

postscript

by Frances Edstrom, columnist

We have a chance to make kids successful

I was happy to read that the Winona Public Schools board did not simply rubber-stamp the same old goals for students for the coming school year. Although to be more correct, the goals were not the same, they were less ambitious, I suppose to acknowledge the fact the students in the district fell short of the previous goals.

The fact is that an astonishing number of kids in the Winona Public Schools can't read and can't do math. That any kids in the district can't read or do math is a travesty, to my way of thinking. I will allow that there are children who are so developmentally challenged as to be physically and mentally incapable of learning beyond a certain level, but those children are not present in the numbers to account for the failure to learn evidenced by the test scores.

I will also acknowledge that, unfortunately, the (mainly useless) state department of education allows parents to "opt out" of testing for their kids without a good reason. This is a practice that I find absolutely wacky. Why would you not want to know how your child is measuring up? After all, children have one chance at a free education, and most people would like to make sure they get it. Besides, it is selfish to deprive the public schools of the chance to measure whether they are doing their job because your child doesn't like to take tests.

If we had children who were failing to thrive physically in the numbers that they are failing to thrive educationally, there would be a national outcry, and experts would be searching for the cause. They wouldn't rely on anecdotal accounts ("parents don't care" or "video games"), and they wouldn't excuse children from thriving because they don't like food.

No, we would be examining the food chain, farming, grocery stores, soft drink and potato chip manufacturers, the medical community, you name it!

However, we don't examine the root causes of failure to thrive

educationally. The questions are simple: why can't kids read and do math?

The more I read about how we teach, the more I think that the answers are simple, too. There is scientific evidence that certain ways of teaching reading and math work better than others. But we still refuse to use the proven methods, in favor of methods that are proven to fail, year after year after year.

Perhaps we should tell kids that schools fly in the face of proven scientific methods. Maybe then they would protest being deprived of an education, ruining their future much more surely and predictably than Baby Boomers driving gas-powered cars and eating meat.

The Winona School board is correct in wanting to find the root cause of the district's failure. Let's find out what methods are used in the classrooms to teach reading and math. Do they use methods just because they are easier for them? Do they teach the way they do because that's what the textbooks say to do? Are they the correct methods or simply the methods teachers learned in college? Are teachers' colleges teaching proven methods or are they relying on old fad methods taught by professors who haven't bothered to keep up with the science of learning?

Are parents happy with the status quo as long as their kids make the honor roll? That's the equivalent of a "participation certificate" these days. If we allow our kids to be challenged we will be happily surprised at how willing they are to succeed.

Our children will never learn to read and do math unless we change the way we are doing things. Winona Public Schools has a chance to do that right now. Let's not squander the opportunity because we are afraid to flout state government or retool our workforce.



letters

MN must do more to combat CWD

From: Amy Cordry

Chris Rogers has once again compiled well-researched information and facts around the latest chronic wasting data in Southeast Minnesota in his Sunday, December 8, 2019, article "Winona's growing CWD infection." Endemic area 646, which is basically Southern Winona, Eastern Olmstead, and all of Fillmore and Houston counties has had an increased number of CWD-positive deer taken during the current hunting season. At this point one begins to look ahead to the future — will Minnesota agencies continue to work to protect their citizens and natural resources from a contagious, fatal disease?

The DNR "Surveillance and Management Plan for Chronic Wasting Disease in Free-ranging Cervids in Minnesota" has part of an answer to that question, in a fashion. On page 33, Appendix C: "Stages of CWD Response and Key Management Actions," the DNR response to a CWD-endemic area will be;

- **Passive** surveillance within zone and mandatory sampling **outside** zone
- Aggressively respond to new detections **outside** CWD management zone
- Use liberalized hunting to manage disease prevalence within disease management and control zones
- Continue **monitoring** (Emphasis mine)

What is a DNR defined endemic area? Same document, same page — endemic is defined as "CWD prevalence > 5%." Greater than five percent of what number is not defined.

While the DNR is responsible for managing free-ranging cervids, the Board of Animal Health (BAH) is responsible for confined animals, including cervids. The BAH is charged with inspecting the farms, animal records, and animals. It is unfortunate that a local deer farm passed inspection by a BAH veterinarian who stated that it "has a good history of CWD surveillance." A short time later, the entire herd was found to be CWD positive and the farm "decommissioned." In SFY2018, the BAH spent more than \$549,000 for farmed cervid expenditures; the BAH took in \$32,000 in SFY 2017 in farmed cervid revenue. For 2019, the BAH anticipates those cervid farm expenditures to be \$815,582. That would be our taxpayer dollars making up for the inadequate revenue stream.

