



## Rochester School Board

### Breanna Bly – Seat 1

#### 1) Why are you running and why should the business community support you?

I am running again, because I would like to see the direction the District is heading in, succeed. We have put several initiatives in place that will absolutely help all of our children be successful. I am excited about the five year plan and the positive impact it will have on not only our students who are struggling, but our middle and top performing students as well.

The business community should support me because I have worked very hard over the last eight years to keep our District structurally balanced. We are fiscally responsible and we have made the tough decisions like budget cuts, when needed. We have one of the highest bond ratings, AA+, not only in the state, but across the nation. One of the reasons for this high rating is due to the fact that we have, in policy, a required 6% reserve fund. This allowed the District to continue to operate as usual during the State shutdown a couple of summers ago.

While keeping our District in sound fiscal shape, we have also continued to offer our students a quality education. We study student data to evaluate the effectiveness of our programs and curriculum. This allows us to make changes as needed.

#### 2) What are the four primary issues facing ISD 535 in the next five years? If elected how would you address these issues?

- a. **Closing the Achievement Gap.** This is crucial. I have worked with the Chamber's Workforce 20/20 initiative and I know full well where our community stands in regards to the reality of workforce shortages in the future. We must be able to educate ALL of our students and have them ready to participate successfully in higher education or enter the workforce with the knowledge and skills necessary for them to be able to compete and succeed in their chosen profession.
- b. **The upcoming budget shortfall.** We have been projecting a budget shortage since 2004 for this upcoming school year. In 2004 it was predicted that we would need to cut \$13 million dollars for the 2000-2010 school year. Our five year budget projections have been a wonderful tool to help us maintain a balanced budget. We have been telling the community we would be facing a reduction this next school year.

In 2001, my first year on the Board, we cut \$10 million dollars from the operating budget. We will need to make tough reductions this year.

3. **Safe Schools.** With the violence increasing in Rochester, we must continue to do all we can to keep our students and staff safe. We have several excellent programs, our Police Liaisons, our Student Liaisons, Conflict Resolution, to name a few. We must also help our students be successful in school so they don't need to go elsewhere looking for a place to belong.

We also must provide our staff with the necessary training in areas such as Efficacy and Gang Awareness.

4. **Communication.** We must continue to find additional ways to communicate to our staff, parents, students and community.

**3) The school district is looking at a several million dollar deficit in 2009 which the school board will need to tackle soon after the November election. If elected what skills do you have which will assist in addressing this enormous task?**

As I stated before, I have had experience in cutting not only \$10 million from the operating budget, but we have continued to make approximately 3 million in reductions since then. We are always looking for ways to make our budget more efficient.

I am also able to make tough decisions. I have proven this over and over again.

I am fair and I do my homework. I will make the best decisions after looking at all options. I believe listening skills are critical during the budget reduction process. I do listen.

**4) What two specific ideas do you have on reducing the deficit?**

This is a tough question, because we have not had any discussion on this yet. It would be very hard for me to identify two specific things right off the bat without having gone through the budget thoroughly. I will be looking at anything that does not raise student achievement and items that appears to be nonessential.

**5) We know the landscape of the workplace is changing. We have more people age 65+ in the workforce and we will continue to see our community diversify in race, ethnicity, and socio-economic background. What do you feel are the three most critical issues we need to address in regards to workforce?**

- a. Student readiness. Students must leave the Rochester Public Schools ready for higher education or the workforce.
- b. The District must prepare students for the society in which they will live and the employment opportunities that may exist then but are not even on the horizon now.
- c. Students must understand the impact that the choices they are making now, especially relating to their education, will have on their eventual employment opportunities.

**6) What is your opinion of the Districts five year plan to help eliminate the achievement gap?**

The five year plan is great! The framework of the plan addresses the needs of all of our students, the areas for improvement listed in the 2005 Baldrige Evaluation and the concerns raised from the EDC report.

It is designed in a way that allows each building to address specifics based on the needs of their students.

The read 180 program is having great success with our students who are below grade level. We have implemented Voyager Math for struggling students.

I am very excited about the Efficacy initiatives. For the past eight years teachers have told me that we must get parents involved in their children's education for us to have success. Efficacy does just that with the training we provide for all parents. We explore the two theories of how people get smart. Are they born with it or can they get smarter by putting in effective effort? We are having tremendous success with the parents that have participated in this training. Along with changing the mindset we give parents three lessons to work on with their child and two assignments they must follow through with. It is my privilege to work with these parents as a parent trainer.

