

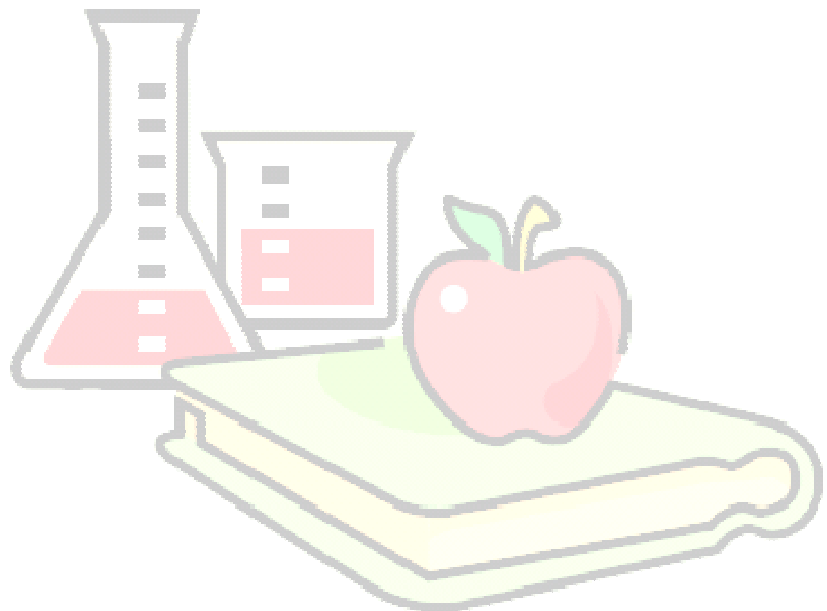
The RACE for Success

Reforming & Advancing Children's Education for Success

November 16, 2009

Representative Tamara Grigsby

Senator Spencer Coggs



INTRODUCTION

Our children deserve a future in which they have equal opportunities to succeed. While opportunity is the cornerstone of public education, student success is its ultimate goal. The Reforming & Advancing Children's Education (RACE) for Success Act was crafted with these values at its core. The "RACE for Success" will reform Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), maintaining a democratically-elected school board that has the authority to appoint the MPS Superintendent while ensuring greater partnership between Milwaukee Public Schools and the City of Milwaukee at the same time. Everyone agrees that Wisconsin must race to the top. The RACE for Success gets us all running in the right direction.

We believe that a real proposal for reforming MPS requires an "all hands on deck" approach that has support from the community and from those working on an everyday basis to teach and nurture our children. Our children's enthusiasm for learning, both inside school and out, will only flourish if we are equally enthusiastic about finding solutions to the problems that they face. The RACE for Success will serve as a rallying point for those willing to demonstrate that passion. The initiatives contained in this proposal are not only designed to positively impact children's education in Milwaukee, but are intended to inspire us all to find collaborative and innovative ways to improve education throughout Wisconsin.

The vitality of the City of Milwaukee depends on the strength of Milwaukee Public Schools, just as the schools themselves rely on concerted efforts made by the city to protect students and provide them with vital services when they are beyond the classroom door. With this plan, the circle of blame that is said to plague public education is put to an end. Focusing on the needs of a child both in the classroom and on the street, the RACE for Success lays the foundation for shared accountability among school and city officials alike. By turning partisans into partners, we can make every parent, teacher, principal, administrator, and elected official a better advocate for our children.

THE PLAN

I. Create a True Partnership for Success that will benefit Milwaukee's Children

- Establish a “Partnership for Success” that will provide an institutionalized forum for collaboration between MPS and the City of Milwaukee. This partnership will recognize the distinct areas of governance given to both the school board and the city, but will help maximize areas of collaboration between the two entities.
 - Partnership for Success will convene meetings at least quarterly to reflect and collaborate on issues related to education, community development, parent involvement, etc.
 - Members of the Partnership will include:
 - The Mayor of Milwaukee
 - Common Council members
 - MPS School Board members
 - MPS Superintendent
 - Mayor and School Board President will serve as co-chairs of the Partnership for Success
- The Partnership for Success will create a “Grassroots Education Network” of community organizations aimed at expanding parental involvement and extracurricular activities.
- The Partnership for Success will search for foundation grants to increase Milwaukee’s commitment to public education.

II. Reform and Modernize MPS School Board Governance

- Empower the mayor to fill school board vacancies by appointing an interim board member.
 - School board could override the selection made by the mayor with a two-thirds majority vote against the appointment.
 - This appointee would last until a special election to replace the board member could be held within 120 days following the vacancy’s opening.
- Move MPS School Board Elections to coincide with the November election cycle beginning in the fall of 2012.
- Eliminate the MPS School Board’s district-wide seat and replace it with a new, population-based district.
- Increase the MPS School Board President’s term from one to two years in order to increase stability in school board governance.

- Expand the Milwaukee Public Schools' School Governance Councils to every elementary, middle, and high school in the district in order to maximize opportunities for parental involvement.
- Independent of the Partnership for Success, the MPS Board will create a standing committee to handle parent issues and complaints in order to increase parental involvement and general confidence in the school board beginning in the fall of 2010.

