



## VOTER ISSUES & FACTS SHEET

### Madison Metropolitan School District Referendum Questions May 24, 2005

Consider the following facts and issues regarding the Madison school district to help determine how you will vote regarding Board of Education proposed referenda questions related to an elementary school building, maintenance projects and general operations revenue. Will you vote for proposals for the Board to continue in the same direction as in the past; or, vote against proposals which will change the direction for the future of the District.

1. There is continuous dissemination of incomplete and misinformation, any of which are misleading to the public and self-serving of the Board and administration.
2. There is a continuous 'cheerleading' approach to how great things are in terms of the education and management in the district and how awful things are financially due the state and federal governments and the economy.
3. There is a continuous approach to the absolution of and by the majority of the Board of Education for responsibility and accountability for actions, or lack thereof, in the leadership and management of the district and its educational and fiscal stewardship.

It is recognized that the district cannot change the state revenue cap system, the state aid equalization formula, the QEO, state and federal unfunded nor underfunded mandates, etc. that cause financial stresses and strains. The Board and administration can, however, manage more effectively and efficiently how they handle and live with these situations until or unless they are changed. Furthermore, the Board has not (but has the power to) deal with the systemic and infrastructure issues that could make significant positive fiscal and performance impacts for the district. Including, but not necessarily limited to, are several items demonstrative of the lack of responsibility and leadership, and the dysfunction of the Board of Education.

By law, the members of the Board of Education of the Madison Metropolitan School District are to be held in a fiduciary responsibility to the public in the operation of the schools. As elected officials, this responsibility is expected to be based in trust, confidence and openness to those served.

The majority members of the Board of Education and its appointed administrative team

1. within less than one quarter of the school year (04-05), overturned its own 2004-2005 budget decisions on athletics fees and staff positions, fine arts coordination, and administrative staff positions
2. by October 2004, virtually depleted its contingency fund for the year to reinstate staff positions previously eliminated, thereby leaving no money for emergencies
3. has not implemented community and board recommendations for a functional analysis of the expanding business services division of the administration
4. in 2003, MMSD had approximately 200 students per administrator in sharp contrast to peer districts ranging from 296 to 339 students per administrator. Eight-year averages show a disparity of 204 in MMSD to 317 students per administrator in four peer districts
5. in 2003, MMSD spent 23.11% more in per student costs (\$11,154) compared with the average of four peer districts (\$9,060) according to uniform reporting standards
6. has rejected a community call for a performance and functional audit of the Community Services Fund (Fund 80)
7. has no policies nor criteria for making decisions and providing oversight and accountability for the placement of programs and services in Fund 80, increasing this budget outside the revenue caps by 216% in five years (\$3.8m to \$8.2m)
8. summarily removed private, non-profit providers of after school child care programs from three elementary schools without board knowledge or discussion
9. increased the Fund 80 budget for District operated after school child care programs without the knowledge of the Board of Education
10. Made statements five years ago that a \$20 million referendum was sufficient to “catch up” on facilities maintenance projects. Twelve (12) projects will not be completed, totaling nearly ½ million dollars. Spent over ½ million dollars for an architect’s position from the referendum monies. The Board is proposing another \$26.2 million referendum over five years (2005-2009) and setting aside up to \$500,000 each year for replacement and repair of technology & instructional equipment
11. reported in March 2004 a savings of \$4.7m in energy costs over the previous 4 years. Has not reported, as requested, the true value of the savings nor how nor where such savings have been applied to maintenance projects or other aspects of the operational budgets

12. has not established its leadership for curriculum in the district through policies, evaluation and performance results with no clear strategic pathway
13. implementing a new accounting, business and human resource services software system without running parallel to the old system in order to correct problems and show appropriate comparisons. The new systems are internally incompatible and do not interface with one another. Have expended nearly \$3m and have not completed the system, nor has it been working properly, i.e. student grading system crashed and reports had to be done by hand at end of first semester 2005
14. did not consider “reduction in force” possibilities of administrative staff, nor conduct functional analyses of business services and staff
15. approved a salary and benefit package for administrators without having sufficient revenue allocation to support the costs
16. allowed administrative rejection of a \$2 million plus federal grant for a “Reading First” program without prior board knowledge, oversight, nor accountability
17. gave final approval to a two year contract with custodian and clerical units for a combined 4.8% salary and benefits increase without knowledge nor discussion of the dollar costs of the contract nor how those expenses will be paid within the budget limitations of the “revenue cap”
18. a two-year contract agreement with MTI for teachers for increases in the salary and benefits package at a rate 2.5-3 times the rate of inflation for each year as well as that of agreements within city, county and state governments. In addition, the agreement with MTI was approved at a time when the Board did not have the money to pay for these increases, nor did it know if they would get it through the June 2003 referendum to increase the revenue cap. Without referendum approval, budget cuts would have been even more severe to instructional and curriculum areas.
19. a contract agreement with district administrators for increases in the salary and benefits package at a rate 2.5-3 times the rate of inflation for each year and that of agreements within city, county and state governments. In addition, the agreement with administrators was approved at a time when the Board did not have the money to pay for these increases, nor did it know if they would get it through the June 2003 referendum to increase the revenue cap. Without referendum approval, budget cuts would have been even more severe to instructional and curriculum areas.
20. lack of follow-up with accountability and performance measures for administrators, i.e., the Board has not evaluated the Superintendent for several years

