



## Guiding Public Education

*WASB Delegate Assembly Addresses*

*Expansion of School Vouchers, Revenue Limits*

**W**ith public education under assault as legislators have moved to greatly expand the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, the 2012 WASB Delegate Assembly forwarded resolutions tackling private school vouchers, revenue limits, maintaining local control on establishing charter schools and other topics. The actions of the Delegate Assembly directs legislative advocacy by the WASB's government relations staff.

### **Delegates Say No to Two Publicly Funded School Systems**

Legislators have already expanded the voucher program to Racine, and potentially 37 other school districts, if they meet four select demographic criteria and are also looking to provide vouchers to special needs students. Responding to the drive by the Legislature to expand vouchers statewide, the WASB Delegate Assembly approved a comprehensive resolution on vouchers and one on

private school vouchers for special needs students.

The approved resolution requires that any school receiving public funds – independent charter school, charter and voucher schools – must take the same student assessments to give taxpayers a clear understanding of how their money is spent; opposes vouchers for special needs students; states that only low-income children should be eligible; supports similar teacher/administrator standards for all schools; and requires graduation data to be reported in a uniform manner.

“The reason for this resolution is that there is a well-financed attack on public education in the state and around the country,” said Mike Blecha, delegate for Green Bay Public Schools, referring to the growth of school voucher programs. “Studies show there is no discernible difference in reading and math scores between public and private schools, so why expand the voucher program? The state’s taxpayers have spent over \$1 billion on the voucher program since its inception.”

### **Resolutions Support Revenue Limit Adjustments**

After nearly two decades of state-imposed revenue limits, delegates approved three resolutions adjusting revenue limits. Delegates supported restoring indexing of revenue limit increases to increases in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). In the past, annual revenue limit increases were tied to increases in the CPI; the Legislature abandoned that approach in the 2011-13 biennial budget. However, Act 10 requires boards to collectively bargain over the increase in total base wages, up to the increase in CPI with any district employee bargaining units that have recertified.

Two other resolutions support modifying revenue limits. One resolution says the increase in the amount of special education costs not covered by state or federal aid should be exempt from revenue limits. The other revenue limit-related resolution approved by delegates urges restoration of a nonrecurring revenue adjustment for above-average, per-pupil transportation costs.

An additional resolution supports legislation that calculates a district’s revenue limit before the start of the



A delegate participates in the discussion at the 2012 WASB Delegate Assembly.

school year. Another key point of the resolution calls for declining enrollment school districts to use a five-year rolling average of enrollment, versus the current three-year rolling average.

### **Supporting Teacher Evaluation Tools**

With legislative action pending on teacher effectiveness, delegates directed the WASB to work for a teacher evaluation system that is not mandated, is implemented gradually, and allows districts that already have established their own systems to continue to use their evaluation systems.

### **Statewide Student Information System Resolution Passes**

With the state in the beginning stages of devising a statewide Student Information System, delegates went on record supporting standards needed to establish a statewide student information system and supports the use of any vendor- or district-developed system that meets the DPI’s standards.

Several delegates spoke against the resolution, citing local control issues, other delegates questioned if this system would ultimately create a one-vendor system.

“This resolution doesn’t address anything about one vendor, it’s saying that we support standards or parameters needed to create a student information system,” said Linda Wankel, delegate for the Bloomer School District.

### **“Double-Dipping” Resolution Passes**

Some legislators have questioned the propriety of individuals taking a post-retirement job with benefits in the Wisconsin Retirement System. Delegates opposed legislation to require that if a Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) retiree is rehired, the employee’s annuity would be suspended. Several delegates argued they often need to hire retirees in order to fill positions for which specialized certification are required.

“We’re a very sparsely populated school district and when it comes to expertise, this allows us to hire retirees back at any time,” said Drummond Area School District delegate James Crandall. “We support this amendment, it is essential for our school district.”

### **Other Resolutions Approved**

Delegates also approved resolutions on low-cost Internet access for schools; sparsity aid; the state’s school accountability system and ESEA waiver; opposing creation of a politically appointed Independent Charter School Board; opposing CESAs from establishing independent virtual charter schools; school board oversight of open enrollment applications outside the enrollment window; and support for legislation clarifying grievance procedures under Act 10. ■