

# School News

Official publication of the Wisconsin Association

June - July 2019 | [wasb.org](http://wasb.org)

## ALL IN for Ag Ed

Partnerships in the Classroom  
and Beyond...





“  
I love  
feeling  
like I’m  
actually  
making a  
difference.”

Yvonne, RN, oncology care manager  
at Network Health





# WISCONSIN SchoolNews

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## Celebrating Our Partnerships

Congratulations on another great school year! You have a lot to be proud of and I hope you have an opportunity during this graduation season to reflect on your district's accomplishments — not only those of your graduating seniors, but of your entire student body and staff.

It's also appropriate to reflect on the external forces that help propel your district forward. The WASB is proud to be your partner and to provide a Report to the Membership on our services to all of the school boards and CESA boards of control in the state. We strive to provide you with the information and services you need. Don't hesitate to contact our staff with questions or concerns.

Partnerships are crucial to the success of public education. Combined, the businesses, philanthropists, non-profit organizations and government agencies that support our local schools provide a nearly inexhaustible list of resources, activities and experiences for students and staff throughout the state.

This issue of the *Wisconsin School News* highlights a cross section of these invaluable partnerships with a particular focus on the agriscience and construction industries.

In New Richmond and Medford, the agricultural education and FFA programs wouldn't be nearly as rich without the local farmers, veterinarians, suppliers and others contributing to their success.

In Belleville, McFarland and Verona, the educational experience of their students has been expanded exponentially through youth apprenticeships. Thanks to the generosity of

J.H. Findorff & Son Inc., the Hoffman Construction Company and other firms in sharing their time and expertise, students have become increasingly more engaged in their local school construction projects — benefiting them and their communities.

In Juda, New Glarus and Monticello, the school districts took advantage of a unique intragovernmental partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Madison's UniverCity Year program to match the research needs of the local districts with the need for higher education learning experiences. UniverCity Year provides an invaluable opportunity for a world-class higher education institution to partner with K-12 education systems and tackle daunting issues in a cost-efficient manner.

In South Milwaukee, Columbus and River Falls, students are directly benefiting from the leadership of the Wisconsin Character Education Partnership. The WCEP, a non-profit aligned with a national movement to instill universal ethical values in all students, works with districts throughout the state to provide resources to students and staff.

In addition to highlighting these partnerships in the *Wisconsin School News*, the WASB wants to help you celebrate and honor your local partnerships.

This summer, I invite you to submit the names of up to five local businesses and organizations, including newspapers or other media, that have been helpful to your district over the past year for the 2019 WASB Business Honor Roll. Tell us who they are and what they have done for your schools,

and we will help you promote the partnership.

All businesses and organizations submitted by Friday, Aug. 16 will be posted on the WASB website. Districts will be provided a sample press release and personalized certificates to present to the businesses. In addition, select partnership stories will be featured in an upcoming issue of the *Wisconsin School News*. Take advantage of this opportunity for statewide recognition of your partnerships.

I also encourage you to take advantage of special training this summer at the WASB Equity Symposium and Summer Leadership Institute on July 12 and 13 in Appleton. The Equity Symposium will focus on the school board's role in promoting educational equity — the intentional allocation of resources, instruction and opportunities to meet the specific needs of students and staff. The conference will feature sessions that highlight the policy making, strategic planning and budgeting decisions needed to promote equity as well as the resources available to districts.

The WASB Summer Leadership Institute will focus on school board governance with tracks for new and experienced board members. Training will include the basics of board governance and funding as well as advanced sessions on leadership coaching, superintendent evaluations, staffing roles and handling conflict.

Take advantage of this unique opportunity for one or two days of training. I hope you have a wonderful summer! ■

Partnerships are crucial to the success of public education.



# REPORT TO THE MEMBERSHIP

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WASB 2018-19 SERVICES

### LEGAL & HUMAN RESOURCES

RESPONDED TO

**4,220**  
**Law-Related Inquires**  
**from 379 Districts**



PROVIDED DIRECT  
SERVICES TO

**95**  
**School**  
**Districts**

### ADVOCACY & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

DIRECTLY

**Represented school boards**  
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### MEETINGS & EVENTS



HOSTED MORE THAN

**60** **WASB**  
**events**

WITH MORE THAN

**4,600**  
**Attendees**

### POLICY SERVICES



RESPONDED TO MORE THAN

**400 Individual**  
**Requests**

FOR POLICY INFORMATION

SERVED

**81% of**  
**School**  
**Districts**



THROUGH WASB POLICY  
LIBRARY AND OTHER  
SPECIAL SERVICES

### CUSTOMIZED LEADERSHIP SERVICES

DIRECTLY SERVED



**26 School Districts**

IN VARIOUS PROJECTS AND ASSISTED OTHERS  
THROUGH INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS

### SEARCH SERVICES

COMPLETED

**15** **Successful**  
**Superintendent**  
**Searches**

AND AIDED NUMEROUS OTHER DISTRICTS  
THROUGH PRESENTATIONS AND ADVICE



### ONLINE PRESENCE

FOLLOWERS  
ON TWITTER

**3,100**  
FOLLOWERS

**3,500**  
USERS

WASB WEBSITE  
AVERAGE PER  
MONTH





A unique facility brings  
the agriculture industry  
to life in Medford

# Bringing the BARN TO SCHOOL

*by Lisa Kopp*

According to the last U.S. Department of Agriculture census, agriculture in central Wisconsin's Taylor County provides 4,307 jobs and contributes \$288 million to the county's total income. A majority of the farms in Taylor County — 90.8 percent — are individually or family owned and Medford, the county seat, has been greatly impacted by agriculture. Yet, most Medford area youth are at least one or two generations removed from the farm.

Lisa Kopp has taught agricultural education for eight years, including five at the Medford Area Public School District. Although Kopp

didn't grow up on a farm, she developed a passion for farm animals. Kopp spent her first three years in Medford bringing live animals into the classrooms before she developed a new idea — a school barn. What started out as a lofty dream is now a reality.

The Medford farm project is unique — a rare Wisconsin school that has a district-owned farm on its property. As the number of Wisconsin farms continues to dwindle, Kopp believes a hands-on classroom will become even more important.

"We consume vegetables... We consume meat... but do you know where your meat is coming from?"

Kopp asked. "We need to show the students that, hey, some of these tasks — raising sheep, raising pork, raising beef cattle — you can do on a small scale at home."

She concludes there are life lessons that can be learned from a farm setting, and she's trying to replicate that farm setting on the Medford school farm.

In addition to an old dairy stanchion barn, this past fall, high school students began using a new 2,300-square-foot classroom barn complete with bathrooms, a locker area, an agriculture mechanics workshop, and two large stalls with cameras live-streaming animal activity.



**“We need to show the students that, hey, some of these tasks — raising sheep, raising pork, raising beef cattle — you can do on a small scale at home.”**

— Lisa Kopp



The two barns are across the parking lot from the Medford Area High School and house chickens, turkeys, steers, pigs, sheep, goats, horses, rabbits and a cat. The animals have all been donated to the district. Some live there for the school year while others are temporary visitors for specific units within the classroom curriculum.

On the school farm, students can learn what it takes to be a farmer and about other agriculture industry career choices. Kopp says that out of every 30 students in her classes, only two or three kids are still living on a production farm.

“If we expect farmers to continue in this next generation, we need to teach them,” Kopp said. “We need

to show them exactly what tasks need to be done... to be that farmer.”

Students are graded on how well they perform their chores. They learn how to halter and lead the animals, feed and water them, provide basic health care, and clean. Students care for the animals on weekends as well, just as they would on any farm.





During the summer, the animals are either harvested or “farmed out” to be cared for by students and local farmers. Some are shown at the county fair by district students.

The school-raised hogs are sold to private buyers each semester and the profit goes back into the barn project. This year, the Medford school lunch company purchased the hogs, which were harvested at a USDA-inspected plant, and planned to use the fresh pork for school lunches in May. The first steer will be harvested this summer with the intention of the meat to be used in a Fall 2019 open house for donors and community supporters. Throughout the year, chicken eggs are collected, washed, labeled and sold for \$2 per dozen.

