

Guest Editorial

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Students as leaders

A guest editorial by State Superintendent Tony Evers

When most of us harken back to our days spent in school, we recall a time when life was a little simpler.

I remember the joy that learning brought to me and the teachers and peers who had such a profound influence on my life.

But thinking back has brought many of us, myself included, to a painful realization. This current generation of students has grown up in a world where violent acts of terror in our schools have always been a risk. Active shooter drills are scheduled right alongside tornado and fire drills as part of the normal school calendar. This is a tough pill to swallow.

But despite what you might hear about this generation, when I talk to our kids, they give me tremendous hope for our future. What we've seen on the news and in our social media feeds in the past week – it's the kind of passion, poise, and leadership I see every time I'm in a school. These kids, whether they're from Florida or Wisconsin, are leading the nation in a critical discussion about school safety.

Our students are engaged, articulate, and passionate about change. They're working together with adults to build a better world. They're taking part in the democratic process and demonstrating the importance of civic activity. And up in Somerset, there's a [young man engineering safety solutions designed to protect his peers](#).

Importantly, they're not alone. Alongside those kids are their educators. Educators who are again being called upon to thread the needle on a matter of great difficulty. And as always, they're rising to the occasion to support their students.

Despite the impressive display of leadership from our kids, we are without any substantive change in school-based gun violence. I refuse to believe the only answer to this troubling trend is arming our teachers or turning our schools into reverse-engineered prisons. We cannot afford to fail another generation with our bickering and finger-pointing. Instead, let's listen to the emerging experts on this subject – our young people.

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NOTES: More information about Somerset student Justin Rivard's "[JustinKase](#)" [doorstop](#) is available on the [USA Today website](#). This editorial is available electronically at <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2018-24.pdf>.