



Forward Together

The WASB invites you to Stand Up for Public Education

Throughout the state, our public schools are providing innovative programs and world-class learning opportunities led by outstanding staff and school leaders. Often, this work goes unrecognized outside the immediate community. While we continue to face challenges and move forward with reforms, we need to ensure that a broader audience knows about the good work taking place in our public schools and how public schools benefit everyone.

To help share those success stories and help school boards learn from each other, the WASB has initiated a Stand Up for Public Education website. Using a blog-style website and social media, the WASB intends to share as many stories as possible, and we'll need your help. Check out the new website by visiting wasb.org and clicking on the "Stand Up for Public Education" button.

So far, we've shared stories about successful farm-to-school programs, partnerships between school districts and higher learning institutions, and a host of other amazing projects taking place in our public schools. We look forward to sharing more.

When we rolled out the Stand Up for Public Education website, we also unveiled the first phase of our redesigned website home page. While more work will be done in the coming months on the navigation

bars, the new home page is intended to help you find information of the most relevance to you on the WASB website as easily as possible. You can navigate to pages in the manner you are accustomed, or you can click on your position in the new "Information for You" section and the most popular sites will be brought to the forefront. We welcome your feedback and suggestions as we continue to improve our website.

The WASB is committed to doing all we can to support and educate school board members, and to stand up for public education. However, I would be remiss in not pointing out that we have serious challenges facing public education in Wisconsin.

The recent NAEP (the "Nation's Report Card") results reveal that while, overall, Wisconsin's fourth- and eighth-grade public school students are on par with or ahead of national averages, we have the worst achievement gap in the nation. There is work to be done — not just for specific groups of students — but across the board for all students. And unfortunately, revenue limitations and increasing poverty rates — nearly two in five Wisconsin children now live in poverty — make our work even harder.

Only public education has the capacity to reach all students and to ensure that every child has access to a free, high-quality education. And

there are shining examples of success in public schools throughout the state.

We need to tell our stories, challenge our assumptions, understand the changes, question our state and local policies, advocate for the appropriate resources, and learn from each other. We need to move forward together, steadily and consistently.

To make this happen, I urge you to take advantage of the diverse programming and networking opportunities provided by the annual State Education Convention in January in Milwaukee. From the in-depth, pre-convention workshops on Tuesday, Jan. 21 to the closing general session on Friday, Jan. 24, local, state and national experts will be sharing strategies and ideas that can help your district and your students.

They will be explaining the numerous reform efforts under way — educator effectiveness, the Common Core State Standards, Universal Design for Learning, and more — and how these reform efforts may impact student learning. These experts will be providing guidance and tips on how to use resources more effectively and efficiently, the latest changes in state law, and a whole lot more.

I look forward to seeing you in Milwaukee and joining you in standing up for public education. ■

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