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SchoolNews

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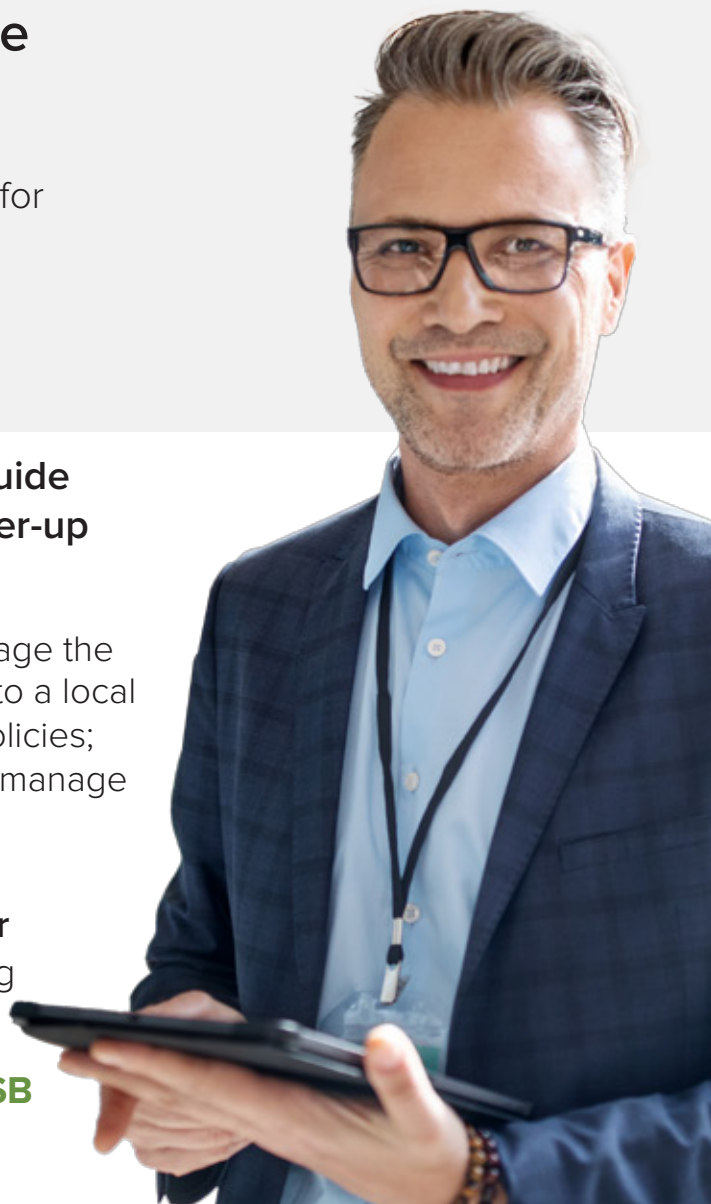
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Report: Fewer Students of Color Take AP Exams

Students of color in Wisconsin high schools are less likely to take an Advanced Placement exam, according to a new report from the Wisconsin Policy Forum.

Data from the 2017-18 school year, the most recent for which data is available, show that 32% of all students enrolled in an AP course didn't take the AP exam.

However, 50% of Black students did not take an AP exam, nor did 49% of American Indian or Alaska Native students or 43% of Hispanic students.

Taking AP tests can be beneficial because students who score highly on the tests may receive college credit.

The test completion rates were lower among the 10 districts with the highest number of Black students enrolled in AP courses. In Milwaukee Public Schools, 44% of Black students did not take an AP exam, somewhat better than the state average.

Cost is not intended to be a barrier to taking AP tests. Wisconsin requires districts to cover the cost of the tests for students who qualify for free or reduced lunch. However, the report notes that in practice families may face bureaucratic hurdles in accessing this support. □

Poll: Public Support for School Funding Up

An August Marquette Law School Poll found overall public support up for increased school funding as the state budget process nears.

When asked whether reducing property taxes or increasing spending on public schools were more important, 52% of poll respondents prioritized funding for public schools while 43% chose reducing property taxes.

That is a slight increase from April results, when 50% chose school spending.

Expanding the number of students using publicly funded vouchers to attend private schools is favored by 46% and opposed by 45%. This

is little changed from one year ago.

Opinion on vouchers changes with the wording of the question. In April 2022, the survey asked whether respondents "favor or oppose allowing all students statewide to use publicly funded vouchers to attend private or religious schools if they wish to do so?" When the question was put like that, 58% favored the voucher extension and 33% were opposed.

The poll interviewed 811 registered voters between Aug. 10-15 using a combination of cell phones and landlines. The margin of error was plus or minus 4.2 percentage points. □

STAT OF THE MONTH

52%

Percentage of Wisconsin residents who favored increasing school spending over lowering property taxes. *Source: Marquette University Law School*

Rural High Schoolers to Learn Robotics

A National Science Foundation-funded project will bring 10 groups of rural Wisconsin students to Madison to gain hands-on experience with robotics, engineering and computer science, the UW-Madison College of Engineering reported.

Under this project, led by UW-Madison Mechanical Engineering Professor Dan Negrut, the team and two Waunakee teachers will create materials that can be

used by other rural teachers in training students in computer simulation and robotics related subjects.

Negrut united with Waunakee High School faculty around the idea of joining forces with Waunakee and other rural Wisconsin high schools on the computing program.

Interested schools are asked to reach out to uwprocsi@gmail.com. □

BARNEVELD STUDENTS WIN NATIONAL BUILDING COMPETITION

A team of four Barneveld High School students recently won the 2022 SkillsUSA TeamWorks Championship at the Georgia World Congress Center, Agri-View reported.

Twenty-seven teams participated in the competition, which required the use of teamwork to build a structure. The students had to build an 8-by-10-foot struc-

ture with a wood floor and second story.

Barneveld qualified for the national competition after winning state.

"I told the team they'd be competing against the best," said Will Hodgson, coach and technology education teacher. "They knew they'd face hard work but said they weren't going to be outworked. When they faced obstacles,

they didn't give up; they figured it out."

Barneveld junior Billy Carden contributed his plumbing abilities to the competition.

"It was the second time I'd ever done plumbing and the first time was at the state competition," he told the newspaper. "I feel great about winning gold for Barneveld and Wisconsin." □



The Beliefs That Bind Us

As school board members, you come from different walks of life. And you have different ideas about the right policies or priorities for your districts.

But these differences are trivial compared with the deep uniting factors that bind you together.

You share a bedrock goal, a North Star: a belief that all students can succeed, can reach their potential. We chose the 2022 School Board Week theme — “We Believe All Children Can Achieve” — because it’s a value that unites school board members and strengthens our schools.

My favorite Wisconsin School News articles tell stories of students who are deeply engaged in their own learning. This month, I’m hoping you’ll read about the students in Chippewa Falls who used a drone to measure heat loss in their school or about the elementary students who eagerly helped their schools conserve energy.

It’s stories like these that remind school board members why they make a commitment to children. More than a commitment; a sacrifice. You didn’t volunteer for board service because it would be easy. It has never been so, but these past few years have put your commitment to the test. Thank you for sticking with it.

School Board Week is a chance to take a bow. Whether you’re a board member yourself or district staff

member, you can visit WASB.org to find a School Board Week planning kit with a press release, graphics to recognize board members on social media and other resources.

One goal of School Board Week, observed Oct. 2-8, is to remind the public who their school board members are. You are volunteers who are motivated by the best interests of children.

As regular readers know, I’m an optimist by nature. My hope is that school boards and their communities can see that their differences are outweighed by common interest.

We are a nation of different faiths, creeds and ethnicities, and public schools are how we create citizens who can live together. As school boards comprised of different types of people, you are modeling how we can work together for a larger purpose.

It must start with the acknowledgement that everyone has the best interests of children in mind. Our governance consultants sometimes call this “assuming positive intent.”

It’s easy to see how this is the right move for leaders. How do you feel when someone claims you don’t care about children? How does that compare when someone acknowledges you have positive intent, that your heart is in the right place, but that they disagree on the path forward?

These challenges can be especially

daunting for newly elected board members. I hope to meet many of you this month. Throughout October, I’m on the road as part of our Fall Regional Meetings. I suspect members really come to talk to each other, but you can hear more about my thoughts on these trips in the September episode of the WASB Connection Podcast.

In addition to recognizing board members for their progress in our Member Recognition Program, one of my favorite parts of regional meetings is talking about the State Education Convention. It’s such a well-loved tradition that members’ ears perk up when I talk about keynotes, sessions and networking.

We want our keynote speakers to inspire emotion in attendees. We want you to be talking about what you learned for days and weeks afterward.

The surest route to relevance is to pick speakers whose themes resonate with your daily life. That’s why our speakers will address trust, resilience, servant leadership and conflict resolution. Each of these topics speaks to your purpose as much as to your daily life.

We hope they will make you think and feel — and provide practical skills that matter in your work. Visit WASB.org/convention to learn about the names and backgrounds of these keynote speakers. ■

We are a nation of different faiths, creeds and ethnicities, and public schools are how we create citizens who can live together.

An aerial photograph of a schoolyard. In the upper center is a large, light-colored school building with a flat roof and several windows. To the left of the building is a parking lot with several white vans and cars. The schoolyard itself is paved with dark asphalt and features a basketball court on the left, a central area with white and blue markings, and a playground with yellow equipment on the right. A large green lawn occupies the lower half of the image, bordered by a chain-link fence. Trees with green and yellow leaves are scattered around the perimeter. The title text is overlaid on the green lawn area.

