

WISCONSIN School News

May 2022 | wasb.org

Publication of the Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Inc.

Royall School District
Superintendent Mark Gruen

Achieve

A rural Wisconsin district needed a comeback.
To achieve it, they needed a leader willing to go

All in.





BoardDocs®

A DILIGENT BRAND

EFFICIENT. TRANSPARENT. SECURE.

Better board meetings require the best-in-class solution.

Learn how the premier governance portal for education helps thousands of districts and schools nationwide to streamline board meeting preparation and improve transparency with the community.

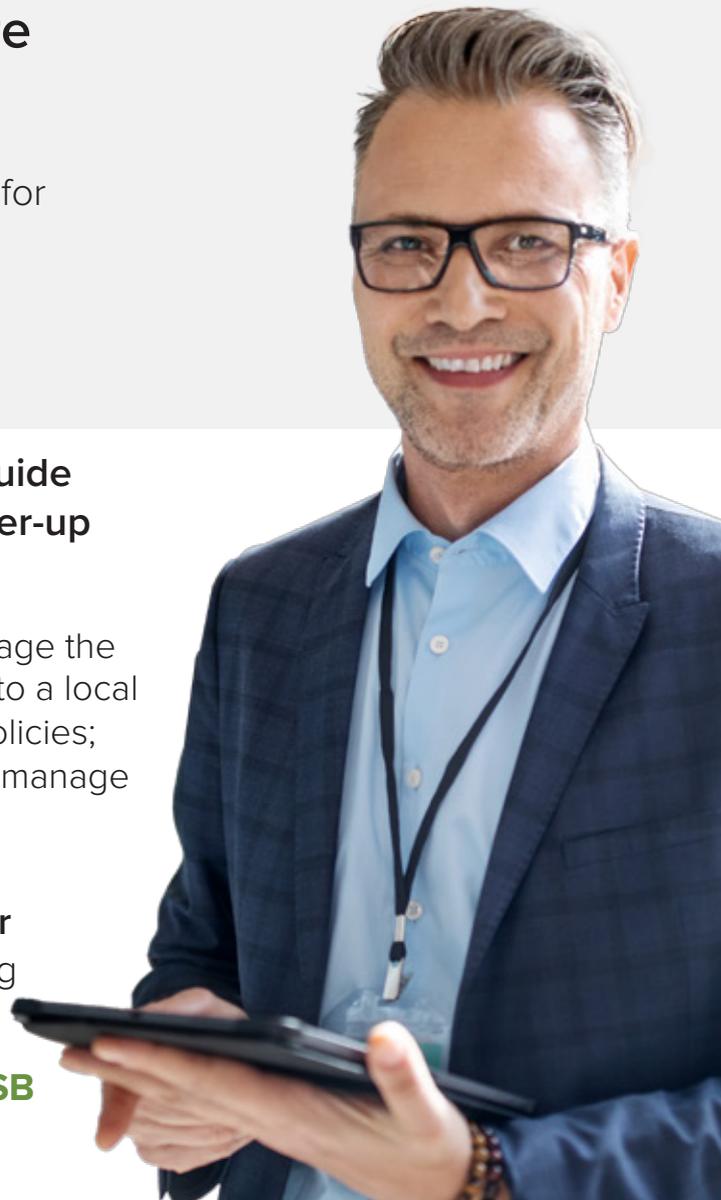
Integrate the WASB Policy Resource Guide with BoardDocs Policy features to power-up your policy management!

WASB PRG subscribers can seamlessly manage the entire policy lifecycle. Transfer PRG content to a local school district workspace; customize draft policies; post active policies online for public access; manage a local library of retired policies ... and more!



BoardDocs is a proud partner of the WASB. Exclusive pricing for WASB members.

Visit [learn.Diligent.com/WASB](https://learn.diligent.com/WASB) to request a demo.



800-407-0141 | BoardDocs.com | info@boarddocs.com

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION
OF THE WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOL BOARDS, INC.

John H. Ashley
Executive Editor

Dan Linehan
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

▪ WASB OFFICERS ▪

John H. Ashley
Executive Director

Barbara Herzog
Oshkosh, Region 7
President

Rosanne Hahn
Burlington, Region 13
1st Vice President

Mike Humke
Dodgeville, Region 9
2nd Vice President

Sue Today
Sevastopol, Region 3
Immediate Past President

▪ WASB BOARD OF DIRECTORS ▪

Linda Flottum
Turtle Lake, Region 1

Capt. Terry McCloskey,
USN Retired
Three Lakes, Region 2

Alan Tuchtenhagen
River Falls, Region 4

Jim Bouché
Wausau, Region 5

Mary Jo Rozmenoski
Black River Falls, Region 6

Andrew Maertz
Reedsville, Region 8

Bill Wipperfurth
Lodi, Region 10

Brett Hyde
Muskego-Norway,
Region 11

Tom Weber
Sun Prairie, Region 12

Sequanna Taylor
Milwaukee, Region 14

Cherie Rhodes
Slinger, Region 15



STRONG LEADERSHIP SAVES A RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT FROM A FINANCIAL TAILSPIN — page 4

4 All In
Dan Linehan

A rural Wisconsin superintendent led his district's comeback. Here's how they did it.

18 Bouncing Back
Kelly DeJonge

How crisis teams can help schools recover after tragedy.

10 Yes or No
Rob DeMeuse

What factors predict the outcome of a referendum in Wisconsin?

22 An Acoustic Trap
Dan Linehan

Washington Island eighth-graders earn STEM prize for designing an innovative trap to capture invasive fish.

14 SAILing with Transformational Team-Based Learning

Districts explain how a team-based learning academy called SAIL helped them.

DEPARTMENTS & COLUMNS

2 News Briefs

3 Viewpoint — Partners in Growing Trust

26 Association News — Summer Leadership Institute, 2023 State Education Convention Call for Proposals, WASB Online Learning Platform, Upcoming WASB Webinars

28 Capitol Watch — Looking Back at a Rancorous Legislative Session

30 Legal Comment — Student Bullying and Social Media

Wisconsin School News (USPS 688-560) is published 10 issues per year by the Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Inc., 122 W. Washington Avenue, Madison, WI 53703.

Contents © 2022 Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Inc. Subscriptions are available to nonmembers for \$90 per year. Periodicals postage is paid at Madison, Wis., and other additional entry offices.

The views expressed in *Wisconsin School News* are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent WASB policies or positions.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Wisconsin School News*, 122 W. Washington Ave., Madison, WI 53703.

Mequon Student Named Wisconsin Journalist of the Year

A Mequon student who writes, photographs, designs, blogs and podcasts has been named the 2022 Wisconsin Journalism Education Association's Journalist of the Year, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported.

Annie Brown, a senior at Homestead High School, told the newspaper she grew up admiring journalists on television such as travel documentarian Anthony Bourdain.

In announcing her selection, the Wisconsin Journalism Education Association said her coverage of the treatment of female athletes off the field was "particularly powerful and well-researched."

Brown first got involved in journalism through her high school's student news site, then started designing publications and taking pictures. She decided to learn these skills to support her staff, she said.

"So I spent an entire weekend learning camera techniques and how to find great photos and good lighting and change lighting on the fly, change lenses, all that technical stuff," Brown said. □

School-Based Mental Health Funds Available

Every public school district in Wisconsin can receive a minimum of \$10,000 to support school-based mental health services under a program announced by Gov. Tony Evers.

The \$15 million "Get Kids Ahead" initiative can be spent on direct mental healthcare, hiring and supporting mental health navigators, providing mental health first aid and trauma-based care training or providing family assistance programs.

"We know that long before the pandemic hit, kids across our state were already facing immense challenges with their mental health, but as parents and educators are seeing firsthand, these challenges have only been made worse by the isolating and traumatic events of the past two years," said Gov. Evers in the press release.

After each district received \$10,000, the remainder of the funding was appropriated on a per-pupil basis.

Find the allocation for each school district at bit.ly/3riYtZs. □

Federal Funds May Bolster Summer School Numbers

After steep summer school declines in 2020 and a partial recovery last year, federal funds may provide a boost to summer enrollment this year, according to a recent Wisconsin Policy Forum report.

The summer school enrollment plunge in 2020 — it fell by more than half — was not particularly hard to explain in light of the COVID-19 pandemic months earlier.

The following summer, in 2021, saw a considerable rebound, but enrollment was still only at 88% of the pre-pandemic high. The report cites a lack of staff willing to work during the summer due to burnout, as well as concerns about public health and deci-

sions to gradually restore programming.

This summer could be different. At least 20% of the funds from the latest COVID relief package must be spent on learning loss, and summer school has been highlighted by the DPI and others as a potential remedy.

Summer school is not the best intervention for every student, the report acknowledges, but is likely part of the solution.

"Programs like summer school that previously played a role in helping students succeed are now more important than ever to help students recover and reach their full potential," the report states. □

STAT OF THE MONTH

88.3%

Percentage of summer school enrollment in 2021, compared to summer 2019. *Source: Wisconsin Policy Forum*

Eau Claire High Schools Create Food Pantries

Two high schools in Eau Claire have partnered with a local food bank to create food pantries thanks to a donation from a local charitable trust, WEAU-TV reports.

The pantries, at Memorial High School and North High School, have large refrigerators and freezers that allow them to keep food.

The district's students and families can place orders for food online and receive their food anonymously. They can also pick up hygiene products such as shampoo, deodorant, razors and soap.

Kim Winkelmann, the partnership coordinator at Memorial High School, told the station that the pantries will help students perform in school.

"Students who have the opportunity to eat well and be able to get the proper nutrition are shown to have better social and emotional behaviors," she told the TV station.

The schools are partnering with the Eau Claire-based Feed My People Food Bank. The funding comes from the Ulrich Trust, set up by Eau Claire graduates Connie and Pat Ulrich. □



Partners in Growing Trust

Schools and school boards have been in the news regularly since the pandemic began. The news has not always been good. Discord and division about our schools is delivered daily to our televisions, newspapers and social media feeds. Conflict attracts attention, but does it reflect reality?

When the pollsters at Gallup ask parents whether they're satisfied with the quality of the education of their oldest child, most say yes. In 2019, before COVID, more than four in five parents were satisfied with their child's public school.

Satisfaction has dipped amid the tumult and disruption of the past two years, but 73% of parents still say they're satisfied. I don't emphasize high satisfaction as an argument for maintaining the status quo. Maintaining and growing this number will also require a full understanding of why 27% of parents aren't satisfied.

As school leaders, we must continually review and update our operations to ensure we are in line with current research-based best practices. Our communities expect us to keep improving.

A positive message about support for public schools is reinforced in this month's Wisconsin School News, which explains that we are near a high-water mark in referendum approval. There was more good news on the referendum front from the Spring Election. Of the 81 school referendums on the ballot, about 80% of them passed. This

issue may provide some context to explain success as well as failure.

When parents are satisfied, it means they trust their children's schools. That trust is built daily by the work of your educators and support staff. We often say American school board members are the link between their schools and community. You are a key element in nurturing and keeping the trust of your community.

What does that look like?

Before they can build trust in a community, boards must build it with each other. That may start with disagreement — not all conflict is a bad thing — but after a decision is made, a board should speak as one. Once it is unified around a common vision, a school board can build trust with its community through transparency.