“The project planning and fundraising was a success and will continue to make a lifelong impact on students, community members and future agriculturalists,” said Kopp. She is on a mission to expand the program and sees it as securing the future of farming. The community has rallied around her dream.

Hundreds of businesses and

individuals in the community have supported this vision and been integral in class curriculum and helping to keep the farm sustainable. Two of them are the Medford Cooperative, which has donated livestock feed, and the Medford Veterinary Clinic, which donates its services. “Without the endless support of the Medford community, this project would not have been possible,” Kopp said.

The agriculture educational facility fits the district goals by helping students learn high levels of math, science and technology skills as they apply them to real-life agriculture situations. The barn allows



Medford staff the ability to collaborate between departments, disciplines and grade levels. Community members and businesses also become more involved in the school by serving as guest speakers and holding demonstrations.

Since Kopp’s hire at Medford, the district added Hanna Rohland as a half-time agriculture teacher due to higher enrollment. Rohland works with the elementary gifted and talented program as well as the agriculture department.

The agriculture department offers a variety of courses, including Horse and Small Animal Science, Production Animal Science, Veterinary Science, Dairy Science, Eighth-Grade Agriculture, Exploring AgriScience, Fish and Wildlife 1 and 2, Forestry, Horticulture, Agriculture Mechanics and Independent Agriculture.

While a school farm may not work in every district, smaller concepts could be incorporated on a short-term basis. Kopp suggests activities such as building a chicken coop in the school courtyard, incubating eggs, feeding





meat birds, bottle-feeding calves to help a local farmer, or farrowing piglets in a storage shed or greenhouse for one month.

Kopp and Rohland co-advise the Medford FFA, which typically has around 75 members each year. More farm students join the FFA than are enrolled in a typical class so collaboration between the FFA and the agriculture department can ensure that students are exposed to lessons and opportunities they couldn't get at home or anywhere else.

"It is for our next generation and if we don't show them how to do these things, they are simply not going to do it," Kopp said.

Spring on the Medford farm has brought on honeybees, a beef pasture, an apple orchard and the first season with a high-tunnel greenhouse. Kopp has visions of restoring the old barn for party rentals, planting pumpkin fields, and growing sweet corn for a farm-to-fork meal.



"About 250 students take ag classes here each year. Every student has a story and a passion. Some kids learn through bookwork while others need hands-on applications," said Kopp thinking of the endless possibilities. "The barn has given us a great opportunity to do both and the students really thrive in this setting." ■

*Lisa Kopp is an 8-12th grade agriculture teacher and FFA advisor for the Medford Area School District.*

## RESOURCES

To stay updated with the latest on the barn, join the "Bringing the Barn to School" Facebook page: [facebook.com/groups/257474004681998](https://facebook.com/groups/257474004681998). Check out the school's live barn camera on the Medford Area Senior High School website by clicking on Academics and finding the Barn Cam: [medford.k12.wi.us/schools/senior/academics/barncam.cfm](https://medford.k12.wi.us/schools/senior/academics/barncam.cfm).

The Wisconsin Ag in the Classroom bus tour will be stopping at the Medford barn from July 15-16, 2019, to learn about the project and its impact on agricultural education. Kopp welcomes visits and tours from other schools. Contact her at [koppli@medford.k12.wi.us](mailto:koppli@medford.k12.wi.us) or 715-748-5951, extension 498.

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# All In for Ag Ed

Growing possibilities in New Richmond | Jodi Helmer

*This community steps up in big ways to support its FFA chapter, thanks to the tireless efforts of the agricultural education instructor. You, too, might be surprised by the support you receive — if you just ask.*

When it comes to providing opportunities for her students, there is nothing Rachel Sauvola won't do.

The agricultural education teacher and FFA advisor at New Richmond High School in New Richmond, Wis., helped a student facilitate a project to hatch shark eggs in the aquaculture lab, for example. She also asked local farmers to donate bull calves for the

animal science program, and she even received a brand-new farm truck from a local Dodge dealership where the minimal lease is paid for by donations into the Ag Education Fund through the New Richmond Area Community Foundation.

"High school students have so much good to offer the world, and all it takes is someone willing to facilitate those projects," Sauvola says.

Although Sauvola knew she

wanted to be an agriculture educator after attending her first FFA meetings in seventh grade, she had no idea that the role would involve writing grants or overseeing donations to support student projects or negotiating deals to secure the infrastructure to grow the program. Sauvola considers the extra tasks small sacrifices to see her students succeed.

"I get to witness all of the leadership skills that my students acquire



pay off,” she says.

The effort Sauvola has put into developing the agricultural education program and FFA chapter at New Richmond High School is paying off, too. And the community has joined the cause.

### ■ Cultivating community engagement

Thanks to a partnership with the city of New Richmond, the New Richmond airport and the School District of New Richmond, the school secured 20 acres of land and intends to build a series of state-of-the-art agriculture buildings,

including a new beef barn, on the site. The New Richmond SOAR (Student Opportunities with Agricultural Resources) Educational Center, coupled with the facilities at the high school, offers hands-on learning opportunities in all aspects of farming — from greenhouse production to aquaculture. The SOAR facilities include a barn where students raise bull calves, and Sauvola hopes to add swine, sheep, goats and additional poultry in the future.

In 2016, students began raising four donated bull calves that produced almost 1,500 pounds of beef that were served in the school lunch

program this spring. Students also raise chickens, ducks and tilapia and grow fresh produce. All have been sold into the school lunch program. The Westfields Hospital in New Richmond and Hudson Hospital also purchase tilapia from the program.

Sauvola notes that demand for the farm-to-table fare, which she markets as “made with student love,” exceeds what the program is producing. She hopes to expand production to more than 2,000 pounds of beef and enough excess eggs and produce to set up a student-run booth at the local farmers market. Attracting enough students to meet the demand







isn't a problem.

When the new school opened in 2008, 20 students were interested in large animal science classes. Now, 90 students are enrolled in that course, and, during the last school year, Sauvola had 436 course requests for the 16 different agricultural education classes she teaches (in a high school with 940 students). An additional part-time agriculture educator joined the program last year to keep up with the demand.

### ■ A community program

The educational offerings are certainly part of the high school, but Sauvola considers it a community agricultural program. In the 19 years Sauvola has worked for the school, she has partnered with countless organizations to get students involved in community projects, including tree-planting events and a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service project

to restore native prairielands.

"This program works because we have a tremendous number of volunteers, and we want to do our part to give back to the community that does so much for us," Sauvola says.

Only a small percentage of the support the chapter receives comes from FFA alumni. In fact, Sauvola avoids the word "alumni" when recruiting volunteers, preferring to call them FFA friends, families and supporters. She uses a volunteer inventory created by the national organization to recruit new volunteers and signed up 52 new supporters in 48 hours.

"We don't want people to think what we're doing isn't open to them because they've never been part of the FFA," she explains. "I add all of our volunteers to the alumni roster to keep them up to date on what the FFA is doing and to increase their level of knowledge and involvement."

Sauvola has learned that the community is always willing to step up when its FFA members are in need. The SOAR Educational Center is "donation central" where feed, animals and pallets are dropped off on a regular basis. Local farmers have even donated ducklings and a 650-pound heifer.

In 2017, when the New Richmond FFA dairy cattle judging team won first place at the World Dairy Expo and received an invitation to travel to Europe to take part in the International Dairy Judging Tour, supporters went above and beyond to make sure the students could participate in the once-in-a-lifetime experience. The team raised \$30,000 through individual, business and organizational contributions. One event — a farm-to-table dinner featuring locally grown foods — raised \$6,000.

"The community is so excited



*“The community is so excited about the things we’re working on and sees the value in the program.”*

— Rachel Sauvola, agricultural education teacher and FFA advisor at New Richmond High School

about the things we’re working on and sees the value in the program,” she says. “It’s incredible who will step up to help when you ask.”

A self-described mover and shaker, Sauvola believes it’s important for students to see her advocating for the program. “It’s good for them to see an adult set goals and work hard to achieve them,” she adds.

Sauvola is adamant that advocacy includes spreading the word about the agricultural education program and FFA chapter far and wide. In addition to being active in the community, she often speaks to the

media and generates buzz by talking about the program to anyone who will listen.

