

# **Presentation to Rotary Club of Madison**

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We need significant change on the Board of Education.

There is no real and consistent leadership. Having watched the Board up close for a couple of years now, that is my perception. That is the perception of many in the public who follow the Board's activities. That is the perception of former Board members – you can supply the names -- you know them.

The Board does not listen. Yes, there have been some election-time conversions; and yes, when the public is so outraged by the decisions made by the Administration or the Board that they protest en mass, they sometimes listen; and, yes, they too often listen when asked to take on more responsibilities than we can afford. But, when ideas are presented to the Board in times of quiet with the goal of improving how the district does its business, those ideas and suggestions are ignored.

I don't like to be ignored. I don't like to see good ideas from others ignored. I do not like to waste my time. I do not like to whine. I like to get things done. That's why I'm running for School Board.

I have the knowledge and experience.

I have a BA in Psychology, with emphasis on child psychology, and heavy dose of statistics and experimental design. I worked for almost 10 years at UW's Research and Development Center for Education involved with the design and analysis of research into curriculum and teaching.

I have a Masters degree in Computer Science and I have taught advanced certificate courses at MATC. I'm currently a project manager at the University of Wisconsin.

I also have a Law degree from UW.

I have a 16 year old daughter who is a sophomore at West, and has been on the honor roll every semester. I, and especially my daughter, understand the hard work necessary to succeed. We adopted her from Peru when she was 5 years old. She spoke Spanish and Quetchua. She had never seen a book, crayon, or a pencil.

I, my wife, and especially my daughter understand what is required to close the gap. But I'm not referring to the gap you keep hearing about, the gap that tells you the percentage of minorities reaching advanced or proficient on tests vs whites. I'm talking about the real gap – the gap between where she was and where she could be. She's not there yet, not close enough.

However, the District would consider its job done, and count her in its “success” column – the column that says 80% of the students are performing at the advanced or proficient level. I keep forgetting she is a minority, and, for some statistical reason, that is important. So, she's in another column showing the percentage of minorities performing at advanced or proficient.

The Board has not been doing its job. The Board's and the Administration's processes must change.

The Board has to evaluate the effectiveness of each program and service it provides. It must account, on its books, for the cost, by program and service. It must ensure that the curriculum is moving everyone forward – that everyone is getting a year's worth of education every year -- closing the real gap: between where the student is and where he/she could be in a year.

It is important that students be reading at the first grade level at the end of first grade, or the goal is reached that third grade students be reading at third grade level, but it is also crucial, that a child entering first grade reading at third grade level, must be reading at the 5 grade level at the end of first grade. If they are not, then the curriculum must be adjusted.

I've had parents tell me their children came into first grade already knowing how to add, subtract, multiple and divide, but by third grade were back to counting on their fingers, having lost previous mastery.

And there is a research paper by one of the teachers in the District who recounts, in a self-satisfied manner, how the most perturbed and angry parents are engineers, architects and math Ph.Ds who are no longer able to guide and help their kids with fractions, because of the new methods of teaching fractions, and further the teacher makes the claim that these same parents really don't understand fractions.

There is another reason we need to look at curriculum effectiveness. The recent report by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) showed that United States students were significantly below average compared to 40 other nations in problem solving skills. The majority of our 15-year old students have only basic (level 1) skills, with only less than 10% scoring as proficient compared to 30% from the top countries. The Madison School district is not going to be much different as it compares its

achievements to other U.S. schools, which we now know, should not be the gold standard.

For the \$13,000 per student per year, we need to get better results. But the Board keeps repeating it's not the process that is the problem, they don't have to change anything significant, perhaps just tweak a little around the edges. That the problem is money. We simply need to spend more money.

The problem is not money. But that's what we hear. From the movie Jerry Maguire it's "Show me the money". "Show me the money". The staff say "Show me the money". The Board says "Show me the money." (Or education will be cut). I say, "Show me the results!"

I would lay a bet, that no one here, regardless of finances or political stripe, would be bothered by the money, if there were the results.

That's what I intend to do on the Board. Get results.