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SchoolNews

May 2023 | wasb.org

Publication of the Wisconsin School Boards Association, Inc.



Hiring and Retaining QUALITY STAFF

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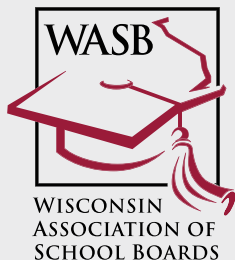
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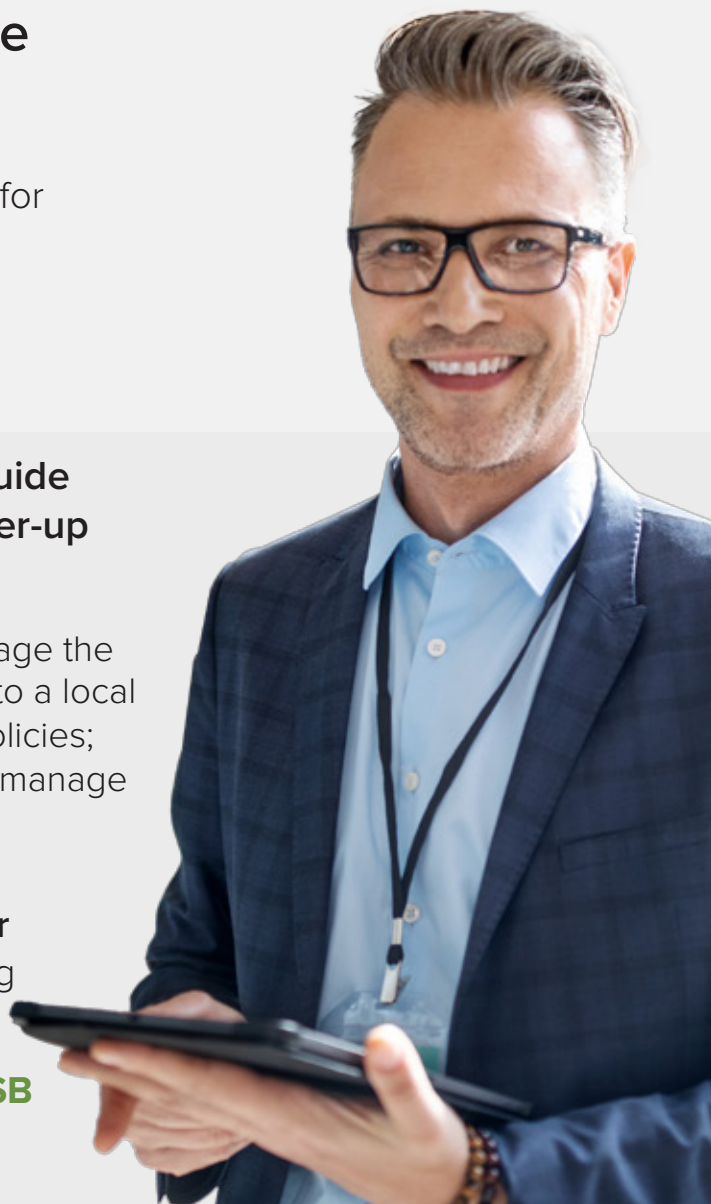
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John H. Ashley
Executive Editor

Dan Linehan
Editor; Director of Communications

Sierra Linton
Contributing Writer
WASB Communications and
Marketing Specialist

■ REGIONAL OFFICES ■

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

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

■ ADVERTISING ■

608-556-9009 • tmccarthy@wasb.org

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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 © 2023 Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Inc.
Subscriptions are available to nonmembers for \$95 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.

Green Bay Partnership Tackles Teacher Shortages

A new partnership between the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay and Green Bay Area Public Schools hopes to help tackle Wisconsin's teacher shortage.

The program launched with a cohort of 15 Green Bay Area Public School employees with bachelor's degrees who were admitted to the university's Master of Science Applied Leadership in Teaching and Learning degree for elementary teacher certification.

"We're excited about this new pathway and how it unites the professional ambitions of GBAPS employees with our

exceptional teacher preparation program, to provide a solution to a growing issue in Wisconsin and across the country. It's core to who we are as a university," UW-Green Bay Chair of Education Tim Kaufman said in a press release.

This partnership will enable hourly paraprofessional employees to advance to a teaching position, increasing their annual salary from \$30,053 to \$50,561, or 68%, on average.

Program costs are funded by a Fast Forward grant from the Department of Workforce Development. □

STAT OF THE MONTH

68%

The average salary increase for Green Bay school district paraprofessionals who advance to a teaching position as part of a partnership with UW-Green Bay. *Source: UW-Green Bay*

State Provides \$473k in Tech. Education Grants

The Department of Workforce Development recently announced more than \$473,000 in Technical Education Equipment Grants to 14 school districts.

The grants were funded through the Wisconsin Fast Forward Program and will help districts develop their advanced manufacturing education programs and connect more than 2,200 students to high-demand and high-wage careers.

"By connecting students to cutting-edge, industry-leading equipment, schools are preparing our future workforce for the needs of employers today," DWD Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek said in a press release. "The value of technical education is evident through Wisconsin's growing manufacturing industry and thriving economy."

High school students will train in advanced manufacturing fields while receiving dual enrollment credits, industry-endorsed certificates and technical endorsements on high school diplomas.

Schools will use the grants to install new equipment, including computer numerical control machines, robotic welders, fiber laser cutting machines, 3D printers and more. □

Kohl Foundation Honors Students, Educators

Over 300 Wisconsin students, teachers and administrators will be honored with the 2023 Student Excellence and Initiative, Teacher Fellowship and Principal Leadership awards by the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation.

"Education is the key to the future of Wisconsin and our nation," former U.S. Senator Herb Kohl said in a press release. "These student, teacher and principal award recipients have demonstrated incredible hard work, achievements, and service. I congratulate them all and hope this award not only helps them in their individual pursuits but also reminds them to pay it forward in the future."

Student Excellence and Initiative Scholarships of \$10,000 will be awarded to 190 graduating high school students who have exhibited academic excellence and have demonstrated leadership in their community.

Teacher Fellowship awards of \$6,000 will be awarded to 100 teachers who were nominated for their leadership and service in and outside the classroom.

Principal Leadership awards of \$6,000 will be presented to 16 principals for establishing high standards for instruction and building an environment to best serve students, families, staff and community. □

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION EXTENDS ESSER I DEADLINE FOR WISCONSIN

The U.S. Department of Education granted Wisconsin and six other states additional time to spend Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds from the first round of COVID-19 funding.

The extension will allow school districts to spend funds from ESSER I through March 30, 2024, or 14 months beyond the original deadline.

The deadline was extended due to challenges districts are facing, such as staffing shortages, supply chain disruptions and reallocating funds reserved for non public schools.

As a part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, ESSER I provided \$13.2 billion for pre-K-12 schools.

Other states granted the extension include Illinois, Indiana, North Carolina, Mississippi, Ohio and Texas. □



Helping You Support Your Staff

Welcome to the hundreds of Wisconsin citizens who've stepped up to serve their students and communities as school board members! We enjoyed meeting many of you at last month's New School Board Member Gatherings and look forward to getting to know you better.

Your new roles will be challenging, but I know you will find it rewarding to help young people reach their potential. The WASB wants to be a trusted partner in helping you carry out your mission.

An absolutely pivotal role in education, of course, is played each day by the teachers, support staff, office staff, paraprofessionals, administrators, custodial staff, bus drivers and many others who work with kids.

Though school board members do not directly oversee staff members, except the superintendent, I know that supporting staff is a priority for you. The culture and environment school boards help to create is critical to helping your workforce feel valued and appreciated.

This issue of Wisconsin School News focuses on engaging and retaining your staff. National Teacher Appreciation Week is May 8-12, and we know this is an issue of top concern for our members all year long.

In our most recent member survey, conducted in 2022, we asked board members and superintendents to name their district's three most urgent issues. Staffing was the second-most popular response, just

after finance and budget.

On page 21, Nick Pretasky from CESA 9 shares the lessons on leadership he's learned from coaching school leaders across the state. His focus on trust, vulnerability, listening, empathy and other virtues should resonate with all education leaders.

You hardly need to be told about your increasing difficulty in filling staff positions. Filling the educator pipeline is a challenge for all of our partners in education. On page 4, read about what three education organizations — the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators, Department of Public Instruction and Wisconsin Education Association Council — are learning and doing about this issue.

From the school board perspective, leading the type of district where people want to work calls upon a wide range of skills and expertise — leadership, budget and more. And this is just one of many roles of a school board member.

Whether you're new or experienced, the WASB wants to support you. Our Online Learning Platform is a one-stop shop for professional development with something for everyone, from essential legal topics to advanced professional development. Please visit WASB.org or contact us for more information on how to subscribe.

We all understand the convenience of remote learning, though our members told us last year that in-person events are their preferred way to learn. The WASB is planning

a series of events planned to support school board members both new and experienced.

Our Spring Workshops, held at six locations and online in May, focus on school board governance. This is a topic that many of our new members may be unfamiliar with. It's a complex topic but with a simple idea at its heart: How can a school board help foster the success of students?

If you miss the in-person events, a recording will be available by the end of May.

The WASB has created a governance framework, a way for school board members to understand their governance roles to support student learning. It has five broad areas: communication and engagement; quality leadership; accountability; strategic focus on the future; and governing for high levels of learning for all children. The final area is a central tenet underpinning the work of all school board members.

This July, the WASB will host a two-day conference in Green Bay with a dual focus on effective governance and student wellness and safety. Learn more about the Summer Leadership Institute: Safe Schools, Healthy Students, on page 27.

