

# Every Child, Every Day

*2014 WASB President Mike Blecha celebrates the role of public schools and urges school leaders to advocate for their schools*

In a passionate address wrapping up his year as WASB President, Mike Blecha celebrated the important role public schools play in “educating every child, every day.”

Blecha proudly pointed out that public schools educate those students going on to college, technical college, the military, and careers. Public schools also educate and support those students with special needs, students in poverty, homeless students, and students with little or no English.

“We educate them all,” Blecha said. “We don’t tell them, ‘Sorry we don’t have a program for you, you’d be better served elsewhere.’”

Blecha listed several examples of Wisconsin public schools building partnerships in an effort to bring more opportunities to students. Several examples included school districts working with business, higher education, and community organizations to connect students to career pathways and post-secondary opportunities. Another example was a diverse school district working with stakeholders to identify the root causes of underachievement.

“We must continue to convince parents and their students that their school of choice and their best chance at academic success is their local, public school,” Blecha said.

Not only do school districts need to refocus and reinvent themselves, but, Blecha said, the WASB is also evaluating its services and value to members. After input from the WASB Board of Directors, it was decided that the organization needs to focus on advocacy and board governance.

In the case of advocacy, Blecha said all school leaders, not just WASB staff need to be involved.

“Advocacy means far more than sending our lobbyist into the Capitol,” Blecha said. “Advocacy



means standing up for the constitutional guarantee for all students to be provided a free and equitable public education.”

Unfortunately, at this time, advocating for public education often means opposing certain mandates. Blecha warned that the WASB and school leaders cannot build a platform on negativity.

“If WASB becomes an organization that is simply opposed to certain things — opposed to private and religious school vouchers, opposed to special education vouchers, opposed to privatizing the charter school process — we become less effective,” he said.

However, Blecha made clear that the WASB will continue to advocate

against these issues but also support those initiatives that help public education.

“We will continue to lobby on those critical issues along with advocating for the right for local school districts to implement the Common Core, and for a fair and equitable accountability system that assists, not demonizes struggling schools,” he said.

Blecha left school leaders with a pertinent quote from Tom Brokaw, a graduate of a public school in North Dakota.

“Public education is the engine that moves us as a society to a common destiny,” he said “It is in public education, Brokaw said, that the American dream begins to take shape.” ■

## Owens to Lead WASB in 2015

**WASB Region 9 Director Wanda Owens** was elected by the WASB Board of Directors as the 2015 WASB President. Owens is a member of the Barneveld School District.

Region 1 Director, Stu Olson, a school board member in the Shell Lake School District, was elected 1st Vice President. Capt. Terry McCloskey, USN Retired, a school board member in the Three Lakes School District, Region 2 Director was elected 2nd Vice President.

# 2015 WASB Board of Directors



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## Share your success. Submit a proposal.

The WASB is inviting school districts to submit a proposal to present a one-hour session at the 2015 Summer Leadership Institute, taking place July 18 in Green Lake. Help other districts learn from your success.

We're looking for sessions on the following:

- Leadership
- Community engagement
- Student achievement
- School funding

**Presenters receive complimentary registration.**

