

## COALITION TO SUPPORT MTSD

*Submitted on 01/14/2022*

### **1. MOTIVATION AND QUALIFICATIONS: What motivated you to run for election and why will you be a good addition to the board?**

I was motivated to run for a position on the Mequon-Thiensville School District Board of Education because I care about our children, their future and our community. I want our schools to reflect the community and what we value and I want the greatest opportunities possible for our children. Being united as a community is critically important and I want our board to engage the community so every child can succeed. I was not motivated by a single issue or have a predetermined agenda, instead I am truly looking to serve our community. I am uniquely qualified for the position as I have professional experience in both education and business which will allow me to be a champion for the students, a representative of the parents, a steward for the community and an advocate for the staff. As a former teacher and administrator in public school districts and now as a chief operations officer of an educational service agency, I understand the teaching and learning process, the programs needed to support children in and out of the classroom and the necessary business and operational systems in place to run an effective and efficient district. As a board member, I will support the governance model, be an active listener and build consensus through collaboration, ensure transparency in the decision making process in order to build trust. Through board service, I would always lead and make decisions with a strong moral and ethical compass.

### **2. VISION FOR MTSD: What is your vision for education in the MTSD? Be specific – what's working and what would you like to see improved?**

My vision for education in the Mequon-Thiensville School District is that every child is provided what they need to succeed. The children of the district have the right to learn in a safe and supportive school environment that provides for the whole child. The instructional program for the district needs to focus on academic excellence which is built on rigor and relevance that will prepare students for college, careers and life. Rigor ensures students are challenged to develop advanced skills and knowledge. Relevance helps students see the value of what they are learning. The program needs to ensure educational opportunities and that there are supports in place for ALL students including those with disabilities and gifts. In order to unlock academic excellence the social-emotional learning needs of students need to be incorporated into the learning community. I would like to see improvement in the district's student growth and target group outcomes on our state report card while also increasing overall student achievement. We need to unlock the possibilities for every student to achieve their goals and dreams. The educational community is currently facing a shortage of individuals entering the profession. The district will need to keenly focus on maintaining a competitive advantage with its human capital system by creating exceptional experiences for employees across their employment life cycle in order to have the most qualified and engaged teachers, leaders and support staff for our students. The district will also need to manage its operations in a fiscally prudent manner in order to meet the expectations of the community while also ensuring the greatest return on the investment the community is making. The district should be the pride of our community and provide the finest opportunity in the state for our children to learn, grow and succeed.

### **3. EQUITY: What does the word equity mean to you? What place, if any, does equity have in our school district?**

Speaking in terms of education, I believe equity means ensuring ALL students have access to opportunities and support unique to them so they can be successful today while preparing them for college, careers and life regardless of their current ability, socioeconomic standing, race, ethnicity, language, gender or disability. I believe equity does have a place in schools because it allows schools to focus on the individual needs of children in order to provide them fair and adaptable support. The concept of equity in schools is not new, it has been around for over a half a century dating back to the Supreme court case Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954), Title IX (1972), the All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990. While I support equitable practices, I do not support practices of isolating children or taking away resources or opportunities from one to provide to another. We need to advocate and be empathic for all children; they are part of our community and our future!

### **4. SCHOOL BOARD/DISTRICT FUNCTION: Do you favor the current governance model or do you feel that the board should shift to an operational model, and why?**

I support the District's current policy-based governance model and would not support a shift to an operational model. The role of the board is to establish policy related to administration, the instructional program, staff, students, finance, property, operations and relations. Policy is a board's broad statement of direction that sets a course of action and provides guidance. The superintendent or designees are responsible for developing administrative rules which put policy into practice by defining how, by whom, where and when things are to be done. In the governance model, the board provides strategic district leadership by "staying above the line" while the administrative team is "below the line" implementing policy and deploying strategies in alignment with the board approved strategic plan. This practice is in alignment with the Baldrige Excellence Framework. The superintendent is accountable to the board for results and ensuring district practices are in alignment with the board's policies. In terms of curriculum planning and oversight, the Wisconsin State statutes define many of the requirements of the board, for example:

