



## Thanks for Your Hard Work

Now that the 2013-15 state budget act has been signed into law, I want to give a special thanks to all the school leaders who wrote or called their legislators, testified before the Joint Finance Committee, attended their legislators' office hours or arranged or participated in legislative forums during the state budget debate. Thank you for advocating on behalf of the children of your district and for public education in Wisconsin. Without your efforts, improvements in budget provisions for public schools would not have happened.

From an original budget that proposed no increase in per-pupil revenue limits and minimal increases in state aids, positive improvements were made. The final budget contains a combination of adjustments to per-pupil revenue limits, additional general school aids and a new, permanent categorical aid that, together, will provide a \$150 per-pupil increase in usable resources for school districts in each year.

Proposals to create special education vouchers and a statewide independent charter school board were removed from the budget bill. Other provisions stripping local school boards of authority over charter schools they have authorized were also removed.

A number of mandates on local school districts were funded by the budget, including the Educator Effectiveness initiative, the Smarter Balanced assessment and ACT suite

of tests (replacements for the out-moded WKCE assessments), and the "Read to Lead" pre-K through grade 2 reading readiness assessments.

Many rural schools will benefit from increases in transportation aid, the provision of National Forest Income payments to schools, and the establishment of a Rural Schools Task Force as well as the technical changes addressing consolidation aid.

A legislative update providing more detail on the state budget and its impact will be part of the Educator Effectiveness Conference to be held in early August.

Legislative advocacy can be difficult and even frustrating work at times, but it pays dividends for the children in your school districts. I hope each of you can see how important it is for legislators to hear from school leaders. I encourage you to continue reaching out to your lawmakers and building those relationships for the future.

The landscape of public education in our state may have been forever changed by the state budget. Between making taxpayer-paid private school vouchers available statewide and adding a new income tax deduction for private school tuition, the state is providing an unprecedented level of support for private education. This will likely lead to a growing competition for scarce education resources that will shape every state budget debate going forward.

How the WASB responds to this

challenge and other challenges will be up to you — our members. The WASB's positions on key issues are determined by policy resolutions adopted by the WASB Delegate Assembly, where each member board has a voice.

The WASB is a diverse organization, covering the entire state of Wisconsin. As you may imagine, our members and their respective school boards have different viewpoints at times. At the annual Delegate Assembly, those differing viewpoints are debated through board-submitted resolutions and the policies for the association are determined.

If you or your board believes the WASB should modify the position it has taken on an issue or establish a new position on an issue not covered by a policy resolution, I encourage you to considering submitting a board resolution. Resolutions for next year's Delegate Assembly, to be held on Jan. 22, 2014, are due Sept. 15.

Advocates for public education need to work together. Now more than ever, school leaders need to connect with our communities and demonstrate how our public schools serve and benefit the public and why they merit continued public and parental support.

With the new school year only a month away, I hope you enjoy the rest of your summer and I look forward to working with you as we move public education forward. ■

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