

inform 2022

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Jason Levash



Scarlett Johnson



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Profession	Small Business Owner (CEO/CFO)	Social Worker Pharma Sales Hospice Care Coordinator Substitute Teacher	COO - Chief Operations Officer, CESA 6	Researcher, homemaker, in the process of obtaining substitute teaching license.
Educational Background (College & Degree)	<i>De Paul University, MBA-Finance UW-Madison, BBA-Marketing and Real Estate Homestead High School</i>	<i>UW La Crosse, BS, UW Milwaukee, Masters of Social Work</i>	<i>UW-Stout: BS, Technology Education: Teacher Certificate & Career and Technical Education Coordinator's Certificate Program: CTE Coordinator Certificate Marquette, M.Ed., Educational Policy and Leadership: Principal Certificate & Curriculum and Instruction Certificate Concordia University, Superintendent Certificate Program</i>	<i>Pre-Law: Political Science/U.S. History at UWM, Marquette Ronald E. McNair fellow</i>
Years in the (MTSD) Community	33	12½ years	2½	11

Inform MT sent the same list of questions to all the candidates. These are the questions and their responses.

- What motivates you to serve on the board of education?
- Describe your Experience with MTSD
- What experiences or skills have prepared you to serve as a board member?
- What do you believe are the strengths of MTSD?
- What are your top priorities to improve or change in MTSD?
- What do you believe is the best way to address differences of opinion?
- How do you balance the needs/interests of the few relative to the wishes of the majority?
- 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?
- Do you believe school boards should remain non-partisan? Why or why not?
- What are your thoughts on Critical Race Theory?
- What are your thoughts on COVID-19 precautions (e.g. masking, vaccines)?
- Are there any other initiatives you would like to promote?

What motivates you to serve on the board of education?

Paul	<p>I am motivated to serve on the BOE for three simple reasons: Service. Love. Experience.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I have a natural predisposition to be a community servant and have served the Mequon-Thiensville School District (MTSD) through Junior Achievement, Homestead Sports Boosters and the Board of Education. 2. I love the Mequon-Thiensville community and our schools. This is where I grew up and chose to raise a family. I want it to be the best it can be on all fronts; I still have one daughter in school here. 3. My education, work history, direct experience with each of our six schools at some point in my life, and volunteerism in MTSD will complement, and be a value-add to, the current Board of Education. <p>I would be a great replacement for Akram Kahn, our small business owner Board Member who is coming off the Board.</p>
Jill	<p>I began to contemplate serving on the Mequon-Thiensville Board of Education about five years ago. I come from a long line of family members that have served in local government, and I now feel the desire to serve as well.</p> <p>I'm the proud mom of two children who both attend Lake Shore Middle School. My belief has always been that the best way to ensure our children are getting a great education is to be an active participant. Three years ago, I made the decision to step back from my professional career to focus more on my family. This afforded me the time to become more involved in, and gain a deeper understanding of, our district through volunteerism.</p> <p>My volunteer experiences within MTSD have allowed me the unique perspective of seeing the district's strengths and challenges. Like you, I understand that having a strong school district is vital to a thriving community.</p>
Jason	<p>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.</p>

Scarlett	<p>Having personally seen the benefits of hard work and a good education in my own life, it is most important to me that our children are afforded the best possible education MTSD can provide to them. Successful and prepared students will translate into successful community members ready to take on the world. In the past, MTSD was incredibly helpful and rewarding for my family, I want other families to experience the benefits of top tier education.</p> <p>Only six years ago my son graduated Homestead with 33 college credits. His peers were recruited into the top universities in the country, many with full or partial scholarships. Today, our graduates struggle to get accepted into their first choice for college, including UW-Madison, I find this unacceptable. Stakeholders in this community take pride in their schools. They are generous, they are supportive, and they have been willing to give MTSD leadership the benefit of the doubt even as the district has lagged behind in every possible metric. They did not approve a \$55 Million dollar tax levy only to watch leadership cheerlead a race to the middle where students can languish in mediocrity.</p> <p>I believe MTSD can and should pivot its focus on educational excellence and in doing so once again become the NUMBER ONE K-12 district in the state. I want to see the US News and World Report Rank Homestead as #1, not #142. MTSD schools have the recourses and means to excel above every school in the state, we only need the WILL to accomplish this feat. I passionately believe that the key to success and a return to educational excellence will necessitate a more collaborative, transparent approach to the governance of our schools.</p>
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Describe your Experience with MTSD

