



School Board Resolutions for the New Year

The start of a new year brings excitement and opportunity. It's a time to refocus on what's important and to evaluate our priorities. As we turn the calendar from 2014 to 2015, let me offer a suggestion that school board members make a special resolution to get more involved in the important education debates set to take place in our state Capitol in the coming months.

November's elections signaled what's in store for public education in our state. Gov. Scott Walker was re-elected and legislative Republicans strengthened their majorities in both houses.

Leadership in the 2015-16 Legislature has announced plans to make major changes to important public education policies. Issues on the docket include: a new accountability system for public and private voucher schools receiving taxpayer funding, a reexamination of state academic standards, and expansion of the statewide voucher program to allow more taxpayer-subsidized tuition payments for students to attend participating private schools.

The state will likely face a tight fiscal situation once again as planned spending is expected to exceed anticipated revenues. This raises questions about just what kind of increase, if any, in revenue limits and state aids, public schools

can expect from lawmakers.

With these important issues hanging in the balance, 2015 will be an important year for public education in Wisconsin. As school board members, you need to tell your district's story. You are entrusted by your communities with the responsibility to manage and care for your public schools and the students they serve, and can speak to lawmakers as one elected official to another.

Communication with your district administrator and other school personnel is important as well, but lawmakers need to hear the voices of locally elected officials loud and clear.

With this in mind, here is a short list of essential New Year's resolutions for school board members:

- Actively monitor legislative activities. Read the WASB legislature updates each week in the *eConnection* and put a legislative discussion on your agenda each month
- Communicate regularly with your legislators. Review your board's policies on how legislative communications are handled — is one person assigned to that role, do you have a committee?
- Invite your legislators to your schools at numerous opportunities throughout the year. Review your district's calendar and

select events that would be appropriate to include legislators. Plan special days just to take them on a tour.

The WASB is here to help keep you informed and to develop your messages as you have those important conversations with lawmakers. I encourage each of you to consult the *Legislative Update* on page 26 for a complete rundown on how to keep up with what is happening in Madison. Your advocacy work is crucial for our schools and communities. The decisions the Legislature makes this year could impact public education for years to come.

I hope your New Year's resolutions also include attending the upcoming State Education Convention in Milwaukee. The annual Joint State Education Convention is the premier education event of the year and I encourage you to take advantage of it. We will have internationally renowned keynote speakers, dozens of break-out sessions featuring school districts from around the state sharing innovative ideas and programs that are improving student achievement, and a packed exhibit hall. The knowledge gained at the convention along with the idea-sharing and networking make this event well worth the trip.

I wish you a happy and successful New Year!

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