This plan is the main reason I am running again. I know we will be successful if people will give it a chance. I know all students can learn and they can be successful. We must change the mindset of not only parents and students, but our staff and our community, especially if we want to produce students that are prepared for higher education and the workplace.

### **Michael Resman – Seat 1**

#### **1) Why are you running and why should the business community support you?**

I served the children of this community for twenty five years as an occupational therapist in the public schools. I couldn't sit back in retirement and watch serious problems develop within the school district without doing what I could to help.

Rochester's growth depends on our ability to recruit some of the best educated researchers in the world. They will come only if we have excellent schools. The turmoil and confusion that exists in the District has spilled over into the media and would not reassure prospective employees.

My career combines medical training with experience in an educational setting. I can bring a more sophisticated approach to the use of educational research and data analysis. I understand the workings of virtually every part of the District. I led an effort to build a Habitat house with school staff, demonstrating my ability to organize, lead and inspire others to work together and accomplish a goal.

#### **2) What are the four primary issues facing ISD 535 in the next five years? If elected how would you address these issues?**

Next year's budget deficit. The challenge will be to continue improving student performance with fewer staff.

Confusion about the five year plan. It's absolutely necessary that staff and the public understand the District's goals, yet few people know what the "gap" is the District is working on. Terms need to be defined, goals stated clearly and communication improved.

Turmoil. Authoritarian superintendents typically see changes they're attempting grid to a halt. Their replacement acts as a peacemaker, soothing the anger that was generated. We need to break this cycle by fully implementing Continuous Improvement by allowing stakeholders make

decisions. This will result in fewer mistakes and more widespread support because all voices were heard.

Some secondary students are not working to their potential. I suggest forming focus groups to learn these student's views of school and their futures. Then, beginning in sixth grade, teachers can regularly spend time discussing the links between academic performance and careers.

- 3) The school district is looking at a several million dollar deficit in 2009 which the school board will need to tackle soon after the November election. If elected what skills do you have which will assist in addressing this enormous task?**

I volunteered to serve on the Ad Hoc Budget Committee. I worked in the District when two rounds of major cutbacks were made. I witnessed the effects on services and students. When programs come up for consideration, I will have an understanding of how they contribute to the District's mission. Layoffs generate strong emotions among the staff. I'm well known in the District; with a reputation for professionalism, compassion and fairness. Hopefully, I can contribute to an atmosphere of trust.

- 4) What two specific ideas do you have on reducing the deficit?**

I support the process that was used to make the last round of budget cuts. It included a diverse group that first decided on priorities. Most savings have to come from layoffs, which should occur as far from the classroom as possible. We can not afford the Efficacy coaches and the new cabinet position of Director of School Improvement. The budget cut will be about 5% of the total. Administrative and support staff from Edison, ESC and Maintenance Services should take a cut between 5% and 10%. About the only savings that can come from Special Education are several administrative and support staff. The Gate Program doesn't cost much so it can't generate many savings. Music, Art and Phy. Ed. have been cut about as much as they can. Most of the new positions added in the last five years have been remedial reading and math teachers. This is about the only large group that can be cut without directly impacting classrooms. Unfortunately, these are the same positions that support proficiency.

- 5) We know the landscape of the workplace is changing. We have more people age 65+ in the workforce and we will continue to see our community diversify in race, ethnicity, and socio-economic background. What do you feel are the three most critical issues we need to address in regards to workforce?**

We need to recruit and retain minority staff. It's important for students to see teachers who look like they do. The Mayo Clinic and IBM have recruited more successfully than the District. Perhaps we can learn from them.

We need to retain young teachers. We lose too many teachers during their first four years. There are mentors in place, but they don't always have time to do an adequate job.

I support expanding Professional Learning Communities to all schools. Providing time for teachers to meet together and discuss student's progress provides a number of benefits. Teachers learn what's working from each other. These small groups can provide the tools and support for teachers to strive for excellence, year after year.

- 6) What is your opinion of the Districts five year plan to help eliminate the achievement gap?**

I agree with the five year plan's goal of increasing the number of students who are proficient. I've already mentioned clarifying goals, communicating more clearly, adopting a more effective management style and motivating underachieving secondary students.

We should seek out the best in the field of education when making program changes. Decisions should be based on unbiased information and research. We are currently reaching for quick fixes from organizations selling ideas. I suggest developing a consultation relationship with the education department of a local university. District staff working on solutions would have access to a professional library. If more clarity was needed, professors could be emailed.

