Time for Muncie to change its story with help from Ball State

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Amen.
Yes. Amen. I truly believe that Ball State University’s desire to operate Muncie Community Schools is an answer to our prayers.

So why would someone who grew up in Carmel, whose kids go to Yorktown schools, be praying about Muncie Community Schools?

We have lived in seven states and traveled to 40. I love Muncie. Muncie has been my home for more than 20 years. Muncie matters to me.

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But, why would it matter to me what the solutions are to the challenges at MCS?

Simple. As MCS goes, so goes Muncie. A school system is the heart and soul of a community.

Unfortunately, the recent FBI indictment and an ongoing investigation of our city government, coupled with the issues of MCS being named a distressed school and now under emergency management, have meant that literally millions of dollars in network news time and dozens of front page newspaper stories have been dedicated to the portrait of Muncie as a community, superficially, shamelessly, and persistently, a questionable future.

So, as the news stories continue, I continue to get questions from my business colleagues and friends about the state and country. “What the heck is going on there?” as they would ask in their eyes.

I respond with the same thing: I have been 20 years. “The people in Muncie are phenomenally. You don’t know the last story.”

Well, it’s time for us to change the story. Dramatically. Now. The longer the current stories continue, the harder it is for businesses to recruit people to Muncie, or even stay in Muncie. While my own children see how much my wife and I love this community and pour into it, they often question if their own future have fumes in it.

Today, there is absolutely no reason to kick back and/or to try to assign blame for the situation at MCS, or to get into whose faults are hurt based on how things have evolved with the new regulations. Talking about feelings will not change the trajectory of this community. Needs will. Ball State will. President Geoffrey Moehlman will.

Why do we have faith?

The simple facts are that business as usual will not change the story. An emergency management team chartered only to balance the budget of MCS will not change the story. Or, we can give Ball State a chance to truly transform the school system and ultimately the community. The future of MCS affects them too. This would change the story immediately.

There are other “distressed” school systems throughout the state who aren’t fortunate enough to have a university in their backyard ready to mobilize 3,000 faculty/staff, 24,000 students and possibly 190,000 alumni to help the homeless school system buck their back. What a story this will tell.

People talking about the inevitability of a continued withdrawal from MCS and managing it with a 4,000学生 (no, the $300,000 annually, down a floor at 40,000 not one goes to change the story. In fact, a 4,000 student MCS means having to operate on a budget of another $7 million less per year, which is about the same amount of money that the building is now rented, more buildings closed and more teachers let go. More of the same story. More news stories. More front page articles. More businesses finding it hard to call Muncie home.

Yet, I stay in Ball State, or should I say, in Bees State. Nowhere in its mission does it describe handling a public secondary school system. President Moehlman, however, arrived on campus with a well thought-out mantra of “Better Together,” understanding that the futures of Ball State and Muncie are inextricably connected, and, does anyone prove, sympathetic. Little did he know that a perfect project like MCS would present itself to truly test the model of neenas.

Now that the legislature has been stalled and proposed, it’s time to weigh. Can’t get caught up in how quickly it was drafted or who was or was not consulted. After all, decisive action is hallmark of true leadership. The legislation is out there for all of us to review and provide feedback to our representatives. That’s exactly the way the process works. Involve yourself in a classic civic lesson that will have real impact for our community.

I support the legislation proposed by Rep. Tim Brown. It allows Ball State a reasonable structure to leverage its vast resources. Some are concerned about stiple representation, but there are 11 other appointed school boards around the state, and two of the seven board positions in the situation would be appointed suggested by the mayor and city council, both of whom have been publicly elected. All gears will be thoroughly vetted.

I believe this is far more agreeable than having a bureaucratic emergency management team in our community’s future. Ball State’s vision is not one of simply balancing budgets, but of creating a truly transformative school system, one that becomes the envy of the state.

First Ball State, then who? Not now, then why? Yes. In my mind, prayers have been answered.

Let’s let Ball State fly. Let’s set them to do what the world trusts them to do — and has trusted them to do for 150 years — educate and develop the best teachers and administrators in the world right in our backyard, so we can truly try to “Better Together” and change the story. We should all have faith in that.

Amen.
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