

WISCONSIN

School News

October 2023 | wasb.org

Official publication of the Wisconsin Association of School F

Oregon students
tend to a garden in
the courtyard of
Forest Edge Elementary.

An Environment for **LEARNING**

Wisconsin students take the lead in building
a greener, healthier state



BoardDocs®

A DILIGENT BRAND

EFFICIENT. TRANSPARENT. SECURE.

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

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

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

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



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

**Visit learn.Diligent.com/WASB
to request a demo.**



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

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

Dan Rossmiller
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 ■

608-512-1701 • dlinehan@wasb.org

■ WASB OFFICERS ■

Dan Rossmiller
Executive Director

Rosanne Hahn
Burlington, Region 13
President

Mike Humke
Dodgeville, Region 9
1st Vice President

Andrew Maertz
Reedsville, Region 8
2nd Vice President

Barbara Herzog
Oshkosh, Region 7
Immediate Past President

■ WASB BOARD OF DIRECTORS ■

Linda Flottum
Turtle Lake, Region 1

Randy Erickson
Prentice, Region 2

Alan Tuchtenhagen
River Falls, Region 4

Jim Bouché
Wausau, Region 5

Mary Jo Rozmenoski
Black River Falls, Region 6

Sue Today
Sevastopol, Region 3

Sandie Anderson
Wild Rose, Region 10

Brett Hyde
Muskego-Norway,
Region 11

Bob Green
Middleton-Cross Plains,
Region 12

Xela Garcia
Milwaukee, Region 14

Cherie Rhodes
Slinger, Region 15

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.



LEARN WHAT IT TAKES TO BE RECOGNIZED AS A GREEN RIBBON SCHOOL — page 4

4 National Green Ribbon Winners Tell Their Story

Four Wisconsin schools share what it takes to achieve recognition in a national program promoting health, wellness and environmental education.

20 Learning in the School Forest

Brian M. Collins, Lori Danz

Two Wisconsin teachers of the year share how they approach outdoor education in their schools.

24 Mini Grants. Big Impact.

Heather Phelps

Students use KEEP mini-grant funds to help reduce the carbon footprint of their schools.

12 From Classroom to Community

Victoria Rydberg-Nania

Wisconsin students prioritize sustainability and climate education.

28 'Cool Choices'

Xia Lowery

Wisconsin students participate in an online game that teaches sustainability practices.

16 Combating 'Swatting' in Schools

Ted Hayes

Indicators and mitigation strategies to help identify dangerous and disruptive hoax phone calls.

DEPARTMENTS & COLUMNS

2 News Briefs

3 Viewpoint — Helping You Build a Vision

30 Capitol Watch — Fall Brings Opportunity

32 Association News — WASB Fall Legislative Conference, 2023 Fall Regional Meetings, School Board Week, WASB Connection Podcast, Upcoming Webinars and Workshops

34 Legal Comment — 6 Things Board Policies Should Address Regarding Workplace Harassment



Slinger Student Wins Sticker Design Contest

A Slinger sophomore created a design showing the tenderness of a loon and chick afloat to win the 2024 Wisconsin State Park and Forest vehicle admission sticker design contest.

Samantha Williams' sticker will be printed on state park and forest annual vehicle admission stickers and will be displayed on more than a half-million vehicles, according to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Taking second place was Aspen Wolter of Jefferson High School, and Chase Robert Reyer of Oshkosh North High School came in third.

Honorable mentions went to:

- Brianne Fortney, Ashwaubenon High School
- Carly Goodlund, McFarland High School
- Raina Crawley, Slinger High School
- Kaya Miller, Slinger High School
- Sean Allen, Kiel High School
- Isabel Lehner, D.C. Everest Idea Charter School
- Emily Grubb, Beaver Dam High School

The annual DNR-sponsored design contest, now in its 33rd year, is open to artwork submissions from high school-age students attending Wisconsin's public, private or parochial schools or home-schools. About 150 entries were sent to the DNR this year. □

Teacher Turnover Rises in Wisconsin

Teacher turnover in Wisconsin has reached its highest level in 14 years, according to a Wisconsin Policy Forum report.

About 16% of teachers moved to a new district or left the teaching profession between the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years. Since 2009, the average annual turnover in teachers has been 11.5%.

The Wisconsin Policy Forum notes that some teacher turnover is not necessarily a problem, but high levels can harm student learning.

"This effect is especially concerning given our findings that turnover is highest in precisely those schools where students face the

biggest challenges and might benefit the most from a stable environment in which to learn," the report states.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jill Underly told The Capital Times that the problem is a "pipeline issue," and she said the state and district should consider their mentoring and support options.

Peggy Wirtz-Olsen, president of the Wisconsin Education Association Council, cited working conditions as a key element of turnover.

"I'm going to underscore low pay, I'm going to talk about unreasonable workloads and really a lack of voice in school decision making," she told the newspaper. □

STAT OF THE MONTH

15.8%

Wisconsin teacher turnover

in the period before the 2022-23 school year.

Source: Wisconsin Policy Forum

AI Could Be Valuable Tool in Schools

From the classroom to the district office and beyond, the artificial intelligence revolution has arrived to K-12 education, according to an article in Education Week.

However, long-term planning and guidance is needed before schools can take advantage of these tools, the article states.

Districts may find more success by experimenting with AI behind the scenes rather than starting in the classroom, according to Bill Daggett, founder of the International Center for Leadership in Education and the Successful Practices Network.

"If it will save you money at the operations level, it's not going to be controversial, it's going to be very positive," Daggett told Education Week.

Districts searching for guidance

around using these tools can start by consulting organizations such as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and the International Society for Technology in Education.

