

**PIVOT:** Empowering Students Today to Succeed in an Unpredictable Tomorrow – page 10

# WISCONSIN SchoolNews

Official publication of the Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Inc.

January-February 2022 | wasb.org



PERSPECTIVES FROM THE 2022

## TEACHERS OF THE YEAR



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# WISCONSIN School News

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**John H. Ashley**  
Executive Editor

**Sheri Krause**

Editor

Director of Communications

■ REGIONAL OFFICES ■

122 W. Washington Avenue  
Madison, WI 53703  
Phone: 608-257-2622  
Fax: 608-257-8386

132 W. Main Street  
Winneconne, WI 54986  
Phone: 920-582-4443  
Fax: 920-582-9951

■ ADVERTISING ■

608-556-9009 • tmccarthy@wasb.org

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## STEM, CTE Classes Better Engage Low-Income Students

**L**ow-income high school juniors who took career and technical education courses in STEM fields were more likely to attend school and be prepared for class, according to research published by the American Educational Research Association.

Student disengagement comes with many negative academic consequences, and they disproportionately fall on low-income students.

The authors, from three public universities, found that career and technical education courses in science, technology, engineering and math increased school engagement in a way that was small but statistically significant.

The authors did not study in detail how or why these courses are connected to higher engagement. However, they speculate that the applied, hands-on nature of these courses may be “more interesting for students, encouraging them to be present, physically and mentally.”

The authors conclude by suggesting that funding for CTE courses can help improve outcomes for disadvantaged students, saying “As the nation looks to find additional ways to encourage STEM interest and celebrate nonacademic successes, CTE may provide a unique opportunity to emphasize some of these alternative aspects of success.” □

## Milwaukee School Board Member Recognized for Music Advocacy

**M**ilwaukee Public Schools board member Marva Herndon has been recognized as an advocate for music education by the Wisconsin Music Educators Association.

Herndon, an MPS graduate who joined the board in 2019, received the 2021 WMEA Distinguished School Board Member award.

“We are delighted to honor Director

## Rising Teacher Burnout Prompts Mental Health Days

**S**taff shortages and teacher burnout are leading thousands of schools nationwide to cancel classes for mental health days, the Wall Street Journal and others reported.

Surveys have indicated a rise in chronic workplace stress among teachers. Almost half (48%) of teachers surveyed by the online marketplace Teachers Pay Teachers in November said they’d considered changing jobs in the previous month, up from 32% in June.

With these staffing challenges exacerbated by hiring problems, many districts have provided teachers and

students with days off to recover mentally and emotionally.

In 2021, there have been at least 3,145 such school closures for mental health days, according to the newspaper.

In the survey, teachers asked for support in the form of more planning time, a budget for teaching materials, attention to their concerns and addressing student behavior. The cancellations are getting some push-back from parents scrambling to find childcare. □

### STAT OF THE MONTH



48%

**Percentage of teachers** who considered changing their jobs in the previous month when surveyed in November. Up from 32% in June. Source: Teachers Pay Teachers

## NSBA Hires New Executive Director

**T**he National School Boards Association has chosen Dr. John Heim to become its new executive director and CEO.

Heim, most recently the executive director of the Kansas Association of School Boards, said he is “dedicated to working with the board and our staff to rebuild trust with the state associations that are our members.”

Herndon for her work and advocacy for public education,” said MPS superintendent Dr. Keith P. Posley.

“She is a champion for public schools and recognizes the positive impact they have on our young people in Milwaukee, specifically through music education. Director Herndon is more than deserving of this recognition and the district applauds

her continued support of Milwaukee Public Schools.”

In 2019, MPS adopted a five-year plan to restore music funding by hiring an additional 85 music teachers, among other changes.

“We have to start somewhere. We have to make an effort to provide equally for all of our students,” Herndon told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel at the time. □

Among his first steps will be to enhance outreach with national organizations representing important stakeholder groups, including those representing parents.

“I wholeheartedly agree with the view recently reaffirmed by NSBA that the voices of parents should and must continue to be heard when it comes to decisions about their children’s education, health and

safety,” he wrote in a letter shared by the NSBA board. Heim also said he strongly believes in the importance of local control and will ensure it “remains another core principle of NSBA.”

Before becoming head of the Kansas Association of School Boards, Heim was a teacher, principal and superintendent. □



# Meeting the Needs of Our Children and Educators

We asked Wisconsin's five 2021-22 teachers of the year to reflect on how the pandemic has changed the future of education for this issue of the Wisconsin School News. Not surprisingly, a theme emerged.

Before children can learn algebra, civics or reading, they need to have their deeper needs met.

Children need to feel safe and to connect with each other and with caring adults in their life. As teacher of the year and speech language pathologist Anna Miller writes on page 7, these connections do not replace academic learning; they lay the foundation for it.

In today's world, meeting the social and emotional needs of our children is even more important to their academic progress.

I encourage you to read the essays of our teachers of the year and weigh their words carefully. These top teachers are writing specifically to you, our school leaders, to outline what their students need to be successful.

And then take a step back and consider what those educators need as well. School staff in Wisconsin and across the nation are increasingly reporting burnout and chronic stress. Staff cannot meet students' needs when their own needs are going unmet.

I know we are all thankful for the

work of our educators and staff, and while expressing our gratitude is important, we need to find ways to go above and beyond to provide meaningful support. As school board members, you play a crucial role in ensuring that educators and staff have the tools they need and find meaning and connection in their work.

A custodian who feels pride in his job is likely to thrive in a way that an unrecognized worker may not. A superintendent with the support of her board can be bolder.

Finally, please consider what you need to be an effective education leader. Far from being selfish, attending to your own needs means you want to be effective for your community's children. But remember, as one of our previous convention keynote speakers said, "You don't have to set yourself on fire to keep others warm."

The last two years have taken a heavy toll on human connection. That's what makes this year's State Education Convention in January even more special for school leaders.

The convention is a great place to build relationships and the values they inspire, such as empathy, camaraderie and gratitude. Our members often tell me they learn as much from each other — from informal hallway conversations and discussions over lunch — as they do from the sessions themselves.

In this issue of the School News,

we highlight our opening keynote speaker, Ravi Hutheesing. In his new book, "Pivot: Empowering Students Today to Succeed in an Unpredictable Tomorrow," Ravi writes about the need to foster curious, critical and communicative students. Education, he writes, should prepare the next generation to capture opportunities and recover from failures — to make pivots of their own.

WASB Breakfast keynote Karyn Buxman is also highlighted in this issue with an excerpt from her book, "Lead with Levity: Strategic Humor for Leaders." A self-described neurohumorist who lives at the intersection of humor and the brain, Karyn will provide school leaders with strategies in how to use humor to diffuse tensions and improve leadership.

Finally, I'm excited to announce that our closing keynote speaker on Friday, Jan. 21 will be Craig Counsell, manager of the Milwaukee Brewers. The former National League Conference Series most valuable player will provide a new perspective on leadership. It's sure to be a memorable keynote.

Check out other recently announced convention highlights on pages 16-17. Visit the WASB website for the complete agenda and to register.

We hope to see you there! ■

**J**As school board members, you play a crucial role in ensuring that educators and staff have the tools they need and find meaning and connection in their work.



2022 WISCONSIN

# TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

Wisconsin Teachers of the Year are incredible educators with unique perspectives and valuable voices, and I am proud to see them represent our state. It is a prestigious thing to become a Teacher of the Year, and this cohort lives up to the expectation of excellence that comes with that honor.

Our Teachers of the Year are selected by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction from the pool of 86 recipients of the Herb Kohl Education Foundation Fellowship. This year, for the second time, we were able to name five Teachers of the Year instead of four thanks to the generosity of the Kohl Foundation.

**Please join me in congratulating Wisconsin's Teachers of the Year**

— Jill Underly, State Superintendent of Public Instruction



**KABBY HONG**  
Verona Area High School,  
Verona Area School District

**Hong is an English teacher with 20 years of experience in education.** A National Board Certified Teacher, Hong has given several presentations for The New York Times on argumentative writing and boasts awards from Stanford University and the University of Chicago for his effectiveness as a teacher. In his application, Hong defined the term “achievement” as striving to help his students “find their voice and become a better version of themselves.”

**G**rowing up in the only Asian American family in a small rural Missouri town, I felt a sense of isolation and never liked being Asian American. I wanted to be Steve Garvey, the first baseman for the Los Angeles Dodgers. Steve was everything that I wasn’t. He was athletic, had “all-American” good looks and was white. I realize now that my self-hatred derived from never seeing someone like me accomplish anything significant or important. Asian Americans never wrote the novels or starred as the main character in the books I read. Asian Americans never showed up in our history books or lessons as inventors, scientists, heroes or activists. Asian Americans were literally invisible in nearly every aspect of our society.

The price Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have paid for that invisibility has come to light during the

pandemic, when there have been more than 9,000 documented hate crimes against the Asian American and Pacific Islander community. As a student, and now as a teacher, I know the power of our public education system to either normalize humanity and excellence across all identities or do the opposite. The choice that we make as educators has profound implications, not just for our school system, but for our country.

Currently, there is a fierce debate about whether race and identity should even be discussed in school. When I was growing up, my school’s curriculum was considered “neutral.” But I would argue that my school’s “neutral” curriculum damaged not only me but also my classmates.

I never learned about the long, rich and accomplished history of Asian Americans in this country. I never learned that the Chinese literally built the railroads that connected America, with many of them sacrificing their lives. I never learned about Wong Kim Ark and his contributions in standing

The goal of any education is to turn one-dimensional concepts into three-dimensional ones, and to take the invisible and make it visible. None of that happened for me and my classmates during my education.

There has been tremendous progress made in the last year with a recognition that schools play a vital role in combating stereotypes, invisibility and violence against the Asian American and Pacific Islander community. Illinois became the first state to require Asian American history to be taught in schools. This effort is a recognition that all students benefit when the definition of who is an American is broad, diverse and inclusive.