The Efficacy Institute does not meet these criteria. It is not research based and in most examples, raised scores to levels lower than our students already achieve. We should keep the non-controversial aspects of the Efficacy program and drop its more extravagant claims.

We need a more sophisticated approach to using educational data. Last year's MCA scores were reported to the school board and public without analysis. Scores fluctuate every year. It's the assignment of statistical significance that allows us to focus only on those changes that were meaningful.

**7) Why are you running and why should the business community support you?**

My campaign offers a paradox. I'm calling for a more deliberate approach to accepting curriculum changes. Insisting on a research base, unbiased information and wide input will slow the process. On the other hand, I'm advocating sweeping changes in the culture of management and some secondary students.

These initiatives require effort, but very little money. I don't believe in quick fixes or fads. Instead, we need to look deeply, listen, and work together.

Collaboration, listening, asking the right questions, independent thinking and hard work have characterized my service to this community.

**Brad Trahan - Seat 1**

**8) Why are you running and why should the business community support you?**

I'm running for this position to simply bring transparency and responsible decision-making back to the school board. I have three children in the Rochester Public school system and feel very strong about their and all kid's educational needs. I have been a Rochester Chamber of Commerce member for approximately 4-years now through the RT Autism Awareness Foundation, Inc. in which my wife Joanie and I founded. Through those years I have attended several Chamber sponsored events. I have demonstrated through action, not words, that I do care about the business community! I feel it's vital to have a close working relationship with the business community and by doing so, ultimately it will benefit our students and district in the long run.

**9) What are the four primary issues facing ISD 535 in the next five years? If elected how would you address these issues?**

1] Collective Bargaining/Contract concerns with District Staff: We have contracts coming due with teachers, Para's, custodial and food service to name a few. Why do I have this as a # 1 issue? Because we will not be able to achieve and or accomplish anything else if we don't have teachers in our classrooms, Para's assisting, custodial cleaning our buildings or food service feeding our kids! I would work very hard to find a fair resolution during the Collective Bargaining process with the district staff including investment options for retirees. 2] Achievement Gap and how do we close it? I would work hard to recommend and follow-through on insisting that we have the necessary teachers and Para's to help our Achievement Gap at a young age! If we can provide those identified students early and provide intense education right out of the starting blocks, we can start closing on that Achievement Gap right from the start and give them extra special attention with more teachers or Para's we can and WILL close that gap. 3] Security and Safety. I believe it to be very important that we put our police liaison officers in each of our three high schools and four middle schools. They have been great success stories with our police and students. staff. 4] Continued Growth and Equity Among Schools. We are currently going through yet another boundary change. I am proud to inform the business community that I have been very much involved in this process by attending several meetings and having correspondence with concerned parents and also current district staff. In just four years, district data indicates that we will be changing boundaries once again as a new middle school will be needed. Continued growth is excellent for our community, many communities don't see this. We must prepare well in advance for this anticipated change.

**10) The school district is looking at a several million dollar deficit in 2009 which the school board will need to tackle soon after the November election. If elected what skills do you have which will assist in addressing this enormous task?**

Our district faces a challenge no greater than this anticipated several million dollar deficit in 2009. My full-time job is working for David W. VanDerHeyden and Associates, P.A. as a Collections Specialist. Each and every day I mediate and create ideas to come up with solutions for our client and our debtor's/adverse parties. I work with people and do so very well. Just this past week I learned that this current district administration is seeking to create an Ad Hoc Budget Committee, [which I have applied to be a part of because if not elected, I would still like to be a part of this committee and process], where "they will look after the best interest of students in a review of the District's operating budget, and to develop a prioritized set of budget reductions for fiscal year 2009-2010 based on assumptions and a charge statement. We have to look out of the best interest of our students but we MUST also look out after the best interest of the entire district staff.

**11) What specific ideas do you have on reducing the deficit?**

The facts are that we are more top heavy now in our administration that we have ever been before. The structure may have changed and "who reports to who" may have changed but the one thing that has NOT changed is their salaries. **Specific Ideas:** We need to find ways to reduce cost and current expenditures/spending and we need FRESH ideas to generate revenue. Options that need to be looked at would be; A] review and reduce building budgets, B] review our transportation costs and procedures, C] look at consolidating departments and or to reduce cost at the administration level, D] Choice School families pay a nominal fee for busing, E] Research public/private to generate funding for athletic/co-curricular activities.

