

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Time to replace MTSD School Board members

To the editor:
According to the district report cards issued by the state Department of Public Instruction, the academic achievement of the Mequon-Thiensville School District was 94.3 in the 2015-2016 school year and dropped to 90.5 in 2018-2019 year — a decline of 4% in three years. The School Board has been ineffective in arresting this decline and the superintendent is focused on a physical building spree, changing the curriculum without transparency and obtuse COVID restrictions.

Meanwhile, the educational quality worsens each year. It's time to replace these complacent board members with people who will enact change to improve the educational quality of the schools.

Hans Angermeier
Mequon

Vote to keep school board members

To the editor:
As a proud parent of two children currently enrolled in the Mequon-Thiensville School District, I feel compelled to defend the School Board against one of the several false claims made by the organizers of the recall campaign. A main reason given to persuade Mequon-Thiensville residents to sign the recall petition was the board's supposed "relinquishing of voting rights on the district's pandemic plan."

The Mequon-Thiensville School District Board of Education operates as a governance board. Many residents may not be familiar with different structures under which school boards function, but put simply a governance model does not require that the board micro-manage the administration. School Board members provide a long-range vision, work to research and craft sound policy, ensure the budget is in line with the district's strategic vision, and evaluate and provide oversight of the superintendent's performance.

The board acts as leadership, setting forth the long-range vision and policies, not as managers who have to figure out how to put those policies into daily operations. So the recall group's accusation that recalled board members "abdicated their duty" by having the administration manage the operational challenges, especially in regards to COVID-19 mitigation measures, shows a misunderstanding of how this School Board functions. The recall group claims there was something "legally questionable" about the way the board carried out their duties. If they are unaware of how a governance model works, and why this model was chosen, their candidates may not be prepared to be effective members of the board, and those deciding on whether or not to vote to keep the existing board members in place may want to consider that.

Vote to keep Erik Hollander, Akram Khan, Chris Schultz and Wendy Francour on the School Board so they can continue their thoughtful work.

Jason Gudex
Mequon

Article favored incumbents in recall

To the editor:
The Sept. 29 News Graphic front-page story by Lisa Curtis, "MT School Board members facing recall urge community to get the facts," presented at least a half-dozen paragraphs of quotes from two of the board members being subject to recall on Nov. 2. I can only surmise that since the voice of only these two board members was reported, these must be the facts these school board members wanted the reader "to get."

When I read a story involving conflicting viewpoints, I expect to hear quotes from all sides, not just one, before reaching a conclusion. I hope that Ms. Curtis will do a follow-up story, with a balancing amount of quotes from those challenging these board members, thereby displaying objective journalism on this important matter to the citizens of Mequon-Thiensville, whose children will be the future of these communities.

Richard Kozinski
Mequon

School board recall is misguided

To the editor:
The MTSD School Board recall is misguided without legal or factual basis and is a threat to our democracy. The recall mechanism was not intended to be utilized to recall public officials by those upset by policy decisions. Elections are about policy; recalls are intended to be about corruption.

In the MTSD recall, there is no claim of corruption. Our School Board members are volunteers free from the shackles of special interest money who in good faith made decisions under emergency pandemic circumstances. Instead of corruption this recall is about disruption and an apparent attempt to promote an outside national partisan agenda. The proponents opposed the school district's management of the balance they had to make as a result of covid between public health measures and the need to have children in the classroom.

Reasonable people can disagree on what the balance should have been; however, the proponents seem incapable of conceding that the school board members acted in good faith in navigating difficult decisions and that their decisions were reasonable based on public health science albeit science they disregard.

It appears now that the recall election is scheduled, the proponents recognize this argument is a loser as they have changed direction, attempting to hang their recall hat on academic decline. That claim is disingenuous. The academic decline argument is untethered to any facts which the proponents believe led to a decline; the assertion is not tied to a decision of the board which they assert caused a decline, and without offering concrete proposals targeted to remedy claimed deficiencies.

In voting in this recall election we should ask ourselves whether this use of the recall was intended to be used to second guess policymakers rather than root out corrupt officials. I believe such use undermines democracy and you should vote to permit Akram Khan and Chris Schultz to complete their terms which expire in April 2022 and Wendy Francour and Erik Hollander to complete their terms which end in April 2023.

John Cabaniss
Thiensville

Replace school board members no longer interested in their responsibilities

To the editor:
To quote Mr Ken Siegel, former (Commentary page) contributor to the News Graphic "Is the School Board recall really about taxes going up 21%, a 22% decline in student enrollment, 15% decline in reading skills ...? Or is it about the decline in ACT scores?" Looking at the MTSD's own data from 3rd grade to 8th grade in basic reading and mathematics, the facts show downward trending for years.

Just examining all these facts indicate there is a problem. Working together I am confident that a hands-on involvement from the school board members these issues can be identified and a resolve can be accomplished.