Using education to fight hate is why we teach the Holocaust in school districts across this country. These lessons don’t just benefit the Jewish community, they benefit all of us as we learn from our mistakes and vow to do better. Our country’s diversity is a source of strength. Schools are at their



### **Our country's diversity is a source of strength.**

Schools are at their best when we don't run from our diversity but embrace it.

— Kabby Hong

up for citizenship rights for all in his landmark U.S. Supreme Court case. I never learned about ground-breaking stateswoman Patsy Mink or the bravery of Daniel Inouye and the 442nd regiment who fought in World War II despite the wrongful incarceration of their families in internment camps.

Not only was I robbed of this knowledge, but so were my non-Asian classmates who only got a one-dimensional view of an entire group of people.

best when we don't run from our diversity but embrace it.

As an educator, I’m an optimist. I believe in the power of education to heal what ails us while illuminating a pathway forward. That can only happen if we work to ensure that all of our students are seen, heard and validated. Instead of wanting to be a “Steve Garvey,” I hope my students will look in the mirror and see themselves as the hero in their own story. □



**PATRICIA ZEMKE**  
John Muir Middle School  
and Horace Mann Middle School,  
Wausau School District

**Zemke is a sixth grade health teacher** with 26 years of experience in education. She is a National Board Certified Teacher and serves on the Wausau School District's social-emotional learning team. In her application, Zemke said she aims to create an environment "where students feel safe to share their dreams, a classroom where students develop empathy to learn from and inspire one another, develop grit to keep striving, and where they develop skills that empower them to become their best selves."

**A**s I sit down to answer the question, "What does life look like in the classroom?" I have a heavy heart as my daughter deals with the second suicide in her high school in a week. I have a heavy heart because I know I will be greeting a student tomorrow who has been getting beaten at home.

I have a heavy heart when I think of the sixth grade student I helped last week who wrote in their work that they were suicidal. It wasn't in BIG BOLD LETTERS. It was hidden among other facts about the student. I immediately went to that student's class and asked to speak with them in the hallway. Explaining my concerns and that I wanted to make sure they were safe, I walked this student directly to the counseling office. We met together with

the counselor; the student did not think I would actually read their assignment.

I have a heavy heart when I mentally get ready for my sixth graders who lost their classmate to cancer last year. These students did not get the chance to talk together about their classmate and what transpired. I have a heavy heart because I carry these worries and thoughts with me, yet do my very best to lighten the worries and thoughts of my students first.

Life also looks great in the classroom. There are students who are ready to learn, eager to participate and happy to be with their friends in person. How do we connect those seemingly "happy" students with the students who are struggling? We make connections.

My class does not start with a traditional "bell ringer" of content warmups. My class starts with talking about our weekends, answering silly questions, mindful minutes or maybe a game. Sometimes, we don't even get to the content. Sometimes, we spend the WHOLE time talking. This is why I know my students lost a friend to cancer; we talk about it almost every day in one way or another. When we talk, we learn about some very important content, such as empathy, resilience, gratitude and grit.

In the elementary classroom, each day begins with "circle time." I would like to see "circle time" continue into

the secondary grades. Why did we ever think it should stop? Students are making bigger decisions at the secondary level and are beginning to have a better understanding of the world and their place in it. Secondary students need to have the opportunity to bounce their ideas and dreams off a trusted adult every day.

Some classrooms utilize a social-emotional learning curriculum to act as "circle time." This is a wonderful step; however, it is a curriculum and our students do not always need a curriculum. Students need a safe and supportive environment that encourages student growth in the form of communication and connection with others. Students may not "participate," but that does not mean they did not make a connection with someone else.

If classrooms adopt a safe and supportive environment for connection, the adults will need time. Time to process all that they will begin to know about their students. The number of school counselors and therapists available at schools will need to increase. Every school needs at least one therapy dog that classrooms can utilize! When classrooms develop the environment for connection, students will talk. When they talk, they learn about very important content — empathy, resilience, gratitude and grit. □



Photo by Allison Shelley  
for EDUimages

**When we talk, we learn about some very important content,** such as empathy, resilience, gratitude and grit.

— Patricia Zemke



**ANNA MILLER**  
Harmony Elementary School,  
Milton School District

Miller is a speech language pathologist for pre-K to third grade and has 25 years of experience in education. Among her many contributions, Miller created an innovative play-based preschool speech program for 3-year-olds. In her application, Miller said she measures her work as a speech language pathologist by the statement, "All children do well when they can."

**A**braham Maslow was an American psychologist who studied motivation and what he called "self-actualization" in the 1960s. He studied the idea that motivation, creativity and learning come only when a person's other needs are "more or less" met. His theory can be visualized as a pyramid. At the bottom of the pyramid, Maslow states that our basic needs come first: food, clothing, shelter and safety. In the middle of the pyramid, we find our psychological needs: sense of belonging, love, friendships and self-esteem. Once these needs are met, we are able to reach the top of the pyramid, where self-fulfillment, creativity and meeting one's potential are found.

The children who walk into our schools every day are each carrying their own version of this pyramid with them. Some of their needs are met while others might not be. Add to that the racial, cultural, gender and religious identities that are critical for developing

a sense of connection and self-esteem. Now let's put on our pandemic glasses and view these pyramids through the lens of two years filled with inconsistency, insecurity, isolation and loss. Students today are more complex than ever, and so are their needs.

Here's what it comes down to. Our kids need us. They need to be learning in classrooms, and they need support reaching academics that were lost in a pandemic. But what they really need is us. Teachers and school districts have recognized this and stepped up with a renewed focus on social and emotional development and support of mental health. We recognize that the students are back in our buildings, but not all of them are equipped with the tools they

for it. There are several structured curricula that provide for direct instruction of skills, and there is professional development available that teaches staff how to weave this learning into daily activities in the classroom. For every unique district and community structure, there is a way to embed social and emotional support for all students. School leaders should bring teachers, administrators and the community together to identify the needs of their district and a plan for reaching those needs.

When I walk through the hallways of my own school building, I see every student being provided with breakfast. I hear morning meetings where stu-

For every unique district and community structure,  
**there is a way to embed social and emotional  
support for all students.**

— Anna Miller



need to learn. And although the COVID-19 pandemic was a catalyst for this renewal, the need for support and programming in this area was present before the pandemic hit and will certainly stretch beyond it.

School leaders play a critical role in supporting our students by providing the time and resources for social and emotional learning. In addition, they recognize that social-emotional learning does not take away from academic learning, but rather lays the foundation

dents have the opportunity to share and connect. I see social and emotional curricula being co-taught with the guidance counselor, who is full-time in my building for the first time. I see a social worker who has shared an app with the community that gives everyone the opportunity to donate to our families in need. I see teachers getting to know students' families and stories. We are building pyramids from the ground up so that our students can reach the top of theirs. □



**ERIC MUMM**  
Lancaster High School,  
Lancaster Community School District

**Mumm is a technology and engineering teacher** and has nine years of experience in education. Mumm was previously identified by the DPI as a 2020 Wisconsin Educator of Promise and was invited to the Wisconsin Educator Leadership Rendezvous. He also serves as the National Honor Society adviser for his high school. Mumm said in his application that his goal as a teacher is to “help students develop and retain a diverse and essential toolkit for anything beyond high school, from everyday life skills to college and the workforce.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has forever changed education. Students are all too familiar with online roll calls, submitting electronic homework, and being assessed from their computer screens. We see this even in small rural schools, where the arrival of digital learning environments has arguably been met with more hurdles. How long will online learning persist? What will its lasting impact be?

Millions of students and families are still opting for — or are being required to take — online instruction. These online learning communities are at the center of contentious debate and ongoing political, social and developmental argument. Furthermore, following closely in the ubiquity of online learning, schools have seen a significant

decrease in student participation and interest. There is increased pressure to get students “caught up” from disrupted instructional time.

I know school board members have been grappling with these issues. As teachers, we have, too. Especially in career and technical education, an area that has been dealt many curveballs since, unlike other disciplines, we don’t transition well to online instruction. As a CTE teacher, I am part of a team that offers hands-on, tangible experiences in real-world situations with employers, community members and educational mentors. We offer certifications and credential programs that give students an advantage in career opportunities and help spark interest in areas that don’t necessarily require higher education degrees.

As we look toward in-person instruction after so much virtual and blended instruction, we find our biggest strength. I believe that if we allow for some out-of-the-box thinking about what education really is, school board members and teachers can offer many opportunities for face-to-face instruction within our changing instructional landscape.

while working outside the school building.

- Schools should explore and support youth apprenticeship or school-to-work opportunities within the community. In a time where “Now Hiring” is posted in many front windows, allowing students to work for a local employer while earning credit, career experience and a paycheck can be powerful for both the student and the community.
- CTE naturally lends itself to open spaces and labs where students can spread out and learn while distancing themselves from others. Future investment in these areas support learning that is free of students in rows or desks.
- If being online is necessary, lean on CTE teachers to provide instruction on technical, workforce and professional skills in place of the hands-on experiences. Doing so allows for relevant and applicable instruction that can be put to use as students eventually enter the workforce.

**As a CTE teacher, I am part of a team that offers hands-on, tangible experiences in real-world situations ...**

— Eric Mumm

As an outlet for alternative, perhaps non-traditional learning, CTE is uniquely fit for this new learning environment.

