

WISCONSIN PUBLIC EDUCATION NETWORK RK

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Contact: Heather DuBois Bourenane, hdb@WisconsinNetwork.org, (608) 572-1696

Public education advocates celebrated as 2018 Friends of Education

Parents and supporters of Wisconsin's public schools gathered in Madison today as they were recognized by the Department of Public Instruction as a 2018 Friend of Education in the State of Education Address by Superintendent Tony Evers. With over 60 Network partners from Superior to Kenosha in attendance, the award was accepted by representatives of grassroots teams from around the state.

"We accept this award on behalf of the countless individuals and groups around the state who are standing up where they live for local students and demanding fairness for *all* of the 860,000 children in Wisconsin's public schools," said **Heather DuBois Bourenane**, proud parent of two students in Sun Prairie public schools and member of **Support Sun Prairie Schools** and the **Sun Prairie Action Resource Coalition (SPARC)**. She serves as executive director of the **Wisconsin Public Education Network (WPEN)**, a nonpartisan coalition of parents, students, educators, school board members, administrators, community leaders and education policy experts united behind one objective: uniting to ensure the success of the 860,000+ students attending Wisconsin public schools.

"WPEN has made it possible for citizens to care passionately and speak loudly in support of public schools, the heart of communities large and small in Wisconsin" said **Marcia Engen**, a retired Appleton Area School District teacher and member of **Fox Cities Advocates for Public Education**.

"This Network helps us do what our kids need us to do most: stand up for them" said **Jenni Hofschulte**, proud MPS parent and president of **Parents for Public Schools-Milwaukee**. "We can't do this work in silos. We need to connect. That's why our motto is 'local-level action, statewide impact.' We need to understand each other's challenges and then share ideas, expertise, so we can take action. When urban, rural and suburban parents unite to make real change, our communities take notice – and so do local and state level decision makers."

Eau Claire Area School District board member **Chris Hambuch-Boyle** has been a leader in supporting passage of board resolutions on public school funding and private school voucher transparency, and has relied on the Network both to draw support for local action and help amplify the message statewide. "I am grateful that the WPEN shines the light of day on public school funding in Wisconsin," she said. "And I'm grateful that this work is being recognized as more and more people begin to understand what's at stake for the public schools we love and depend on."

Melissa Prochaska, an educator and founding member of the **Community Advocates for Public Schools (CAPS)** team in Watertown, connected with the Network when her team was looking to get organized to stand up for local students. "Wisconsin Public Education Network has been instrumental in empowering advocates to take action locally and lift up the cornerstone of communities, our public schools," she said. "We put together an advocacy group in Watertown in under three weeks because of the unbelievable resources and network of WPEN. Our request for help was met with endless connections and people extending assistance from communities near and far all to help kids in our public schools. I've never experienced such a support system before." With a major operational referendum facing the district, she also sees the critical need for supporting local communities as they engage in local action: "This referendum is critical to the success of our children in Watertown. If it doesn't pass, our district faces a million dollar deficit and students will pay the price. It gives me hope to know that Wisconsin Public Education Network is working to both support us at the local level *and* to fight at the state level for the funding reform our schools so desperately need."

Wisconsin Public Education Network invites all who agree that *every* student in *every* public school deserves an equal shot at success to join and support them. [Follow WPEN on facebook](https://www.facebook.com/WisconsinPublicEducationNetwork), learn more at www.WisconsinNetwork.org or text GIVE to (608) 530-6667 to support thriving public schools.

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