Paul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MTSD Board of Education (Treasurer, 3 years; Government Committee, 2 years) • Homestead Sports Booster Club (4 years: 2 years President, 1 year VP) • Junior Achievement (Classroom volunteer, 10 years) • Inform Mequon-Thiensville (co-founder) -- Inform's focus is information and engagement primarily related to our schools. • Community Conversation Task Force (leader) - MTSD was 1 of 4 key stakeholders. • Assistant-Superintendent Hiring Committee (member) • MTSD Parent since 2006 (15 years) -- 3 daughters at or thru MTSD K-12 (2 graduated, 1 a current Junior at Homestead). • MTSD Student from 1976-1988.
Jill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room Parent for both my children from K-5 • Fall Fundraiser Chair Oriole Lane 2018 • MTSD Destination Imagination Team manager 2017- Current (4 state level team qualifications, 1 Global Finals team qualifications) • Jr. Achievement Coordinator • VP Lake Shore PTO 2020/2021 school year • President Lake Shore PTO 2021/2022 school year • Area Council Representative for Lake Shore Middle School PTO 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 school year • Substitute teach 2021-present
Jason	<p>My wife is a graduate of MTSD along with her parents and siblings. Our oldest son currently receives services from the MTSD.</p>

Scarlett	<p>Community involvement/Volunteer experience (brief):</p> <p>Parent volunteer: lunchrooms, playground supervisor, in the classroom (pre-k3 to 8th), school fundraising, rainbow olympics, parent chaperone.</p> <p>Oakleaf Club Volunteer and Vice-President (Oakleaf club is a charitable organization Comprised of spouses of U.S. Navy officers). Oakleaf offer support for members of the military and their families.</p>
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What experiences or skills have prepared you to serve as a board member?

Paul	<p>I have a strong financial and business background, direct experience on the School Board, serving as Treasurer for three years, and have the right soft skills to be successful. Over the years, I have established TRUST with current Board members, District administration, teachers and people in the community whom I know well.</p> <p>TRUST is a requirement for speed and efficiency: I have the right background, no hidden agenda, a history of successful work and I do what I say. All of these are critical to “hit the ground running”. But to be truly impactful, it is important to be a good listener to fellow board members and the community, ask relevant questions that advance understanding and have strong critical thinking skills to develop a well thought out answer. Serving in the role of Office of the President and CFO for a \$50 million company, I have demonstrated all these skills. I encourage you to find somebody who knows me and ask them about me, or if you want to talk, let’s arrange it.</p>
Jill	<p>Professional Experience - I hold a Master’s Degree in Social Work and spent many years working in the homes of underserved families in the City of Milwaukee. My career continued in pharmaceutical sales, working in psychiatry, critical care, and transplant medications. I managed accounts in community-based hospitals, large medical centers, and at the VA. In addition, I worked in hospice care, assisting patients and their families to make very challenging decisions during those critical times.</p> <p>Volunteerism - I volunteered as room parent, chaired and assisted in school fundraisers, and I coached successful MTSD Destination Imagination teams. I am the current PTO President at Lake Shore Middle School and serve as a representative on the MTSD Area Council. The Area Council unites district administrators and leaders with the goal of enriching the educational experience and outcomes for all students. Last year, I also obtained my substitute teaching license to help with the teacher shortage during the pandemic.</p> <p>My skills and knowledge from my professional career, and my substitute teaching and volunteer experiences in MTSD, make me uniquely qualified to represent all stakeholders. Now is the time for me to step forward and take a more formal role as a member of the MTSD School Board.</p>
Jason	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