**12) We know the landscape of the workplace is changing. We have more people age 65+ in the workforce and we will continue to see our community diversify in race, ethnicity, and socio-economic background. What do you feel are the three most critical issues we need to address in regards to workforce?**

1] A strong government, a strong private sector and a strong educational system will go along way to address our workforce! 2] Evaluate what skills and capabilities that each of us need in our particular business in addition to how do we go about the retention of employees? 3] We need to continue to review and offer strong educational programs that will fit the needs of our students.

**13) What is your opinion of the Districts five year plan to help eliminate the Achievement Gap?**

While I like ones vision to address this issue, I am very concerned that are we robbing Peter to pay Paul? Are we putting so much focus on this and are we losing focus in other areas of our students education or losing programs or classes to address the Achievement Gap? The Superintendent is now reporting that the gap has been cut by 5% after data analyzed. In all fairness to this district, I'm not sure anyone can offer a constructive, "for or against", opinion of this plan until another couple of years goes by and while data is being compiled.

**14) Additional Comments?**

I would like to thank the Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce for this opportunity to address the above mentioned questions. I feel it's a terrible shame that you and your member's have to try and learn about thirteen of us candidates in the school board race, rather than six and I would look to change that come 2010 and beyond.

I would be honored and humbled to serve on the Rochester School Board, Seat 1. I have lived in Rochester for 27-years and love the community. I am a Rochester Mayo High School graduate of 1985! I've been honored with my wife Joanie with the Mayor's Medal of Honor for "Those Services to Those with Disabilities". I have been honored with my wife Joanie by receiving the Kids Day America/International "Children's Empowerment Aware for Outstanding Commitment and Dedication to the Children of our Community." My wife and I founded the RT Autism Awareness Foundation, Inc. in May 2003 and with the support of family, friends, businesses and this community as a whole, we HAVE made a positive difference for our children and their families.

Most recently, I was just appointed Chair of the Minnesota Autism Task Force. I am very proud of this and I look forward to this challenge to unite the whole State of Minnesota together to address the many issues that does concern; children, families, public schools, health, social services, the business community and yes-the taxpayer!

I'm a leader with a "can do" attitude and my glass is always "half-full". I will have this same passion and desire I have demonstrated in the years past to learn and bring a positive impact to this school board and like every other task I have taken on. Thank you very much for your time!

**Christina Delfanian – Seat 1**

**1) Why are you running and why should the business community support you?**

I am running because I feel it is important for parents and teachers to be communicated with. I believe that no matter what programs we plan on implementing will be effective unless the majority of individuals in the district are on board. In order to achieve this we need to communicate, both informing and listening.

I recognize the great work the business community has done in partnering with the school districts. I am a team player and am ready and willing to work with anyone who is interested in helping students achieve their best. I understand that the achievement gap in school translates into an opportunity gap in adulthood and could have a negative impact on the workforce in Rochester. I also believe that when we all work together great things can happen and I would be honored to have the chance to work with you.

**2) What are the four primary issues facing ISD 535 in the next five years? If elected how would you address these issues?**

1. The budget cuts.

The ways I will deal with the budget cuts include:

- a) Trimming current waste.
- b) Getting e-mail and paper questionnaires from teachers, parents and students about what they do not want cut and what they are willing to give up.
- c) Use all available information to make decisions about cuts.
- d) Working with Volunteers in Education, PTSA, and grant sources to help minimize the effects of the budget cuts we end up making.

I am ready and able to make the tough decisions and hold the district fiscally responsible.

2. The Achievement Gap

Due not only to federal funding issues from no child left behind but also due to moral obligations the achievement gap needs to be closed. The gap is multi-factorial and as such needs various interventions. Language barriers, large class sizes, and discipline issues in the schools all need to be addressed, as do many other issues if we are to close the achievement gap. While dealing with the achievement gap we also need to ensure high quality challenging classes for students who are proficient.

3. School safety

Schools need to be safe for students to learn and teachers to teach. I would work with local policy and search out funding sources to bring back policy liaisons in all middle and high schools. I would also work with staff and administrators to help ensure that consistent policies are made and implemented across all schools.

4. There are many areas that need to be targeted. However I feel bringing back the communication and the feeling of respect for teacher and parent input is a primary need for this district. I will purpose policies that will ensure teachers are not reprimanded for expressing ideas that may not be that of the administration. I will put in place policies that require some degree of random parent input in certain situations. The school board is to represent the community that means the community's voices are heard. I will listen to their voices.