Its decision-making is done in the open. It's not always easy or comfortable to build consensus in public, but it is more trustworthy than the alternative.

Trust is also built with school staff and administrators. When school board members receive complaints from citizens, they can avoid undermining their staff by referring the citizen first to the appropriate staff member for resolution.

We can improve our responsiveness with families without compromising critical relationships that help our schools be effective. Educators and administrators can only innovate for students if they trust school board members to support them.

In each of these cases and more,

the WASB wants to be your partner in building trust.

This year's spring workshops, held at six locations from May 10-19, focus on helping education leaders understand the pillars of good governance. We also explain why that matters for student achievement. Visit WASB.org to register.

Our Online Learning Platform is a great place to go in-depth on any of dozens of topics. It's the only place to find Wisconsin-specific training on topics as diverse as handling complaints, running meetings and understanding school finance.

Finally, we intend to build trust with you, our members, by being responsive to your needs. Look for more information in these pages in coming months about our recent member survey.

To our newest members, we'd like you to think of the WASB as a resource that helps you be effective. To me, being responsive is about being a resource — especially when it comes to law and policy — but to remember we don't have all the answers.

As you were sworn in, you became a full-fledged school board member. Your vision and vote is equal to your board colleagues, and we view our role as helping our boards to carry out their vision.

That's what local control means — having faith in your knowledge of your own communities. ■

We often say American school board members are the link between their schools and community. You are a key element in nurturing and keeping the trust of your community.

All in.

A rural Wisconsin superintendent led his district's comeback. Here's how they did it.

Dan Linehan

“Rural schools are starving for leadership.”

— Mark Gruen, superintendent, Royall School District

As Mark Gruen joined the Royall School District as superintendent in 2010, the district and its community faced a stark choice: transform academically and financially or dissolve.

Led by a series of part-time superintendents in previous years, the district had borrowed millions to fund its operations. The graduation rate was at 78%, and an audit had found the district largely noncompliant in implementing special education rules.

They also didn't have an ice maker.

Every day after school, Gruen and his children would bag the ice from 18 trays and put them in the freezer for athletes.

Over the next decade, the district, with a current enrollment of about 500, slowly dug itself out of its financial hole. But it wasn't cost-cutting or other technical skills alone that preserved the district.

Gruen and others say it was a shared commitment to going all in, such as bagging ice each day, that made the improvement possible. When tough decisions had to be made, the school board and community had the confidence that they were being made for the right reasons.

“Rural schools are starving for leadership,” said Gruen, himself a product of Royall schools.

Then-board member Ryan

McKittrick said having strong leadership meant “having a person who came in and was able to lead the community in one direction.”

“We all got behind and just walked in that direction.”

By 2021, the district had a budget surplus and had made numerous academic gains — all without the use of a referendum. That year, Gruen received two honors: Rural Administrator of the Year from the Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance and Superintendent of the Year from the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators.

The story of Royall's comeback starts decades ago, as it was buffeted by the crosswinds affecting many rural districts.



Mark Gruen has led the Royall School District, based in Elroy, since 2010.



■ Rural consolidation

Rural population declines in the mid-20th century spurred many districts to consolidate. In about 1959, the districts of Kendall and Elroy joined together; a few years later, Wilton joined in, creating the Royall School District.

Over time, the district realized it could not support its far-flung buildings. After a study conducted in the '90s, the district decided to close the school in Wilton. Instead of sending their students to Kendall and Elroy, Wilton residents voted to leave the district and joined nearby Brookwood.

The departure of Wilton's children and the property value of its residents led Royall into a budgetary freefall for about a decade, Gruen said.

Wanting to save money, the board cut the superintendent to half-time.

"They made a natural mistake and decided that they would cut their leadership, but in times like these you need leadership more than ever," he said.

Unable to make regular payroll, the district resorted to short-term

borrowing. From 2005 to 2010, the district paid a total of about \$86,000 in interest costs on these short-term loans.

One school board member from the time recalls being surprised to learn just how dire the district's position was.

■ 'Not going to be a district'

A few weeks after being appointed to the Royall School Board in 2010, McKittrick attended the State Education Convention. Members of his board hadn't historically attended, and he figured it would be a chance to get comfortable in the role.

As he walked the convention halls with his Royall name badge, McKittrick was spotted by a representative from the Department of Public Instruction. Their brief conversation stuck with McKittrick.

"I just remember her looking me right in the face, 'If Royall continues to have a year like the last two, there's not going to be a school district anymore.'"

He'd known the district had troubles, but he hadn't known their extent. The district didn't have

enough money to pay salaries and was taking out more than a million dollars each year to make payroll.

The school board decided it needed a strong, full-time leader to save the district. The board took up the search on its own.

After the interviews, the team was unanimous: Gruen had been rated as the top pick by every member. But persuading him to come to Royall would be a tough sell.

■ Coming home

Gruen had started his career as a teacher in Verona before becoming activities director in La Crosse. He moved to Eleva-Strum, a district similar to Royall in size, as a middle school-high school principal and after two and a half years was promoted to superintendent.

From a career-building perspective, a district of Royall's size wouldn't be his first choice.

"It was not a good career move at all," Gruen says of the potential move to Royall.

“They made a natural mistake and decided that they would cut their leadership, but in times like these you need leadership more than ever.”

Taking a job in a rural district is rarely a lifelong commitment for a superintendent. These spots are often filled by young principals who see them as a stepping stone to a larger district.

To persuade Gruen, McKittrick and the other board members emphasized his family connections. In addition to his own history at Royall, Gruen had a father who farmed nearby and a brother with three children in the district.

“We really sold him on coming home,” McKittrick said. The board didn’t hide their problems; they used them as a selling point of a sort.

The board said, “we’re not in a good position and you can help us dig out of this hole.” They said they were looking for “someone who can be a

part of the community and who cares.”

The pitch worked on both fronts. Gruen’s wife urged him to take the opportunity to return home, and he acknowledges “there is a piece of me that does like to take on that challenge.”

He started on Aug. 14, 2010, a few weeks before the first day of school.

■ Cuts big and small

After getting the curriculum ready for the fall, finance was the major challenge. Gruen was able to make some changes quickly.

Working with the financial services firm Baird, he refinanced the district’s debt, shaving about \$700,000 in long-term interest costs in his first month.

Still, changing course would take years. McKittrick remembers the slogan from 2012: “Debt free in ‘23.”

Meanwhile, other needed investments loomed.

“Our facilities were so run down, our heating, air conditioning, roofs,” he said. A referendum would’ve been a tough sell, he said, given that the tax rate was already “extraordinarily high.”

“We just kept on making small cuts, small unnoticeable cuts,” Gruen said, such as not replacing retirees and combining jobs.

The next logical move, according to Gruen, was to close the elementary school in Kendall, which was more than half empty. The closing would save money on heating, technology and



WEST DE PERE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL
DE PERE, WI

ROOM TO GROW

In response to continued enrollment growth, the West De Pere community approved a \$74.7 million referendum to add academic space and improve infrastructure.

The district-wide building program included a new intermediate school for grades 5-6 incorporating unique and modern spaces for students. This, is **Building Excellence**.

920.969.7000 | edu@miron-construction.com

VIEW OUR K-12 PROJECT EXPERIENCE AT MIRON-CONSTRUCTION.COM

An equal opportunity, affirmative action employer.





Supt. Mark Gruen shimmyes up a basketball pole to hang a power cord to bring electricity to a track.

transportation, as well as lower custodial and secretarial staff costs. But making financial sense did not mean it would be accepted by a community that saw the school as part of its identity.

“That, we knew, had to be done with kid gloves,” Gruen says. He appeared at more than a dozen meetings to discuss the situation. He told residents the closing could save about \$300,000 a year without compromising their kids’ education. What would they do, in his position?

McKittrick called it one of the hardest decisions he had to make as a board member, but one he voted to approve because it was the best choice financially.

The district also needed to restore its fund balance, which is the amount of money it keeps on hand at any given time to pay bills. Having a higher fund balance would prevent them from taking out short-term loans and help improve their bond rating, meaning they could get a lower interest rate on long-term loans.

For Wisconsin districts, though, saving money comes at a cost. When

a district doesn’t spend all its money, it gets less from the state the next year. A district that does not need to spend its budget, the logic goes, appears to be doing well, and its funding is more needed elsewhere.

Little by little, he grew the fund balance. By 2015-’16, the district was earning interest income on its fund balance — \$42,000 over the next five years — rather than paying interest.

By 2016, the tax rate had fallen to a 20-year low, and by the 2020-’21 school year had fallen further to an all-time low.

This spring, the district asked voters to pass a \$10.9 million capital referendum mainly focused on safety and security. The referendum passed, 500 votes to 330.

At the same time, Gruen faced other challenges.

Some residents questioned the need for his position. The district had gotten along alright with a part-time superintendent; why should they need to pay more for a full-time spot?

And some people who knew Gruen as a young man saw him as Mark

instead of Superintendent Gruen.

“Some people have conceptions of who you are from your youth,” he said, and he had to prove himself.

Turning around the district was, of course, more than about money.

■ Opportunities for kids

Craig Baeseman, a teacher in the Royall district since 1992, said a void in leadership can manifest for teachers as a lack of support. Simple requests became complex.

He taught geography, and his efforts to replace their ‘60s-era maps were stymied by delays on getting an approval before a bid would expire. Staff morale was poor.

There were areas to improve academically. A DPI audit revealed the district was largely noncompliant in implementing special education rules. The graduation rate was low, at 78%, limiting post-high school options of many students.

Most students who failed to graduate had failed classes because they didn’t do the coursework. Instead, the district implemented a system requiring students failing a class to attend a special period, called “pride,” to make it up.

In the last seven years, every one of the district’s high school students who attended the district for their entire high school career graduated on time.

“If we help them, partner with them in the effort to graduate, it gives them an opportunity to take the bull by the horns,” Gruen says.

Among their other additions in the last decade have been a new greenhouse, auto shop and social studies curriculum. Thanks to donations, they overhauled indoor athletic areas and created a fitness center.

And, yes, they got an ice machine, a gift of the booster club.

Baeseman believes the district’s students today have many more academic opportunities.

In the last seven years, every one of the district's high school students who attended the district for their entire high school career graduated on time.

"Compared to where we started and where we are now, it's night and day different," he said. They've increased the number of Advanced Placement classes from a handful to more than a dozen.

Of the AP history classes Baeseman taught, 86% of students scored high enough on the post-class AP test to secure college credit. The national average for passage is 48%.

■ 'The first person out there'

Mark's visibility and eagerness to help out was an important part of his success. To start with, every child in the school knows Gruen, McKittrick said.

When Gruen doesn't show up at

an after-school event, people ask whether he's sick. He and others being willing to show extra effort invigorated the community.

After a local businessman donated money to build a football field, board members and Gruen picked up tools and got to work.

"Everybody had a job and Mark coordinated all that," McKittrick said. "That kind of leadership, showing the way, rubs off on everybody else. He's humble and will tell you it's everybody, but he's the first person out there (ready to help)."

■ Going all in

Just as Royall's challenges — such as consolidation and population decline

— are shared by many districts, a solution is in reach.

"I think the main thing is rural schools are starving for leadership," Gruen says.

