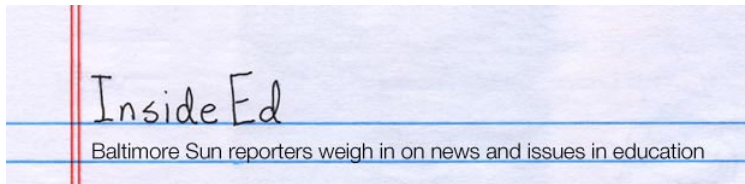


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## Arts coordinator to remain -- in some capacity

It was a full house at last night's school budget forum. Most of the people filling the room were protesting the **elimination of the fine arts coordinator position**, and many of the rest there to advocate keeping Edison's contract to run three elementary schools. I'll be writing more about Edison in the next few days.

As for the arts coordinator: Dr. Alonso said it was an oversight that the position was cut from the organizational chart, but he never intended the function to go away. He would not guarantee that a person would be in the position full-time but said someone will still be in charge of the outside partnerships, event coordination, professional development, artwork display, etc. (A few kids had some very cute testimony about how good they feel to see their artwork displayed at North Avenue, all thanks to the arts coordinator, even if he did spell one boy's brother's name wrong on the display in the hallway.) Many in the audience were dressed in orange because, **as one of the commenters told us yesterday**, it is arts coordinator Larry Friend's favorite color.

Even after Dr. Alonso assured the audience members that he shares the commitment to the arts and was supporting their cause, the testimony continued -- and morphed into pleas for *more* arts coordinators in the central office like there used to be. Alonso grew more and more visibly annoyed as the night went on, reiterating that 1) the overwhelming majority of resources need to be in schools, 2) he needs to create a model that's sustainable in uncertain economic times and 3) having a bunch of arts coordinators in the central office before did not bring about a system of great art programs. The quality varies greatly, he said, but more schools have arts programs and partnerships this year under the decentralized funding model than in the past.

No one testified about the **downsizing of the other content-related offices at North Avenue**, but Don Fry, president of the Greater Baltimore Committee, wrote a letter to the system this week questioning the merging of the math, science and technology offices.

Posted by [Sara Neufeld](#) on March 20, 2009 6:04 AM | [Permalink](#)



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<http://weblogs.baltimoresun.com/cgi-bin/mt/mt-t.cgi/1133886>

Dr. Alonso will not restore a coordinator position in the arts if he isn't going to restore coordinators for math and reading. It's not possible. According to the organizational chart (available in "Proposed FY 2010 Budget Documents," page 10, on the front page at [www.bcps.k12.md.us](http://www.bcps.k12.md.us)), no specialized subject has coordinators anymore. All subjects are organized under general titles like STEM (science, technology, engineer AND math), Enrichment (the arts, english as a second language, phys ed/athletics), Humanities (social studies, library, foreign languages) and Literacy (all things related to reading).

On page 12, you can find the Networks, which are the geographic clusters being created as "little North Avenues." Within these offices (14 of them) are academic support positions. I'm sure these are the people that Dr. Alonso is referring to as "supporting the arts and doing other things, too." Each cluster of 15-20 schools would have a general academic support staff member. I bet all current coordinators are going to be advised to apply for these positions once they get their official "pink slips."

This is the same thing that happened last year with the big giant cuts at central. As all resources are going to the schools, those who lost central office positions were advised to apply for school-based jobs. Now, I bet they'll be saying the same thing about the clusters. All coordinators should apply for the academic support positions. This is what decentralization looks like.

Dr. Alonso is right. There were more arts activities this year than when there were specialists for each subject. The problem isn't the positions. It's the personnel. The current Fine Arts Coordinator is the reason that these things happened. These efforts are standard practice in all other counties. He believes that Baltimore City kids deserve that equity so he identified 40 teachers to help him get it done.

As a parent and education advocate, I have followed this closely. It was great to see so many people at the hearing last night showing support for the arts. I wish I had spoken.