“There isn’t a district newsletter that goes out without FFA news, a SOAR update and an agriscience update,” she says. “If you don’t tell your story, no one will know what you’re doing. If I can be the vehicle to tell our story, the world will be a better place.”

SOAR and the agricultural program at New Richmond High School have developed an excellent reputation for top-notch education. Visitors from seven states have visited New Richmond to tour the

facilities and the SOAR Educational Center, and several students have transferred to the high school from neighboring towns because of the program.

“What we do is so important for career connections and helping set students up for success. Parents and students recognize the opportunities,” Sauvola says. “When you’re passionate about something and have good help, there isn’t anything you can’t do.” ■

*Jodi Helmer is with the National FFA Organization. Reprinted with permission from the National FFA Organization (New Horizons Winter 2018 issue).*



PARDEEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL  
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## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

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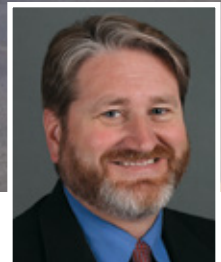
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**Building Excellence**



# Your Construction Project as a Learning Tool



Since the beginning of 2017, Wisconsin voters have approved more than \$2 billion worth of facility projects in school district referendums. While this is great news for Wisconsin school districts and the construction industry, it's even better news for our students. In addition to getting new and updated facilities, students who are interested in the building design and construction professions have the opportunity to garner valuable experience and knowledge beyond their technical education classes.

The nexus between building projects, student desire and demand

for talent in the construction profession allows for a momentous opportunity. When a district partners with an architectural firm and construction manager on a facility project, students can learn about the architecture, engineering and construction professions through hands-on, experiential learning.

Encourage your staff to dream and take advantage of these real-world prospects. But don't wait until the construction starts ... the prospects begin during the planning process.

## ■ The building process as a teaching tool

Students can be involved in the

planning and design phases of building projects. Gaining student perspectives as daily users is helpful to the project and provides students with a window into how the design process functions.

Additionally, there are opportunities for internships, job shadows and mentorships with architects and engineers. One local high school student, Mackenzie Beck, made such a strong impression on us that we hired her as an intern last summer. She was involved in designing and documenting a new shelter for an area park. Mackenzie's classmates in her school's Building Construction 2

**Students can learn about the architecture, engineering and construction professions** through hands-on, experiential learning when a district partners with an architectural firm and construction manager on a facility project.



class brought her design to life with the help of local contractors. She also received further real-world experience when she was interviewed by her local news during the park shelter's ribbon cutting in January of this year.

### ■ Construction provides lots of lessons

There are numerous ways to engage students during the construction process. Having students be a part of the project is often a paradigm shift for many construction professionals who typically try to keep anyone not working on a project far from the jobsite. However, once the professionals realize this is a great way to develop a pipeline of talent and engage the next generation of workers, they often embrace the concept.

Early discussions and planning can ensure opportunities to participate in and observe different

phases of the construction process. A recent middle school project provided the opportunity for one district's high school seniors to complete a construction internship — working weekly with our project manager and field project manager throughout the duration of the project. Imagine how this experience could influence college application reviewers and future employers.

They also provide opportunities for students to work directly with the skilled trades. During a recent large construction project that resulted in new and renovated spaces for a Wisconsin district, students participated in job activity supervision and rough carpentry work. Seizing upon opportunities

like these creates interest in high-demand construction jobs, which is great for our economy and for our students.

### ■ Your building projects are ongoing tools for learning

The learning opportunities don't stop once a project is complete. Students who are considering design or construction careers can continue to be involved in your building improvements and new projects. Learning opportunities include:

- **Review building design intent in comparison to actual construction results.** Students can interact with initial renderings or 3D views to compare the plan with actual results.

### ■ The learning opportunities shouldn't stop once a project is complete.



Student Mackenzie Beck was interviewed by local media for her role in the construction of a local park shelter.



This can continue year after year as a teaching tool.

- **Develop comprehension of construction and building components.**

Everything from repurposed materials, low or no-VOC (volatile organic compounds) products, lighting choices, acoustics elements and more can be compared so students gain an understanding of the impact of design decisions.

- **Understand facility operations.**

Software allows school districts to utilize building information modeling to track warranties, maintenance items, system utilization, security, room assignments and more. This information is incredibly helpful to assess ongoing expenses and can be valuable for teaching students about items such as computerized systems and building system management.

- **Monitor occupant use patterns and profiles.** Students can monitor how a space is truly being used and if construction elements are being

utilized properly. For example, assessment of the lighting levels in relation to the visual tasks being performed in a space is valuable for future planning and cost savings. Insufficient or poor-quality lighting may reduce teacher and student productivity while areas that are over-lit waste energy.

- **Study the climate and environment (indoor and outdoor).**

Looking at elements such as temperature, air quality, positioning of the building and water consumption can be evaluated year after year for practical student lessons.

- **Understand thermal comfort.**

Evaluating how students and staff operate at differing temperatures allows students the chance to understand the true impact of temperature regulation.

- **Monitor energy use.** Consistently evaluating energy usage and how actions and choices impact that usage is vital to future designs and planning. Allowing students to

observe how routine maintenance, equipment purchases, etc., impact the bottom line and the environment is an excellent teaching tool.

## ■ Beyond the construction industry

There are numerous other ways to study the effects of the built environment on human interaction and performance. Biophilia, which is about incorporating natural materials, views of nature, vegetation, natural light and other elements of the natural world into the built environment, is a growing field and provides new horizons for our students. This field will continue to grow as more people become aware of the scientific research and grasp the mental and physical performance benefits to both the workforce and education. Similarly, a greater grasp on seasonal disorders related to weather and allergens can be studied with resultant real-world impacts and outcomes. Understanding how design and the arrangement of space impacts us sociologically provides engagement with fields that students may not have previously understood.

■ Creativity and collaboration are the dynamic elements that make hands-on learning happen.





## ■ Differing levels for different students

Connecting educational leaders with construction professionals early in the process to gauge interest and enthusiasm is the initial step in determining what level of learning your project will provide. Design and construction professionals can speak to classes, conduct construction tours, review student resumes, perform mock employment interviews and participate in panel discussions.

While the interest level of older students is more likely to be greater, we encourage engaging with younger students as well. In a recent elementary school project, we let children come into the newly constructed gym. We briefly shared information about the building process and then let them play. We provided sidewalk chalk and allowed the students to draw on the concrete

floor, which would soon be under a wood gym floor — giving students a connection to the building project.

## ■ Partnerships produce positive experiences

These are just a few examples of the ways that students can gain from your next construction or remodeling project — and get to know the people who make buildings come to life. Creativity and collaboration are the dynamic elements that make hands-on learning happen. Use this article as a

catalyst for a discussion between faculty and project professionals, and your students will reap the benefits for many years to come. ■

*Jody Andres, AIA LEED AP, is a senior project architect and the K-12 market leader at Hoffman Planning, Design & Construction, Inc. Andres is a LEED Accredited Professional, past President of the American Institute of Architects Wisconsin, and the regional representative to the AIA Strategic Council. He has worked with more than 50 school districts on PreK-12 educational facilities, providing needs assessment, planning, programming and design services. Jody can be reached at [jandres@hoffman.net](mailto:jandres@hoffman.net).*



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# Classroom to Construction Site

The benefit of youth apprenticeships | Erika Freeman

**A**s educators prepare students for the future, a worthwhile initiative is underway. In recent years, youth apprenticeships have had a growing presence in school districts across the state. Such programs offer students hands-on

learning while exploring careers in almost any industry. Specifically, students participating in youth apprenticeship programs receive an education that combines academic and technical instruction with on-the-job training.

J.H. Findorff & Son Inc. has direct experience and a genuine interest in supporting youth apprenticeship programs. As a commercial builder, we understand that such programs are incredibly valuable. They help set the foundation to





Isaac Sanderson, a senior at Verona. He has been working at the new Verona Area High School project set for completion in fall 2020.

shape careers. To make this possible, we offer students opportunities to learn outside of the classroom on actual construction sites. This alternative learning environment teaches students how to approach challenges, effectively communicate and collaborate with teams. Additionally, students are given first-hand experience on the careers available in the

construction industry, ranging from virtual construction to project management.