School boards should offer realistic salaries, especially considering that rural superintendents must often do the work of several people at a larger district.

"You absolutely are asking more for less," he said. But once a rural district has found the right person, success is possible.

"Rural school boards need to try and find people willing to go all in," he said. "And if they are, they're priceless." ■

Dan Linehan is the WASB's director of communications.



Find the right match.

The WASB's Search Services will help ensure your school board makes the right hire.

Our dedicated consultants are your trusted partner, considering your district's long- and short-term goals and how they connect with your search for a superintendent.

Contact the WASB today.



Search Services

| 608-257-2622

| 877-705-4422

| Visit wasb.org



YES or NO



What factors predict the outcome of a referendum in Wisconsin?

by Rob DeMeuse

Apparently, referendums in Wisconsin have become so commonplace, even “old adages” have formed. I heard one, in particular, many times over the last seven years.

“Wanna pass a referendum? Win a football championship.”

That’s a natural research question. Does playing in Camp Randall help? Are there factors that predict whether a referendum will pass in Wisconsin?

Wisconsin referendum trends

In 2002-2003, Wisconsin hit a low in referendum passage with an approval rate of only 29.1%. The highest proportion passed was in 2019-2020, when 86.7% passed.

Across the last 28 school years, on average, in any given year, about 59% of referendums on the ballot pass. Since Act 10 was passed at the end of the 2010-2011 school year, the proportion passed has been above that average every year. Before Act 10, only some of the very early years breached that average threshold.

Let’s approach this slightly differently. In the revenue cap era (the 1993-1994 school year through the present), what are the top 10 school years in terms of the percentage of referendums passed? The top ten is the last 10 — the 10 years following Act 10’s passage.

Even during the COVID-19 year, 2020-2021, 70.5% of referendums passed. Yes, this was a decline, but that simply brought Wisconsin back down to what had previously been record highs. Whether this decline continues remains a question mark.

Now, let me preemptively address a few questions that could — but don’t — poke holes in the data above. One could say, “Well, maybe only some districts are holding refer-

endums? Maybe this trend over the last 28 years is driven by only a smaller subset of districts across the state?” That’s not true. Holding a referendum is something nearly all districts in the state have experienced.

In year one of the revenue cap era

In recent years, Wisconsin schools have reached highs both in terms of dollars requested by districts.

Jump around

I collected data on more than 60 factors that could affect whether a referendum in Wisconsin passes.

I grouped these into three categories: school district factors (e.g., change in district size, student staff ratios, sala-

2010-2020 WERE TOP 10 YEARS FOR REFERENDUM PASSAGE

SCHOOL YEAR	Approved	Attempted	% APPROVED
2019-2020	52	60	86.7%
2018-2019	126	146	86.3%
2017-2018	69	84	82.1%
2015-2016	72	93	77.4%
2016-2017	99	139	71.2%
2020-2021	86	122	70.5%
2013-2014	45	64	70.3%
2014-2015	97	144	67.4%
2011-2012	38	59	64.4%
2012-2013	64	102	62.8%

(1993-94), about 10% of districts in the state experienced a referendum. By year five, nearly 80% of districts in the state experienced at least one referendum. By year 10, it was about 90%. Now, roughly 98% of school districts in Wisconsin have held at least one referendum.

Another idea to preempt is, “Well, maybe a lot of referendums are passing because they’re cheaper than they were before.” This is also untrue.

ries), referendum factors (e.g., tax impact, length of the referendum, turnout) and community factors (educational attainment, property values, median income). I then used various statistical methods to create two equations.

One equation predicted the likelihood a referendum in a given community would pass. In other words, does X referendum in district Y have a 12% chance of passing? 40%



The top 10 school years for referendums passed?

The last 10 — the 10 years following Act 10’s passage.

chance? 90% chance? The second equation predicted the percentage of people expected to vote in favor of a referendum in a community. Would 15% of voters check “yes?” 62%? 78%? With these equations at hand, I went to communities where I was wrong to learn why. What could I learn from people in communities where I really thought a referendum would pass, but it failed? Similarly, what could I learn from people in communities where I really thought a referendum would fail, but it passed?

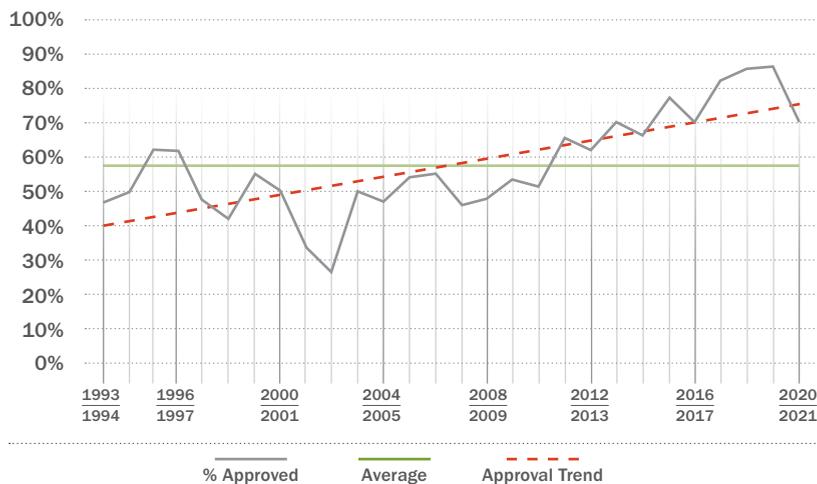
Let’s unpack a few of the myths that this research shattered:

“I live in a Republican area, so referendums don’t pass here.” Mostly false.

Do the chances go down? Yes. But the chances start from a very, very high level. If 0% of people voted for that Republican, the chances of a referendum passing are about 90%. If 100% of people voted for that Republican, the chances of passage remain slightly above 50%. For what it’s worth, 0 and 100 have never happened in the revenue cap era. GOP presidential candidate support ranged from 32% to 74% in my observations. A referendum occurring in a community with the highest record of GOP presidential support still had a 65.5% probability of passage.

“The fewer people who vote, the more likely a referendum is to pass.” Also wrong. As the proportion of people who vote in the election increases (in other words, as turnout increases), the chances a referendum passes increases. Interestingly, previous research shows the opposite in Minnesota.

WISCONSIN REFERENDUM APPROVAL RATES ON GRADUAL RISE



“Areas with lower education levels don’t pass referendums.” Again, wrong. This is a U-shape. As the percentage of people in a community with a bachelor’s degree or more increases, the chances of passage decrease and then increase.

“If you want to pass a referendum, win a football championship.” **“Athletics parents are so passionate that athletics projects won’t affect a referendum.”** **“Operational referenda (ones that aren’t typically for building updates) cause ‘fatigue,’ and you need to take a break in between.”** All wrong. All of these are what are called dichotomous variables. These are either “on” or “off.” They happened or they didn’t. So, if a district played in Camp Randall for a football championship in the two years before a referendum, the chances of passage decrease by over 15%. If a

referendum is focused on athletics, the chances of passage decrease by about 46%. If a non-recurring operational referendum is held as the previous one is expiring (or no break in between), the chances that next referendum is approved increases by 20%.

“You do what is right.” No one interviewed for this work believed that a person’s political affiliation was not an important factor in their voting decision. One quote that really captured it all said, “I don’t care if I have an R or D by my name. I’m not going by this or that. I’ve never connected it.”

So, why didn’t people connect politics and referendums? And did politics play a role that was not at the forefront of interviewees’ minds? (Caveat: I completed this work prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.)

First, why didn’t people connect



THREE TYPES OF REFERENDUMS SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN WISCONSIN CAN USE:

NON-RECURRING

This ballot question asks voters to approve additional funding above the annual revenue limit to maintain class sizes, programs and student services. Funds secured are used within the year they are received. The additional funding ends after a specified number of years, often between three to five.

RECURRING

Like a non-recurring referendum, these funds are used for operational costs. However, there is no sunset.

DEBT ISSUANCE

This ballot question asks voters to approve a district issuing debt to pay for major building projects, such as renovations or new buildings. Like a home mortgage, a capital referendum is typically financed over an extended period, often 20 years.



ON THE WEB: Visit WASB.org to find referendum resources, including a 21-page WASB School District Guide to Referenda.

politics and referendums? Because an identity someone had with their school overtook politics when voters entered the voting booth. People asked themselves, “How should I vote in this election as a Pine Tree School District Wildcat who might be liberal or conservative?” and not, “How should I vote in this election as a conservative or liberal who lives in the Pine Tree School District?”

Party affiliation was not “activated” because voters did not see their local schools through a partisan lens during a referendum. And they did not want them to be partisan. They didn’t want their school to become a political pawn. Instead, they did “what was right.”

One interviewee, Toni, said the school “impacted their own pocket, their own homesteads. So, you may be Republican, that’s your thought, but, once it affects your family life, your family household, you think with your family first before you do your political lines. When it comes to family, there are no party lines. It’s what’s best for the family. And I think Pine Tree is a family-oriented community.”

So, how might politics still be relevant? The idea of “local control.” Conservative interviewees wanted good schools and, consistent with the ideology, were hesitant to tax hikes. However, the compromise was to raise taxes but keep the tax hikes at a hyperlocal level where they could see the fruits of their tax’s labor.

Liberal interviewees also wanted good schools and more state aid. But, seeing little additional state aid, their compromise was to keep tax hikes local so that they could at least support their district to a point they wished the state would fund all schools.

I’m not sure residents ever fully let go of their political preferences. This is not surprising. Americans

and voters around the world increasingly see their political party as a core part of their identity. Nevertheless, residents did not see or feel these political preferences because a mix of both conservatives and liberals supported the referendum. Different parties were getting to the same point in the road through different avenues. It wasn’t us vs. them. Either way, spending was occurring at the local level.

Looking ahead

Between upcoming elections, interest rate decisions within the Fed, COVID case counts, military conflict and fuel prices, the crystal ball is muddy. It’s very difficult to speculate about questions related to the future of referendum outcomes. Last April, the percentage of referendums approved in Wisconsin declined, but that needs context. Approximately 70% were approved by communities, which, just five years ago, were near record highs. At the time of this writing, April elections haven’t taken place, and the trend can’t yet be determined.

Looking beyond COVID, what we hear from survey respondents is that referendums tend to be supported when three questions are clearly answered:

1. Where is the money going?
2. Why is that project needed?
3. Why is that projected needed now?

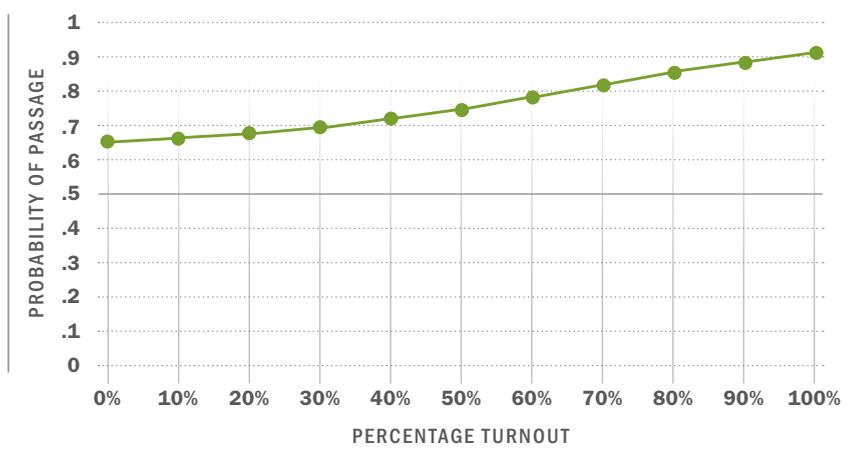
When these questions aren’t clearly answered, community members simply don’t know what to tell you. And when people are unsure about a project’s tax impacts, they understandably check no.