Milwaukee's **GREEN AND HEALTHY** Schoolyards

by Michael Timm

How the state's largest district is CONNECTING ASPHALT PLAY SPACES TO NATURE and creating outdoor classrooms

Something amazing is brewing in Milwaukee: the transformation of public schoolyards from seas of asphalt to islands of nature-inspired green spaces that manage rainwater and provide healthier learning environments that nurture the next generation.

An estimated 45% of Milwaukee is covered with impervious surfaces — roads, roofs and parking lots. Milwaukee Public Schools, which maintains 500 acres of that hard space, has recruited a consortium of partners to chip away at those asphalt surfaces.

As a result of massive collaboration supported by an expanding network of community partners, every year, five MPS schools enter a three-year process



Asphalt is removed from Zablocki Elementary's schoolyard.

to retrofit their schoolyards with green infrastructure. This includes features like underground cisterns, rain gardens, trees and bioswales, which are plant-filled channels that funnels and cleans rainwater.

Nineteen Milwaukee schools have transformed their properties in the past four years, adding more than 1 million gallons of green infrastructure water storage capacity and removing over 408,000 square feet of

hard surface. Conceptualized projects are poised to more than double those environmental impacts over the next three years.

The designs also incorporate outdoor classrooms, native plants and nature-based play spaces. Since expanding from a handful of pilot schools, the process has

evolved into a sustained effort that includes 31 schools to date, touching thousands of young people across grade bands.

“Five schools per year are able to get into our green schoolyard renovation program,” explains MPS Sustainability Project Specialist Heather Dietzel, whose role was created in large part to manage the expanding program. “We have over 150 schools,



BEFORE Bay View Montessori's original cracked-asphalt schoolyard



AFTER Bay View Montessori's schoolyard transformed into a more green, kid-friendly environment



Plants naturally remove contaminants from water, so green schoolyards help purify this critical source of drinking water.

so it's a competitive process that schools compete to get into based on need and enthusiasm."

Every fall, representatives from both the community and MPS come together to select which applicants enter the pipeline of schoolyard redevelopment projects. "Then, they get into a three-year process where first they dream and conceptualize what they want on their schoolyard. That includes teachers, parents, students and staff and community members," Dietzel says. "In year two, they fundraise — they do penny wars, bake sales, everything you can think of to raise money for their project — and we write lots of grants. In year three, we hire engineers and contractors to design and build our projects."

Partnerships yield benefits

MPS doesn't do this massive lift alone. The Milwaukee-based nonprofit Reflo acts as a catalyst, holding together a process that involves educators, administrators,

engineers, construction contractors, environmental nonprofits, higher education institutions, and state and local agencies — even students themselves. Reflo holds monthly meetings with school green teams to:

- guide the conceptual design process
- work with partners to maximize stormwater management capture
- support fundraising and maintenance
- administer the Green Schools Consortium of Milwaukee network of over 1,300 stakeholders

Reflo also convenes the annual Green & Healthy Schools Conference to share best practices and multiply collaboration opportunities.

Another key MPS partner is the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District, a regional government agency tasked with sewage treatment and flood management that has

championed green infrastructure to manage stormwater where it falls.

"MMSD wants to invest in our community," says Lisa Sasso, a senior project planner with the district who coordinates and partially funds the projects with MPS and Reflo. "We want to help protect Lake Michigan, and we want to get our next generation to be environmental stewards. That's what we're doing through schools."

What's the connection to Lake Michigan? Rainwater collects contaminants such as fertilizer and motor oil as it flows through a city. Plants naturally remove contaminants from water, so green schoolyards help purify this critical source of drinking water.

The investments are starting to show returns, some of which are easier than others to measure.

"Qualitatively, we're getting a lot of good feedback back from our school principals that, once their schoolyard is green, they're getting a lot less referrals on discipline, they're

getting a lot less referrals on injuries,” Dietzel says.

For health metrics that are more challenging to measure, the school district has partnered with the Medical College of Wisconsin on a multi-year research project to track heat-island, social-emotional health and biometric impacts related to the schoolyards. This work will add local data on the value of children’s exposure to nature and urban green space.

“An increasing body of research underscores that students’ access to green schoolyards can result in better academic outcomes, increased engagement and enthusiasm, improved social-emotional skills and decreased childhood obesity,” says Lisa Neeb, who manages Reflo’s Green & Healthy Schools program and works with each school. “Redeveloped schoolyards offer many other benefits, including improved stormwater management, urban biodiversity, community engagement and meaningful STEAM curricular connections.”

Educators embrace outdoor learning

Teachers are finding green schoolyards transformative. In short, they love them.

“To see some of the green infrastructure going into the schools or even the planning of what they were doing, it was amazing,” says Angela Vaternick, a teacher at Bay View Montessori, which had its asphalt schoolyard redeveloped in 2021 to include multiple bioswales, an underground cistern and a new soccer field. “I’ve taught in MPS for almost 18 years, and the playgrounds are usually just concrete yards as far as you can see. I know that children need to play. Children need to explore.”

Teachers express excitement about using their new spaces and sharing them with colleagues across disciplines and grades. Within the district, demand for the program is high, with over a dozen schools applying each fall. Bay View Montessori did not win

grant support the first year it applied, but Vaternick and her team came back determined and they won support their second year. “For me, it was like, we need this. We need this grant,” she recalls. “We involved children in the planning process. We were sort of surprised we were able to do that. They wanted the children’s voices.”

Students’ input is invited throughout conceptual planning. They sketch their ideas and share what they would like. Later, students are also exposed to different career pathways involved.

“Kids get really hurt when they fall on concrete, but with grass, they’ll have a softer landing. And these changes are better for the environment, which is what I am excited about,” observes La’Veya, a fourth-grade student looking forward to the completion of the schoolyard redevelopment at Neeskara Elementary this year. “A new playground will be more fun and make kids feel like Neeskara really cares about them.”

Students’ input is invited throughout conceptual planning. They sketch their ideas and share what they would like.





Teachers and students are looking forward to using these revitalized learning spaces. At Bay View Montessori, Vaternick already observes different activities in her schoolyard, which now has enough space for soccer and other ball games. Students have given presentations in an outdoor classroom. They are also using magnifying glasses to explore life in the surrounding vegetation.

Milwaukee's green schoolyards are gaining national recognition.

Earlier in 2022, the U.S. Department of Education recognized two MPS schools, A.E. Burdick and Golda Meir, with its prestigious Green Ribbon School award. Both schools had undergone a green schoolyard transformation: Burdick in 2019 and Golda in 2020.

Golda Meir teacher Tina Gleason says the reaction to their new schoolyard, which includes a cistern beneath a new soccer field where there was previously just blacktop, has been amazing.

"The more teachers learn about it, the more excited they get," says Gleason. "Especially the high school teachers. Because I think they think the playground is for the little kids. And I'm like, 'No, it's an outdoor classroom. It's not a playground. You can take your kids out there and you can do stuff with them.' That's really exciting."

Golda Meir's schoolyard is already

being used by a variety of classes, Gleason says, including English, choir, environmental education, gym, elementary, math and even French. COVID-19 has reinforced the value of outdoor learning spaces offering fresh air.

There are also social-emotional benefits.

"When we come in from nature time, [my students] are calm, less stressed. It's a great break for mental health," says Lisa Misky, a teacher at Starms Early Childhood Center, which redeveloped its schoolyard in 2019 to include nature-based play areas and a

permeable rubber play surface in the shape of Lake Michigan, with slides representing Milwaukee's three rivers. "You're calmer and less stressed when your hands are in the soil or doing purposeful, positive activities."

Kirsten Brown is principal at Gaenslen School, whose student population is 48% special education. In 2022, Gaenslen is in its fundraising phase, with construction expected in 2023. "This is so important to us because not only is this wonderful for our general education students, but it is also a way to make the space more



The conceptual design phase involves meaningful engagement with a range of school stakeholders including the students themselves.

inclusive of our special education students,” Brown says. “We want to incorporate things like braille and a lavender garden.”

Across a large and diverse district, the multi-phase process continues to engage school green team partners and their communities in the ongoing “Maintenance & Stewardship” phase, even after construction is completed.

Dietzel credits MPS teachers and principals with the success thus far. “In between their lessons and their very full plates, they’re out there weeding, they’re out there learning how to revamp their lesson plans to incorporate this stuff,” Dietzel says. “And it’s an extra workload they wouldn’t have to do, but they do it, and they’re really happy about it. I love to see it.”

■ Networks of support

In May 2022, a delegation from MPS and Reflo showcased Milwaukee’s green schoolyards leadership at the Children & Nature Network’s annual

international conference in Atlanta. Other school districts took note.

MPS Green & Healthy schoolyards also align with the district’s climate justice emphasis, which the school board enshrined into two recent resolutions.

Changing what people believe a large urban public school district can do takes funding support.

The MPS Foundation, MPS district grant writers and Reflo work to secure a diversified mix of funding streams. The sewer district supports the process directly and contributes funding based on gallons of stormwater managed. Grant support has flowed from foundations like the Fund for Lake Michigan, state programs like Wisconsin Coastal Management, and federal sources like the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and Environmental Protection Agency. About \$12 million was raised over four years to support the first 19 schools.

The City of Milwaukee contributes \$600,000 per year to advance its

green infrastructure goals. Though the city and MPS are separate entities, it also helped support the development of the districtwide coordinator role Dietzel now holds.

