

Wisconsin Association of School Boards: Citizen engagement is democracy's bedrock

Posted on Thursday, Oct 14, 2021

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Public input is vital to public education. Children succeed when their parents and family members are closely involved in their education.

We are seeing and continuing to encourage parents and community members to exercise their First Amendment rights and make their voices heard. We applaud parents' dedication to their children's education and their willingness to speak with elected officials.

Unfortunately, there have been some isolated incidents in the state recently involving threats to the personal safety of board members. Such threats cannot and should not be tolerated. But we are heartened by the fact that, overall, interactions between school board members and community members have been civil and positive.

As the statewide association representing Wisconsin's 421 public school boards, our experience can help parents and community members be even more effective when interacting with their local school boards.

Recognize that it's normal and healthy for there to be a diversity of opinions — hearing different perspectives leads to better decisions and makes our communities stronger.

Attend board meetings and speak up during the public comment period as board policies allow. Send emails or make phone calls to your elected officials.

To help board members hear and understand the message you want to deliver, be clear and respectful in your communications. You can be passionate about the issue, but maintaining a civil, constructive dialogue leads to more informed decision making.

Recognize that boards frequently face difficult choices. The matters at hand can be complex with no easy answers in sight. But school board members share your goal — a successful public education system that helps all students excel.

Let's work together to make Wisconsin public schools the best they can be. Our children are watching.