- 3) The school district is looking at a several million dollar deficit in 2009 which the school board will need to tackle soon after the November election. If elected what skills do you have which will assist in addressing this enormous task?**

The school district is looking at a several million dollar deficit in 2009 which the school board will need to tackle soon after the November election. If elected what skills do you have which will assist in addressing this enormous task?

I have a well rounded understanding of economic issues. I manage my family's budget. I manage a rental unit and have managed a medical clinic. I am ready and able to deal with the schools budget issues.

- 4) What two specific ideas do you have on reducing the deficit?**

1. I believe we can reduce some additional waste in the schools, examples include:

- a) Working with maintenance staff to make sure all lights and computers are off.
- b) Set the temperature at school at 70 degrees in the winter and 74 in the summer.
- c) Making sure we are getting the best deals on paper supplies, cleaning and food service supplies.

2. I would like to look at grant sources to offset some of the cuts and pilot new programs without dipping into already tight budgets.

- 5) We know the landscape of the workplace is changing. We have more people age 65+ in the workforce and we will continue to see our community diversify in race, ethnicity, and socio-economic background. What do you feel are the three most critical issues we need to address in regards to workforce?**

We know the landscape of the workplace is changing. We have more people age 65+ in the workforce and we will continue to see our community diversify in race, ethnicity, and socio-economic background. What do you feel are the three most critical issues we need to address in regard to workforce?

1. The need for students in the Rochester area to be qualified and excited to fill the spots left by retiring community members.
2. We need to help all students regardless of race, ethnicity and socio-economic background have a sense of belonging to Rochester. One way to do this is to have a diverse school staff. This not only includes diverse teachers, but also diverse para-professional, clerical, and maintenance staff.
3. We need housing and transportation that will allow easy mobility for all in our community.

- 6) What is your opinion of the District's five year plan to help eliminate the achievement gap?**

Many components of the five year plan are good. After school study programs in the areas of math and reading (many of which were piloted 2 years ago) have been needed for a long time and will greatly help children. However, issues such as efficacy training are of great concern to me, especially when 5 staff are being given salaries to teach this technique which lacks any evidence-based data to prove its efficacy.

**7) Additional comments?**

I have served on the Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) for 6 years, am currently the SEAC autism parent representative and I chaired SEAC last year. I do early childhood screenings for the school district. I have lectured to child care providers through FIRST SIGNS of Minnesota. I have taught parents whose children were newly diagnosed with autism through a collaborative effort with ARC and a grant from the Interagency Early Intervention Committee. I am a registered nurse, a wife and a mother of a 13 and 11 year old.

My experiences have given me the ability to work well with others, implementing policies and getting community support. I believe that communication and mutual respect is the cornerstone of leadership. I also believe that the voices of parents in Rochester have not been heard. I will make listening to their voices my priority and implement policies accordingly.

**Jim Pittenger – Seat 3**

**1) Why are you running and why should the business community support you?**

I'm running because I live in this community, I care about this community. I have been a small business owner and know first hand some issues our community faces with Rochester's economics.

**2) What are the four primary issues facing ISD 535 in the next five years? If elected how would you address these issues?**

- Money and how it spent
- Looking at the district personnel
- Continuing to offer quality programs while keeping the budget in balance
- Hiring and retaining a quality work force

**3) The school district is looking at a several million dollar deficit in 2009 which the school board will need to tackle soon after the November election. If elected what skills do you have which will assist in addressing this enormous task?**

I am a problem solver who can work well with others to arrive at reasonable solutions to difficult circumstances. I believe we need to keep the impact of budget considerations as far away as possible from impacting students. I believe that every aspect of the district services should be considered in the initial conversation about where budget reductions could come from. *I will also keep the focus of our children while being responsible to the community.*

**4) What two specific ideas do you have on reducing the deficit?**

- Looking at all district personnel and programs
- Effective consolidation of programs i.e. closing Friedell as a middle school and use the space for all of the alternative learning programs.

**5) We know the landscape of the workplace is changing. We have more people age 65+ in the workforce and we will continue to see our community diversify in race, ethnicity, and socio-**

**economic background. What do you feel are the three most critical issues we need to address in regards to workforce?**

- Educate children who can make good employees and community members
- Teach good work ethics
- Know how to communicate effectively and establish good relationships

**6) What is your opinion of the Districts five year plan to help eliminate the achievement gap?**

There are a number of good strategies outlined in the five year plan and many of them are achievable goals for the district to have. In order for the plan to be effective and district personnel support to happen people need to know that they feel valued, treated with respect and safe as professionals. Moral reflects the outcome and I wonder how what the level of moral in the district currently is.