Erick Shambarger, the city’s director of environmental sustainability, sees the schoolyard projects as incredibly important. “First and foremost, in an urban environment, surrounded by really too much blacktop and asphalt surfaces in general, but particularly in schoolyards, that’s not a healthy environment for our kids,” he says. “It’s not healthy from an air-quality standpoint. It doesn’t give people a good sense of what the outdoors should be. And it’s not equitable with suburban neighbors that may have high schools that have very large playfields and things like that, where kids are routinely getting exposed to nature. So, the green schoolyards project just checks all the boxes.” ■

Michael Timm is Milwaukee Water Stories project manager for Reflo.

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Student Science *TAKES FLIGHT*

Chippewa Falls high schoolers use a drone-mounted thermal camera to identify heat loss from a school building

Chippewa Falls High School students identified a problem: Some classrooms were noticeably warmer or cooler than others, distracting from learning.

Heat can leak from buildings, as the students knew from physics class. But finding where that was happening at the school, especially considering it could come from the roof and other hard-to-reach places, wasn't going to be easy.

Thanks to a happy coincidence and a new grant from the Wisconsin K12 Energy Education Program, the students had most of the tools they needed to investigate. A drone purchased with grant money could zip around the school, and students were already earning credentials as drone pilots.

Chippewa Falls students Monte Brown and Iverson Beckwith recognized that the drone could be used to explore the heat gain and loss of their school building. The drone allowed students to combine their classroom instruction with a problem-solving spirit to help make their school more energy efficient.

And they're not done yet. The students, known as the Green Team, plan to apply for a grant to fix some of the issues they're identifying, further showing how school build-



by Samara Hamze, clean energy educator at UW-Stevens Point

ings provide fertile opportunities for learning, community service and career exploration.

■ Putting drones to use

The students' journey began when the incoming dean of students, Joe Nelson, came to the Chippewa Falls Area Unified School District from the local police department. Looking to share his security experience, Nelson worked with science teacher Nick Gagnon to apply for a grant to purchase dual-imaging (thermal and visual) drones.

After receiving the drones, Gagnon sought a pathway for students to earn their remote pilot certificate from the Federal Aviation Administration. With this certification, students earn FAA credentials

that can be applied to jobs across multiple industry sectors. They receive an opportunity to explore those careers.

During the 2019-20 school year, the school district and police department coordinated a search-and-rescue simulation with the high school students. With interest in drones piqued, three students became certified to fly the grant-funded drones.

Gagnon, who had previously attended Wisconsin's K-12 Energy Education Program workshops, sought to explore additional ways the drones could be used in service of the school community. His school became the first one statewide to submit a full proposal and complete their project.

■ The building as classroom

The operation of any building integrates perfectly into Next Generation Science Standards, which ask students to understand different types of systems and models. Without the need for expensive trips or tools, students can explore the flow of energy to, and through, their school building.

The Wisconsin Standards for Environmental Literacy and Sustainability, adopted in 2018, are also well-suited to an interdisciplinary



investigation of a building and the behavior of its occupants.

Brown and Beckwith, who took physics with Gagnon and received their FAA remote pilot certificates, needed the right software to analyze the infra red photos and videos the drone captured.

After meeting with KEEP staff and receiving grant funding, Brown and fellow Green Team students contacted experts throughout the Midwest who are using drones for remote thermal sensing. The students sought advice on software that is compatible with their drone's

cameras and their project objectives.

In addition to stabilizing classroom temperature, the students aimed to reduce the cost of heating and lower their school's overall carbon footprint.

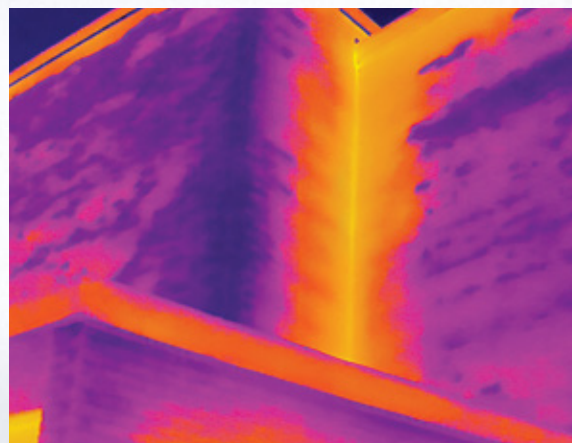
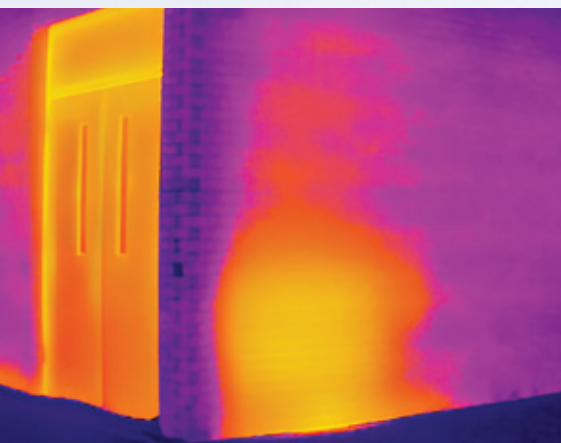
■ Community service

With guidance from partners like Rebecca Nicholson, operations and engineering specialist at Arch Electric, the students used KEEP Mini-Grant funds to purchase and install software that stitches together drone-gathered images to create a comprehensive overview of where

the school building is leaking heat during the winter months. The drone images were used to scan hard-to-reach areas like the roof and vents.

The students presented their findings to the school board in February. Areas of heat loss — such as the greenhouse and door seals — stood out as white areas on their drone video, which can be viewed at wevideo.com/view/2519641113.

The students demonstrated areas where the school building envelope needs attention. This student initiative has led to more in-depth conversations about the high school's energy use.



Chippewa Falls student Monte Brown shows how thermal cameras work on the drone. The color gradations captured by the drone-mounted thermal camera vividly identify areas of heat loss throughout the building exterior.



Chippewa Falls teachers attend a two-day renewable energy workshop at Madison Area Technical College.

Next steps

The KEEP Green Team Mini-Grant will be offered again during the 2022-23 school year for any high school team of students who have an actionable idea on how to measure and plan for reduction in their school building's carbon footprint.

At Chippewa Falls High School, some next steps are already being taken.

In July 2022, six district teachers attended a two-day renewable energy workshop at Madison Area Technical College.

"Our district is supporting six — six! — science teachers at once to come down [to Madison] to learn these things because we recognize these are important things to teach our students," says Jeanna Burgan, an agriscience instructor who said the

Career exploration

While the project focused on remote sensing of school building heat losses, the skills the students learned and practiced are applicable across all disciplines and career stages.

Working on the student-led objectives of the grant proposal allowed the Green Team to practice basic to advanced life skills.

For example, students emailed KEEP staff to set up meetings and coordinate components of the grant. They also had the opportunity to collaborate with school district administrators — the curriculum coordinator, facilities director and high school principal — and energy professionals to discuss the learning outcomes of their grant project.

The students were assisted by the district's Focus on Energy Advisor Steve Craker, who provided them with the spreadsheet and formulas used to calculate energy and cost benefits for upgrading the building's insulation. Students explored energy management while integrating what they'd learned in physics class.

KEEP Offers Green Team Mini-Grants

KEEP is a program of the Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education, located on the campus of UW-Stevens Point with a vision of communities making informed energy choices now and for a sustainable future. KEEP is funded by the six investor-owned utilities in Wisconsin and provides professional development and classroom resources for K-12 teachers in public, private and non-formal education. One of the initiatives of KEEP is youth engagement through the Green Teams Mini-Grant, which debuted in the 2021-22 school year.

For this initiative, student Green Teams are invited to submit a short form where they propose a project idea. After meeting with KEEP staff, presenting their idea in greater detail and getting oriented to the Green Team Mini-Grant process, students with feasible ideas are invited to submit a full proposal. The Green Teams Mini-Grant is specifically designed with three objectives in mind:

1. The grant proposal and execution must be student-led. This is to lift the burden of fundraising and reporting from educators and provide students with life skills (aka soft skills) in communications, collaboration and commitment.
2. The grant proposal and award process are learning opportunities for students. Students must think through the entire process of an idea from inception to execution, promotion, and the sustainability of the project for at least three years.
3. The grant project must demonstrate a reduction in a school building's carbon footprint, allowing students the flexibility to consider and propose ideas in a variety of areas of environmental concern (energy, waste, water, transportation, food, site use), so long as there is a quantitative analysis of the potential environmental benefit.

- KEEP Green Team Mini-Grant: bit.ly/KEEP-GreenTeams
- Focus on Energy® for schools: focusonenergy.com/energy-advisor-map

workshop supported staff innovation.

A fellow science teacher, Rebecca Bestul, added that the workshop made her more aware of “soft skills type jobs before you even get to poles in the ground.”

A new cohort of students at Chippewa Falls High School is continuing the project as part of an environmental studies independent study class. This fall, the students will be studying and sitting for their FAA remote pilot certificate exam. Once certified, they plan to carry the project forward.

Madison Hunt, a junior, said that the team has a two-year plan. This year, they will expand their school building energy data collection. They will “prioritize and organize from most expensive to least expensive and also the easiest to the hardest to fix.”

She plans to present the project to the school board, “giving them an overview of what we are doing, our plans, especially for our senior year.”

Next year, they plan to apply for a large grant to help fund the energy efficiency projects identified by the students.