1) Annually, include as an item on the agenda of the first school board meeting of the school year a notice that clearly identifies the pupil academic standards adopted by the school board under s. 118.30 (1g) (a) 1. that will be in effect for the school year and 2) The school board shall adopt all the textbooks necessary for use in the schools under its charge. The list of the adopted books shall be filed with the school district clerk, 118.03(1). Beyond the statutory requirements for curriculum development and oversight, the board should through policy ensure the curriculum development and review process. I believe the policy should allow administration as trained professionals to present recommendations before the board for approval to allow them to implement a coherent educational program that will meet the desired educational outcomes of the community. Stakeholder input is important when a board is making decisions because these groups are affected by the district's actions and success. The reason why receiving their input is important is because it will form the basis of customer expectations which will assist in the design of programs and services to meet their needs. The board also needs to engage with the customer to ensure relationships are being built in order to determine customer satisfaction and engagement. Ultimately, the statutory requirements on the board, the policies of the board and the administrative rules will define the system to ensure a balance of input from stakeholders while also empowering the professional staff of the district to align action with the expectations of the community.

**5. PANDEMIC: Do you believe our district should incorporate COVID mitigation strategies? Are there certain strategies that you are opposed to or feel should be mandatory, and why?**

I believe that in person learning is best for the majority of our children and families for academic and social-emotional growth. The district must balance the need for in person learning with prudent mitigation practices. I believe the strategies laid out in the MTSD COVID-19 MITIGATION LEVELS document that was updated in January of 2022 are appropriate and it provides balance while supporting the health and safety of students and staff. The benefits of having our students in classrooms is clear and as a community we should make the commitment to taking personal responsibility so our children can be at school with their peers and teachers! While I support vaccination, I do not believe it should be mandatory for our students or staff. During this time we also need to provide grace, be empathic and provide support to our students, district staff and parents as it is a complex period of time we are living through and learning from.

**6. COMMUNICATION: What kind of communication should the school board have with parents/families? With teachers?**

The district has a responsibility to engage with parents and community members using various methods so everyone knows how the district and schools are performing and progressing strategically as well as operationally, how decisions are being made and how taxpayer resources are being spent. It is also the responsibility of the district and board to ensure the “voice of the customer” is included when making decisions; clear expectations on how input is going to be used also needs to be shared at the forefront. The board should be taking steps to promote trust between parents, teachers, administration, and the school board. I believe ensuring transparency and having a “source of truth” will assist in building trust and fostering positive relationships in support of the district. In addition, I believe soliciting input throughout decision making processes can build trust as it will allow all parties to engage in conversation around the topic and hear diverse thoughts on what an approach could be. Board members should be responsive to questions from individuals in the community and provide a response based upon factual information or redirection to district administration. Calls and emails should not go unanswered, at minimum an acknowledgement should be occurring. Communication is typically an opportunity for improvement in all organizations so the district must commit time and resources in an effective and efficient manner alongside the board to ensure all stakeholders have what they need to support student learning in the district.

**7. CONFLICTS: Is membership on the board of education compatible with your present volunteer and/or employed position(s)? Any conflicts of interest?**

I do not currently have any conflicts of interest. I am employed by CESA 6, an education service agency. The Mequon-Thiensville School District is a member of CESA 1. The Mequon-Thiensville School District has had contracts in the past with CESA 6 but does not have any at the current time. In the event the District administration recommends a contract with CESA 6 before the Board for approval I would abstain from the vote.

**8. AFFILIATIONS: Have you or are you open to accepting any support (data, volunteers, and/or financial) from a partisan political group or organization?**

[Jason P. Levash for Mequon-Thiensville School District Board of Education - Levash4MTSD.com](http://Levash4MTSD.com)

My campaign does not have an affiliation with a partisan political group at the current time nor does it intend to accept one. I believe school board elections should stay nonpartisan, and allow for the election of individuals based on their own merits rather than as a member of a political party.

**9. UNITY: Our community just went through a difficult recall process—what suggestions do you have to help us move forward, together?**

I believe community unity is critically important moving forward because strong communities build strong schools. Raising the next generation is a shared responsibility that we all have ownership in. When families, communities and schools work together, students are more successful and the entire community benefits. Moving forward, I want our board to engage with the community in new ways so every stakeholder can play a role in ensuring every child can succeed. Board members, access to easy to find and interpret information and the process deployed across the district need to be accessible to the whole community. No community member should have doubt about information, feel lost in the process of engagement and feel as if they have not been heard. As a board member, I would like to provide additional opportunities utilizing a variety of different methods to listen to stakeholders in addition to the public comment agenda item at board meetings. I also would like to invite stakeholders into as many advisory structures as possible so their voices are informing the administration and board on current topics of discussion. While at times we may not always agree on the approach, we need to be respectful of each other, speak the truth and engage in the process. I will always be there to listen, share the facts and encourage civil engagement. Being united as a community around our children is critically important if we want them to succeed now and in the future! We cannot forget the common goal of providing the best opportunities for our children and their futures. WE CAN DO THIS as a Community.