You expect your educators and administrators to develop as professionals, and we hope you see your own role the same way. We want to be your partner in advancing student success, including by helping you support your hard-working staff.

Thank you for your service. ■

The culture and environment school boards help to create is critical to helping your workforce feel valued and appreciated.



Hiring and Retaining QUALITY STAFF

Training and supporting the next generation of educators will take the concerted action of the state's education leaders. The WASB asked three organizations — the Department of Public Instruction, the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators and the Wisconsin Education Association Council — to help our members understand this challenge and the steps being taken to meet it.

Jennifer Kammerud



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

FINDING OUR MISSING TEACHERS

Wisconsin data shows where teachers are dropping out of the educator pipeline

School districts across Wisconsin, and the nation, are facing difficulty in hiring and retaining educators.

Answering the question, “Where have the teachers gone?” requires a deep understanding of how teachers are trained and why they stay in the

profession.

Are fewer young people entering schools of education? Are graduation rates changing? Are fewer graduates getting licensed and hired by schools? Once hired, are they staying in their district, state or profession?

The Wisconsin Department of

Public Instruction has prepared a report that for the first time adds to data on schools of education with information on shortage areas, retention, salary and retirements.

The Educator Preparation Program and Workforce Analysis Report, summarized here, paints a



Are enough teachers graduating from Wisconsin schools? Are they staying here to teach? Why or why not?

picture that reinforces concerns expressed by those trying to hire and retain teachers.

The information that follows from this report provides some information as to where and why we are experiencing shortages.

■ Wisconsin tops region in enrollment

Wisconsin educator preparation programs are enrolling more students than our surrounding states. Yet enrollment in educator preparation programs in Wisconsin declined from 2008-09 through 2017-18. As a result, there is a smaller pool of prospective teachers available to hire.

The state will have to see if what appears to be an increase in 2019-20 enrollments holds, but that number is still below 2008-09 levels (*see Fig. 1, following page*).

■ Are graduates teaching here?

While Wisconsin has more students enrolled in our preparation programs, there is a drop off in those students completing their programs and then going on to become licensed and employed in Wisconsin.

The impact of this is notable. In 2020-21, out of a possible 5,400 new teachers, the state only added 3,600 public school teachers.

Current data do not address why so many completers choose not to pursue licensure or employment in a public school in Wisconsin. It could be that completers are working in another state as an educator, or working in a private school, or chose a different career. Regardless of the reason, they are not working in Wisconsin public schools.

■ What retention data says

In addition to the smaller pool of eligible applicants are matters of retention. While the year over year teacher retention rate for all teachers is high at 91.7% for the state, the numbers tell a different story for those teachers in their first five years.

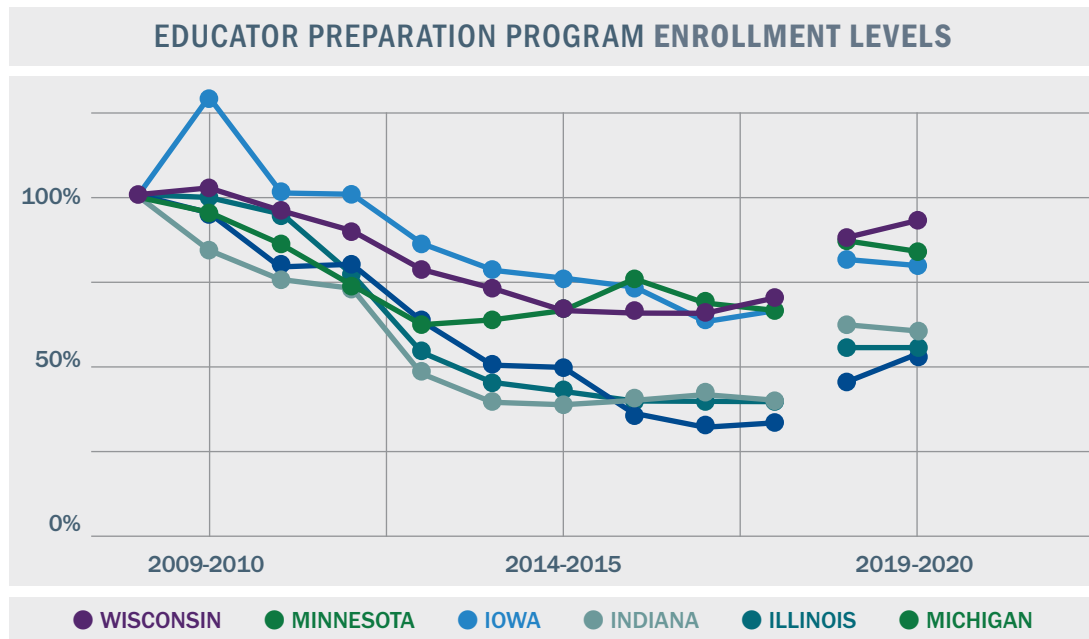
Retention rates fall to 67% for the state by year five and is even higher within the same school district or school.

This raises questions the DPI does not yet have answers to, such as why teachers are choosing to leave the profession and why they are not staying in the schools or districts that initially hired them.

Meanwhile, teacher compensation has not kept up with inflation.

In looking across all teachers, the DPI found median salary and fringe has gone down in constant 2021

Fig. 1



dollars over the last decade. Median salaries, adjusted for inflation, have dropped from \$61,663 in 2010 to \$56,249 in 2021.

Further information on public teacher salary data can be accessed on the DPI's website for those looking for a full range and complete salary and fringe data as reported by public school districts.

■ Licensure exceptions rising

The DPI calculates shortages through an examination of licensure data. The state has a tiered licensing structure with Tier I licenses being those that are requested for individuals who meet certain criteria but have not yet completed all requirements for a full Tier II license. By examining Tier I licenses, requested when schools cannot find a fully qualified applicant they wish to employ, the department can see the license areas where there are shortages.

Specifically, the department focuses on the Tier I one- and three-year licenses with stipulations and speech and language pathology licenses with

stipulations to see these shortages.

Licensure data is telling us that the number of Tier I licenses is growing, demonstrating shortages in fully licensed applicants. It also demonstrates the subject areas in which school districts are experiencing the most extreme shortages. Currently, based on licensure data, schools are having the hardest time hiring people in special education, although there are shortages across all areas of licensure.

This shortage data, however, is only a partial picture. It does not capture, for example, a dearth of candidates for a position or the instances where a school district simply decides to move in a different direction and not hire for a position due to the shortages they are experiencing.

■ What DPI is doing

How many teachers do we need and how do we ensure that supply? If the state were to simply look at the overall number of teachers, retirements and those completing educator preparation programs the shortages being experi-

enced would not be apparent.

Yet Wisconsin clearly has shortages across the state as demonstrated by licensure data and the everyday experiences of school districts. As a state how can we ensure that educator preparation program completers stay and work in Wisconsin and in the profession?

The work of the DPI's Licensing, Educator Advancement and Development Team is concentrated on strategies to address these questions throughout the various stages of attracting, developing, recruiting and retaining educators, and State Supt. Jill Underly has made this a critical focus of the department. She has proposed initiatives in her biennial budget request focused on addressing these issues and has directed work across the agency focused on growing and supporting educators in their work.

Governor Tony Evers' biennial budget proposal shares the focus of Underly's work and advances proposals that would help address the shortages Wisconsin is experiencing.

Currently, based on licensure data, schools are having the hardest time hiring people in special education, *although there are shortages across all areas of licensure.*

- Increase revenue limit authority. School districts need the ability to provide a competitive wage, mentoring, classroom support and professional development to ensure that teachers have the tools they need to persist in the profession and succeed in the classroom.
- Create a new grant program to help school districts grow more educators by reimbursing the costs of grow-your-own educator programs that help

teachers and staff obtain further licensure and encourage students to enter the teaching profession.

- Create new stipends for those completing an internship or student teaching, to encourage completion of the preparation program and support for student teachers by providing stipends of \$9,600 for interns, \$2,500 for student teachers and \$1,000 for cooperating teachers who supervise student teachers.

Wisconsin has people wanting to be teachers. Keeping them, supporting them and ensuring they persist in the profession will be critical to addressing the shortages being experienced across the state. The DPI will continue to engage school districts, preparation programs, educators, parents, elected officials and communities as the agency remains focused on this work. ■

Jennifer Kammerud is director of the Licensing, Educator Advancement and Development (LEAD) Team at DPI.

Jim Lynch



ASSOCIATION OF WISCONSIN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

WHEN PRINCIPALS STAY, SO DO TEACHERS

Last May, researchers Sarah Guthery and Lauren Bailes published a study exploring the link between teacher retention and the tenure of principals.

In their study of 11,717 Texas principals, they found teachers were more likely to stick around in schools with longer-serving principals.

The authors also found that principals can stem the tide of teachers leaving a school. A principal who stays at least five consecutive years in an unstable school (one with less than 69% teacher retention in the two years before the principal's arrival) can help improve retention.

Wisconsin data recently analyzed by the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at UW-Madison is consistent with Guthery's and Bailes' findings.

The table to the right shows relationships between teacher mobility and principal tenure in Wisconsin public schools over the past several years, using 1999-2000 as the starting point of principal tenure.

This "heat map" clearly shows the trend that higher levels of principal tenure (in green) are associated with higher rates of teacher stability.

Retention critical to shortage

Widespread concern in recent years regarding educator shortages has reinforced the notion that we must focus on both attracting new educators as well as improving retention rates.