Scarlett	<p>As the mother of five I have a wealth of experience in dealing with the educational needs of children. I have a first hand understanding that a one size fits all approach to education fails students at every level. Children have unique needs and thus require a diverse set of supports. My child in the TAG program AND my child with learning and speech delays, both require coordinators and educators who will meet their needs and be present IN THE CLASSROOMS providing direct instruction to students. Teachers are burned out, they need help and support, not equity coaches.</p> <p>My diverse background, raising five children, and twenty years of volunteer experience in schools makes me an ideal member of the school board. I understand every situation families in MTSD are experiencing right now. It is this “boots on the ground” parent perspective that is so lacking in our current board, and without that perspective the last 2 years have become contentious as many parents and students feel they are simply cogs in a machine.</p> <p>I am an avid researcher, writer, and in everything I do I give 110%. I help to advise and formulate policy initiatives related to education. I have had the opportunity to testify before the Wisconsin legislature, and speak with state representatives about important issues in education. I organize large and small events and I speak to parents/grandparents/stakeholders on important issues. These last 18 months of active engagement have given me a great deal of perspective, I have had countless opportunities to hear from community members with views that fall across the spectrum. I am not insulated in a bubble of my choosing like the majority of our current board. I believe it is unreasonable for elected Board Members to expect to occupy a space in an echo chamber. If elected I would be a unique and fresh perspective on the board, and if we truly value diversity, then we should also value DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT.</p> <p>I am in the process of obtaining a temporary teaching license so that I can provide support for teachers and students in the community as a substitute teacher.</p>
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What do you believe are the strengths of MTSD?	
Paul	<p>The relative strength of MTSD in Wisconsin comes from three areas: Process. People. Parents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First, the systemic strengths of MTSD are its commitment to strategic planning and execution, policy and process, the annual cadence of work, continuous improvement, and making data driven decisions. • Second, resource strengths of the District include Administration, beginning with the Superintendent, who is responsible for building a top-tier Administrative team and implementing Board policy, process and the tactical components of strategic initiatives; and staff (teachers, specialists and admin). MTSD is like a consulting firm, which requires great people to succeed. • Finally, MTSD stands above most schools in Wisconsin because, as our former Superintendent used to say, “we have really good DNA.” We are fortunate to have an educated and, “diverse and highly engaged community” (Policy 9212), who value education and instill/expect great outcomes from their children. <p>I like to ask people, “if we picked up MTSD and plopped it in the middle of the worst performing central city, would it perform the same?” Probably not. Our school district is literally home-grown – custom designed for the needs of our children and stakeholders.</p>
Jill	<p>MTSD is composed of parents and community members, who are engaged in their children’s education, and are willing to donate their time and resources. We have excellent, committed teachers who believe in educating our children. MTSD also offers many athletic options, social clubs, academics clubs, opportunities for student volunteerism, and an outstanding recreation department that serves all ages.</p>

<p>Jason</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>Scarlett</p>	<p>As a military spouse I traveled and lived outside of Wisconsin (and overseas) for several years. Moving back to Wisconsin I wasn't sure where to put down roots. I was sold on Mequon-Thiensville after visiting my sister and experiencing life in a safe and scenic environment, with a thriving school district and a friendly community. In 2009 I knew this was a great place to raise healthy and happy children, and although MTSD has serious issues to address, I still believe this to be true.</p>

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

Over the next three years, there are three critical areas which we must address within the strategic planning framework:

1. **Pandemic management**, primarily responses to disruptions in learning and staffing (we are here now). When students are not in school there are obviously disruptions in learning, but equally problematic are staffing issues. When a teacher is sick, instruction is managed through a pool of about 10 FTE building substitutes, with additional gaps filled internally, by specialists and other admin. While economically prudent, when a math specialist (for example) is teaching, the specialist is not supporting students with other needs. Further, when teachers are out, they lose the ability to plan and collaborate with their teams. MTSD operates best when teaching, coaching and collaboration are synchronized – anything else is also disruptive to learning.
2. **Staff availability & recruitment** (an increasing national problem). Fewer people are becoming teachers. Enrollment in Education in the UW system is near a low. Fortunately, we are destination employer and right now, do not have trouble recruiting best and brightest, but this will not always be the case. When the education job market tightens, we need to be positioned as a Great Place to Work, which is more than just total comp. GP2W for MTSD should include excellent relationships with Admin, parents and the community.
3. **Significantly increased costs** coming in the 2023-2024 school year, without the ability to increase revenue (a structural deficit not seen since before Act 10). Per Act 10, wages increases cannot be negotiated by unions beyond CPI. Historically, CPI has been closer to 0.5%, MTSD is showing 4% and my research shows it could be higher. The entire Board will need to be fully engaged and equipped to take on these challenges to position MTSD for academic excellence beyond those of our peers.

