

Madam President, I want to take this time to make my own “report” to the Board, and I promise that I will end up with a request. But I do ask that you give me latitude because this is going to take a few minutes.

First, my disclaimers. Along the way, I may make statements that might offend some people here tonight. While I wish that weren’t the case, I feel strongly that there are things that need to be said, and I’m going to say them. One of the beauties of being old and nearing the completion of my service on the Board is that I can probably get away with saying things that others can’t. And let me be clear...what I am about to say is NOT, REPEAT NOT, born out of any current employee issue.

We have an outstanding school system despite what the recent articles showing up in the news and social media would make you believe. We have outstanding classified employees, teachers, and administrators who are totally committed to doing the very best for kids. They have a tremendous passion. Many positive things are happening in our schools every day. But we have our shortcomings and we make mistakes. School Districts everywhere have problems and issues of their own. Even nationally there is political dysfunction everywhere you look.

The current climate in our schools concerns me a great deal and there is a culture that is unhealthy and needs to be fixed. Maybe this new culture is a result of passion, or zeal; maybe innocent ignorance, maybe arrogance, maybe stupidity, maybe defiance or any other number of reasons. But we should all agree that it is not healthy and is not the Woodland way. Let me offer some observations...

Some employees make decisions or take actions on their own which is beyond their authority. Sometimes they know it, and choose to do it anyway. Sometimes they don't feel like they need to have a boss or follow their direction. Sometimes the problem might BE a boss. These instances are all unacceptable and are issues that needs to be fixed.

Some employees do not treat students or fellow employees with the care, dignity or respect that must be demanded of them. This is unacceptable and is an issue that needs to be fixed.

We have heard that some employees who witness wrongdoing are afraid to report it. Sometimes if they do report, they do not want to be on the record. They want someone to do something about it as long as they're not involved. They feel nothing will happen, that things will be brushed under the rug. They say they will be labeled "a troublemaker". They fear retaliation, they fear for their job. In being afraid to do the right thing, they themselves could violate laws and district policy as well. I thought education was above all this but perhaps I was wrong. I see this as a big problem. And, I see it as unacceptable and something that needs to be fixed.

At the same time, Sometimes the District tries to address improper actions by an employee and the result is not popular, especially if the employee is well liked. Everyone wants problems addressed, unless it touches them personally and then all bets are off. Something like the old "not in my back yard" philosophy. This is not fair to the School District, the community, or the school administration trying to do the supervisory jobs they were hired to do. This too is a cultural problem that is unacceptable and needs to be fixed.

So now its finally time for my request.

I want the Board to address these situations. It is our District. We are the duly elected officials charged with its governance. They are our problems, we need to own them, and step up and provide the leadership to address them. It won't be easy and at times may not be comfortable but that doesn't matter.

I propose that we begin immediately to:

Examine policies and processes that now exist;

Come up with ways that we can define the obstacles that exist, including at least a frank, honest home-town conversation with all of our employees and the community about the problems as they see them;

Come up with ways to make them better and work to put solutions or improvements in place.

We have to address this issue so that the future of our District can remain bright...a place that employees want to come to work at and families want to trust their children to.

I ask the Board to concur with my request and begin discussions as soon as possible.

