

Dear Mayor, Common Council, County Executive, County Board, Superintendent, Board of Education, Youth Commission:

We write to inform you of our consideration of dissolving the City County Schools Collaborative Committee (the Committee). While there has always been potential for this committee to address issues and shared city, county, and school district priorities impacting MMSD students and their families, the committee has struggled to find our purpose.

The Committee “serves as a formal channel of communication and policy recommendations regarding issues of shared concern between the City of Madison, the Madison Metropolitan School District Board of Education, and Dane County.” MGO § 33.28. In 2019, the Committee updated¹ its Mission Statement to:

The City, County, Schools Collaborative Committee (CCSCC) was created with the understanding that the responsibility for our children belongs to all of us. The committee’s charge is to bring forth ways in which local governmental bodies can collaborate to improve outcomes for all Madison Metropolitan School District youth, families and staff. The committee will serve as a formal channel of communication, policy recommendations and resource allocation regarding issues of shared concern.

In December 2018, the Committee (then called the “Education Committee”) had conversations like those we have been having this year concerning our purpose, efficacy, and future viability. Priorities, membership, and the name were discussed. In 2019, the Committee took a vote against dissolution of the Committee with Alder Phair, then Committee chair, abstaining. We then surveyed elected officials about the value of the Committee and received 22 responses with two-thirds responding positively about the value and potential for the Committee. Many respondents recognized the unique, joint membership as the only regular public forum for city, county, and school electeds to share information and strengthen partnerships. One respondent noted that the Committee lacked a clear vision and strategy and multiple respondents indicated the Committee was ineffective and a source of frustration.

While the ordinance only provides for meetings on an “as-needed basis”, the Committee has historically tried to meet monthly. The Committee includes eight (8) members: Mayor or designee, two Common Council members, the Madison Metropolitan School District School Superintendent or representative, two Madison Metropolitan School District Board of Education members, and two County Board Supervisors. All members are voting members, except the designee of the Mayor and the representative of the Superintendent when they attend meetings in place of the Mayor or the Superintendent. While the current co-chairs, Nichelle Nichols and

¹ This was updated from this Mission and Goals Statement adopted in 2012. *The Education Committee was created with the understanding that the responsibility of educating our children belongs to all of us. The committee’s charge is to bring forth ways in which local governmental bodies can collaborate to improve the educational experience and outcomes for all Madison Metropolitan School District students. The committee will study the partnerships that are already in place among the different entities. In the process it will learn who is being served and where that is taking place. It will assess the existing need, identify any duplication of services or programs and examine the successes and potential failures thereof. The committee will begin work immediately to identify areas in which the entities can work together to benefit students and their families.*

Heidi Wegleitner, have served on the Committee for several years, the other elected official seats turn over more frequently and often we have new members after every Spring election. The Committee sometimes struggles to meet quorum.

We have not received any referrals of legislative items in several years. The Committee continues to receive excellent staff support from the Community Development Division and Department of Civil Rights and we have received a variety of informative presentations over the years from city, county, and school staff and community partners, including but not limited to those on Opportunity Youth, Early Childhood Zones, Madison Out of School Time (MOST), Community Schools, Bridges Mental Health Initiative, transportation access and the school bus pass and crossing guard programs, and youth and family homelessness. It is helpful for us to be educated and informed on these programs, but— as a Committee— we do not have a budget or any authority to allocate funding for unmet needs.

During COVID, the Committee identified the following priorities: accessible internet, affordable housing, support for psychosocial and emotional health and school based mental health services, and transportation access, particularly bus passes. We have sent communications to the school board, council, and county board regarding collaboration, transparency, and community engagement with allocation of federal pandemic response funding. In early 2021, we waded into digital equity issues and received reports from representatives on our committee who also served on the City's digital equity task force. In 2022 through early 2024, we invested significant committee time into learning about driver's education access and developed a policy position in support of universal access to driver's education as part of the core school curriculum. In some recent years, we made advisory recommendations on shared priorities for City, County, and School District budgets but have not generated any initiatives on our own.

We are sensitive to the extensive city resources, particularly in the form of staff time, that have been devoted to the Committee since its creation over 15 years ago. And, we all continue to appreciate the potential for a body like this. And, we are mindful that with some of our historical areas of priority - homelessness and housing, school-based mental health, youth employment, digital equity, transportation access— there are already other committees, boards, and commissions that have oversight or advisory responsibilities. We explored changes in structure to include more shared ownership by the School District and Dane County, but did not receive sufficient support to move in that direction. We have also explored modifying our meeting schedule and scope to better match more limited staff and Committee member capacity. At the end of the day, we are left wondering whether maintaining the Committee in its current form is worthwhile.

We understand there are significant challenges facing MMSD families, including the most vulnerable families that are sleeping outside, in cars, or doubled up in someone else's home because there is no emergency drop-in shelter for families experiencing homelessness. We need to step up and figure out ways— together— to address unmet needs. However, this Committee— without sufficient support and buy-in— from the County and Schools— will continue to struggle in making an impact.

We are accordingly writing to give you notice that we intend to recommend dissolution of the Committee. Should you object to the Committee's dissolution, please reach out to us via email at _____ or . If you would like the Committee to continue its service, please give us your ideas (and referrals!) for the Committee's work. [INSERT any more specific questions or prompts here?]