

North Side Planning Council Questionnaire

Response by Lawrence J. Winkler

Candidate for Board of Education, Seat 7

QUESTION 1: What personal qualities and experience (activities, education, occupation, civic, etc.) do you have that you believe qualifies you for this office?

I have a BA in psychology in child development, experimental design, MS Computer Science; and Law degree.

I performed analysis and design at UW R&D Center for Education.

I have substantial experience in understanding, for one child, mine, the issues surrounding educationally needy children.

My wife and I adopted our daughter when she was 5 years of age from Peru. She had had no education, had never seen a pencil, didn't know the letters. Today, she is an honor roll student at West High School.

My daughter is the expert on what efforts such success requires; I have an understanding, as a father, of the efforts of parents and children required to triumph academically.

QUESTION 2: Considering the rapid demographic changes and the increasing concentration of poverty that is taking place throughout Dane County, is the district acting effectively, through the Equity Resource Formula and other measures, to alleviate the student achievement gap? What are your ideas for making sure that every student receives the resources he/she needs to succeed? Be specific.

The Equity Resource Policy 9001 was adopted in June of 1994, and anticipated the ERF and other measures.

Since policy adoption, the district has implemented curricula that are meant to close the achievement gap, district-wide (e.g., Balanced Literacy, Reading Recover). These are likely to be more effective given the changing demographics than ERF.

Additional strategies, not ERF, need to be looked at. All students have the same needs. The issues are how those needs are being satisfied and what needs are left unsatisfied. This view suggests more than staff allocations, but partnerships with the parents, community and the child him/herself to satisfy those needs.

QUESTION 3: In 2004, the school district administration proposed to eliminate the Equity Resource Policy with very little notice, no official evaluation of the policy's effectiveness and almost no opportunity for public input, further reinforcing the perception that the administration often acts unilaterally. What role should the school board and the public have in district decision-making and how will you insure that the administration stays accountable to those practices?

The attempt to eliminate the Equity Resource Policy is one example of lack of Board oversight of administration decisions. The other is the decision to refuse the \$2M Reading First grant without public input and with the Board refusing to discuss.

The unfortunate aspect of the Board's decision was that it may have been correct. However, a functioning would have modified the Superintendent's decision letter and other communications to keep negotiations for the \$2M grant alive, instead of allowing communications to fail, militating against establishing a long-term relationship with the Reading First grant staff.

How to establish accountability? This school board race is one way. I will try to articulate my positions on this during the campaign, hoping to gather agreement from the public, who will then need to assert pressure on existing Board members to the legitimacy of a new approach.

QUESTION 4: For several years, the district has had to grapple with annual budget shortfalls – pitting program against program and school against school – and has regularly gone to referendum as a stopgap measure. What are your ideas for a long-term solution to our annual budget crisis and what would you do to implement those ideas?

Since 1993, when the revenue caps were imposed on school districts and the QEO was enacted by the State, and the State has failed to fund school programs as promised, while mandating programs.

The State always had the money to fund the schools, but instead funded other programs substantially to their political benefit.

There would be no political benefit to underfunding the schools except for the citizenry.

The schools will not be adequately funded until the citizenry take their responsibility to education seriously enough to fund it at the State level, placing substantially lesser importance on consumption.