III . Increase Collaboration in MPS Superintendent Search and Selection

- Allow the Mayor of Milwaukee to have an advisory council to counsel her/him on matters related to the search and interview process surrounding the selection of a new school superintendent. The mayor shall select members of this group that include:
 - The mayor or her/his appointee.
 - A representative from the business community.
 - A representative from the teaching community.
 - The Milwaukee Common Council President.
- The mayor will be able to individually interview the final three candidates for MPS superintendent that were selected by the MPS Board.
 - Of the three finalists, the mayor shall make a recommendation to the MPS Board.
 - Ultimately, the school board is responsible for selecting the superintendent.
 - The mayor may veto the selection of the school board; however, that veto would be subject to a potential override by the MPS Board (the Milwaukee Public School Board may overrule the mayor's veto with a two-thirds majority vote by board members).

IV . Increase Responsibility in School Budgeting

- The mayor shall be given line item veto authority over the schools budget if the aggregate property tax increase due to the school budget is above 8%.
 - Vetoes shall be subject to potential override by the MPS School Board.

V . Establish a Master Plan for Facility Use

- Require MPS to develop a Master Facilities Plan by December, 2010.
- MPS will assess its facilities for use or reuse.

- The master facilities plan will be developed by the administration and approved by the MPS Board.
- School closure and merger plans of Milwaukee Public Schools will be shared with the Partnership with Success.

VI . Ensure Financial Accountability at Milwaukee Public Schools

- Require MPS to permanently centralize individual school budgets.
- Require MPS to make financial reports available to the public. Require reports to be routinely submitted to the following:
 - State Superintendent of Public Instruction
 - The Mayor of Milwaukee
 - City of Milwaukee, Office of the Comptroller
 - City of Milwaukee Common Council Finance and Personnel Committee
 - Wisconsin Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance
- MPS will require all of its schools to provide annual reports of its finances.
- Require Partnership for Success to work with stakeholders and an independent third party to develop a plan to confront Milwaukee Public Schools' unfunded liability.
- Require MPS to maintain a chief accountability office within the Office of Board Governance in order to ensure district-wide financial accountability.

VII . Allocate Additional Resources for Health Services in Schools

- Beginning July 1, 2011, require the Department of Health Services (DHS) to reimburse any Wisconsin school district or cooperative education service agency (CESA) for 100% of that portion of federal financial participation (FFP) for school medical services that are in excess of what the State of Wisconsin received from the FFP in the 2009-2011 biennium.
- DHS must distribute this required reimbursement based on the percentage of total reimbursement for school medical services that each school district and CESA received in the immediately previous fiscal year.
- This provision will apply statewide, providing every school district with additional revenue.
 - These additional funds shall be used by school districts for health related purposes.

VIII . Redirect Assistance for Building Better, Greener Schools throughout Wisconsin

- Increase green building and energy efficiency opportunities for school districts outside of MPS by redistributing the unutilized bonding authority given to Milwaukee Public Schools.
- Require the Department of Public Instruction to give priority to public school districts serving children in poverty when redistributing these bonds.
- Give preference to districts seeking bonds for maintenance upgrades for existing facilities, especially for energy efficiency and “green building” upgrades.

IX . Provide MPS Students with Affordable Public Transportation

- In the event that Milwaukee County receives a .5% sale tax authority for transit purposes, direct county transit operator to provide a minimum 33% discount for public transit bus passes for eligible students
 - This provision will only take effect if Milwaukee County is able to enact its .5% sales tax for transit purposes.
- Direct MPS to change its policy in order to enable middle school students to access public transit.

X . Solidify an Academic Plan for MPS Students

- Require Milwaukee Public Schools to maintain a streamlined and consistently evaluated reading and math curriculum.
- Make the ACT exam accessible to all 11th grade students.
- Direct MPS to provide multicultural training to all administrators and staff.
- Create at least two “Assistance and Transition Campuses” for disruptive students within MPS.
 - Direct Assistance and Transition Campuses to seek partnership with local civic organizations.

XI . Require Additional Training, Assistance, and Oversight at MPS

- Increase oversight of principal tenure.
 - Specify that the MPS Superintendent may establish a three year contract with a principal.
 - Principals shall be subject to annual performance reviews.
 - After the expiration of that contract, a principal’s record and performance shall be reviewed.
 - A second 3 year contract may be granted.

- Annual performance reviews shall also be conducted under this contract.
- Following a principal's sixth year of service, the superintendent shall make a recommendation regarding tenure.
- The Milwaukee Public School Board must approve recommendation for tenure.
- Principals rejected from tenure would have access to an appeals process through the MPS Board.
- MPS shall establish and maintain a principal training and professional development program.
- Require all school board members to attend an annual professional training from a recognized board association.

XII . Prioritize Possible Programs for Funding under the Race to the Top Program

- Create a framework for the future creation of “Promise Neighborhoods” in the City of Milwaukee, based on President Obama’s plan for urban renewal.
 - Require the Partnership for Success to conduct outreach to the White House Office of Urban Affairs to identify potential federal funding for Promise Neighborhoods (in addition to the Race to the Top Program).
- Use federal funds to create a 9th grade Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Program.
 - Program would be focused on core curriculum courses in the 9th grade.
- Use Race to the Top dollars to expand STEM programming for students in kindergarten through 5th grade.

XIII . Gather new Information focused on Individual School Improvement

- Construct a standard, MPS-approved, comprehensive annual parent survey. Require schools to use it as a tool to gather parent input prior to developing or modifying parent involvement and school improvement plans for the coming school year.
- In order to better understand the diverse education dynamics in the City of Milwaukee, direct MPS and the Department of Public Instruction to construct a survey for parents of children participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) or attending Milwaukee Public Schools.

- Data will be used by MPS to identify school-based and district-wide parental concerns.