Recent research conducted by the Center for Education Research based on more than 20 years of Wisconsin public school staffing data finds that, on average, around 4.5% of Wisconsin's approximately 60,000 public school teachers leave the profession each year before reaching typical retirement age.

If we could reduce the statewide teacher attrition rate modestly to 3%, however, using a combination of research-based strategies that include high-quality professional learning for school leaders, demand for new teachers would decrease by nearly 1,000 in an average year, and current statewide shortages would look completely different.

Teacher Retention Rises With Experienced Principals

| Length of Principal Tenure | 2018-2019 | 2019-2020 | 2020-2021 |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 year | 83.7% | 83.0% | 85.4% |
| 2 years | 83.1% | 84.1% | 86.3% |
| 3 years | 84.7% | 83.1% | 87.5% |
| 4 years | 86.3% | 84.8% | 87.4% |
| 5 years | 84.3% | 86.2% | 88.5% |
| 6 years | 86.8% | 85.2% | 88.1% |
| 7 years | 86.2% | 85.1% | 87.1% |
| 8 years | 87.0% | 85.9% | 87.6% |
| 9 years | 86.5% | 86.3% | 88.9% |
| 10 years | 87.7% | 89.3% | 88.9% |
| 11 years | 87.4% | 86.2% | 87.1% |
| 12 years | 86.3% | 86.5% | 88.8% |
| 13 years | 88.2% | 88.2% | 89.5% |
| 14 years | 87.0% | 87.5% | 87.8% |
| 15 years | 87.5% | 87.8% | 87.5% |
| 16 years | 86.3% | 88.4% | 89.5% |
| 17 years | 89.9% | 85.3% | 90.3% |
| 18 years | 92.4% | 87.9% | 86.7% |
| 18 years | 90.7% | 87.8% | 88.8% |
| 20 years | 89.0% | 87.3% | 92.4% |
| 21 years | | 88.7% | 91.6% |
| 22 years | | | 90.3% |

This "heat map" clearly shows the trend that higher levels of principal tenure are associated with higher rates of teacher stability (in green). Percentage shows teachers who remained at the school.

Source: WCER/Region 10 Comprehensive Center (DPI all-staff data, 1999-00 to 2021-22)

■ Promoting principal longevity

At a time when 73% of school leaders nationwide report staffing shortages, this is a key reminder of why it is so important to attract, retain and grow strong leaders. Research tells us it takes five to 10 years for a principal to have a meaningful impact on a large school.

School leaders need sufficient time in the position to get the job done but, unfortunately, only sometimes get it. According to the School Leaders Network, only one principal in four stays in a given leadership position longer than five years. Of those brand new to the principalship,

50% do not make it past year three.

Besides losing talented people from the profession, the costs of principal turnover are high in terms of both real dollars and their effect on learning environments. For example, preparing and onboarding a new principal carries an average price tag of \$75,000 nationally.

Research conducted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the Learning Policy Institute identified inadequate professional learning as one of the five main reasons contributing to principals leaving their jobs.

Inversely, the research indicated that

providing high-quality professional learning is one of five strategies for promoting principal retention.

The Association of Wisconsin School Administrators has developed high-quality conferences, academies, and coaching so that every school leader has access to the professional learning and coaching support that promotes longevity and growth.

These opportunities are outlined in AWSA's Professional Learning Catalog that is available under the Professional Learning tab at www.awsa.org. ■

Jim Lynch is executive director of the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators.

Peggy Wirtz-Olsen



WISCONSIN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION COUNCIL

RAISE PAY, IMPROVE WORKING CONDITIONS

All students, no matter where they live, deserve to have caring, qualified, committed teachers. To make that happen, we must work harder than ever to find common ground in the education community.

At the Wisconsin Education Association Council, keeping public school educators in their profession is a top priority. For those of us who have been called to teach, it's alarming to see fewer people pursuing careers in education and one-in-three new teachers leaving in their first five years. The crisis is something we have sounded the alarm on for over a decade – but now, it seems, Wisconsin is listening.

There is not a single solution to reduce the number of educators leaving the profession. There is, however, a mix of common-sense approaches that can make a difference in time to prevent far-reaching damage to public education. The first is educator compensation. Between 2011 and 2021, the

adjusted median salary for teachers fell from \$62,000 to \$56,000, fringe benefits fell by almost \$8,500, and insurance co-pays and deductibles dramatically increased.

Educators cannot afford to support their families and pay student loans. More than half are working two jobs. On top of low pay and increasing health care costs, the lack of transparent and fair salary schedules often leaves educators uncertain about their future earnings. In today's job market, it's easy for educators to find higher-paying jobs with less stress and more respect. It's more common than ever for them to leave in the middle of the school year.

"There is guilt involved with leaving at this time, so I've had to unpack that," said Marie, a longtime northern Wisconsin teacher who now has a work-from-home job with a tech company. "Making this big of a decision included so many facets."

Along with pay, workloads must be addressed. "Year after year the

district develops ways to try and provide special education services, while not ever hiring more teachers to do the work," said Lee, a Madison-area special education teacher. "I have been asked to provide special education services to students within three different classes during the same period. This is not sustainable."

"The work teachers have been asked to do has increased to an unsustainable level," agreed Barb, a Green Bay teacher. "Our school day was lengthened, there are more meetings, class sizes have gone up and the number of interventionists has decreased. We're stretched to the breaking point, and not surprisingly, many people are leaving the profession or choosing not to enter it in the first place."

Educators balk when they hear the term "teacher shortage," saying it's not a shortage because there are enough licensed teachers. The fact is fewer will do the job under current conditions, especially with the mounting mental health problems



“We’re stretched to the breaking point, and not surprisingly, many people are leaving the profession *or choosing not to enter it in the first place.*”

their students display.

“I have seen a dramatic increase in anxiety of my little kindergartners,” said Ann, an early education teacher in southeastern Wisconsin. “Of my 20 students, I have eight who would benefit from consistent support from a school counselor or social worker, but our counselor is at our building only one day a week and the social worker is part-time. No educator should have a workload that prevents them from meeting the needs of children.”

Whether a parent, secretary,

teacher, superintendent, board member or principal — we all have a stake in the future of our students and public schools. Agreeing to a set of principles encompassing our shared values will make all the difference for rebuilding the education workforce and presenting a united voice for public education at the state and national levels.

Stabilizing public education. Establishing clear, consistent, predictable compensation systems for educators. Meeting the needs of a changing demographic of learners

and workforce. Recognizing the increasing demand for mental health support. Resetting the time demands and expectations placed on public school educators.

It’s time for all of us to collaborate around the principles on which we have common ground. Only then can real solutions be advanced to inspire the next generation of educators and keep them in our public schools. ■

WEAC President Peggy Wirtz-Olsen, an English and art teacher, is proud to lead the state’s largest association of public school educators.

WEAC LOOKS TO SUPPORT NEW, EXPERIENCED TEACHERS


The educator-members of the Wisconsin Education Association Council unite to improve our schools and the lives of our students by supporting each other throughout our careers, starting with Educators Rising in high school. Our Aspiring Educators program on university campuses focuses on future teachers including the Foundation of Reading Test preparation and student teaching support. WEAC brings new teachers together through the Wisconsin Early Career Educators, offering classroom management, financial planning and licensing support to get them started on a great career. For experienced educators, we offer school leadership training, National Board Certification mentorship and a wide range of teacher-led professional development and mental health programs. Some of our other popular programming includes substitute teacher training and Spanish for educators, which we provide to some districts for their entire staff.





The Case for Low-Cost Benefits

How districts can increase financial incentives to attract and retain school staff



For many years, public schools have been faced with limited budgets and resources to retain qualified staff, trends that have been exacerbated by the COVID pandemic.

Increasing wages for public school employees would be well deserved. But most districts cannot afford large pay increases within the confines of the current political and financial environment. However, there are options districts can consider to help address these challenges for no or low cost.

One Wisconsin district has seen real progress in using some of these solutions for attracting and retaining staff.

The statistics bear out our interwoven crises of educator stress, burnout and job departure.

A challenging landscape

Nationwide, over 600,000 teachers in public education have quit in the last two years.¹ The National Education Association reports that 55% of educators are considering leaving their profession earlier than planned, and 91% of educators said pandemic-related stress and burnout is a “serious problem” in the profession.²

Further, a recent Stanford-led study found that teachers generally experience greater economic stress than a national sample of other

workers. Economically anxious teachers tend to have more negative attitudes about their jobs, worse attendance, and were 50% more likely to depart the district within two years of taking the survey. Younger teachers were most likely to express economic anxiety across all measures. This impact on teachers’ attitudes and behavior has serious implications for schools.³

Impact on Wisconsin schools

In comparison, Wisconsin is producing more teachers than are exiting due to retirements. As of 2021, the number of teachers in the state remained relatively stable at just over 64,000. However, only 67% of those completing their Educator Preparation Program went on to work at a Wisconsin public school, and new teachers have a retention rate of just 67% after the first five years of teaching.⁴ While there is relative stability in the number of teachers in Wisconsin as a whole, districts still face staffing challenges, including the significant issue of retaining new teachers.

The case for low-cost benefits

According to a 2022 survey of workers, financially stressed workers are twice as likely to look elsewhere for a job than those who are not stressed and six times more likely to

say that financial stress has severely impacted their productivity at work (especially millennials in their 30s). Nearly half said money worries had a severe or major impact on their mental health.⁵

Employers should consider offering financial education alongside their mental health resources. The same study also found that financially stressed employees are nearly twice as likely to say that one-on-one financial coaching is extremely helpful. Offering financial education with a clear and simple explanation of how investing works and why it’s important can illustrate to employees why saving even a small amount in a retirement savings account like a 403(b) can help them achieve their financial goals.

