

This message is for the Madison County Board of Supervisors as much as it is for the School Board. Children are just as much members of this community as land owners.

- For several weeks after Christmas break, we did not have enough bus drivers for all of the routes, and each day, we would receive a phone call explaining that kids would be late arriving to school. Every day, there were students who missed instructional time, and the teacher's instruction was interrupted when students arrived. I asked questions and found that the number of routes has significantly dropped over the last several years. I assume this was either due to efficiency or lack of drivers. I also found that we pay less than surrounding counties regarding bus drivers. I think we are smart enough here in Madison to solve a problem like this rather than simply saying, "We don't have the budget." We should be able to figure out a solution and if we can't, at least start asking questions to someone who can.
- From what I understand, we still do manual bus route planning. It is 2025. Software is available to accomplish this, and has been for years, making it much more efficient to plan routes. No one wants to hear that we don't have money for this. This is low-hanging fruit. So is bus driver wages.
- It's that time of year again when we hear about teachers and staff who will be leaving. I also hear that the answer to some of these vacancies is that we aren't going to fill the positions. Is that because filling the positions is unnecessary, or is that an easy way to fix the "no money problem?" We cannot afford to have class sizes go up. It isn't good for the teacher, and it is not good for the student.
- It goes without saying that we need to do the same thing with teacher wages as we need to do with bus drivers. We cannot afford to continue to lose quality teachers to surrounding counties who pay more. We go through the same thing every single year. We all know what it is when we continue to do the same thing repeatedly, getting the same result but expecting a different result.
- We absolutely CAN NOT continue to use the same tired excuse of not having the budget for the most basic things in a school system. For example:
 - Are we ok with students arriving late to school for weeks because we can't afford to pay bus drivers?
 - Are we ok with our students losing valuable one-on-one interactions with their teachers because class sizes will increase if we don't hire for vacancies?
 - Is it ok to use "we don't have the money" as an excuse whenever our kid's education comes into question?
 - It still blows my mind that our schools don't have dumpsters.

- Less enrollment doesn't mean less money is needed when we are already in need

And now the good stuff! I have had the pleasure of being on the Career and Technical Education committee for the last couple of years. It needs to be said and put on record that what our CTE teachers are doing is truly special. I recently heard from agriculture, nursing, business, building trades, and STEM teachers about what they are doing in their classes, and the product they are delivering is second to none. This is one area where I challenge anyone else to produce the quality experiences our teachers produce right now. Thank you to those teachers who are putting together a high-quality product!

I will leave you with one question, though. Are you or anybody else ok with losing these talented staff members because we cannot retain them or fund their program because "we don't have the money?"

This isn't about being liberal or conservative. This is about our children's education.