

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



The Power of Having a Unifying Voice for Public Education

By Linda Leiding, MSBA President and Lake Crystal Wellcome Memorial (LCWM) School Board Member

So, to date myself, during my junior year in high school, my father brought home a calculator. It was about 8 inches by 12 inches, completed basic functions — addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division — and had a one-hour battery life. Big deal, right? But, at the time, it was considered to be state-of-the-art. I took it to school to use in my math class, and I was the envy of the class.

A debate quickly ensued: Should calculators be allowed in classrooms or not? On one side, educators feared that allowing calculators would diminish students' ability to learn core math skills. On the other hand, some saw the calculator as a valuable tool that could enhance learning. Eventually, it became clear that calculators were here to stay. Educators adapted and embraced their use.

Fast forward to 2024. Calculators are now as powerful as small computers, are recognized as the norm in advanced math and science classes, and are even used in standardized tests. What was once a controversial piece of equipment has evolved to be recognized as a beneficial tool.

Just as the debate over calculators evolved, so too must our conversations

about the future of public education. The challenges facing Minnesota's public schools today — adapting to new technologies, addressing disparities in resources, or navigating political pressures — require not just leadership, but unified leadership. School board members play a critical role in shaping the educational landscape, and our ability to present a united front can make all the difference.

We must recognize that adapting to new challenges requires working together toward the greater good. Despite differing perspectives, it is crucial for Minnesota's school board members to maintain and promote a common goal: to support and strengthen public education for every child in the state. This shared mission unites us as a voice for the voiceless. It is our collective responsibility to ensure the decisions we make will promote innovative and responsive education that will prepare our students for the future. Our unity in this common goal connects us and makes our mission powerful.

Public education is the bedrock of a thriving, equitable society. However, for public education to continue fulfilling its mission, we must advocate collectively, ensuring every child has access to quality learning opportunities. One of the pillars of the Minnesota School Boards

Association (MSBA) strategic plan is promoting a unified voice for public education. The MSBA staff members are actively working to collaborate with school districts and board members to craft a unified message to reach legislators and community members. When we speak with one voice, we can effectively advocate for the resources and policies that support quality education for all students. Whether it's pushing for equitable funding, promoting teacher development, or addressing the needs of underserved communities, a unified stance amplifies the message. It ensures public education remains a priority for policymakers and the public.

The decisions we make today will shape the lives of our future leaders. Our collective voice is powerful. When united, we are an unstoppable force for positive change, ensuring that every student in Minnesota has the opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed. Together, there is no limit to what we can accomplish for our students.

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