Through youth apprenticeship programs, students develop clear connections between learning in the classroom and experiences on the jobsite. This prepares them to achieve their future career and educational goals.

“We feel youth apprenticeships are a great way to get students involved in the construction process,” said Matt Breunig, director of project management.

Findorff regularly teams with school districts and the Dane County School Consortium to recruit students interested in this mutually beneficial opportunity. The consortium has been a vital resource in this process. With a mission to offer today’s youth a pathway to tomorrow’s careers, the consortium partners with local businesses and community groups to bring innovative learning programs to students.

The company has trained and mentored 12 youth apprentices since 2014.

“We look for students who are excited about the construction industry, show they can be responsible and have an eagerness to learn. We also try to offer opportunities that align with students’ interests,” Breunig said. “As part of this process, project managers and field superintendents build relationships with school districts that selected us to manage their construction projects. Having hired students from those districts, the work has been meaningful for everyone involved.”

Most recently, students from Belleville, McFarland and Verona worked on projects within their respective districts. Their experiences, while different, can be used as models for others considering the same path as they take the first steps in their construction careers.

#### **Verona Area School District:**

Isaac Sanderson has been a youth apprentice for the district’s new high school since September 2018. He works closely with carpenters, learning the skills of the trade and the importance of quality craftsmanship. “(This experience) gave me a good idea about what it is like working in the trades,” Sanderson said. “I’m hoping that I continue to learn and gain the experience necessary to eventually become a lead carpenter.” Isaac is graduating high school this year and plans to become a carpenter apprentice to start his full-time career.

#### **McFarland School District:**

Alton Slane enjoys learning about all the different aspects of construction. He began his tenure as a youth apprentice last fall at a construction site for the McFarland School District. “Allowing students like me to work through an apprenticeship is an amazing way to involve them in the workforce,” said Slane. “Having more options after high school and feeling better prepared for the future are big pluses.”

#### **School District of Belleville:**

Julia McNamar worked on the addition to the School District of Belleville’s Intermediate School in 2018. Her responsibilities included requests for information postings, reviewing mechanical plans and preparing two-week, look-ahead schedules for subcontractors. “The most valuable thing I learned is that communication is the gateway to success,” McNamar said. “With so many workers assigned to different areas of the project, communication is key to keep people informed and stay efficient.” District Administrator Pam Yoder was impressed by McNamar’s involvement with the program. “It was such an inspiration to see her interact with other women in the construction field,” Yoder said. “We’re grateful for this amazing opportunity for our students.”



These experiences show how students benefit greatly from youth apprenticeship programs. However, it should be noted that construction managers and other employers can also reap rewards from their involvement, including:

- Increased awareness with education clients.
- Trained workers who are better prepared to enter the workforce and have required, job-specific proficiencies.
- Reduced costs for recruitment and training.
- Improved employee retention.

When it is all said and done, youth apprenticeships are win-win situations for everyone involved.

“Students who are looking for careers in the trades and are eager to learn will have the opportunity to work with the best,” General Superintendent Mark Schneider said. “Additionally, as Findorff is committed to the community, we appreciate the opportunity to train future generations of the trades. Students not only can advance their career goals, but also can develop

life-ready skills as they start to enter adulthood.”

### ■ **An Eye on the Future:** *Five Strategies to Engage Our Future Workforce*

Construction, like any other industry, is in competition to capture the interest of young people looking for career options. Construction isn’t always on most young people’s radar as a viable career path. What can we, as an industry and a construction company, do about attracting students to our industry?

According to research, the best way to get students interested in construction is to provide exposure and career information during their middle school years. We have developed strategies that help expose elementary, middle and high school students to the many facets of the construction industry. In addition to our commitment to the youth apprenticeship program, we also concentrate on the following four initiatives:

**1. Career fair involvement:** The company participates in youth career exploration opportunities at every



Alton Slane, a junior at McFarland High School, has been working as a youth apprentice on his district’s construction project.

education level. While the delivery and messages are different, the exposure young students receive to various opportunities is similar. At multiple fairs throughout the school year, students can meet a project manager or superintendent, learn construction basics, or experience virtual reality using goggles that help visualize a new or renovated building.

**2. Field worker recruitment:** The recruitment of tradespeople is typically directed by our union partners. However, with its nearly 130-year history, Findorff has a deep reputation for hiring local talent in the communities in which work is performed. This has been an advantage with recruitment efforts, particularly during the busy construction season. In addition, we proactively partner with agencies like Operation Fresh Start to mentor young adults every year. After completing specific education requirements as well as receiving instruction and experience,

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individuals can continue with a career in construction.

**3. Strong partnerships with Dane County School Consortium:** The consortium works collaboratively with Dane County school districts and statewide programs to offer educational opportunities related to potential careers. One program they have partnered on for the last two years continues to increase in interest. The week-long Findorff Construction Camp in June allows participants (high school students 14 to 17 years old) to work alongside construction professionals in the carpentry, electrical and plumbing trades as well as learn about project management and safety. This exposure to the trades and construction industry offers hands-on opportunities to students curious about the field.

FutureQuest, an event led by the consortium, is an annual career fair

in which more than 5,000 middle school students attend from every Dane County school district. Students are involved in activities that explore various construction career pathways. At this event, thousands of attendees are successfully engaged at an interactive booth showcasing augmented and virtual reality uses in the building process.

**4. On-site activities:** Because Findorff performs work (remodeling or new construction) in many occupied school environments, we have developed several activities to engage students and staff while exposing them to the nuances of a job site. Recently, our project team partnered with a local district to provide video-taped answers to questions students asked in advance. It was a fun and interactive way to engage students, staff and parents on the project. Other ways we connect with students include:

- Classroom presentations
- Drone demonstrations
- Virtual reality activities

After experiencing a series of uncertainties and labor shortages over the past few years, there is increasing concern for the future of the construction industry. We proactively seek opportunities to engage diverse populations, including young adults, minorities and women, to help move the workforce in the right direction. Findorff knows that inviting young students to take a closer look at the construction industry and the trades can be beneficial to their career selection process. Getting exposed earlier allows them to better understand and appreciate the industry and possibly have their sights set on a fulfilling career in construction. ■

*Erika Freeman is in Communication Services – Education Market for J.H. Findorff & Son Inc.*



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Connecting local governments and  
school districts to UW-Madison

*Gavin Luter, Bekah McBride  
and Tom Ziemer*

# The Wisconsin Idea Gets **BACK TO ITS ROOTS**

One defining characteristic of the University of Wisconsin-Madison is the history of the “Wisconsin Idea.” The idea is simple: make the university more useful for Wisconsin citizens. UniverCity Year seeks to do just that. The UW-Madison program works with local governments, such as school districts, to find solutions to some of the biggest challenges facing communities throughout Wisconsin. The program facilitates a three-year partnership between the university and a local government or a cluster of local governments, allowing faculty and students to

collaborate with the community on projects that address local issues. As an interdisciplinary effort, UCY leverages the talents of UW-Madison’s faculty, staff and students, applying their expertise to issues that matter to local government leaders.

In its three-plus years, UCY has engaged hundreds of students and faculty members on dozens of projects with the City of Monona, Dane County and Green County in southcentral Wisconsin and Pepin County in northwestern Wisconsin. Each year, UCY typically matches 20-30 projects in priority areas defined by the local stakeholders.

Students and faculty work with the community on these projects while local governments receive deliverables that address the priority areas so that the best possible decisions can be made and solutions reached.

These efforts have proven to be a win-win for local governments and UW-Madison. The basic assumption of UCY is that local government leaders are always looking for ways to do interesting and innovative things in their locality but are sometimes limited in terms of time, funding and capacity. Universities are full of people thinking about, researching and teaching innovative



◀ Juda High School teacher Scott Anderson gives UniverCity Year faculty and staff a tour of the Juda School's solar panels during an initial site visit where UW-Madison students learned about the school's needs and assets.