My child learns more when the arts are involved in her lessons. I'm lucky to be in a school that is rich in the arts. All children in Baltimore City deserve that same opportunity. That's the thing we have to figure out. One person can't make that happen. It takes an entire community, working with individual schools that will make that happen. Dr. Alonso wants individual schools to make individual decisions. That's not going to change.

Posted by: BCPS Parent | [March 20, 2009 9:51 AM](#)

Although I am happy that so many people came to show their support - I also believe that now isn't the time to be asking for MORE art coordinators when we are having trouble keeping just one! And I hope that Larry is kept more than in 'some capacity' - and is kept full time. Because he is needed full time. More than likely his official 'title' will have to change while his job functions and purposes remain the same.

And just for the record...about the misspelling.... I was one of the teachers that helped label, mat, frame and hang the over 200 new student artworks at North Ave a couple weeks ago. Installing the show was supposed to be an all day paid event with 20-30 art teachers. Because of the budget freeze - it became a 4 hour (unpaid) event with 10-15 art teachers. It was a lot of work for very few of us to do, and I sincerely apologize if any names were mis-typed on any labels....I am positive they will be promptly fixed!

Posted by: ArtTeacherLady | [March 20, 2009 6:33 PM](#)

I am sorry, but it is just incorrect data to say that more happened this past year than in years past. Do we still have free tickets and buses yearlong from all arts institutions in Baltimore? NO, not since the elimination of individual specialists for each arts area -- we used to have a music specialist, several visual arts specialists, and a theater specialist who was paid in partnership via a non-profit organization. The amount of work they did is NOT less than what Larry did -- dont get me wrong, he did many great things and in different ways, but the arts have been GUTTED in this system over the years and I have personally watched it. The people at the specialist level, at least in the fine arts office, spent SO much time in the field supporting teachers, getting grants and putting instruments and paints in teachers and students' hands, arranging concerts and gallery showings (Kathy Lockhart had WAY more students' work on display all over the system, not just in the halls of North Ave), and getting buses donated all year long with free tickets to the symphony, museums, Center Stage, etc., in a way that just doesn't happen anymore. I am sorry, but you need at LEAST one full-time person helping the arts in this system -- its not like you have the arts in each school yet! Until that happens, you need someone centrally to help make all those opportunities happen -- as Alonso likes to say, ITS FOR THE KIDS, isnt it?!?!?!?

Posted by: Ummm... | [March 22, 2009 8:56 AM](#)

I had an initial contact negative experience with "THAT ONE" The Fine Art Coordinator (Larry Friend) over a simple info query feedback about responding back to me with the number of Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) ticket event request that came from my child's city public school administrator and public school music teacher.

Is it some kind of a secret parents are not supposed to know. Why???????

Posted by: Anonymous | [March 22, 2009 1:16 PM](#)

### Art News!

Arts Education in Maryland School Alliance (AEMS) and The Kennedy Center Alliance for Education Network has awarded "The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts School of Excellence in Arts Education Award" to Roland Park Elementary/Middle School. We are being recognized for "outstanding accomplishments in making the arts an essential part of education in our state". The award ceremony will take place in May. The application process included essays, letters of recommendation and a documentary video of the schools arts programming. We will be presenting the video at The Celebration of the Arts Festival that will take place May 11-15.

Posted by: Clare OMalley Grizzard | [March 24, 2009 9:29 AM](#)

[http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/Careers/Job\\_Opportunities/03\\_24\\_09\\_NetworkTeamLeader.a](http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/Careers/Job_Opportunities/03_24_09_NetworkTeamLeader.a)

Posted by: Bill | [March 26, 2009 2:17 PM](#)

(If you haven't left a comment here before, you may need to be approved by the site owner before your comment will appear. Until then, it won't appear on the entry. Thanks for waiting.)

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Bill wrote: <a href="http://www.baltimorecitysc... [\[more\]](#)
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Bill wrote: <a href="http://www.baltimorecitysc... [\[more\]](#)
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