Similarly, our data tells us that referendum supporters may be lulled into a false sense of security. It’s easy to look at the percentage of referendums passing and think, “Something will pass here too. They always do.” That’s simply not true. Communicating and informing a community about the answers to the questions above is necessary. Similarly, our data tells us that community members want to engage with their local school district more frequently than when the district needs money.

The end of your three-year, non-recurring cycle may be quickly approaching. What kind of engagement are you doing in between those cycles? ■

Rob DeMeuse, PhD, is the research director at School Perceptions, a Wisconsin-based education research firm. A proud product of rural Wisconsin, he earned his PhD from the University of Wisconsin. Prior to graduate school, Rob was a high school social studies teacher.

REFERENDUMS LIKELIER TO PASS WHEN TURNOUT IS HIGHER





Coach Kevin Bruggink offers support to the SAIL team from Seymour Community School District as they work through one of their team mileposts. (Photo by AWSA Associate Executive Director Joe Schroeder.)

SAILing

With Transformational Team-Based Learning

Districts explain how a two-year leadership training academy helped them

Every year, about 100 Wisconsin superintendents, principals, teachers and other educators team up to learn about a systematic approach to transforming conditions in their schools.

The School Administrators Institute for Transformational Leadership, or SAIL Academy, is a two-year program offered by the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators and Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators.

Teams work through a common root cause analysis process and address problems in their schools. They also implement and monitor customized short cycles of continuous improvement plans that encourage practice changes to promote student learning growth.

The SAIL academy uses the research of Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn in “Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems.”

For both of their years in SAIL, teams attend three consecutive all-day sessions with facilitators in June and then have follow-up sessions in November and March. Each team is assigned a coach who works with the team during sessions and supports the team’s work between sessions for the full two years.

In recent years, AWSA and WASDA have partnered with researchers from the Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative at

The School Administrators Institute for Transformational Leadership, or SAIL Academy, is a two-year program offered by the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators and Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators.

**SAIL
LEARNING
OBJECTIVES**

1
Demonstrate foundational knowledge of coherence components that build deep organizational impact.

2
Identify and address root cause problems or practice at the instructional, organizational and leadership levels.

3
Examine how long-term phases of change can inform and guide short-term implementation and inquiry cycles.

UW–Madison to evaluate the degree to which professional learning academies like SAIL support growth in professional learning and leadership practice. In 2020-21, the collaborative evaluated five districts that participated in SAIL. We wanted to learn:

What do SAIL participants report are the benefits of the professional learning experience and coaching support provided through SAIL?

How are knowledge and skills learned in the academy used and sustained by participants in their local contexts?

Collaborative researchers interviewed teachers and leaders from the five SAIL teams (three district-level and two school-based), interviewed the SAIL coaches that worked with the teams, and reviewed SAIL materials and team documents. These teams were from rural, urban and suburban districts from four regions.

Across the teams, we identified three key findings:

1. SAIL supported the teams' ability to find focus, clarity and coherence in their improvement work;
2. Team composition and consistent leadership is key to the success of the work; and
3. Integrating SAIL processes and tools is essential to sustainability.

Focus, clarity and coherence

Focus, clarity and coherence around improvement priorities and goals is the primary takeaway for teams. Coherence is a key element of SAIL.

Fullan and Quinn state that “coherence consists of the shared depth of understanding about the purpose and nature of the work.”

In other words, coherence means consistency in priorities across buildings within the district as well as the common understanding of the priorities.

One team member described a common response among participants when asked about the SAIL experience, saying “We have become specific in what we want to do and what we stand for.” Participants said they found a “clarity of purpose,” “more alignment,” “coherence throughout the system” and have learned that “less is more.” These teams developed “common goals” and the SAIL process kept them “grounded and focused.”

100-day plans seen as integral

One tool that SAIL facilitators introduce to teams, called 100-day plans, was found to be especially useful in helping them stay focused. Each team we spoke with referenced the use of 100-day plans and attributed their ability to stay focused on their goals to those plans. One team

member shared that it helped “keep the main thing the main thing.” Every team talked about the usefulness of the “action steps and key results and next steps” that are built into the 100-day plans. One team member stated that the 100-day plans “gave [them] a step-by-step plan and recurring cycle to check back on the data, to be part of what we do and how we do the work.”

Team members also reported that the 100-day plans helped build coherence across their schools and districts. One member said that the 100-day plans allow for entire schools or districts to “focus on something” and build a shared purpose. One team stated that the 100-day plans were a “framework” that “connects to [their] theory of action” and “drives what [they] do daily and [their] professional development.” The plans were also attributed to fostering shared leadership and trust.

Each team shared that they continue to focus on the goals they developed in SAIL.

Team composition, consistent leadership

Thoughtful composition of teams, along with consistent and engaged leadership, are key ingredients to successful experiences.

One school-based team created an

Participants said they found a “clarity of purpose,” “more alignment,” “coherence throughout the system” and have learned that “less is more.”

Thoughtful consideration of team composition and consistent leadership are key factors in this team-based learning experience.

application process to develop its team, while another recruited teachers from a variety of departments to ensure core and non-core representation and sought teachers who were working on “racial awareness.”

A district-level team was intentional in seeking school leaders who had the capacity to take on the learning and leverage it in their school, as well as include new school leaders who could use the SAIL opportunity as a way to support alignment around common instructional priorities.

A different district team was purposeful in including teachers. Their 17-member team was selected in order to leverage the learning back in the district and “lead from a lot of different directions.” One team that did not include teachers reported more challenges embedding the SAIL processes into the daily work of schools.

Leadership also had a major impact on team success. One of the district-level teams had three dif-

ferent superintendents during their time in SAIL. As a result, certain practices and tools were initially adopted, but then abandoned with the shift in district leadership.

A leader of another district team spent time prior to SAIL making sure the team understood the “why” of attending and that each member had talking points to share with other district staff so they too understood why the district was participating in SAIL and the intended outcome.

■ Integrating existing practices

Teams are successful when leaders help integrate the work already happening in the district to the SAIL process.

For example, the Educator Effectiveness (EE) system, professional learning communities and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports were all improvement strategies that could be aligned to SAIL.

Two of the school-based teams shared how their 100-day plans were developed and used by their PLCs. One of those teams also used the

coherence framework to “evaluate the health of [their] (professional learning communities).” A member of that team reported their teacher trainings now “have more of a known purpose.”

Two teams described how teachers developed their EE professional practice goals around areas of improvement identified in SAIL. One asked their teachers to identify how they will be better in 100 days when they are developing their professional practice goals.

A district-based team shared that their school and student learning objectives are developed in support of the district goals they developed in SAIL. The district also anchored its adult learning framework to key teaching domains and component language from the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Another district team stated that they used the WI Educator Development Support and Retention survey results, a survey that addresses EE and other organizational factors, as a

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT: WAUKESHA SCHOOL DISTRICT

In 2013, Waukesha sent a team of district and school leaders to SAIL. At the time, district leaders believed SAIL could serve as a support for new school leaders and provide a way to align instructional priorities.

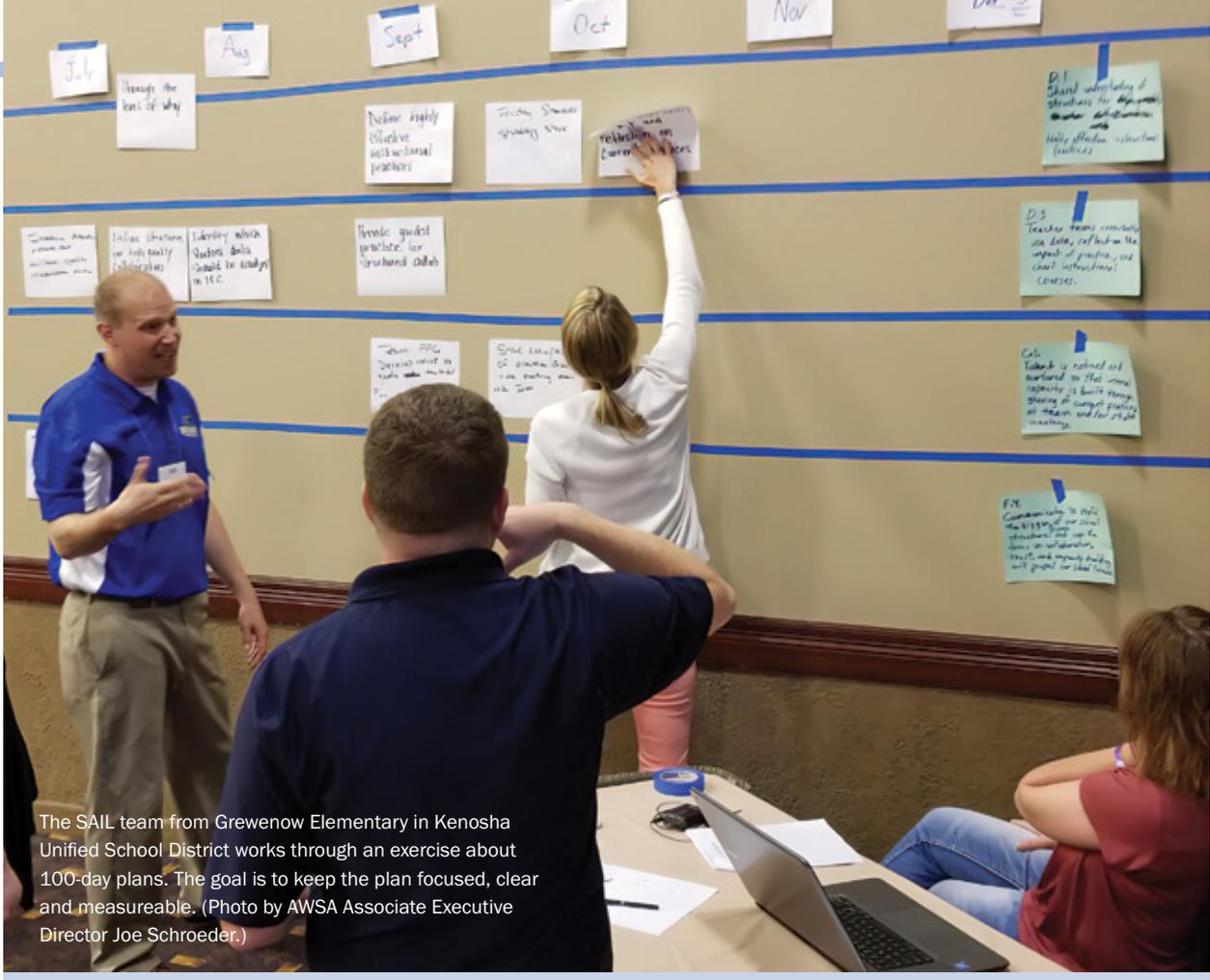
After their initial experience, district leaders believed the SAIL process could benefit each school and adopted it as a systemwide process for continuous improvement. They hold their own “SAIL days” each June and every school sends a team to participate in learning and planning. The district uses the SAIL 100-day plans to specify goals, action steps and measures of progress. School and

district leaders reported that SAIL has had a major impact on school and district processes and individual practices.

