

“Local Control Depends on Trust”

2016 WASB President **Stu Olson** urges school leaders to build trust

When Stu Olson took office as WASB president in January 2016, he spoke about the importance of building trust in our schools and communities. Unbeknownst to him, trust would become a buzzword in the coming year.

“From last January to now, that word ‘trust’ has been in the news like never before,” Olson said. “I’ve got a feeling we’ll hear it a lot in 2017 too.”

In the realm of public education, there are some troubling trends regarding trust. Olson cited the PDK/Gallup Poll, which found that parents generally put their local schools in high regard but give lower grades to the national institution of public education.

At the state level, Olson noted Governor Scott Walker’s support of school choice. “When Governor Walker talks about public education, his catchphrase is, ‘I trust parents,’” Olson said. “It’s a winning message that resonates with parents, but it poses a challenge, too, by implying that the public education establishment doesn’t trust parents.”

Olson pointed to the proliferation of charter schools, home schooling,

and vouchers as another example of a lack of trust in public education. Data on the topic, while scarce, shows that some parents who choose alternatives to public education cite factors such as academics and safety. However, a majority of parents who choose alternatives to public education say that public schools don’t support the morals and values they are trying to teach their children.

“That’s not the main reason we would prefer to hear,” Olson said. “It’s not the most tangible. It’s not something we want to talk about much ... Suffice it to say, if we want to rebuild trust and have a single public education system going forward, we need to address that.”

To move forward, Olson said work needs to be done in our local school districts. Olson said one small step school leaders can take is to examine school policy such as those regarding teaching controversial topics and how the district addresses parental input on these issues. “Ask yourself: Does our district’s version inspire trust in parents, or raise eyebrows?”

Olson concluded by addressing the increasing threat of school



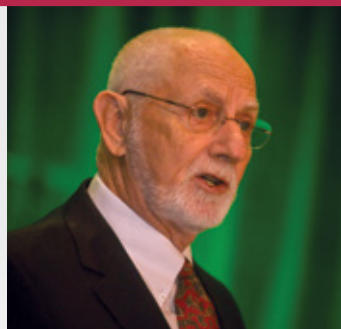
vouchers on public education. While there are many factors school leaders can’t control, one thing they can influence is local and state politics. Olson urged school leaders to talk with and develop relationships with their legislators.

“Trust depends on local control, and local control depends on trust,” Olson said. “Local control is safe to the extent the Legislature trusts school boards to govern their districts. The WASB is a bulwark for local control, but the strongest influence lies with each of you talking with your legislators.” ■

McCloskey Elected to Lead WASB in 2017

Capt. Terry McCloskey, USN Retired, WASB Region 2 director, was elected by the WASB Board of Directors as the 2017 WASB President. McCloskey is a member of the Three Lakes School Board.

Region 6 director Mary Jo Rozmenoski, president of the Black River Falls School Board, was elected 1st Vice President. Brett Hyde, region 11 director and a member of the Muskego-Norway School Board, was elected 2nd Vice President.



Board Member Wins Complimentary Registration

Daniel Pulver, a member of the Pardeeville School Board, won a complimentary registration to 2018 State Education Convention. The WASB handed out tickets to board members at its Regional Meetings last fall. School board members entered those tickets into a drawing in the Sustainable Schools Pavilion in the convention exhibit hall and Pulver’s ticketed was selected. Thanks to those school board members who participated!

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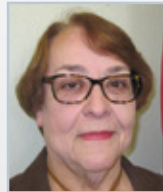
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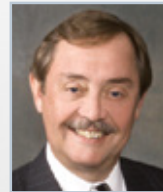
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