

It's really tricky when something potentially harmful is buried within something that is inarguably good. (Take one look at the way legislation is done in our country. Proposed bills can have one piece that everyone wants fixed, buried deep inside a bunch of bad ideas. Alternatively, there could be one really bad idea overwhelmed by a whole bunch of "common sense", because what idiot would dare vote against "common sense"?)

What monster could be against the gift of an expensive literacy program? But this is not a literacy program. The literacy tutoring offer of this proposal is buried within something much bigger in scope, that the public should be made aware of.

Some board members voiced concerns that the unanimous vote requirement seemed manipulative. I shared those concerns, and in the Q and A session with the foundation representative their response did not alleviate my concerns:

"A no vote isn't neutral. its opposition. If you're having conversations with other people in the district, if those conversations trickle down in a way that create opposition in that environment, that will not help us be successful. Your being all in matters."

This kind of language should cause **alarm bells**, as conversations about the success of the program and whether or not it is good for the students and staff should ALWAYS be open for discussion, even if it would lead to once again pulling out of a pilot program. By forcing such a strong commitment from the school board, the foundation makes it less likely that the pilot will be abandoned, even if it isn't working or is actively doing harm.

The foundation wants "skin in the game" (their words) because what this is is a **radical social experiment**. Quote from Brent Fox:

"It's a test. We're gonna try something new."

This board, many of whom are on their way out the door, is deciding whether or not one of our schools will be used in this sociological test. As with *any ethical* experiment, especially the ones that may negatively impact participants, it CANNOT continue without the full informed consent of those who will be involved and impacted. They ethically cannot put the kids into a program like this without explicitly telling the parents and teachers **ahead of time** about the potential dangers and increased expectations that will be placed on them. I've seen no evidence that such an outreach has been made to the parents, in fact I'm seeing evidence of the opposite. All of those involved at the chosen school, not just the ones in the literacy program, would need to be informed of this colossal shift, including a full disclosure of the associated hazards. The school district could even be opening itself up to a lawsuit if it continues onward *without* that informed consent.

-Skyrocket uses an "emotional constancy" rubric on teachers, which forces "fake" emotional states upon teachers.

-The proposal will **incentivize** those fake emotional states in the presence of **emotionally developing children**.

-The proposal will **incentivize strict adherence to time metrics and precise policies over addressing emotional distress** of emotionally developing children.

-Teachers in the program feel **exhausted, inauthentic, micromanaged, professionally disrespected, and surveilled**.

-Skyrocket could leak over into the district, **corrupting the board**

-Skyrockets or the Hendricks foundation could end up with sensitive School board information.

-If it goes badly, it could leave a **lasting stain** on BSD

-This board and this superintendent **will not be here** to do the hard work they admit they are signing up for.

-The extra tech and strangers in our schools create **potential danger for our vulnerable immigrant families** and others.

-Its unsustainable and could leave the district **not getting much** out of the experience but a headache.

-There are **no** 3rd party research studies that measure Skyrockets success.

-Their coaching is only actively being used in about **60 schools in spite of what they alluded to in their presentation.**

-Around 240 schools are using their frameworks *only*, **not** the full, in depth, on site coaching service that is being pushed here.

To be clear, Skyrocket has nothing to do with the literacy portion of this proposal, but it is the most expensive part. Open Literacy is being coupled with Skyrocket in this unique proposal from the Hendricks foundation, and it has been sold to the public AS a literacy program, which could be viewed as a deceptive move. If you look at where the real money is, it would appear that the Hendricks foundation thinks improving our school culture is actually more important than tutoring kids in reading.

It was my understanding that a schools' culture is derived naturally and authentically through the combination of unique personalities within it, not scripted into existence through a, frankly creepy, teacher monitoring system. It might be in your mind to take this one time, 3 year offer from the Hendricks foundation with the intention of learning some of these techniques and then spreading that throughout the district if it works. Some techniques acquired could no doubt assist in creating a disciplined, joyful learning environment and we **should** look into some of them- to use **when the teachers find them to be natural and appropriate.** But that type of research is available online, largely for free, without someone looking over our teachers shoulders.

I understand that we do have a situation with declining literacy rates, but insisting upon implementation of this program by the fall and balking at waiting a year doesn't seem to me to be in the spirit of fully informing the community, either. Giving bonuses to teachers and staff for "strong school-wide culture and proficiency" creates a **MASSIVE** conflict of interest by incentivizing an environment which does not center on the well-being of the students but the score that teachers get from skyrocket.

Ultimately, literacy scores are dropping and parents aren't engaged because our families are in economic turmoil. Something that would really help the kids in our community would be stable access to affordable housing & food, health & mental health-care, because i agree with skyrocket on one thing, that in order to be successful, the foundation of a thing has to be solid, but it would seem that we have different interpretations of what "foundational" means for a public school child learning how to read.

I have strongly urged and advised the board to vote no on this proposal. I am happy to provide you with more information that I found, along with some more in depth details about some of the psychological dangers and ongoing academic dispute about the merits of "emotional constancy" values, or you can go to [HGF Portal](#) there should be a link to some of this research and a **full essay from me** that delves into more detail about how Skyrocket can be emotionally damaging *under normal circumstances* and with the addition of staff bonuses how it becomes worse. There is also a reference page there with further information about (what I would consider) a better approach to emotionally focused teaching, called

“S.E.L.” which stands for Social Emotional learning ([How Social-Emotional Learning Transforms Classrooms](#)), advocating for a more balanced, healthy, and professional way of addressing emotions in the classroom. Perhaps the board could approach the Hendricks Foundation about that instead? Thank you for your time, I'm here to answer any questions you might have via email to the best of my ability. I'm surprised Beloit Daily news didn't pick up on any of this. If no one wants to do the job, are you hiring?

Regards,

Rachel Riley

Henry Grant Foundation, Outreach Coordinator and
mom who did some research.