



## Addressing the Teacher Shortage Issue

As we know all too well, teacher shortage issues are a challenge facing school districts, rural and urban, in all corners of our state. And it looks like it is going to get even more challenging. A recent report from the Public Policy Forum, a non-profit independent research organization based in Milwaukee, found that enrollment in teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities in the Midwest, including Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin have all experienced a reduction in enrollments. The drop has been particularly precipitous for Illinois which has seen a 57 percent decrease of enrollment in its teacher preparation programs from 2008-09 to 2013-14. And we're hearing similar stories nationwide.

The Public Policy Forum's report illustrated how school districts in the Milwaukee metro area have been losing a significant number of teachers. While the report focused on the Milwaukee area, it also included teacher pipeline statistics and analysis for the State of Wisconsin as a whole. With their permission, we've included a summary of those statewide statistics in this issue of the *Wisconsin School News*. We hope you find it informative.

In conjunction with the release of the study, the Public Policy Forum held a panel discussion on the issues at play affecting teacher shortage in Wisconsin. Dr. Pat Greco, superintendent of the Menomonee Falls School District, talked about the

challenge of retaining good educators in a district with declining enrollment and nearby districts competing for teachers.

"We steal (teachers) from one another," Greco said. "That doesn't create a pipeline plan. It actually creates part of the edge in the market."

Greco added that each school year, she is contacted by some of the district's best educators who are considering leaving for a job offer from another district.

Another panelist, John Peacock, a mathematics teacher for Milwaukee Public Schools, talked about the reasons he has considered leaving the profession, including an increased work load, shifting approaches to pedagogy (such as Common Core State Standards and standards-based grading), and, among other issues, essentially receiving a pay freeze. Peacock added that these issues are taking teachers farther away from connecting with students.

"In many ways, we've become a checklist technician," Peacock said.

The question of how we can attract and retain quality teachers is a complicated one and there is no simple solution. Public policy makers at all levels must come together to find long-term solutions.

The WASB has been working with school districts across the state to create compensation systems aimed at attracting and retaining educators. The Department of Public Instruction has surveyed districts on what they are doing to address teacher shortage

issues and has a series of regional meetings scheduled to discuss the feedback. We look forward to those discussions and hope they will provide a foundation to jump start a broader conversation about what we can do in Wisconsin to elevate the teaching profession.

While the teacher shortage issue looms large, we're also contending with a number of other policy changes at the federal level. In mid-June, the WASB Board of Directors Executive Committee, our Government Relations staff, and I will be traveling to Washington, D.C. for the National School Boards Association's Advocacy Institute to represent Wisconsin school boards and meet with our congressional delegation. We will report more on this event in the next issue of *Wisconsin School News*, but the focus will be on discussing implementation of the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which is going through the regulatory drafting process, the Child Nutrition Act reauthorization, the Perkins Career and Technical Education reauthorization, and federal funding of our schools.

Please watch for more information from the WASB. We likely will be asking districts to provide information to your congressional representatives on the impact of these laws on your districts in order to shape the reauthorizations and push for increased investments in special education and Title I funding. Stay tuned. ■

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