

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Support the
MTSD recall**

To the editor:
Why the recall? It all circles back to academic achievement!

When looking at MTSD's own data disclosed in August, mathematics achievement from 3rd through 8th grade showed only 56% of students meeting that benchmark. More alarming, "7th grade had the lowest percentage of students who met Milestone 3 at 47%," showed MTSD math data. That's a 19.3% decrease from 2018 to 2021.

Early reading scores also showed an alarming decline. In 2015-16, 95% of students met or exceeded Milestone 1, Reading to Independent Level. That percentage consistently declined to 81% in 2020-21. In 2019-20, "the Kindergarten scores were the lowest at 76% of students" reading at grade level, the report stated. Further, "in 2020-21, the same cohort was the lowest achieving at 73% as first graders."

Recall supporters have been communicating with the board about these academic issues for months prior to no avail. Academic achievement was not discussed until August — a month before school started. The pandemic cannot be to blame for all this.

Data clearly goes back to 2015-16. Why has academic decline happened? Is it curriculum choices? Is it instructional strategies? Is it student-teacher ratios, 1:25 respectively, in the elementary/middle schools?

Recall supporters advocate for our MTSD teachers. Teachers are essential. Teachers are equally as important as parents with children's education. Recall supporters want more funding for teacher support in classrooms versus the district spending more money on upper-level administrators that don't have a direct effect on student achievement. Parents are concerned that standards are actually being lowered in core subject areas. Students struggle to pass ACTs and college math placements; even though they achieve A's and high B's in their classes. Do parents not have the right to question those overseeing the district and setting policies?

Support the teachers and students. Support the recall. Restore MTSD.

Matt Seyfer
Thiensville

**Appreciative
of School Board's
work, obligations**

To the editor:
I am writing this letter to say "thank you" to the current MTSD School Board. It has been a very rough year for you and I am thankful that you are still volunteering in your roles to help serve our community and most importantly our children. I am thankful that the School Board is listening to all community members, but not backing down to the loudest group to just quiet down the masses. Any board is in a tricky situation — you are tasked with listening to all viewpoints and then determining what action to take based on the information you have taken. You will never be able to please 100% of the people.

I appreciate the board sticking to their guns! I don't want a school board that is going to treat their role as "the squeaky wheel gets the grease." I want a board that is going to do what is best for the kids. A board is a board for a reason — to listen to all with ideas, suggestions or concerns and then make decisions based on how they feel the majority wants things done. The majority spoke when we voted in spring.

Peace be with all of you as you continue to serve our school district.

Dawn Moll
Mequon

**MTSD is considering
the voices of all**

To the editor:
My name is Kristen Bradley. I am a MTSD alumna with a child currently attending school in the district. Over the last six months, I have heard repeatedly that the Mequon-Thiensville School District Board of Education is unresponsive to the concerns and voices of its constituents.

I would like to take a moment to express that nothing could be further from the truth. I have attended the vast majority of the board meetings for the last 18 months. During these meetings, I have personally witnessed the board members listening closely during the public comment period of applicable meetings. I have received emails after the meetings addressing specific concerns that were brought up to provide greater clarity than the meeting with its time constraints could allow.

Additionally, I have seen the board vote to resume a public comment period AFTER the meeting itself was suspended to facilitate full community participation in the School Board decision-making process, to allow ALL voices to be heard. The Mequon-Thiensville School Board voted to extend the public comment period despite the late hour and berating and personal attacks they were receiving.

In life, there are decisions made every single day that I (or we) may not agree with, and this is often frustrating when we feel passionately about a particular issue. This board, however, is in place to safeguard the interests of ALL children and staff within the district. A decision which is made that does not align with my own personal beliefs DOES NOT suggest that they were not listening. Such decisions indicate a strong ethical principle to protect each individual to the greatest extent possible.

I wholeheartedly support the incumbent

MTSD School Board members and hope that each individual within our community will reflect accurately on their responsiveness and sense of responsibility to hear all of our voices. They have been and continue to listen.