**7) Additional comments?**

I believe that one of the problems in this district is communication. Honest and consisted communication is a must. There appear to be different rules for different people which doesn't help produce the desired outcome of teaching all students.

I have many questions on how the district functions and who really benefits from the decisions that are made.

**Cris Fisher – Seat 7**

**1) Why are you running and why should the business community support you?**

I am running for another term because I believe it is important to have the voice of experience at the table as we work through a time of transition and challenges.

I am a former business owner who brings sound fiscal judgment to our decisions, balanced with recognition of our responsibility to provide a quality education for all students.

**2) What are the four primary issues facing ISD 535 in the next five years? If elected how would you address these issues?**

1 - 25% of our students are failing – we have budgeted a 5-year plan to tackle this issue and both the Board and the superintendent will need to be held accountable for the results.

2 – Budget constraints - I have already asked for efficiencies in not hiring non-essential positions and will be asking for the data to show what programs/interventions are not meeting expectations and supporting student achievement.

3 – Growing enrollment – It is imperative that we continue our long-range look at facilities as our elementary population grows and that population is moving into our already crowded middle schools.

4 – Internal and external communication – The Board must develop organized processes to develop and articulate both short-term goals and long-range plans. Through this communication, we can reestablish trust and confidence with our stakeholders.

**3)The school district is looking at a several million dollar deficit in 2009 which the school board will need to tackle soon after the November election. If elected what skills do you have which will assist in addressing this enormous task?**

I have been on the Board for 8 years and was a part of the \$10M in cuts in 2001. I understand what needs to be done to look at data and make the right decisions to minimally impact our students. I am a former business owner who understands how to operate on a budget.

**4) What two specific ideas do you have on reducing the deficit?**

We must examine all of the data to determine how we will make budget cuts. As mentioned earlier, we have already asked that efficiencies be made; and it is important to know that they are being made and money is being saved. We will need to exam data to determine what programs are working and what programs are not working so we can make the best decisions for student achievement. We also need to look at our carryovers and find a way to create some efficiencies in that area.

**5) We know the landscape of the workplace is changing. We have more people age 65+ in the workforce and we will continue to see our community diversify in race, ethnicity, and socio-economic background. What do you feel are the three most critical issues we need to address in regards to workforce?**

1 – A strong partnership must exist from early childhood through post-secondary education. It is crucial to have the involvement from the business community in the overall vision for educating our students in a changing world.

2 – Educating and training our students to recognize their learning potential and creating educational systems that will maximize their capabilities. Efficacy training is a step in the right direction for this type of training.

3 – We must close the opportunity gap so that all of our students are able to reach proficiency. The 5-year plan addresses this segment of the student population and it is vital to the future of our community and our society that we support these efforts.

**6)What is your opinion of the Districts five year plan to help eliminate the achievement gap?**

The 5- year plan is an aggressive model that is designed to reach the students who have not been successful under our present system. I believe the plan is based on proven models of educational success and expect that we will see an improvement in the test scores. If we do not, we will need to make sure there is accountability for the program and make adjustments as is necessary.

**7)Additional comments?**

As a former business owner, I bring strong fiscal management skills to the Board. As a former teacher; I understand the joys and challenges of being in the classroom. With involvement in the school system since 1983; I believe I bring a broad base of experience and knowledge to my role as a school board member. I would like to bring that voice of experience and be a part of the tough decisions that need to be made regarding policies, budget cuts and future vision and direction for the Rochester Public Schools.

**Othelmo Da Silva – Seat 7**

**1) Why are you running and why should the business community support you?**

As the parent of seven young children, three of whom are public school students, I am personally vested in the long term educational quality and financial health of the Rochester School District. My wife and I made a long term commitment to public education when we enrolled Miguel, our firstborn son now in fifth grade, at Washington Elementary. He is now joined by his brothers Rodrigo (second grade) and Ian (kindergarten). My elementary school age children are a daily reminder of where the Rochester School Board's priorities must reside.

The Rochester business community is an essential partner when it comes to quality education. A community that is known for the quality of its schools is a more attractive environment for prospective employers and new businesses. As a Rochester School Board member, I would ensure the chamber's participation and collaboration on matters related to the quality of the education offerings in our community.

