

New Board Members, Referendums, and Leadership

WASB Spring Academy focused on issues for new and experienced school board members

The WASB Spring Academy, which took place May 3 in Wisconsin Dells, covered a variety of topics and issues crucial to board service. The event featured three separate tracks of programming – Introduction to Board Service, Referendum Pathway, and Leadership.

The Introduction to Board Service track included sessions focused on school board basics. Sessions covered policy development, Wisconsin school finance, board member resources at the Department of Public Instruction, and the legal authority and duties of Wisconsin school boards.

In the session on school board policy development, WASB Legal and Policy Services Counsel Dan Mallin pointed out that successful policy development work requires both content expertise and process expertise. In other words, school board members need to understand not only what issues must be covered in its policy book but also how to best address those issues through effective policy making.

“The value of process expertise is often overlooked,” Mallin said.

“One important function that a good process serves is to ensure that an appropriate level of content expertise is applied to each policy challenge.”

In a recent survey of WASB members, referendum planning was cited as one of the most important communication/public relations topics facing districts this year. To help with this issue, the WASB held a Referendum Pathway at the Spring

Academy. A two-part session, led by WASB consultants, examined facility and financial assessments and plans, which are crucial to complete before deciding whether or not a district is ready to go to referendum.

This track included a session on legal and policy considerations related to school referendums. In discussing advocacy of a referendum question, WASB Staff Counsel, Ben Richter, reminded attendees that school board members, as individuals, can advocate for a referendum.

“While a board as a whole may not spend public funds to advocate one way or another for a referendum, individual board members do not give up their right to advocate or campaign for or against a referendum on their own time,” Richter said.

WASB Consultants Louis Birchbauer, Dennis Richards, Al Brown and George Zimmer led three sessions as part of a Leadership track for experienced school board members. The sessions delved into strategies for effective board leadership, school board governance, and a session on new brain research and what it means for curriculum.

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In his session on strategies for effective board leadership, Birchbauer laid out three main components for success.

“School board leadership has three basic components: communication — giving and receiving of information; relationships — making connections; and trust — firm belief or



WASB Consultant Roger Price leads a session at the WASB Spring Academy. The event featured separate tracks of programming focused on new school board members, school referendums, and leadership issues.

confidence by others in your honesty, integrity, reliability, and justice when dealing with issues,” Birchbauer said. “All other board member traits are enhanced by these three components.”

WASB Executive Director John Ashley opened the event with a brief welcome message that included insight into the elements necessary to

provide a positive environment for effective governance to take

place. Dan Rossmiller, director of government relations, wrapped up the 2014 Spring Academy with an update on legislative issues related to school boards.

To view presentations from this event, visit wasb.org. Select “Meetings & Events” and then “Event Recaps.” □



Recognize Your Business Partners

The WASB is accepting nominations for the 2014 Business Honor Roll. Recognize businesses or organizations that have supported your schools in the past year.

Member school boards can nominate up to five local businesses, including newspapers or other media, that have been helpful to your school district over the past year.

Nominated businesses will be posted at wasb.org. Districts will be provided a press release and certificate to present to your partner businesses.

To nominate a business, visit wasb.org. Select "Communications" and then "Business Honor Roll." □

Nominations close Friday, August 15, 2014.

Upcoming Event: **Summer Leadership Institute**

Event will focus on accountability, finance, and governance issues

The Summer Leadership Institute, taking place August 2 at the Crowne Plaza in Madison, aims to provide school board members with the tools and knowledge to successfully lead your school district and improve board governance.

This all-day event provides school leaders with an opportunity to network with colleagues from around the state and get up-to-date information on a range of school leadership issues. The Summer Leadership Institute will have three separate tracks of programming: "School Finance," "Accountability," and "Governance."

The School Finance track will begin by having attendees participate in the Investing in Wisconsin Public Schools interactive tool that helps participants comprehend the variables, stakeholders and nuances of financing Wisconsin's public schools. Other sessions in the school finance track include in-depth sessions on the school district budget cycle and Wisconsin's school finance system.

The Accountability track features experts from the Department of Public Instruction and the WASB. Sessions will provide an update on the educator effectiveness

initiative and discuss implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Other sessions include what school board members need to know about assessments and evaluations, and take a look at school and district accountability. This track will wrap up with a session led by WASB Consultants Al Brown and Louis Birchbauer on effectively interpreting, presenting, and using data.

School board members interested in developing leadership strategies to lead your school board or to improve school board governance should attend the Leadership track. WASB consultants, who have many years of experience in school leadership positions, will provide insight on important issues and strategies. One session will address how different leadership styles affect the quality and impression of your decision making. Other sessions will examine school board practices and protocols to keep school boards focused on key leadership roles and issues, and communicating and building trust.

Attend one track or sessions in multiple tracks to customize your learning. For more information, visit wasb.org. □