

July 23, 2012

Dear commission members:

As a longtime reporter and editor, I am naturally skeptical. Young reporters are schooled by grizzled editors like me to always check things out. As in: "If your mom says she loves you, check it out, kid." I feel that way about the Simpson Street Free Press's program. I've checked it out. Years ago, as editor of Isthmus, I worked with its students during a summer intern program and was blown away at how smart, hard working and promising these mostly poor and minority kids were.

If only kids like this could get the right breaks, if only they could get the right training, if only they could be pushed to excel...

They would accomplish so much in life!

I've since joined the board of directors of the Simpson Street Free Press. My sentiments have been reinforced. Spending time in the newsroom never fails to charge me up and feel good about the future. The Free Press's curriculum works. The kids are subject to a rigorous lesson plan that stresses information gathering, critical thinking and clear writing. Best of all, they're taught one of The Secrets Of The Universe: *Writing well requires constant and vigilant rewriting.*

Working your words over and over again is how you learn to organize your thinking and to write convincingly. The Simpson Street Free Press teaches this essential skill. (Speaking of which, how many of us know young people from professional families who struggle in college because they haven't been taught to write clearly?)

I ask that you consider giving full funding to the Simpson Street Free Press. We all know that the "achievement gap" is a huge problem haunting our community. Madison has to do better with disadvantaged kids. The Free Press has a 20-year record of success of motivating these kids. The Free Press is part of the solution.

Feel free to contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,]

(S) Marc Eisen

Simpson Street Free Press board member

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