As an employer, you don’t need to be the expert and eat up valuable staff resources providing financial education if you partner with an organization who can provide low or no cost financial offerings and resources. For example, one popular free resource offered by WEA Member Benefits is the “Don’t Be Jack™” financial literacy game for educators. Teams compete while they learn about the advantages or consequences of certain financial actions. Member Benefits has also partnered with Elevate Wisconsin, a financial wellness program backed

Adding automatic enrollment to your 403(b) plan can help encourage retirement savings, enhance staff morale, **and help attract and retain good employees.**

by the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions. The program provides interactive, effective and unbiased online instruction in personal finance and investing fundamentals designed to enhance the lives of Wisconsin public employees and their families.

Throughout its 50 years of providing retirement savings solutions to public school employees, Member Benefits has found that encouraging financial mentors from your staff to start financial wellness groups, investment clubs, and others can be a great way for everyone to become better informed. Educators like to pay their knowledge forward and active groups like these can be helpful to employees of all ages. And for new employees, mentors can help create and retain a sense of belonging and value.

■ **Matching and vesting in a 403(b) savings plan**

According to a recent survey, saving enough for retirement is a top stressor for all age groups, from under age 30 to over age 70.⁶ Many school districts offer an employer match through their 403(b) program as well as a vesting program. Offering a match can be a good incentive to employees because:

- It allows you to attract and retain talent by providing a meaningful financial investment without risk to the employee.
- More flexibility is built into employees' retirement savings by accumulating assets outside of Social Security or the state pension plan and it gives employees an option to grow tax-deferred retirement savings.
- Matching employee contributions has a positive impact on plan participant rates.
- Employees save more as they tend to contribute the amount

necessary to maximize the employer match.

- It helps employees feel valued and boosts goodwill.

Two other advantages for the district include the ability to place a vesting schedule that limits the percent of employer-funded money the employee would receive if they left the district prior to a set number of years. And if there are forfeitures, these assets may be used to offset future employer obligations to the 403(b).

■ **Automatic enrollment in the 403(b)**

As employers, you know there are many roadblocks that prevent employees from saving — they may not feel they can afford to contribute or may be confused about their options. This can lead to a reluctance to participate in the 403(b) plan. Choosing to utilize automatic enrollment in your 403(b) plan:

- Avoids those initial roadblocks that get in the way of participating in the plan.

- Helps jump-start employees' financial security.
- Engages new employees from day one.

Employees can opt out if they choose and they can change their investment allocations from the default at any time. Adding automatic enrollment to your 403(b) plan can help encourage retirement savings, enhance staff morale, and help attract and retain good employees.

■ **One district's story of success**

The School District of Wisconsin Dells participates in WEA Member Benefits' 403(b) plan. From 2018 to 2022, the district saw an increase in balance and overall accounts. Total participants with account balances went from 108 to 399, a whopping 269% increase, and total monetary balance invested in the plan increased by 23%.

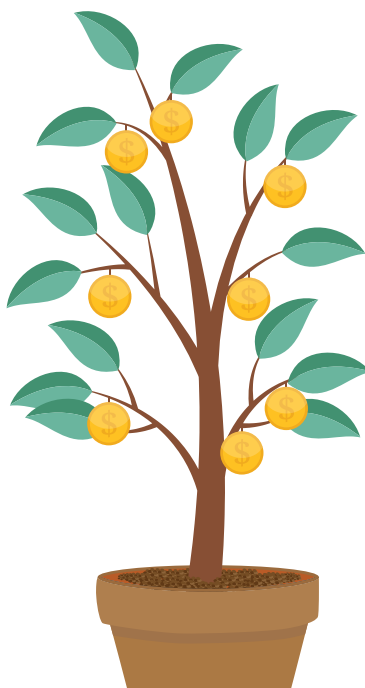
District Administrator Terrance Slack said the district has seen high buy-in from staff after offering automatic enrollment in the 403(b) plan.

"As such, the district sees just shy of 75% of its employees participating in a 403(b) plan, which far exceeds the national average of approximately 33%," he says.

Explaining financial offerings to staff has been another priority.

"The district also realizes how busy staff members are in their daily jobs and that taking time to get one's personal finances right can prove to be a challenge," Slack says. "Over the past six years, the district has expanded its wellness program to feature multiple financial professional development offerings to staff members, including three wellness days a year, typically in October, January, and May."

The staff, he says, have "really embraced the opportunity to become more fiscally informed and to under-





stand the impact of enrolling in their retirement program early, the importance of making annual adjustments to contributions, and how to forecast their retirement future with greater clarity.”

Slack also praised WEA Member Benefits’ valuable professional development efforts with staff, both new and veteran.

“Their a la carte model also includes conducting follow up meetings to keep employees focused on their financial goals,” he says.

It’s easy to lose focus on personal finance in our hustle-and-bustle world, Slack says, and weaving these efforts into the district’s wellness plan has made it more stress-free.

As a result, “the aforementioned 75% participation rate among active employees has become a valuable pillar in our district-spon-

sored wellness plan. It’s a simple way to ease the complexity surrounding finances and a great way to invest in our staff given all the good service they provide our students and families.”

■ Nothing to lose, everything to gain

Districts can find success by making it easier to save for retirement and bringing financial wellness opportunities to their staff. Public school employees say time and again how much having access to financial education has made a difference in their lives. No district has ever regretted making it easier for their employees to save for their future. ■

WEA Member Benefits is a leading provider of 403(b) retirement plans for Wisconsin public school districts with over five decades of service. Contact them at 1-800-279-4030 or visit weabenefits.com to learn more.



1. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
2. 2022 National Education Association survey.
3. Stress in Boom Times: Understanding Teachers’ Economic Anxiety in a High-Cost Urban District.
4. Educator Preparation Program and Workforce Analysis Report – 2021.
5. 2022 PwC Employee Financial Wellness Survey.
6. Cerulli Associates.

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Culture at the Center of Staffing Dilemma

Retention is about more than money:
Employees who feel fulfilled
are more likely to stick around

School districts across the state and the nation are facing the same recruitment and staffing challenge with decreasing availability of qualified applicants.

This problem is not limited to teachers. It includes everyone from the district administrator to entry-level support staff. While recruitment and hiring remain critical elements of the staffing solution, without a commitment and strategic action plan on engagement and retention, a district's staffing plan becomes a leaky dam. Administrators find themselves trying to plug holes as fast as possible before another leak occurs.

Many employers are quick to

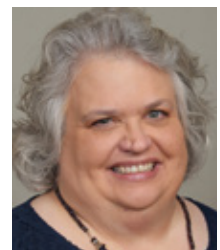
address compensation and benefits to solve retention problems. While employees need competitive levels of compensation, meeting their other needs is also critical. Understanding a psychological concept called the hierarchy of needs, proposed by American psychologist Abraham Maslow in 1943, can shed light on the retention issue.

■ More than money

Employees must receive compensation that will satisfy their physiological and safety needs. However, meeting employees' needs is not just about money, and more money doesn't equate to a sustainable rate

of staff engagement and retention.

When we discuss retention, the basic tenet is to address engagement and then measure its effect on retention. Like the song "Love and Marriage" popularized by Frank Sinatra, "you can't have one without the other," we need to go back to the hierarchy of needs to find the answer to the engagement and retention issue.



*Susan Muentner
Wisconsin
Association of
School Personnel
Administrators*

Maslow proposed that human beings possess two sets of needs. This five-stage model can be divided into deficiency needs and growth needs. The first four levels are often referred to as deficiency needs, and the top level is known as growth needs. The further up the pyramid of needs that are met for the employee by their job and the organization they work for, the less likely they are to want to leave. Deficiency needs arise due to deprivation and are said to motivate people to action when they are unmet. The motivation to fulfill such unmet needs will increase the longer they are denied.

The key engagement elements that align with Maslow's hierarchy of needs are leadership, communication, work environment, resources and involvement. Starting at the third level of needs, love and belonging, the key engagement factors here are the need for interpersonal relationships, feeling part of a group, friendship, trust, acceptance and communication.

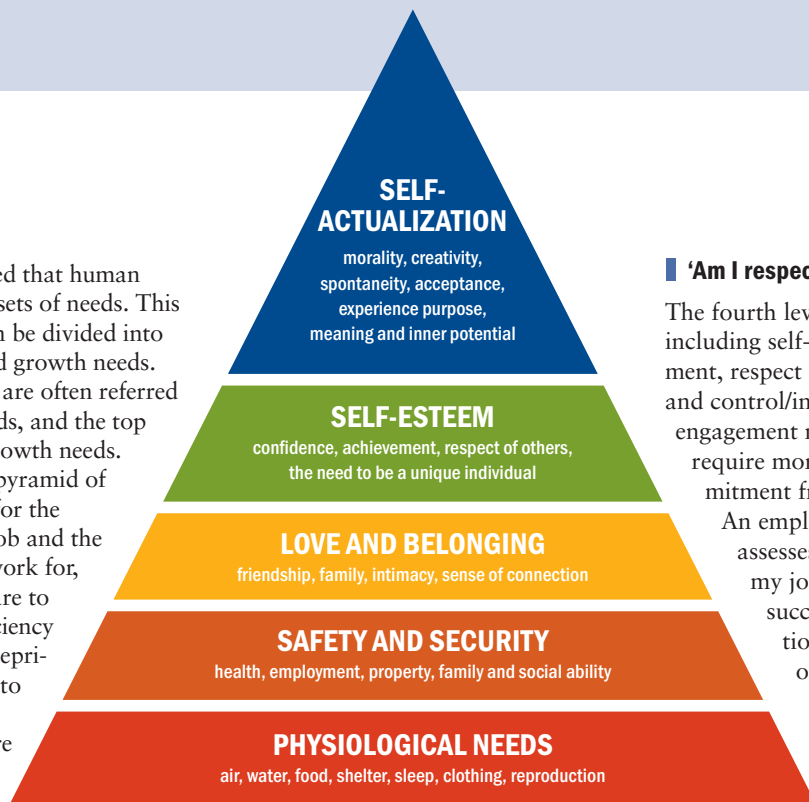
■ Feeling welcomed

From the time they accept a job offer, an employee assesses whether these needs can be met. Starting a new job is stressful for everyone. An employer can work to satisfy these needs with a plan that begins before the new employee sets foot in their new position.

