

Introductory remarks:

As you all know *because you are here*, there is a LOT at stake. Public education in Indiana has been under attack for well over a decade now. When this attack first began, when vouchers were enacted by the state legislature, and when test-driven accountability began measuring and sorting our kids, teachers, and schools by these absurd standardized tests, many educators and parents said, “I don’t want to get political.” Well, politics, it turns out, is not just partisan polarizing. **Politics is about our relationship to power.** We have 3 of our ICPE Board members who, in particular, can tell you about this firsthand.

Dr. Suellen Reed has famously said, “Children do not come to schools with R’s or D’s stamped on their foreheads. We must educate **all** students.” Dr. Reed was a Republican serving our children as state superintendent under a Democrat governor— before extremists took power, a supermajority power, and apparently stopped caring about educating ALL kids.

Then we also have the wonderful & tireless Glenda Ritz on our Board, who, too, knows a little about power plays over education policy. Glenda, as you recall, was a Democrat state superintendent who, despite being outspent by her opponent, Tony Bennett, who ran with 5x the amount of money Glenda had, She received *tens of thousands of votes* more than even our then-governor (he who shall not be named—ahem, Mike Pence) and she heroically fought for our public schools, our teachers and our kids in the midst of that horrible power struggle.

These former state superintendents of public instruction—back when we were *allowed* the democratic act of VOTING for our state superintendent— can tell you all about the political power struggle to defend our public schools. And then there’s our Board member *emeritus*, Dr. Jennifer McCormick, Indiana’s LAST ELECTED state superintendent and our NEXT GOVERNOR, ... who came into that role of superintendent as a Republican and left that office as a Democrat because she knows that we must always, always, be about KIDS FIRST. Not some kids. Not the kids who win the lottery both literally and figuratively, but ALL KIDS FIRST. She also knows that it is not just public education which is under attack, but, as goes this cornerstone holding it up, so goes DEMOCRACY. You will hear directly from her about this soon!

Today we are going to help you learn how you can be an informed participant of that democracy by sharing some tools we have for you.

Remarks on politics in education

By the way, our friends in Indianapolis and Gary and other places in Indiana, know, and remind us, that it has **not** been a one-sided, partisan attack on public schools when it comes to local city politics. They know well the outsourcing, segregation, and experimenting done in the name of our most vulnerable children and families, and the trauma of the closing of their local public schools. We are very mindful about recognizing that here at ICPE. We know that it has been a bipartisan attempt to privatize public schools and that it will take a bipartisan effort to protect and

improve them. **But** it IS true that, statewide we DO have entrenched extremist power in one party. We must help people understand that it will take a concerted effort, regardless of party, to break that stranglehold of power, and turn our state into a place where *all* people stand for kids first. We have public schools that are doing their best to serve all children, students that come to school with all kinds of needs, on budgets that are very tight. What could these schools do, what could teachers be paid, if the money spent on vouchers was put into the public school funding formula and into the PUBLIC schools struggling all over the state?

Concluding remarks:

As has been said earlier, so much is on the line this November.

We have a supermajority in the Statehouse that would rather put our tax dollars into an entitlement program for the wealthy than support our teachers with the pay they deserve or provide preschool for our youngest, most vulnerable kids. We have a supermajority that decided that we don't deserve the RIGHT to elect the person who is the leader of education in the state, the superintendent of public instruction and, instead, has concentrated all of the power over the state board of education, the higher education and career education, within the Governor's office. We have a legislature that bullies and targets certain populations of our kids, is determined to whitewash history, keeping kids from books in which they see themselves or their families, keeping kids from learning the truth in history and is more concerned with repealing child labor laws that allowing teachers to teach and kids to learn how to think, how to respect differences and how to care for one another. It is time for a change.

We love our public schools and we vote. This is the message we need to spread, loud and clear, and take with us into the voting booth this fall.

Here's where you come in. We really need you. Any amount of membership or donation you can give allows us to be more effective both in our advocacy and our voice at the statehouse. This is a grassroots movement. We have a list of organizations on our website who share our vision for a strong, well funded public education system which serves all children. We share a vision to ensure that the promise of public education is one that is fulfilled for every single Hoosier child. We must work to make that promise a reality. Public schools unite us— and this country, at this point in history, is bone weary of the factions, the tribalism, the meanness, the hate, the purity tests, the divisions. We want to be connected. We want respect and care. We want a COMMON GOOD. It is time to come together. For our kids and our future.

As Jennifer would say, “LETS Gooooooo!”