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My name is David Prown and I'm a 25 year resident of Red Bank, NJ. I came to Red Bank in the late 80's to run my families (now) 90 year old family business.

Having a business so long in town, being civic minded and a father of 3, I was very passionate about Red Bank, the schools and the young people.

I writing in 100% support of the Red Bank Charter School expansion from the perspective of the three (3) hats I wear. 1st, I will write it as a former Red Bank Charter School parent secondly as a youth advocate and thirdly as a resident/tax payer.

Before the Charter School existed, I had some involvement with the Boro School system as a local business owner. I most remember the security aspects of my visits there. I personally was never scared but very much remember the school having active in-school security personnel. That really surprised me as well as often seeing a Red Bank Police vehicle out in front of the school

In the late '90's I recall following the efforts of the Charter School founders and their efforts. I was clearly impressed with their steely resolve and focus on creating another public school choice for the kids of Red Bank. There was plenty of "anti" sentiment and this effort was being played out vividly in the media.

The notion of "White Flight" of Red Bank families to other towns once their kids reached school age was well known for decades. In addition, for folks that loved the town of Red Bank and could afford to stay and send their kids to local private schools (called Green Flight), did so.

(Side note, being so involved with youth programs in town for 2 decades now, the # of Red Bank youth that went to private schools, particularly the Catholic school in town was huge!! We were always taking flyers, posters, getting sign ups from within St. James school because so many kids their lived in Red Bank. Those #'s dipped significantly once the the Grades 4th - 8th grade Charter School was formed. Once the RBCS expansion occurred opening it up to grades K-3, the amount of both "White Flight" and "Green Flight" became almost a non subject.

We were one of those families that visited the Boro schools but decided that the Catholic school route was the best for our 3 kids. Within a year of so after RBCS opened, we put our son on the waiting list at Red Bank Charter because clearly there was a new, positive, public academic player in town. After a number of months, we got the call that there was a slot available for Joshua and we moved him to the Charter school during his 6th grade year.

The school helped Josh find himself and build confidence. The following year, he was elected school president and his 8th grade year he focused on academics. So much so, that he became the 1st RBCS student to be admitted to a private school for his high school years (the local extremely prestigious Christian Brothers Academy).

While Joshua was at RBCS, his twin sisters 2 years behind him, were also at St. James, came off the waiting list (as siblings, they go to the top of the waiting list). Both of them had issues that subsequently neither the Charter School nor the Middle School (where they went next) couldn't really address.

As time has progressed my involvement with both the Charter School and the Boro Schools increased. What was fascinating was the competitive impact The Charter School had on the the Boro Schools and particularly the Middle School.

I'm in business my whole adult life and like it or not, competition is a win-win as it forces folks to step up or get out. From aggressively interfacing with community partners, to Junior Honor societies to SO MUCH MORE, the rise of the Middle School from a really shaky academic institution to a respectable one was dramatic.

Nonetheless, the subsequent adding of grades K-3; the expansion of class size from 18 to 20; and then adding pre-k has kept an awful lot of Red Bank kids/families in town (which is just healthy for all).

Today, with the RBCS student waiting list averaging over 100 students at any given time is a "real tell" about the amount of interest in this public school. Combine that with all three (3) of the incumbent Red Bank Boro School Board of Education members who spoke at the fall '15 Meet the Candidates night that "overcrowding" was a real issue. (As a tax payer, this makes this expansion become an extra no brainer vs. the thought of the always controversial notion of bond issues for the construction/expansion)

In my 20+ years in Red Bank, I have watched our family oriented, small shop downtown transform itself to be a hip, upscale, gentrified shopping needs that in most ways doesn't reflect the socio economics of most of our community which is sad. However, the advent of the Red Bank Charter School on our town has been an absolute boon. We have get so many families in town (who would have moved) as well as given parents a real choice in public education which is a wonderful option.

Lastly, the visionary and successful academic achievements of the Charter School have significantly inspired to the Middle School get out of its chair and try to complete. They have a long way to go but they have become respectable and that is wonderful for many other Red Kids.

But at the end of day, the Red Bank Charter School has dramatically impacted and improved the academic readiness of our kids as they transition to the local regional high school and beyond. Clearly the large # of kids on the waiting list validates the educational product coming out of the Red Bank Charter School. Hence the proposal for the expansion of the Red Bank Charter School is highly desired by residents and fully support 100%.

Sincerely,

David Prown
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