(Photo credit – Gavin Luter)

ways to solve problems. Students also need experiences to help them prepare for their careers. UCY exists to take advantage of these different realities and create partnerships to improve theory, research and practice around local government problem-solving.

Could your school district be the next UCY partner? UCY has already completed projects in Green County schools. And through a collaboration with the UW-Madison School of Education, the top-ranked public education school in the nation, UCY is poised to address complex issues in K-12 education.

Partners working with UCY can expect tangible data, analysis, research, concept plans, designs and policy recommendations that help advance local goals. For example, the UW-Madison Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering's senior capstone design course recently developed a renewable energy system to help offset the Juda School District's energy expenses by 25 percent.

The Juda School District has one 4K-12 building that serves approximately 300 students. Working alongside the district, Jan Kucher, a capstone instructor and UW-Madison adjunct professor, and his students studied the viability and impact of renewable energy systems for the school from five perspectives: environmental impact, safety, constructability, cost and social considerations. The research pointed to a system that incorporates both a geothermal heating and cooling system as well as a rooftop solar panel array to bolster the school district's existing solar setup. The students also explored funding options that would help the district

pay for such a major upgrade.

For the students participating in the capstone, the project was an excellent opportunity to gain experience interacting with clients. "It's given me confidence that I could go work on something that I've never really experienced before and be able to learn it quickly," said UW-Madison student Robin Ritchey.

Juda High School students also gained insight and motivation by working with UW-Madison students. "It shows them the opportunities that are out there in the world," said Scott Anderson, a high school math and engineering teacher at Juda. "It's a great motivator for my students."

In a similar project, Scott



▲ Juda High School teacher Scott Anderson (front) and his students pose with UW-Madison engineering students (far right, clockwise) Brooke Marten, Robin Ritchey, Emma Connell, Morgan Keck and Connor Acker and team mentor Casey Joyce (middle) outside of Juda School. (Photo credit – Scott Anderson)

Williams, a UW-Madison faculty associate and research and education coordinator for the Wisconsin Energy Institute, worked with his Interdisciplinary Design for Energy

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& Sustainability students to explore several renewable energy systems for the New Glarus School District. In this case, it was determined that a rooftop mounted solar photovoltaic system would produce the most effective and economically viable design without encroaching on current or future landholdings. They also offered several concrete ideas for how the school can save money on energy through conservation tactics.

“One of the benefits of working with this program is the opportunity to create real-world projects that allow students to see their work benefit a community,” Williams said. “UniverCity Year also has a lot of resources available to help students and faculty get the projects off the ground.”

An additional UCY collaboration saw UW-Madison professor Doug McLeod and students from his Creative Campaign Messages course work with the Monticello School District to design a marketing plan for their schools. The project started because Monticello had no marketing materials, and they were struggling with declining enrollment.

Students designed creative messages and marketing materials (brochures, website content, handouts and advertisements) that can be used jointly to attract students to enroll in the school and parents to consider living in Monticello.

Through projects like these, UCY is working with communities across Wisconsin to create better places. Local government leaders have already felt the benefits of the projects.

“Our return was definitely worth far more than our initial investment,” Monona Mayor Mary O’Connor said. “The completed projects will save Monona tax dollars in the future because we will be able to go to consultants with refined project ideas, avoiding the time and expense of the initial development process.”

“We knew we were going to get a good product, but the process has been especially exciting too,” Dane County Board of Supervisors chair Sharon Corrigan added. “To have this center of thinking and learning and exploration working on our problems has been really gratifying.”

UniverCity Year is accepting

## MORE INFO

**UCY/Green County**  
school district projects:

[bit.ly/ucy-greencounty](http://bit.ly/ucy-greencounty)

**UCY/Juda**  
school project:

[bit.ly/ucy-juda](http://bit.ly/ucy-juda)

**UCY/Monticello**  
school project:

[bit.ly/ucy-monticello](http://bit.ly/ucy-monticello)

applications for new community partners through July 29. To learn more about this initiative, contact managing director Gavin Luter at [gavin@cows.org](mailto:gavin@cows.org) or 608-261-1141, or visit [university.wisc.edu/ucy](http://university.wisc.edu/ucy). ■

*Gavin Luter is the director of the UniverCity Alliance; Bekah McBride is a marketing & communications coordinator for the UW-Madison Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies; and Tom Ziemer is a science writer for the UW-Madison College of Engineering.*

**“One of the benefits of working with this program is the opportunity to create real-world projects that allow students to see their work benefit a community.”**

— Scott Williams, UW-Madison





# Are We at a New Normal?

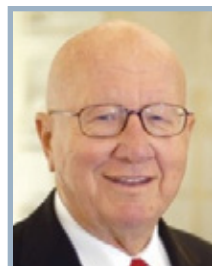
How school leaders can establish  
a values-driven culture

*Richard R. Pieper, Sr.  
and G. James Lemoine, Ph.D.*

**W**isconsin superintendents and their school districts can educate future generations with values as well as academic scores. Why are instilling values important? Consider the recent college admissions scandal and other problematic situations that have arisen in the educational system. This article serves to state the problem and provide two schools of thought for alleviating it.

The United States' most prestigious universities and members of the nation's wealthy elite were caught this March in a massive college admissions scheme. What was most shocking is that too many

people were not shocked. What does it mean when admired and famous business leaders are people who ignore morals to benefit themselves? Like Steve Jobs, who regularly parked in handicapped spaces; Mark Zuckerberg, who famously said the way to live is to be legal without being ethical; and Sheryl Sandberg, who wrote books about positive leadership but, in practice, prioritized profits over data privacy and the good of society. How did we get to a point where our political leaders value demonizing their opponents over working toward the



Richard Pieper



James Lemoine

common good; where three-fourths of Americans report our country's moral values are declining; where an increasing minority believe actions like cheating on spouses is OK; and where children report cheating in record numbers (because, in their words, everyone does it and it's the



## Leadership programs are evolving, promising better times. But old habits are hard to break.

fastest way to the top)?

Many explanations have been floated for our lack of attention to morality and basic human decency. A convincing one relates to how we educate and what we expect from our new leaders. We teach young political leaders to amass power and prestige, young business leaders to prioritize efficiencies and profitability, and young educational leaders to value abstract test scores and bureaucratic conformance. Too frequently, higher education has taught leaders that they need not serve society, but instead serve their stockholders, bosses or themselves. Celebrated academics wrote in the Harvard Business School's *Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice*, "What kinds of leaders are these institutions developing that have caused so much hardship for so many?"

If leaders are to work for the betterment of society, we've developed a strange way of teaching leadership. The science of leadership has historically been either hostile or ambivalent to leadership ethics, partly due to its origins. In the early 20th century, the first theory on how to amass and maintain power emerged from sociological and political research. This ultimately meant maximizing factory workers' effectiveness. In 1970, economist Milton Friedman argued that a business's only responsibility is to maximize profit and any type of corporate social responsibility is a dangerous distraction. A consensus emerged in the 1980s and 1990s around a model called

"transformational leadership," which didn't include morality. Rather, this model defines a successful transformational leader as someone who accomplished an organization's objectives without regard for the overall impact on customers, communities or, in some cases, followers. From this body of knowledge, leadership professors and consultants built their curricula and lessons — those with which our current leaders were trained. Is it any surprise few leaders since have behaved ethically or with much regard for the people they manage?

Yet, in 1991, Dr. Jill Graham at Loyola University Chicago wrote an article in *The Leadership Quarterly* in which she warned that prioritizing an organization's profit and success above all else was dangerous and incompatible with the public good. She suggested that organizations and leadership scholars turn to servant leadership, an approach created by Robert Greenleaf in 1970. His concept of servant leadership focuses on a humble leader who chooses to share power, build relationships and serve followers. The most important aspect of this approach is prioritizing all stakeholders, including the organization itself as well as followers, customers (for education: students and their families) and society in general. Graham's paper was rarely cited and made little impact at the time.