For example, does a new teacher walk into a clean, organized classroom with their desk set with basic supplies, or do they walk into a classroom where the former teacher

has left a closet full of old materials or a storage area that is disorganized and cluttered? Does their classroom have their name posted so they walk in knowing the space belongs to them? Having uniform shirts with their name on them and a cleaning cart ready to go gives new custodians the sense that they are needed and part of the team from day one.

The onboarding process is also critical. Is there someone there to greet them when they arrive on the first day? Are they assigned a mentor or a trainer that can show them not only what they need to do, but where they can put their lunch or where supplies are located? Do they have someone to eat lunch with on their first day? The more quickly you can make an employee feel part of the team, the stronger the sense of belonging need is met. This includes regular meetings with their supervisor to check in to see how they are doing and what they might need.



Proposed by Abraham Maslow in 1943, the hierarchy of needs concept helps pinpoint wherein solutions may exist for teacher retention.

■ 'Am I respected?'

The fourth level are esteem needs including self-worth, accomplishment, respect from others, mastery and control/independence. Here the engagement needs are deeper and require more attention and commitment from the organization. An employee at this level assesses questions such as, is my job important to the success of the organization? Do I feel that my opinion and contributions are seen, heard, and valued? Do I have control over how I perform my job and am I respected by others for the work that I do? Do I have

input into decisions that are made that affect my job?

The employee at this level has a need to feel a sense of contribution to the mission of the organization and that the work they produce matters and has value to the success of the organization. Here the supervisor's role is to provide opportunities for two-way communication and to allow the employee control over their work within the parameters of their position.

Jeff Genovese, director of business services at Yorkville Joint #2 School District, says staff members may complain that administrators don't communicate well with their staff. So administrators committed to being more approachable and responsive.

"This didn't happen overnight, but by doing this we gained respect and credibility," he says. "We didn't always give them the answer they were seeking, but at least they knew



The highest level of needs is that of self-realization and refers to an employee's potential, personal growth and **their need to become everything they are capable of becoming.**

they had input and were heard.”

The highest level of needs is that of self-realization and refers to an employee's potential, personal growth and their need to become everything they are capable of becoming. In this area, the employee asks, can I advance within the organization? Is there additional training, certification or additional skills or knowledge I can acquire?

■ What can you do?

To improve engagement and retention, the most difficult question is where to start. This often starts with an employee engagement survey to measure baseline results. Be transparent to employees about what the purpose of the survey is and how the results will be used. There is little more frustrating to employees than to answer a survey and then to see nothing done. Allowing for confidentiality will yield more trust and allow for more honest responses. Consider a third party to collect the results and garner a greater sense of confidentiality.

Once baseline results are gathered, a retention plan can be put into place. If you don't know your past and current retention rate, calculate them so you have a current measure and a trend. If you can split your retention rates by reasons such as voluntary, involuntary and retirement, it will yield a better strategy with more specific goals. Gather turnover/retention results from surrounding schools of similar size,



geographical and demographic makeup to guide you to setting realistic and attainable goals.

■ School board commitment crucial

A strong recommendation is to make retention an action plan within your strategic plan. If you do not place a central focus and commit substantial time and resources toward this plan, it will sit on the shelf and not have the ongoing emphasis on results. Retention requires the support and endorsement of all leadership from the school board to line level supervisors. A plan that doesn't have the support of a school board is unlikely to succeed.

Set a realistic goal to increase engagement scores and retention rates. An increase of 5-10% per year is an achievable goal. Communicate with all employees about your com-

mitment to engagement and retention. This transparency is part of building trust, showing respect, and valuing their opinions and involvement and aligns with Maslow's levels three and four.

Another way of being transparent is to develop a dashboard of results that can be shared internally and/or externally. This lets employees know you are serious about valuing current employees and increasing engagement and retention. There are many techniques you can use as part of your strategic retention action plan including rounding and stay interviews.

Whatever actions and techniques you choose to include, make sure they align with where your engagement survey identified as areas needing improvement. Repeat the engagement survey at regular intervals to measure the results of your efforts and share them with all employees. The ultimate journey to successful retention depends on the commitment of the entire organization.

Despite being a daunting project, the time and effort spent on improving engagement and retention will decrease turnover and the need for an endless cycle of recruiting and hiring of replacement employees. In addition, you will be on your way to building a cohesive school and work environment where employees have their higher levels of need fulfilled. ■

Susan Muentzer is executive director of the Wisconsin Association of School Personnel Administrators.



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IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

More schools turning to short-term licenses

In just the past decade, the number of emergency teaching licenses in Wisconsin has nearly tripled, suggesting schools are facing increasing challenges from staff shortages and high turnover in areas such as special education.

In the 2021-22 school year, the state Department of Public Instruction issued 3,197 emergency licenses to teach in Wisconsin. This is an increase of 2,072 licenses, or 184%, over 2012-13, when 1,125 emergency licenses were issued.

In addition, the number of emergency license holders rose to a new high of 2,854 in 2021-22 (which we refer to as 2022), up from 2,794 the prior year and 1,076 in 2013. (Some individuals hold more than one emergency license.)

For 2019 and beyond, the number of emergency licenses and license holders is actually higher than these reported counts. Since 2018, DPI has offered a three-year emergency license and only includes the license in its reported count for

the year of its original issuance.

Although most emergency licenses are employed in urban and rural districts, the increase in their use has happened in schools across the state. From 2013 to 2022, 103 additional districts took up the use of emergency certifications. Here, we explore this trend and consider what it says about broader labor challenges within districts as well as whether these licenses are being used for their intended purposes.

Emergency licenses play an important role in staffing the state's classrooms, **including in scenarios** **that are often short-term and sometimes urgent.**

■ Why issue emergency licenses?

When school districts in Wisconsin cannot find a teacher licensed by DPI to fill a certain position, they can hire an unlicensed individual who then applies for a license with certain conditions or stipulations. This is commonly referred to as an emergency license, and also it can be used by counselors, social workers, librarians, and school administrators.

Emergency licenses play an important role in staffing the state's classrooms, including in scenarios that are often short-term and sometimes urgent. Moreover, they can benefit both districts and teachers. For example, when teachers licensed in other states move to Wisconsin, they may need time to complete coursework specific to this state, and an emergency license can help them to begin a new teaching job more quickly.

Individuals in alternative certification programs who have college degrees but need classroom experience are also common applicants for emergency licenses. Another possible scenario is when a district employee transitions to a position for which he or she is not yet certified. For example, an elementary school teacher may obtain an emergency license to become a reading teacher, or a teacher may take on a counselor role. An emergency license may also be used in a temporary scenario, such as a high school biology teacher covering a section of chemistry for one year for scheduling reasons.

As these scenarios illustrate, the use of emergency licenses does not necessarily indicate a problem in a district. However, the rapid growth in emergency certifications raises questions, including whether workforce challenges have grown for districts and whether the use of



emergency licenses has outgrown their original purpose.

■ Rising number of districts using emergency licenses

Alongside the increase in licenses and license holders in the past decade, the number of districts employing teachers with emergency licenses also rose, from 303 districts in 2013 to 406 districts in 2022, thus constituting a majority of the state's public school districts. This trend is consistent with rising workforce challenges for districts.

As the use of emergency licenses rose across the state, their growth and distribution has stayed fairly consistent across districts in different locales. Over the past decade, urban schools have regularly accounted for about 42% of emergency licenses, suburban schools for 14%, town schools for 7%, and rural schools for 33%. (The other 4% are in districts with a combination of locales or none listed.)

This consistency indicates that workforce issues causing a rise in emergency licensures are not increasing disproportionately in certain geographic types of districts. However, as the numbers above show, some districts rely on emergency licenses more than others. In particular, when compared to the

distribution of teaching positions in the state, the share of emergency licenses is disproportionately higher than expected for urban schools and lower than expected for suburban schools.

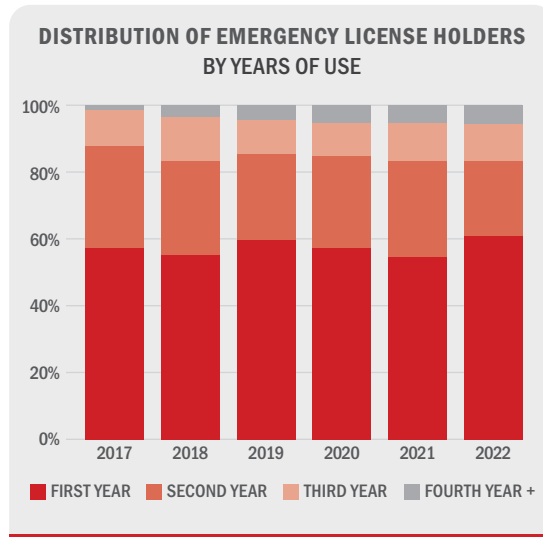
■ Three license types drive increase

Three subject areas were responsible for the majority (61.5%) of the increase in the number of emergency licenses. Cross-Categorical Special Education led with the largest increase, growing by 525 licenses since 2013 to 761 in 2022 and accounting for about one-quarter of the total increase. This license is required for teachers who work with students with disabilities who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). In 2022, only 8.1% of all the teaching positions in Wisconsin were held by someone with this license, which means these positions are accounting for a disproportionately large share of the emergency certifications.