These opportunities can still be provided in COVID-cautious environments and, with the right kind of support, can be made widely available to many, if not all, students. For example:

- Schools can work with the community, in small groups, with project-based learning. By working with organizations and individuals in the community, teachers can provide opportunities for students to learn skills

My hope is that this kind of innovative strategizing would become a more permanent fixture in schools. The problems that existed pre-pandemic for students — the student debt crisis and the dearth of skilled workers heading into an aging industry and labor workforce — are still very real. If we can refocus the priorities within our school districts to offer a variety of trade- and skill-based educational opportunities, we can not only address the problems we are experiencing right now, but also begin to find a balm for the already existing problems we have ignored. □



**TARAH FEDENIA**  
Poplar Creek Elementary School,  
New Berlin School District

Fedenia is a speech language pathologist with a decade of experience in education. In addition to her work as a bilingual (Spanish) SLP, Fedenia was previously a staff member at the Friendship House in Milwaukee, a transitional women and children's shelter, and was an instructor for children living at the Milwaukee Rescue Mission's Joy House. Her educational philosophy, as noted in her application, is to "provide support to those who need it the most."

To quote Angela Davis, "If we prepare schools to be restorative for the most vulnerable among us, all students, even the least vulnerable, will be well served." In our efforts to serve all Wisconsin students well, we need school board members to prioritize what best prepares students for this time in history. This includes mental health services, equitable access to technology, maker- and design-thinking, strengths-based approaches to families, bilingual support and closing opportunity gaps.

Mental health services are more important than ever. Before we can expect students to learn, they need to feel safe. Our students have experienced one of the most isolating events of history during the most formative years of their lives. Students need outlets to share experiences, if necessary, with a school psychologist. We need to build

time into the school day for teachers to have flexibility to provide relationship-building opportunities. The umbrella of mental health services includes mindfulness activities, restorative justice practices, and efforts to reduce suspensions and expulsions. We also need to prioritize access to mental health supports for our LGBTQ+ students, who are more likely to report lack of support.

We need to do whatever it takes to provide equitable access to technology, which has become synonymous with access to instruction. This includes technology that unlocks barriers for our learners with disabilities, such as students who use voice-output applications on iPads to communicate with others. We need access to technological programs that support maximum possible growth for our state's most high-achieving learners.

Scientists created COVID-19 vaccinations faster than any other vaccine in history. In the future, our children will be faced with new challenges that we cannot foresee, which they will use maker-thinking and design-thinking to overcome. Upon graduation, our students will apply for jobs that address issues that don't exist yet. Therefore, we need to continue supporting makerspace and STEM learning opportunities for all.

To make virtual learning work throughout the pandemic, school staff tried to creatively meet each family where they are. To provide equitable opportunities for each student to meet their full potential, we need to continue to tap into strengths that families bring

to the table. We need to continue funding parent centers and parent coordinators who transform schools into sites of positive and culturally relevant community engagement.

The pandemic hit many of our bilingual families even harder than some of our other families. In our Wisconsin schools without bilingual programs, bilingual families had the added challenge during virtual learning of understanding how to support students' access to and ability to complete school-work in their non-native language. Wisconsin's unique funding model for English language learners excludes smaller school districts with less than a mandatory number of students enrolled. School board members in districts with and without this state aid alike must embrace the challenge of creatively finding ways to support their English language learners.

Opportunity gaps for Wisconsin's students of color, Indigenous students, students with disabilities and homeless students are evidenced by considerably lower graduation rates. There is evidence that the opportunity gaps present before the pandemic have only been exacerbated by it. We need to prioritize these students' success if we truly profess to believe in equitable education.

As Michelle Obama stated in her autobiography, "Grief and resilience live together." Teachers have demonstrated their resiliency to do best by their students throughout this pandemic, and we ask our school board members to do the same. ■

We need to build time into the school day for teachers to have **flexibility to provide relationship-building opportunities.**

— Tarah Fedenia



Photo by Allison Shelley  
for EDUimages

# PIVOT

An excerpt from  
**“PIVOT: Empowering  
Students Today  
to Succeed in an  
Unpredictable Tomorrow”**  
by Ravi Hutheesing



## Ravi Hutheesing

Opening Keynote Speaker  
Wednesday, Jan. 19  
2022 Wisconsin State Education Convention



**W**hen I began thinking about this book, the world was relatively calm, with strong economies and no major conflicts. With technology rapidly evolving and impacting the future of jobs, the education industry was deeply engaged in debates about how to best prepare students for an unpredictable future. As a keynote speaker

## **The Wisconsin State Education Convention is proud to bring back Ravi Hutheesing as the opening keynote on Jan. 19.**

Ravi's journey as a rock star, aviator and U.S. State Department cultural diplomat is an inspiring example of how to pivot and succeed in an ever-changing world.

who has delivered speeches to thousands of education leaders at conferences, including the International Baccalaureate Global Conference and AASA's National Conference on Education, answering this question has been a cornerstone of my message. Creating cultural competence and equity in education (fairness, regardless of differing values and beliefs), and implementing technology and personalized learning, are common themes because, while the future may be unpredictable, educators help shape the future by how they prepare students.

Then the unthinkable happened. COVID-19 shattered global economies, flipped education upside-down, and caused all of humanity to make the most significant pivot in a lifetime. For much of 2020, 90% of the global population lived in countries with some degree of travel restriction, 1.7 billion people were ordered to stay at home, and the rest either found their everyday lives severely curtailed given the mandated closures of non-essential businesses or were encouraged to self-quarantine while working and learning from home.

Classrooms and conference rooms pivoted immediately from physical to virtual. Wedding receptions, birthday celebrations, and funerals soon followed. The global shutdown accelerated the implementation of technology into education, the workforce, and social interac-

He is the first American-born descendant of India's first family (which includes prime ministers Nehru and Gandhi), but his worldwide visibility skyrocketed in 1997 as the guitarist of triple Grammy nominee, Hanson. The group performed at the White House and Madison Square Garden as well as on "Saturday Night

Live," the "Today" show and more.

Ravi later became a pilot and aviation speaker, helping the industry attract new student pilots. In 2015, the U.S. State Department began sponsoring his cultural programs in Russia, Indonesia, Iraq and Lebanon. □

tions practically overnight.

The absence of traditional schooling for at least one semester was probably the most significant disruption for most families. Ninety percent of the world's students found schools closed or were sent home from colleges and universities, sometimes without even the time to pack their belongings. Educators went into a panic as they attempted to bridge a gap that turned into a chasm. School systems everywhere involuntarily accelerated the adaptation to online learning with varying degrees of success. While digital learning had already been increasing in classrooms, it quickly became apparent how much disparity it creates without structure and guaranteed access to computers and high-speed internet. Moreover, since

Minnesota, suspected of committing a minor offense by using a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill, was killed by the excessive force of the arresting white police officer. While the virus had, in some ways, united the globe in the effort to contain a common enemy, people were also reaching psychological breaking points from being kept in figurative cages. Riots quickly erupted in cities across the United States, often evolving from peaceful protests into violent clashes with police. Then, like the coronavirus, the protests transcended borders, spreading to Europe and beyond as the world's attention pivoted from overcoming a health crisis to demanding social justice.

The time had come for me to complete this book, which is for all educators, including school adminis-



The global shutdown **accelerated the implementation of technology** into education, the workforce and social interactions practically overnight.

many families depend on free school lunches, creating a system to distribute box lunches often took precedence over solving the challenges of delivering education to the home.

Just as the world was beginning to find its rhythm, a second event stopped us in our tracks. George Floyd, a black man in Minneapolis,

trators, teachers, counselors, parents and students. I believe education is the solution to all the world's problems, but to educate the "whole child" and create "lifelong learners," it must begin as a partnership between parents and teachers and then pivot to one between students and mentors. While it need not

always be an active collaboration, each must take ownership of his or her role because education is much more than just going to school. By giving all students the skills to pivot in the face of constant changes, we empower them to succeed in an unpredictable future.

My pivots — from a family of

direction while maintaining the fundamental principles and strengths on which one operates — the distance between thought and action is reduced considerably. Whether it is an individual or an entire industry, the ability to pivot is the difference between staying relevant and becoming redundant.

been slow to come, possibly because, despite this negative narrative, statistics tell a different story. In the U.S., the number of high school graduates, college enrollments and employees (other than in recession years) have consistently risen. While the latest PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) scores indicate that American students are average compared to other countries, once you dissect these scores further and isolate schools with fewer than 25% of students receiving FRLP (free and reduced-priced lunch program) — those eligible for Title 1 funding — the U.S. is close to the top of the list. In this regard, one can argue that there is not a public education problem as much as there is a poverty problem, and much like everywhere in the world, the disparity can often be linked to socioeconomic and racial divides.

While disparity has been accentuated during the pandemic due to the lack of equal access to technology, which would likely perpetuate classism and racism, young people around the world are now taking a firm stance on social justice issues. Even during the months before COVID-19 and George Floyd, millennials have started marching on the streets to fight for equality, from Hong Kong to Chile to France to Lebanon. While previous generations have done the same, it is the multicultural nature of millennials and their successors, Gen Z, that could produce a change unlike anything we have seen before.

To prepare students for an unpredictable future, the most important thing they need to master is how to learn. The world will always have more to teach than the classroom; therefore, the primary focus of education must be to create lifelong learners. COVID-19 and George Floyd's death are excellent examples of world events that yield lifelong lessons, and both history and the future will provide a plethora of others.

The task for all educators is simple to understand but perhaps more complicated to implement. It



politicians and bankers to the guitarist of a world-famous band to a “flying musician” in the aviation industry to a cultural diplomat for the U.S. Department of State to an arts and education advocate as a keynote speaker — have created an exciting and fulfilling journey made possible by owning my education.

My goal has always been to push the education industry to pivot toward a hybrid of traditional and real-world schooling. As a concept, “change” can be daunting, and it can lead to procrastination. If one makes a pivot instead — a shift in

In education, the call for reform is nothing new. It is part of every political platform worldwide. For over four decades in the U.S., politicians have campaigned that education must get “back to basics” because we are “A Nation at Risk” and there must be “No Child Left Behind.” More recently, parents have been taking matters into their own hands by getting vouchers to use public money to enroll their children in charter schools (some of which are for-profit), giving them “school choice.”