Corporate scandals in the early 21st century renewed interest in servant leadership. Researchers at the University of Illinois-Chicago demonstrated that servant leadership could enhance societal outcomes like volunteerism and boost employee performance beyond the more

goal-focused transformational leadership. A separate study found that a CEO emphasis on all stakeholder values predicted positive firm growth and return on investment while a CEO emphasis on only profitability did not. Thus, a new wave of research was launched to explore a seemingly paradoxical effect — beyond positively impacting employees and communities, leadership prioritizing societal good creates more profits than leadership that prioritizes profit.

Some scholars still claim that moral leadership models do not work in the real world. But a review of nearly 300 published studies found that moral approaches to leadership are consistent, positive predictors of performance, employee motivation, engagement and creativity, and often surpass the effects of traditional leadership.

Leadership programs are evolving, promising better times. But old habits are hard to break. Recently, the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership sent copies of its servant leadership essay to every member of the United States Congress. None responded. If elected officials struggle with serving others, no wonder many of the powerful in America seem more interested in retaining their lofty positions, rather than helping others achieve similar success.

Servant leadership can be adapted in all schools as a first step in re-establishing values. We urge schools to visit the Greenleaf Institute Servant Leadership website [Greenleaf.org](http://Greenleaf.org), which makes it easy for early adapters. In Wisconsin, meetings occur several times a year around the state.



Complementing servant leadership is Wisconsin Schools of Character, a national and statewide approach to furthering values (WiCharacter.org). Its goal is to ensure greatness to our posterity by raising the profile of goodness as our standard of public behavior and integrity as the touchstone of all social interactions.

A number of schools throughout Wisconsin are involved, including the following examples of exemplary character education districts and schools in Wisconsin:

- South Milwaukee School District
- Edgewood Elementary School (Greenfield)
- Greenwood Elementary School (River Falls)
- Brown Deer Middle/High School (Brown Deer)

- Meyer Middle School (River Falls)
- Pleasant Prairie Elementary School (Kenosha)
- Catholic Memorial High School (Waukesha)
- Columbus Elementary School (Columbus)
- Capitol West Academy (Milwaukee)
- Woodlands School – Bluemound Campus (Milwaukee)
- Prairie Elementary School (Waunakee)
- Lake Bluff Elementary School (Shorewood)
- Jefferson School District
- Stormonth Elementary School (Fox Point/Bayside)
- Milwaukee College Preparatory School

Those caught in the recent college admissions scandal surely forgot their values, assuming they were taught values. If something is not done, their actions will be repeated and the admissions scandal shows what our new normal will look like. All the grammar, history, science and social studies in the world will not be able to withstand the onslaught of a valueless approach to living our lives. ■

**Richard R. Pieper, Sr.** is the Trustee Emeritus and Past Chairman for the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership; the Past President of Character.org (CEP); and an American Patriot of Character Awardee.

**G. James Lemoine, Ph.D.** is an Assistant Professor at the School of Management, University at Buffalo; Trustee and Greenleaf Scholar at the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership.



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Deadline: **Friday, August 16.**



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## To Be Continued ...

*An incomplete look at the 2019-20 state budget process*



**A**s we write this month's column, debate over the state's 2019-21 state budget is in full swing. We had hoped to give you a major progress report in these pages; however, we are unable to do so. While the Legislature's powerful Joint Finance Committee is poised to take up K-12 education funding, it has not yet done so. Key votes on K-12 funding were set for May 23, several days after our deadline.

So, rather than speculate on issues that will likely be decided by the time this issue of the magazine reaches your mailbox, we will take a look back on the budget process.

For the first time in over a decade, Wisconsin state government is split between the two major parties — Democrat Tony Evers controls the governor's post while Republicans dominate both houses of the Legislature. Conventional wisdom holds that the two parties will have to cooperate for anything to be accomplished. That conventional wisdom is being put to a rather severe test.

On March 1, Gov. Evers put forth an ambitious budget for public education calling for an increase of more than \$1.4 billion in state funding for schools for his "Fair

Funding for our Future" reform plan. The plan called for boosting state general equalization aid by adding \$611 million in new state funding over the biennium and transferring another \$1.09 billion that is currently distributed to state property tax credits into the general equalization aid pot, beginning in 2020-21.

In addition, Evers' plan called for boosting state special education categorical aid by \$606 million over the biennium (\$75 million in the first year/\$531 million in the second) to raise the state reimbursement level from around 25.3 percent to an estimated 30 percent in the first year and 60 percent in the second year. The plan also called for an additional \$63 million in state funding over the biennium for school-based mental health services and \$44 million more in state funding to assist schools in educating English learners.

To fund this massive effort, Evers' plan relied on persuading lawmakers to do two things that would generate additional state revenues:

- 1)** Raise state taxes by over \$1 billion (mainly through limiting the ability of taxpayers whose incomes exceeded certain thresholds to exclude non-farm

capital gains (\$505 million) and limiting the amount of manufacturing income taxpayers may claim in calculating the manufacturing and agriculture tax credit (\$516 million)); and

- 2)** Expand Medicaid eligibility to allow the state to capture additional federal funding that would offset or free up about \$324.5 million in state funds for other purposes.

Almost from the beginning, GOP legislative leaders signaled they were not on board with the governor's proposals, especially his aggressive spending plan and tax hikes. They immediately rejected much of the plan and threatened to craft their own budget rather than work from the governor's document. They vowed to fund state government without raising taxes and signaled that their budget version would look quite different from the governor's.

Still, the non-partisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau prepared its usual summary of the governor's budget proposal and JFC hearings on the proposed budget went on as usual at four locations around the state. Partisan differences were largely kept under wraps. It was the proverbial "calm before the storm."

For the first time in over a decade, Wisconsin state government is split between the two major parties ... Conventional wisdom holds that the two parties will have to cooperate for anything to be accomplished. Conventional wisdom is being put to a rather severe test.



On May 1, the GOP-controlled Legislature formally signaled it would have no part in raising additional revenues. In a memo, the co-chairs of the Joint Finance Committee announced the committee would not work from the governor's proposal in building the budget and declared 131 items the governor had included in his budget to be "off limits" to further budget discussion. Among those 131 items were the proposed major tax increases described above, the proposed Medicaid expansion, and the proposed transfer of funding for state property tax credits into the school aid appropriation.

At that point, it became clear that the governor's "Fair Funding" proposal faced almost insurmountable obstacles, and his proposals to increase K-12 funding faced a very steep climb. Without additional revenues from a tax increase or an infusion of federal funding, the governor's proposals to provide additional funding would have to depend on revenue growth from existing sources.

Updated revenue projections that were received in mid-May indicated the state would take in an estimated \$753 million more over the current fiscal year, which ends on June 30, and in the next two years. However, this influx of cash will not be evenly distributed, with about \$592 million entering state coffers in the current 2018-19 fiscal year and only modest additional revenues of \$68 million and \$93 million, respectively,

projected over the next two years.

Under current state law, \$291.2 million of the increased collections in 2018-19 must be deposited in the state's budget stabilization (or "rainy day") fund. JFC co-chair Rep. John Nygren (R-Marinette) called for putting all the surplus cash into the budget stabilization fund. In a rare case of agreement, Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R-Rochester) and Evers agreed.

But that is about the only sign of agreement. Legislative Republicans

separate bills. To get around the governor's partial veto authority, which can only be used on bills containing an appropriation, one bill would contain spending changes and the other policy language. By putting policy language into a bill without any appropriations, they would foreclose the governor's option to use his partial veto authority although he could veto such a bill in its entirety.

So where does that leave things as of this juncture? The answer may have revealed itself by the time you read this column, but perhaps not.

In the meantime, the WASB Government Relations staff has been actively advocating on behalf of predictable, sustainable increases in spendable resources for public school districts and substantial increases in special education

categorical aid and funding for school-based mental health services and programs to help schools with English-learner students. We have supported expanding sparsity aid and high-cost transportation for rural districts and new initiatives aimed at helping urban districts with their special challenges.