The next two largest increases in emergency licenses were for Regular Education and Elementary and Middle Education. Regular Education grew by 475 licenses, or 22.9% of the total increase, and Elementary and Middle Education rose by 275 licenses, or 13.3% of the total increase. Both of these licenses are used by teachers in elementary and middle school classrooms in which one person teaches a range of subjects. The Elementary and Middle Education license is a new category as of 2020.

These three license categories are intended to be used by career teachers for multiple years. The rise in their use suggests that a growing number of teachers are entering classrooms before they meet the requirements for a regular license. Special education in particular appears to be an area of shortage for

Since 2017, about 30% of individuals with an emergency license held one in a previous year, and about 10% had emergency licenses in two previous years.



districts, leading them to rely upon emergency licensures to fill positions.

Some licenses held for years

The data show a large number of teachers hold on to their emergency licenses for multiple years. The data for our research begins in 2013, so it takes until 2017 to identify the growing number of teachers who have held emergency licenses for multiple years. Since 2017, about 30% of individuals with an emergency license held one in a previous year, and about 10% had emergency licenses in two previous years.

A considerable portion of these teachers are obtaining emergency licenses for the same subject in successive years. The program anticipates some repeat license holders in districts with limited staff, such as a high school where a social studies teacher gets an emergency certification in psychology for one year and then sociology in a later year. Yet, the majority of the repeated licenses are in the same subject area. This concentration suggests that districts and individuals are using emergency licenses for needs that extend beyond the short term. Policymakers may wish to track if emergency license holders are eventually converting to regular licenses and, if so, how long it is taking them to do so.

For licensed teachers who want to obtain a license in another subject area, DPI began offering a three-year license with stipulations in 2018. Its

purpose is to provide established teachers with sufficient time to meet all of the requirements of a license in a new subject area. In 2022, there were 209 three-year licenses issued, which accounted for only 6.5% of all the emergency certifications approved that year. With many one-year license holders requesting renewals, DPI may wish to consider expanding the current three-year license program.

Short-term and long-term opportunities

Districts have faced longstanding challenges filling classrooms with qualified staff, particularly in specialty subjects, but concerns about teacher shortages in Wisconsin have grown far more prevalent in recent years. The rise in emergency licenses substantiates these growing concerns by suggesting that districts are encountering greater difficulties in hiring enough teachers through the traditional routes, particularly in special education.

Emergency licenses also appear to

increasingly provide an alternative process for training new teachers. Rather than completing an educational degree program and then obtaining a post, candidates are landing the job first and then obtaining the license and the education. Though there may be a need for this progression, it also risks increasing the number of educators without formal training in their subject area.

The increase in emergency licenses is one factor for elected officials and policymakers to consider as they contemplate actions to address teacher shortages and debate broader issues such as school funding and the teacher pipeline. Addressing these larger challenges will take time, however. In the meantime, DPI already has a three-year license that attempts to balance education and training objectives with districts' and teachers' immediate needs, and that might be used more broadly.

In addition, the state and districts should work to ensure that new hires with no classroom experience receive meaningful mentorship and effective training. With proper support, the emergency license holders of today are more likely to remain in the profession and reduce the need for this approach in the future. ■

This information is a service of the Wisconsin Policy Forum, the state's leading resource for nonpartisan state and local government research and civic education. Learn more at wispolicyforum.org.

Leading a HUMAN SYSTEM



To build an effective school, leaders must understand what inspires our people

There is more greatness in our schools than we see on the news. Our unheralded teachers and leaders do extraordinary work every day.

How do they do it? What is important to them? What principles and values guide them?

I have been given the opportunity to support and coach school leaders across the state of Wisconsin. Through the years, I have found one constant that connects every school: the system is 100% human.

And the most successful leaders not only understand this but leverage humanistic leadership to make a greater impact.

Humanistic leadership: vision, purpose and belief

The ability to lead, support, and inspire is more important now than ever. Humanistic leaders create environments that have less burnout, teacher turnover and disconnected students.

However, the job of today's leaders is more complex and dynamic than ever. Leadership is not a title or certification, and it happens at all levels from board to student. Influential leaders understand that the title of leader is an earned right and a responsibility to those who choose to follow.

The "Why Teach" survey, com-

pleted by LKMco and Pearson, highlights the two primary reasons why teachers go into teaching. First, they want to make a difference in the lives of children. Second, they think they will be good at it.

Savvy leaders know to keep the "why" of teaching front and center for every teacher. When teachers lose this sense of purpose, they often question their own value and consider leaving the profession altogether.

I have had the fortune of witnessing education leaders in action across the state of Wisconsin.

Judy Mueller, a lead teacher in the Watertown School District, ensures that the work in her school consistently aligns with the vision and purpose of her school.

"Teachers and leaders can become disillusioned and frustrated when professional practice does not have a clear path forward," she says.

Judy enlists teachers and students during the visioning, which ensures a deeper commitment to the work. She leads with the understanding that educators get frustrated when professional development and daily school behaviors do not align with our educational values.

According to Judy, "Teachers are not cogs in the wheel, but they are essential voices that make it all happen. Teachers should be a part of that visioning and should create

together the commitment for the plan to move the work forward."

She has a knack for understanding the human need for collaborative discussions that are intentional, relevant and clearly aligned to a goal.



Nick Pretasky
CESA 9

Trust and safety

As I have witnessed school districts around Wisconsin creating environments of innovation, improvement, and a relentless pursuit of growth, one underlying essential keeps emerging: trust.

Matt Mineau, superintendent of the North Fond du Lac School District, knew that building an environment of trust with his school board would be an essential first step.

"When I first became superintendent, I met with every board member, individually, to listen and learn from them. I needed to know them on a personal level. Then we could begin to build a culture of trust."

In his famed article, "Improving Relationships Within the School-house," former Harvard Graduate School of Education faculty Roland Barth wrote that the relationships of



It is critical to create an environment where we can deeply listen
and offer the opportunity to collaborate on the next steps.
This does not only ensure clarity but assures commitment.

the adults in a school may be the greatest indicator of school success. A school culture without trust denies humans the feeling of safety that is needed to be curious and take positive risks. The most successful school board meetings I have experienced have this trust at the center.

This past January, I had the opportunity to attend a school board meeting in North Fond du Lac. It was brilliant to witness a boardroom culture where a district administrator felt safe and supported enough that he could admit what he did not know and where he was still learning. Not only did the board members embrace the learning, they asked how they could support it.

■ Vulnerability and inner work

Amy Traynor, a lead teacher in the Mondovi School District, does not believe that vulnerability is a sign of weakness but quite the opposite.

“The best leaders are learners. Great leaders are willing to admit when they do not know and they ask for help.”

Amy is willing to do the inner work and courage to broaden her own paradigms to better understand what is most relevant to those she leads. It has been amazing to watch her refusal to allow the fear of failure to impede her willingness to innovate and get better.

Competent leaders not only have the courage to take on the challenges of the job, but they also have the

vulnerability to admit their mistakes.

It is critical that we allow our education leaders permission to ask for help. Amy’s governance board not only recognizes the importance of supporting their leader, but they encourage her to work with a leadership coach.

“Working with a leadership coach helps me brainstorm new ideas, think differently, and discuss potential solutions,” she says. Coaching allows her to get her mind right so that she can show up for those that she leads.

It is impressive to see a school culture that is governed by a board that unconditionally supports the leadership.

■ Listen and provide clarity

According to the “Why Teach” survey, teachers leave the teaching profession because of workload and lack of leadership. Stress and anxiety are induced when there is a high level of ambiguity.

Teachers I interview often report that there is a lack of clear alignment among district goals, the professional development calendar and students’ needs. They do not think they have the agency to make the changes needed. Initiatives come and go with little connection creating a deep feeling of exhaustion and sometimes generating a fear of the unknown.

“If you want to take care of your staff, you need to take care of the schedule,” says Stephanie Cull, a

lead teacher in the Lakeland Union High School District. “Make it clear. It is the one thing we can control.”

Stephanie and her staff have tackled the tolerance for ambiguity head-on. She has pressed pause, listened to her staff, and worked to jointly design a school playbook that will provide connection, clarity and alignment.

Program coherence and staff commitment were a must for Stephanie’s leadership.

“We had so many different initiatives going on, I do not think we could have listed them all,” she says. She realized that professional development did not need one more thing from the outside but needed to deeply listen to her people. She identified that if sustainable practices were the desired state, time for building continuity and commitment needed to be the work.

The answer is already in the room. It is critical to create an environment where we can deeply listen and offer the opportunity to collaborate on the next steps. This does not only ensure clarity but assures commitment. I was moved by the conviction and collaboration of the teachers and staff. It is a powerful experience watching staff and teachers wash away the stress by creating a shared understanding and jointly determining the next steps.

■ Growth through conflict

Every great leadership story has a strong adversarial moment. There is



no better testament to being human than the story that typically involves an arduous grind before a dramatic solution was discovered.

These inspirational stories consistently tell us that within every adverse moment lies an even greater opportunity.

