

Hi, I'm Jim May. I'm a proud dad of two young kids currently in public schools. I'm also a proud member of ICPE.

I was honored when ICPE asked me to speak today, but I have to admit, I struggled with what to talk about. I don't work in education. There are speakers here today who dwarf my knowledge of the issues our schools and teachers face both locally and here at the Statehouse. I never even attended public school as a kid. I'm just a dad who wants my kids and all the other kids in our state to have access to a high-quality public education. So I thought I'd share how our local school board election brought me to this cause.

Growing up, I attended private evangelical schools from pre-k all the way through my high school graduation. And then I spent the next decade having to unlearn a lot of things. I was dismayed to find that across many subjects, the schools that I had attended often taught opinions as facts and basic, long-established facts as opinions.

When my wife and I began planning to start a family, there was no question we wanted a public school education for our children. We lived in a district known for its excellent schools. At the time, we thought that was all we had to do to ensure our kids would get a high-quality public education.

Then, in 2022, when we started doing research for our school board election, we discovered a slate of candidates representing a movement that claimed our schools were in rapid decline. That movement said reading and math proficiency were crashing. Teachers were supposedly trying to turn kids gay or change their genders. White kids were being shamed for their skin color. Libraries were full of pornography. There was even nonsense about litter boxes.

As engaged parents, we immediately recognized these claims as absurd propaganda, but we were alarmed to see them gaining traction. When I spoke up publicly in opposition to those candidates, I quickly discovered their movement, which claims to be centered on parents' rights, had no interest in listening to parents who didn't share their agenda. So I ended up launching a website to use data to push back against the misinformation they were spreading in our community.

I soon came to realize that our schools weren't just facing extremists trying to take over our local board, but the ongoing statewide and national attacks that you all have been fighting back against for years. And getting involved locally was my first step in connecting with all kinds of wonderful people, including other concerned parents and community members, educators, members of our local government and the phenomenal team at ICPE.

If there's one thing I've learned over the past year and a half, it's just how important it is to use our voices, especially for those of us who are parents of kids currently in the schools. I believe, and the data supports the idea, that the default position of the vast majority of Hoosiers is to support public education. Unfortunately, so many simply aren't aware of the threats it faces.

There are also a lot of people whose kids have long graduated, who are susceptible to falling for the propaganda targeting our schools and teachers. They need to hear from current parents about our own positive experiences.

When I talk to other parents about the attacks on our schools, I often hear how discouraged they are by the misinformation and propaganda. To which I counter that we should be deeply encouraged by the incredible amount of effort that goes into spreading those lies. It tells us that the people attacking public education know that they can't win with the truth. And it's up to us to use our voices to spread that truth.

Thank you to ICPE and ISTA for organizing today's event and to each of you who took the time to come down to support our schools. For those who have meetings with legislators this afternoon, I know ICPE already provided some great talking points and that it's not a budget year, but I'll mention I also just posted research showing that since our state government embraced the dogma of school choice, private school tuitions have increased at more than twice the rate of public school funding. You can find that data on [carmelschoolsdad.com](http://carmelschoolsdad.com) if it's something you'd like to mention.

Thank you again.