We thank those of you who have communicated with your legislators about your needs and explained how funding proposals would address those needs. Your efforts are vital. ■

*Dan Rossmiller is the WASB Director of Government Relations; Chris Kulow is the WASB Government Relations Specialist.*

**To find updates on JFC action on state budget provisions affecting the K-12 education, we encourage you to follow the WASB Legislative Update Blog and our weekly WASB email *Legislative Newsletter*. As always, we will be posting updates on actions on the 2019-21 state budget as they happen.**

have long been wary of the governor's powerful partial veto authority, arguably the most powerful in the nation. One of the reasons they have taken so much "policy" language out of the budget is that they fear the governor will be able to wield his partial veto authority to creatively rewrite portions of the budget — having learned their lesson when former Gov. Scott Walker used his veto pen to turn a one-year moratorium on the use of the energy efficiency exemption from revenue limits into a 1,000-year moratorium.

So great is their concern that GOP legislative leaders are considering splitting the budget into two

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The first day, Friday, July 12, will focus on what boards need to know to reach all children with equity topics such as social emotional learning, equity-based decision making, discipline disparities, advanced courses, strategic planning, available resources and more.

The day includes special presentations by Hanover Research and

Equal Opportunity Schools. It also features staff from the Middleton-Cross Plains Area and Verona school districts, the Department of Public Instruction and the WASB.

The next day, Saturday, July 13, will focus on governance with sessions for new and experienced board members. Topics include how to conduct effective board meetings, policy making, school finance, superintendent evaluations, staffing roles and responsibilities, conflict management, and special leadership training for board presidents and vice presidents. ■



The 2019-20 schedule of WASB legal webinars is now available online. Visit [WASB.org](http://WASB.org) for the complete list and to register.

## Upcoming WASB Webinars

### Annual and Special Meetings: Notices, Procedures and Powers

June 12 | 12-1 pm

This presentation will review the notice requirements for annual and special meetings, cover meeting agendas and procedures and discuss the division of powers between the annual meeting and the school board in common school districts.

*Presenter: Barry Forbes, Associate Executive Director and Staff Counsel*

### Pupil Records

August 7 | 12-1 pm

The maintenance and release of pupil records are dictated by state and federal laws. This presentation will cover the basics of the pupil records laws with a focus on the limitations to the release of pupil records and recent legal changes.

*Presenter: Ben Richter, Staff Counsel*

### School District Referenda — Legal & Policy Considerations

August 21 | 12-1 pm

Before starting a referendum process, school boards need to be aware of a number of legal and policy considerations. This webinar will provide a detailed analysis of the different types of referenda as well as the procedures and timing, the use of district funds and resources, the roles of the board, individual board members and staff, and how districts, staff and boards may interact with third-party groups, e.g., “vote yes,” “vote no,” etc.

*Presenter: Barry Forbes, Associate Executive Director and Staff Counsel*

**Please note:** These webinars, and all previous ones, are recorded and available on demand. WASB members can purchase any webinar and watch when their schedule allows. Upcoming live and pre-recorded webinars are listed on the webinar catalog page at [WASB.org](http://WASB.org). In addition, links to past webinars are available in the Policy Resources Guide.



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*Janes Elementary School in the Racine Unified School District originally opened in 1857 as the Fourth Ward Grammar School.*

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# Discipline, Termination and Nonrenewal Under Districts' Grievance Policies

As a general proposition, employment in Wisconsin is at will. An employer may discipline or terminate an employee at any time, with or without notice, and for any reason so long as that reason is not illegal.<sup>1</sup> However, at-will employment can be modified by contract, statute or internal employer policy or handbook. For example, prior to 2011 Wisconsin Acts 10 and 32 (Act 10), most district employees were covered by collective bargaining agreements that required just cause for discipline and discharge and established a grievance arbitration procedure under which employees could challenge such actions. While Act 10 prohibits the negotiation of these provisions with a union representing employees, that legislation does not prevent boards from adopting these provisions unilaterally. Act 10 also requires that boards adopt a grievance process with respect to employee discipline, termination and workplace safety ("Act 10 grievance policy").<sup>2</sup> An Act 10 grievance policy must provide for a hearing before an impartial hearing officer and an appeal process in which the highest level of appeal is the school board. In addition to the process established by districts' Act 10 grievance policies, districts must follow the statutory procedural requirements for the nonrenewal of contracted full-time teachers and specified administrators.

Thus, even though Wisconsin is an at-will employment state, all districts seeking to discipline, terminate or nonrenew an employee have procedural obligations of which they need to be aware.<sup>3</sup> In addition, boards need to ensure that their Act 10 grievance policies, contracts and internal policies and handbooks are consistent with respect to the standard under which

the district may terminate or nonrenew employees and the processes that must be followed in doing so.

This *Legal Comment* will review employee termination and nonrenewal in the context of a district's Act 10 grievance policy and how that policy should dovetail with other statutory, constitutional and internal procedural guidelines. Its emphasis is not a comprehensive discussion of employee termination or nonrenewal although either, as will be discussed, will trigger the Act 10 grievance policy.

## ■ Termination and Nonrenewal of Employees with a Contract

Districts must enter into written contracts with teachers, specified administrators and drivers of motor vehicles owned by the district.<sup>4</sup> Districts can also enter into individual contracts with other employees for a specific term or duration even though there is no statutory obligation to do so. Districts may include in their employment contracts the standards under which such contracts can be terminated during their term. Absent such provisions, districts may only terminate such contracts during their terms for "good and sufficient cause."<sup>5</sup> The standard by which an employee contract can be terminated during its term is important not only because it determines the circumstances under which such action can take place, but also because it dictates the process that a district must use to accomplish that action.

An employee who has an expectation of continued employment arising from a policy, statute, handbook, collective bargaining agreement or individual contract has a protected property interest in the employee's employment. Under the 14th Amendment to the United States

Constitution, no one can be denied a protected property interest without due process of law. Such a property interest arises if, for example, an employee can only be terminated under a "just cause" or "cause" standard.<sup>6</sup> An employee who has a property interest in the employee's employment is almost always entitled to a pre-termination hearing prior to being terminated although individual circumstances will affect how elaborate such a hearing must be.<sup>7</sup> In some cases, the employee will also be entitled to a post-termination hearing that should be aligned with the district's Act 10 grievance policy. Regardless of the standard for termination adopted by the board, a terminated employee will have the right to file a grievance under the district's Act 10 grievance procedure.

Nonrenewal of full-time teachers' or administrators' contracts at the end of their terms is governed by Wis. Stat. ss. 118.22 and 118.24, respectively.<sup>8</sup> These statutes establish time parameters by which such teacher or administrator must be notified of potential nonrenewal and the right to a conference or hearing with the school board. These nonrenewal statutes do not establish a substantive standard that a district must meet in order to nonrenew a teacher's or administrator's contract. However, a district must meet any standard that it has adopted by board policy, employee handbook or individual contract in order to take such action. If a district has adopted a "cause" standard for nonrenewal, the district will have to ensure the nonrenewal process comports with due process. In this situation, districts should consult with legal counsel in order to properly coordinate any required statutory conferences or hearings with the



district's Act 10 grievance policy and the requirements of due process.

### ■ Termination of Employees Without Contracts

In the absence of any standard for termination or nonrenewal in any board policy or handbook, district employees without a contract are at-will employees with no expectation of continued employment. While these employees are not entitled to a pre-termination hearing, they may follow a district's Act 10 grievance policy to obtain a hearing before an impartial hearing officer after termination. In addition, some boards have adopted processes that must be followed as a condition precedent to any employee termination. For example, a board that adopts, by policy, handbook or individual contract, a mandatory progressive discipline scheme that must be followed before an employee can be terminated has likely eliminated employees' at-will status and could also have created an expectation of continued employment for its employees. In addition, a board can adopt a standard for termination higher than an at-will standard, but lower than a cause standard. For example, an "arbitrary or capricious" standard requires a rational basis for termination and likely does not create an expectation of continued employment.

### ■ Act 10 Grievance Policies and Due Process

One issue subject to judicial interpretation is whether an Act 10 grievance policy creates a property interest in employment, thus triggering the need for a pre-termination hearing before terminating an employee. In *Nesvold v. Roland*,<sup>9</sup> a county employee filed a federal lawsuit alleging that his separation from employment violated his due process rights. The county adopted an Act 10 grievance policy under which the impartial hearing officer could only overturn the separation upon a finding that such action was arbitrary or capricious. The court

held that the adoption of an Act 10 grievance policy does not create a constitutional property right. Significantly, the court also concluded that the adoption of an arbitrary or capricious standard does not create a property right, holding that, while such a standard moves the employment out of at-will status, it does not establish a cause standard sufficient to create a property right in continued employment. The court further recognized that the Act 10 grievance policy in and of itself satisfies federal due process rights even if that process does not provide all the relief that an employee seeks, such as front pay or future loss of earnings. This case suggests that the adoption of an Act 10 grievance policy that includes a standard of review short of "cause" or "just cause" does not give rise to a property right that would impose due process obligations on a district.

