

February 28, 2005

Letters to the Editor
Bartlett Examiner
4N781 Gerber Road
Bartlett, IL 60103

Dear Editor:

There is an old Native American proverb, "Do not judge your neighbor until you walk a mile in his moccasins." For many years now, the Village of Bartlett has been judged and labeled by some of our neighbors for loudly vocalizing our dissatisfaction with School District U-46 and for our persistent pursuit of improved education opportunities. But the truth is that it doesn't matter in which quadrant of U-46 we walk our mile, all of our "moccasins" are essentially cut from the same hide.

The parents in Bartlett working for a better school district even if it means disconnection, the bilingual families in Elgin fighting for fair and equal learning resources together with residents from all U-46 communities who are growing increasingly impatient with fiscal inefficiencies and faltering test scores all feel the same utter frustration with the conditions in our school district. We share the same concerns and the same desire – the best education possible for our children.

When U-46 recently closed neighborhood schools in Elgin and Streamwood, reshuffled the bilingual programs and once again prepared to shuttle children to unfamiliar new schools outside their neighborhoods, it didn't matter if we were Bartlett parents, or Streamwood parents or Hanover Park parents, we understood because we have been there ourselves. When three Hispanic families in Elgin, who attended board meetings and urgently appealed to district officials, failed to have their concerns heard and were forced to stand up against discriminatory practices by filing a lawsuit, we can all understand and sympathize.

For some of us the issue with School District U-46 is school boundaries, which often seem to be drawn with insufficient input from the communities they impact. For others it's the seemingly inadequate planning before schools are built and special needs programs are located. For many of us the issue is below average academic performance or the district's continuing financial woes. For most of us, it's the administration's unwillingness to listen to and acknowledge our concerns. But the most important issue, for all of us, regardless of our municipal boundaries, is the fact that we care about our children enough to fight for the quality of their education with whatever means we have available to us, be it a discrimination lawsuit, legislative action or the disconnection from a school district that is failing us.

Sincerely,
Catherine J. Melchert
Village President