According to one principal, “Staff would say we are focused and have a clear vision of where we are going.”

Another principal said that “Now, with the SAIL process, it really defined the vital few [priorities]. So, the shift is more strategic, with impact-based goals. We’ve seen tremendous gains since SAIL.”

This year, the district sent a team back to AWSA’s SAIL academy in order to recalibrate and create continuity with the new district superintendent. □



The SAIL team from Grewenow Elementary in Kenosha Unified School District works through an exercise about 100-day plans. The goal is to keep the plan focused, clear and measureable. (Photo by AWSA Associate Executive Director Joe Schroeder.)

measuring tool for their SAIL goals.

Finally, a district team reported that they used EE to reinforce the processes that the district established to support their SAIL goals. In doing so, the SAIL team developed 10 questions for educators and evaluators to reference in post-observation conversations to probe how the district developed process supports observed lessons.

Summary

Dozens of districts across the state have attended SAIL. The study sum-

marized here illustrates characteristics that help teams successfully utilize the learning and how the work is informing leadership practice.

For study participants, attending SAIL as a team and continuing to use the SAIL tools beyond the sessions contributed to improved focus and clarity around their improvement goals, and increased and improved collaboration.

Thoughtful consideration of team composition and consistent leadership are key factors in this team-based learning experience. ■

Registration for the 11th cohort of SAIL will open in January 2023. Learn more at <https://awsa.memberclicks.net/sail>.

Steve Kimball is a scientist and co-director of the Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative at UW–Madison. He can be reached at steven.kimball@wisc.edu.

Jessica Arrigoni is a researcher at Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative at UW–Madison. She can be reached at jessica.arrigoni@wisc.edu.

Joe Schroeder is associate executive director of the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators. Reach him at joeschroeder@awsa.org.

Jody Landish is assistant superintendent of teaching and learning at the School District of Waukesha. Reach her at jlandish@waukesha.k12.wi.us.

TUITION REIMBURSEMENT AVAILABLE

Tuition for the program is **\$649 per person** for each year of this two-year program.

District and school leaders with an administrative license are eligible to have **up to 75% of the tuition reimbursed** if they attend all of the sessions and complete work products demonstrating the new knowledge they learned.



BOUNCING BACK

How crisis teams can help schools recover after tragedy

by Kelly DeJonge

On Oct. 15, 2018, 13-year-old Jayme Closs was abducted from her family home in Barron. The entire state quickly became aware of the devastating series of events. Even more so, Jayme's family, peers, teachers and community were deeply and emotionally wounded.

After Jayme's abduction, the Wisconsin Office of School Safety developed and provided resources to assist the school community, specifically offering a team of counselors who responded to the school. Resources and support were also provided by a therapist and two Wausau Police Department school resource officers with therapy dogs. This additional support provided critical incident response and debriefing to the Barron School District to assist in managing the trauma of the event and the mental health needs of the school community.

Since its inception, the Office of

School Safety (OSS) has paved the way for improved school safety in Wisconsin by providing many resources for school districts. When tragedies occur, resources for immediate and ongoing support are limited. The OSS is developing a statewide network of Critical Incident Response Teams (CIRT), one for each of 12 statewide Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESA), to serve and support the needs of educational communities during and after these unfortunate occurrences.

Kelly DeJonge leads the statewide CIRT effort. DeJonge joined OSS in February 2021 after serving 21 years as a law enforcement officer in suburban Milwaukee County, including 10 years as a school resource officer.

The OSS considers a critical incident to be a sudden and unexpected incident or sequence of events which can cause trauma within a school community that may overwhelm the normal coping mechanisms of the school. School crises may be large-

scale incidents, or smaller-scale incidents that may be more individualized. Examples of critical incidents within schools include threats or acts of violence, natural disasters, serious injuries to students or staff, suicide, weather-related disasters, community turmoil, intruders, missing persons and hate crimes.

When a school community is faced with a critical incident, unusual demands and expectations arise. While schools continue to educate students, they are faced with unpredictable circumstances. Any school district can experience a critical incident, yet many schools do not have the necessary human resources to give support immediately, or over the weeks and months to come.

Having a pre-planned, coordinated response team when a critical incident occurs can decrease the recovery time after the event and increase the chances of a healthy overall recovery. School-based crisis teams provide the support from a

In October 2021, the Wisconsin School News featured a story on school safety plans. In this article, the Office of School Safety shares its vision for supporting a **statewide network of Critical Incident Response Teams.**



team of people that are known to the school community. Unfortunately, critical incidents can also affect the same school-based crisis team members who are responding to the incident and can lead to staff burnout in the aftermath of the event.

If a critical incident occurs within a school community and the impact is greater than the readily available resources, a well-trained regional crisis team — without the emotional ties to the affected school district — can work with the school-based team to supplement the resources and the support networks that are already in place.

Closs's abduction identified a significant gap in crisis response services available to schools across Wisconsin. Shortly after, OSS set

aside \$2 million in state grant funds for a Critical Incident Stabilization Fund, intended to assist schools in recovering from a critical incident. In addition to these funds, OSS has also dedicated \$1 million in federal grant funds from the Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance STOP Grant, to develop and train regional critical incident response teams.

The OSS believes it is important to consider what resources may be lacking and to provide support and resources to all school districts — large or small, suburban or rural, public or private — while the school community recovers from a critical incident.

Regional crisis teams will provide resources and support to schools in response to a critical incident.

Some examples include:

- Adding coverage for school mental health coordinators
- Implementing an incident command structure to ensure effective operations and avoid staff burnout during a crisis
- Helping schools return to normal routines as quickly and calmly as possible
- Developing long-term sustainable plans for mental health support for staff and students
- Providing a chance for school staff members to talk through their own reactions and experiences to make sure they can cope effectively following the critical incident

CIRT members are volunteers who will provide support to schools as they respond and recover from critical incidents at the discretion of their respective school district or agency. The CIRT response can vary from a phone consultation with a school district to partial and/or full on-site deployment of CIRT members. Members of CIRT teams will be comprised of school psychologists, school social workers, school counselors, administrators, safety coordinators, law enforcement clergy and chaplain services, social service agencies and any other appropriately trained personnel.

“It is important to have the CIRT comprised of individuals with a multidisciplinary approach so that an overall holistic crisis response method can be accomplished,” DeJonge said.

Every CIRT member will receive specialized training identified by OSS

and subject matter experts. Training will equip team members with techniques rooted in best practice for response after a critical incident occurs. Training for all team members allows for the same language to be spoken while providing similar support mechanisms to the school districts throughout the state.

The CIRT members will need to attend one of four training sessions held from June through August. (See sidebar for dates and locations.)

Every school year brings new challenges to educators and school districts throughout the country. A key component behind the CIRT project is to ensure that a working collaboration among the stakeholders takes place as the healing process and recovery begin. The CIRT project is just another step in ensuring the safest schools in Wisconsin.

For additional information or questions about the Office of School

Safety, Critical Incident Response Teams or the Critical Incident Stabilization grant fund, please contact Kelly DeJonge at dejongeKA@doj.state.wi.us. ■

Critical Incident Response Team Training Sessions

- **June 13-17, 2022** | CESA #7
595 Baeten Road,
Green Bay, Wisconsin
- **June 20-24, 2022** | CESA #11
225 Ostermann Drive,
Turtle Lake, Wisconsin
- **August 1-5, 2022** | CESA #1
N25 W23131 Paul Road,
Ste. 100, Pewaukee, Wisconsin
- **August 8-12, 2022** | CESA #9
304 Kaphaem Road,
Tomahawk, Wisconsin



Governance Services

Comprehensive training, support and resources customized to meet your needs.

The WASB can help with:

- strategic planning
- new member onboarding
- goal setting
- conflict resolution

and much more!

Contact the WASB today for a free consultation.



Governance Services | 608-257-2622 | 877-705-4422 | Visit wasb.org

AN ACOUSTIC TRAP

Team of Washington Island eighth graders earns STEM prize



When the eighth-grade team on Washington Island settled on a STEM project to trap the invasive round goby, it wasn't just about science. It was personal.

Like virtually everyone on this island off the fingertip of Door County, the children grew up on and around the water. And they wanted to protect it.

They'd seen firsthand how the round goby is replacing bass, perch and trout on their fishing lines.

"We'll pull up multiple gobies," a student, Tommy, said, "and they steal our worms."

Then they learned how the round goby outcompetes native fish.

"It's really bad for our Great Lakes," Collin, a student, said.

Fishing and other outdoor activities are central to the lives of Washington Islanders, said their teacher, Tim Verboomen.

"The kids go dive shipwrecks, they go snorkeling," he said. "When you're down in the shipwreck, you see them covered with zebra mussels and gobies all over the place. It makes everybody kind of angry."

The students' work so far — a trap containing a speaker to lure

female round gobies — has earned them a \$6,500 prize through Samsung's "Solve for Tomorrow" contest. Wisconsin's smallest school district, with 54 students, Washington Island was the only district in the state to earn the award.

The students chose this problem because it was meaningful to them, not because it was easy.

■ The sound of the goby

The round goby has only been in North America since 1990, when it hitched a ride in cargo ships from the Black and Caspian seas in Europe. By 1994, it was reproducing in the Great Lakes.

"There's very little information about what you can do — there's really nothing," said Rita, an eighth-grader.

But they stumbled on a potential

strategy early on. They learned about a University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee professor who had recorded the sound male gobies make to attract females to breed.

That mating call, the students realized, could act as bait, luring female gobies into a trap. Using sound has the advantage of targeting only the goby; most fish traps and nets accidentally catch and kill beneficial fish.

The students learned all this by interviewing university researchers and a wildlife expert from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Rita said students would come up with interview questions ahead of time about the gobies and how effective their trap might be.

Their teacher said the guests often seemed surprised by the quality of the questions.

Once they finished their research, the students started confronting several practical problems.

■ Overcoming challenges

Collin said the students held a brainstorming session on how to catch the fish, and a trap seemed like the most promising option.



The trap would need to be large enough to hold the speaker, the students realized. So, they set out to design their own. They used a 3D printer, a device that can “print” three-dimensional objects by layering thin layers of material on top of each other.

Ultimately, the cage they designed was not sturdy enough to stand up to the forces of Lake Michigan. They ended up ordering metal fishing traps.

They also had to figure out where to find speakers capable of transmitting under water. They borrowed two speakers from the University of Windsor in Ontario.

To keep the speakers charged, the team asked permission from a marina to hook up the speakers to one of their outlets.

■ **Winning the prize**

Samsung’s “Solve for Tomorrow” contest asks students in grades

6-12 to “consider how science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) can be used to create change in their communities.”

Another teacher at the school had applied for the prize a few years back, and the eighth-grade team applied this year, collaborating on a three-minute video that explains the problem and the students’ potential solution.

Students split up work on the script, then stitched the pieces together. Their first draft was almost eight minutes long, though the final product had to be only three minutes.

