

Silveira

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**MTI VOTERS  
2012 School Board Election Questionnaire**

Please respond to each of the following questions. If you wish to add/clarify your response, please attach a separate sheet and designate your responses with the same number which appears in the questionnaire. *Please submit your responses to MTI Headquarters (821 Williamson Street) by January 5, 2012.*

General:

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?**

The process of changing boundaries is very emotional for the community that will potentially be affected by the moves. There is no one way of changing boundaries that will make everyone happy. Therefore, I think the Board has to be consistent when evaluating and making these changes. The first guiding principle for me is that the change has to be a long-term solution. I do not believe that boundary changes should be used as a band-aid to address any issue. Another consideration is to avoid creating schools with high concentrations of low income families. Following this, my next consideration is to keep bus routes no more than 45 minutes, one way. Another consideration is that every effort should be made to keep geographically and historically defined neighborhoods together and to consider the proximity of students to a school when redrawing boundary lines. However, I must also say that due to the differences in the geography of the school attendance areas, as well as the distribution of low income students in relation to a school, the final consideration is important but may not always be possible.

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?**

If the recommendation of closing a school was brought to the Board, I would want to know the information listed below before making a decision. I would use this information to construct a cost-benefit analysis.

- i. In the big picture, why was a certain school chosen
- ii. Financial savings associated with closing a school
- iii. Additional costs associated with moving children to a new school
- iv. Are the "new" schools set up to support the needs of the incoming students
- v. Demographics of families that would move to a new school
- vi. Plan for staff at school being closed
- vii. Projected growth for the attendance area of the recommended closed school as well as for the new school
- viii. Future numbers (capacity, low income, etc.) for new school
- ix. Affect of changes on the middle and high school tracks
- x. Is this a long-term solution to the stated problem

3. **If the School Board finds it necessary, due to the State-imposed revenue controls, to make further budget cuts to the 2012-13 budget, what criteria would you, as a Board member, use to make such a judgment?**

My first priority would be to keep as many cuts as possible away from the classroom. We are going to have to have a serious conversation this year about budget reallocation as our needs continue to grow. In order to do this effectively, we will need data about what is and what is not working. Staff feedback on efficiencies and programs should be part of the process.

4. **Identify specific MMSD programs and/or policies which you believe should to be modified, re-prioritized, or eliminated, and explain why.**

Regarding programs, this is difficult because we have so little data on program effectiveness. We are in the middle of a literacy program evaluation which hopefully will bring information as to what is/is not working. The district and the Board have to be willing to make changes if the data shows something is not working. Program evaluation for the sake of doing an evaluation means nothing unless something is done with the information.

Regarding policy, I would like to look at all of the board policies to ensure relevance. I am a believer in some form of policy governance and question whether all of the board policies should actually be board policy as opposed to administrative policy. I advocate continuing to look at the student code of conduct and related policies (i.e., suspension and expulsion) to ensure relevance, effectiveness and consistency. We have to ensure these policies work for students, staff and school. Policies like the student code of conduct also need input from people in the schools on a daily basis. This type of input is missing from a number of our policies.

5. **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 a consistent (equitable) behavior support system should be in place across the district at all school levels. There should be expectations for a consistent response from administrators at all schools. In addition, any response to a behavior incident needs to be done in a fair and timely manner. With the high mobility of the MMSD, a consistent program implemented across the district is needed so children will understand rules and behavior, irrespective of attendance area. I also strongly support on-going staff training on how to respond to difficult situations. With that said, the jury is still out in my mind on the effectiveness of PBIS.

I am concerned about the increase in gang activity in our community and how it may impact our schools. At my request, board members met with members of the MPD gang task force who have ideas about working with our schools, especially on the prevention and early intervention end of issues.

The district issued a report on School Safety Recommendations in December 2010. There are a number of different tactics listed in the report that should be explored. There is an emphasis on violence prevention.

Engagement in school is critical. Many discipline problems arise because students lack a sense of belonging. I was an advocate for the positions at our 4 high schools that focus on the "high flyers" and work with them to help keep their focus in the schools. I am concerned about cuts we have made to the social worker, psychologist and guidance positions and would like to see data on how this has affected discipline and school climate.

I strongly believe that there are children in our schools who need to be in different learning environments that would benefit both the student and the school. I support looking at our alternative programs to see if there is a way we can accommodate more children, including increased middle school and elementary offerings. We have a pilot program running in Whitehorse Middle School this year. I look forward to the evaluation.

I am still concerned about our code of conduct and lack of input from people who are in the schools on a daily basis.

