

The Greeks and Romans spoke of "A healthy mind in a healthy body."

The Duke of Wellington famously stated "The battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton."

I stand before you this evening not in my role of publisher of NewsLanc.com but as a father and grandfather of McCaskey students and graduates.

Athletics and physical fitness play a large role in retaining students, for socializing our youngsters, for teaching teamwork and leadership, in promoting healthy life styles, and fostering a sense of self worth.

Sadly, the athletic and physical fitness programs for our school system have fallen into disarray over the past few years, as is apparent from the high percentage of losses by most of our teams. As NewsLanc has reported, there was a breakdown in supervision and concern from the superintendant's office down.

Our teams need not always have winning seasons, but they should be able to win a significant numbers of games. Our inner city youngsters have enough problems of self esteem without playing for under- trained and non-motivating coaches, and, as a result, losing game after game.

Positive steps have already been taken by Superintendant Pedro Rivera: An interim athletic director is in place and a search has begun to hire a permanent replacement. My concern is that the critical importance of this hiring may not be fully recognized by this board and the administration.

The new athletic director will need to work with and gain the respect of gym teachers and coaches from elementary school through high school.

Rebuilding will be a several year commitment, and it will be a lonely job.

Reflect upon how much attention was given to attract excellent candidates for the school superintendant position. How much thought has this board given to obtaining the best possible athletic director?

An active search is needed for candidates that have proven themselves as effective athletic leaders elsewhere. Outreach should take place to encourage highly qualified applicants. To obtain the best person for this critical job, compensation of at least a hundred thousand dollars a year should be offered!

This arguably is the second most important job in the district. Finding and engaging the right person should be among the administration's and board's highest priorities.

*Robert Edwin Field, Lancaster Township 717-940-1221 Sept. 16, 2008*