Yet, a significant change has



## It comes down to four concentrations: inspire curiosity, recognize and nurture talent, provoke critical thinking and foster communication.

comes down to four concentrations: inspire curiosity, recognize and nurture talent, provoke critical thinking, and foster communication. If educators focus on these four, we need not reimagine education. Instead, we can redefine schooling to make education impervious to however unpredictable the future may be. In other words, the classroom must empower every student to perpetually absorb and act upon the lessons of an ever-changing world.

PricewaterhouseCoopers reports that nearly 40% of jobs will be automated in the next decade. No matter when you read this, the rate of change is a startling reference. Those

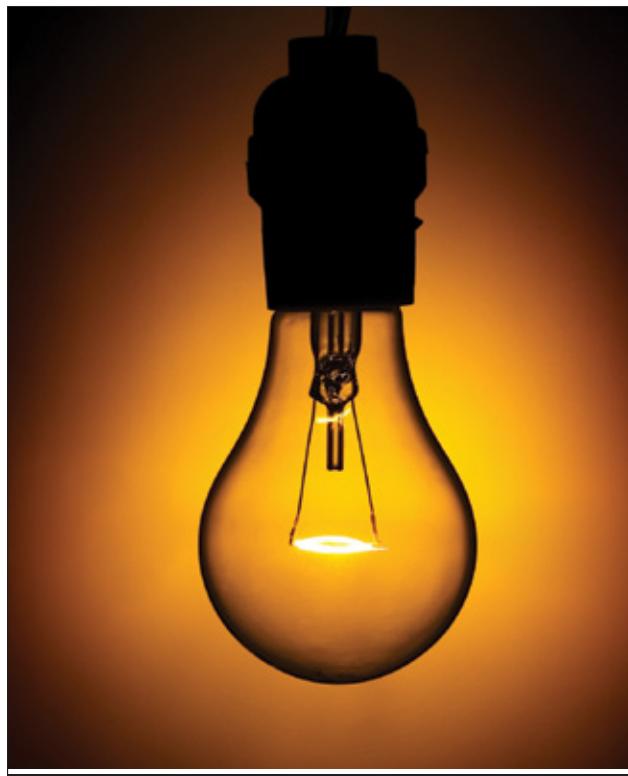
who argue that jobs will return are speculating at best. There is no telling whether there will be new jobs created or if our jobs will cease to be the primary focus of our lives. The “ice-breaker” question of the future may no longer be “what do you do?” but rather, “how do you feel about...?”

Outsourcing of labor is nothing new, and less expensive options will always be sought. However, jobs that used to be outsourced to humans in third-world countries will now go to first-world technology. The benefit to companies that employ robots over people will become increasingly apparent — no need for payroll,

healthcare provisions, pensions, workman's compensation, etc. Moreover, artificial intelligence will likely evolve faster than job creation, and at some point, predominantly create jobs for other robots.

Technological deflation — the diminishing price of technology — will have a significant impact on future economies and job markets, and if that is combined with the ability to provide equal access to high-speed broadband internet, the impact on humanity should ultimately be positive. Nevertheless, to stay relevant, one must be able to pivot. ■

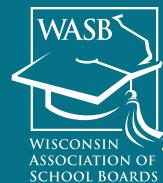
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Made in Wisconsin for Wisconsin school districts, the **WASB Policy Resource Guide** is a convenient, up-to-date, web-based policy tool providing sample policies and the resources needed to customize local policies.

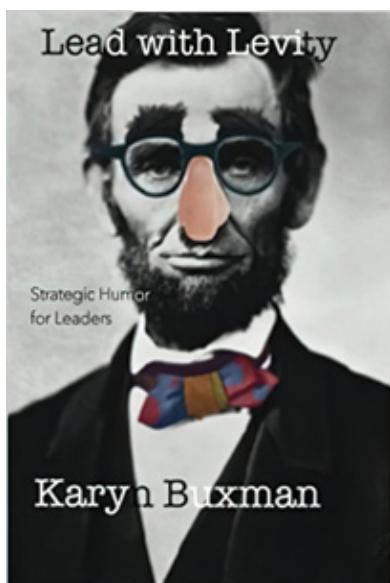
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# DEFUSING DIFFICULT Conversations

An excerpt from  
**“Lead with Levity:  
Strategic Humor for Leaders”**  
by Karyn Buxman



**Karyn Buxman**  
WASB Breakfast Keynote Speaker  
Thursday, Jan. 20  
2022 Wisconsin State Education Convention

**I**t was 1984, and the second presidential debate between Walter Mondale and Ronald Reagan was underway. After the first debate, critics observed that Reagan looked tired, and they wondered if he might be too old for the job.

Reagan's team went to work and prepared his response. (They knew it was an important issue.) Sure enough, in the second debate, Reagan was asked, "Given the fact that you are already the oldest president in U.S. history, would you really be able to function should a crisis arise?"

Reagan assured the audience that

he'd be perfectly capable of dealing with any situation at hand — and then he quipped "I will not make age an issue of this campaign. I am not going to exploit, for political purposes, my opponent's youth and inexperience."

When the laughter died down, so did the question of Reagan's age. And he was elected president for a second term.

When you're engaged in a difficult conversation, people often pose what author Malcolm Kushner calls a "hostile question." The purpose of their question isn't really to gain infor-

mation, but to challenge you, embarrass you, make you express frustration, and put you in a negative light. You might hear questions like, "Who do you think you are?!" or "Whose budget is this coming out of?!"

You have numerous ways to approach the situation. You can be serious. You can debate. You can take the situation elsewhere. You can walk away. You can BS your way out. Or you can defuse the situation with humor. All of these approaches can succeed, but determining the right choice at the right time requires some discernment on your part.



Used strategically, humor can alter the hierarchy, placing you in a more powerful position. It is a sign of confidence, and a way of taking charge. As a leader, the goal is not to get the other person laughing so hard that you can escape unnoticed, but to defuse tension, establish more control, and then guide the conversation in the direction that you want.

A little exercise: Think back to a time when you were faced with hostile questions, particularly ones you might face again. Write down as

many of these questions as you can think of. Then select one and begin creating a list of humorous responses. Come up with several. I can tell you from experience that the first few will probably be the funniest — but also the most inappropriate. (The purpose here is to defuse the bomb, not light

the fuse!) As a leader, your goal is not to get into a power struggle, but to reach a resolution. If you practice, you'll find a response that will lightly defuse the situation and allow you to move the conversation in a more productive direction.

Whether you're dealing with irritable administrators, strained staff or peevish parents — humor is a powerful means of defusing difficult conversations. ■

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**Karyn Buxman is a TEDx speaker, successful author, brain-based high-performance coach, former school board member — and a neurohumorist (she lives at the intersection of humor and the brain).**

As a global expert in strategic humor for business, Karyn helps high performers go

from great to mastery. At the 2022 State Education Convention in January, Karyn will be the keynote speaker for the WASB Breakfast on Thursday, Jan. 20, and lead a breakout session later that day.

In her breakfast keynote, Karyn will help attendees discover how to harness humor to distract, relate, reframe and refuel to

empower yourself and those you care for.

Later that day, Karyn will offer a highly interactive breakout session that combines the power of story and the power of humor to connect an audience through their common experiences and their laughter.

Karyn is serious about humor! □



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# CONVENTION UPDATES

Visit the convention website for the complete agenda and updates: [WASB.org/convention](http://WASB.org/convention)



## 2022 Convention Recorded Sessions

**Want to expand your learning? Sign up to access the 2022 convention's recorded sessions.** At the convention, eight select breakout sessions and two keynote speakers will be recorded. Any WASB member can access the recordings by signing up for the 2022 Convention Recorded Sessions program. The fee is \$95. Convention attendees can sign up for the discounted rate of \$55. *Visit the convention website for the list of recorded sessions.*



## 2022 Convention Mobile App

**If you use a smartphone or tablet,** download the 2022 Convention App to have all of the information at your fingertips. Search for “WI Ed Conv” in the Apple or Google Play stores.

The app provides the agenda, exhibitors, sponsors, maps, presentation materials, updates, messages for attendees and more.

## Enjoy a Cookie Break!

Take a break and stop by the Exhibit Hall for a sweet treat on Wednesday, Jan. 19.



## Browse the Bookstore

**On Wednesday, Jan. 19 and Thursday, Jan. 20,** take time to peruse our large selection of books focused on leadership and school district management. We also feature books by our keynote speakers.

*Located in the Exhibit Hall.*

# EXHIBIT HALL

## Special Exhibits

### The Exhibit Hall features hundreds of businesses and organizations

focused on providing products, services and support to public schools. Visit the Exhibit Hall and interact with experienced school partners to learn about innovative products and services available to schools.

#### ★ Burke Outdoor Classroom



**Combining learning and the outdoors** creates an environment that is flexible, open and has room for students to learn together, apart. This outdoor classroom design, featured in Burke Booth 137, will inspire exploration, activity and hands-on learning experiences for years to come.

#### ★ Solar Schools Pavilion



**Clean energy is possible for all Wisconsin schools.**

Improving building energy efficiency and planning for renewable energy will stabilize a district's utility expenses and may have an excellent return on investment. Visit the Solar Schools Pavilion to meet community partners and providers who can help your district develop a roadmap to clean energy.

#### ★ Tech Corner Mini-Sessions



**Technology is rapidly changing the dynamics of education** and enabling new ways of learning,

communicating and working collaboratively.

Stop by the Tech Corners during the dedicated exhibit hall hours for special mini-sessions that will give you ideas on how to improve instruction, curriculum and facilities for tomorrow's students.

