org/Docs/LandersEd-GT102601.pdf>