



Share Your Message

Show your community the great work taking place

We educate every child, every day.” That was the theme of my address at the State Education Convention in January as the incoming president of the Wisconsin Association of School Boards.

I am honored to serve as your president this year, whether you represent a small rural district, a growing suburban district or a large urban district, like mine in Green Bay.

Yes, we all have varying needs and challenges in our individual districts — all 424 of them in Wisconsin — but we all agree on our bottom line: Ensuring that each and every one of our students is successful.

Many of our graduates will attend four-year colleges or universities. Some will be better served by attendance at a two-year technical college. Others will chose the military or immediately enter the workforce.

Wisconsin has the second highest graduation rate in the country. Of that we should be enormously proud. However, we also have some of the highest achievement gaps in the country between our students of color and our white students. We also need to do better with our students who have special needs. The impact of poverty on our students’ learning ability is also troubling and needs greater community-wide attention.

Those are significant challenges. But let’s get back to my central theme: We educate every child, every day.

Nationwide, the attacks on public

education are unrelenting, and often the arguments advanced by critics of public education bear little resemblance to the truth. Yes, we have our challenges. But public schools across Wisconsin have never been more vibrant as we customize our educational offerings to ensure that all our students are successful.

Those who demonize public education think the answers to challenges faced by public education are private school vouchers, special education vouchers and charter schools run by private companies.

But we all take great pride that in public education we educate every child who attends our schools. We have a constitutional obligation to provide a high-quality education to every child and our teachers and staff members do that every day, to the best of their ability.

The naysayers of public education attempt to compare the quality and accessibility of private education with public education without similar student demographics or comparable accountability.

These attacks on public education have forced many of us to be reactive. No longer. We must become more proactive about the quality of public education and the opportunities we provide to all our students.

Share your message of innovative programming in your schools, not just with your parents but others in your community. Invite them into your schools. Build partnerships, especially

with your business leaders. Continue to advocate with your legislators.

But all this can be overwhelming in your part-time role as a school board member. WASB stands ready to help you become an advocate for public education. Visit wasb.org and click on Stand Up for Public Education. Learn how to share your success stories.

Also, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) has recently launched a similar effort. Search standup4publicschools.net to see how NSBA can assist you.

Remember in your messaging: We educate every child, every day. Every child, every day.

Dr. Lillian Katz is a renowned early childhood educator. This comment of hers typifies what we do in public education, “I believe that each of us must come to care about everyone else’s children. We must come to see that the well-being of our own individual children is intimately linked to the well-being of all other people’s children.”

“The good life for our own children,” Katz said, “can only be secured if it is also secured for all other people’s children.”

Every child, every day. Every child, every day.

Best of luck with your messaging! ■

Blecha is 2014 president of the WASB and a member of the Green Bay Area Public School Board.

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