### ■ Act 10 Grievance Policies and Nonrenewals

Act 10 provides little guidance as to what should be included in an Act 10 grievance policy and there is scant legislative history to aid in its interpretation. For example, the statute does not define "employee," "termination," "discipline" or "workplace safety." Given this lack of statutory clarity as to the scope of employment actions subject to Act 10's provisions, many districts have adopted Act 10 grievance policies that limit the application of the grievance process by excluding certain employment actions from the definition of "termination."

Many districts have chosen to exclude from their Act 10 grievance policies any employment action caused by economic factors such as layoffs, furloughs, reductions-in-force, or wage and benefit adjustments. Many districts also exclude non-disciplinary employment actions from their Act 10 grievance policies, such as resignations, retirements, voluntary quits and administrative leaves with pay. Some districts have also excluded nonrenewals from

their Act 10 grievance policy.

The extent to which districts are able to narrow the scope of their Act 10 grievance policy by defining the terms "discipline" and "termination" has been the subject of some litigation. In *Marks v. Board of Education of the Wisconsin Rapids Public School*, the district's individual contracts and Act 10 grievance policy stated that nonrenewals would be governed by the process set forth in Wis. Stat. s. 118.22 and would not be subject to the district's Act 10 grievance policy.<sup>10</sup> The court concluded that no statute provided evidence that the legislature intended for nonrenewals to be subject to the Act 10 grievance policy, particularly when it had established a procedure for nonrenewal in Wis. Stat. s. 118.22. The court concluded that the nonrenewal statute and the Act 10 grievance policy address two separate and distinct aspects of the employment relationship between districts and teachers. Therefore, it held that the individual teacher contracts did not unlawfully exclude nonrenewals from the Act 10 grievance policy.

In *Schneider v. Howard Suamico School District*, the district adopted an Act 10 grievance procedure which excluded teacher nonrenewals under Wis. Stat. s. 118.22 from the definition of "termination" and "discipline."<sup>11</sup> A nonrenewed teacher argued that this exclusion violated Act 10. The court concluded that "discipline" is akin to "punishment" after interpreting the statute by referencing the dictionary definition of "discipline." The court concluded that because some nonrenewals may constitute "punishment," nonrenewals could not be categorically excluded from the grievance procedure. The court did not consider whether nonrenewals are also "terminations." This decision suggests that an Act 10 grievance policy may exclude from its scope the nonrenewal of teacher or administrator contracts for non-disciplinary reasons. The decision also suggests that other non-disciplinary actions might be properly excluded

from an Act 10 grievance policy.

However, *Dodge County Professional Employees Local 1323-A v. Dodge County*, a court of appeals case that did not involve a school district contract nonrenewal, suggests that perhaps boards do not have much latitude in excluding certain employment separations from the definition of “termination.”<sup>12</sup> In this case, the county adopted an Act 10 grievance policy that excluded from its provisions “termination of employment due to ... lack of qualification ...” An employee was convicted of operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol. County policy required as a qualification for employment that employees not have any convictions for operating under the influence of alcohol. The county terminated the employee because of her conviction. The employee grieved the discharge under the county’s Act 10 grievance policy. The county refused to process the grievance because the employee was terminated for lack of qualifications, which was excluded from the definition of “termination.”

The employee filed a lawsuit alleging that the statute required that her discharge be considered a “termination” and, thus, subject to the county’s Act 10 grievance policy. The court of appeals agreed, holding that the county’s exclusion of her discharge from the grievance process violated Act 10. In interpreting Act 10, the court used the dictionary definition of “termination” and found it to mean “to terminate” or to “discontinue the employment of; dismiss.” The court, however, noted that not all employment separations are “terminations” within the meaning of the statute and emphasized that its ruling was meant to convey only that the action taken against this specific employee was a termination within the plain meaning of the statute. While *Marks* suggests the nonrenewal of teacher or administrator contracts can

be excluded from a district’s Act 10 grievance policy, *Schneider* and *Dodge County* cloud the issue. Thus, whether a contract nonrenewal can be excluded from an Act 10 grievance policy is subject to debate. A district should consult with its legal counsel in deciding whether to include nonrenewal actions within the scope of its Act 10 grievance policy.

### ■ The Impartial Hearing Officer’s Review Standard

Act 10 does not establish any standard of review to guide the impartial hearing officer. In *Marks*, the board established an arbitrary or capricious standard for termination in its teacher contracts. Notwithstanding this, the employee argued that the individual teacher contracts implicitly created a cause standard for termination. The court rejected this argument and concluded that the board could adopt an arbitrary or capricious standard for termination in its contracts. This decision confirms that a district has the discretion to establish whatever standard it wishes with respect to employee terminations (whether they are subject to employment contracts or not), including at-will, arbitrary or capricious, or cause.

### ■ Conclusion

The Wisconsin Legislature gave districts significant discretion in the drafting of Act 10 grievance policies. Boards should review their individual teacher, administrator and other employee contracts, district policies and handbooks, and their Act 10 grievance policies to determine if the termination and nonrenewal standards and processes stated in each are consistent. Failure to be consistent can cause difficulties when terminating or nonrenewing an employee who seeks to contest that action. Boards should also review their Act 10 grievance policies to determine whether to include nonrenewal of teacher and administrator contracts within the

definition of “termination” in that policy. The law is not clear in this area and consultation with legal counsel on this issue is advised. Finally, if a district’s contracts, policies or handbooks create a cause or similar standard for discipline or termination, the board should review its policies, including its Act 10 grievance policy, to determine whether the processes set forth in them provide for appropriate due process. ■

### ■ End Notes

This Legal Comment was written by Michael J. Julka, Steven C. Zach, and Brian P. Goodman of Boardman & Clark LLP; WASB Legal Counsel. For additional information on related topics, see *Wisconsin School News* “The Statutory Provisions Related to Teacher Contracts” (Jan.-Feb. 2017) and “The Renewal and Nonrenewal of Teacher and Administrator Contract (Dec. 2008).

1. *Vorwald v. Sch. Dist. of River Falls*, 167 Wis. 2d 549, 482 N.W.2d 93 (1992).
2. Wis. Stat. s. 66.0509(1m).
3. The remainder of this *Legal Comment* will reference just termination and contract nonrenewal, although the standards for discipline are generally the same as termination.
4. Wis. Stats. ss. 118.21, 118.24, 121.52(2)(a).
5. *Curkeet v. Joint Sch. Dist. No. 2*, 159 Wis. 149, 149 N.W. 708 (1914); *Millar v. Joint Sch. Dist. No. 2*, 2 Wis. 2d 303, 86 N.W.2d 455 (Ct. App. 1957).
6. *Beischel v. Stone Bank Sch. Dist.*, 362 F.3d 430 (7th Cir. 2004).
7. *Cleveland Bd. of Educ. v. Loudermill*, 470 U.S. 532 (1985).
8. There are no statutory procedures applicable to the nonrenewal of contracts for drivers of motor vehicles owned by the district.
9. *Nesvold v. Roland*, 37 F. Supp. 3d 1022 (W.D. Wis. 2014).
10. *Marks v. Bd. of Educ. of the Wis. Rapids Pub. Sch.*, No. 14-CV-205 (Wis. Cir. Ct. Wood Cty. May 3, 2016).
11. *Schneider v. Howard Suamico Sch. Dist.*, No. 2013-CV-397 (Wis. Cir. Ct. Brown Cty. Jan. 23, 2014).
12. *Dodge Cty. Prof’l Emp. Local 1323-A v. Dodge County*, 2014 WI App 8, 352 Wis. 2d 400, 842 N.W.2d 400.





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