

Supporting Public Schools is “A Plus” for Our Kids

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Sen. Jeff Smith shares his experience as a classroom volunteer and member of the Senate Committee on Education, learning about ways we can support our students in our public schools.

MADISON - Wisconsin's K-12 schools are the cornerstone of our communities. The education offered at our neighborhood public schools provides the opportunity for our kids to reach their full potential. It's our responsibility to ensure this opportunity is available for all Wisconsin students—regardless of zip code.

Of course, I knew this long before I was elected to the state legislature. My wife and life partner chose a career as a teacher. When our first child was born she let me know that I'd be responsible for volunteering in our daughter's classroom when she reached school age. Little did I realize what an impact that would have on my trajectory into politics.

I took that directive to heart and volunteered as much as the school would allow. Gaining an understanding of the needs of our schools, I was an active participant in the passage of an important referendum in the late 1990s.

It also led me to creating a parent advisory committee that still is involved with the Eau Claire School District. My activism in education morphed into engagement in the Wisconsin Parent Teacher Association Board, the Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools and an appointment on the Governor’s Task Force for Educational Excellence.



You can see how I spent years learning about how Wisconsin’s public schools prepare kids for the future. Over the years, I saw how things were changing with the drastic reforms being made that ultimately were hurting students in Wisconsin’s public schools and impacting property taxpayers.

It’s this experience I bring with me to the Senate Committee on Education. There’s a lot that’s been happening in this committee this legislative session, especially in response to the pandemic.

Unfortunately the bills being rushed through committee do nothing to address the serious challenges facing Wisconsin educators, parents and their children. To make matters worse, these bills carry a hefty price tag for Wisconsin taxpayers.

In early February, legislative Republicans introduced a package of bills that overhaul Wisconsin’s educational standards. Among the bills, one proposal gives more leeway to taxpayer-funded, unaccountable charter schools.