21. granted the superintendent sole authority to make buy-out settlements with teachers to be fired, with essentially a blank check up to five months of salary and benefits and no oversight or review by the Board
22. no demonstrated interest in the review, reconsideration and/or renegotiation of the \$10,000 per year for three years early retirement payout through the Teacher Emeritus Retirement Program (TERP)
23. lack of timely and appropriate information to the public regarding the actual costs to taxpayers of an approval to raise the revenue cap for additional spending
24. inaction to initiate measures for the review and analysis of the effectiveness and performance results of programs, services, staffing and curriculum
25. refusal to make modifications to the Reading Recovery program for about 350 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students at an additional cost of over \$8,000 per student which results in only a 57% performance completion rate of reading at 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade
26. there are at least 67 full time equivalent personnel classified as teachers, at a cost exceeding \$3m, in positions at central administration in roles as resource teachers
27. inaction to initiate uniform cost and cost-benefit analyses criteria and standards for programs, services, staffing and curriculum
28. refusal to accept responsibility for planning, identification of alternatives and budgeting to live within the financial means under existing parameters
29. the recurring transfer of various services to Fund 80, clearing these budget line items from under the revenue cap, but which continue to cause and be a part of the tax burden
30. praising academic high performers (deservedly so), but void of recognizing others achieving at lesser levels and the needs of the majority of students who are low- or non-achievers in a variety of studies
31. touting the district as a magnet for special education students, each of whom cost more to serve than the average per pupil costs, with less and less state and federal financial aid (less than 50% combined) to support those special needs student costs
32. no significant attempts or measures at cost containment and collaborative partnerships in special education health and social services

33. the majority of the board continually focuses discussions about the need for more and more money with the seeming expectation the “community” will support more and more taxation to give more and more money to the district to spend
34. when the board is presented with suggestions, recommendations and proposals by citizens and others the typical responses from the majority of the board are “we can’t do that” and/or “we are doing all we can” and/or “we aren’t interested in looking at doing things any differently, because...”
35. when different points of view, suggestions, etc. are offered, the majority of the Board generally dismisses those ideas as unacceptable, and/or when the majority of the board votes, then that is the only position or point of view that counts
36. decided to schedule balloting for proposed referenda questions on a special date (May 24, 2005) from a regularly scheduled county-wide election at an additional cost of nearly \$90,000
37. will go to referendum in May 2005, for \$14.5m to construct a second elementary school on the campus of Leopold Elementary School at a cost to taxpayers of approximately \$20 per year for 20 years. No serious consideration has been given to alternatives, long term needs and impacts, nor to managing growing student enrollment for the next two school years, prior to the availability of expanded capacity
38. will go to referendum in May 2005, for proposals to increase the revenue cap for one year for operating expenses. The proposal asks for \$7.4m for 05-06 at a cost to taxpayers of \$83 on an average house assessed at \$205k

The intentions of this listing are to be instructive and constructive. Active Citizens for Education is committed to working together with all members of the Board and with other citizens to move forward in positive ways to improve the effectiveness and results of the education of our students in this community; the operations of the district; and, communications with and the engagement of the community in the educational enterprise. We will be very happy to discuss any or all of these issues with any members of the Board and the community. Thank you for your consideration.

**VOTE            MAY 24            VOTE            MAY 24            VOTE            MAY 24**

For more information, or to make comments, contact Active Citizens for Education, Don Severson, President, [info@activecitizensforeducation.org](mailto:info@activecitizensforeducation.org) or call 608/238-8300

Web Site: [www.activecitizensforeducation.org](http://www.activecitizensforeducation.org)

For additional information and comments on school issues: [www.schoolinfosystem.org](http://www.schoolinfosystem.org)