



## Help Guide Public Education

### Submit a resolution to the WASB Policy and Resolutions Committee

When school board members talk, the WASB listens. That, in essence, is how the Wisconsin Association of School Boards directs legislative advocacy through its Delegate Assembly.

Resolutions adopted by the Delegate Assembly at the annual State Education Conference in Milwaukee in January guide our lobbyists as they advocate on behalf of public education.

Dan Rossmiller, the veteran government relations director for WASB, refers often to those resolutions when visiting the offices of state legislators.

Those resolutions carry a lot of weight, as legislators know that resolutions passed by the Delegate Assembly are the official position of WASB, the premier voice of public education in Wisconsin.

That's why, as your WASB president, I am urging you as members of the 424 school boards in Wisconsin to consider submitting a resolution this year. **The deadline: Sept. 15.**

The resolutions submitted by individual school boards go to WASB's Policy and Resolutions Committee for consideration. That committee meets Sept. 26-27 in Madison and again Nov. 7 prior to the Legislative Advocacy Conference in Stevens Point the following day.

The committee consists of two school board members from each of WASB's 15 regions, as appointed by the regional directors, and the four members of WASB's Executive Committee.

The committee has two basic charges: examine the proposed resolutions to make sure they don't duplicate existing resolutions already on the books, and to advance resolutions that are worthy of debate by the Delegate Assembly.

Every school district and all 12 CESAs are allowed a representative at the Delegate Assembly.

I'll let Rossmiller explain the significance of the resolution process: "The positions taken by these resolutions inform and guide the WASB's staff lobbyists as they develop legislation for introduction by lawmakers and as they respond to legislation already proposed or introduced by legislators," Rossmiller explained. "Because we follow the Delegate Assembly process, the WASB's policies are member driven, not staff driven."

Listening to school board members debate the resolutions, Rossmiller said, "helps our lobbyists to be able to develop arguments in support of the WASB positions when they are testifying in legislative committees or meeting with legislators to discuss proposals on a particular topic on which the WASB has adopted a resolution."

Here's a sampling of resolutions on critical educational issues that were passed by overwhelming margins in January:

- **The WASB supports** legislation to allow local districts the maximum latitude in determining the number of days of direct pupil instruction using the hours required under current law, and in determining what constitutes a day of school. (*This resolution played a role in the Legislature ending the 180-day school calendar mandate*).
- **The WASB supports** adoption and implementation of the Common Core State Standards at all grade levels in the content areas of English language arts, mathematics and literacy (in all content areas) which are aimed

at placing all Wisconsin students on track to graduate from high school, ready for college or careers.

- **The WASB opposes** any legislative or regulatory efforts to limit or to dictate the level of the general fund balances that a local school district must maintain.
- **Private and parochial schools** that accept state funding through taxpayer-financed vouchers must be held to the same state statutory requirements, testing requirements and accountability standards as public schools, without exception.
- **Private vouchers schools** must be subject to and comply with the Open Meetings Law and Public Records Law that apply to public schools.

I chaired the Policy and Resolutions Committee last year and witnessed school board members coming to the process with open minds, willing to listen to arguments made by fellow committee members.

Those principled discussions that took place centered around how to best serve the more than 800,000 students educated daily in Wisconsin's public schools. I'll repeat the message that I first delivered in January at the State Education Convention as incoming WASB president: Public schools educate every child, every day. Every child, every day.

WASB's Delegate Assembly is true democracy in action. Please consider being a part of that critical process by submitting a resolution. ■

*Blecha is 2014 president of the WASB and a member of the Green Bay Area Public School Board.*