

Oertwig Response: DFL Questionnaire

1. Yes, I will abide by the DFL endorsement, and support endorsed candidates.
2. We endorse because we want candidates elected who share our values. Education is the cornerstone of a free society and the guarantee of equal opportunities depends on quality education. I am best able to deliver results.
3. QUALIFICATIONS: You will not find another candidate with a more well-rounded and extensive understanding of education issues who is ready to provide much needed leadership.

TIME & COMMITMENT: I'm prepared to serve full time; this is not a stepping stone to another post. Being an effective leader at the local, statewide and national levels takes a time commitment few can make. By endorsing me, I make that commitment for you.

SCHOOL INVOLVEMENTS: I had the courage to lead the 2002 levy campaign. When the Chamber of Commerce and Mayor Kelly openly opposed the referendum, I publicly supported it. When the superintendent was silent on the referendum, I was vocal. As chair, I led and we won. We saved at least one staff person in each school!

I AM THE ONLY ST PAUL SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER, EVER IN HISTORY, TO HAVE SERVED ON THE 12-MEMBER NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE FOR THE COUNCIL OF URBAN BOARDS OF EDUCATION (CUBE.) I presented CUBE proposals to improve No Child Left Behind at a congressional luncheon.

I AM THE ONLY ST. PAUL BOARD MEMBER, EVER IN HISTORY, WHO HAS SERVED AS CHAIR OF ASSOCIATION OF METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS (AMSD); an alliance with suburban leaders preserved funding for urban students.

I've served on numerous other groups: I am the only St. Paul School Board member, ever in history, to chair the city, county, school district Joint Property Tax Advisory Committee; St. Paul Teachers' Retirement Association Board of Trustees, Trustee; East Metro Integration District Board (EMID); Former Chair of the Metro Educational Cooperative Service Unit Board; Minnesota School Boards Association Board of Directors; Former Board Member of the Council of Great City Schools; Former Chair of the Children's Initiative Board of Directors; President, Payne Phalen District 5 Planning Council; Former Chair, Railroad Island TF; Former Officer, Southwest Area District Council & Macalester Groveland Community Council; Former Chair of school district citizen advisory committees: Citizens' Budget Review Committee; Curriculum (PERC); Secondary Ad Hoc Space Planning Committee; DFL PARTY leader, Former Associate Chair, Fourth Congressional District; Current State Central Committee UNION involvements: Former statewide board member of MAPE (Mn. Assoc. of Professional Employees) and Chair of the Legislative Committee

SENSITIVITY TO MINORITY COMMUNITIES: I am St. Paul's ONLY openly gay elected official EVER elected, in the HISTORY of the CITY. I have always served regardless of my sexuality, but my experiences help me understand the struggles of others. I was told there is no court in Ramsey County willing to grant joint custody to a gay man (1986.) The Newspaper gave me 24 hours to tell my kids I was gay before they would out me on the front page (1990,) which damaged my relationship with my children. Protestors jeered at the board meetings; and 20 to 30 calls per day, lasting for up to six months, threatened specific acts of physical harm (1990-91.)

4. Contribution in group decision-making? In groups, I have often moved to a leadership role. In my first eight years on the board, I was the strongest advocate for an open, participatory decision-making process. In a leadership role, my decision-making style did not fit well with the last two superintendents who had a top down, superintendent dominated process. I certainly played a major role in moderating Pat Harvey's decision-making style, and securing

greater staff and community input into decision-making.

5. Public transparency must exist before and after decisions are made. I am exceedingly frustrated with decisions of the current board. It is difficult to determine what role, if any, the board has in decision-making. There is behind-the-scenes pressure to avoid board questioning in public. Staff is pressured not to speak in public. I strongly believe that the best decisions are made when lines of communication are open. We need to understand the criteria that were used in making a decision. I would not be running if I had confidence in the board's decision-making process. I am the candidate most able to reform the current process.

6. I want to:

Seek a new superintendent with strong ties and a strong, long-term commitment to St. Paul who will view all parents & communities as being a part of the change we need. Student interest in education will not be ignited without broad involvement.

Restore the school board role in school leadership by providing strong, effective, and responsive local school board decision-making.

Provide state and national leadership in re-examining the direction for education in the years ahead, as I have in the past. Our presence at the national level is urgently needed. We have left the Bush years and the future of education nationally is being decided now. St. Paul needs to be there.

7. What criteria to use in selecting the next superintendent?

First, let's STOP ASSUMING that there is a national expert (SUPER-HERO SUPERINTENDENT) who will sweep in and tell us all exactly what we need to do to make our system perfect (and that it can be done easily and in short order). The national model for school leadership is one of dominating, demanding leaders who assume they have all the answers before they even meet anyone in your town.

Let's stop assuming that test scores tell us everything we need to know about improving our schools. We should expect that our staff have learned how to use data to see what gaps in learning their students have, and are able to use test data to develop stronger schools and programs.

So, what should we be looking for? The next leader should have a strong knowledge of St. Paul and an interest in learning what the community vision for our schools is. The next leader should have expertise in implementing community initiated plans and programs to improve schools. S/he should demonstrate what it takes to ignite a student's desire to learn.

The next leader needs to understand and have a record of working with staff as a key element for success in the classroom. We will all do better when we all feel we are a part of developing the plans to improve our schools.

The next leader must understand the impact of the concentration of children in poverty in our urban cores and must have a demonstrated ability to secure local, statewide & national resources to bring change.