



Photo by [Library of Congress](#)

WHAT WOULD ABE LINCOLN THINK ABOUT OUR SCHOOLS

And the importance of a good education

By Nancy Mercante, Citizens for Delaware Schools
As it appeared in *A Better Delaware* blog in March 2024

Perhaps Abraham Lincoln gave the best description of the underlying authority of our government in his Gettysburg Address when he said it was “of the people, by the people and for the people”. Of all the layers of today’s government from federal, state, county, and city, the one intended to function closest to the people is the local school board, elected to work on behalf of and with parents in overseeing the education of their children.

This function is so important on so many levels -- children, families, future work force, and the nation -- that it seems unconscionable for a community not to take an active interest in the workings and performance of the school board. But here we are in Delaware where the voter turnout in school board elections is a miserable average of five percent.

Effectively accountable only at the ballot box at election time, school boards members wield considerable power over the education and social development of children. While their primary function is to elect and oversee the superintendent, let’s drill down on what that includes.

- *Allocation and oversight of millions of taxpayer dollars.*
- *Construction and maintenance of extensive infrastructure.*
- *Selection and implementation of curriculum and textbooks.*
- *Ensuring the safety of students and teachers.*
- *Maximizing student outcomes to the highest degree.*
- *Promoting the involvement of parents and community in education.*
- *Personnel and Human Resource management.*

So, let’s examine one reason why voter turnout is so low when the stakes are so high. Could it be that every aspect of our school system is working so well that we face the threat of being overrun with doctors and rocket scientists? Unfortunately, that is not the case.

Here are the sad facts based on information taken from the Delaware Dept. of Education and National Assessment of Educational Progress:

- *Delaware spent an average of \$20,230 per student in 2023.*
 - *13th highest in the nation.*
- *Students being promoted through Delaware’s schools simply cannot read, write, and do math at grade level.*

Nationally, Delaware ranked:

 - *47th in fourth grade math*
 - *46th in sixth grade reading*
 - *45th in eighth grade math and reading*

High cost and poor outcomes! Are we getting what we are paying for and what must we do?

Study the issues, follow the candidates, spread the word, and cast an informed vote.

CitizensforDelawareSchools.org (C4DS) is providing information about the school board candidates in a Voters Guide published on this website. Candidates were asked to submit their positions on key issues in their own words by March 28th.

Honest Abe once said, "Upon the subject of education, ...I can only say that I view it as the most important subject which we, as a people, can be engaged in". Surely, he was right! The United States of America can only survive with an involved and informed electorate.

Get out and vote in the School Board elections on May 14th.