“We revised, revised, revised ... then revised a bunch more to get the narration down,” their teacher explained.

Watch the students’ video in the online version of this story at WASB.org.

■ **Eager to test**

As of this writing, the water on Lake

Michigan was still frozen, so the team hasn’t been able to put their idea to the test. They’d like to drop the trap from a dock into a small-mouth bass nesting area.

They know they can’t get rid of the gobies entirely, but they’d like to protect a bass nursery if they can. The team is eager to learn whether their device catches any gobies.

Mason, a student, said the team would like to find a less costly source for speakers with the hopes of distributing the traps.

They’re realistic, but hopeful.

“It’s not that we don’t want to eliminate gobies,” Rita said. “It’s way bigger than any of us can handle. There’s no way that a few eighth graders can do that on their own, but just to make a bit of an impact is going to feel a lot better than disappointment.” ■

Amongst their many challenges, the team had to figure out where to find **speakers capable of transmitting under water.**



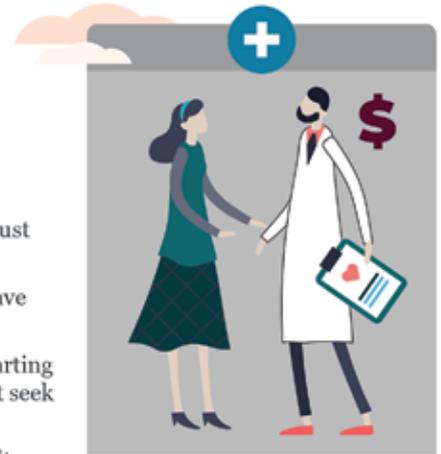
Self-Funding 101: The Basics & Benefits

When an employer pays for their employees' health care out-of-pocket using a "fund" or trust that's earmarked to pay for health care claims, that's self-funding.

Although self-funding has been used by large employers for decades, smaller employers have been slower to adopt it. Until now.

As traditional PPO and HMOs break record profits (while costing more), employers are starting to view the pandemic as a breaking point to jump into self-funding. When employees don't seek medical care due to good health, employers don't save money, insurers do.

With self-funding, employers are rewarded for having a healthier workforce, and as a result, incent their employees to be healthier. And healthier employees mean a happier and more productive workforce.



Why Choose Self-Funding?

Significant Savings	Self-funded employers no longer need to pay insurers or state taxes on their premiums. When total health claims are lower than expected, the employer gets to keep their savings – which can be substantial. Engaged employers can expect to save at least 15% on their health care costs in just a few years.
Complete Customization	Every employee population has different demographics, and self-funded employers can design their health benefits to suit their unique needs. And because self-funded employers aren't forced to use a single health system, they can incent their employees to seek care at high-value providers.
Total Control	Employers gain unlimited access to their data because they own it as a self-funded business. Analyzing this data helps self-funded employers identify health trends (like common chronic illnesses) within their workforce, unlocking significant cost-savings through disease management programs.
Unprecedented Flexibility	Within the bounds of ERISA, employers can operate their health plan as they see fit, partnering with whatever vendors they wish. And by bringing together like-minded vendor partners, employers can save even more by reducing waste and improving their employees' health and wellbeing.

What Are the Risks of Self-Funding?

So, what happens when an employee or family member incurs an unpredictable, financially devastating claim? Self-funded employers can partner with a stop-loss insurer to cover individual claims that exceed a predefined maximum allowed amount per person, defending against catastrophic claims. Self-funded employers generally utilize stop-loss insurance for aggregate claims as well, which acts as a safety net if their total claims exceed the employer's expectations.

There's also a more considerable administrative burden for employers to implement their health plan. (And improve it to save even more in subsequent years.) That's why employers work with partners to help them manage and administer their benefits – like third-party administrators (TPA) to process their claims and pharmacy benefit managers (PBM) for prescription benefits.

Self-Funding Smart: The Alliance Approach

By self-funding with The Alliance, you gain total transparency of your claims data, and while other insurers make little attempt to improve network quality, our ever-growing Smarter NetworksSM span more than 34,000 doctors and providers across the Midwest, helping your employees avoid out-of-network surprise billing.

As the voice for more than 300 self-funded employers, we find savings where others can't – or won't – using deep data mining and analytics to unlock steerage, bundled payments, inflation protection, usage-based fees, and other opportunities.

Finally, The Alliance is a not-for-profit cooperative that's member-owned and led, which means your priorities are our priorities. For over 30 years we've been growing our network, building our purchasing power, and upgrading our provider contracts to help you achieve better value for your health care dollar – focusing on your bottom line – not ours.

Ready to transition to a self-funded plan? Contact our Business Development team at the-alliance.org/wasb

Create a custom health plan your employees will **love**.

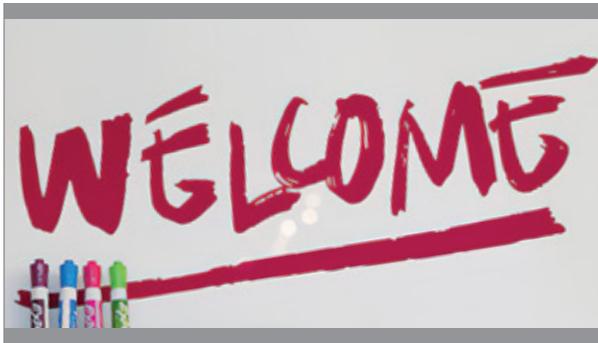


Smarter NetworksSM. Serious Savings.

The Alliance digs deeper into claims data to unlock savings for you and your employees that others can't – or won't. We know you're different than other employers, so we'll help you create a custom provider network that's tailored to your unique needs.

Find personalized savings at the-alliance.org/wasb

The Alliance 
Self-Funding Smart [®]



Welcome New School Board Members!

Whether you're taking office yourself or you are welcoming new members onto your school board, the WASB is here to help.

The New School Board Member Handbook answers dozens of questions commonly asked by new school board members. Find it at the "Basic Legal and Governance Resources" page at WASB.org.

A recording of our online 2022 New School Board Member Gathering is also available on our Online Events page. □

2023 WISCONSIN STATE EDUCATION CONVENTION



January 18-20, 2023

**WISCONSIN CENTER
MILWAUKEE**

► CALL FOR PROPOSALS Breakout Sessions, School Fair and Music Competition

The Joint State Education Convention, to be held in Milwaukee, Jan. 18-20, 2023, presents your opportunity to highlight your innovative programs and talented students.

If your district has results worth sharing, consider submitting a proposal. We are looking for breakout sessions and School Fair proposals that feature innovative projects and initiatives. *Proposals are due Friday, June 24.*

In addition, we are looking for three musical performance groups to show off their skills at the convention. *Apply by Friday, June 3.* Visit WASB.org/convention to learn more and submit a proposal.

ONE PLACE FOR WASB ONLINE SCHOOL BOARD TRAINING

WASB Online Learning Platform: Your one-stop shop for professional development

FOR NEW MEMBERS:

The Platform includes training to introduce new school board members to their legal and governance roles, such as:

- Open meetings and public records laws
- Communications by board members, including through social media
- Guiding school board operations through policy
- The rules and responsibilities of school board members

FOR CLERKS, TREASURERS AND PRESIDENTS:

The Platform's Board Officer Training Series includes 16 webinars dedicated to helping school board presidents, clerks and treasurers understand their roles as described in law and policy, such as:

- Introduction and overview of board president statutory responsibilities
- Board president's common policy responsibilities
- Running effective school board meetings
- Board clerk duties
- Board treasurer duties

Districts that register for the Online Learning Platform have access to all of the training on the Platform for one year for a one-time fee. Board members in subscribing districts receive 50 WASB Member Recognition Points each year in recognition of the substantial amount of training available in the platform.

To register, district staff should use their WASB Portal and find the Online Learning Platform under "Subscriptions."



Linehan to Head WASB Communications

Dan Linehan has been promoted to director of communications of the WASB.

He joined the WASB as a communications and marketing specialist in 2019 and was chosen for his skills, experience and strong relationships with staff.

As director, he oversees the *Wisconsin School News*, leads preparation for the next State Education Convention and directs the WASB's overall communications strategy, among other duties.

Dan has 15 years of communications experience, including more than a decade as a newspaper reporter. He lives in Stoughton with his wife, son and chickens. □



2022 WASB Summer Leadership Institute

JULY 8 & 9 | RADISSON HOTEL | LA CROSSE

Register online at WASB.org

EFFECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT/SCHOOL BOARD TEAMS: LEADING THE WAY FOR ALL STUDENTS

This two-day training opportunity gives you the chance to network with your colleagues and learn what it takes to develop a strong governance team.

AGENDA OUTLINE

FRIDAY, JULY 8

Morning Keynote: JoAnn Miller, director of continuous improvement at CESA 8

Session Track: Elevating Achievement for All Children

Evening Reception: Thomas Thibodeau, associate professor and distinguished professor of servant leadership at Viterbo University

SATURDAY, JULY 9 (half day)

Session Track: Governance Mindsets (for school board members and superintendents)

UPCOMING RECURRING WASB WEBINARS

WASB LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE MONTHLY UPDATE

MAY 18 | JUNE 15 | JULY 20 | 12 p.m.

WASB attorneys and government relations staff provide a complimentary monthly update on recent legal and legislative issues. Find the link to join on the Online Events page. *No registration required.*

WEBINARS

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

MAY 5 | 12-1 p.m.

Presenter:

Bob Butler, Associate Executive Director and Staff Counsel

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 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.

HIRING TEACHERS

JUNE 7 | 12-1 p.m.

Presenter:

Bob Butler, Associate Executive Director and Staff Counsel

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.

Looking Back at a Rancorous Legislative Session

Telling your story to lawmakers pays off for your students



With the 2021-22 legislative session in the books, we can look back on a challenging biennium. The pandemic and school closures caused disruption and frustration for parents that mixed into an already highly charged partisan environment at the Capitol.

Republican legislators criticized public schools for what they see as a lack of transparency and accountability to parents. They argued for more direct parental involvement in district operations and placed diversity and equity efforts under the microscope as concerns about what has been called “critical race theory” grew among some parents in their districts.

GOP lawmakers, who hold solid majorities in both houses, introduced many bills aimed at public schools (most of which were not signed into law) this session reflecting these concerns. Over the course of the session, we tracked the progress of more than 90 K-12 education-related bills.

We won’t list them all here (if you follow the WASB Legislative Update blog you will be familiar with most), but it is instructive to look at some of the common themes we saw this session:

■ Accountability and transparency

Some GOP lawmakers argued it is too difficult for parents, other community members and groups to know what is being taught in public schools. They brought forward bills

mandating the posting of all school curricula online by grade and class, enumerating parental rights to inspect teaching materials (a right that already exists), and requiring districts to respond to open record requests quickly and without charge, etc. The bills would have required significant staff time and cost to accomplish yet provided no additional funding.

■ Lawsuits

Several bills this session included language creating causes of action for lawsuits against school districts alleged not to have complied with the mandates included in the bill. These bills often called for awarding successful litigants attorney fees, costs, and monetary and other damages that taxpayers would be required to cover. Other bills set extremely high burdens for schools to meet in defending themselves. Such provisions were included in bills on open record requests, “critical race theory,” and posting of teaching materials online, among others. This trend has coincided with the growth in influence of the conservative Wisconsin Institute of Law & Liberty, which specializes in lawsuits against school districts on behalf of parents and other community members on issues like open records requests and which helped draft some of these bills.

