

## Get it Right

Written by Rep. Mia McLeod  
Monday, 09 September 2013 09:36 -

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Recently, a reporter with The State contacted me about an article she was writing. Said she wanted to know my thoughts about whether interim Richland Two Superintendent, Dr. Debbie Hamm, should be asked to stay on or whether the District should conduct a national search for the position.

Not a tough question, but certainly one that warranted some consideration.

Here's the deal. I rarely venture out of "my lane." My plate is already full, so I have neither the time nor the desire to critique Richland Two's actions or decisions, even when I disagree with them. But in this instance, I was asked so I answered.

Here's the problem. Ms. Click's story was obviously written already. Had I known that, I wouldn't have wasted my time or hers. Instead, I became the misinformed, misquoted "party-crasher" of the "Hamm for Superintendent Fest" that was Ms. Click's second slanted attempt to sway public opinion.

And while her efforts to marginalize me as anti-Hamm and pro-Brochu are neither true nor necessary, I can't help but wonder why the elevation of one must warrant the destruction of the other.

Former Superintendent, Dr. Katie Brochu, certainly has her share of critics. Perhaps Dr. Hamm will too. I'm just not one of them. But you'd never know that by reading Ms. Click's article.

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Dr. Hamm may be aptly qualified and capable of meeting the challenges and opportunities our school district faces. Unfortunately she, like other recent Richland County “appointees,” was presented to us on the “garbage can lid.”

Everything I’m sharing here was shared with Ms. Click first, including the fact that I’ve spoken with many parents, teachers and administrators who understood and supported Dr. Brochu’s vision for Richland Two. Too bad she couldn’t find a few of them to help balance out her obviously biased views.

When asked if I “agreed” that Dr. Hamm should stay on as Superintendent (permanently), I replied that I had just met Dr. Hamm at Richland Two’s Partnership Summit and couldn’t speak to her ability or desire to serve, but hoped the District would conduct a national search as due diligence requires.

When asked if Dr. Hamm is “a better fit” for our Richland Two community and “family-like” culture, my response was, “Not necessarily a better fit.” But why must we keep comparing the two again?

That’s a good question for Ms. Click because just after the District’s Partnership Summit, she wrote an article that characterized Dr. Brochu’s tenure as “a bump in the road” and attributed this year’s event turnout and enthusiasm to Dr. Hamm.

Funny thing is...there were just as many people and just as much enthusiasm at last year’s event—which was a half day or longer. Dr. Brochu invited me, along with many other business and community leaders, including Ms. Click. Don’t remember seeing her though, or any other vocal Brochu critics.

“A bump in the road.” Seriously?

That’s not only inaccurate. It’s downright offensive. So are inferences that the District is now

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“healing” from wounds allegedly inflicted back then and Dr. Hamm, after only 3 months, is just the “salve” we need.

Perhaps Dr. Brochu didn’t “play politics” with the good ole boys and gals (yep...they’re in the suburbs too). But I can attest to her collaborative, inclusive vision and efforts to connect with and engage our communities and stakeholders.

I found her to be personable, approachable, supportive, visible and a champion of innovative concepts and cutting-edge practices, like those unveiled at New Carolina’s event last Spring. And yet, she’s criticized as being anti-Magnet, anti-political, anti-social, anti-collaborative and ultimately, anti-Richland Two?

Garbage.

Guess that lid isn’t the only thing that’s been recycled...

As a parent of two Richland Two Magnet students, I can tell you that Dr. Brochu wasn’t anti-Magnet. She was pro-parity. There’s a difference.

Her “think outside the box” leadership embraced change, technology, equity and professional development. In fact, the beginning of her professional demise was questioning and challenging the “status quo,” during the District’s recent redistricting efforts, over the loud cries of a vocal few.

And although I would never praise anyone for simply hiring minority Principals, I certainly do commend her for elevating qualified, competent educators (who happen to be minorities) to those positions—which more accurately reflects the population the District serves.

So the next time you quote me, Ms. Click, please get it right. Few things are more frustrating than irresponsible journalism. And let me be clear...regardless of whether Dr. Hamm stays on

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as our permanent Superintendent, I've always been and always will be pro-public education and pro-Richland Two.

Quote that...