Beyond these existential challenges, I have no specific agenda for MTSD. I am a firm believer school board candidates who seek office to drive a targeted action will be disappointed, along with those who elected them, because one-off tactical changes are not how the Board of Education functions. More on this later.

My top priorities include academic excellence for all students, showing trust through transparency, and being a voice for all.

Academic Excellence for All - Data from MTSD's Milestones for Post-Secondary Success show decline in 5 out of 7 areas since 2015. These Milestones were set up by the district to monitor student progress in preparing graduates for college and future career success. I am excited and would be honored to be a part of the effort in building academic excellence for all students.

Trust through Transparency - Detailed information regarding curriculum, instructional materials, and education consultants, along with the associated costs, should be accessible to all taxpayers on the district's website. This would build stakeholder trust by providing easy access to curriculum, show fiscal responsibility as well as save time and resources in responding to overwhelming Open Records requests.

A Voice for All - A school board should find a way to hear the views of all its stakeholders and respond to their questions and concerns. This should include teachers in addition to parents, students, and community members. I am dedicated to finding new ways to ensure stakeholders have a dialogue with the board and feel heard. Some suggestions include the following, in accordance with board policy, as it relates to Open Meeting Laws: board hours, open forums, monthly board newsletters, and listening sessions.

Paul

Jill

Jason	<p>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.</p>
Scarlett	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refocus the board’s priorities toward educational excellence. MTSD will once again be the NUMBER ONE district in the state of Wisconsin! • Curriculum transparency. Parents and grandparents, who are concerned about what children are learning in the classroom, should have access to taxpayer-funded materials. The commitment to transparency should also apply to professional development, and outside consultants. • A new commitment to diversity of ideas, recognizing that classrooms are spaces where children should be taught HOW to think critically, not WHAT to think ideologically. • Accurately and meaningfully address the learning loss kids experienced over the pandemic, and I will work tirelessly to provide real solutions for the decline in early reading and math proficiency. • Reinvigorate accelerated learning programs, and provide more support for kids with special needs.

What do you believe is the best way to address differences of opinion?

Paul	<p>Personally, the short answer is: Listening. From the standpoint that someone else has a different opinion than me, I will always choose to understand WHY, and whether the opinion is based on fact or emotion. From my experience, I know there are things I do not know, so I welcome the opportunity to learn, but I am also going to ask a lot of questions. There were times on the Board when I changed my mind based on facts presented by my fellow Board members or input from the community, just as there were times I did not. I always reserve the right to change my mind based on new information and discussion. I have no ego when it comes to this, and I am never locked down on an outcome.</p> <p>Big picture, I find this question interesting because notwithstanding the special election in November, over the past 10 years, there have been very few issues which rallied the community. School Board meetings were infrequently attended, and I would be amazed it felt like less than 5% of the community paid attention to 50% of their property tax bill (MTSD). Post-special election, I still see a big disconnect between facts and beliefs (creating differences of opinion). Just today I spoke to a person who told me the Board and school dismisses parents, only to find out her children are in private school and she has zero experience with public education here. I spoke to another person months ago who wanted to recall the Board because overall scores were down, but never made the connection to the pandemic, or this was a national problem. We have an information communication problem. Moving closer to bridging the “facts-beliefs” gap will naturally resolve many differences. This issue should be taken on by the Board over the next several months, but will not be solved overnight.</p>
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Jill	Understanding the diverse concerns and opinions of stakeholders is important to me. After all, differences of opinion are inevitable. Therefore, it is my belief all opinions deserve to be voiced and considered. We are representing our children—our most important asset. The paramount value in any negotiation is mutual respect, so we must find common ground. It is also essential to acknowledge concerns and follow up prudently with community members.
Jason	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 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.
Scarlett	Active Listening, small group engagement, committees that provide meaningful roles for stakeholders in the community, is a good start. We need to provide forums to facilitate a free exchange of concerns, issues and ideas. This is a new era, Parents and stakeholders are more involved, informed, engaged and want a seat at the table. MTSD cannot continue to operate under old assumptions and write off suggestions and concerns based on an outdated conception of their role as an elected board member. It is difficult to address differences of opinion if you never actually engage with those who have a different point of view. Three minute speeches to members isn’t real engagement. .