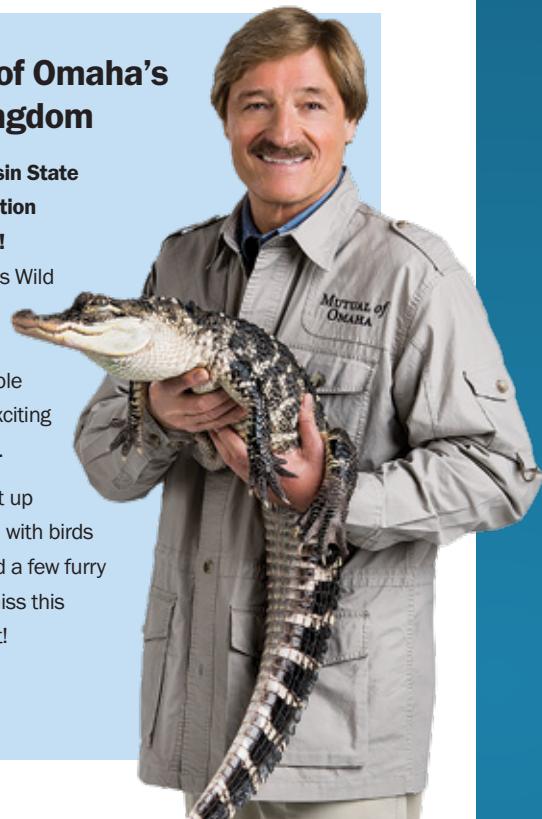
One series of sessions features the "Classroom of the Future" presented by Plunkett Raysich Architects, Forward Space, Upper 90 Energy and CG Schmidt Construction. The other series includes sessions such as "Create an Inclusive Makerspace: Simple, High Impact Strategies" by the New Berlin School District.

#### ★ Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom

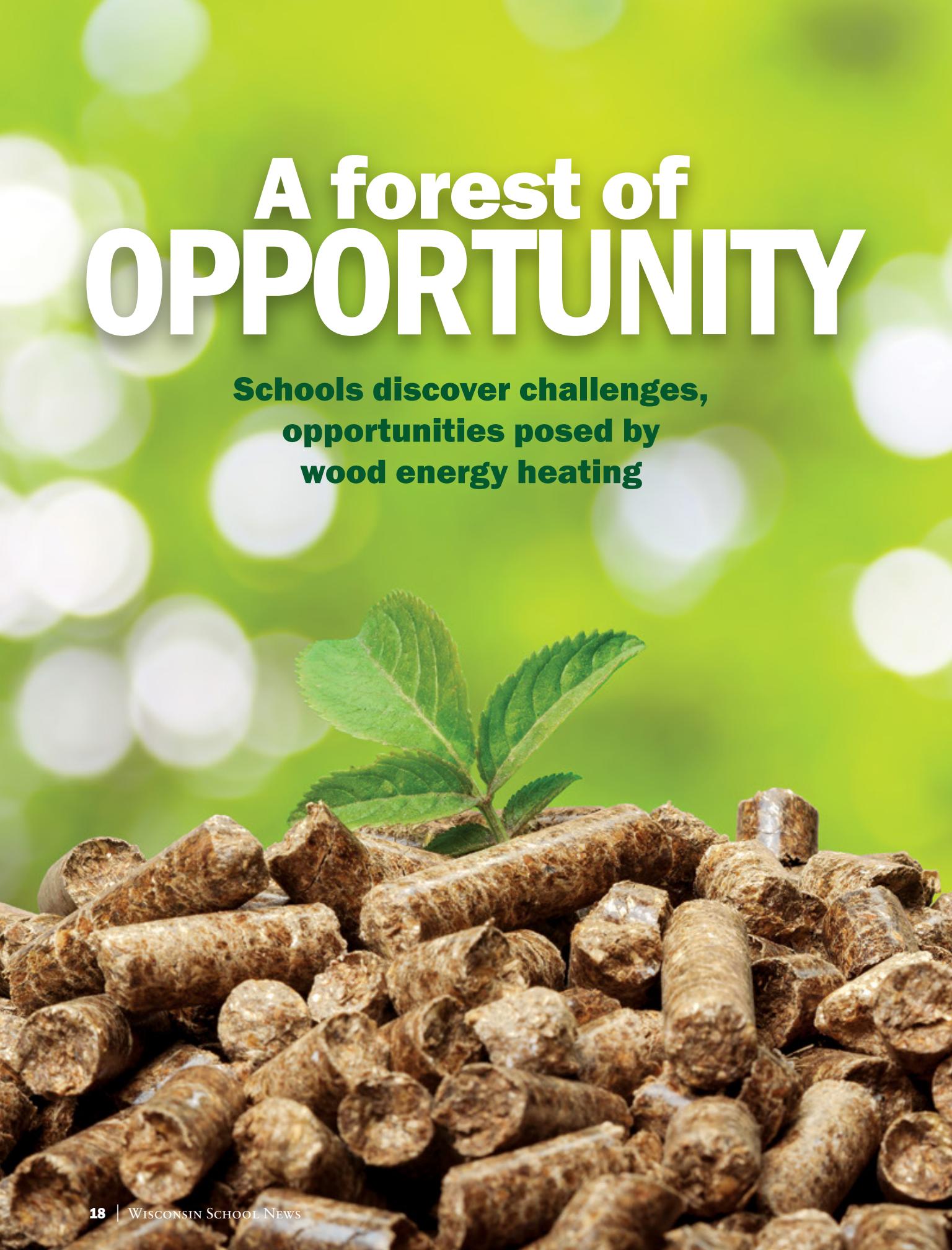
**The 2022 Wisconsin State Education Convention is going to be wild!**

"Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom" host Peter Gros will provide unforgettable interactions with exciting and exotic animals.

You'll be able to get up close and personal with birds of prey, reptiles and a few furry mammals. Don't miss this one-of-a-kind event!



# A forest of **OPPORTUNITY**



**Schools discover challenges,  
opportunities posed by  
wood energy heating**

**W**hen the Rice Lake School District heats its buildings through frigid northern Wisconsin winters, it turns to its own backyard for a plentiful, renewable fuel source — wood chips, a lumber mill byproduct that has few other uses.

Rice Lake is one of a handful of Wisconsin public school districts known to currently have their own wood energy heating system in operation.

There is plenty of untapped potential. Only about one-fourth of the potential energy from Wisconsin's forests is being used, according to a 2012 federal study. This excess woody biomass material is either dumped in landfills or left on the ground to accumulate, increasing the risk of damaging wildfires and decreasing forest health.

A wood energy system that uses this excess material — whether it is a byproduct from wood manufacturing or as part of a sustainable forest management program — can promote a healthy forest ecosystem. This is even true in urban areas where the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has reported struggling to find a better use for urban forest management residue.

For districts with school forests, utilizing a wood energy system can be a tool for students to explore various career pathways involving renewable energy and forestry products.



While the Rice Lake School District has found the fuel source is economical — since modernizing their boiler in 2007, they now save an estimated \$125,000 a year by burning wood rather than natural gas, finance director Pat Blackaller says — the systems come with unique challenges.

A reliable supply of wood byproducts is not an option in every district and maintaining these systems can be challenging and labor-intensive.

Before trying to understand the lack of wood fuel adoption, we should ask why schools should consider spending the time and energy to reconsider their heating fuel.

#### ■ Why consider wood fuel?

Let's start with a definition: What is woody biomass energy?

It comes from "woody material,"

which could include anything from wood residues directly from a forest (e.g. treetops, slash, wood chips, branches, small-diameter trees from a thinning, or insect-infested and diseased trees) or indirectly from wood manufacturing or processing (e.g. sawdust, defective wood, trimmings).

The districts that use wood fuel speak highly of it.

Schools in the western Wisconsin district of Pepin have been using wood pellets to fuel their boilers since 2010. Because it is more refined, this fuel source is different from wood chips. Though it is not a waste material or byproduct, it's still a regionally sourced form of renewable energy.

District administrator Bruce Quinton said initial projections estimated the system would pay for itself in three years, though it did so in only half that time. The district uses fuel oil as a backup, but most of their heating comes from the pellets.

A major selling point of the wood pellets was that the new equipment tied into their existing system, removing the need to overhaul the original equipment. The district also appreciated that they were burning Wisconsin fuel rather than buying it from out-of-state or international sources.

"I wouldn't hesitate to recommend it to anybody looking for an alternative source of heating," Quinton says.

**Schools in the western Wisconsin district of Pepin have been using wood pellets to fuel their boilers since 2010. Because it is more refined, this fuel source is different from wood chips.**



Lower pollution is also a benefit.

Though traditional wood-burning boilers generate plenty of greenhouse gas pollution, modern wood boilers are different. The newer boilers operate at a much higher temperature and pressure, removing contaminants and emissions.

“Very little, if any, hydrocarbons come out the stack,” says Blackaller. “It’s better than natural gas, on average. Largely because it is a renewable energy source, the fuel is typically a waste product, and is carbon neutral.”

Efficiency has also improved in recent decades. Thanks in part to higher temperatures that convert wood energy to heat, efficiency has risen from 50-60% to about 85%, Blackaller says.

Finally, wood fuel is a local energy source that could help make schools safe places during disrup-

tions or disasters. Having energy independence to be able to support a community through such difficult circumstances could make a world of difference.

The use of woody biomass energy is highly encouraged by the Wisconsin Statewide Wood Energy Team to help prevent wildfires and restore and manage forests.

While the team aims to increase wood energy use in Wisconsin, a recent survey helps to explain why so few school districts use these systems.

#### **■ Survey explores lack of usage**

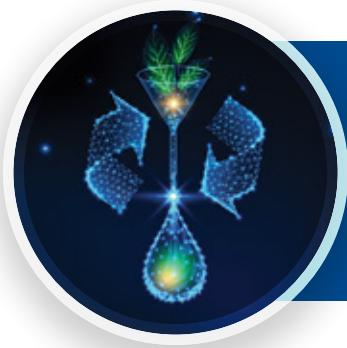
The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, in conjunction with the DNR, used funding from a U.S. Department of Agriculture’s McIntire-Stennis grant to conduct a study from 2019 to 2021 to fill information gaps and provide insight to help guide policy and outreach efforts to Wisconsin

public school districts. The study was led by UW-Stevens Point graduate student Bethany Slembarski.