They each have a rarely discussed trait in leadership: conviction. Amazing leaders across Wisconsin refuse to hide from conflict. They have the courage to use conflict as an opportunity to build stronger relationships with those around them. This consistent willingness to own their path and move the work forward is contagious and inspires their team.

In North Fond du Lac, Mineau described his team's dedication to adult behaviors as an essential prerequisite to creating an environment

where we know not everything will be smooth.

"We focus a lot on behaviors that lead to reliability and credibility," he says. "When we are vulnerable and our adult behaviors are consistent, we are prepared for any adversity."

Change is inevitable. Growth is optional. School boards and leadership teams are willing to dedicate the time to cultivate cohesion and a shared vision to tackle conflict head-on. They believe there is a solution just around the corner.

■ Empathy and gratitude

If I needed to list the leadership skill that seems to be most important, I would list courage without hesitation. Courage is derived from a culture of belief, gratitude, and deep understanding with empathy at the center.

Scott Foster, superintendent in the Northland Pines School District, does not hesitate to share with others his appreciation and belief in his team.

"Any superintendent can write a book about all of their successes, but nothing happens without my people," he says. "I have been fortunate to be surrounded by great people."

Scott is consistently looking for ways to personalize his support and tap into his people's strengths.

"It is my responsibility to make sure I put my team members into positions to succeed and then get out of their way to allow them to do what they do best." He spends the time to truly know his team and provides what they each need to be successful.

Thank you to all the leaders highlighted in this article and to all of the other leaders out there who show up every day to support, challenge, and inspire others to reach their full human potential. We all appreciate you! ■

Nick Pretasky is the associate director of the Wisconsin Resource Center for Charter Schools at CESA 9.



Attendees walk over to the Wisconsin State Capitol for their afternoon visits with legislators.

A DAY AT THE CAPITOL

Wisconsin education leaders advocate for students

On March 22, more than 200 Wisconsin school board members and administrators walked the halls and meeting rooms of the Capitol advocating for students. The WASB's Day at the Capitol event started with morning sessions including a legislator panel and state budget briefing. In the afternoon, they attended meetings with lawmakers scheduled by the WASB. For more photos, visit [WASB.org](https://www.wasb.org), hover over "Training & Events" and click "Event Recaps."

Photos by Sierra Linton, WASB communications and marketing specialist



A panel of legislators in key education roles is asked about the proposed 2023-25 state budget and how public education will be prioritized.



WASB President Rosanne Hahn, second from left, joins Racine Unified board members to meet with Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, center.

MONONA TERRACE

WASB Government Relations
Director Dan Rossmiller
welcomes attendees to the
2023 Day at the Capitol,
held at the Monona Terrace.



Attendees from the Adams-Friendship, Black River Falls, Melrose-Mindoro,
Sparta, Stevens Point and Wild Rose school boards meet with Sen. Patrick Testin.



WASB Immediate Past President
Barbara Herzog meets with a staffer
in Rep. Michael Schraa's office.



Attendees from Mount Horeb meet with Chief of Staff
Savanna Stevens from Rep. Dave Considine's office.



Attendees from the Green Bay Area School District meet with
Rep. Kristina Shelton and staffer Paige Anderson.

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Friday's sessions will focus on the theme of student safety and wellness. On Saturday, sessions will focus on quality governance, including sessions on legal, governmental and policy topics.

AGENDA OUTLINE

FRIDAY, JULY 14

Morning Keynote: Dr. Dipesh Navsaria, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, UW–Madison School of Medicine and Public Health

Select Session Titles:

- Youth Mental Health Post-Pandemic: A Focus on Anxiety and Depression
- Designing Safe and Welcoming Schools: A Panel Discussion
- The Power of Proactive and Preventive Emotional Well-Being Skill Development
- Preventing Student Injury: What School Board Members Should Know About Liability
- Cybersecurity and Citizenship: Keeping Kids Safe and Districts Secure Online

Evening Reception: Phil Hauck, author of “The Golden Age of Brown County Enterprise”

SATURDAY, JULY 15

Select Session Titles:

- On-Boarding New School Board Members
- Fundamentals of School Finance
- Public Record Laws and Public Comment Periods
- Governing for High Levels of Learning for All Children

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

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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
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- Board treasurer duties

Starting May 1, districts that register for the Online Learning Platform have access to all of the training on the Platform through June 2024 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.”



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.

To begin learning about how to be an effective board member, visit the "Basic Legal and Governance Resources" page at WASB.org. It includes a variety of resources, including the New School Board Member Handbook and the recently recorded online New School Board Member Gathering. □

2024 WISCONSIN STATE EDUCATION CONVENTION



January 17-19, 2024
WISCONSIN CENTER
MILWAUKEE

► CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Sessions, School Fair, Art, Music and Video Team

The Joint State Education Convention, to be held in Milwaukee, Jan. 17-19, 2024, is 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 23.*

In addition, we are looking for three musical performance groups to show off their skills at the convention. *Apply by Friday, June 2.*

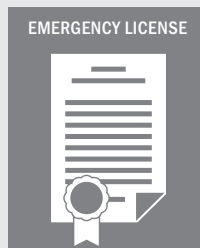
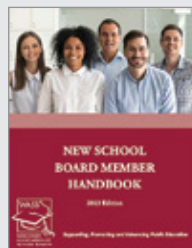
Finally, we are also seeking proposals for student art and a student video team. *Deadlines vary.*

Visit WASB.org/convention to learn more and submit a proposal.



WASB Connection Podcast

A recent episode of the **WASB Connection Podcast** gave an update on our recent New Board Member Gatherings and explored the rise in emergency licensure for educators. We discuss how emergency licensure doesn't necessarily reflect a problem, but that it may be illuminating to better understand why a district is using emergency licensure.



.....
"Is it just to fill a gap for a year, or is this person hoping to use this emergency license as a way to get to permanent licensure ... I think a school board member would want to ask, 'Is there a way to support this person's education so that they can be the best teacher possible?'"

— Wisconsin Policy Forum researcher Don Cramer

.....

**Find the episode on the WASB website
or wherever you find podcasts.**

UPCOMING RECURRING WASB WEBINARS

■ LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE VIDEO UPDATE

MAY 17 | JUNE 21 | 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.*

■ CAPITOL CHAT

FRIDAYS | 12 p.m.

WASB government relations staff Dan Rossmiller and Chris Kulow host a live webinar each Friday at noon during the state budget season to update members on the latest legislative developments and take their questions. Find the link to join on the Online Events page. *No registration required.*

On State Budget, Focus Shifts to Decision-Making

Not too late to make your voice heard for students



In each legislative session, the two-year (or biennial) state budget is considered the one “must pass” bill. Historically, the budget bill is where nearly all major decisions about education funding are made.

By the time this issue of Wisconsin School News arrives in your mailbox, the legislature’s budget-writing Joint Finance Committee (JFC) will have completed its four public hearings (or “listening sessions”) on the proposed 2023-25 biennial state budget. Those hearings were held in Waukesha (April 5), Eau Claire (April 11), Wisconsin Dells (April 12) and Minocqua (April 26) and drew hundreds of Wisconsinites who offered testimony.

We want to express our special thanks to the many school board members, administrators, parents, educators, and other community members who spoke out in favor of public school funding at those JFC hearings.

A shift in focus

With the conclusion of the public hearings, the 16 members of the JFC now shift from listening mode to decision-making mode as they prepare to begin voting on changes to the governor’s recommended budget.

The JFC co-chairs have indicated they will write their own version of the budget using the state’s existing budget as their base. Nevertheless, many of the provisions recommended by the governor may still be considered as options when the committee holds its voting sessions. The committee often works from

budget papers prepared by the non-partisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau. These LFB budget papers address specific budget topics and outline various options for the committee to consider. We would anticipate that in numerous cases those budget papers may contain the governor’s recommendation as one of the options for the committee to consider.

Still time to contact legislators

There is still time to reach out to your legislators if you haven’t done so or if you want to reemphasize concerns you’ve already raised with them.

Typically, the JFC meetings at which votes are taken, called executive sessions, begin during the first or second week of May, and run through Memorial Day, and often through early- to mid-June.

Take the two most recent budget cycles, for example. In 2019, the JFC started holding executive sessions on May 9 and they continued through June 11. In 2021, the JFC held nine executive sessions with the first on May 6 and the last on June 17. The major budget decisions affecting public education were made by the JFC during those periods.

However, there is no set pattern or schedule as to when the JFC will make its K-12 education funding decisions; it could happen at the beginning, middle or end of the committee’s executive session schedule. Further, once the budget bill leaves the JFC, very few changes are expected. This makes your immediate advocacy and

action vitally important.

The WASB continues to advocate for the state budget priorities laid out in our 2023 Legislative Agenda. Those include seeking: a) an increase in spendable resources for school districts that meets or exceeds the rate of inflation; b) a significant increase in the state’s commitment to reimburse districts for special education costs; c) additional funding for school-based mental health services through categorical aids rather than competitive grants.

The WASB also supports an increase in the low revenue ceiling for the state’s lowest spending districts. The low revenue ceiling aims to narrow gaps in per pupil spending between the lowest spending districts and higher spending districts by allowing an increase in per pupil spending up to a level set by the Legislature without referendum approval.

With a \$7.1 billion state surplus, and inflation running at a 40-year high rate of about 7 percent, securing an inflationary increase in spendable resources for school districts via adjustments in revenue limits or increases in per pupil aid is critically important for many financially struggling districts.

Your advocacy matters

Since the mid-1990s, school district spending has been tightly controlled by state-imposed revenue limits. These limits restrict what schools can spend on teachers, staff, textbooks or other instructional materials, supplies, transportation, routine mainte-

nance for facilities and all the other things our kids and schools need to operate. These limits, by themselves, would not necessarily be a problem if the state allowed reasonable increases over time.