How do you balance the needs/interests of the few relative to the wishes of the majority?

Paul	Key decisions are generally not made by “majority-rule” because without a referendum or vote at a special meeting, it’s hard to know which desires represent the “majority”. Even after the special election in November 2021, it is not clear if the majority of voters rejected the recall candidates, their claims, ideology or just the recall process itself. Instead, as a Board member, every decision must be a balance between the interests of all stakeholders within a school district, which includes students, parents, taxpayers, business owners and the school district itself. My process for decision-making involves three steps: (1) Collect data -- Get invested in the details of the issue provided by the District, and discovered through subject matter experts and additional sources outside the District. (2) Ask relevant questions for deeper understanding and meaning. (3) Do the hard work and analysis. Following this process to varying degrees for decision making is something I’ve done as a business leader and a school board member. I went through this process on the Board before voting to approve 4K and selling vacant land, and pushing to make changes to building expansions. For some topics, decisions can be made using the Tregoe Ed Decision Analysis (DA) process which I have used in business and the MTSD board has used for many years. A DA essentially quantifies qualitative inputs (supporting data driven decision making).
Jill	As a board member, I will guide discussions toward finding equitable solutions to ensure there’s a balance between various stakeholders’ ideas, needs, and interests. While we won’t always agree, know that we all want to do what’s best for our children. I will make every effort to advocate and vote so that students, parents, and stakeholders know they are being heard and represented.

Jason	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.
Scarlett	Those in the Minority on any given issue should have a seat at the decision making table. However, in the case of MTSD, determining minority/majority status on most issues is near impossible, and those that would try to define what is and is not a minority viewpoint are biased. A board that is touch with the community, one that represents a diverse set of opinions would fare better than the current board in which there is no real diversity of opinion on important issues.

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?

Paul	Simply, the Board’s role is strategic (“above the line”) and Administration’s role is tactical (“below the line”). It is appropriate for the Board to ask about tactics and present challenges, but inappropriate to do this work. What I’ve described is a “governance” model, which MTSD has been working under since the K-8 and high school districts merged in 1972. More specifically, the “above the line” roles of the Board are to establish strategy, create policy, approve the budget, and appoint/evaluate the Superintendent. In contrast, the Superintendent and Administration execute the will of the Board. Specifically, they enforce State Statute, the State Board of Education rules and Board policy. Wisconsin statute 120.13 details a school board’s power to promote the “cause of education” and MTSD bylaw 0134 states, “The Board is accountable to the public for the education of its children and the stewardship of the School District’s resources.” Finally, although the community votes on the annual tax levy, I’ve always understood we elect Board members to avoid “taxation without representation”, which is why I pay particularly close attention to school finance.
Jill	The roles of the MTSD School Board and the Superintendent are clearly defined within the school board policies. Currently, the MTSD School Board utilizes a governance model. According to MTSD’s website, board members are responsible for: “Setting a strategic vision, Revising, reviewing and developing policy, Reviewing and approving a budget that is aligned with the strategic plan, Overseeing and monitoring organizational performance, Recruiting, hiring and evaluating the superintendent. “The superintendent works for the school board. It is the superintendent’s job to put the board’s plan into action through “management and operation of the school district through implementation of board policies.” Finally, our administration team is responsible for “supporting the superintendent, creating school-based plans that align with the district’s operational plans and vision, and implementation of policies and procedures.”