**2) What are the four primary issues facing ISD 535 in the next five years? If elected how would you address these issues?**

1. Closing the achievement gap. I am 100% behind the district's 5-year plan to significantly improve the performance of students currently in the gap.
2. Finances. Financing the Rochester educational system will be a daunting task. What I propose to do if elected is to budget for the future. The district needs to make budgeting decisions it can live with and finance 10 to 20 years in advance.
3. Communication. The current school board communicates results and final products well. It does a poor job of communicating process and gradual progress. Keeping the community apprised of the steps leading to a final goal is essential to a sense of involvement.
4. Trust. The current board has made decisions that cost them the trust of the community. I plan to rebuild trust with the community through transparent processes. The public need to know the issues the board faces in advance and given a chance to give input before board discussions and deliberations take place.

**3) The school district is looking at a several million dollar deficit in 2009 which the school board will need to tackle soon after the November election. If elected what skills do you have which will assist in addressing this enormous task?**

I have an understanding of what it costs working families, people on fixed incomes and small businesses to fund government functions. I would like to alleviate their burden by requiring more from the Minnesota legislature. The Rochester community funds schools well. The problem is, our community is funding failing schools in the Twin Cities and the Iron Range. I would lobby the legislature to either invest more in our educational system or not take away as much to begin with.

**4) What two specific ideas do you have on reducing the deficit?**

- 1) The first step is to review spending with a view of reducing it in ways that will affect classroom instruction the least.
  - 2) Enlist the assistance of the Rochester business community brain trust in order to look at the deficit from a business perspective. I am interested in business solutions to a persistent problem the public sector seems unable to solve budget cycle after budget cycle.
- 5) We know the landscape of the workplace is changing. We have more people age 65+ in the workforce and we will continue to see our community diversify in race, ethnicity, and socio-economic background. What do you feel are the three most critical issues we need to address in regards to workforce?**
- 1) Have enough healthy, growing businesses to absorb a growing workforce.
  - 2) Help seniors, racially, culturally, and ethnically diverse populations prepare, adapt or retool skills in order to become marketable in the Rochester workplace.
  - 3) Promote and strengthen vocational education through our local high schools and Rochester Community and Technical College.
- 6) What is your opinion of the Districts five year plan to help eliminate the achievement gap?**

I enthusiastically support the district's five-year-plan. It is well thought out and straightforward. It's goals are clear and measurable. Some have labeled it "unrealistic." I beg to differ. True, the bar is set high but it is as it should be. We have settled for the status quo and, some say, mediocrity for too long. We have been doing well, but why not excel?

### **Marcia Matz – Seat 7**

- 1) Why are you running and why should the business community Support you?**

I am running because I want to. Why should the business community support me? Never gave it any thought, some businesses support various extra curricular activities the schools have, e.g. sports. Those businesses who do that should consider increasing their monetary support to help off set the budget short fall.

- 2) What are the four primary issues facing ISD 535 in the next five years? If elected how would you address these issues?**

I don't know, however, common sense dictates that one would address the issues to the best of ones ability and expect to have people mad at me because they disagreed with what I choose to do.

- 3) The school district is looking at a several million dollar deficit in 2009 which the school board will need to tackle soon after the November election. If elected what skills do you have which will assist in addressing this enormous task?**

I have the skills of having lived on a budget and I know that when your income falls short of expectations, you have to cut out the extra things and go with the basic needs. I believe the various booster clubs should hold fund raisers to supplement those programs that have their funding reduced or cut.

**4) What two specific ideas do you have on reducing the deficit?**

Ideas to reduce the deficit, spend less, or hold fund raisers to increase the funding that the budget doesn't cover.

**5) We know the landscape of the workplace is changing. We have more people age 65+ in the workforce and we will continue to see our community diversify in race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background. What do you feel are the three most critical issues we need to address in regards to workforce?**

I don't understand how this applies to schools

**6) What is your opinion of the Districts five year plan to help eliminate the achievement gap?**

I know from experience that some students would rather "just pass" than to worry about higher grades. The gap is not very big in Rochester. A determination should be made as to whether the students in this gap are there because they need academic help or by choice.

**7) Additional comments**

I am new to the area, I have not "taken sides" because I don't know what the sides are. I have little sympathy for people who are upset that the re-drawing of district lines may have their child attending a different school than they planned, if you want the child in a specific school, move into that district.