■ Using federal funds

Another theme was bills that directed the usage of federal COVID relief funds rather than state funds. This has been an issue since the state budget when the influx of federal dollars led lawmakers to propose (and the governor to sign) a budget with no increase in revenue limits and only enough state dollars for K-12 schools to meet requirements to receive the federal funding. Lawmakers were continually frustrated that the governor had sole discretion to distribute the federal dollars despite the legislature’s constitutional authority to allocate funds in non-emergency situations. They were more than happy to propose earmarking federal funds for mental health and mandates relating to reading instruction, knowing the governor would veto those bills to preserve his authority to direct those funds (and he did). Meanwhile, the state was accumulating a projected \$3.8 billion budget surplus and setting aside \$1.8 billion in the state’s “rainy day” fund.

■ Electoral politics

Much of the session was marked by significant partisan rancor between Democratic Gov. Tony Evers and the Republican majorities in both houses of the Legislature. The governor has already vetoed more bills this session (98 and counting) than any other Wisconsin governor. Being an election

Ideally, by communicating regularly and openly, you will be able to build a level of trust where, when issues arise, lawmakers trust you to address them locally.

year, many of these bills were measures that Republicans knew were doomed to fail but would give them (and the governor) something to campaign on. Legislative Republicans did not have enough votes to override vetoes.

New conservative groups have also been sprouting up recently and weighing in on K-12 education issues. Groups like the Wisconsin Institute of Law & Liberty, the MacIver Institute, the Badger Institute and the Institute for Reforming Government have been lobbying legislators and testifying at public hearings in support of GOP education reform efforts.

■ **Advocacy needed**

Legislators have debated many of these issues from the standpoint of their perceived legitimacy. Republicans claim these are issues brought to them by concerned parents and Democrats have claimed these are issues created and pushed by conservative political groups with an eye towards the 2022 elections.

No matter their origin, many of you have addressed these issues at your board meetings. Ultimately, one of the biggest challenges of being an elected official of any type is trying to determine if the people reaching out to you are merely a vocal minority that does not reflect your community as a whole or a vocal contingent that represents a majority of your community.

Just as school board members are far more likely to hear from people upset with something going on in their district, state legislators are also far more likely to hear from the same sort of people.

It is important to balance out messaging from upset people by communicating and developing relationships with your legislators as a school board member and administrator. Let them know about your successes while being honest with them about

your needs and challenges. Admit if you have made errors, but correct mistaken impressions or untruths about your district. If you don't set the record straight, who will?

Ideally, by communicating regularly and openly, you will be able to build a level of trust where, when issues arise, lawmakers trust you to address them locally. That way, you determine the solution that best meets your local situation rather than encouraging lawmakers to propose, or, worse, to impose a one-size-fits-all state mandate.

Part of building that relationship of trust with lawmakers is also building trust with your local community. That means making a good-faith effort to be responsive and transparent to inquiries. Addressing as many issues as you can at the local level will hopefully prevent some from "going over your head" to your state legislators looking for a law change that impacts all 421 districts.

Many lawmakers are retiring or not running for reelection and redistricting has still not been settled,

which means there is a decent shot you will have a new state senator or representative in your area. It is a great opportunity to connect and start building a relationship with them. Schools in some areas team up to hold regular meetings with their legislators to have an ongoing dialogue. Others may hold candidate forums this summer and fall before the November election to better understand their future lawmakers' views and where some efforts to educate them may be needed or helpful.

If you are interested in improving your legislative advocacy, the WASB has a Legislative Advocacy Toolkit on our website with helpful tips and advice. We will also be providing Legislative Advocacy workshops after the November election around the state for members interested in a deeper dive on developing an advocacy program.

You can always contact Dan & Chris with questions. Thanks for your efforts on behalf of your students! ■

Legislative Update

Stay up-to-date on the latest state and national legislative news.

Our mobile-friendly site is regularly updated by WASB staff and includes a "Follow" tool for you to receive email updates when a new item is posted.

Visit the WASB Legislative Update at wasb.org. Select "Advocacy & Government Relations" and then "Legislative Update."



Advocacy & Government Relations | 608-257-2622 | Visit wasb.org



Student Bullying and Social Media

The pervasiveness of student social media use continues to create problems for school districts. While most student social media use takes place outside of the school day, use of social media can significantly impact students and their education during the school day. For example, a student could be bullied on social media on a Sunday evening, but the bullying and its ramifications could continue in school on Monday. School boards grapple with the challenge of drafting bullying policies that sufficiently address the problem of student bullying and are still manageable for the school administration and compliant with the law.

This Legal Comment will discuss the current state of the law with respect to school districts' ability to regulate off-campus student social media use under the First Amendment. First, this Legal Comment will examine a 2021 U.S. Supreme Court case that limited school districts' authority to regulate certain off-campus student speech on social media in many instances. Then, this Legal Comment will discuss a Court of Appeals case that focuses on school districts' continued ability to regulate off-campus student speech on social media that constitutes serious or severe bullying.

The U.S. Supreme Court weighs in on off-campus student speech

The U.S. Supreme Court has provided crucial legal guidance for

school districts regarding their limited authority to regulate off-campus student speech.¹ In *Mahanoy Area School District v. B.L.*, a cheerleader, B.L., failed to make the varsity cheerleading squad. Her response was to make a Snapchat message in which she used strong swear words to describe her feelings about cheerleading and school. She then sent it to her 250 Snapchat friends. Another student took a screenshot of the Snapchat message using a second cell phone and showed it to other members of the cheerleading squad. One of those cheerleaders was the daughter of one of the cheerleading coaches, and she showed it to her mother. Discussion of the post occurred during an algebra class taught by one of the cheerleading coaches. The coaches discussed the matter with the school principal.

The district decided to suspend B.L. from the junior varsity cheerleading team for the upcoming school year. B.L.'s family filed a federal lawsuit claiming that the district's action violated B.L.'s First Amendment right to free speech. The case was appealed, and the U.S. Supreme Court heard the case.

The U.S. Supreme Court held that the district's discipline of B.L. was a violation of her First Amendment rights. However, the Court left the door open for school officials to regulate off-campus student speech in certain situations. First, the Court outlined three characteristics of off-campus student speech that

justify limiting school districts' authority to regulate off-campus student speech in many, but not all, instances, including:

- School districts do not have general authority over students when students engage in off-campus speech because school district officials do not stand in loco parentis to students when they are off campus. Instead, students are generally under the authority of their parents when they are off campus.
- If school districts could regulate off-campus speech, when coupled with the ability to regulate on-campus speech, school districts would be able to regulate student speech 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Public school districts are “the nurseries of democracy,” and in this role, must protect certain speech, even speech that is unpopular.

The Court found that at its core, notwithstanding B.L.'s choice of strong language, B.L. was engaging in criticism of the rules of the community in which B.L. belonged — the cheerleading squad, its coaches and the school. The First Amendment generally provides strong protection to this type of pure speech. By contrast, this language did not rise to the level of obscenity that loses First Amendment protection because, among requirements, her use of language could not be considered

Public school districts are “the nurseries of democracy,” and in this role, must protect certain speech, even speech that is unpopular.

According to the Court, “Undifferentiated fear or apprehension ... is not enough to overcome the right to freedom of expression.”

erotic.² Additionally, the language did not constitute “fighting words” that loses First Amendment protection because B.L.’s language did not contain “personally abusive epithets which, when addressed to the ordinary citizen, are, as a matter of common knowledge, inherently likely to provoke violent reaction.”³

The Court reasoned that at the time of her speech, it was outside of school hours. B.L. was off campus at a coffee shop, using her personal device and messaging her private circle of Snapchat friends. She did not identify the school district in her post and did not specifically name or target any individual member of the school community, even if the recipients of her Snapchat message could infer who the targets of her criticisms were.

The district put forward three arguments in defense of its discipline, but the Court rejected all of them. First, the district asserted that it had an interest in teaching good manners and in punishing the use of vulgar language aimed at the school community. However, the Court reasoned that this interest is weakened considerably by the fact that B.L. spoke outside of school on her own time and not at a time when the district stood *in loco parentis* to B.L.

Second, the district asserted that it was trying to prevent a substantial disruption to the educational environment, if not of a classroom, then of a school-sponsored extracurricular activity. However, the evidence only supported 5 to 10 minutes of discussion of the Snapchat messages over a couple of days in one algebra class and that some cheerleaders were “upset” by the posts. The

Court did not find this sufficient to reasonably forecast that a substantial disruption to the school environment would occur. Additionally, the Court explained that the school’s desire to avoid the discomfort and unpleasantness that accompanies an unpopular viewpoint is not sufficient to reasonably forecast a substantial disruption.

Finally, the district asserted that the speech could affect the morale of the cheerleading squad. However, the Court held that the district had no evidentiary basis for this claim beyond a vague concern for the general negativity of B.L.’s speech. According to the Court, “Undifferentiated fear or apprehension ... is not enough to overcome the right to freedom of expression.”⁴

While the Court expressed strong reservations about a school district’s ability to regulate off-campus student speech, the Court expressly stated that schools might be able to regulate off-campus speech in certain circumstances, including:

- Serious or severe bullying or harassment targeting particular individuals;
- Threats aimed at teachers or other students;
- The failure to follow rules concerning lessons, the writing of papers, the use of computers, or participation in other online school activities; and
- Breaches of school security devices, including material maintained within school computers.

The Court left it to lower courts to decide the precise contours of these exceptions in subsequent cases.

■ The First Circuit Court of Appeals focuses on bullying

A recent case out of the First Circuit Court of Appeals, even though it is not legally binding on Wisconsin school districts, provides an example of how a court is likely to address off-campus student speech in the wake of *Mahanoy*. In *Doe v. Hopkinton Public Schools*,⁵ the Court of Appeals upheld an out-of-school suspension imposed on students that were engaged in both on-campus and off-campus bullying. The students sued the school district alleging that the district’s discipline violated their First Amendment right to off-campus free speech.

The family of a student who was bullied, Doe, filed a complaint with the student’s high school alleging that he was being bullied by the student’s hockey team. Doe had been video-recorded and photographed without his permission. These recordings and photos were being circulated in a private Snapchat group consisting of many members of the hockey team (not including Doe). In that Snapchat group, other students made demeaning and explosive-laced comments concerning Doe’s appearance, voice, intimate anatomy, parents and grandmother. The suspended students received these messages and responded to them. For example, one of the suspended students inquired in the Snapchat group “Are [Doe’s] parents ugly too [o]r did he just get bad genes.” Another student then shared pictures of Doe’s parents to which the suspended student commented, “A family of absolute beauties.”