Kristen Bradley
Thiensville

**MTSD School Board
is listening to parents**

To the editor:
I am an MTSD parent who writes in support of our current MTSD School Board members and in opposition to the recall.

Based on the recall leaders' constant cries to the media, one might think that the current Board "isn't listening to parents." I disagree. To the contrary, the board has demonstrated commendable patience in listening to all parents, including those with differing perspectives. For example, with respect to last year's pandemic response plan, the board listened respectfully to those parents (some of whom now lead this recall effort) who opposed masks, quarantines, and other COVID mitigation measures, to those who argued against any form of in-person instruction, and, of course, to the many of us who fell somewhere in between. There were, and continue to be, a wide variety of perspectives within the MTSD on these issues.

When the recall leaders claim that the board isn't listening to parents, what they really mean is the board made decisions that did not line up 100% with their own particular perspective. Just because you don't get everything you want does not mean that the board members are not listening. It just means that they have to listen to others, too. The board and administration should be commended for their efforts to accommodate different parents with different views. These efforts allowed our children to have a safe, five-day-per-week in-person school experience last year (unlike many other districts).

We should be grateful to our current board members for making difficult decisions with the best interests of ALL of our children in mind.

I encourage all responsible voters to join me in voting to retain Erik Hollander, Akram Khan, Chris Schultz, and Wendy Francour in the upcoming election.

Melissa Bleidorn
Mequon

**Check things out
for yourself before
voting in recall**

To the editor:
Is the School Board recall really about taxes going up by 21%, a 22% decline in student enrollment, 15% decline in reading skills, 15% decline in math and ACT? Well, it only takes a few minutes of your time to check for yourself. These are all falsehoods (lies). The recall is not about the School Board, but rather it is a start of a bigger plan by a small fanatical group of people who don't plan to stop at the School Board but will try to do the same to our city and state government.

They really want to divide us so we fight neighbor against neighbor. They hope that by pushing lie after lie, you will hear it enough in the hopes you will eventually believe it. I am so surprised to learn that so many people didn't do their homework before blindly signing a petition to recall FOUR board members. "When it's seems too big (substituted from "good") to be true, it probably isn't." The truth is our taxes from 2015 until now have remained low and have only gone up by less than the inflation rate. I have checked it out myself in as little as 10 minutes by going to such sources of information as government websites like <https://dpi.wi.gov/sfs/statistical/basic-facts/district-tax-levy-rates>. The truth is that our taxes are among the lowest compared to most of the schools in our district. Our mill rate (tax paid per \$1000 of assessed property value) has gone down year after year since 2015; from \$2.22 per \$1000 in 2015, to \$1.68 in 2020 and a bit higher in 2021 of 7.96 (which is due to the referendum to pay for key projects to improve our schools in order to compete with the rest of the world). My property taxes have remained low and in the last five years have actually gone down.

My kids graduated from MTSD schools and are well prepared for college and their future. Please take time to check the facts yourself from reputable sources before you blindly trust people coming in from outside who just want to push their fanatical agenda on us all. Check out the facts before you act. Vote for truth over lies.

Ken Siegel
Mequon

MTSD is not broken

To the editor:
To paraphrase Thomas Paine, these are, indeed, the times that try men's and women's souls.

In recent months, there has been a concerted effort across our country to inject partisan politics into school boards, a locally controlled entity which, historically, has been nonpartisan. Sadly, that fanaticism has now come to the Mequon-Thiensville School District in the form of a recall election involving four incumbent MTSD school board members.

These four incumbent School Board members have done nothing to merit being recalled, but the political extremists behind the MTSD recall movement would have you believe otherwise. Their over-the-top rhetoric notwithstanding, MTSD has historically been one of the top public school districts in the state of Wisconsin — and it remains so. MTSD is not broken.