**Mike Baker – Seat 7**

**1) Why are you running and why should the business community support you?**

I am running because I have a passion for seeing that our kids have the best education we can provide them. I feel the current school board leadership is not leading at all but is following whatever the Superintendent wishes to do. I believe that the current school board set Dr. Dallemand up for failure before he arrived by not including the community and having the majority of the Teachers behind the "Efficacy Plan".

Dr. Dallemand used the Efficacy Institute for a reference when he was hired and paid them \$275K with the current board's approval for his "Political Payback" for their endorsement of him, and called it a "Feasibility Study"

I believe I can provide better communication to the community and more direction to the Superintendent as to how to make the goals and objectives that the community desires come about. The Superintendent has ignored state hiring guidelines and ISD #535 hiring guidelines by not posting the Human Resource Directors position. He stated the reason he didn't post the job was because, the people who would have applied already had jobs.

I can see that the Superintendent disregards the current school boards leadership ability by his decisions; I can help him see clearly.

**2) What are the four primary issues facing ISD 535 in the next five years? If elected how would you address these issues?**

1. Provide strong Leadership for the District.
2. Give clear direction to the Superintendent as to the expectations we have of him. Why wasn't Dr. Dallemand shadowing the asst Superintendent for 3 month's to learn how we do things in ISD #535?
3. Communication with the Teachers Union – I would want open and honest communication with the teachers. No teacher should be threatened in any way if they don't agree with what we are doing, but should be allowed to speak freely and give their opinions as to what we need to improve on.
4. Efficacy Implementation – This is a Third World solution for a School district that has 90% of the plan already in place. The training for this plan is insulting to the qualified teachers that we have in the District. Get to the chase and allow the teachers to get the training they feel necessary as it becomes available. Provide realistic goals and objectives. Saying that we will have 100% parent participation and 100% student achievement are not realistic

**3) The school district is looking at a several million dollar deficit in 2009 which the school board will need to tackle soon after the November election. If elected what skills do you have which will assist in addressing this enormous task?**

The district has been telling us about this deficit for four years. Why haven't they cut back on their spending accordingly? Why did they allow Dr. Dallemand to increase the salaries of his top administrators by 25% when we are giving the teachers a 1% per year increase? I would start cutting at the top. Decrease administrative salaries accordingly and proportionately. I would also work without a salary and challenge the other board members to do so. Involve the teachers in making suggestions as to what they can get by without.

In my own home my wife Valerie and I have four children attending College. We have been able to manage our budget and make it work to everyone's benefit. I have managed a large University Foodservice Budget and also as a General Manager in the Commercial Foodservice. I have excellent communication skills and have a good feel for what we do need and can get by without.

**4) What two specific ideas do you have on reducing the deficit?**

1. Shrink the Administrative positions. They have fancy names but what do they really do? Allow the hiring to occur at each individual school by the Principals.
2. Asking the teachers for their input as to what they can absolutely get by without.

**5) We know the landscape of the workplace is changing. We have more people age 65+ in the workforce and we will continue to see our community diversify in race, ethnicity, and socio-economic background. What do you feel are the three most critical issues we need to address in regards to workforce?**

1. Hire the most qualified teachers.
2. Actively recruit new teachers at the Colleges and Universities.
3. Pay competitively.

**6) What is your opinion of the Districts five year plan to help eliminate the achievement gap?**

It is not realistic! Why put unrealistic expectations on the teachers when the key ingredient is missing? The Parent! Most of these underachievers come from homes where they are not required to do their homework. The Efficacy focus works great in third world countries but not in the United States. Rochester has a graduation rate of 88.5% while the schools listed as references at the Efficacy Institute range from 21.7% to 68%. Which of these poor performing districts are we planning on modeling our implementation after? If the end result of anything that we put into the school district doesn't have the long range plan of improving the graduation rate then why are we using it? The current School Board shoved "Efficacy" down the teachers throats just like "Outcome Based Education" You wonder why no one is on board?

**8) Additional comments?**

As I was listening to the City Council candidates during the NAACP Open Forum I asked myself why haven't I paid attention to who we elect as public officials to represent us. The conclusion was, that we become so busy trying to get our children through school we just assume some good folks are taking care of the big stuff. I was wrong not to pay attention! We live in serious times and we need leaders who are not afraid to lead! If you think the current school board members are doing a great job then endorse them! If you would like to make a change for someone who understands we have to be fiscally responsible to get the most for our money. We need to hire the most qualified Teachers and Superintendents that will work in the best interest of our community and not come in with their own agenda and try to rewrite our policies for us, then please consider voting for me.

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