

MTI VOTERS
2010 School Board Election Questionnaire
Answers Provided by James Howard

I appreciate the opportunity to speak with MTI regarding my campaign. I am a charter member of the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) and long-term union supporter. I have answered the questions as best as I can based on my current knowledge. I look forward to the interview and the opportunity to learn more about the issues that are important to MTI and your members.

1. *If the School Board finds it necessary to change school boundaries due to enrollment, what criteria would you, as a Board member, use to make such a judgment?*

It's really unfortunate when schools become over crowded because communities and parents get very emotional about changing schools. If we must change school boundaries it's very important to look at the determinants causing the overcrowding to see if we can be proactive in preventing the need for future boundary changes. Some determinants are projected student growth patterns, what caused the current overcrowding, etc.

2. *If the School Board finds it necessary to close a school/schools due to economic reasons, what criteria would you, as a Board member, use to make such a judgment?*

I hope it never becomes necessary to close a school. Our neighborhood schools are the foundation of our public school system and they have served us well. To make such a decision all available data would need to be looked at to ensure the smallest impact to kids, families, teachers, etc. The data should include exploring all available financial sources to work to alleviate having to make the school closure choice.

3. *If the School Board finds it necessary, due to the State-imposed revenue controls, to make further budget cuts to the 2010-11 budget, what criteria would you, as a Board member, use to make such a judgment?*

I would have to work with the other Board members and administration to make such a decision. I believe we would have to prioritize in a way that learning is preserved and not weakened. But it would be necessary to work together with the other Board members and the school administration to make budget decisions.

4. *Even though MMUSD employs a full-time legislative lobbyist, and is favorably situated in the Capital city, it suffered the worst reduction in State aid. What would you do to correct this?*

I will continue to support the full-time legislative lobbyist activities involving increased state funding for public schools. I will also continue to support current funding activities underway as advocated by the Alliance for Excellent Schools such as a increase in the sales tax to fund public education.

5. *Identify specific MMSD programs and/or policies which you believe should be modified, reprioritized, or eliminated, and explain why.*

I would need to have knowledge of the many specific MMSD programs and/or policies and currently I don't have such knowledge. I would need to work with the current BOE and administration to make such decisions. I am a strong proponent of the new strategic plan for the district.

6. *What should the District do to reduce violence/assure that proper discipline and safety (of the learning and working environment) is maintained in our schools?*

I believe that each school should have a discipline plan developed internally by school administration, students, parents and staff. Having stakeholders buy into the plan is essential for the success of the plan. The discipline plan and the District's no harassment policy should be fairly and consistently enforced.

7. *Do you agree that the health insurance provided to District employees should be mutually selected through collective bargaining?*

I am a strong proponent of the collective bargaining process. Because of the continuing escalation of health insurance cost I believe the process should be used if the goal is to provide the most economical insurance packages.

8. *Explain your concerns/proposed solutions relative to the District's efforts to reduce the "achievement gap".*

I am very concerned about the issues surrounding the achievement gap. One issue is the disparate graduation rates between whites and minorities. I believe the district needs to do everything possible to address these issues on a school by school basis. We must continue to do everything we can to support struggling schools and provide those schools with the needed resources. We must continue to support programs like Schools of Hope and inclusive decision making on the BOE. Inclusive decision making is important to providing unique input into decisions affecting the achievement gap.

9. *Should planning time for elementary teachers be increased? If yes, how could this be accomplished? (see Contract provision attached.)*

The contract provision was not attached but I support teachers having adequate planning time. If planning time is inadequate then we must examine the reasons. For example, if teachers are assuming non-classroom-related duties that detract from academic planning then we should try and find an alternative. It is important that the district and parents work with teachers to support the critical function of teaching.

10. *Given that the Wisconsin Association of School Boards rarely supports the interests of the Madison Metropolitan School District, do you support the District withdrawing from the WASB? If not, please explain.*

I'm surprised to hear that the Wisconsin Association of School Boards rarely supports the interests of the Madison Metropolitan School District. I would have thought that the interest of the two parties would be the same. Given my lack of knowledge about the WASB I don't have an opinion. I believe if the two organizations had similar interest it would be good to be a member.

