

SCHOOL DISTRICT
OF WAUKESHA

Board resolution emphasizes role of parents

By Hunter Turpin
hturpin@conley.net.com
262-513-2681

WAUKESHA — Should parents be considered primary decision makers and mentors as it pertains to a child's education? The School District of Waukesha Board of Education voted to approve the "Parental Rights and Transparency" resolution, which is meant to guide and inform future discussion and policies based on what the board believes to be true, according to Board President Kelly Piacsek.

"The resolution will establish guiding principles for the development, confirmation or modification of policies and procedures in areas of emerging parental concern," the School District of Waukesha said in a statement Thursday. "In addition, the resolution directs the superintendent to develop or confirm procedures to fully protect these rights of district parents and their children to the extent allowed by state and federal law."

The resolution is divided into two primary parts. The first section reads like a bill of rights for parents, such as "Parents play the primary role as decision makers in the student's K-12 educational experience" and "Student physical safety is a district priority"—things the board believes to be true, Piacsek said. There are 12 of these in total.

The second section includes things the board wishes to be true or want to be enacted. These parental rights, the document says, relate to curriculum appropriateness and transparency, student privacy and safety, deeply held family values, and student personal and gender identity.

See **RESOLUTION**, PAGE 2A

Resolution

From Page 1A

The resolution concludes by calling on state and federal-level officials to enhance legislation to protect these parental rights.

The full resolution can be found at bit.ly/3w05pN0.

Public response

At the beginning of the meeting, over 20 people spoke regarding the resolution.

"I encourage (the board) to do what is right and ignore the attacks coming from a very vocal minority and the woke," said resident Keith Best. "Stay strong. Waukesha strong."

Supporters said parents know their children best and the resolution is putting common-sense ideas on paper.

Of those who spoke against it, some were concerned that the ordinance didn't support teachers and others said it wasn't necessary as parents are guaranteed rights elsewhere. However, the most common concern was that the resolution would have negative effects, maybe even deadly effects, on LGBT+ students who can only identify with their chosen gender or sexuality at school due to circumstances at home.

"I think that comment about 'pretending to be something they are not' illustrates how there are parents and a board member, at least one, who does not understand what it means to be a transgender or non-binary youth," community member Laurel Peterson said, quoting a board member from a previous meeting.

Board discussion

The board unanimously passed the resolution, making only minor grammatical changes.

"I have heard that this resolution could result in the 'outing' of students to their family members," said board member Corey Montiho. "That can be a dangerous thing because parents, as this resolution talks about,

have the right to their own ideas on how to raise their children and what their beliefs are, and once we get into that it can be dangerous territory."

Montiho said he has read the resolution and doesn't think it requires or insinuates that district employees would have to "out" students.

"I don't see anything that says these educators and staff have to notify parents (of name or pronoun changes)," Montiho said. "That being said, maybe we should ...be clear on what happens when that does happen if this is adopted, should there be a prohibition in this policy that says 'we do not out students.' We're in the business of educating students, not raising them."

The resolution says "District staff will not be permitted to call a minor students by names, nicknames or other pronouns other than commonly shortened or abbreviated full names ... or pronouns consistent with the student's biological sex, without written permission from the parent."

Some board members were concerned about calling on higher governments to change legislation, saying it was unnecessary at this point. But Piacsek explained her rationale, citing an example of where state statute and the School Board don't line up.

Deputy Superintendent Joe Koch explained that schools and staff do what they are allowed under law and, within the last several years, instruction from the Department of Education, Department of Public Instruction, and other state and federal agencies has been changing on issues of gender identity.

"If a student comes for-

ward with a gender identity question, staff know that we have student services staff in all our schools that can help and assist in that conversation," Koch said. "There have been instances where plans have been put in place to help support students, those plans are put in place with the knowledge of the parent."

Ultimately, board members said students are only in school for a fraction of their lives and parents are the primary decision makers and mentors.

"The right and the fundamental leadership, guardianship of their minor child is the parent," board member Karrie Kozlowski. "Our staff are not trained, qualified, set to be able to influence, coach, guide that, and while this information may come forth to them, to me, they have an absolute responsibility, they must report this to the parent."

Kozlowski said the district should be building a partnership with parents, and this resolution can help.

"It's hard to build a partnership when the execution on one side is withholding information on a minor child that, by definition, is not developed or mature enough on many of these things to go without the act of dedicated support, parental involvement or a support network," she said.

The resolution will be effective March 1, according to the district.



The FREEMAN

A Trusted News Source Since 1859

801 N. Barstow St., P.O. Box 7,
Waukesha, WI 53187

262-542-2500

Hours: M-F 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Subscription Rates
 • By in-county mail
 13 weeks.....\$72
 26 weeks.....\$138
 52 weeks.....\$264
 • Out-of-county mail
 13 weeks.....\$91.50
 26 weeks.....\$180
 52 weeks.....\$354
 In-County EZ Buy
\$21 per month with credit card
 Out-of-County EZ Buy
\$28 per month with credit card
 E-edition
\$14.75 a month with credit card

Circulation Dept.
 To reach the Circulation Department

Lottery

Thursday, Jan. 12
WISCONSIN

Daily Pick 3	0-8-1
Daily Pick 4	0-6-0-3
SuperCash	12-14-18-23-25-31
SuperCash Doubler:	No
Badger 5	11-18-22-25-27