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

YES

NO

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

This question requires a lengthy answer. Rather than get into details, I have put my thoughts in more of an outline response. Although we have made small strides in closing the achievement gap, we have a long way to go before we can say we have been successful for all of our students. Urgency is key as we move forward. It will take many comprehensive strategies to close the gap. We must ensure that the focus is on

financing and implementing the many strategies we believe will work for our students.

In order to effectively address closing the achievement gap, we need to look not only at our schools but also into our community. Social, economic and educational factors come into play when looking at a child and their ability to learn. Therefore, we must look at these factors when looking for ways to increase achievement efforts. Richard Rothstein outlines 3 tracks that should be pursued to narrow the achievement gap. I strongly agree with these tracks. I have listed the tracks and then some specifics for the MMSD. As mentioned, this is an outline only and does not include the specifics under each item.

1. In-school improvement efforts that raise the quality of instruction
  - a. Find ways to increase TIME with students. (i.e., extended school day, extended school year, double dosing, etc.)
  - b. Culturally relevant curriculum
  - c. Focus on smaller class size
  - d. Look at putting more teachers/staff back into the class room
  - e. Implement multi-faceted plan for the recruitment of minority teachers/staff/administrators
  - f. Increase efforts to get people of color involved in the schools through mentoring programs, Schools of Hope, etc.
  - g. Re-initiate district and in-school discussions on cultural competency
  - h. Evaluate programs in place like Schools of Hope and AVID. Evaluate expansion of programs that are working.
  - i. With the high mobility rate of some students, we must look at ways to help stabilize students' school experience by ensuring supportive and consistent enrollment processes across the district.
  - j. Consistent expectations and discipline across schools
  - k. All children must be engaged in a high level, challenging curriculum
  - l. Resources must be allocated to equitably address needs
  - m. Evaluate our alternative education programs and determine if there is a need for additional programs to meet the needs of some of our students
  - n. Focus on transition years
  - o. Early intervention programs
  - p. Evaluate what is working in individual schools and see if programs can be expanded
2. Expanding the definition of schooling
  - a. Increased access to school activities and reading in the summer through MSCR programs, increased library hours, expanded summer school offering
  - b. Closely monitor the cognitive/social-emotional effects of 4K on low income students. Adjust curriculum as needed.
  - c. Expand programs such as Play and Learn and Mobile Play and Learn
  - d. Re-evaluate the parent involvement policies and find better ways to bring families into the schools. I made a budget amendment in June to add a parent engagement position for African American families. A person was hired for the job in late December.
  - e. Explore reinitiating family liaisons at individual schools
  - f. Increase community partnerships to bring programming to our children during non-school hours
3. Social and economic policies that enable children to begin/attend school more equally ready to learn
  - a. Continue the partnerships with the health care providers in the community to provide services to students and schools
  - b. Housing patterns need to be evaluated for future development
  - c. Work with city on their neighborhood intervention initiatives
  - d. Develop ways to educate parents on how to support their child's learning experience
  - e. Continue focus on initiatives identified in the United Way "Born Learning" initiative

**8. Should planning time for teachers be increased? If yes, how could this be accomplished?**

I strongly believe that ample planning time for teachers is essential. With all of the challenges being faced by our teachers on a daily basis, planning time is critical for them to be effective in the classroom. My preference is to see a shift in the planning time with more time devoted to individual teacher planning and less time devoted to district training. I would like to see more staff input solicited on the focus of the district professional development as well.

**9. 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? Please explain**

your rationale.

Yes. For the first time I believe the district should withdraw from WASB. I see no benefits to school districts the size of MMSD.

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

I believe that public schools should be funded with tax dollars and think we should look at a systems that fund schools with tax dollars beyond property taxes.

a. Do you support further increasing student fees?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES                        X   NO

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

  X   YES                      \_\_\_\_\_ NO

12. Do you support class sizes of 15 or less for the primary grades?

  X   YES                      \_\_\_\_\_ NO

13. 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?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES                        X   NO

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

  X   YES                      \_\_\_\_\_ NO

I would consider support of a charter school if the proposal addresses a student need that is not being met by the district and it is an instrumentality of MMSD. Cost is also an important factor for me.

c. The Urban League's proposed "Madison Preparatory Academy" as a charter school which would *not* be an instrumentality of the district?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES                        X   NO

14. Do you agree that the work of teachers i.e. work of those in MTI's teacher bargaining unit, should *not* be performed by others (sub-contracted)?

