



## Refocusing for the New School Year

September is always an exciting time of the year in Wisconsin — leaves begin changing color and, of course, the start of a new school year! It's a good time to reflect on our roles and responsibilities and refocus our goals.

To assist school boards in that endeavor, this year, we are highlighting two board governance tools at the Fall Regional Meetings in September and October — the Annual Board Development Tool and the *Key Work of School Boards*. We know that effective governance practices of school boards have a direct, positive impact on student achievement.

Created by the WASB and School Perceptions, the Annual Board Development Tool is an online evaluation survey that allows school board members to rate their work in 12 governing areas. The Tool is aligned to the *Key Work of School Boards*, a framework for effective school governance consisting of eight action areas that are intended to be integrated into a single, systematic process.

Each school board that attends its Regional Meeting will receive a complimentary code that will allow the board members and district administrator to access the survey in 2014-15. Participating boards will be able to download the aggregate results of their responses as part of the complimentary service. Boards can also order a full report from School Perceptions and/or request facilitation services from the WASB.

The Annual Board Development Tools and the *Key Work of School Boards* are designed to help boards begin the process of understanding where you have agreement on issues and priorities, and where there is more work to be done. But this is just the start.

Every board needs to set goals and have a clear, strategic plan to accomplish them. Whatever your goals may be — increase graduation rates, exceed the national and state norms on standardized tests every year, decrease disciplinary rates, hire and retain high-quality staff, narrow the achievement gap, etc. You won't accomplish them unless the board is in agreement, resources are aligned to those goals, there are accountability measures in place that are clearly understood, and the board stays focused.

The WASB is here to help. We can facilitate the discussions, conduct a master plan of school district resources, assist with superintendent evaluations, and help you develop a strategic plan. But it starts with the board taking the first steps.

For those boards with strong processes already in place to fulfill their commitment to excellence in governance and the results to prove it, I urge you to keep sharing your stories in the *Wisconsin School News* magazine, the Annual State Education Convention and other WASB programs to help your fellow board members across the state. Public

education is stronger if we are working together.

Your hard work is not going unnoticed. Results from the 46th Annual PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools show that Americans believe strongly in their local school boards. When asked who should have the greatest influence on what is taught in public schools, Americans said they preferred local school boards over the federal government by a 56 to 15 percent margin.

Results like those from the Gallup poll show that the work you do as school board members is important to your communities. I think it's important to recognize the efforts of our school boards here in Wisconsin. That's why I'm excited to announce that the WASB has designated Oct. 5-11 as Wisconsin School Board Appreciation Week. This week will be an opportunity for school districts and communities to recognize their school board members. We have created a "kit" full of resources such as press releases and activities and ideas to recognize school board members. For more information, visit [wasb.org](http://wasb.org) and select "Communications" and then "Wisconsin School Board Appreciation Week."

I wish you a great start to the new school year and look forward to seeing you at your Regional Meeting this fall! ■

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