

March 24, 2004

To Members of the Madison School Board:

We are writing as members of the Board of Directors of the Madison East High School Booster Club, an organization that represents each of the competitive sports programs offered at our school. As active and concerned parents of student athletes, we have kept very close tabs on the school budget process and are very familiar with the tight budget conditions that the school district is facing. As stakeholders with significant investments in the East High athletic program, we also are aware of the ways in which the current proposals will harm the students, the programs, and the vital school-parent-community partnerships that support them. We will spell out our concerns in more detail later in this letter, but summarize them below:

- 1) The proposals for athletic programs are not likely to play a major role in solving the budget shortfall and are likely to cause great harm to our students, schools, and athletic programs.
- 2) We anticipate that decisions to eliminate no-cut and JV teams and to substantially increase athletic fees will cause a significant drop in the number of students participating in sports, a development that threatens to undermine student academic and athletic achievement.
- 3) The policy discussion is being conducted without comprehensive information on how athletic programs are financed and does not appear to take into account the respective roles of general funds, fees, revenue, fundraising, and family expenditures, in supporting athletic programs.
- 4) The current budget proposals threaten significant investments made by booster clubs, athletes, parents, and the community, and which touch every facet of our athletic programs from uniforms and practice balls to major equipment purchases and facilities upgrades.
- 5) The decision to take the athletic directors out of schools and create a single centralized administrative position for the district is of concern because of the daily, hands on, role that the AD plays at East, and because of the poor track records of other programs where in-school contact has been replaced by downtown administrators.

The proposed changes to the athletic program are unlikely to help the district's budget shortfall. We anticipate that eliminating teams will simply exclude large numbers of students who might otherwise pay fees. Significantly increasing fees will make it much harder for families who do not have sufficient incomes or who do not qualify for free/reduced lunch, to afford the basic entry fees. In fact the amount of money to be saved just isn't there when you consider that thousands of students will be impacted by the devastation these cuts will bring to the sports programs. It doesn't make economic sense to cut programs that can actually raise revenue through booster clubs, fundraisers, concessions, gate receipts and athlete fees.

In addition, we note that increasing the Central Athletic Director from half- to full-time simply transfers salary costs from in-school directors to the Central Director, who has a 2003-2004 half-time salary and fringe rate of \$49,060 (p. 22, budget discussion document). The additional \$49,060 required to bring that position up to full time would fund the salaries and fringes of the West High athletic director and part of one of the other in-school directors. We also agree that overtime and additional salary for athletic secretaries would also undermine any costs savings generated by eliminating in-school directors (p.23, budget discussion document).

Decreased student participation in sports will affect student performance in areas outside athletics. Our high school is huge, but freshmen who participate in athletics gain an advantage in

making the transition because their teams give them a feeling immediate connection to the school and to new friends. Cutting the freshman No Cut policy offers athletics only to those students who have had the advantage of private clubs or experience in recreation programs. The No Cut policy also is particularly important in giving at risk students the motivation to attend school and apply themselves academically.

We find proposals for MSCR and/or the YMCA to administer programs unacceptable because of the role that school-based programs play in fostering student success. For these reasons, it is important that as many students as possible have school-based after school athletic programs. The minimal savings do not justify the actions that will impact so many.

Board policies need to take into account the respective roles of general funds, fees, revenue, fundraising, and family expenditures, in supporting athletic programs. Policy decisions, particularly those related to fees, need to accurately reflect the entire funding package. The February 16 report on the cost of being a student, for example, states that “most of the equipment is supplied by the district,” and uses the supply of football pads and uniforms as an example. At East High School, however, the Booster Club has supplied such items for all athletic teams for more than a decade.

Over the last ten years the East High Athletic Booster Club has raised funds and has donated over \$300,000.00 to supply the majority of East’s sports equipment, uniforms, balls and other supplies. Our club also has allocated \$60,000 to resurface the tennis courts; East’s baseball coach is currently raising private funds to bring Kelliher Field up to a basic standard of play. Some of our larger projects are carried out through partnerships with other schools and members of the community.

Finally, we would like the budget discussion to reflect that students and parents play an ever-increasing role in financing individual team activities through added fees, fundraising, concession sales, and purchasing of uniforms. In short, students and their families are making substantial contributions above and beyond the basic athletic fees.

The proposed policies run counter to strong school-parent-community partnerships. By proposing the above cuts the MMSD is damaging the positive ties that sports create between a school, its alumni, and the larger community. When our football team competed for the Big 8 Title, the East Side of Madison was caught up in the excitement. We are certain the Memorial HS community is currently feeling that same sense of pride and excitement due to its basketball program. Successful athletic teams bring communities together and make people feel connected and proud of their public schools. We hope you agree that well-rounded athletic programs are part of what makes our high school centers of excellence. At a time when money is tight it keeps our tax base connected, concerned and loyal to public education.

Eliminating in-school athletic directors will hurt athletic programs and students. The East High School Athletic Director plays a vital role. Having gone without a full-time Athletic Director for quite some time before the hiring of our current director, we have a unique appreciation for the role the Athletic Director plays at East (and at high schools in general). The Athletic Director’s knowledge of the school, its teams, and its facilities is critical to long-range planning. He also plays a direct role in resolving conflicts over practice facilities and equipment. His engagement with coaches and teams is a significant factor in his ability to work well with WIAA and the Big Eight, and to help East work with those organizations.

Most important, he plays an important role with student athletes. Over 1,043 individual students participate in athletics at East, and the Athletic Director directly and indirectly has contact with each through the weekly academic progress reports, enforcement of academic eligibility standards, and other activities. We are particularly concerned about the loss of daily contact

because we have seen the results when other programs were consolidated at the district level. The Athletic Director needs to be site based. East has seen a rise in athletic accomplishments. We feel that our Athletic Director's continued work and presence at East High School is part of this success.

The East High School Athletic Booster Club has a strong partnership with our school and we are proud of our role in supporting our students. At the same time, we are increasingly concerned by the fact over time we have become "The" funding source of first recourse for items that most people assume are supplied by district general funds. We feel we have done our part and ask you to hold up the district's end of the partnership by allocating cuts in an equitable manner rather than the disproportionate 30% cut planned for the publicly-funded portion of the athletic budget.

Sincerely,

The East High School Athletic Booster Club Board 2003-2004

Rick Petershack

Jim Dunn

Richard Adam

Don and Coleen Heinz

Tim Healy

Mona Melms

Chris Severson

Jean Schroeder

Lionel Spartz

Gary and Peggy Noyes

Ann Rulseh

Mike Metcalfe

Linda Owen

Jane Heymann

Liz Carley

Linda Hughes

Pam Cross-Leone

Steve Leone

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Alan Crossley

Barb Kyle