11. *From what sources do you believe that public schools should be funded?*

I believe that our public schools should be funded with tax dollars. A well educated society benefits us all.

a. *Do you support further increasing student fees?*

In general I do not support further increases in student fees because due to the current economic climate families are under an extreme amount of financial pressure. However I cannot rule out fee increases that are well thought out and supported by the general public.

12. *Do you support the Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools' (WAES) initiative to raise sales tax by 1% to help fund schools?*

Yes.

13. *Do you support class sizes of 15 or less for all primary grades?*

I support small class sizes for the primary grades.

14. *Do you support:*

a. *The use of public funds (vouchers) to enable parents to pay tuition with tax payers' money for religious and private schools?*

No.

b. *The expansion of Charter schools within the Madison Metropolitan School District?*

If the District has a particular need or if the proposed school is budget neutral, a charter school may be an innovative way to address that need. The Nuestro Mundo Community School and the proposed Badger School are good examples of how the District used and may use a charter school to address a need and desire. The need was to provide a dual language school and the desire is to provide agricultural education. The district primary focus should be to support existing schools and making sure that the creation of a charter school does not negatively impact the other schools in the district.

15. *List MMSD staff and Board member(s) from whom you do or would seek advice.*

I have had the occasion to work with many MMSD staff and will continue to do so.

16. *Is your candidacy being promoted by any organization? If yes, please name such organization(s).*

My candidacy is not being promoted by any organization. My decision to run for the BOE was based on consultation with friends, family and many advocates within the school district. I do hope that those that value my unique perspective and the many years of service to the district will endorse my candidacy during this campaign.

17. *Have you ever been employed as a teacher? If yes, please describe why you left the teaching profession.*

No.

18. *Do you support the inclusion model for including Title 1, EEN and ESL students in the regular education classroom? Why/why not?*

Title 1, EEN, and ESL students all present very specific challenges in our educational setting. I would support a student-based education plan developed by education stake holders such as students, parents, teachers, District and staff developed to address the needs of these students.

19. *What grouping practices do you advocate for talented and gifted (TAG) students?*

Currently I do not have an opinion and I'm not clear about what grouping practices mean. The district has an approved talented and gifted plan and I do think we should work within the plan guidelines. I believe that it's important that we have high expectations for all students and to challenge all of our students to become high achievers.

20. *Aside from limitations from lack of adequate financial resources, what problems do you feel exist in meeting TAG students' needs at present, and how would you propose to solve these problems?*

I think that it's commendable that the district is moving ahead with a very organized approach with our talented and gifted students. I haven't identified any specific problems at this time that I feel exist in meeting TAG students needs. The problems that have been identified and future problems should be resolved by working together within the district with parents and staff. I do believe that the district must continue to provide challenging and continuous curricula and programming for identified students in order that they may achieve their full academic, intellectual, and creative potential.

21. *The Board of Education has moved from the development of policy to becoming involved in implementation of policy; i.e. matters usually reserved to administration. Some examples are when it:*

a. *Decided to hear parents' complaints about a teacher's tests and grading.*

b. *Decided, to modify the administration's decision about how a State Statute should be implemented.*

Do you believe that the Board should delegate to administration the implementation of policy which the Board has created and the implementation of State Statutes.

I believe the Board should delegate the implementation of policy to the administration. I also believe that the Board should be accountable for and take responsibility for its policies and to monitor how policies are being implemented. Implementation should be consistent with Board intent to determine if policy should be revised.

Do you believe that the Board should delegate to administration the implementation of State Statutes?

Yes, I believe the Board should delegate to the administration the implementation of State Statutes. I do believe the Board should decide how State Statutes are implemented and give the administration direction. The Board should monitor statute implementation to see if implementation is consistent with Board intent. The Board needs to give direction about whether statutes should be implemented in a different way.

Do you support the Board exploring a means to make their meetings more efficient?

I agree that Board meetings should be as efficient as possible. While seeking improved efficiency essential matters must be continue to be reviewed thoroughly.

Do you support a merit pay scheme being added to the Collective Bargaining Agreement

Although I do advocate for collective bargaining, there isn't a current merit pay scheme that I support.