All Wisconsin public school district administrators, directors of buildings operation and management and school forest managers were sent online surveys and invited to participate in focus groups. The project assessed their knowledge and familiarity of woody biomass energy, determined major barriers and challenges to using woody biomass, and identified preferred avenues to receiving information about renewable energy.

Of the participating school districts, two currently have a wood energy system. One is actively using it to heat their school buildings and pool, and the other uses it as an emergency backup system.

There are a number of drawbacks associated with the use of woody



The use of woody biomass energy is highly encouraged by the Wisconsin Statewide Wood Energy Team to help prevent wildfires and restore and manage forests.

biomass that explain the fuel source's lack of widespread adoption.

#### ■ Barriers and challenges

When the School District of Shell Lake started burning biomass about 15 years ago, it didn't take long for maintenance supervisor and safety coordinator Tim Ullom to become a fan. They started with corn and, after its prices rose, switched to wood pellets.

"You open up your back door and there's trees out there, so why not?" he says. But, in the last few years, new challenges started to arise.

Consolidation in the industry has reduced regional competition, which leads to longer hauls, higher transportation costs and perhaps higher prices for the fuel in the future.

Meanwhile, it was getting harder to reliably find repair parts for the wood boiler. And the main alternative

looks more economical as the price of natural gas continues to drop.

Then, about two years ago, the school finished an expansion, part of which included gas boilers. If those gas boilers go offline, the wood boiler could theoretically take over. But the lack of certainty around fuel supply and boiler parts means the wood system isn't an ironclad backup.

The wood boiler was shut off this fall.



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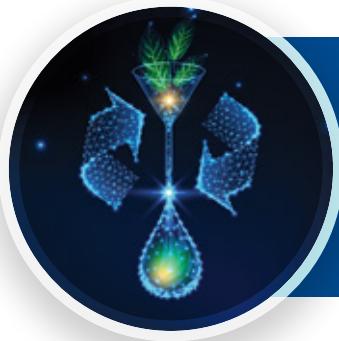
Not on track to graduate high school on time  
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## Using wood fuel alongside another energy source, like natural gas, can help meet challenges regarding price and availability.

The results of the UW-Stevens Point study showed overall low knowledge and familiarity with woody biomass energy. According to the study's results, major barriers and challenges to implementing a wood energy heating system included costs, space and knowledge.

In addition to their installation costs, wood energy systems can require more operational labor and long-term maintenance.

One participant who has experience working with a wood energy system explained staffing challenges:

"we run our system so lean ... that to have people at the ready with the knowledge and ability to get in there, repair an auger system and everything associated with the boilers ..."

Natural gas, on the other hand, is relatively easy to use, says Tad Beeksma, the technical lead for schools, government and agriculture at Focus on Energy, an energy efficiency and renewable resource program.

"It comes through a pipe, and the boiler runs. It's all automated and easy ... it's one of the reasons why natural gas wins" in many cases, he says.

The cost of wood fuel sources, especially compared with natural gas, is often the deciding factor.

In the mid-2000s, the high price of natural gas led many districts to consider wood energy, Beeksma said. But natural gas prices have plunged since then, leading many districts away from wood energy.

Using wood fuel alongside another energy source, like natural gas, can help meet challenges regarding price and availability. Schools that run such a hybrid system can switch between natural gas and wood based



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on the availability and price of both types of fuel.

Focus on Energy has worked with Wisconsin districts to explore the feasibility of wood energy and is willing to assist others, Beeksma says.

Finally, as a new concept, biomass energy can meet resistance from engineers, utility companies and others.

Rice Lake's Blackaller said the district worked with engineers who at first did not believe wood energy would save the district money. After the completion of the project, and seeing the performance, they saw the significant value of using a wood heating system.

"The reality is engineers do what they know, no disrespect intended," he says.

Finding a quality affordable fuel source can be hard, too. Wood fuel supply and accessibility was shown

to be especially challenging for the western edge, or Driftless region, of Wisconsin. This makes sense as the region consists of a lot of forestlands but has some intense rocky and uneven terrain. Therefore, while wood fuel is all around, access to that fuel can be quite challenging.

Wood fuel isn't limited to northern Wisconsin, though. Home construction in the southern part of the state has led to an abundance of woody material, Blackaller says.

"There's an enormous surplus of wood byproducts in the southern part of the state, where we do wood manufacturing," he says.

Energetic leadership is crucial to capture the opportunities provided by wood biomass heating. ■

*Bethany Slembarski contributed to this story.*



## RESOURCES FOR WOODY BIOMASS ENERGY

Resources to help with funding, acquiring wood fuel, assessing feasibility, connecting with a professional, and learning more about wood energy in general include:

**U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service  
Wood Innovation Grant**

**Rural Energy for America Program**

**Public Service Commission of Wisconsin**  
(Next bioenergy grants predicted to be available in 2022)

**Midwest Biomass Exchange**  
This resource is a marketplace where buyers can browse a list of biomass sellers to find a quality and affordable wood fuel source.

**Wisconsin State Wood Energy Team**

This website offers information about wood energy systems and can help connect a school district with a trained wood energy advisor to conduct a free pre-feasibility assessment.

# Act Now to Limit Your Cybersecurity Risks

Not a day goes by without hackers breaking into an organization's information technology system to hold a website or production facility hostage or steal personal records.

Cyber insurance underwriters, unfortunately, do not often understand the depth and scope of cyber exposures and hackers are two steps ahead of everyone. As a result, these network security threats, with the resulting insurance claims, have led to an unprecedented increase in cyber insurance premiums and retentions, reductions in overall insurance policy limits, and extra limitations in coverage.

Cyber insurance is usually offered in one of two ways:

- Through a school district's general liability or other insurance policy, which provides for a minimal amount of coverage for breach-related expenses (notification, forensic and legal reviews), computer attack and extortion, network security, and/or data compromise defense and liability losses.
- In a stand-alone cyber insurance policy, which usually includes more robust limits for the coverages mentioned above as well as others.

Districts that successfully renewed their stand-alone 2021 cyber insurance policy with few issues should be prepared, because the 2022 renewal will be nothing like prior years. Without specific cybersecurity measures in place or plans to implement them in the near future, districts likely will not receive a 2022 cyber insurance proposal — new or renewal. A district that was fortunate enough to receive a cyber insurance renewal should expect premium increases of 50% to 200%, unless they plan ahead.

## What can a school district do to decrease the possibility of its cyber insurance becoming unavailable or cost-prohibitive next year?

A detailed conversation about the numerous IT/cybersecurity measures a district could employ is beyond the scope of this article. Instead, it will focus on three of them:

- Vulnerability scans — typically conducted by a cyber insurance company.
- Multi-factor authentication — now required by cyber insurance underwriters to get or renew cyber insurance.
- Cyber incident response plans — help ensure a reasoned response when a district experiences a cyber incident.

The benefits of these and other risk management strategies are twofold. They are an investment in the district's IT security infrastructure and help to mitigate the chance of hackers successfully breaching a system.

## Vulnerability scans and assessments

Scans that assess computers, systems and networks for security weaknesses (known as vulnerabilities) are typically automated and provide an initial look at what could be exploited.

A district's cyber insurance underwriter typically conducts a scan on IT systems based on "front facing" or publicly viewable ports that are open and could receive or send data. When purchasing a stand-alone cyber insurance policy, ask the agent to obtain any scans conducted by the underwriter.

Vulnerability scans can be initiated manually or run on a scheduled basis, and may take up to several hours to

complete. They are considered a passive approach to vulnerability management because they only report detected vulnerabilities. It's up to the district's IT staff to patch weaknesses on a prioritized basis or confirm that a discovered vulnerability is a false positive, then rerun the scan.

Good scanning software will rank vulnerabilities into risk groups (typically high, medium or low) and assign a "score" to a vulnerability so a district can prioritize its search efforts on discovered items starting with those of the highest potential risk. (To learn more, visit [bit.ly/3nQoKx0](http://bit.ly/3nQoKx0).)

If your district is considered a Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS) merchant, scans are mandatory and should only be conducted by a PCI DSS-approved scan vendor.

The PCI DSS applies to all entities that store, process and/or transmit credit cardholder data, or rely on outside service providers to do so. American Express, Discover, JCB International, MasterCard and Visa, for example, have their own PCI compliance programs.

## Multi-factor authentication

Cyber insurance underwriters now require prospective and current insureds to implement multi-factor authentication. To reduce the risk of a break, a multi-factor authentication process requires someone to use two factors to access an IT system. Examples of multi-factor authentication include swiping a bank card at a store and then entering a personal identification number; or logging into a website, receiving a numeric code on a phone and entering the code into the website.

The authentication process requires two different types of credentials. Entering two passwords

to log into an account, for instance, would not be considered multi-factor because passwords are considered one type of credential.

Free-of-charge multi-factor authentication programs are available. However, they typically only impact a specific program. Employment details are likely housed in a separate, limited-access IT directory or application, and are not protected by free programs. Districts should seek out premium software solutions, which typically charge a monthly fee per user.

The first step to finding the right authentication solution is to identify data the district needs to protect and evaluate the entry points (open ports) on all systems and servers. An IT support team should be able to identify its major systems and work across departments to identify applications that require a multi-factor authentication system.

### Cyber incident response plans

Similar to preparing for potential intruders, fires and student altercations, district staff need to know how to respond if a cybersecurity incident occurs.

A cybersecurity incident is anything that prompts district personnel to think the district's IT system has been breached by an unauthorized person, entity or program (virus, malware), or that confidential information has been unknowingly released. The impact of a breach is too expansive to describe, but it can result in personal identifiable information being released, payroll being stolen or district data being held for ransom.

Having a cyber incident response plan will decrease staff anxiety and response expenses.