## INFORM

Submitted on 01/14/2022

### 1. What motivates you to serve on the board of education?

I was motivated to run for a position on the Mequon-Thiensville School District Board of Education because I care about our children, their future and our community. I want our schools to reflect the community and what we value and I want the greatest opportunities possible for our children. Being united as a community is critically important and I want our board to engage the community so every child can succeed. I was not motivated by a single issue or have a predetermined agenda, instead I am truly looking to serve our community.

### 2. What experiences or skills have prepared you to serve as a board member?

I am uniquely qualified for the position as I have professional experience in both education and business which will allow me to be a champion for the students, a representative of the parents, a steward for the community and an advocate for the staff. As a former teacher and administrator in public school districts, a small business owner, and now as a chief operations officer of an educational service agency, I understand the teaching and learning process, the programs needed to support children in and out of the classroom and the necessary business and operational systems that need to be in place to run an effective and efficient district. Through prior experiences of working with and for boards and serving on boards I understand the roles of each and how to balance the roles and responsibilities while serving stakeholders. As a school board member, I will support the governance model, be an active listener and build consensus through collaboration, ensure transparency in the decision making process in order to build trust and lead and make decisions with a strong moral and ethical compass.

### 3. What do you believe are the strengths of MTSD?

I believe as a whole the instructional program for our students is strong and is being delivered by a dedicated and talented staff that is built on a foundation of continuous improvement. The district supports the right of ALL children to learn in a safe and supportive school environment that provides for the whole child. Historically, the instructional program of the district has focused on academic excellence ensuring rigor and relevance in order to prepare students for college, careers and life. Vast educational opportunities have and continue to be implemented by the district to support ALL students including those with varying levels of ability and interests, disability and talents. More recently the district has taken a lead on ensuring the social-emotional learning needs of students are being incorporated into the learning community. As the district states, the students are inspired and supported by exceptional educators who are dedicated to building momentum and propelling students forward. Lastly, the continuous improvement practices of the district are well established and systems are in place for strategic planning, data informed decisions making, researched based actions and progress monitoring in alignment with improvement measures.

### 4. What are your top priorities to improve or change in MTSD?

In addition to community unity and communication/engagement with stakeholders which I address in a later question I believe the top priority for the district is addressing learning loss as a result of the



pandemic. Most of our children have not been able to learn at the same rate as in normal, pre-pandemic years. This prolonged period of time has impacted students academically, socially and emotionally and has presented many challenges to students, educators, and parents. The district needs to ensure its academic recovery plan is being deployed with fidelity and supported with adequate resources. The plan needs to be studied frequently for effectiveness and actions need to be taken to adjust the plan to ensure ALL students are on a trajectory to close the gap. Equally important, we need to provide resources to support our children's social-emotional health. As we emerge from the pandemic we cannot forget the impacts it has had on our children and we will need to adjust for years to come in order to position our children for future generations of success. I would also like to see improvement in the district's student growth and target group outcomes on our state report card while also increasing overall student achievement. We need to unlock the possibilities for every student to achieve their goals and dreams.

## **5. What do you believe is the best way to address differences of opinion?**

I believe the best way to address differences of opinions is by having a dialogue on the topic, being open and honest with your understanding, sharing fact, and being respectful. Be respectful by giving the other person and opinion attention and consideration; not engaging or initially dismissing is not okay. Be honest on where you stand on the topic and acknowledge there is a difference while not disparaging the other person or their opinion. As a community we need to model this for our children as it is critical for their development. I also believe that opinions are misstated facts at times. Board members should be in a position to state the fact by having a "source of truth". This would also assist in building trust and fostering positive relationships in support of the district and allow for true diverse dialogue on opinions which is ultimately healthy for any system and its improvement.

