

# Service Associate Q&A

## Featuring Skyward's Ray Ackerlund

*Editor's note: Each issue, we will pose questions to a WASB Service Associate to share the good work that these businesses are doing with Wisconsin public schools.*



**Ray Ackerlund** is vice president of marketing and product management at Skyward. Follow him on Twitter: @rayackerlund.



**Q.** *What services does Skyward offer to school districts?*

**A.** Skyward's School Management System helps districts effectively manage student and business information to improve decision making, evaluate student performance, capitalize on new technology initiatives, such as Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) or 1:1, and track personnel data, such as the new Teacher Effectiveness requirements.

**Q.** *How long has Skyward worked with school districts in Wisconsin?*

**A.** Skyward was founded in Stevens Point in 1980, and has focused on serving school districts since the beginning. We are extremely proud of our growth as a company and currently serve over 80 percent of Wisconsin school districts and more than 1,600 school districts around the world.

**Q.** *How is your company different than other providers? Or what separates Skyward from other providers?*

**A.** Our customers mention numerous aspects that set us apart, but it truly boils down to our commitment to partner with our customers, and the strength of all the Skyward employees dedicated to making that happen. This partnership is what drove us to develop the first integrated solution to manage both student and business operations, improve upon those solutions along the way, and develop

brand new products, such as the Course Learning Center, to meet districts' need for an integrated learning management tool. The partnership thrives because of the strong support teams we have in place to help districts succeed with our product.

**Q.** *What is one big issue right now in your field that school leaders should be aware of?*

**A.** The emerging trend to implement personal learning is a very exciting and challenging issue because it impacts districts on multiple levels. Specifically, it requires more time from a teacher's perspective to evaluate student performance and build a personalized learning plan, and it also requires additional financial support to be effective. Because this impacts both instructional and financial allocation, districts should be supportive of this trend but recognize the need to provide adequate resources and professional development for successful implementation.

**Q.** *What do you enjoy about working with Wisconsin schools?*

**A.** Even with all the challenges Wisconsin schools face, I am continually amazed by our customers' commitment to providing Wisconsin students a great education. That commitment and extra effort carries over to us so that we help the schools meet their goals. We all recognize the value

Wisconsin schools have on our children, but they should also know the positive impact and inspiration they have on others outside of education.

**Q.** *Anything else you'd like WASB members to know?*

**A.** In appreciation of the support we receive from our customers, we redirect our spending back into the states where our customers live. As a Wisconsin-based company, it's important to us to make every effort to continually reinvest here and create quality jobs for our future graduates. ■

*The WASB Service Associates Program includes more than 20 businesses and organizations that have been recognized by the WASB Board of Directors as reputable businesses and partners of public education in Wisconsin. For more information, visit [wasb.org](http://wasb.org) and select "Service Associates."*

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