

Opinion

Letters to the Editor

Leslie tax-payer directs blame at Leslie Board of Education

Dear Editor:

I am a taxpayer in the Leslie School District. I am getting more and more disturbed that the school board has dilly dallied around and can not seem to generate a conversation with the representatives of the teachers to come up with a reasonable teachers contract. It is a disgrace that a school district with a beautiful facility as we have, cannot settle a teacher contract in a reasonable amount of time. I am looking at the school board and one person that I am looking at is Pat Fogg who runs a multi million-dollar business. I believe Pat should be able to assume some leadership role. Pat, get the school board and the teachers together to get the school board off dead center. It is a disgrace to listen to a school board

meeting and all I hear is a few bills discussed and some votes on "humdrum" items to pay. Do we only discuss teacher contracts in the backroom or with some strangers from Muskegon or Oscoda? Bill Meyers talks like he has all the answers but I don't see anything happening. Had some initiative been taken locally, two years ago the contract could have been settled. Now, you are in the worst economic time in history and you are in serious trouble. The school board is going to have to go in debt (just like the federal government) to get the teachers a contract. The upper end of your administration, not the assistant principals or attendance officers, but the administrators that do not directly contact children each day, may have to have their jobs reorganized or combined.

I believe the school board members are all educated people and someone is not giving them the correct information or advice to take care of the taxpayers of the community. As a taxpayer in this district, I believe there is something seriously wrong with the board, that they cannot put this thing together. Does the board understand the requirements of 96 teachers and the day-to-day effort that they must put forward to teach our children? They appear to want to run the district as a business, however they appear not to realize this is a service based business. The teachers are servicing our children and their education. This is what the children are in school for.

Sincerely,

John R. Ghere

Resident says school board support should not be at the cost of education

Dear Editor:

Citizens, support your local school board but not at the expense of your children. Last week in your local paper "The Leslie Weekly Guardian," an organization known throughout Michigan as the Educational Action Group (EAG) decided to inject themselves in the management of the Leslie Public Schools. On the surface it would appear that they were brought in at the request of our superintendent for the purpose of placing pressure on the citizens of Leslie to support the cuts proposed by the school board. In fact, they start their EAG ad campaign by asking us to support our elected school board. This is a fair request provided that the school board is acting accordingly to the wishes of the electorate who placed them in office. Leslie residents know that these are hard times. Many of us have lost our jobs, some have lost their homes, and all have had a neighbor or a family member that has suffered at the hands of this horrific economy.

Many of you chose to attend the board meeting concerning the financial conditions of our

schools. Many of you stood up in support of our teachers and our support staff. You have raised questions about safety, curriculum and finance. Most often your questions were not answered. You have asked hard questions about administrative cuts and why they have been limited to assistant principals and discipline coordinators. You have asked why our board has not asked our top administrators to take a pay cut, thus showing their willingness to soften the burden of our teachers and staff.

You have asked why our teachers do not have a contract after two years. Teachers who educate, protect, and help raise our children and grandchildren into fine young adults. Now they find themselves not knowing what their futures hold, and what they do or do not mean to the board. Our teachers are among the finest in the state and they deserve more. Each support staff member adds an additional requirement to their job description, that of looking after our children. Their reward for this additional duty is not in their paycheck, it is in the pride they feel for the schools they protect and clean.

All Leslie residents are now being asked to blindly support their elected school board because a group of outsiders tell us to do so. They distort and discourage your support of your teachers and their representatives. They tell us that to privatize is to save our schools. They are not about saving money, they are about breaking the backs of the unions that support our teachers and support staff. These are the same teachers and support staffs that we, as residents ask to educate, protect and nurture our children.

EAG wants you to believe that nothing changes when the board strips away our support staff. They would have you believe that our superintendent will step in when needed to supervise a recess at Woodworth, or share in the discipline at the Middle School. This is not going to happen and they know it. What will happen is a loss of control. Once community control is gone from your local schools, we as residents will never regain it.

John Wayne Stewart

Leslie, MI

Reader encourages community to remain focused on educational quality

Dear Editor:

It comes as no surprise that, once again, the School Board of Leslie Public Schools has brought in an outsider to do their bidding. Kyle Olson, a man with an axe to grind with the MEA, has no interest in the children, education or families of the Leslie Community. I hope it did not miss anyone's attention that not only did Kyle Olson write a letter to the editor but it was also his group that took out a full page add bashing the staff members that care for and educate your children on a daily basis. His beef is with the MEA and thus anyone who is a member of that union. Please do not mistake his jaded views as a sincere concern for OUR community.

It is clear by the message in his guest editorial in the Leslie Weekly Guardian that he is not a friend of teachers or any school employee for that matter. It is embarrassing that our School Board, our elected officials, would invite this kind of negativity into our community. It is clear that they are putting forth a lot of effort into dividing

this community and taking the focus off the education of our children.

This is the second time that the School Board has invited an outside entity to take part in community business. It has already been established that they have hired an outside negotiator to bargain a contract with the teachers and the support staff members. I use the terms "bargain" and "negotiator" loosely because the argument could be made that he has done neither. This man has something in common with Kyle Olsen.....neither one has children in our schools, ties to our families or any vested interest in this community.

The question begs.....are these School Board members so out of touch with the school system and community that they cannot communicate in person with their own staff members or even those who elected them to this position? Two pieces of evidence suggest that the answer to both parts of that question is a resounding YES.

1. The school board has hired an outside negotiator to bargain their contracts instead of showing confidence in the superintendent they

hired to do the job. They do not even attend negotiating sessions as observers. They have been repeatedly asked to do so and have refused.

2. The school board has contacted an outside entity to propagandize this community in a horrific campaign against the staff members of Leslie Public Schools. They had a community forum in which only two Board members would address the public and the Board President actually read from prepared statements instead of openly answering questions.

In closing, I would like to encourage this community to remain focused on the education of our children. Please do not be swayed by this recent crusade by the School Board to vilify their staff members. As I said before, their goal is to divide this community not unite it. This negative campaign is unacceptable and inappropriate. I challenge this school board to change course and work to unite this community in a positive manner.

Randy Maiville

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