

## OP ED: Why Education Matters in 2023

Education is the foundation of everything. From the moment a baby is born, they are taught: who is in charge, if they are loved, when they get fed, what is dangerous, and what is safe.

With the arrival of a new year, often comes new priorities, and adjusted cultural climates. If the results of General Election 2022 taught us anything, it's that *education* is going to be more hot than ever. How do I know that education will still matter in 2023? Because it involves people and it has always mattered, not just now when it has been the trending thing to do.

Citizens all over Michigan are about to experience a fresh wave of education energy from the State Capitol in Lansing, Michigan. With the newly minted leaders, namely Democrats, who will now have State Senate and House majority and thus control the agenda of policy discussions, the unions and champions of progressive education are going to be on a euphoric high.

They will eagerly throw themselves into advancing and solidifying their influence in this marketplace. Should you find it - by chance - quiet in the first few weeks, recognize an absence of sound and movement only signals they are working quietly, behind the scenes or underground hoping you will not notice.

The question has never been "should citizens pay attention to what takes place in taxpayer-funded schools." Citizens have always been needed as school volunteers, board meeting attendees, employees, school board members and community partners. Unfortunately it took until the "Pandemic of 2020" for people's eyes to see and ears to hear what has been going on under our noses for a long time. Our lack of care - and engagement - has made way for where we are now.

The effort to improve education for our children does not stop at the border of 2022.

- The repercussions of kids out of school for so long will continue to be felt as students struggle to catch up: tutors will be needed
- The press to grow "identity" politics and woo our students to the transgender ideology in many classrooms will grow: school boards need to be held accountable
- The attempt to improve the appearance of the school data (results) will advance: we must ask pressing questions, "What are you not telling us? Are things really this good?"
- The effort to grow the influence of school administrators, school lawyers, counselors, and teachers will increase: we need to have individuals who are not beholden to the unions at the table
- The changing of the goalposts and standards will still be pursued: we need to let Elected Leaders and governing officials know *this is not okay and ask questions that let them know we care*

Citizens need to watch for activity, speak up with honor and class, seek ways to volunteer, serve where they are allowed, and find ways to build relationships with those who are in the Education arena. We should be pleasantly asking questions, listening, and responding with the inquiry, "*How can I be part of the solution?*"

Taxpayers, citizens, parents, grandparents are needed in engagement now more than ever. If Michigan citizens truly care about bringing good advancements to Michigan education, we cannot wait on the Michigan Legislature to change hands in 2 years. Starting now, we must:

- Attend school board meetings
- Ask teachers if you can help in classrooms
- Find educators there with right motives and find out how to serve and support them
- Track the State House and State Senate Education Committee hearings; attend these meetings; speak up with class, with facts, and in a professional decorum
- Tune into the State Board of Education monthly meetings
- Get ready to run for school board (or roll up your sleeves to help others step into this role)
- Support the schools that champion your ideals
- And build relationships with incredible organizations and movements that are working to bring solutions to the educational arena

We must be kind and patient with those who are still unaware. We must celebrate and support those in our schools who are doing all things well. And we must be willing to step into the gap to *help where we can* and not just point fingers at what is not being done right.

But above all, *don't stop engaging on the education issue*. Why? Because people matter. Our kids' lives matter. They need us. And it is our moral obligation in this hour of history not to disengage from the arena, but to ask "How can we serve more effectively" to help our nation succeed starting at the ground level: *among America's children*.

Education Matters now more than ever. Don't stop your pursuit of truth and love of those impacted by this arena, and especially the lives of our children. They need us. And our future needs them.

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