



February 13, 2017

Ms. Natasha Baker  
State School Reform Officer  
111 South Capitol Avenue  
Lansing, MI 48933

Dear Ms. Baker,

My name is Cykeia Lee, and I currently serve as the Director of The Learning Network of Greater Kalamazoo, housed at the Kalamazoo Community Foundation. In my role, I have witnessed first-hand the dedication and talents that are working every day to improve student outcomes at both the Woodward School for Technology and Research and the Washington Writers' Academy. Today, I am writing to implore you to support educational equity by allowing these two elementary schools to stay open.

According to the Center for Public Education, "Equity in education is achieved when students are all treated the same and have access to similar resources. Equity is achieved when all students receive the resources they need so that they graduate prepared for success after high school." Can you help me understand how closing these two Kalamazoo elementary schools will better provide students with the resources they need to be successful?

National research and best practices indicate a number of effective strategies for turning around a school. These include deploying principals who are experts in instructional leadership, proactively engaging the community around a shared vision of improvement, and allocating additional funds to high-poverty schools so that students have the wrap-around services they require before they are able to learn. To my knowledge, there is no research that suggests simply closing a school leads to improved student outcomes.

In a state with such striking racial and economic disparities in education outcomes, the Student Reform Office's approach to closing schools is plainly inequitable. Woodward School for Technology and Research, and Washington Writers' Academy are serving students from diverse socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds to help them succeed. It is clear to me that closing these two schools and forcing families to relocate their children will ultimately disrupt ongoing education and cause unreasonable hardship to our community's children.

I look forward to your reply, and to working together to find solutions to keep Washington Writers' Academy and the Woodward School for Technology and Research open.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cykeia Lee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cykeia Lee