What has started as a student-led project at one school has evolved into a three-pronged approach that is replicable in many high schools: innovative teaching, student engagement and administrative support to nurture local solutions that have global implications. ■



Chippewa Falls teachers explore the installation of solar panels during the renewable energy workshop.

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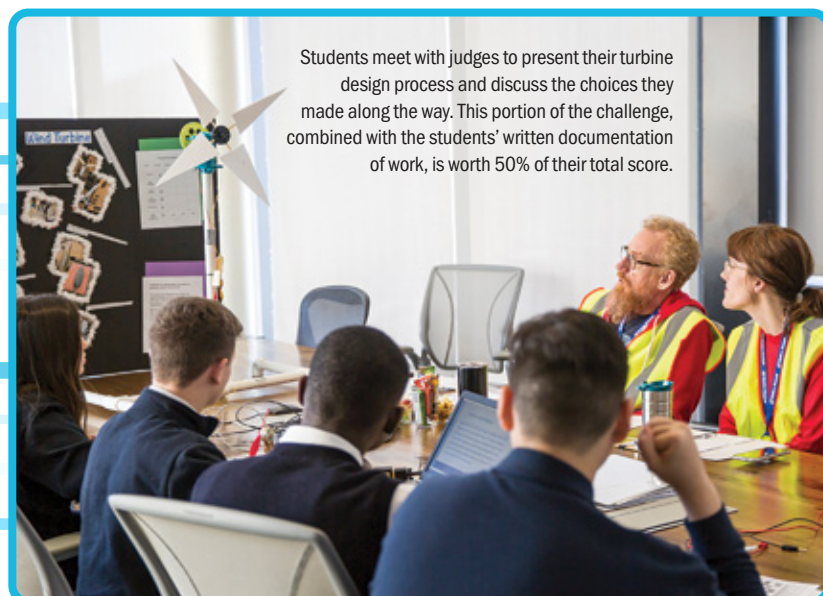


The Darlington Quilt Blockers compete in one of the “instant challenges” at the KidWind event — using a gin pole to safely raise a model small-scale turbine tower.

Bringing Clean Energy

INTO THE CLASSROOM

by Allison Bender



Students meet with judges to present their turbine design process and discuss the choices they made along the way. This portion of the challenge, combined with the students' written documentation of work, is worth 50% of their total score.

KidWind prepares learners for renewable energy's present and future

Before entering a high school competition to design a wind turbine, Landon Bilka wanted to be an accountant. The Mauston native's experience at KidWind, a nonprofit that uses hands-on activities to teach kids about renewable energy, opened his eyes to new interests and changed his career trajectory.

"KidWind changed my perspective about what I want to do in the future," Bilka says of how the program led him recognize his eagerness to engineer, build and design. "I'm now studying engineering at UW–Madison and I'm really glad I had this opportunity to change my mind."

The clean energy transition is underway. Wisconsin is awash with new solar and wind, and it is developing its capacity to store the electricity from these and other renewable energy sources. Through the next decade, we will continue to see a wave of new "green" jobs for the people who'll design, maintain,

communicate and govern this clean energy transition.

Across Wisconsin, students are diving into the science and engineering challenges posed by renewable energy.

"The value of a hands-on learning experience when teaching students about renewable energy in today's classroom cannot be overlooked," says Dick Anderson, a Wisconsin KidWind advisor and retired Darlington High School technical education instructor. Some teachers who attend a KidWind workshop for educators may simply incorporate KidWind into their lessons, while others take their involvement a step further by bringing students to the University of Wisconsin–Madison for the Challenge event.

■ Spinning up KidWind

In 2003, Mike Arquin, a middle school science teacher, became frustrated with the lack of curricula and resources for teaching about wind energy. He decided to make his own,

and KidWind was born. The national nonprofit helps students and teachers creatively explore the science, technology and implications of a world powered by renewable energy.

There are two primary ways KidWind reaches Wisconsin children: the dozens of students participating in challenge competitions, and the hundreds of kids whose instructors use KidWind materials in their classrooms. These materials explore everything from the physics of blade design to careers in energy.

The annual culmination of the nonprofit's work in Wisconsin is held on a Saturday in early spring, when the Wisconsin Energy Institute hosts the Wisconsin KidWind Challenge. Teams of fourth- through 12th-grade students from across the state and northern Illinois flock to the UW–Madison campus to put their knowledge, and the turbines they've built, to the test.

■ A problem-solving 'Challenge'

The KidWind Challenge event is a



Students from the Madison East High School team make last-minute adjustments to their turbines before testing them in the competition wind tunnels.



At a fall 2021 Educator Workshop, teachers gather around a wind tunnel to see how their turbine performs.

flurry of activity.

Between power output tests, design presentations, “instant challenges,” and career talks from energy industry professionals, team members don’t have much down time. The event is designed to celebrate all that the students have learned: from the development of their turbines to their public speaking skills and their ability to solve problems as a team. It’s a time for students to experience their public university, meet current college students and professionals, and feel proud of what they can accomplish. And they are constantly learning.

The 2022 challenge was the first time students from Madison East High School participated in KidWind. Having just learned about

the opportunity in early 2022, the kids were undeterred by their little time to prepare.

“It ended up being more work than we anticipated, so we sacrificed our lunch periods for a month. But, it’s fun!” says Martin, a freshman. “I’m a lot more open to experimentation now.”

“We know enough to know we know very little, so I’m guessing we’re going to be back next year,” agrees Avery, another Madison East team member. “With our new knowledge and the things we’re going to learn over the next couple months, we’re going to come back stronger. We’ll build a generator that actually works, and we’ll think a little bit more beyond just hoisting a gener-

ator up and slapping some blades on it. We know a lot more now.”

Martin and Avery’s team left the challenge with a plan to return, as well as the Spirit of KidWind award for their exceptional attitudes and teamwork.

Pedro, a senior at Darlington High School, has participated in KidWind for two years. In 2022, he and his team, the Quilt Blockers, placed among the top teams at the Wisconsin Challenge, qualifying for the national competition in San Antonio, Texas. They finished in the top three of 53 teams across Mexico and the U.S., including Mauston.

“To me, KidWind means innovation and thinking outside the box,” Pedro says. “I had a lot of fun doing

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH TEAM PROVIDES ENERGY-BASED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The Wisconsin Energy Institute and the K-12 Energy Education Program are here to help teachers bring cross-disciplinary, hands-on and inquiry-based energy education into their classrooms. Participation in the Wisconsin KidWind Challenge is free and funding is available to help schools get started. To learn more about Wisconsin KidWind and register for the upcoming 2022 Educator Workshops, visit energy.wisc.edu/education/kidwind-challenge. Have questions about how your district can get involved in Wisconsin KidWind? Reach out to outreach@energy.wisc.edu.

The Wisconsin KidWind Challenge is just one of many programs offered by the Education and Outreach team at the

Wisconsin Energy Institute and its sister organization, the Great Lakes Bioenergy Research Center. The programming prepares students to take the lead in transitioning the world to clean energy and develops innovative and effective ways for learners of all ages to explore and understand energy. The Wisconsin Energy Institute welcomes school groups to UW-Madison, visits after-school programs, hosts open house events and works with researchers to develop new activities. KidWind activities are often incorporated into these learning experiences. Visit energy.wisc.edu/education to learn more about its offerings, including free field trips. □



Pedro (being carried) and the rest of the Darlington team playfully pose at the 2022 Wisconsin KidWind Challenge.

KidWind and trying to see how far we could improve our wind turbines. It means lots of hard work and making the best of what you can do. I enjoyed everything about it, and I hope future generations join in on this fantastic project!”

Teachers gather to learn

Wisconsin KidWind coordinators from the Wisconsin Energy Institute at UW–Madison and their partners at the K-12 Energy Education Program at UW–Stevens host KidWind workshops around the state.

Their goal is to promote the Wisconsin KidWind Challenge and provide teachers with the tools, resources and confidence to bring renewable energy education into their classrooms. KidWind alums like Bilka attend the workshops to share their success stories. Teachers leave with a box of materials, a renewed motivation for energy education, and the resources they need to incorporate hands-on wind energy lessons into their curriculum.

An hour into a 2022 workshop, teachers got a taste of what the KidWind Challenge is like by designing and building their own wind turbines to test in a 4-foot-by-4-foot wind tunnel. Iterating on blade shape, size and pitch; switching out gear ratios; and laughing a lot were all part of the process. The teachers were getting a taste of what it’s like to be a student on a KidWind team.

“Students don’t always have the

together and seeing it succeed or fail.”

KidWind provides that experience, giving students the chance to think like an engineer; design, build and test a wind-powered system; and continue learning and exploring.

Looking forward

Landon, Martin, Avery and Pedro are among dozens of Wisconsin kids whose lives have changed through their participation in KidWind. Whether it is uncovering a whole new interest in STEM or discovering how to better communicate with teammates, the program allows students to connect what they’re

KidWind provides ... students the chance to think like an engineer; design, build and test a wind-powered system; and continue learning and exploring.

chance to do things hands-on,” says Cynthia Chin, a Madison East High School teacher and Engineering Club advisor. “They don’t always have the experience of putting something

learning in the classroom with things they care about today, and with potential future careers.

The last Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports have made it increasingly clear that this decade is our best chance to limit global warming to below 1.5 degrees Celsius and prevent the worst impacts of climate change. Switching to clean energy sources will be the predominant way that we reduce greenhouse gases that cause global warming.