Jason	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Scarlett	<p>School Board members are elected by tax-paying stakeholders, they act as the representatives of the community, and they should always put the overall well being of students in the district FIRST.</p> <p>School boards ensure that all students achieve at high levels through excellence in governance, and though I believe we live in a district with many talented educators, our current board does not do enough to provide a path for MTSD students to reach their full potential. An engaged school board listens to all voices, a proactive board has open lines of communication with parents and teachers, invites partnerships, and provides leadership that builds public support which is vital to implement the board's vision.</p> <p>The Board provides vision and works on broad policy goals, the superintendent executes that vision.</p>

Do you believe school boards should remain non-partisan? Why or why not?

Paul	<p>I do believe school boards should remain non-partisan. Experientially, I've found non-partisan elections are focused on the background and experiences of candidates, which is important to find a Board member who compliments the existing Board and is a good fit for the community. Further, I've found many Board votes don't translate to political affiliations, so focusing on politics would not give the community different outcomes. With this context, turning board elections political would be unnecessarily divisive and would hurt more than help. Personally, I have many supporters who are both conservative and liberal, and all of whom trust me and look up to me for leadership on school matters. It doesn't make sense to me how partisanship makes us better. To back this up, I wrote a letter to both the RPOC and Oz Dems, asking them to please consider not getting involved in this election. I did this in the spirit of unity and what's best for the place we call home, and not out of fear.</p> <p>I do understand the notion of non-partisan school boards is changing in some states. As of today, the Wisconsin Elections Commission sees school board races as non-partisan; no political affiliations are listed on the ballot. From my research, there are pros and cons of partisan boards, and more research is needed to understand whether political affiliations impact board decisions or not. I see this as an evolving topic and welcome a better understanding of it over time.</p>
Jill	<p>I believe that school boards should remain nonpartisan. While we all carry personal beliefs and viewpoints, school board members should strive to gain the views and wishes of all the people it serves and vote accordingly. After watching the struggles in our district over the past two years, I believe that a partisan election could cause further division in our community and district. In contrast, my goal is to help bring our community together by finding common ground and building upon that foundation.</p>

Jason	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 parties platform or ideology. At the same time I believe political parties are important in American 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.
Scarlett	<p>I believe school boards are non-partisan in name only, so the question is fundamentally flawed. Those with progressive left of center ideological views seem to define themselves as “non-partisan” and anyone who disagrees with them is a “partisan” radical. This is a deeply unfair construct.</p> <p>The best we can do right now is be honest about who we are and work very hard to be fair representatives of all stakeholders-including those who did not vote for us.</p> <p>Is there a future in which school board positions are truly non-partisan? I always have hope.</p>

What are your thoughts on Critical Race Theory?

