



Board members discussed their concerns with Steve Tyink, founder of Attach, a design firm that consults with companies and other organizations, including school districts, on making quality improvements and "better attachments with their customers."

One of Supt. Lee Allinger's goals for the 2007-08 is to improve community "engagement" in the schools.

Tyink, an Appleton parent, has offered to work with the district on a pro bono basis, helping the board and staff look at ways to help the district grow and continue carving out its own niche.

Just plain satisfying "customers" isn't enough anymore, Tyink said. "Great school systems are figuring out how to take it to the next level."

He advised the board to preserve the core of what it does well and "call out for differences that continue to separate and differentiate the district from the rest."

That effort could begin with something as simple as the welcome mat school staffs put out. First impressions are critical, Tyink said, from the greeting a school secretary gives first-time visitors, to the way in which principals give prospective families school tours.