It is not in need of being fixed, especially by a radical fringe group the leaders of which have no experience, expertise or demonstrated competence in the arena of public education. They are frauds masquerading as patriots. Do not be fooled!

Now is not the time for you to do nothing. If you do nothing, you will be playing into the hands of the extremists whose objective is to take control of MTSD for revolutionary purposes. It will happen here if you let it.

Regardless of whether or not you currently have children or grandchildren in the MTSD, we all have a vested interest in our local schools. So act now before it is too late!

Assuming you are a resident of the MTSD and are eligible to vote, I urge you to go to the polls and vote to retain all four incumbent School Board members who are being challenged. They are: Wendy Francour, Erik Hollander, Akram Khan, and Chris Schultz.

The election will take place on Tuesday, Nov. 2, 2021. Early voting and absentee voting are permitted.

I am writing solely as a concerned citizen and as a grandparent who, within a few years, will have five grandchildren enrolled in the MTSD. I am not affiliated with any partisan group which has a vested interest in the outcome of this election.

Kenton Howenstine
Mequon

**Thanks for supporting
children of Haiti**

To the editor:
Thanks, Cedarburg and visitors. We often hear of the hate and intolerance of this world. Last week at our Harvest Fest I experienced the generosity of this community and those who visit.

We had a rummage sale/snow cone booth to benefit our children's home in Haiti. The response was overwhelming. Many, many people came up and gave us \$5, \$10, \$20 and even \$100 to support what we do in Haiti. Many people also thanked us for trying to make the world a better place.

We are a country with a big heart. When we hear of intolerance and bigotry from some, we should know that the overwhelming majority of this country does not support their hate. Thank you so much for your support and encouragement, Cedarburg.

Dale Waldo
Co-Director, Children's Home of Haiti
Cedarburg

**State GOP aiming
to please Trump**

To the editor:
It's very reassuring to know that the state of Wisconsin is so flush with cash that the GOP-led Assembly can waste over \$600,000 on an audit of a presidential election when there is absolutely zero evidence of voter fraud. How can they consider themselves the party of fiscal conservatism and keep a straight face? Speaker Vos couldn't fly down to Florida fast enough to kiss Donald Trump's ring. (He actually went to kiss something else, but I don't think the editor will let me say what it was.)

Are state Republicans so afraid of the former president that they'll do almost anything to soothe his fragile ego?

Thomas Kandziora
Cedarburg

**Get informed and vote
for a more peaceful world**

To the editor:
COVID has highlighted our interdependence on one another, the fragile systems supporting us including earth's ecosystems, and government's role in our progress or decline as human beings. In my 57 years of voting, I sometimes wondered if I made good choices. Now, in this electronic age, I've learned how to access What's On My Ballot, candidate websites and League of Women Voters sites. I attend Zoom meetings where priorities for fairness and the common good are shared.

Fairness is personal for me as I directly benefited from Martin Luther King's non-violent struggle for fairness, which eventually gave us the Civil Rights Act, allowing me employment advancement as a woman to earn a living wage that supported my three children and me after my husband died in 1975. This is why the gerrymandered maps from 2010 census data are so abhorrent to me. They were drawn to circumvent voters who might oppose self-serving agendas. Where Wisconsin county boards allowed ballot referendums calling for fair maps to be drawn with 2020 census data, a majority of voters asked for a fair process. A majority of Ozaukee County Board members denied a fair maps ballot referendum.

And it's also time our education systems tell the truth of the cruel policies and treatment of Native Americans and blacks in our country's founding and beyond. We cannot learn from past horrors inflicted if they are whitewashed. A high-ranking Pentagon official, when asked what he thought was the most critical thing to do for peace said, quality public education of our youth is the way to peace.

Note informed. Now to do your part in moving us forward into a more just, peaceful world. Ozaukee Dems, Grassroots North Shore, and League of Women Voters have each helped me be a more informed, responsible voter.

Marcia Kaminski
Gratton