

## Out-Going State Board of Education Member Speaks Out

Out-going State Board of Education member Lisa Woods gave a report at her last meeting. We knew you'd want to hear her bold and honest parting words.

We are thankful for her service and willingness to speak the truth.

Please especially note her bold comments highlighted in "yellow" below.



### **COMMITTEE REPORT OF BOARD MEMBER LISA WOODS DISTRICT 5**

Good afternoon. This is my last meeting as an elected Member of the Ohio State Board of Education, and I wanted to take a few moments to reflect upon the past four years, make some comments for the record, thank my colleagues for this experience, and offer some thoughts and advice for the future of public education in Ohio.

I sought this office to make a difference and to strongly work to be both a voice and ears for parents and students in Ohio public education. I hope that as 2020 gives way to 2021, this Board will seek to prioritize hearing those voices of the parents of Ohio. I ran for office as a parent, as a widowed parent, of 5 wonderful children, one of special needs.

Over four incredible years, I have had the opportunity to work with each and every one of you, to learn your perspectives, the priorities of your constituents, the uniqueness that is Ohio with different regions, different types of educational needs and desires. Our 11.7 million people are incredible and they are incredible because they are unique individuals, not statistics. We have initiative, drive, smarts, innovation. We also have ideas and concerns. I have

tried to advance many of those over the years, even if they don't fit neatly into perceptions of what can and should happen in public education.

When I ran for office and was elected, I did so as a grassroots parent, and have tried to think and act like a parent throughout my tenure. I encourage this thinking. I saw every educational policy question through this prism and always ask some basic questions: "Does this policy help children to learn, to earn, to advance their careers? Does this policy or priority of this Board make the best use of hard earned money of the citizens? Would a family support this policy as in the best interests of their school children? Would an employer support this policy to hire and train the best possible employees? Does this policy make school kids smarter and more inclined to success?"

I hope that you would ask yourself some of these questions as you continue to debate public educational policy.

Our time together in the pre-COVID-19 world helped foster relationships and alliances that helped Ohio school children. I am so fortunate to have visited schools both in my district and outside that provided great and different perspectives on the kinds of children and learning environments that Ohioans learn in. From big city to suburban to rural, to the public community schools, homeschooling parents, and the schools that cater to underserved and sometimes forgotten children, I learned a lot and applied that knowledge to my participation on this Board.

I am most proud of efforts to save and nurture drop out recovery schools in Ohio. At the same token, I am disappointed that I had to do that. Our own staff continues to operate as an entity of their own, enforcing their ideology and not necessarily the policies of the elected Board, elected by the people. I issue a challenge to the incoming Board, set policy and reign in ODE employees. We have some tremendously talented people that work for the Department, but they should be carrying out policy adopted by and considered by the Board, not themselves. The efforts to essentially shut down drop out recovery schools, already operating with such a challenged school population with challenged funding were most disappointing and did a disservice to the people of Ohio.

Among unfinished business is the awful state report card, a report card that itself deserves a **Big Fat "F"** for failure. Despite all of our efforts, Ohio still has a report card that does not reflect actual learning, that carries fundamental flaws, that makes all of our schools look bad, and maybe that is the intent in some twisted way. Four years later, we still have a report card that does not accurately report student learning. Please, Board, Governor DeWine, and Ohio General Assembly, roll up your sleeves and make our State Report Card meaningful and reflective of reality. The people of Ohio deserve more.

I know that a farewell message usually includes a lot of platitudes and thank you's and I certainly am grateful to you all for your collegial approach, for your consideration of my ideas, and I know I tried at all times to see your perspectives. To our Superintendent and Staff, thank you for the courtesies extended to me, I know you will do the same for my successor who won the election, and to whom I wish success as someone who deeply wants to see Ohio succeed.

But, I also am compelled to be honest and straightforward. This position did have disappointments. We talk a lot about accountability, and sometimes get so carried away with accountability we forget about the big picture – Are Ohio school children learning with the knowledge sets that they need to be successful? I would argue that this is an open ended question. The Employer Community does not think so, they tell us that young people are not prepared to enter the work world. Higher Education feels the same way, 27% of high school graduates have to take at least one remedial class in college. We can't sit here and congratulate ourselves when these truths are seldom addressed and glossed over with desires for more money. At some point in time, this Board has to grasp that maybe the curriculum, the teaching methods, the lack of parental engagement, the truancy have to be addressed in more meaningful ways and force meaningful change so that parents and taxpayers are getting the highest bang for their buck, and children are ready to work or pursue higher education upon graduation.

This body also needs to be more deliberate and use fact based logic for decision making. The rush in one meeting, with almost zero public input aside from predestined advocates to force divisive and factually questionable racial regimen upon this Board and Ohio's school children really was not our finest hour. Now, instead of working to improve students learning, we are rushing to force more divisions upon our kids and poisoning the educational environment with race based theories that have never been proven to be factual, in fact, have been proven to be nonfactual like the 1619 Project that we cannot get an honest answer as to how it got on the Department's website, and our Superintendent will not remove it.

The 1619 Project has been debunked as a fraud and false teaching of history by historical scholars of the political left, right, and middle, but it remains a teaching resource in Ohio. Why? We can't get an honest answer and that should scare Ohioans and Board Members who deserve an honest debate on this topic, and have not received one.

I hope I challenged you all a bit. I hope to stay engaged in Ohio and our education system and will continue to be an advocate for parents and

students, the reason we are here. I wish each and every one of you the very best, and thank my great kids, mother, constituents, the people and education professionals of District 5 for allowing me this time to be a voice for the voiceless, the kids and parents who do not have the public employee dues money to talk for them, but we do need to listen to them.

Thank you all for an amazing four years, and I wish this Board great success in your future deliberations and policy making.

