

## Advocating for Public Education

*School leaders push for restoring school funding and removing private school voucher expansion*

School board members and district administrators convened in Madison on March 18 for the WASB Day at the Capitol. School leaders learned about the 2015-17 state budget proposal and how it affects school funding, strategized about how to deliver their message to the state capitol, and met with legislators.

WASB President Wanda Owens opened the meeting by thanking the school leaders in attendance for advocating for their schools. “I can’t think of a more important time to make your voices heard,” Owens said.

School leaders got an in-depth presentation on the state budget proposal by Erin Fath, policy and budget director at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Fath



reported that, under the current budget proposal, there will be \$0 change to the revenue limits per-pupil adjustment in the first year of the biennium. In the second year of the biennium, the per-pupil aid

would be restored on a one-time basis to about \$165-170 per pupil. Fath noted that the instability of the per-pupil funding is essentially a cut to school funding.

“It’s a departure from how the state has historically done school funding,” Fath said.

The state budget proposal also makes changes related to private school vouchers. The state budget would remove the existing cap of 1,000 students and, for the first time, pay for vouchers directly out of the state general aid (money that public schools receive from the state). This would disproportionately impact property-poor districts because those districts rely more heavily on state general aid.

“If you have students participate in a choice program, it is a real loss of revenue to the district,” Fath said.

The state budget proposal doesn’t include the DPI’s request for increase to categorical aids. The budget also excluded funding for DPI’s request for new categorical aids related to



career readiness, school safety, and others.

Faced with this host of cuts and challenges to public education, WASB Government Relations Director Dan Rossmiller addressed key areas for school leaders to focus their advocacy efforts on. Rossmiller urged school leaders to ask their legislators to restore the funding cut to per-pupil aid and remove the expansion of school vouchers.

The Day at the Capitol provided board members and superintendents an opportunity to meet with their lawmakers. Although the event is over, Rossmiller asks that school leaders maintain contact and continue to build relationships with lawmakers. The goal is to build credibility with legislators and others so they will look to you when they need information.

For advocacy tips and resources, visit [wasb.org](http://wasb.org) and select “Advocacy & Government Relations.” ■



## ■ Upcoming Webinars

The WASB hosts a series of webinars throughout the year on legal, policy, and other important school leadership topics. Here is a look at the upcoming webinars from the WASB:

### ■ **Hiring Teachers** May 13, noon – 1 pm

*Presenter: Bob Butler, Associate Executive Director and Staff Counsel*

This presentation will inform you about the general hiring process of teachers, including state requirements. It includes information about the purpose of position descriptions, the posting of vacancy notices, application forms, the interview process, and reference checks. You will also learn about state and federal laws as they relate to employment discrimination.

### ■ **Annual and Special Meetings:**

#### **Notice, Procedures and Powers** June 12, noon – 1 pm

*Presenter: Barry Forbes, Associate Executive Director and Staff Counsel*

This presentation will review the notice requirements for annual and special meetings, cover meeting agendas and procedures and discuss the division of powers between the annual meeting and the school board in common school districts.

**Please note:** *These and all previous webinars are recorded and available on demand. WASB members can purchase any webinar and watch when their schedule allows. Upcoming live and pre-recorded webinars are listed on the WASB Webinars page at [wasb.org](http://wasb.org) (select “Meetings & Events” and then “Webinars”).*



## ■ Upcoming Event: Summer Leadership Institute

July 18, Heidel House Resort & Spa, Green Lake

School board members are invited to the Summer Leadership Institute, taking place July 18 at the Heidel House Resort & Spa in Green Lake. This event 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 not only to network with colleagues from around the state but also get up-to-date information on a range of school leadership issues. The Summer Leadership Institute will feature sessions on leadership, community engagement, student achievement, and school funding.

The WASB Summer Leadership Institute provides school leaders with the information and leadership strategies to improve the governance and operation of your school district. *For more information, visit [wasb.org](http://wasb.org).*