Consider one of the worst-case scenarios: The database holding employees' personal information is accidentally attached and released via email to an outsider posing as an auditor.

- What is the first thing you do?

- What is the second thing you do?
- Who executes steps No. 1 and No. 2?
- Who do you notify?
- Are you required to notify anyone? When?
- What do you say to your staff?
- What do you say to the press?

A comprehensive cyber incident response plan will prevent staff members from frantically trying to decide what to do when a cybersecurity incident occurs.

And it will save you money. Studies indicate implementing a cyber incident response plan decreases the per-record response cost by almost 10%. It makes sense to have a response plan even if the district carries breach response insurance.

What tools and templates are available to help develop a cyber incident response plan?

Templates are available from numerous sources, including WASB-endorsed insurance agencies Arthur J. Gallagher, M3 and TRICOR. Furthermore, many cyber insurance companies offer access to cyber risk management services at no additional cost.

### Summary

Taking steps to avoid and mitigate the impact of a cyber incident or breach will cost time and money. But they are inexpensive compared to the expense of responding to a cyber incident without insurance company-funded services and financing.

Get ahead of the cyber insurance market by preparing for your 2022 cyber insurance renewal now by:

- Engaging the district's insurance agent and cyber insurance underwriter. Ask for the results of any scans they have conducted on the district's IT systems.
- Implementing the three suggested measures in this column. While multi-factor authentication requires a financial investment, vulnerability scans and cyber incident response plans are available at no, or minimal, cost. ■

*For questions and assistance with cyber insurance questions, call Joy Gänder, CPCU, ARM, principal, (608) 286-0286, Gänder Consulting Group, LLC. Joy provides complimentary risk management counsel to all Wisconsin public school districts and CESAs as a WASB member service.*

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### WASB Connection Podcast

The latest episode of the WASB Connection Podcast features a conversation with 2022 State Education Convention keynote Ravi Hutheesing. As someone who's pivoted from rockstar to aviator to cultural diplomat, Ravi is no stranger to change.

He believes children of the future will increasingly have to make pivots of their own. In this episode, we talk through Ravi's fascinating career and the role education can play in preparing children to catch opportunities and recover from setbacks.

**“There’s two things that require you to pivot in life. One is an amazing opportunity and the other is when everything collapses.”**

—Ravi Hutheesing, convention keynote and author

Find the episode on the [WASB website](#) or wherever you find podcasts.

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# Recognizing Our School Leaders

Each year, through the Member Recognition Program, the WASB honors school board members who participate in activities that strengthen their skills as local educational leaders. Board members are awarded points for participating in WASB and national activities such as attending conventions, workshops, seminars and webinars or serving on special committees.

Below are the 10 school board members who achieved **Level 5 of the Member**

**Recognition Program in 2020-21.** This is the top level that a school board member can achieve and requires a tremendous commitment on behalf of the school board member.

Congratulations!



## 2020-21 WASB Member Recognition Program — Level 5

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**Becky Levzow**, vice president of the Pardeeville Area School Board, received her Level 5 award at the Region 10 Regional Meeting this fall.

## ► WATCH FOR A WASB MEMBER SURVEY

In early 2022, the WASB will be seeking input from members to improve its programs and services.

## UPCOMING WEBINARS

### ■ INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTS AND THE NONRENEWAL PROCESS

February 15, **12 p.m.**

The significance of individual teacher contract provisions with respect to employment decisions cannot be understated, especially when it comes to renewing or not renewing a teacher's contract. This presentation will focus on the statutory process in section 118.22 of the statutes that school boards must use to renew or not renew full-time teaching contracts and include recommendations on which individual contract provisions school boards should include and which provisions they should avoid. This session will also briefly cover considerations school boards must take into account with respect to the renewal or nonrenewal of part-time teaching contracts.

### ■ SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

May 5, **12 p.m.**

The use of social media, online communications and email by school board members raises legal issues for individual board members and school boards as a whole. This webinar will address the legal implications of such use in regards to the First Amendment, Wisconsin's open meetings, public records and pupil records laws, and board member roles and responsibilities, including who speaks for the board amongst other things.

### ■ HIRING TEACHERS

June 7, **12 p.m.**

This webinar provides a general overview on the process for hiring teachers. It includes information on position descriptions, posting of vacancy notices, application forms, the interview process (including virtual interviews), contract provisions pertaining to layoffs, reference checks, furloughs, the number of contract days, and state and federal laws as they relate to employment discrimination.

Visit [WASB.org](https://WASB.org) for more information and to register.

### ■ RECURRING WEBINAR:

#### WASB LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE VIDEO UPDATE

January 12, **12 p.m.**

February 16, **12 p.m.**

March 16, **12 p.m.**

WASB attorneys and government relations staff provide a complimentary, monthly update on recent legal and legislative issues to answer members' most pressing questions. No registration required. Visit [WASB.org](https://WASB.org) for the link.

# Make a New Year's Resolution to Build Relationships with Lawmakers

*Keeping Communication Open Yields Rewards*



With a new year upon us, we hope that local school leaders will resolve to build better, stronger relations with state lawmakers.

In some cases, this may mean getting acquainted for the first time; for others, it may mean repairing frayed relationships. Regardless, it is important work and necessary for the well-being of your district and its students.

As we have indicated in previous columns, the 2021-22 legislative session is expected to wind to a close by early March.

Lawmakers only have a few short weeks to put their stamp on a particular bill or enact legislation to cite in their re-election bid. Expect the action to be a bit hectic and hard to follow in these final weeks of the session.

What will ultimately be accomplished in the next couple months remains to be seen, but we can hazard a guess or two.

In our November 2021 Capitol Watch column, we looked at several legislative initiatives aimed at imposing transparency and additional reporting requirements on school districts. We noted that many of those bills would direct time, resources and attention away from educating students while providing no additional funding. Gov. Tony Evers has shown a willingness to veto such bills, citing both the costs

of the mandates and the Legislature's reluctance to allow increased school district spending.

We note, for example, the governor's recent veto of Senate Bill 463, which would have required each school board to post on its website a lengthy and prescriptive list of the district's learning materials and educational activities by subject, grade and teacher.

We anticipate the governor will likely employ similar reasoning in deciding whether to sign or veto several of the other bills highlighted in the November column.

In last month's column, we focused on the issue of how to improve reading proficiency in early elementary grades, labelling it as unfinished business. It now appears likely to remain unfinished business. Despite the sense of urgency many Republican (and some Democratic) lawmakers expressed in early fall, it appears that the governor's veto of a legislative plan to address the issue through intensive assessment of the youngest students has curbed some of the enthusiasm. The governor's veto message suggested that the unfunded nature of the mandates in the reading bill received strong consideration in his decision.

In addition, the U.S. Department of Education's apparent reluctance to approve a relatively small (\$5 million) portion of the state's plan

for spending nearly \$1.5 billion in federal COVID relief funding (ESSER III funds) on a variety of very specific reading-related activities appears to have dampened lawmakers' interest in the issue as well.

Indications are that no additional efforts will be made to pass a comprehensive reading improvement initiative despite the recent recommendation of a special task force subcommittee created by Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R-Burlington). The recommendations included "implementing individualized reading plans for students who demonstrate a substantial reading deficiency" in four-year-old kindergarten through third grade and for "state-funded support for teacher training on scientifically based reading instruction and intervention."

The recommendation for additional state funding for professional development and other related purposes, while welcome and overdue, may be playing a part in giving lawmakers pause. They may realize that the earlier bill might not have been vetoed if it had included funding.

For the time being, lawmakers appear to be waiting for State Superintendent Jill Underly to put forward a promised comprehensive reading initiative.

And that brings us back to our starting point — the need to build

Rising inflation and staffing shortages coupled with a revenue-limit freeze imposed by lawmakers will worsen our budgeting challenges.

relationships with the legislators who represent your district. You may not get everything you wish for from those legislators, but everything you DO get comes because they approved it. Keep that in mind as you make your New Year's resolutions. We need to be building bridges with our lawmakers rather than walls.

Just as the challenges posed by the pandemic over the past 20 months have been significant, the challenges that lie ahead for schools are likely to be at least as daunting. That makes relationship building even more important.

Rising inflation and staffing shortages coupled with a revenue-limit freeze imposed by lawmakers will worsen our budgeting challenges. The availability of one-time money may ease those challenges for some districts, but a nearly inevitable "fiscal cliff" will come when those dollars run out.

At present, despite a healthy surplus in state coffers, lawmakers appear unlikely to commit to filling in the funding to avert a fiscal cliff, let alone match the rising level of inflation.

While we certainly don't anticipate the Legislature will be able to address any of these issues in the limited time remaining this session, school leaders need to be thinking ahead and getting these issues on the radar of policy makers before next November's elections. It's not too early to start the conversation and certainly not too early to begin building or rebuilding the relationships needed to aid those conversations along.

Finally, because this is a redistricting year, expect lawmakers to be more than a little preoccupied in the coming months with how the new legislative district maps — redrawn to reflect population changes detailed by the recent U.S. Census — may affect their district boundaries.

More than likely, some lawmakers will find that their residences are no longer within their district boundaries — requiring that they move, run against another incumbent lawmaker for the same seat or resign. Already, we have seen some lawmakers announce their retirement or their intention to run for another office.

Retirements and other circumstances that create vacant seats may provide school board members and others who support public education an opportunity to find legislative candidates supportive of public education.

We look forward to giving you an update on these and other legislative matters at the State Education Convention later this month. We hope you will join us for our Legislative Update session on Friday, Jan. 21.

As always, thank you for efforts to advocate on behalf of the boys and girls of Wisconsin. ■



## Legislative Update

**Stay up-to-date on the latest state and national legislative news** by following the WASB Legislative Update website. The mobile-friendly site is regularly updated by WASB staff and includes a "Follow" tool that allows you to receive email updates when a new item is posted.

