



## Protecting Our Students

The safety of our students has been paramount in my mind, as I know it has been for many of you. With another tragic shooting in Colorado just before the one-year anniversary of the horrific shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School, we're all reminded that we must be forever vigilant for our students.

As school leaders, we have a responsibility to ensure that we do everything we can to create a safe and healthy place for students to learn. We know that school safety is not only about addressing student violence, but also mental health, interventions, nursing services, facilities, transportation, and much more.

At the state level, serious discussions about school safety are underway. In July, I participated in a school safety summit that included leaders from a number of organizations including the Department of Public Instruction, the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators, the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association, the Wisconsin School Safety Coordinators Association, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, and, among others, the Wisconsin Juvenile Officers Association.

From this summit, a series of cross-cutting beliefs were developed that were identified as crucial to the work of keeping our schools safe. These beliefs highlight the impor-

tance of developing and maintaining a positive school culture and include:

- Every school should be a warm and welcoming place for students, parents, staff, and the community;
- Leadership matters;
- Relationships matter;
- Practice must follow good policy;
- Joint collaboration among and between systems including community members is key;
- Investment in capacity building, including training, is smart and saves resources;
- No "one size fits all" approaches; and
- Listen to students' voices.

The beliefs acknowledge that this work looks different in every district. Cultural differences and community traditions need to be taken into account and school safety approaches tailored for each school district and school.

The members of the school safety summit are committed to continuing to work together. With a set of common beliefs in place, we plan to continue meeting and finding ways to take definitive action to assist state and local policymakers. We hope this work will make a meaningful difference at the local level.

There will be several sessions that

directly pertain to school safety at the upcoming State Education Convention. One will focus on the school safety summit, another on proactive steps that local school districts can take to minimize violence. Other sessions on student interventions, school leadership, facilities and additional topics that relate to the health and welfare of students will be offered throughout the convention. I encourage you to attend as many as possible. Our efforts to protect students must be continually monitored and evaluated.

This is personal for all of us. At a WASB Regional Meeting in Baraboo in 2006, I stayed late talking to a school administrator who didn't want to leave until he told me all of the great things that were happening in his schools. He was so proud of his students and his district. We were the last to leave. The very next day, that administrator, John Klang, was shot and killed protecting his students at Weston High School from a teenage gunman. I've never forgotten that final conversation with Mr. Klang or the ultimate sacrifice he made for his students.

The WASB is committed to doing all we can to assist you in your work of enhancing school safety. Your input and recommendations as we move forward will be crucial. Thank you for the work you do on behalf of your students each and every day. ■

As school leaders, we have a responsibility to ensure that we do everything we can to create a safe and healthy place for students to learn.