The suspended students argued that the Snapchat messages were

private and not subject to regulation by the school district. However, the court disagreed. The court emphasized the importance of giving school administrators deference in disciplinary measures so long as their judgment was reasonable. Following an investigation, the school district determined that the students (1) engaged in the bullying which caused emotional harm to Doe, (2) created a hostile environment for Doe during school-sponsored events and activities, and (3) infringed on Doe's rights at school. The court emphasized that school districts have a significant interest in regulating serious or severe bullying or harassment that invades the rights of others, even when such speech occurs off campus. The court cited *Mahanoy* as support for its conclusion that a school's regulatory interests remained significant in off-campus circumstances of serious or severe bullying targeting particular individuals. Additionally, the suspended students were not solely engaged in off-campus activity. Some of the messages and pictures were shared on the bus and at hockey team activities, and hockey was a school-sponsored extracurricular activity. The court distinguished this case from *Mahanoy*, explaining that the general statement of discontent in *Mahanoy* was vastly different from bullying that targets a specific student, as was the case in *Hopkinton*.

The suspended students tried to argue that their statements alone did not constitute bullying. However, the court found that it was reasonable for the school district to determine that children often engage in bullying as a group, and those who encourage others to bully are also connected to those statements that constitute bullying. The derogatory comments made by the suspended students were part of continuous, active participation in a Snapchat group that constituted the bullying of a specific

student. This "fostered an environment that emboldened the bullies and encouraged others in the invasion of [the student's] rights."⁶ The court cautioned that, in certain circumstances, participation in such a group might be so attenuated that punishing students for merely participating in a group would be unreasonable. However, that was not the case here, where the court found that the students were active participants in at least some of the bullying activity.

The suspended students also tried to argue that they did not intend for Doe to receive the bullying messages. However, the court held that there was no intent requirement necessary. The messages constituted bullying, and the school administration was reasonable when it acted to discipline the students for this improper speech.

The court also applied the *Tinker* test⁷ which, in relevant part, states that student speech may be regulated only if it would substantially disrupt school operations or interfere with the rights of others. The Court held that a reasonable school administrator could have found that this type of bullying substantially disrupted an extracurricular activity and invaded Doe's rights.

■ School districts should review their bullying – and other applicable – policies

By law, all school districts must have a student bullying policy.⁸ School boards should consider reviewing these policies in the wake of these recent court decisions. Some bullying policies only cover school and school-sponsored functions and events. Other bullying policies might also cover online bullying, sometimes called "cyberbullying." Any bullying policy that attempts to address online bullying should be drafted in a way that is consistent with the limitations of the First Amendment, but is also broad enough to cover potentially severe or

serious bullying of an individual student. Similarly, school boards may also want to review their athletic and activity codes to be consistent with the limitations of the First Amendment.

Once appropriate policies are in place, district administrators can evaluate on a case-by-case basis whether off-campus social media posts by students might be actionable under the policies. Administrators will need to evaluate whether the specific posts at issue are sufficiently serious or severe as to permit the district to enforce its bullying policy and/or athletic and activity codes notwithstanding the legal constraints imposed by the First Amendment. Given the continued development in this area of the law, school boards and administration are well-advised to discuss these issues with their legal counsel as they arise. ■

■ Endnotes

1. *Mahanoy Area Sch. Dist. v. B. L.*, 141 S. Ct. 2038 (2021).
2. *Cohen v. California*, 403 U.S. 15, 20 (1971) (citing *Roth v. U.S.*, 354 U.S. 476 (1957)).
3. *Id.* (citing *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire*, 315 U.S. 568 (1942)).
4. *Mahanoy Area Sch. Dist.*, 141 S. Ct. at 2048 (citing *Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Cmty. Sch. Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503, 509 (1969)).
5. *Doe v. Hopkinton Pub. Sch.*, 19 F.4th 493 (1st Cir. 2021).
6. *Id.* at 508.
7. *Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Cmty. Sch. Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969).
8. Wis. Stat. s. 118.46.

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: "Free Speech in the Racial Justice Era" (Oct. 2020); "Free Speech and Student Clothing" (Apr. 2020); "The First Amendment and Regulation of Students' Social Media Use" (Jan. 2016); and "Student Threats and the First Amendment" (Apr. 2014).



Educational Services and Products

2022 WASB SERVICE ASSOCIATES

Architecture, Engineering and Construction

► **Bray Architects**

414-226-0200
mwolfert@brayarch.com
brayarch.com

Architecture, interior design, planning, referendum support.

► **C.D. Smith, Construction, Inc.**

920-216-9081
tmuellenbach@cdsmith.com
cdsmith.com

Serving districts of any size, C.D. Smith has over 80 years of diverse experience building state-of-the-art educational facilities.

► **CG Schmidt**

608-255-1177
sarah.dunn@cgschmidt.com
cgschmidt.com

Construction management, general contracting, design-build.

► **Eppstein Uhen Architects**

414-271-5350
ericd@eua.com, eua.com

Architectural design and service leader known for inspired design.

► **Hoffman Planning, Design & Construction, Inc.**

800-236-2370
jandres@hoffman.net, hoffman.net
Planners, architects and construction managers.

► **J.H. Findorff & Son Inc.**

608-257-5321
cmlsna@findorff.com, findorff.com

With offices in Madison and Milwaukee, Findorff is one of Wisconsin's leading builders.

► **JP Cullen**

608-754-6601, jpcullen.com

A family-owned, full-service construction management firm that specializes in budgeting, planning and constructing the tough jobs.

► **Miron Construction Co., Inc.**

920-969-7030
craig.uhlenbrauck@miron-construction.com
miron-construction.com

A leader in the educational market, having completed over \$1 billion in K-12 construction. Services include; construction management, design/build, facilities master planning, pre-construction services & referendum planning services.

► **Performance Services**

630-461-0780
jwede@performanceservices.com
performanceservices.com

Providing complete referendum services to Wisconsin K-12 schools including pre-planning, design and construction with a guaranteed learning environment.

► **Plunkett Raysich Architects LLP**

414-359-3060
skramer@prarch.com, prarch.com
Architectural and interior design services.

► **Scherrer Construction Company, Inc.**

262-539-3100
customsolutions@scherrerconstruction.com
scherrerconstruction.com

General contractor/construction manager for over 90 years. Specializing in K-12 school construction, our services include master planning, referendum support, pre-construction services and construction management.

► **The Boldt Company**

920-225-6216
theboldtcompany.com

A leading sustainable construction firm in the nation providing professional construction services in a variety of markets.

► **VJS Construction Services**

262-542-9000
cbathke@vjscs.com, vjscs.com

A top-10 construction company in southeastern Wisconsin with 65 years of experience.

Computer Hardware, Software, Consulting

► **Skyward, Inc.**

715-341-9406
holly@skyward.com, skyward.com

Skyward is an administrative software company serving over 2,000 K-12 school districts around the world. Our goal? To foster a more productive, collaborative, and successful environment.

Financing, Banking, Consulting

► **Baird Public Finance**

800-792-2473
BBrewer@rwbaird.com
rwbaird.com/publicfinance

Baird's Public Finance team provides school financing solutions including: long range capital planning, services related to debt issuance, investment advisory services and referendum assistance.

Insurance and Employee Benefits

► **Community Insurance Corporation**

800-236-6885, josh@aegis-wi.com
communityinsurancecorporation.com

Dedicated to providing school districts with the tools they need to economically and efficiently address today's changing insurance and risk management environment.

► **EMC Insurance Companies**

262-717-3900, emcins.com
philip.lucca@emcins.com
Property and casualty insurance.

► **Gallagher**

262-792-2240
nancy_moon@ajg.com, ajg.com
Specializing in serving the risk management and insurance needs of public schools.

► **Key Benefit Concepts LLC**

262-522-6415, keybenefits.com
info@keybenefits.com
Actuarial and employee benefit consulting services.

► **M3 Insurance**

800-272-2443
marty.malloy@m3ins.com
M3ins.com

The dedicated education specialists at M3 Insurance provide over 50% of Wisconsin school districts with the very best in risk management, employee benefits, and insurance services.

► **National Insurance Services of Wisconsin, Inc.**

800-627-3660
slaudon@nisbenefits.com
NISBenefits.com

Over 82% of Wisconsin school districts are already working with NIS! Since 1969, we've helped school districts find creative solutions to their employee benefit plans. We offer health, dental, disability, life, insurance, worksite benefits, retirement income solutions, full benefit consulting, exclusive proprietary arrangements, and our own online enrollment and benefit administration system, NIS Enroll.

► **R&R Insurance**

262-574-7000
jeff.thiel@rrins.com
myknowledgebroker.com

Our School Practice Group has more than 25 years of educational institution experience and a dedicated resource center designed with school district's risk and claims management needs in mind.

► **TRICOR Insurance**

855-904-1618
jgibson@tricorinsurance.com
tricorinsurance.com

We now insure over 150 public schools. Our School Practice Team is made up of a diverse group of experienced individuals who are extensively trained and specialized in school insurance products, risk management, support services, loss control, human resources and claims advocacy.

► **UnitedHealthcare**

414-443-4735
jessica_a_daun@uhc.com
uhc.com

UnitedHealthcare is dedicated to helping people live healthier lives and making the health system work better for everyone. We are committed to improving the healthcare experience of K-12 teachers, staff, retirees and their families in the state of Wisconsin.

► **USI Insurance Services**

608-259-3666
al.jaeger@usi.com, usi.com
Our focus is financial security options that protect and assist growth. We go beyond simply protecting against the loss of assets and property.

Leadership Consulting

► **Studer Education**

850-898-3949
info@studereducation.com
studereducation.com

We support the critical work of school district leaders through coaching around an Evidence-Based Leadership framework to increase student achievement, employee engagement, parent satisfaction, district support services, and financial efficiency.

Legal Services

► **Buelow Vetter Bulkeam Olson & Vliet LLC**

262-364-0300
jaziere@buelowvetter.com
buelowvetter.com

We have decades of experience in representing school boards across Wisconsin. We advise school boards and administrators on a variety of issues from labor and employment to student discipline and expulsion.

► **Renning, Lewis & Lacy, s.c.**

844-626-0901
info@law-rl.com
law-rl.com

Renning, Lewis & Lacy, S.C. provides legal counsel on a full range of issues that school and higher education institution clients confront on a regular basis.

► **von Briesen & Roper, s.c.**

414-287-1122
aphillips@vonbriesen.com
vonbriesen.com

We're dedicated to ingenuity and creativity in helping schools solve their most complex legal and organizational problems. Challenge us to help you challenge the status quo.

► **Weld Riley, s.c.**

715-839-7786, weldriley.com
sweld@weldriley.com

We provide a wide variety of legal advice and counseling to help Wisconsin school districts, colleges and CESAs address corporate-related, body politic and unique legal issues.

School/Community Research

► **School Perceptions, LLC**

262-299-0329
info@schoolperceptions.com
schoolperceptions.com

An independent research firm specializing in conducting surveys for public and private schools, educational service agencies, communities and other state-level organizations.

Transportation

► **Dairyland Buses, Inc.**

262-544-8181, ridesta.com
mjordan@ridesta.com
School bus contracting provider, managed contracts, training, maintenance.



SUPPORTING, PROMOTING AND ADVANCING PUBLIC EDUCATION



2022 WASB Summer Leadership Institute



JULY 8 & 9 | RADISSON HOTEL | LA CROSSE

EFFECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT/SCHOOL BOARD TEAMS:

Leading the Way for All Students

This two-day training opportunity gives you the chance to network with your colleagues and learn what it takes to develop a strong governance team.

Visit [WASB.org](https://www.wasb.org) for complete information and to register. | 608-257-2622 | info@wasb.org