“The most exciting thing about the KidWind Project is that the kids can see that we can make electricity without burning fossil fuels,” says Greg Reiva, KidWind coach and middle school science teacher. “We can actually do this. This is the future. When they’re finished here, they’ve learned that we can make electricity in a whole new way, and it can be a different world.” ■

Allison Bender is outreach coordinator for the Wisconsin Energy Institute.

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Schools Get Smart ABOUT ENERGY

Competition puts children in charge of conservation

by Focus on Energy

Wisconsin school districts collectively spend more than \$175 million annually in energy costs, exceeding the funding needed to cover textbooks and technological resources combined.

Improving energy efficiency is one of ways to save without compromising the quality of education.

Renew Our Schools is an excellent opportunity to engage students and staff with a fun conservation challenge focused on responsible energy use. Participating schools use an energy monitoring system called eGauge to track electricity use and discover the impact of no-cost

actions to conserve energy.

During the five-week competition, schools earn points with school-measured savings and energy actions. Points are awarded based on their planning, promotion and other aspects of the project.

Small changes can create huge savings. This past spring, nine schools in Wisconsin participated in this nationwide competition. Students explored their schools' energy use, adjusted their behavior based on the data they gathered and reduced energy consumption in their school and community.

Student team takes lead

Royal Oaks Elementary School, part of the Sun Prairie Area School District, saw this competition as an opportunity to apply student and staff knowledge and skills to earn an impressive grand prize and establish a baseline for future energy upgrades.

Royal Oaks is no stranger to energy-focused conservation programs. In 2018, students and staff raised \$23,000 to install solar panels on the building and subsequently purchased energy-generating bicycles with the money saved on energy costs. These bicycles turn the energy from biking into electricity for the

— Patrick Bencher, second grade teacher, Royal Oaks Elementary

The students wanted to create opportunities involving the younger grade levels, so they embarked on a poster campaign to promote the competition and provide helpful reminders on various ways to save energy. One tactic called attention to the amount of energy consumed by

Students performed 20 room audits around the school using a variety of tools to track and measure energy use:

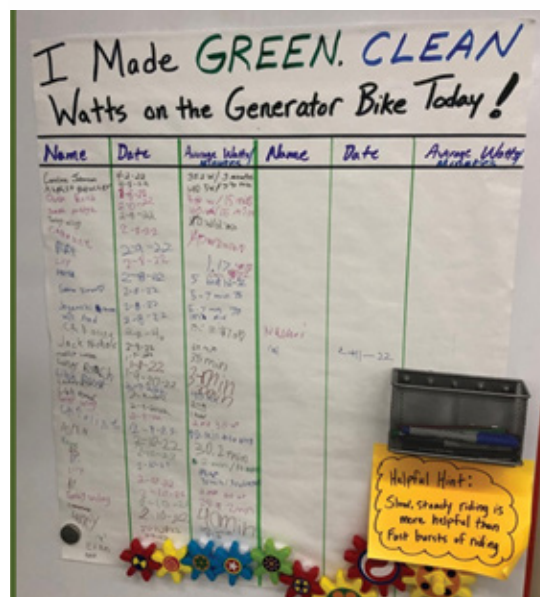
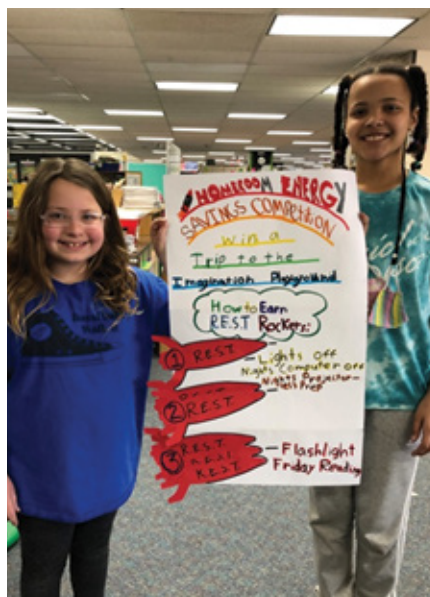
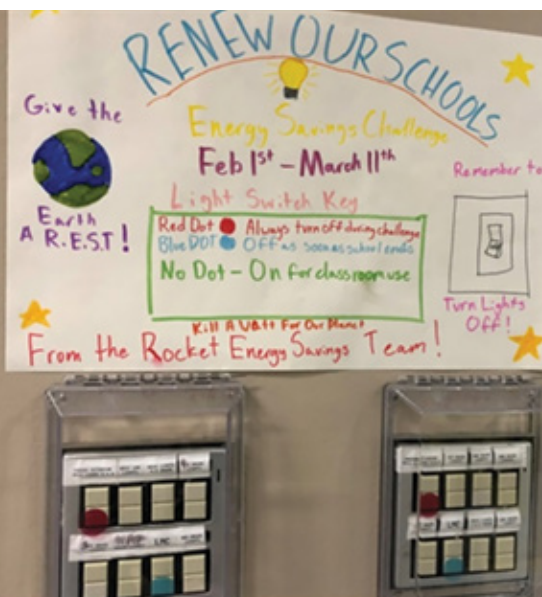
- Watt meters monitored how much electricity devices in the school consumed compared to standby.
- Infrared meters gauged potential air leaks in different parts of the building.
- LUX light meters measured the amount of light provided in various rooms.

Throughout the challenge, team members asked each classroom to monitor their electricity use with the



How Your School can GET SMART About Energy

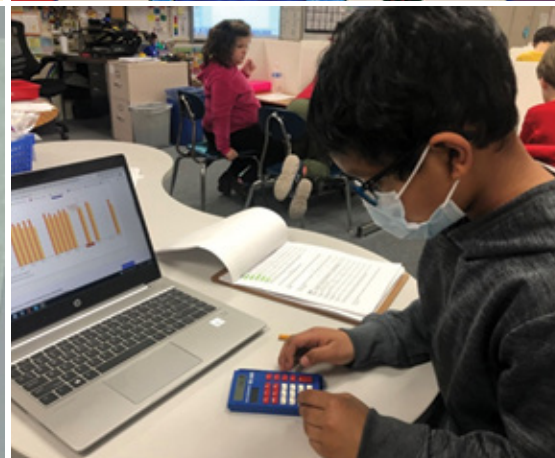
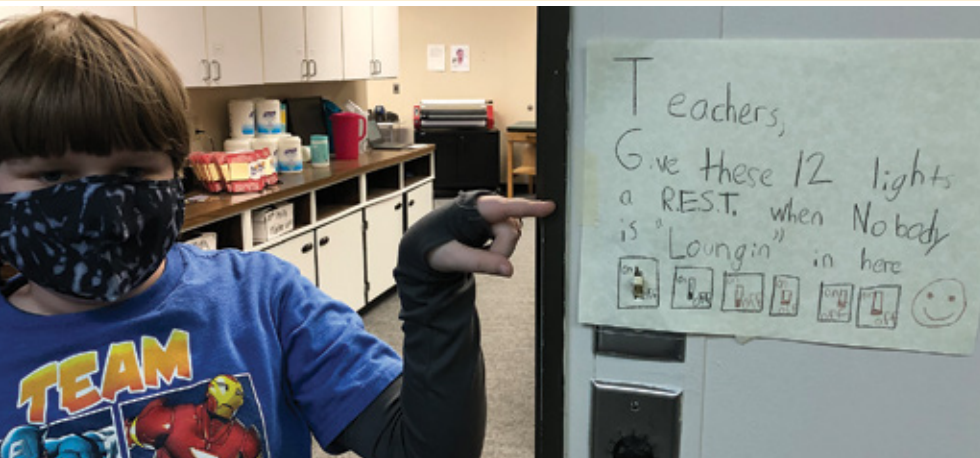
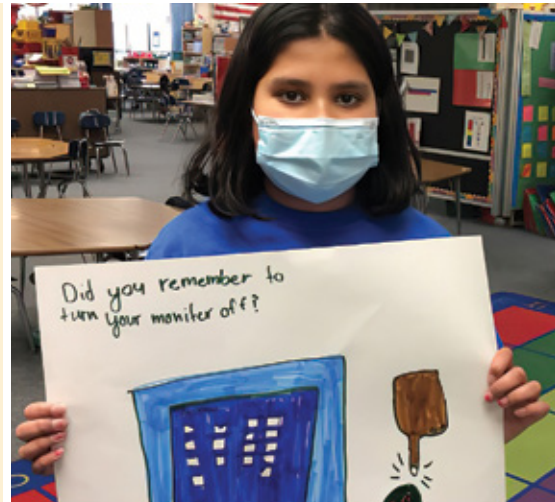
EVALUATE. Reflect on challenges and successes. Complete an Energy Action Plan and encourage the school to adopt an admin-signed Energy Policy to earn points.



ABOUT FOCUS ON ENERGY

Focus on Energy is Wisconsin's statewide energy efficiency and renewable resource program funded by the state's investor-owned energy utilities and participating municipal and electric cooperative utilities. Focus on Energy works with eligible Wisconsin residents and businesses to install cost-effective energy efficiency and renewable energy products. Focus on Energy information, resources and financial incentives help to implement projects that otherwise would not be completed. A recent independent evaluation found that for every \$1 invested, Focus on Energy generates more than \$4 in benefits for Wisconsin residents and businesses.

For more information, call 800.762.7077 or visit focusonenergy.com.



eGauge link shared with the school. The eGauge measures the amount of electricity consumed in the building. Royal Oaks' peak usage was around 100 kilowatts. With this competition, their goal was to reduce that amount by 10%.