Last spring the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee refused to pass laws that would have helped stop the spread of CWD; one law would have required all cervid farms to have double fencing in order to prevent nose-to-nose contact between farmed and free-ranging deer. This would also offer additional insurance against deer movement in and out of confined areas.

The local Minnesota Deer Hunters Association, Bluffland Whitetails Association; Winona, Houston, and Fillmore county farm bureaus, and your neighbors are contacting legislators on this important issue. If you are concerned and you support powerful CWD control, talk to them or contact your legislators now.

letters

For the holidays, consider loving a liberal

From: Jim Bonilla
Winona

In the spirit of the season maybe it's time to extend love to a liberal. After all, they can't help it if they worry about the future of our planet. For them, seeing an eagle soaring over the Mississippi might give them the same sense of awe and reverence others experience when they're in God's

House. Consider loving a liberal even if some of their ideas about gun control seem wacky. Like you, they love their children and grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Like you, they find it unacceptable that any child should fear for their lives because people with military-style assault weapons might burst into their classroom or house of worship. Just for the season, consider loving a liberal who recoils at

the idea of banning immigrants. Like you, they probably had a mother, father or loved one saved by medical technology invented by an immigrant. Let me add one last wish for this holiday season. If you're a liberal, it couldn't hurt to love a conservative. After all, this season of love and forgiveness only comes once a year. Or does it?

City should have regular public-comment periods

From: Steve Schild

I'll leave the decision about whether the city of Winona needs a public-relations director to people who've studied the issue. But if the goal is to improve communica-

tion with citizens, here's something the city can do that wouldn't cost a nickel: include a public-comment section in every regular council meeting.

The City Council is Winona's only local elected body that doesn't allow citizens

to speak at regular meetings; the School Board, of which I'm a member, and the Winona County Board both offer citizens that opportunity to directly address their elected leaders. I urge the city to do the same.

Thoughts on very different campaign styles

From: Fred Orłowski
Winona

I find it a bit puzzling on how the Democratic party presidential candidates and the incumbent president conduct their campaigns for the 2020 presidential election.

The Democratic party candidates conduct town hall meetings and impromptu conversations with perspective voters, while our president delivers his message

via "rallies."

Here is my perception on these two methods of communicating. Although en masse, meeting with voters on a somewhat individual basis allows for a two-way exchange of ideas, issues, and promotes discussions. On the other hand, speaking from a podium and telling the public what you've done and what you're going to do is a one-way conversation.

From my recollection of high school

civics classes, the bedrock of American government has what's called a "representative democracy." We (the voters), elect office holders to represent and formulate laws to advocate on our behalf, not having a candidate "dictate" on what he/she is going to do.

Again, this is just an observation of the stark differences on how the methods of these campaigns are operating.

Who is accountable for legal compliance for elections?

From: Paul B. Double
Winona

With all the discussion on election fraud and criminal actions, the question that remains to be addressed is who has the final accountability and responsibly to insure legal compliance. Who is charged for enforcement for all levels of the ballot, vote, and final determination? Is it the town

board chair, the city mayor, county board chair, secretary of state, governor, congressional leaders, or the president, or all of the above? Does the process cap the legal accountability at the lowest level "election judge" or "voter," or does it pass up the chain of command? Who was in charge at the highest level and is serving jail time anywhere and paying the price for not doing their job? Who has the job legal voters

expect and demand for ensuring all elections to be fair and legal?

If the "buck stops" along the way, show me! If it flows up the ladder, show me! Show me who got jail time, a fine, or any other serious penalty not for just any illegal voter but those "in charge of the process and law" which insures all voters followed all the rules and paid a price if they did not.



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Big Dipper

From: Orlin Brommer

A friend says he likes my postings when they are short. Here is one for him and for you. As kids we learned about the Big Dipper, but had trouble finding it. Now is a good time to look to the northern horizon and the dipper sitting upright low in the sky. Cold nights are clear nights. You might even try a car ride. Head north and turn out the lights. It is best to stop the auto first. The Big Dipper will look just like the one on your electronic device.

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