  X   YES                      \_\_\_\_\_ NO

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

I work most closely with Marj Passman on the board. I do not hesitate to contact any board member for opinions or information, if needed. Depending on the issue, I talk with many different teachers/staff and/or principals to get feedback on what is happening in the schools.

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

\_\_\_\_\_ YES                        X   NO

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

While not formally "employed" as a teacher, I did receive a BS in biology, chemistry and secondary education. I was certified to teach in Massachusetts and had completed my student teaching. At that time, I made the decision to pursue more advanced science training and received my MS in molecular biology. I was a teaching assistant in graduate school and have kept involved in education at Promega, the company at which I work.

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

Yes, I support the inclusion model as stated above. I believe inclusion maximizes individual growth and affords a sense of belonging to all involved. I believe in order to have a strong inclusive program, there must be good communication between administration, staff and parents; there must be an adequate number of staff in the classroom; and all staff must have appropriate training and resources to deliver a differentiated and challenging curriculum, so all children benefit.

I do not think that inclusion is an all or none philosophy, however. There are children that may need to be challenged differently and require direct instruction through pull-out, cluster groupings, honors classes, etc.

The key is to make sure we are meeting the needs of our individual students.

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

Cluster groupings are described in the TAG plan approved by the Board in August.

Although I do believe that we needed to look at our course offerings in our high schools, I do not like the way the high school plan was rolled out, with very little input from staff, students and community. I look forward to seeing the evaluation of the courses offered at the high schools this year and who was enrolled in the new classes.

**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?**

In its response letter regarding district compliance if the area of serving our gifted and talented students, DPI required the following of the TAG department: 1) establish a plan and designate a person to coordinate the gifted and talented program that includes an identification process and discussion of program opportunities for identified students; 2) identify gifted and talented students; 3) provide a policy statement ensuring that identified gifted and talented students are provided access to appropriate programming without charge; 4) develop a comprehensive description of programming options for all five areas of identification to be included in the gifted education plan; 5) provide an opportunity for parental participation in the programming decisions.

**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?**

Yes. I believe that a policy governance model in the Board-Superintendent relationship is critical to moving this district forward. The Board should create policy and then delegate to the administration the implementation of the policy. The Board should be responsible for, and be held accountable for, ensuring that policy is implemented in a manner consistent with the goals/direction of the Board.

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

Yes. Administration should be responsible for the implementation of State Statutes. The Board should be responsible for, and be held accountable for, ensuring that policy is implemented in a manner consistent with the goals/direction of the Board and consistent with the State Statutes.

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

Yes. I took a leadership role in streamlining meeting (i.e. consent agendas) so we could spend more time on discussion. Board agendas have recently become too long again so I would like to look a further ways to streamline the meetings in 2012.

**Do you support a merit pay scheme being added to the Collective Bargaining Agreement? If yes, based on which performance indicators?**

I have concerns about merit pay in an educational setting and I have not seen any systems in public education that have been successful. There are so many factors out of the control of staff. My concern is that it would divide staff.

**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 daughter attended Leopold Elementary, Cherokee Middle and West High Schools. She is currently a sophomore at UW-Milwaukee.

**23. Given Act 10's negative impact on Collective Bargaining Agreements, will you introduce and vote for a motion to adopt the Collective Bargaining Agreements negotiated between MTI and The Madison Metropolitan School District as MMSD policy?**

YES  NO

Legislation

**24. 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?**

YES  NO

**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 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?**

YES  NO

**26. Will you introduce and vote for a motion to seek passage of legislation which will limit further expansion of District funded charter schools, which are *not* instrumentalities of the District?**

YES  NO

**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 maintain or expand the benefit level of the Wisconsin Family and Medical Leave Act?**

YES  NO

**28. 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?**

YES  NO

**29. 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?**

YES       NO

30. Do you support a specific school finance reform plan (e.g., School Finance Network (SFN), Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools (WAES), Andrews/Matthews Plan)?

YES       NO

I don't support one specific plan but like different aspects of plans.

31. Will you introduce and vote for a motion to direct the Wisconsin Association of School Boards to request the introduction and promote passage of a repeal of Act 10 and full restoration of education employees' collective bargaining rights?

YES       NO

Your Campaign

32. Are you, or any of your campaign committee members, active in or supportive of the "Get Real", "ACE", or "Vote No for Change" organizations?

No.

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

Name	Silveira for School Board
Address	5760 Barbara Drive, Fitchburg, WI 53711 608-516-8981 arlene_silveira@yahoo.com
Treasurer	Barbara Katz

Committee members: Still forming committee.

Arlene Silveira  
Signature

January 4, 2012  
Date