**Visit the WASB Legislative Update website by visiting [wasb.org](http://wasb.org).** Select "Advocacy & Government Relations" and then "Legislative Update."





# Developments Regarding Reasonable Suspicion Searches

There are times when school officials need to conduct searches on school grounds or during a school-sponsored event. These searches are subject to the Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which grants individuals the right to be free from unreasonable governmental searches. A recent Wisconsin Court of Appeals case, *State v. Vang*,<sup>1</sup> interpreted the Fourth Amendment to permit school officials to conduct reasonable suspicion searches of non-students, and reaffirmed the ability of school officials to direct law enforcement to conduct these searches on behalf of the school officials. This Legal Comment will overview the evolution of the Fourth Amendment case law involving school officials' authority to conduct school searches, discuss the unique facts of *Vang*, and provide guidance for school boards and school officials with respect to policies and practices regarding school searches.

## Legal standards governing school searches of students

The seminal case regarding student searches is the U.S. Supreme Court case *New Jersey v. T.L.O.*<sup>2</sup> This case established a two-part test for assessing whether a school search is constitutional under the Fourth Amendment. The type of search permitted by *T.L.O.* is commonly referred to as a "reasonable suspicion" search, and it establishes a lower threshold than the "probable cause" standard that applies to certain law enforcement searches. The reasonable suspicion test applies to any search of a student's person, clothing or possessions.<sup>3</sup> The first requirement under the reasonable suspicion test is that the search must be justified at its inception. The second requirement is that the search must be reasonable in

scope. From a practical perspective, this means that, prior to conducting a reasonable suspicion search, a school official must have a reasonable basis to suspect that the search will turn up evidence of a violation of the law or school rules. Second, the search can be no more intrusive than is reasonable in light of the objectives of the search, the age and sex of the student, and the nature of the infraction.

In *T.L.O.*, a high school vice principal received a report from a teacher that a student was smoking in the bathroom. The vice principal searched the student's purse and discovered rolling papers. After finding the rolling papers, the vice principal searched a zippered compartment in the purse and discovered marijuana and drug paraphernalia. The Supreme Court held that these searches were constitutional. The report of the student smoking in the bathroom justified the vice principal's search of the student's purse for cigarettes. The discovery of the rolling papers justified searching the purse further for more potential evidence of violations of the law or school rules. The increased scope of the search from the purse to the zippered pouch in her purse was reasonable based on the evidence initially found in her purse.

In *Safford Unified School District No. 1 v. Redding*,<sup>4</sup> the U.S. Supreme Court held that a particular student search was unreasonable. In this case, administrators searched a female student, Redding, after receiving a report from another student that Redding provided her with ibuprofen in violation of the district's medication policy. The Supreme Court held that this report justified a search of Redding's backpack and outer clothing. However, when that search did not turn up any pills, the administration told

Redding to remove her clothes down to her underwear so they could search further. The Supreme Court found that this extension of the search was unreasonable in scope given the limited quantity of pills Redding was suspected of possessing, the limited risk these over-the-counter pills posed to other students, and the intrusive nature of the search. In Wisconsin, state statutes prohibit strip searches of pupils by any school official, employee or agent, under any circumstances.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, if the search performed on Redding had been conducted in Wisconsin, it would have violated the state statutes in addition to the Fourth Amendment.

## The *Vang* Case

Toward the end of a school day, a school resource officer assigned to the Appleton Area School District noticed that two young men were hanging out in the commons area of Appleton East High School. The SRO did not recognize them as Appleton East High School students. They were wearing hats in violation of the school's dress code and were not wearing visitor badges in violation of the school's visitor policy. The SRO took the men to the school office and asked them for student identification. They admitted they were not students at the school, explaining that their uncle drove them to the school from Wausau to pick up a student named Lucy. While the SRO was questioning the men, Lucy arrived at the school office.

The SRO then discovered that there was a person in a vehicle outside the school, and directed the athletic director, who had joined the SRO in the office, to make contact with the driver (Vang). Lucy ran ahead of the athletic director and talked to Vang.

Vang then moved the car to a side parking lot and walked toward the school's front door. Lucy approached him again, and Vang began to walk away from the school. At this point, the SRO asked Vang to come into the building. Lucy and Vang claimed that Vang was Lucy's uncle. After some questioning, Vang admitted that he was not Lucy's uncle.

The SRO patted Vang down but did not find any items which were in violation of school rules or the law. The SRO then contacted his police department to send an additional officer to the school. At the same time, the athletic director contacted additional members of the administration. When the additional officer arrived, the administration directed the officer and the SRO to search Vang's vehicle. They found two firearms in the vehicle.

Vang claimed that the search of his vehicle violated his Fourth Amendment rights. On appeal, the Court of Appeals ruled that reasonable suspicion was the appropriate legal standard to apply to the search of Vang's vehicle, even though Vang was not a student at the school. Vang contended that the stricter probable cause standard should have applied. The court held that the reasonable suspicion standard extends to searches of individuals who are not students at the school at which the search occurs, at least when the subject of a search is reasonably believed to pose a threat to school safety. The court reasoned that school officials have a duty to keep students safe from threats posed by both students and non-students.

Additionally, the court reaffirmed the principle that the reasonable suspicion standard applied to this search even though it was conducted by law enforcement.<sup>6</sup> The court explained that the reasonable suspicion standard applies when law

enforcement is acting at the request of, and in conjunction with, school officials. In this case, the administration decided that the search of Vang's vehicle was necessary, and then requested that law enforcement search the vehicle at the direction of the school's administration. The court found it significant that the school officials directed and controlled the parameters of the search.

Finally, the court applied the reasonable suspicion standard and found the search appropriate under that standard. The search was justified at its inception. The men in the commons area were violating school policies and this justified the SRO having a concern for the safety of students. Additionally, Vang's evasive behavior in moving the car further away after talking to Lucy and his movements towards and then away from the school gave rise to a reasonable inference that Vang was trying to keep school officials away from the car and was trying to hide something. Vang's inconsistent statements regarding his relationship to Lucy also raised concerns. These facts provided reasonable suspicion to the administration to search Vang's car with the assistance of law enforcement.

### **Implications for search policies and practices**

In light of *Vang*, boards should review their school search policies and consider the parameters around those searches. For example, an initial issue for board consideration is defining who is authorized to conduct searches. This authority should be limited to trained individuals, but consideration should be given to situations when school officials might need to conduct searches, such as on field trips or at extracurricular events.

An additional consideration is the extent to which school officials can work with law enforcement on school searches for potential violations of school rules and/or laws. If a board is comfortable with law enforcement participating in school searches, the policy can give administrators the discretion to determine when it is appropriate to reach out to law enforcement for assistance with a search. If a board is not comfortable with this approach, it can specify parameters for when it would be appropriate for school officials to utilize law enforcement for assistance in searches, such as when drugs or weapons are suspected, but there is no imminent risk of harm. For school districts that have SROs, the policy could require that administration first reach out to an SRO to conduct the search, if the SRO is available, before contacting other officers. To ensure that the reasonable suspicion standard applies, such a policy should also include language stating that, when a school official requests law enforcement assistance with a search, the school official will direct and control the parameters of the search.

In the alternative, a board might want to limit the involvement of law enforcement in school searches, even when it would be constitutional for school officials to request such assistance. By policy, the board could place strict limits on, or even completely prohibit, school officials' ability to involve law enforcement in school searches.

An additional policy consideration for the board is the extent to which it will permit school officials to conduct reasonable suspicion searches of non-students, with or without the assistance of law enforcement. The holding in *Vang* supports a policy that allows school officials to conduct reasonable suspi-

**The reasonable suspicion test applies to any search of a student's person, clothing or possessions.**

cion searches of non-students when the subject of the search is reasonably believed to pose a threat to school safety, and the search is conducted on school grounds or at a school-sponsored activity. Additionally, boards should be aware of the potential safety risks to school officials who attempt to conduct searches of non-students. In such situations, it may be prudent to involve law enforcement because of the potential threat to those at the school, including school officials, when a non-student is confronted and searched on school property or at a school event.

### Conclusion

School officials' ability to conduct searches using the reasonable suspicion standard is a helpful tool in investigating potential violations of school policies and the law, including the limited ability to

search non-students. Additionally, when appropriate and consistent with applicable board policies, school officials should involve law enforcement in these searches, provided that the school officials direct and control any such searches by law enforcement. For districts that have an SRO, boards should review any applicable memorandum of understanding with a law enforcement agency to ensure that the document is clear about when a search will be conducted at the direction of school officials rather than at the initiation and direction of law enforcement. Compliance with the law regarding searches is vital because an improper search can invalidate any school-imposed discipline and related criminal prosecutions, and expose a district to potential liability for violating the Fourth Amendment. ■

### Endnotes

1. 2021 WI App 28; 398 Wis. 2d 311; 960 N.W.2d 434.
2. 469 U.S. 325 (1985).
3. Please note that there are situations where different legal standards may apply to a search at school, such as locker searches, searches of cars parked on district property, and sniffs performed by trained drug dogs.
4. 557 U.S. 364 (2009).
5. Wis. Stat. s. 118.32.
6. See *State v. Angelia D.B.*, 211 Wis. 2d 140, 564 N.W.2d 682 (1997).

\*This Legal Comment was written by Michael J. Julka and Brian P. Goodman of Boardman Clark, WASB Legal Counsel. For related articles, see Wisconsin School News: "School Resource Officers" (Dec. 2018); "Searching Student Cell Phones" (May 2016); "Balancing the Need to Educate and Protect: The Use of School Resource Officers in Wisconsin Public Schools" (Aug. 2013); and "Reasonable Suspicion for Student Searches" (Nov. 2009).

*Legal Comment is designed to provide authoritative general information, with commentary, as a service to WASB members. It should not be relied upon as legal advice. If required, legal advice regarding this topic should be obtained from district legal counsel.*



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