Despite the 2019 recommendation of the bipartisan Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding that revenue limits be adjusted for inflation annually — a practice that was followed from 1998-99 through 2008-09 — there has been no adjustment in revenue limits in six of the last eight school years.

Since 2009, schools haven't allowed increases in spendable resources that met inflation in any school year. In three separate school years, no additional spendable dollars were provided to schools.

In such an environment, the only way districts can boost revenues to maintain their budgets to try to keep pace with inflation is to ask voters to pass a referendum to override its revenue cap.

According to the non-partisan Legislative Reference Bureau, since 2011, allowable school spending has fallen behind inflation by \$2,236.60 per student. In other words, a district that has not been able to pass a referendum since 2011 may find itself with a spending level that is \$2,236 per pupil behind inflation.

It is little wonder that an increasing number of districts find themselves reliant on referendums to maintain operations.

■ Fewer referendums pass

The most recent school district referendum results from April 4, however, may be a warning that an era of historically high passage rates for operating referendums (i.e., referendums to exceed state-imposed revenue limits) may be ending.

Historically, Wisconsin school districts have had a higher success

rate asking voters to approve temporary increases in state-imposed revenue limits for a limited period of years (also called non-recurring referendums) than they have had asking voters for permanent increases (also called recurring referendums). That was not the case on April 4.

Just last November voters approved 59 of 69 temporary (or non-recurring) increases, a passage rate of 85.5 percent. However, on April 4, only 21 of 43 requests for temporary increase in revenue limits were approved (just 48.8 percent). The passage rate hasn't been that low since 2013.

Although, 6 of 10 requests for permanent (recurring) increases were approved (60 percent), in November 2022, 11 of 14 such requests were approved (or 78.6 percent).

One way districts can avoid or forestall going to referendum is by convincing lawmakers to provide inflationary increases in spendable resources for schools. Please act now before it is too late. ■

TELL YOUR STORY!

Budget Advocacy Checklist

We urge you to contact your lawmakers by doing one of the following:

- You may still submit written comments to the JFC: Comments can be sent to the committee at <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomments> or sent via U.S. mail to: Joe Malkasian, Room 305 East, State Capitol, Madison, WI 53702.
- Attend a local listening session held by your legislators and speak about your budget priorities.
- Invite legislators to your schools to share your budget priorities and solicit their feedback.
- Send an email or letter to your legislators outlining your district's budget priorities.

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The Difference Between a ‘Union’ and a ‘Certified Exclusive Collective Bargaining Representative’

The passage of 2011 Wisconsin Act 10 significantly curtailed school districts’ obligation and ability to collectively bargain with their employees. In the wake of these legal changes, public sector unions have taken a variety of approaches to maintain a presence among school district employees. As a result, board members and others might be confused about the distinction between a “union” without statutory recognition and a labor organization that is a “certified exclusive collective bargaining representative.” Simply put, every labor organization is a union, but not every union is a labor organization that is a “certified exclusive collective bargaining representative.” Board members need to understand the crucial distinction between these two types of entities to ensure ongoing legal compliance. This Legal Comment will define these two different entities, differentiate the legal rights that each entity might afford its members, and explain some of the rights employees have under state labor law regardless of the presence of either entity in a district.

Certified exclusive collective bargaining representatives

The Municipal Employment Relations Act provides certain rights to all

school district employees other than supervisors, confidential, managerial, or executive employees. Some of these rights include the right to self-organization; the right to form, join, or assist labor organizations; and the right to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing. A “collective bargaining unit” is a defined group of school district employees that the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission (WERC) has determined to be appropriate for collective bargaining. Members of the defined collective bargaining unit must vote to certify a labor organization as the exclusive collective bargaining representative for the purpose of representing the unit in collective bargaining for that year and each year thereafter. The WERC certifies any exclusive collective bargaining representative that receives at least 51% of the votes of all of the members of the collective bargaining unit in elections conducted by the WERC.

If certified, the exclusive collective bargaining representative has the right to request collective bargaining with the school board regarding total base wages and the distribution of total base wages for a collective bargaining agreement with a duration of one year (except for the initial contract). If the certified

exclusive collective bargaining representative becomes decertified by not receiving at least 51% of the votes of the entire bargaining unit during a subsequent annual election, the affected employees may not be included in a substantially similar bargaining unit for 12 months from the date of decertification.

The certified exclusive collective bargaining representative has a “duty of fair representation” to all members of the collective bargaining unit with respect to “base wages” collective bargaining, regardless of whether such collective bargaining unit members choose to join the certified exclusive collective bargaining representative as dues paying members. An individual employee might choose to vote for certification of an exclusive collective bargaining representative, but that employee has no obligation to join the labor organization that serves as the certified exclusive collective bargaining representative. Therefore, a certified exclusive collective bargaining representative will generally solicit membership in the labor organization from members of the bargaining unit. Additionally, dues for certified exclusive collective bargaining representative membership may not be deducted from member wages or salaries, even at the request of the

Every labor organization is a union, but not every union is a labor organization that is a “certified exclusive collective bargaining representative.”

Unions might have a presence within a school district regardless of whether the unions have been certified as the exclusive collective bargaining representative for any employees of the district.

representative or the employee.

The school board is not obligated to engage the certified exclusive collective bargaining representative regarding matters other than the negotiation of total base wages and distribution thereof, and the school board is prohibited by law from negotiating any other matter with the representative. However, the school board may elect, at its option, to “meet and confer” with the certified exclusive collective bargaining representative on matters outside the scope of total base wages and the distribution thereof. Most such “meet and confer” processes involve other employee stakeholders as well. As distinct from “negotiations,” the ultimate decision/determination on a matter that is the subject of the “meet and confer” process is solely within the control of the school board.

■ Unions

In contrast, unions might have a presence within a school district regardless of whether the unions have been certified as the exclusive collective bargaining representative for any employees of the district. Even in instances where there is not a certified exclusive collective bargaining representative in a district, a union might solicit employees for membership in the union.

Employees who choose to join a union pay the dues associated with doing so and get the benefits of such membership (just like might be the case for any other membership organization). In some situations, it is even possible that more than one

membership union is present in a district for the same group of employees. Unlike a certified exclusive collective bargaining representative, membership unions are not necessarily exclusive to a certain group of district employees.

The membership benefits offered by a union are determined exclusively by the membership union. Each employee has the right to make their own decision regarding whether to join the union in light of the benefits the union offers members. This decision is separate and distinct from the employee’s decision on voting to certify the labor organization as an exclusive collective bargaining representative. Membership union dues may not be deducted from member wages or salaries.

School boards and administrators should resist the urge to ascertain who is a member of either the certified exclusive collective bargaining representative or a union.

Attempting to discern such membership can result in a prohibited practice, and any employment action taken in part due to animus toward an employee’s membership in either organization is also a prohibited practice. The WERC has the authority to review prohibited practice complaints and order a school district to remediate the results of any such prohibited practice (such as by rehiring an improperly terminated employee). That is why it is often better for board members and administrators to not know whether an employee is a member of such an organization.

■ The right to engage in lawful concerted activity

The Municipal Employment Relation Act provides all school district employees (other than supervisors, confidential, managerial, or executive employees) with the right to engage in lawful concerted activity for the purpose of mutual aid or protection. This right gives covered employees broad rights to engage in lawful concerted activity, such as working with other employees to express concerns about wages, hours, and working conditions to the administration, the school board, and even the public (including through social media).

However, this right is not unlimited. For example, a concerted slowdown of work by employees would likely constitute an unlawful strike.

Arising out of an employee’s right to engage in lawful concerted activities for the purpose of mutual aid or protection, an employee has the right to be represented by another individual (but not by legal counsel) at a mandatory meeting with the district administration when the employee reasonably believes the meeting may result in disciplinary action, including meetings that are investigatory interviews. Such representation is often referred to as “Weingarten rights” after the U.S. Supreme Court case granting this right to private sector employees.

This right is not limited to employees that are members of a union or certified exclusive collective bargaining representative. However, some unions and certified exclusive collective bargaining representatives

offer such representation as a benefit to their members. Certified exclusive collective bargaining representatives do not have an obligation to represent all members of a collective bargaining unit in such meetings. Such representation is outside the scope of the labor organization's duty of fair representation.

School districts have no legal duty to advise the employee of the right to representation at these meetings. However, districts may choose to advise employees of this right in certain situations. Additionally, administrators should review applicable policies and employee handbooks which might require administrators to advise employees

of their right to representation at certain meetings.

Conclusion

2011 Wisconsin Act 10 fundamentally altered school district labor relations. Board members need to be aware of these significant changes so they can avoid creating legal risk, even inadvertently. Negotiation is limited in scope and only available when there is a certified exclusive collective bargaining representative for a defined bargaining unit in the district. Absent such certification, any union presence in a district is solely through a membership union that offers certain rights to members as established by that membership

union. Nevertheless, certain rights, such as the right to engage in lawful concerted activity for the purpose of mutual aid or protection, including Weingarten rights, exist for all school district employees covered by state law. Districts facing questions regarding certified exclusive collective bargaining representatives, unions, and statutory employee rights should consult with legal counsel. ■

This Legal Comment was written by Michael J. Julka and Brian P. Goodman, of Boardman & Clark LLP, WASB Legal Counsel. For related articles, see Wisconsin School News: "Addressing Questions About Act 10 After Wisconsin Supreme Court Decision" (Sept. 2014); and "Effects of Decertification of the Exclusive Bargaining Representative" (Jan. 2014).

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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