Students recorded data using a dashboard engagement journal. Weekly write-ups confirmed savings numbers and allowed students to adjust their action plans. Daily data indicated savings dipped below the average baseline. Monthly metrics demonstrated the school reduced its energy usage by 9,500 kWh, resulting in \$584 savings on their monthly utility bill. This 18% energy reduction is equivalent to saving the greenhouse gas emissions from one and a half gasoline-powered cars driven for an entire year.

Expanded learning

Renew Our Schools provided many opportunities for students to learn and grow throughout the competition:

- As a cross-country energy competition, students explored how energy is produced and consumed in other states compared to Wisconsin.
- Upper-level students created an interactive lesson and presented it to the kindergarten class.
- Second graders used the LUX light meters to collect data in over 20 spaces around the building.
- Students met with energy engineers and heating and cooling specialists to discover how these technologies operate in their building.

At the end of the competition, Royal Oaks took first place, earning \$2,500 in prize money for future energy-saving upgrades throughout the building. Team members applied everything they learned throughout the challenge and created a school energy savings policy to guide the school on future building improvements.

"More Wisconsin schools are starting to bring STEM-based curricula into the classroom, especially for elementary and middle school-aged students," said Heather Feigum, program manager with Focus on Energy. "Encouraging younger students to investigate how electricity is used at home or in the classroom, will go a long way in creating future generations that use energy more sustainably."



Student shoutouts

Given her interest in science, Rhea Vaidya was nominated by her fourth grade teacher to participate in the challenge. Although this was her first energy competition, Rhea jumped right into performing room audits. She particularly enjoyed using the infrared meters to detect temperature changes and measure the amount of light with the LUX light meter. She also had fun exploring her school and pointing out rooms with unnecessary equipment plugged in, like a popcorn machine that was not being used.

When asked about the value of saving energy, Rhea responded, “It is important to conserve energy to reduce the impact on our environment. That is why we nicknamed our team REST (Rocket Energy Savings Team) since our goal was to give energy a break.”

After winning the cash prize, Rhea came up with the idea of installing separate light switches between the different grade levels. The Royal Oaks building is set up as one large space with room dividers to separate the grades. As a result, the lighting system overlaps multiple “rooms,” so incorporating more individualized lighting would allow teachers to control each grade’s lighting needs.

Evan Dean’s fifth grade teacher nominated him to participate in the

“Encouraging younger students to **investigate how electricity is used** at home or in the classroom will go a long way in creating future generations that use energy more sustainably.”

— Heather Feigum, program manager with Focus on Energy

challenge. Also a member of the team, Evan had a lot of fun creating the promotional video to launch the competition. His segment focused specifically on the energy-generating bicycles used by Royal Oaks during the challenge.

When asked what advice he would recommend to other students looking to participate in this type of competition, Evan said, “Don’t let all the points discourage you. Every little bit helps, so it’s important to stay focused on each task and try not to lose sight of the overall goal.”

Evan believes it’s important to prioritize sustainability, saying, “When you’re efficient with how energy is being used, it’s easy to save energy.”

Join the competition

If you are interested in increasing teamwork and sustainability in your school, consider enrolling in the Spring 2023 Renew Our Schools Competition. Focus on Energy is partnering with Wisconsin K-12 Energy Education Program to sponsor 12 schools to compete. Participating schools contribute \$200 towards their enrollment which is reimbursed by Focus on Energy upon successfully completing the challenge. Focus on Energy covers the cost to install the eGauge monitor used as part of the competition. This saves schools up to \$1,200 in participation costs.

In addition to financial assistance, Focus on Energy and KEEP support schools during the competition by:

- Providing on-site guidance to help students learn how to perform an energy audit.
- Offering a toolkit including hands-on devices, lesson plans, and suggested school energy actions.
- Contributing helpful resources and recommendations along the way.

To learn more and fill out an interest form, visit focusonenergy.com/programs/k-12-schools. Applications are accepted until Oct. 31, 2022 for the Spring 2023 Competition, scheduled for Jan. 30 to March 6, 2023. ■

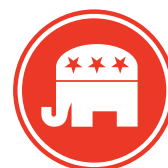




Evers v. Michels



This November, Wisconsin residents will choose between incumbent Governor Tony Evers and challenger Tim Michels for governor.





For a number of years, the Wisconsin School News has conducted a Q&A with the candidates for governor before each gubernatorial election. We provide written questions and print their responses. In keeping with our past practice, we posed a series of questions to the candidates on a range of education issues.

The Tim Michels campaign did not submit a response to the questionnaire. Tony Evers' responses follow.

■ **What would be your vision/top priorities for K-12 public education in Wisconsin as governor?**

Tony Evers: Having spent years as an educator, I know how important a quality education is, that's why during my first term, I brought both parties together to fund Wisconsin public schools at their highest level in nearly two decades and signed the largest increase in special education funding in a decade. But I know we can do even more to improve the quality of education in Wisconsin.

I will work to increase state aid to schools, ensuring districts have sufficient resources to face the upcoming fiscal cliff, address rising costs, and support additional funding to support special education programs. I will also increase funding for student mental health and financial literacy programs to help our students receive the support they need to succeed in and out of the classroom.

I will also continue to support Wisconsin's rural school districts through sparsity aid and transportation funding to give rural communities the support they need to deliver high-quality education.

■ **Schools are facing rising costs due to inflation and teacher and other staffing supply challenges. Will you support providing an inflationary increase in spendable resources for school districts?**

TE: I believe what's best for our kids is what's best for our state. That's why I've allocated federal funds to help with rising costs and the challenges from the pandemic. Just recently, I announced an additional \$90 million for Wisconsin's schools to help address staffing shortages and provide direct classroom support. And in my most recent budget proposal, I've proposed revenue limit increases of \$350 per pupil in 2022-23 and an additional \$650 per pupil in 2023-24, along with a roughly \$800 million state investment to hold the line on property taxes. I will continue to work to increase state aid to schools and to make sure students and teachers have the resources they need to be successful.

■ **Districts have used their federal funds to upgrade and expand technology that serves and supports students. With the expiration of these funding sources, how would you support providing resources to help schools sustain and keep up to date with the latest in technology?**

TE: Access to high-speed internet and modern-day technology is not a luxury, it's a necessity. I am committed to making sure students have the resources they need, including access to modern technology and high-speed internet, so they are set up for success. My most recent investment in schools included funding to update school technology.



■ School shootings have been occurring in this country at an alarming frequency. What initiatives would you support to help keep students and staff safe?

TE: We cannot accept that kids might go to school and never come home. And, in this state, we cannot accept policies and rhetoric that will make this problem worse while common sense measures supported by an overwhelming majority of Wisconsinites go nowhere.

I support common-sense gun safety legislation that is also supported by the majority of Wisconsinites. I've proposed universal background checks for every gun purchased in Wisconsin and red flag laws to temporarily remove guns from people who are a danger to themselves or others. People in crisis should have access to mental health and treatment programs instead of posing a public safety threat to communities.

■ Increasingly, public schools are facing teacher supply challenges as fewer people enter the teaching profession. What, if anything, would you do as governor to attract more people to the teaching profession and help schools retain their current teachers?

TE: Our teachers, our schools, and the entire public education system have been under attack for decades. We have seen teachers demonized and harassed for political gain when they are just trying to do their jobs. Additionally, the last administration signed legislation that has resulted in historic teacher shortages. We need leaders who work together with teachers and parents to improve our kids' education, rather than trying to divide our communities.

During my first term, we restored more funding to schools to help hire and retain teachers in the state budget and directed an additional more than \$200 million to schools to help fill funding gaps and help with things like staff shortages. I also created the \$1 million Teacher

Training and Recruitment Grant program. I will also continue fighting for tuition assistance at our universities and increasing teacher pay to recruit more teachers in Wisconsin and improve teacher retention rates.

■ Across the state, Wisconsin's private-sector employers are also facing worker shortages. What initiatives or programs, if any, would you propose to increase capacity for career and technical education and other workforce training opportunities in Wisconsin schools?

TE: With near record-low unemployment, it's critical to expand Wisconsin's workforce to fill jobs and give small businesses the workers they need to operate and grow. That's why I support a regional approach that tackles specific challenges — like access to childcare, quality education for our kids, apprenticeship and job training programs, and more. I'll continue to work with local partners and employers to find solutions that work.

College is a great option, but not always the best option for everyone. That's why I will continue to invest in job training and apprenticeship programs that connect people with hands-on skills training for high-demand fields. I will also continue to support initiatives that help get parents connected with these programs across the state, ensuring that every student knows about the options available to them when they graduate high school.

■ Is the matter of closing achievement gaps between students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds important to you? If so, what specific proposals do you have to address closing these gaps?

TE: We must work to close the achievement gaps in schools, which is why I've supported increasing funding for our schools and working to close these gaps. The

“Students learn in different ways. That doesn’t mean they should get left behind, it means we need to give them the tools they need to learn.”

— Incumbent Gov. Tony Evers

Urban Excellence Initiative I proposed earlier this year would expand summer school, enhance early childhood education, support community engagement to improve academic achievement, and support principals in the state’s five largest school districts. I’ll also continue to support Wisconsin’s rural school districts through sparsity aid and transportation funding to give rural communities the support they need to deliver high-quality education. We’ve got to make sure when we provide funding for education, that no kid gets left behind.

