



Doing More with Less

As a new school year begins, look outside the box to do more for students

It is hard to believe that the summer of 2012 is basically over. What a summer it has been!

In June, we had a recall election of our state's governor. No matter what side of the issue you were on, it was settled on Election Day and we have to accept that and move on.

June and July brought oppressive heat and little rain for most of Wisconsin.

July and August brought the annual ritual of the local county fairs where our young students displayed their talents developed outside the classroom from baking cakes to photography or displaying grand champion livestock.

Also in July and August, the Olympics took place in London. As I watched these amazing athletes, I could not help but to think about how these young men and women once played on our playgrounds and sat in our classrooms where they learned to reach as high as they can.

As school board members, many of us have had our annual meetings. Some were quiet affairs with only the board members in attendance while others had to be held in the gym because of the number of citizens attending. Most of us received pre-

liminary state aid estimates that were disappointing and more hard choices have had to be made.

Now, September has come and one thing that is as absolute as death and taxes is that those big yellow buses will be arriving at our schoolhouse doors. I would like to remind board members in Wisconsin of the young people who are arriving at our school doors. It is the young kindergartener with her hair still in curls who thinks school will be a great adventure. It is the third-grader who now will have 30 fellow students in class and will at times wish his teacher had more time for him. It will be the junior high student who has cerebral palsy and will need the help of an aid to be successful. It will be the high school student who excels in the arts and music and was hoping these programs would be expanded, not cut. I remind you of these students because the decisions that we make at the board table have a direct affect on them.

We, as school board members, do not make widgets and cannot simply cut production costs to save money. We are responsible for the education of our communities' children so they will be productive citizens of this state and country.

The new normal is that we must do more with less. To do this we must look outside the box to solve our problems. We must break down the silos that most districts have constructed over the years. We need to be more cooperative with neighboring districts, maybe by sharing a music teacher or a school psychologist. We must make better use of technology that is available — the 5 students who want to take French may be able to do this online instead of having a traditional classroom teacher.

We, as school board members, in this new normal must also commit to our own professional development. I urge you to attend WASB seminars this fall and especially the Joint State Education Convention in January. You will learn new ideas that may help your district succeed in the near and distant future.

I wish you all the greatest success in the coming year and once again remind you that the decisions you make as a school board member really matter to the young people on those big yellow buses. ■

Sherman, the 2012 WASB president, is vice-president of the Genoa City Joint 2 School Board and president of the Lake Geneva-Genoa City Union High School Board.

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