Paul	<p>Critical Race Theory (CRT) has no place in MTSD and does not exist at MTSD. I have personally researched and written three articles related to CRT and MTSD demonstrating this: https://www.informmt.org/recall. That said, I’ve seen people equate CRT with the idea of “equity”. While this is somewhat understood, there is a notion that “equity” is CRT, so let’s unpack it.</p> <p>I was on the school board when Superintendent Means introduced the concept of educational equity (back then, it was just “equity”). I researched claims that equity at MTSD “dumbs down” education, hurts high achieving students and has eliminated TAG. What I found is the opposite. MTSD strives to give each student what they need to be successful and has actually increased rigor for students. Let me give you some very specific examples of how “educational equity” translates into action at MTSD.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To build upon Milestone 5, Algebra 2 success, MTSD underwent a 7-year change to bring Algebra to every middle school student, allowing them to take Geometry as a Freshman, and thus giving them higher-level math Junior and Senior year. 2. AP courses like AP Human Geography are an option for Freshman who normally would not focus on AP courses until later. In fact, the HHS student selected in 2021 to be a delegate to the US Senate Youth Program references this class, plus AP U.S. History and AP U.S. Government as examples of classes preparing her for the opportunity. 3. AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) is an elective in middle school and high school. AVID is a system to prepare a student for college, but also supports them taking AP courses where they otherwise may not. 4. MTSD has several literacy and math specialists for intervention when a student is struggling. They support students and teachers to achieve District milestones. 5. TAG (Talented, Advanced & Gifted Program) Coordinators, who ensure all students are challenged, identified and implemented “Beast Academy” for high achievers in math. 6. In the area of special needs students, with the support of consultants, these students are generally included in class lectures with their peers and then get additional support other times during the day (e.g., study hall). Due to the huge range of IEP (Individual Education Plan) needs, educational equity for special needs students has a big range too. <p>Ironically, if we wanted to eliminate the concept of “educational equity” and replace it with “educational equality,” then every student (or no student) would take AP courses or have an IEP. So, while “equality” was more or less implicit in the way I was taught in the 1970’s, it is not the way education looks today.</p>
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Jill	<p>I believe Critical Race Theory does not belong in our schools. Originally seen as a theory taught at the collegiate level, more literature is being published on its use in education. There is a general level of confusion and disagreement about what CRT is and more work needs to be done in defining what CRT in K-12 looks like. We should not let this discussion distract us from our goals. MTSD should continue to focus on academic excellence for all of our students so they can be successful in whatever career pathway they choose.</p>
Jason	<p>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!</p>
Scarlett	<p>I am very much against the implementation of policies, curriculum, and professional development that are ideological in nature and meant to achieve an ideological agenda. Children are not to be used to achieve a vision of the anointed, they should be taught HOW to think not WHAT to think.</p> <p>Critical Race Theory isn’t a class taught to students. CRT is framework, a lens, one of many of critical theories that put identity politics and anti-western sensibilities above all else, this is wrong.</p> <p>Unfortunately, concepts like “equity” have been twisted by prevailing critical theories/ theorists in education. When the average person ponders their term “equity” they think “equal opportunity.” In reality, “equity” in education policy translates into equalizing outcomes among groups, usually based on group identity. This needs to change.</p> <p>“Equity” should refer to the principle that all stakeholders must receive fair and impartial treatment, regardless of their identity. All individuals and groups of individuals must have equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from the District’s programs so that every stakeholder can benefit from the District’s educational equity.</p> <p>“Educational equity” should refer to the school district’s policy and goals of creating learning environments in which diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, as defined herein, allow all stakeholders to fulfill their academic and human potential.</p> <p>MTSD should ensure that every single student is seen, heard, and valued as a singular personality, not simply a representative member of a monolithic identity group.</p>

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

Paul	<p>While I will answer the question later, my personal thoughts on COVID-19 precautions are not relevant to serving on the Board because the development and execution of masking and mitigation procedures are tasks assigned to Administration by Board in Policy 8450, which was last reviewed in August 2021 and requires, "...alignment with the guidelines, and recommendations of local, state, and federal public health experts.": http://go.boarddocs.com/wi/mtsd/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=C37L3N530A24. I have discussed 8450 with members of the Board Policy Committee and am satisfied with it. That said, if Board member Paul wanted to throw away policy and direct the actions of the District related to mitigation, it would not be possible because the Board operates as a group, reaching consensus on guidance; no single board member could direct such an action. Theoretically, the Board as a whole could direct detailed actions to the District, but this would be very tactical (violating the concept of Board governance) and strain Board/Admin relations, which I would not favor. Advancing this idea further, it would be exceedingly difficult for a part-time Board to write an entire COVID mitigation plan and stay current with it.</p> <p>Regarding my personal feelings on COVID-19 precautions, I start by saying I believe in "free markets and free people", which means I generally believe in "choice." However, this is also an extremely complicated topic, which is very nuanced, so I would not translate "choice" into letting everyone do what they want, wherever and whenever. We need to balance respect with the needs of others. There is a "greater good" component of this discussion which asks us to think less about ourselves and more about others. I'm a student of World War II history and I'm trying to imagine people who did not ration, buy war bonds or support war efforts because it was an inconvenience to them. Granted, masking is not a world war, but respect is neither a conservative nor liberal idea. When I traveled Budapest in 1998 and toured a very old synagogue, I was asked to wear a kippah (yarmulke) on my head. I initially refused and was reminded that wearing it is not about me, but about respect for the temple. I put it on and when I left, I took it off. Masking – non-masking – sometimes it is situational, but we should always respect each other, even if we do not agree.</p>
Jill	<p>MTSD follows the guidance of the CDC and the Washington Ozaukee Public Health Department for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools. However, these recommendations do not take into consideration the concerns voiced by many parents who are frustrated with the CDC's frequently changing recommendations, worry over social, mental health, and academic impacts from quarantines and masking, along with medical privacy concerns. The time is right to conduct a formal survey to gauge the views of stakeholders. MTSD currently has a covid testing site, but no vaccine clinic. Given the large number of community vaccination locations, an MTSD onsite vaccine clinic is not necessary.</p>
Jason	<p>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.</p>
Scarlett	<p>MTSD should continue to move forward so that mitigation reflects the latest data, the sensibility of our community and puts students first. The verdict is in, the vast majority of masks don't work as intended. So, who are these masks really meant for if we know clearly, they are not for the protection of our students? And what other forms of harm are we inflicted on our students with this ongoing forced masking? Is it not in district quality reports that as a district they want to address every aspect of a child's being? Does that not include their emotional, psychological and social well-being? Masks should be optional. More details are on my website.</p>

