



Mequon-Thiensville School District
City of Mequon and Village of Thiensville

5000 W. Mequon Rd., Mequon, WI 53092
Phone: 262-238-8500, Fax: 262-238-8520
www.mtsd.k12.wi.us

OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

February 4, 2016

Dear Parent and/or Guardian,

There are always rumors circulating around every school district, and MTSD is no different. It's regrettable that a few disgruntled people can create a misleading story, and as your school board, we thought it was important to provide you with factual information.

Some of the recent chatter relates to inaccurate claims about our ability to retain high-performing teachers and other educators. That is not the case, and MTSD continues to have an incredibly talented and dedicated group of educators and teachers in all of our schools who help the district remain the top academic performer in the entire state. For example, the State Department of Public Instruction Report Cards for the two most recent years shows that MTSD is the top ranked K-12 school district in the state. We continue to be a destination workplace and attract high quality candidates for openings. While a few staff members left in the past year, each of these individuals decided to resign their employment for individual reasons that include spousal relocation, personal situations and other issues unrelated to their work or the District. MTSD continues to be a great place to work, and we know that our teachers, principals, administrators and other staff are the keys to our success.

The best proof of our ability to provide a quality education can be seen in the results. Standardized test scores show that overall, we are one of the top performing school districts in the region. Our success also is demonstrated in where our graduating seniors go to college including military academies, Ivy League schools, Big Ten universities, private colleges and many of the finest schools in our own state. The success of our students reflects the commitment, hard work and excellence that entire staff brings to their schools each and every day. They're the ones who make the MTSD one of the best in all of Wisconsin.

Some of the current chatter about the success at the MTSD unfairly targets Superintendent Demond Means and may, in part, be due to his community service position as Commissioner of the Opportunity Schools and Partnership program with Milwaukee County. The Board has seen no evidence whatsoever that his voluntary community service has impacted his work for the District. On the contrary, we encourage community service among all our employees, and working with other community leaders, educators and students is a good thing. With our District's continued ranking as the best school system in the state delivering high test scores and above average rankings on the Badger Exam, the Board has full faith in our Superintendent's ability to keep the District on the right course. With help and hard work from a dedicated team of teachers and other educators, Superintendent Means continues to lead our District with distinction, achieving strong results.

It's important to remember that while service on the School Board is a volunteer job, it's a position each and every Board member takes seriously because of our unanimous and firm commitment to the students, their parents and the community we, too, call home. The Board is made up of long-term residents who reflect the community's commitment to sustaining MTSD's outstanding educational outcomes. In order to achieve these results, the Board establishes policies that the Superintendent and the staff implement.

It's easy to make unfounded claims, spread rumors and engage in whispering campaigns. However, when looking at the facts and studying the data, it's clear that the Board's direction and implementation by the District are producing positive results.

Last year, our ACT composite scores were the highest in Wisconsin, and our students outpaced the state average on the Badger Exam. The District has done this by investing in additional training for our staff, bringing new teaching tools into the classroom and involving the community in our strategic planning and ongoing school activities.

To help attract and retain a great staff, the District, under the Board's leadership, has created and implemented a merit pay and compensation system that is tied to student performance. At the same time, the Board has adhered to a philosophy of prudent fiscal management that has allowed our fund balance to grow in each of the last eight years and achieved a consistent Aaa bond rating, which is no small achievement based on trends in funding public education. The District also changed insurance carriers, sold vacant and unneeded land at a profit and privatized cleaning services in order to save money that can better be used in direct support of our students and schools.

These strategic decisions have allowed MTSD to establish innovative curriculum and classroom programming that directly benefit our students. As a result, parents and students have access to individual instructional plans for students, AVID in every school, expanded STEM offerings and increased access to academic rigor for all students.

None of this would be possible without an engaged and committed group of parents and community volunteers and we are proud to partner with them. Whether it's the PTO, the Mequon-Thiensville Education Foundation, the Athletic and Fine Arts Booster Clubs or our collaborative VOICES program, the School Board works closely with the community to make sure our students -- your children -- are getting the best possible education.

While the Board welcomes constructive feedback, it is destructive to our school community to criticize without studying the facts and the results. Our hope as a unified Board is that by presenting you with this brief update, you can separate the wheat from the chaff and come to your own determination. We remain engaged with you, our fellow citizens, to advance the strategic goals in order to sustain the success of the Mequon-Thiensville School District.

Sincerely,

Paul Buzzell
Stephanie Clark
Mary Cyrier
Wendy Francour
Kathryn Houpt
Jon Jacobs
Cindy Werner

Mequon-Thiensville School District
Board of Education