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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Tony Zielinski
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Pilot Program Could Provide Immediate Relief

Ald. Zielinski Proposes Classroom Environment Be Prioritized

Ald. Tony Zielinski has drafted a resolution before the Common Council that addresses the need for Milwaukee Public Schools to find new roads to student success. His efforts outline a specific pilot program that begins, first and foremost, with attention to the classroom environment. “We must have an environment conducive to learning—it has to be in place before computers, projects or testing.”

The program, piloted through one high school and one middle school, will allow teachers to identify students who are habitually disruptive in the classroom and assign them to an alternative program associated specifically with that school. Under the present system teachers are not empowered with such authority and that enables continued disruptiveness in the classroom. Ald. Zielinski says, “This has to change. Our teachers have to be empowered to take control of their classrooms.”

Within the alternative learning program, the focus will heavily emphasize family preservation support systems, allowing teachers and administrators to work with disruptive students as a means of understanding the roots of their problem and working with families to help alleviate the barriers both inside and outside the school that affect that child’s ability to focus in the classroom.

“We can’t just remove all problem students and put them in a new school. They deserve a safe environment to learn in as well, and if we bring in family preservation support specialists to help identify all that keeps these children from focusing, we’re giving them an edge,” Ald. Zielinski said. Zielinski added that the program would help to later reintegrate these students into the classroom with a stronger work ethic and better coping skills.

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MPS Pilot Program/ADD ONE

This pilot program then allows classrooms to be free of atypical distractions, which have recently included very violent behaviors, and gives teachers the space to do what they do best: teach. “Kids who want to learn are sitting in MPS classrooms watching their teacher handle non-stop behavior problems and violence. That’s not what they came to school for,” Ald. Zielinski said.

The alderman’s program, based on more than a year of research and planning, places classroom environment as a priority that, when addressed, will enhance other measures of success like test scores and attendance rates. As MPS works through the ramifications of last week’s vote to dissolve, the alderman says a program still needs to be in place to work with teachers and students who are part of MPS right now.

He anticipates the resolution will appear before the Judiciary and Legislative Committee on September 29, 2008. “While MPS is determining whether or not to dissolve, I am interested in working with them to implement this plan. A pilot program must begin immediately and our students can’t wait,” Ald. Zielinski said.