Are there any other initiatives you would like to promote?

Paul

At the annual Board retreat in spring, the Board can choose topics to research in the year as “work of the Board”. Typically, the Board has the capacity for 1-3 topics in a year (they cannot do 10). The topic I would present at the retreat is community communication. This topic may go beyond the topics currently under review since the last Board self-evaluation (which can be a great source for projects). Instead, my proposal focuses on how the Board (not MTSD) interacts with the public. The community has the impression the Board is “robotic” and does not listen. Speaking as a former Board member, I get it. Unfortunately, while regimes have changed, Board behavior has not. The Board should consider more public real-talks. They should explain in detail their decision-making process for key votes. They should be more intentionally accessible to the public. Some of the rules about public comment and engagement should be reviewed. Branching from here, MTSD procedures should be available in BoardDocs along with Policy. The availability of public records should be more easily accessible without the need for a FOIA request. All of these actions will help build TRUST and save Administrative time, allowing for higher level District function. Beyond Board work, as stated earlier, the three most pressing issues facing MTSD are: pandemic management, staffing & recruitment and balancing budgets while maintaining quality.

Jill

- **Classroom support** - I believe our teachers, especially at the elementary level, need additional support staff in their classrooms. We have larger classroom sizes with a wide range of student needs and abilities. Direct support within the classroom could add to academic outcomes for teaching staff and success for students learning new concepts and forming the foundation for future learning.
- **Talented and Gifted** - I would advocate for additional TAG staff to allow for direct student services. Currently MTSD has only 2 TAG coordinators to serve all 6 of its buildings. As a parent of a TAG student, I understand that these students have unique challenges which are important and need to be addressed.
- **Improved communication of the Board** - I believe that policy needs to be developed which would provide a pathway for stakeholders to have their requests, questions and concerns, moved forward into discussion in working meetings and possibly moved forward into action. While not all questions raised could go through this process, a written communication could be developed to address the board's responses and/or FAQ's. This would create a greater sense of responsiveness and engagement with the community.

Jason

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.

I would like to consider a local school governance committee to review curriculum and consultants used by the district. We could establish a local school governance committee to review consultant materials and contracts, talk to the MTSD DELT team, converse with educators, and observe training/consulting sessions.

What is a Local School Governance Team (LSGT)?

A local school governance team (LSGT) is a group of parents/guardians, educators, and community members who work together to support student learning and well-being in their school.

Their responsibilities can include:

- Approve and monitor the school growth plan
- Participate in the hiring process by selecting finalists
- Provide input into key decisions including budget and personnel.

LSGTs can also help design strategic initiatives tailored to the specific needs of their students.

These initiatives include:

- Summer and after-school enrichment programs
- Programs to address students' behavioral and social-emotional needs
- High-quality professional learning for teachers
- Workshops to help parents support their students' academic success and healthy development

Updated: Mar 6, 2022 @ 7:37pm