22. *Do/did/will your children attend private or parochial schools during their K- 12 years? If no, and if you have children, what schools have/will they attend(ed)?*

No. My children attended and currently attend Madison Public Schools. My oldest daughter attended Emerson Elementary, Sherman Middle and East High. My two youngest children are currently attending Emerson Elementary and Sherman Middle.

23. *Will you introduce and vote for a motion which would direct the Wisconsin Association of School Boards to request the introduction and promote the passage of legislation to eliminate the revenue controls on public schools and return full budgeting authority to the School Board?*

I do not know how WASB works. I will continue to work for and I am supportive of efforts to educate state legislators regarding the impacts of the state's current funding structure. We must continue to have local control of schools uninhibited by state legislation.

24. *Will you introduce and vote for a motion to direct the Wisconsin Association of School Boards to request the introduction and promote the passage of legislation to prohibit the*

privatization. of public schools via the use of tuition tax credits (vouchers) to pay tuition with taxpayers' money to private or religious schools?

I do not support the use of tuition tax credits to pay tuition to religious or private schools.

25. *Will you introduce and vote for a motion to direct the Wisconsin Association of School Boards to request the introduction and promote the passage of legislation which will maintain or expand the benefit level of the Wisconsin Family and Medical Leave Act?*

I support the Wisconsin Family and Medical Leave Act. The Act is necessary for the security of employees during times of illness, childbirth and caring for elderly parents. The District should support this law which is a fundamental family value.

26. *Will you introduce and vote for a motion to direct the Wisconsin Association of School Boards to request the introduction and promote the passage of legislation which will increase the retirement formula multiplier from 1.6% to 2% for teachers and general employees, i.e. equal that of protective employees?*

I would need more information before making a fiscal decision on this subject especially during these very challenging economic times.

27. *Will you introduce and vote for a motion to direct the Wisconsin Association of School Boards to request the introduction and promote the passage of legislation which will prohibit public employee residency requirements?*

I don't believe there is an employee residency requirement for the District except for top administrators. I don't have any knowledge or information that would lead me to seek a change in the current requirements.

28. *Will you introduce and vote for a motion to direct the Wisconsin Association of School Boards to request the introduction and promote the passage of legislation which will eliminate and forbid restrictions to free and open collective bargaining for the selection of insurance for public employees (under Wis. Stat. 111.70), including the naming of the insurance carrier?*

Again, I believe in the collective bargaining process and I believe this to be a bargainable issue. In issues such as this I believe local control is better than legislation.

29. *Will you introduce and vote for a motion to direct the Wisconsin Association of School Boards to request the introduction and promote the passage of legislation which will guarantee free and open collective bargaining regarding the establishment of the school calendar/school year, including the right to begin the school year, via negotiations between MTI and the District?*

I believe the decision regarding when the school year should start should be local and not a state mandate.

30. Will you introduce and vote for a motion to direct the Wisconsin Association of School Boards to request the introduction and promote the passage of legislation to forbid the work of employees organized under Wis. Stat. 111.70 (collective bargaining statute) to be subcontracted?

I believe that local control should not be limited.

31. Will you introduce and vote for a motion to direct the Wisconsin Association of School Boards to seek passage of legislation which will require full State funding of any State-mandated program?

I support state funding of state mandated programs.

32. Will you introduce and vote for a motion to direct the Wisconsin Association of School Boards to seek passage of legislation which will provide adequate State funding of public education?

I support adequate state funding of public education. I believe the state should not balance the state budget by reducing funding to school districts.

33. Do you support a specific school finance reform plan? Why/why not?

I support school finance plans that seek state sales tax increases as a way of financing public schools.

34. Are you, or any of your campaign committee members, active in or supportive (past or present) of the "Get Real", "ACE", "Vote No for Change" or similar organizations?

I am not, and my campaign committee members are not.

35. Name of Campaign Committee/Address/Phone #/ Treasurer. List the members of your campaign committee.

Name	James Howard for School Board
Address	1213 North Sherman Ave, P. O. Box 111, Madison, WI 53704
Treasurer	Nicole Hoffmann, 5 Maplewood Lane, Unit 207, Madison, WI 53704

Signature
James L. Howard

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