



Be a “Cheerleader” for Your Schools

Share the good news of what is happening in you schools

Another school year is upon us and, hopefully, it’s been going smoothly. If the students in your district are like those in mine, they are energized and engaged, and classrooms and hallways are alive! As school board members, we play a critical role in building and sustaining that positive, invigorating environment. We must continually be one of our districts’ most vocal “cheerleaders.”

Serving as those “cheerleaders” doesn’t diminish in any way the importance of our other governance responsibilities. We need to draft and support district policies that encourage and facilitate increased student achievement. We need to ensure that district resources are utilized in the most effective and efficient way. We need to continually evaluate, enhance, and modify our district’s curriculum and programming. We need to stay focused on ensuring that every student leaves our schools college and career ready.

If anything, being a positive, vocal advocate for our district and the schools within it strengthens our ultimate success. If we aren’t proud of our students and their accomplishments and don’t promote and

celebrate the great work that’s happening in our classrooms every day, how can we expect others to positively support our public schools?

Considering the struggles that preceded and followed passage of the most recent state education budget and the increasing assaults against local governance and public education in particular, this year has been a challenging one indeed for all of us. Those challenges and the frustration they caused, however, did propel board members from throughout the state to actively engage in joint advocacy efforts in support of public education. Board members forged partnerships not only with each other but also with professional staff and community members around issues of common concern.

That joint advocacy must continue, for our work is far from being completed. If we truly believe that public education provides the underpinning for our democratic way of life, we can’t afford to stand still or even to diminish those efforts. Each of us must do our part. As Henry Ford once said, “You can’t build your reputation on what you’re going to do.”

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards and its Board of Directors has undertaken a new campaign, Stand Up for Public Education, designed to showcase the great things happening in our schools. A brief explanation of that campaign was provided at this year’s regional meetings, and further details will be announced on the WASB website, in this magazine, and through other avenues. As your president, I fully support this campaign and am confident that it will positively promote public education.

In closing, I encourage you to share the good news happening in your schools! Cheer for your “winning teams!” In doing so, all of us will learn from each other. More importantly, doing so will promote the value of public education to others in our local communities, throughout the state, and in the nation as a whole.

To quote NSBA President David Pickler, “Together we can; together we must.” Our students’, our communities’, and country’s well-being depend upon all of us doing so!

Thompson is president of the WASB and a member of the Waterloo School Board.

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