■ **Special education state reimbursement rates have not kept pace with the costs of staff and services for students with disabilities creating budgetary pressures at school districts. Do you support increasing state reimbursement for special education costs?**

TE: Students learn in different ways. That doesn’t mean they should get left behind, it means we need to give them the tools they need to learn. I’m proud to say that I signed the largest increase in special education funding ever in my last budget, but that doesn’t make up for years of neglect under previous administrations. We’re just getting started in this area — and my plan for our schools will direct a portion of the state’s surplus into additional special education staff and programming.

My most recent budget proposal includes investing \$750 million over the biennium to increase special education aid. This would increase the reimbursement rate for special

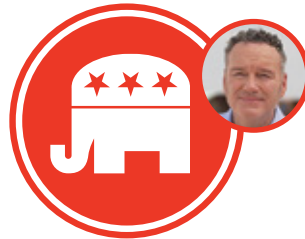
education from roughly 30% to 45% in the first year of the biennium and to 60% in the second year of the biennium, with a goal of achieving 90% reimbursement by the 2026-27 school year.

■ **Overall, what makes you the best candidate for K-12 public education in Wisconsin?**

TE: I believe what’s best for our kids is what’s best for our state, and I know every kid in Wisconsin should have access to a high-quality public education and career opportunities that allow them to achieve their dreams. Having spent years as an educator in Wisconsin’s schools, I know how important a quality education is, that’s why during my first term I brought both parties together to fund Wisconsin public schools at their highest level in nearly two decades and signed the largest increase in special education funding in a decade.

Under my leadership, Wisconsin schools have improved from 18th to the top 10 in the nation according to U.S. News and World Report.

We need strong public schools to support our communities, our workforce, and our economy. I am the best candidate for governor because I know the value of our public schools. I know the value they bring to our state and I will never stop fighting for them, defending them, and working to make them the best that they can be. Our kids’ future and our state’s future depends on it. ■



2022 Fall Advocacy Workshops

CONNECTING WITH LAWMAKERS

Dates and locations vary



The 2023-25 state budget is going to be critical for Wisconsin public schools.

Inflation, staffing challenges, frozen state/local funding and an end to one-time federal funding will conspire to exacerbate district funding challenges.

Join us for a hands-on evening workshop on how to strengthen relationships with lawmakers and their staff. As an attendee, you will learn how to become a better, more effective legislative advocate for your students and your schools during the state budget process. Dinner is included with the registration fee.

Thursday, Nov. 10 | **Green Bay** | CESA 7, 595 Baeten Rd.

Thursday, Nov. 10 | **Tomahawk** | CESA 9, 304 Kaphaem Rd.

Tuesday, Nov. 15 | **Fennimore** | CESA 3, 1300 Industrial Dr.

Tuesday, Nov. 15 | **Portage** | CESA 5, 626 E. Slifer St.

Tuesday, Nov. 15 | **Turtle Lake** | CESA 11, 225 Ostermann Dr.

Wednesday, Nov. 16 | **Online** | Link sent to registrants

2022 FALL REGIONAL MEETINGS SCHEDULE

For Fall Regional Meeting agenda and registration information, visit [WASB.org](https://wasb.org) and click on "Training and Events"

Region 1 | Oct. 11 – Ashland, Best Western/The Hotel Chequamegon
Oct. 12 – Rice Lake, Lehman's Supper Club

Region 2* | Oct. 13 – Minocqua, Norwood Pines Supper Club

Region 3 | Oct. 5 – Green Bay, Rock Garden/Comfort Suites

Region 4 | Oct. 26 – Menomonie, Off Broadway (by Stout Ale House)

Region 5* | Oct. 25 – Rothschild, Holiday Inn

Region 6 | Oct. 27 – Onalaska, Stoney Creek Hotel La Crosse-Onalaska

Region 7* | Oct. 6 – Neenah, Bridgewood Resort

Region 8 | Oct. 4 – Kiel, Millhome Supper Club

Region 9 | Sept. 28 – Fennimore, Southwest Tech

Region 10* | Oct. 20 – Wisconsin Dells, Trappers Turn

Regions 11* & 15* | Oct. 18 – Menomonee Falls, Davians

Region 12 | Sept. 29 – Middleton, Middleton High School

Region 13 | Oct. 19 – Burlington, Veterans Terrace

Region 14 | TBD – Milwaukee, Milwaukee Public Schools
Administration Building

Online | Nov. 2 – Open and complimentary to all members

* Denotes regions with elections for WASB Board of Directors



School Board Week Planning Kit Now Available

Oct. 2-8 is School Board Week in Wisconsin.

Head to [WASB.org](https://wasb.org) to find a Wisconsin School Board Week Planning Kit. It includes:

- Activity ideas
- Sample resolutions
- Sample news releases
- Social media posts
- Sample opinion column
- Graphic templates to help you recognize your school board

LEGAL WEBINARS

■ PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT BOARD MEETINGS

OCT. 12 | 12 - 1 p.m.

Scott Mikesch, WASB Staff Counsel

Public comments at meetings can present a difficult balancing act for school boards. While providing regular opportunities for members of the public to offer input is important, the school board also needs to carefully manage its meeting time and encourage constructive discourse. This webinar will identify the relevant legal and policy considerations that a board can use as a guide when it identifies a need to refine its current approach to public participation during meetings.

■ ELECTION NOTICES AND PROCEDURES (Two-part series)

PART 1: Election Notices & Procedures **OCT. 26** | 12 - 1 p.m.

PART 2: Campaign Finance **NOV. 2** | 12 - 1 p.m.

Dan Mallin, WASB Legal and Policy Services Counsel

Wisconsin school districts must comply with numerous statutory obligations related to elections. This two-part webinar will cover key deadlines, required notices and post-election processes. It will be of particular interest to school district clerks and to superintendents' administrative assistants (who often assist with election duties).

This webinar will be held in two parts and registrants receive access to both parts with one registration fee.

■ ADMINISTRATOR CONTRACTS

NOV. 9 | 12 - 1 p.m.

Ben Richter, WASB Staff Counsel

This presentation covers all aspects of administrator contracts, including the drafting of contracts, contract terms, application of section 118.24 Wis. Stat. to administrator non-renewals and more. State and federal court decisions on administrator contracts, including the Klaus v. Eau Claire School District case, will be covered.

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

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OCT. 19 | **NOV. 16** | 12 p.m.

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



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Surveying Our Election-Year Landscape

Gubernatorial, legislative contests to set the stage for a pivotal state budget



There are about five weeks until a November election that may have huge ramifications for preK-12 education in our state. In many respects, this election could be pivotal.

For one thing, the November ballot will feature races for the Wisconsin Legislature and governor's office. Whoever sits in those seats will determine how the state allocates its growing \$5 billion surplus and what share of that money goes toward educating our state's preK-12 population.

That will happen through debate over the state's two-year (biennial) budget. Whoever is elected governor will forward a state budget proposal covering the 2023-24 and 2024-25 fiscal years to the Legislature in late January or early February 2023. Whoever controls the Legislature will control the budget process and the specific provisions included in the budget from there.

This year's legislative races will be the first to be run in seats with boundaries drawn up by Republican lawmakers and later approved by the state Supreme Court. Republicans currently hold a 61-38 majority in the Assembly and a 21-12 majority in the Senate. The GOP will almost certainly hold onto and may even increase those majorities.

A bigger question is whether legislative Republicans will have an ally in the governor's office who will support their initiatives or someone who will push back against some of them.

Incumbent Gov. Tony Evers, a former state superintendent of public instruction, battled lawmakers over several policy issues affecting K-12 education, including statewide

expansion of private school vouchers and the ability of parents to sue school boards over a variety of policy differences.

Should Evers no longer be in place to block some of those initiatives with his veto pen — or should Democrats lose the ability to block veto override attempts through a failure to hold at least one-third of the seats in both houses of the Legislature — expect many, if not all, of those formerly stalled initiatives to become law.

For another thing, there will be 78 local school district referenda on the Nov. 8 ballot, with 40 of these asking for additional revenue limit authority. (To date this year, there have already been 50 referenda asking voters for authority to exceed revenue caps this year, of which 44 were approved.)

Lawmakers didn't increase per-pupil revenue limits in the most recent (i.e., 2021-23) biennial state budget. But that was before inflation became such a factor and began eroding school district operating budgets held level by the lack of increase in revenue limits.

Now, as schools attempt to cope with high inflation and staffing challenges, those referendum results will be closely watched.

Back in June 2021, as lawmakers debated the 2021-23 state budget, they pointed to the influx of more than \$2 billion in federal pandemic relief funds flowing to Wisconsin schools as a reason not to adjust state spending restraints on school districts or further increase state school aid.

Fast-forward to October 2022. Inflation, as measured for purposes of calculating allowable total base wage

increases under Act 10, is running at over 8.3% per year. That soaring inflation is eating into school budgets and making it harder to address teacher shortages and other staffing challenges that threaten to limit opportunities for students or force larger class sizes. Of necessity, schools are increasingly turning to one-time funding — either by using the one-time federal funding or by seeking one-time voter approval of referenda relief — to meet their ongoing operational needs. Neither is an ideal nor a tenable long-term solution.

Instead of the typical “back to school stories” this fall, the media have been describing the perfect storm faced by many districts. Its causes include record inflation, frozen revenue caps, lagging state funding, declining enrollment and increased student needs due to COVID-19. Those stories highlight that boards and administrators are increasingly talking about future “fiscal cliffs,” budget deficits and impending financial distress as federal pandemic aid ends. The articles point out that the result could be significant cuts, referenda asking for more money or both.

