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### School

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of at least 60 former and current Southside High School students who have battled cancer, said she would like Sherwood to improve communication between concerned parents, the administration and the school board.

"At first it was very good, and then it came to a halt," Patros said, noting that parents and city council members received no response to a second questionnaire letter they sent to the board about the cancer investigation.

Teachers are interested to see how Sherwood will approach negotiations with the union.

"She's in a very tough position," said Lynn Grottenhaler, president of the Elmira Teachers Association.

For the first time this year, union and district leadership agreed on a contract before the previous one expired, and both sides heralded negotiations as the firmliest ever. Union membership rejected the contract earlier this month.

"Joe (Patros) has demonstrated to us a real sense of leadership," Grottenhaler said. "Will he continue the atmosphere that we created at the end of the year of being able to work together?"

Grottenhaler noted that this collaborative approach does not yet extend from district leadership into schools, where the relationship between teachers and administrators is often adversarial. She would like to see Sherwood lead the way in closing this rift.

Many parents and community members want Sherwood's emphasis to be on academic performance, a goal Sherwood has already stated will be top priority.

Gail McGee, a former school board member with three children in district elementary schools, said she would like to see the district modify its approach to teaching students who have different learning styles.

"We need to match the kids who learn in the same way," she said. "If you have a kid who is having difficulty learning and haven't identified that, the results will be disappointing."

Anita Brooks-Lewis, a health care administrator and former school board member, said she hopes Sherwood will closely examine failure and dropout rates and re-examine the block schedule at Southside High School.

The schedule, in which students attend four 80-minute classes a day on a semester system, has been criticized for its perceived detrimental effect on test scores and at one point was voted down by Southside teachers.

Parent Joanne Lamourant Jr. also concerned about the \$88 million school construction project in the pipeline starts this year, and its effect on instruction as classes move temporarily to other schools in 2001.

Sherwood has been supervising a \$30 million project to demolish and rebuild schools in Cleveland Hill, a 1,000-student district in the Buffalo suburbs.

Sherwood could not be reached for this story. Her first day in the district is Wednesday.

Clipped By:



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