

Dave Considine: Appreciate teachers every week

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This week, May 8 through May 12, is National Teacher Appreciation Week. First, I want to thank all the educators across our state, and particularly around the 81st District, who work so hard to help our children learn and become better citizens. Our communities are better off because of your work, and I am proud and grateful to represent you.

Every day, teachers dedicate their time and energy to students in Baraboo, Sauk Prairie, Portage, Black Earth, North Freedom, and so many more communities. They often come in to work early and stay long after students leave. Many times, they use their own money to support their classrooms without even being asked.

Teachers face plenty of obstacles on the job: tight schedules, limited resources, large classes, testing requirements, and more. They are confronted with a growing movement, both in Wisconsin and nationally, that doesn't value their contributions or their role in our society. In our state, they've had their union voices drastically quieted and watched as the state severely cut aid to public schools. (Yes, there is an increase in Governor Walker's budget proposal this time around, but it is not enough to cover the damage from his previous cuts.) And this is on top of the normal workplace challenges we all face!

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And yet, they stay. In the Baraboo School District alone, at least 25 teachers are celebrating 5+ years of service to the district. Given the challenges I just described (and many more that I have personally experienced as a public educator), this is no

small feat. Despite all of these factors that might push them away, many Wisconsin educators stick around. They do not give up. Especially in public schools, they do their best to serve every child who comes through their door, no matter their situation or abilities.

Am I saying that all teachers are perfect? Of course not. Our school system will never be perfect. But our educators are working hard every day to do more with less, and we need to acknowledge that. Over the years, we've asked them to fill so many roles with so few extra resources: teacher, counselor, social worker, sometimes even parent or guardian. Teacher Appreciation Week is a great time to show respect for the educators in your life, and to encourage the amazing work they do to prepare our children to be better citizens. But it would be even better to appreciate them every week.

We can do this at the state level by increasing funding for public schools, rather than supporting private voucher schools at the public's expense. The legislature could work to reduce testing requirements so that our teachers and students don't have to focus all their energy on "teaching to the test". Instead of creating an endless stream of temporary pilot programs that we never really seem to revisit, we could show real leadership by implementing programs that are built to help sustain our public schools into the future.

What will you do to show your appreciation for the teachers in your life – including retired teachers – during National Teacher Appreciation Week? I encourage us all (myself included!) to go beyond a Facebook post or an op-ed piece. Send your child's teachers a handwritten thank-you note. Say hello and thank them if you see them out in the community. Or better yet, ask how you can help them! Ask what their classroom needs or if there's anything you can help your child with at home to make things easier at school. They will appreciate it more than you know.

— *Considine, D-Baraboo, represents the 81st Senate District.*