Other media stories told of how school districts throughout the state face staffing challenges, including teacher supply challenges and wage competition from other public and private employers, supply chain issues, rising interest rates and, of course, inflation. Those stories describe district leaders facing the dilemma of whether to tap one-time monies to meet ongoing costs, make cuts to programming and staff, or seek additional revenues via referendum.

While the problem is being acutely

felt, it did not arise overnight. Enrollment in teacher preparation programs has been declining for a decade or so and the supply of new teachers is now insufficient to offset the large numbers of teachers who are retiring. And the chronic underfunding of Wisconsin's schools has

been going on for well over a decade.

In July, the nonpartisan Wisconsin Policy Forum, citing figures from the U.S. Census Bureau, reported that Wisconsin's per pupil spending on K-12 education had dropped from 11th highest among the 50 states in 2002 to 25th highest in 2020.

That report suggested that the freeze in both caps on school revenues and in per pupil aid payments in the 2021-23 state budget may drive Wisconsin's ranking even lower in upcoming years.

However, even before the current two-year (2021-23) state budget froze school district revenue limits, those limits were not keeping pace with inflation. Indeed, there has been no per pupil revenue limit increase for public schools in six of the last eight school years. One-time federal COVID relief was a fiscal lifeline for many districts, but now a "fiscal cliff" looms when that one-time federal funding runs out.

And, as if public school advocates didn't have enough worries on their plates, proposals to expand private school vouchers to all students statewide could raise property taxes statewide by at least \$577 million before a single new dollar is put toward our public schools.

Now you know why the next state budget will be pivotal for public education. What are you going to do about it?

If you want to learn how to get involved, be a better advocate, and make a difference for your schools, mark your calendars this November. Please join the WASB government relations team at a Fall Advocacy Workshop near you.

The workshops will be held on Thursday, Nov. 10 at:

- CESA 7 | Green Bay
- CESA 9 | Tomahawk

Tuesday, Nov. 15 at:

- CESA 3 | Fennimore
- CESA 5 | Portage
- CESA 11 | Turtle Lake

We will also host a statewide online version of the workshop on Wednesday, Nov. 16 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Visit WASB.org to register.

Thank you for your efforts on behalf of your students. We hope to see you this fall. ■

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6 Things Board Members Need to Know About Students With Food Allergies

The risk of exposure to allergens at school and the potential for life-threatening allergic reactions can make students with food allergies feel anxious and unsafe at school. For school board members, it can seem an insurmountable task to manage hundreds of students in a traditional school environment while protecting the health of students with food allergies. While most of the tasks involved in educating students with disabilities will fall on district employees, board members should have a working understanding of the complexities and legal challenges in fulfilling this duty. The purpose of this Legal Comment is to identify the important legal aspects of ensuring students with food allergies have access to a school's programs and activities.

1. Know the law

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974 prohibits discrimination on the basis of a disability and ensures that students with disabilities have access to the programs and activities of schools that receive federal financial assistance, which includes public school districts. A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits a major life activity. Food allergies can cause

serious and even life-threatening reactions which affect numerous major life activities including eating, drinking, breathing, thinking and learning. Accordingly, in most instances, a food allergy is considered a disability under the law, and students with food allergies are generally entitled to accommodations necessary for them to access the programs and activities at school. The documentation of these accommodations usually takes the form of a Section 504 Plan.

2. Individual health plans or informal accommodation plans are inadequate

Individual health plans (typically referred to as IHPs) do not come with the procedural safeguards set forth in Section 504. Consequently, if a student is suspected of having a disability (including food allergies), an IHP is insufficient to comply with Section 504. In the past, it was common for districts to provide IHPs to students with food allergies, and document therein the relevant protocols related to rescue medications and classroom management. However, to ensure compliance with Section 504, district employees should refer students with food allergies for an evaluation and provide accommodations consistent with applicable legal procedures.

3. Plan ahead

Keeping students safe during the school day means knowing when and where students might be at the greatest risk of exposure to an allergen. To do this, district employees often imagine a student's path throughout the day and identify points of possible allergen exposure. They might ask these types of questions: Is food allowed on the bus, in hallways, at lockers, in the gym, in classrooms, or during recess? Does the lunchroom have assigned seating? Are tables cleaned between classes? Are students required to wash their hands after eating? What is the layout of the school, and how close is the lunchroom or farthest classroom to the nurse's office? Once district employees have gathered this information, they will consider common practices that might mitigate the risks such as assigning seating at lunch, limiting food to certain areas of the school and only at certain times, and requiring students to wash their hands following a snack or meal. District employees that engage in planning will be better prepared to address the needs of students with food allergies.

Keeping students safe during the school day means knowing when and where students might be at the greatest risk of exposure to an allergen.

District employees might ask medical providers about the likelihood and expected symptoms of a food allergy reaction and recommendations for mitigating risk and responding to an allergen exposure.

4. Seek information from medical providers

When a district employee learns that a student has a suspected disability caused by a food allergy, the employee should refer the student for an evaluation under Section 504. The appropriate district employee should seek a release of information from parents to speak with the student's allergist or other relevant medical provider. Information from a student's medical provider is needed to determine eligibility under Section 504 and will be critical to identifying student-specific accommodations. For example, district employees might ask medical providers about the likelihood and expected symptoms of a food allergy reaction and recommendations for mitigating risk and responding to an allergen exposure. Having this information will make determining necessary accommodations easier.

5. Remember that accommodations are based on necessity, not reasonableness

Section 504 requires school districts to provide a free appropriate public education to students with disabilities. If an accommodation is necessary for a student to access the district's programs and activities, it is required under law. Therefore, while a district is not required to provide every accommodation requested by a family, the district's decision should

not be based on whether an accommodation is reasonable (what is reasonable to one person may not be reasonable to another), but, rather, whether it is necessary for the student to access the district's program. Decisions on necessary accommodations should be informed by information from medical providers and consideration of factors that may affect the risk of allergen exposure, such as age and grade level, cognitive ability, policies regarding food in school, physical layout of the school and classroom, class sizes and level of student supervision.

Accommodations should not be based on broad-sweeping generalizations (e.g., no food in school), but instead should be narrowly tailored to student-specific needs. Depending on the student, accommodations might include measures such as: dedicated allergen-free lunch tables; specific cleaning protocols for tables and desks; policies addressing snacks and handwashing in the classroom; school-wide policies on food at school, on the bus and during extra-curricular activities; dedicated staff trained to identify a reaction and initiate a response; and protocols for the possession and administration of rescue medications.

6. All accommodations in a Section 504 Plan must be provided

Once accommodations are determined to be necessary, these accommodations must be provided to the

student in the manner and frequency set forth in the Section 504 Plan. For example, if a Section 504 Plan states that parents will be contacted before the school day if a substitute teacher will be in the classroom, the call must occur. Or, if a Section 504 Plan provides that only prepackaged snacks are allowed in the classroom, a fellow classmate should not be allowed to eat an unwrapped baked good from home in the classroom.

Conclusion

Ensuring a safe school environment for students with food allergies can be challenging for districts. Board members should understand the complexity of these situations, so they can understand that protocols such as "nut-free classrooms" and restrictions on passing out homemade birthday treats are generally established to comply with the law. Board members should strive to understand that district employees have developed plans for mitigating risks of allergen exposure, based on student-specific needs, to ensure legal compliance. ■

**This Legal Comment was written by Michael J. Julka, Brian P. Goodman, and Tess O'Brien-Heinzen of Boardman Clark, WASB Legal Counsel. For related articles, see Wisconsin School News: "The Manifestation Determination Process" (Oct. 2021); "Service and Emotional Support Animals: Knowing the Difference" (Sept. 2018); and "District Disciplinary Proceedings Involving Students with Disabilities" (Oct. 2016).*

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

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I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. Dan Linehan, editor.	Total	4,380	4,315
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2022 REPORT TO THE MEMBERSHIP

Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Inc. Condensed Statement of Activities for the Year Ending June 30, 2022

REVENUE	
Membership Dues	\$ 2,111,632
Program Revenue	\$ 1,762,248
Interest and Investment-Related Income (loss)	\$ (43,581)
Other Income	\$ 43,522
Total Revenue	<u>\$ 3,873,821</u>
EXPENSES	
Program Expense	\$ 2,847,313
Management and General	\$ 1,161,232
Total Expenses	<u>\$ 4,008,545</u>
Change in Unrestricted Net Assets-Operating	<u>\$ (134,724)</u>

Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Inc. Condensed Statement of Financial Position, June 30, 2022

ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Investments, Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 3,421,352
Accounts Receivable	\$ 201,417
Deferred Costs and Prepaid Expenses	\$ 377,302
Accrued Interest Receivable	\$ 1,251
Total Current Assets	<u>\$ 4,001,322</u>
Long-Term Investments	\$ -
Property and Equipment, Net	<u>\$ 87,108</u>
Total Assets	<u><u>\$ 4,088,430</u></u>
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	
Current Liabilities	
Deferred Revenue	\$ 1,122,622
Accounts Payable, Payroll Taxes and Benefits Payable	\$ 373,776
Accrued Lease Liability	\$ 20,336
Short-Term Portion of Capital Lease	\$ 21,789
Total Current Liabilities	<u>\$ 1,538,523</u>
Long Term Liabilities	
Long-Term Portion of Capital Lease	\$ 14,726
Total Liabilities	<u>\$ 1,553,249</u>
Net Assets	
Unrestricted	\$ 2,505,596
Temporarily Restricted	\$ 29,585
Total Net Assets	<u>\$ 2,535,181</u>
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	<u><u>\$ 4,088,430</u></u>



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