## **6. How do you balance the needs/interests of the few relative to the wishes of the majority?**

First, I believe you need to truly understand the needs/interests of the few while also validating what you believe are the wishes of the majority. Having conversations with stakeholders will allow you to hear diverse thoughts on the topic. During these conversations you need to actively listen, ask questions for clarification, present facts and share your insight. I believe most individuals are well intentioned and they are advocating for something they truly believe is best for their children and/or the community. Ultimately if a decision has to be made you would want to arrive at consensus but if that is not possible you will want those stakeholders to have trust in you, the district, the board and the process. That is why I believe that the board should be soliciting input throughout the decision making processes in order to build that trust because ultimately everyone wants to know how they can advocate for their position, be heard, and respected in the process.

## **7. What do you believe is the role of a school board member, and how does it differ from the role of the superintendent and district administration?**

At the highest level the role of a school board is governance and the role of the superintendent and administration is to run the district. The board governs by establishing policy related to administration, the instructional program, staff, students, finance, property, operations and relations. Policy is a board's broad statement of direction that sets a course of action and provides guidance. The superintendent or designees are responsible for developing administrative rules which put policy into practice by defining how, by whom, where and when things are to be done. In addition, the board is responsible for the strategic direction of the district by approving a strategic plan that

establishes goals and key performance indicators. In the governance model, the board “stays above the line” while the administrative team is “below the line” deploying strategies in alignment with the board approved strategic plan. The board is also responsible for overseeing resources for the school district and being stewards for the community. The administrative team and staff make the day-to-day decisions that affect the operation of the school district, deploy board-approved resources, recruit, and assign staff and documenting results. The superintendent is accountable to the board for results and ensuring district practices are in alignment with the board’s policies. I support the District’s current policy-based governance model and would not support a shift to an operational model.

## **8. Do you believe school boards should remain non-partisan? Why or why not?**

I believe school board elections should stay nonpartisan, and allow for the election of individuals based on their own merits rather than as a member of a political party. While in office I believe it is important that school board members represent all stakeholders and not a particular political party's platform or ideology. At the same time I believe political parties are important in America and contribute to an informed and engaged electorate. Therefore, I believe it is okay for school board members to be active in political parties as individuals.

## **9. What are your thoughts on Critical Race Theory?**

I am in alignment with the MTSD’s current position on CRT and would continue to support it and ensure the district remains free of like theories. CRT should not be part of the curriculum of any course in MTSD. The term “critical race theory” or “CRT” is being inaccurately used by some to include educational equity. I believe educational equity means ensuring ALL students have access to opportunities and support unique to them so they can be successful today while preparing them for college, careers and life regardless of their current ability, socioeconomic standing, race, ethnicity, language, gender or disability. I believe equity does have a place in schools because it allows schools to focus on the individual needs of children in order to provide them fair and adaptable support. The concept of equity in schools is not new, it has been around for over a half a century dating back to the Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), Title IX (1972), the All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990. While I support equitable practices, I do not support practices of isolating children or taking away resources or opportunities from one to provide to another. We need to advocate and be empathic for all children; they are part of our community and our future!

## **10. What are your thoughts on COVID-19 precautions (e.g. masking, vaccines)?**

I believe that in person learning is best for the majority of our children and families for academic and social-emotional growth. The district must balance the need for in person learning with prudent mitigation practices. I believe the strategies laid out in the MTSD COVID-19 MITIGATION LEVELS document that was updated in January of 2022 are appropriate and it provides balance while supporting the health and safety of students and staff. The benefits of having our students in classrooms is clear and as a community we should make the commitment to taking personal responsibility so our children can be at school with their peers and teachers! While I support vaccination, I do not believe it should be mandatory for our students or staff. During this time we also need to provide grace, be empathic and provide support to our students, district staff and parents as it is a complex period of time we are living through and learning from.

## **11. Are there any other initiatives you would like to promote? E.g. delaying the start of high school so kids are better rested**

As a board member I would like to initial work on unity as a community and communication/engagement with all stakeholders. Through conversations with stakeholders themes will start to emerge on what the priorities of the district should be. I believe community unity is critically important moving forward because strong communities build strong schools. Raising the next generation is a shared responsibility that we all have ownership in. When families, communities and schools work together, students are more successful and the entire community benefits. Moving forward, I want our board to engage with the community in new ways so every stakeholder can play a role in ensuring every child can succeed. Board members, access to easy to find and interpret information and the process deployed across the district need to be accessible to the whole community. No community member should have doubt about information, feel lost in the process of engagement and feel as if they have not been heard. As a board member, I would like to provide additional opportunities utilizing a variety of different methods to listen to stakeholders in addition to the public comment agenda item at board meetings. I also would like to invite stakeholders into as many advisory structures as possible so their voices are informing the administration and board on current topics of discussion. While at times we may not always agree on the approach, we need to be respectful of each other, speak the truth and engage in the process. I will always be there to listen, share the facts and encourage civil engagement. Being united as a community around our children is critically important if we want them to succeed now and in the future! We cannot forget the common goal of providing the best opportunities for our children and their futures. WE CAN DO THIS as a Community.