However, when incumbent school board members abdicate their responsibilities this norm of downward spiral continues. That is why I am advocating the recall election and replacement of those who apparently are no longer interested in the school board responsibilities. Support the students and the teachers by supporting the successful recall. Make MTSD great again!

John Richmond
Mequon

Congratulations to MTSD on their report card

To the editor:
In the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's most recent District Report Card, MTSD was ranked the No. 2 public K-12 district in the state.

MTSD has an AAA bond rating from Moody's, the highest rating they offer, which saved us, the taxpayers, \$16 million in the most recent referendum.

I send my congratulations to the MTSD School Board for its leadership that has made these exemplary results possible. I look forward to their continued service!

Christine Nuernberg
MTSD School Board Member 1973-1991
Mayor city of Mequon 1998-2001

Critical race theory is not being taught in MTSD

To the editor:
By now you've heard plenty about Critical Race Theory, and there's no shortage of opinions about what exactly CRT is. But whether your definition is correct or not, whether you are for it or against it, the bottom line is: CRT is not in our district's curriculum. End of story. If this is a hot button issue for you — maybe even your main reason for voting against qualified, high-performing, hardworking members of our current school board — please research for yourself versus taking the recall group's word for it. They've yet to provide proof of CRT in our schools. (You can't find what's not there.) This claim isn't even their own idea but rather a trendy scare tactic they've taken from the same playbook that's driving school board recalls across our country.

The equally baseless claim that the word "equity" in our curriculum means "lowered academic standards" is just more "fake news." Our board is fully transparent that "equity" is about meeting the specific needs of every child, building each up, lessening none. Our curriculum is actually more rigorous than ever, which a quick look on MTSD's website will prove. Also, the purpose of the Academic Recovery Plan is to address unfinished learning due to the sudden shift to virtual learning in the spring of 2020, thanks to the pandemic. The plan spotlights that our board always strives for excellence.

Is there room for improvement? Of

course, but replacing four members of the school board is not the answer. No matter where you stand on the issues, I hope the opposing candidates' lack of experience or a concrete plan to solve their imagined problems gives you pause... because if our school board is packed with members as inexperienced and unqualified as they are, "fake" problems will be replaced with ones that are all too real.

Linda Kotlyarsky
Mequon

MTSD staff and parents need to come together

To the editor:
In these divided times we continue to witness a polarization of values, priorities and behavior. This has led to a stalemate on many critical issues confronting our nation, states and cities. It strikes me that never in recent years has there been a greater need for meaningful dialogue and consensus. Polarization between groups rarely, if ever, achieves a mutually satisfactory outcome. It would appear to be glaringly obvious that consensus is desperately needed in regards to issues confronting the Mequon-Thiensville School District as four members of their school board are facing recall. As a grandparent of two children in the district, I am keenly aware of the balance needed between the input from parents and the viewpoint of educators when employing curriculum.

Both parties (MTSD staff and concerned parents) must come together in the spirit of open dialogue in an effort to provide what is most important — the educational well-being of our students. The recall effort seems to have created serious division, making dialogue a seemingly insurmountable task. Don't let politics poison our educational system. Children are our future!

Jack Beschta, BA, MBA, BS
Oregon

Mask optional policy is working

To the editor:
Last week the News Graphic published an opinion piece by a Dr. Kate Burrows. She makes an impassioned plea for masking. She focused on the Cedarburg School District and said the district was not being responsive to parents. I support the mask optional policy and take issue with Dr. Burrows' position. She does not trust parents to make decisions that are in the best interest of their families. She said we should listen to the experts. I find it hard to believe a medical professional would be so dismissive of citizens seeking out other information and valuing other opinions. I believe parents and citizens can take information from a variety of sources and synthesize this information and make informed decisions that are in the best interest of their families.

Dr. Burrows did not point out any data to support her opinion. The information I am providing comes from the Cedarburg School District's own website. The Cedarburg School District currently has 3,167 students. As of Oct. 1, the district has had three positive covid cases in the last seven days. Over same period there have been three positive cases among staff. In the month of September, the staff had a grand total of six positive cases and the students had 52 positive cases for a rate of 1.64% of the student population. The peak number of positive tests for students was from October of 2020 through January of 2021. Positive cases among students are down drastically since that time. All this information is coming from the district itself on their COVID-19 dashboard. Thankfully there have been no deaths of district students reported. Additionally, according to the state department of health, the seven-day average of confirmed cases for Ozaukee County at the end of September was 24, down tremendously from the peak of last November.

The current policy is working. Masks are optional, the numbers are down, and school is open. Three wins for the citizens and students in Cedarburg.

Rick Karahna
Cedarburg

Deadline for recall letters is Oct. 26

The deadline for letters pertaining to the Mequon-Thiensville School District recall election must be submitted to letters@conley.net.com by noon Tuesday, Oct. 26.

Letters should be signed and include phone number and address so that we may verify authenticity. Neither phone number nor address will be printed when letters appear.

Please keep letters to no more than 300 words. Letter writers are limited to one letter every 30 days. We reserve the right to edit letters.

• Email: letters@conley.net.com