Winston Churchill said of democracy “many forms of government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time." As a superintendent of schools, it is my privilege to be able witness democracy in action. The power of elected officials, special interests, majority rule, public opinion, advocacy and apathy are all part of this imperfect democracy in which we live.

Our students are observing and participating in the democratic process. I am very proud of our students. They have tremendous capacity for compassion, understanding, and respect. They can communicate and advocate for that which impacts them; they have the capacity to understand the big picture, while being strongly loyal to their peers, their family and their community.

Advocacy is an important part of our democracy. Recently, we had a large number of students and community members attend a board of education meeting. The board of education is comprised of seven community members who are elected to three year terms to serve the school district and the school community as the district’s governance team. Generally, board meetings find five people or less in attendance along with our beloved West Winfield Star’s, Gene Doremus. The board welcomes the opportunity to hear from the community. The board generally meets twice a month on the second and fourth Tuesday. The meetings are open to the public; and the board’s agenda is published in advance of each meeting. Board members receive a packet of information that supports the meeting agenda five days before each meeting.

The publics input informs decision makers. There are several opportunities for the public to participate in the board’s meetings. The first is public comment. Community members seeking to offer public comment must make their request at least 24 hours in advance of a scheduled board meeting through the district clerk (Christine Roberts croberts@mmcsd.org). The second way for the community to participate occurs toward the end of the meeting and comment must be related to a particular item on the board’s agenda. It is important for the board to receive feedback about its work. Attending a board meeting and addressing the board is one way to share this feedback.

Another great way to offer feedback to the board is through a written communication, email or letter. The board of education has received many written communications from alumni and community members. The board is grateful for the messages received recently that relate the powerful impact that an educator and coach can have upon the lives of students and athletes. Each of these messages have been shared with the board. Our board members have the difficult responsibility, as unpaid elected officials, to weigh all of the information that it receives and to make decisions that it believes are in the best interest of the school district, its students, faculty and staff.

I believe that Mount Markham is an outstanding school district. I am privileged to have the opportunity to interact with and be impressed by our outstanding board members, community members, students, faculty and staff on a daily basis. I also get to observe and participate in the democratic process with its strengths and weaknesses; I would not have it any other way.