## **12. Please share any endorsements.**



## JOURNAL SENTINEL

Submitted on 01/17/2022

- 1. Declining academic performance was an issue often brought up during the November recall election. What would you do to help the district improve its academic performance?**

The top priority for the District should be to address learning loss as a result of the pandemic by ensuring its academic recovery plan is being deployed with fidelity and supported with adequate resources. The plan needs to be studied frequently for effectiveness and innovative actions need to be taken at the grade and individual levels to adjust the plan to ensure ALL students are engaging in a rigorous curriculum to close the gap. These actions will also support improvement in the District's student growth and target group outcomes on the state report card and increase overall student achievement.

- 2. The role of race and diversity in the district's curriculum was another issue brought up during the recall. How should the district teach about topics related to race and diversity?**

The District has adopted the 2018 Wisconsin State Standards for Social Studies which identify what students should know and be able to do. The standards do include performance indicators related to race and diversity and clearly establish what should be taught in MTSD. It is the responsibility of the professional educators to foster a safe learning environment for all students to engage with rigorous curriculum so they can think critically about the historical, behavioral, geographical and economic elements of race and diversity. The classroom should be free of any theory and practices that teach students what to think.

- 3. What are your thoughts on COVID-19 mitigation measures such as mask requirements, testing, school-based vaccine clinics and metrics for going virtual and their use in the district's schools?**

In person learning is best for the majority of our children and families for academic and social-emotional growth. Having prudent mitigation practices in place allows for learning to continue while supporting the health and safety of students and staff. The updated strategies laid out in the January 2022 MTSD COVID-19 MITIGATION LEVELS document are appropriate for masking and quarantining. Providing additional testing capacity in the community is beneficial to identify illness and ultimately keep healthy children in school. While I support vaccination and vaccine clinics, I do not believe vaccination should be mandatory for our students or staff.

## OZAUKEE FORWARD

*Submitted on 01/29/2022*

### **1. In your opinion, what should be the 3 top priorities of your school board?**

1: Supporting Learning - The pandemic has resulted in learning loss for students; the academic recovery plan in place needs to be deployed with fidelity, supported with adequate resources and monitored. A focus also needs to be on improving the District's student growth and target group outcomes.

2: Community Engagement - Strong communities build strong schools so the board needs to engage with the community in new ways so every stakeholder has a voice, is responded to, and is able to engage in civil discourse.

3: Fiscal Management - The district is going to be facing significant fiscal restraints while developing the 2022-2023 budget, a focus will need to be on allocating resources in a fiscally conservative manner that will support ALL students.

### **2. What are the central events/or ideas our country was founded upon, and how important is it to teach these in the classroom?**

MTSD has adopted the 2018 Wisconsin Standards for Social Studies. Standard PS1.b: Origins and foundation

of the government of the United States has a focus on investigating how principles expressed in the Declaration of Independence, Constitution (including the Preamble and the Bill of Rights) have been applied throughout United States history. I believe students should have a strong understanding of the origins of the US along with the how and why the country exists today. It is the responsibility of the professional educators of the District to deliver instruction in alignment with the standards.

### **3. What should the district's position be on teaching CRT, or topics related to it?**

Critical Race Theory should not be taught in the district or be in the curriculum of any course. The classroom should be free of any theories or practices that teach students what to think. Instead students should engage with a rigorous curriculum so they can learn how to think critically. The standards adopted by the board should identify what students should know and be able to do. At the same time, students should be able to explore for themselves theories, diverse perspectives and historical facts without being censored.

### **4. Can you explain your understanding of equity vs equality and what this means for education?**

Educational equality focuses on ensuring everyone has the same rights, opportunities, and resources. Educational equity ensures ALL students have access to resources, opportunities and support unique to them so they can be successful today while preparing them for college, careers and life regardless of their current ability, socioeconomic standing, race, ethnicity, language, gender or disability. We need to start with equality by providing all students the same opportunities to ensure success while being equitable to adjust the equal opportunities to the student based upon who they are as a human being.

