

'Change is Coming'

The first National Principal of the Year **Janie Hatton** calls on school leaders to focus on equity, acceptance and collaboration

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Janie Hatton, a former principal with Milwaukee Public Schools and the first National Principal of the Year, urged school board members to meet the social and cultural changes facing school districts and communities across the state.

Those changes include expanding communities of underrepresented students, the evolving state and definition of the family, and, among other issues, the continued struggle of equality for all. Hatton said school leaders can set a tone of acceptance and equality in their communities by adopting policy that is supportive of all students, regardless of their background or economic situation.

"Everyone needs to see the school district as the beacon of hope and change," Hatton said. "Your communities need you. You are capable, competent school board members willing to face hard situations."

Hatton added that this important work is crucial for all communities, including the state's smaller, rural school districts.

"Change is coming," Hatton said. "We love our little towns but we want them to be sustainable not status quo. If you want that small town to thrive, you have to put the work in now."

To be sustainable, Hatton said, our schools need to focus on equity, assimilation, acculturation, restorative justice, and closing the opportunity gap. "These are critical words for a critical time," she said.

Hatton also encouraged school districts to work with organizations

and businesses in their communities and to collaborate with area school districts.

"As leaders, we need to include other institutions in our communities," Hatton said. "Are we talking to our health care providers, police, churches, and business? We need to build partnerships based on equity."

As a longtime educator and principal, Hatton has seen the good that comes out of education. She has seen many of her students go on to post-secondary education, do good work, and give back to their communities. Hatton emphasized that school leadership is an important responsibility.



"Everyone needs to see the school district as the beacon of hope and change."

It has the power to impact students and set them up for success.

"What you do for children matters," she said. "They will remember what you did and how you did it." ■



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