



Be a Voice for Public Education in 2018

It's the start of a new year. With it comes the hope of a new year better than the last.

In K-12 education, the additional state investments in funding for our public schools that were included in the state budget this past year were a welcome improvement over recent years, but not a permanent solution or a guarantee of a sustained level of investment. We know that fighting for funding will be an ongoing, perennial issue for years to come.

As we start the new year and begin anew, we need to refocus our efforts on speaking up and advocating for our students. Public schools are the schools of choice for the vast majority of our students and the bedrock of our democracy. It's up to locally elected school board members and school administrators to be the voice for their students at the state and federal levels.

Your first opportunity in the new year will be with the recently announced state Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding, which kicked off in December with an informational public hearing. We're proud to note that WASB Director of Government Relation, Dan Rossmiller has been appointed to the commission.

The commission is expected to hold public hearings across the state in the coming months and then hear

from the National Conference of State Legislatures and others about how school funding systems are designed and operate in other states. After gathering that information, the commission will begin writing its plan.

The public hearings, which as of this writing have not been scheduled, are likely to begin in late January or early February and will provide an opportunity for school leaders to share their ideas and concerns about school funding. I encourage you to consider testifying about the school funding challenges facing your district and include the input of community members. While the WASB has solid representation on the commission, it will still be important for local school officials to testify and make their voices heard.

The upcoming State Education Convention later this month will provide a number of opportunities to learn about the school funding system in greater detail. In addition to other sessions, a pre-convention workshop and a special, in-depth featured session will provide comprehensive training by staff from the Department of Public Instruction School Financial Services team and experienced school business officials. I encourage you to visit the convention website at wasb.org/convention for details on all of the sessions. This training will help you in the

upcoming school funding debate as well as in the next state budget debate.

There are items to watch at the federal level as well in the coming year. The full impact of the recent federal tax reform is still being analyzed at the time of this writing, but the continued efforts at the state and federal levels to prioritize private school funding over public schools are concerning to say the least. In February, I will be traveling to Washington, D.C. with the WASB executive committee to meet with our federal lawmakers and be a voice for public education in Wisconsin.

I encourage you to watch our Legislative Update blog for the latest information on these and other important issues.

I hope to see you at the 97th State Education Convention, taking place Jan. 17-19 in Milwaukee. The annual 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 breakout sessions featuring school districts from around the state sharing innovative ideas and programs that are improving student achievement, and a packed exhibit hall. I hope you will join us. Your students are counting on you! ■

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