**5. Do you think enhanced pay in recognition of high performing teachers should be part of a district's compensation package?**

The MTSD's current compensation model has elements of recognition for high performance. The model has three elements: Student Learning Objective, SLO (50%), Evaluation of Teacher Effectiveness using the Danielson Model (30%) and Professional Practice Goal (20%). Teachers that meet their SLO goal(s), are rated effective or highly effective and engage in professional development have access to compensation increases annually. All teachers do not receive the same increase in compensation since increases are awarded on a continuum based upon their performance. I support the current model and have professional administrative experience in implementing a like model in another district.

## NAACP

Submitted on 01/31/2022

**1. Tell us a bit about yourself, your background/experience, and your connection and/or interest in the Mequon-Thiensville Schools. What are your reasons for seeking a position on the Board?**

My wife Amy and I along with our two sons, ages 5 and 3, moved to Mequon in the summer of 2019. Amy was born and raised in Mequon and we wanted our boys to graduate from Homestead following multiple generations before them. Currently, I serve as the Chief Operations officer of CESA 6, an education service agency that provides solutions to K-12 school districts to maximize their success. Prior to my current executive leadership position, I served the West Bend School District in multiple administrative positions with my last being the director of secondary education. I started my educational career as a technology and engineering teacher in the Cedarburg School District. I have a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Stout in technology and engineering education, and a master's degree from Marquette University in Educational Policy and Leadership. Education is a passion of mine and my professional and personal experiences uniquely position me to serve as a school board member.

I was motivated to run for a position on the Mequon-Thiensville School District Board of Education because I care about our children, their future and our community. I want our schools to reflect the community and what we value and I want the greatest opportunities possible for our children. Being united as a community is critically important and I want our board to engage the community so every child can succeed. I was not motivated by a single issue or have a predetermined agenda, instead I am truly looking to serve our community. I am uniquely qualified for the position as I have professional experience in both education and business which will allow me to be a champion for the students, a representative of the parents, a steward for the community and an advocate for the staff. As a former teacher and administrator in public school districts and now as a chief operations officer of an educational service agency, I understand the teaching and learning process, the programs needed to support children in and out of the classroom and the necessary business and operational systems in place to run an effective and efficient district. As a board member, I will support the governance model, be an active listener and build consensus through collaboration, ensure transparency in the decision making process in order to build trust. Through board service, I would always lead and make decisions with a strong moral and ethical compass.

**2. What are some major issues that you believe our school district is currently facing? How would you like the district to deal with those issues?**

Supporting Learning - The pandemic has resulted in learning loss for students. The district needs to ensure its academic recovery plan is being deployed with fidelity and supported with adequate resources. The plan needs to be studied frequently for effectiveness and actions need to be taken to adjust the plan to ensure ALL students are on a trajectory to close the gap. Equally important, we need to provide resources to support our children's social-emotional health. As we emerge from the pandemic we cannot forget the impacts it has had on our children and we will need to adjust for years to come in order to position our children for future generations of success. I would also like to see improvement in the district's student growth and target group outcomes on our state report card while

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also increasing overall student achievement. We need to unlock the possibilities for every student to achieve their goals and dreams.

Community Engagement - Strong communities build strong schools. Raising the next generation is a shared responsibility that we all have ownership in. When families, communities and schools work together, students are more successful and the entire community benefits. Moving forward, I want our board to engage with the community in new ways so every stakeholder can play a role in ensuring every child can succeed. Board members, access to easy to find and interpret information and the process deployed across the district need to be accessible to the whole community. No community member should have doubt about information, feel lost in the process of engagement and feel as if they have not been heard. As a board member, I would like to provide additional opportunities utilizing a variety of different methods to listen to stakeholders in addition to the public comment agenda item at board meetings. I also would like to invite stakeholders into as many advisory structures as possible so their voices are informing the administration and board on current topics of discussion. While at times we may not always agree on the approach, we need to be respectful of each other, speak the truth and engage in the process. I will always be there to listen, share the facts and encourage civil engagement. Being united as a community around our children is critically important if we want them to succeed now and in the future! We cannot forget the common goal of providing the best opportunities for our children and their futures.

