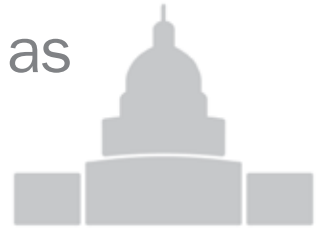


School Safety Dominates Discussion as 2017-18 Legislative Session Ends



What Did the WASB Advocate For?

As the special session on school safety proposal was being developed, the WASB was actively involved in discussions with the governor, his staff and with legislative leadership offices. We emphasized that the plan needed to be flexible enough to allow local districts to use the resources for safety measures or steps each district identifies as its greatest safety needs.

We also emphasized that the overall amount of school safety resources provided needed to be robust enough that every school district could receive sufficient resources to adequately address their needs. We didn't want any school district or school to be left out. Finally, we urged that funding be ongoing, predictable and sustainable although future allocations are always under the purview of future legislatures and governors.

Throughout the process by which the school safety legislation was developed and approved, the WASB advocated that funding devoted to only "hardening" school facilities, while welcome, is not likely to be sufficient to address the full range of locally identified needs. The WASB argued for local flexibility and advocated that, ideally, these grants should be eligible to fund an array of school safety-related expenditures

■ **Prevention and intervention**
School-based mental health screening and counseling services.

State-provided resources to enable local districts to provide educational services for expelled pupils, particularly non special-education pupils who would otherwise be cut off from

contact with the educational system.

Anti-bullying (prevention and awareness) education, violence prevention curricula, and character education.

Conflict resolution and dispute management strategy training.

■ Collaborative measures

Providing schools with technical assistance and training to address emergency preparedness and school violence.

Encouraging mental health providers to work with law enforcement and schools to develop uniform threat assessment tools to identify potential shooters and determine how to treat them and/or limit their access to people and weapons.

Training school personnel in the use of threat assessment techniques.

Developing tip lines, hotlines or other ways for students and parents to report disturbing or threatening behavior.

Allowing community-based approaches to continue after age 21 and offer options for those times when school is not in session.

■ Secure school facilities

Improved access and visitor management systems.

Adequate and functioning school safety equipment (e.g., video surveillance systems, sensors, cell phone apps or two-way radios, distress/ alarm buzzers and hotlines).

Proper brick and mortar improvements (e.g., secured entrances, architectural design features, interior door locks, emergency exits, metal detectors).

Adequate compensation for armed school security officers. The WASB indicated, based on the WASB resolutions, that we would prefer armed school security officers to be current law enforcement officers or retired law enforcement officers who have maintained their training.

■ Key Provisions of School Safety Legislation

The focal point of legislative action was a proposal put forward by Governor Walker, who called lawmakers into a special session to take up his proposal to create a \$100 million grant program to be housed in a new Office of School Safety in the state Department of Justice (DOJ).

Under the legislation as passed by both houses, the DOJ must, in consultation with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), develop a plan for awarding grants to school districts.

While the DOJ is given broad discretion in determining the eligible expenditures, the legislation specifies that it must include expenditures for:

- Compliance with the model practices for school safety that are required by the bill to be created by the DOJ in consultation with the DPI, the Wisconsin School Safety Coordinators Association and the Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools Training and Technical Assistance Center;
- School staff training on school safety that the DOJ either offers or contracts with other parties to offer (Note: Under the bill, training may include trauma-informed care and how adverse

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childhood experiences impact a child's development and increase the need for counseling or support.);

- Safety-related upgrades to school buildings, equipment, and facilities; and
- Items necessary to comply with school safety plan requirements that are newly revised under the school safety legislation.

■ What Schools Need to Do to Prepare to Apply for Grants

A district's grant application must include all of the following:

- The district's school safety plan;
- Blueprints of each school building and facility; and
- A proposed plan for how the grant money will be spent.

Before a district can submit a grant application, a number of things will have to happen.

■ What Does a School Safety Plan Need to Include?

- An individualized safety plan for each school building and facility that is regularly occupied by pupils. (New) This individualized safety plan must include any real property related to the school building or facility that is regularly occupied by pupils;
- General guidelines specifying procedures for emergency prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery; (already required under current law);
- Guidelines and procedures to address school violence and attacks, threats of school violence and attacks, bomb threats, fire, weather-related emergencies, intruders, parent-student

reunification, and threats to non-classroom events, including recess, concerts and other performances, athletic events, and any other extracurricular activity or event; (new) and;

- The process for reviewing the methods for conducting drills required at least annually to comply with the plan (the annual drill requirement is new).

A district will need to ensure that its school safety plan does not contain any of the following provisions:

- A requirement that an employee must contact a school administrator, school official, or any other person before calling 911;
- A prohibition against an employee reporting school violence or a threat of school violence directly to a law enforcement agency; or
- A prohibition against an employee reporting a suspicious individual or activity directly to a law enforcement agency.

Before creating or updating a school safety plan, a school board must, in consultation with a local law enforcement agency, conduct an on-site safety assessment of each school building, site, and facility that is regularly occupied by pupils. This required on-site assessment must include playgrounds, athletic facilities or fields, and any other property that is occupied by pupils on a regular basis.

■ What is the Timeline for Issuing Grants?

In legislative committee testimony, Attorney General Brad Schimel, who heads the DOJ, testified that if the bill were signed into law before the end of March, he hoped the grant money could be awarded by as early as the end of the current school year,

which would be an ambitious schedule.

For this to happen, the DOJ will have to hire people to staff the Office of School Safety. The DOJ also will, in consultation with the DPI, need to develop a plan for awarding grants, including a description of what types of expenditures are eligible to be funded by grant proceeds and develop the process or method by which school districts would submit their applications.

Whether or not the Attorney General's schedule can be met, all of this is likely to happen quickly. We still have lots of questions to sort out. For example, it isn't clear if grants would be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis or be prorated if requests for funding exceed the amount appropriated. What is clear is that because the grants would be funded by what is called a "continuing" appropriation, the money would remain available for grants to be awarded until those funds have been exhausted.

In conclusion, WASB members and other school leaders should rest assured that this legislation is not the end of the WASB's conversation with lawmakers and the governor about school safety, but just the beginning. School safety will be an important agenda item as we discuss what we want the governor to include in the next biennial state budget and we will be urging that school safety funding be robust and sustainable and allow flexibility so local districts can use it to meet their most pressing local needs.

Follow the WASB Legislative Update Blog (wasblegupdate.wasb.org/) for more details as they become available. ■