Fiscal Management - The district is going to be facing significant fiscal restraints while developing the 2022-2023 budget, a focus will need to be on allocating resources in a fiscally conservative manner that will support ALL students. Inflationary pressure that the district has not seen in decades will require the district to utilize the resources that were established as part of the bilingual budget in ways that have not been tested since the late 2000s. The district will need to manage its operations in a fiscally prudent manner in order to meet the expectations of the community while also ensuring the greatest return on the investment the community is making.

Human Capital - The educational community is currently facing a shortage of individuals entering the profession. The district will need to keenly focus on maintaining a competitive advantage with its human capital system by creating exceptional experiences for employees across their employment life cycle in order to have the most qualified and engaged teachers, leaders and support staff for our students.

### **3. What is your perception of the current working and learning climate in our school district? Do you have any ideas on how to insure a positive working and learning climate is in our district?**

The Climate and Culture Survey administered to parents, the annual survey for all students in Grades 4-12 which assess school climate and student engagement along with the annual staff engagement survey provide a window into the working and learning climate for the school district. The district's commitment to continuous improvement is grounded in data-informed analysis and research-based actions to attain and surpass measurable goals, aligned with desired outcomes. The district's strategic plan has two goals associated with the working and learning climate: Goal 3: Student Belonging and Well-Being and Goal 4: Workforce Environment. The student goal is focused on fostering collaboration and developing relationships to enhance the safety, connectedness, and well-being of our students. There are four objectives: A - Define and implement culturally responsive principles and best practices in the school environment to foster the connectedness and belonging of our students, Objective B - Cultivate authentic and positive relationships amongst students, staff and

**Jason P. Leavsh for Mequon-Thiensville School District Board of Education - [Levash4MTSD.com](http://Levash4MTSD.com)**

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families to enhance our students' physical and psychological safety, Objective C - Integrate social and emotional learning practices within the instructional environment to strengthen student engagement and wellbeing and Objective D - Respond with urgency, flexibility, and compassion to the individual social and emotional needs of students as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. The strategy teams the district has in place allows the district to focus on ensuring a positive working and learning climate is in our district. The district's mission is that together, we will ignite each student's passion for learning, preparing for a life of infinite possibilities. A positive school climate and culture is essential to realizing that mission.

#### **4. How do your goals align with the NAACP's mission and vision?**

As a professional educator and leader in the educational community, I believe every child should be provided what they need to succeed. The children of the district have the right to learn in a safe and supportive school environment that provides for the whole child. My belief on education equality parallels the NAACP mission and vision in which ALL students have access to opportunities and support unique to them so they can be successful today while preparing them for college, careers and life regardless of their current ability, socioeconomic standing, race, ethnicity, language, gender or disability. I believe equity does have a place in schools because it allows schools to focus on the individual needs of children in order to provide them fair and adaptable support. I do not support practices of isolating children or taking away resources or opportunities from one to provide to another. We need to advocate and be empathic for all children; they are part of our community and our future!



## NEWS GRAPHIC

*Submitted on 02/01/2022*

### **1. What qualifications and strengths would you bring to the School Board?**

I am uniquely qualified for the position as I have professional experience in both education and business. As a former teacher and administrator in public school districts, a small business owner, and now as a chief operations officer of an educational service agency, I understand the teaching and learning process, the programs needed to support children in and out of the classroom and the necessary business and operational systems that need to be in place to run an effective and efficient district. Through prior experiences of working with and for boards and serving on boards I understand the roles of each and how to balance the roles and responsibilities while serving stakeholders.

### **2. What do you believe are the one or two most important issues before the board in the next term?**

Student Learning - The pandemic has resulted in learning loss for students; the academic recovery plan in place needs to be deployed with fidelity, supported with adequate resources and monitored. A focus also needs to be on improving the District's student growth and target group outcomes.

Community Engagement - Strong communities build strong schools so the board needs to engage with the community in new ways so every stakeholder has a voice, is responded to, and is able to engage in civil discourse.

Fiscal Management - The district is going to be facing significant fiscal restraints while developing the 2022-2023 budget, a focus will need to be on allocating resources in a fiscally conservative manner that will support ALL students.

### **3. What is a school board member's role and responsibility? How does that role differ from the role of the superintendent or administration?**

At the highest level the role of a school board is governance and the role of the superintendent and administration is to run the district. In the governance model, the board "stays above the line" while the administrative team is "below the line" deploying strategies and procedures in alignment with the board approved policies, strategic plan and budget. The superintendent is accountable to the board for results and ensuring alignment.