The article suggests a number of potential areas AI could contribute to, including facilities and transportation, community relations, hiring and clerical work.

For example, districts can use AI to find the most efficient transportation routes.

Scott Elder, superintendent of the Albuquerque school district in New Mexico, told the publication that he'd like to use AI to keep better track of the pace of school spending.

"We're really looking at it to try to streamline the work we do on payroll and operations," he said. □



Helping You Build a Vision

If you're a Wisconsin education leader looking for inspiration and learning opportunities, I hope you'll consider what the WASB has to offer this fall.

The month of October begins with Wisconsin School Board Week, a time to recognize the good work and sacrifices you've made for your communities. Head to WASB.org for more information and a toolkit to help you celebrate.

In addition, our many events this fall will focus on building you up and supporting you in your role as leaders.

Those events start with Fall Regional Meetings, a series of 14 gatherings held across Wisconsin. Before each one, an experienced WASB attorney will hold a workshop about school board member responsibilities under public records law. We chose this topic because we're hearing so much about the need for districts to respond to these increasingly common and complex requests.

I wrote about the regional meetings in last month's column. If you want to learn more about what these regional meetings have to offer, please head to WASB.org and select "Training & Events." I look forward to seeing you at those gatherings.

I'm also excited to welcome members to the Fall Legislative Conference at the Heidel House in Green Lake on Saturday, Nov. 4.

And it's not just for your board presidents or legislative liaisons; the lineup is full of interesting topics that are relevant to every school board member's work.

I hope you'll look at the agenda on page 31, see the diverse topics and presenters and find something that piques your interest.

Meanwhile, our online events calendar is also full of opportunities for you to grow as leaders. The pandemic prompted us to expand our online offerings, and we've kept many of those in place, while adding new and timely offerings.

For example, you can attend an online Fall Regional Meeting on the evening of Wednesday, Nov. 1 and an online workshop about public records law on Wednesday, Dec. 6. Visit our Online Events page at WASB.org to find the full lineup of upcoming offers.

There's so much information available online, but it can be hard to know what's accurate and relevant. Our Online Learning Platform is the largest collection of online professional development made specifically for Wisconsin school board members and administrative staff.

It covers virtually every topic a school board member needs to know about, and everyone in your district can access it under one subscription. We've recently recorded a two-minute demo that explains how to find and

use the Platform. Find it at WASB.org by selecting "Training & Events" then "Online Learning Platform."

Finally, the pages of this issue are a great example of how we view our role as public education evangelists.

It's not only about sharing the good news about what schools and students are doing, but about highlighting stories that you can bring to your district. We know many of you draw inspiration and ideas from fellow school districts, and we make sure to highlight efforts in the School News that are within the grasp of most districts.

Starting on page 4, learn about how three Wisconsin schools and a district hit high marks in environmentally friendly education and practices. School board priorities led directly to these opportunities for children to connect their classroom and community.

Read about how the Oregon School District started with a school board policy committed to environmental sustainability and wellness and ended up with the first net-zero school in the state. This is another way of saying it supplies all its own power through renewable energy.

If you're looking to develop your vision as leaders, please check out what the WASB can do for you. What you do matters for kids. ■

In addition, our many events this fall will focus on building you up and supporting you in your role as leaders.

Their Story...

NATIONAL GREEN RIBBON WINNERS



Lettuce is harvested from the ForkFarm hydroponic unit at the Unified School District of De Pere

Each year, the U.S. Department of Education recognizes the work of schools across the country by designating them as “Green Ribbon Schools.”

The award is intended to recognize schools with comprehensive, measurable efforts that make progress in three areas: reduced environmental impact and costs, improved health and wellness, and effective environmental and sustainability education.

In 2023, 17 states participated in the program, and 26 schools and 11 districts were recognized nationwide. This includes three Wisconsin public schools and one public school district. Wisconsin School News asked each district to write about what they achieved and how they did it.

Unified School District of De Pere

De Pere Takes Comprehensive Approach to Sustainability

By Pamela Pirman

The Unified School District of De Pere was one of only 11 districts nationwide to be recognized for its district-wide accomplishments.

“This award is especially meaningful because it recognizes the valuable sustainability-related teaching and learning happening

within our district,” Superintendent Christopher Thompson said. “Our students plant and harvest vegetables from raised bed gardens at each school.”

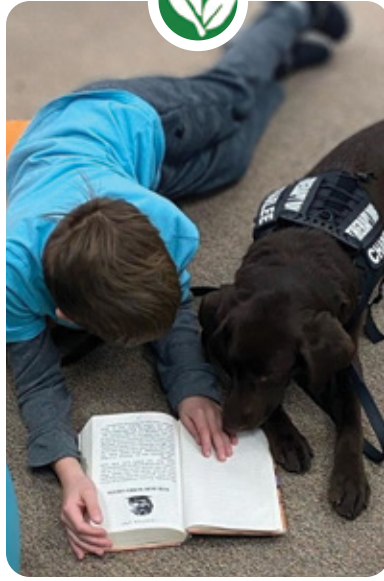
District buildings feature outdoor learning centers as well as vegetable and pollinator gardens. A diverse group of staff, from school nutrition employees to high school agriculture teachers, use the gardens as part of their hands-on curriculum. They also work with students at all grade levels to plant, maintain and harvest

produce from the vegetable gardens.

The district was also recognized for its health and fitness efforts, including the regular participation of students in health and fitness challenges.

In collaboration with Advocate Aurora Health, a full-time nurse rotates on a regular schedule through all seven district buildings providing on-site staff access to health care.

In the high school level, students monitor local streams and lakes for water quality indicators.



At De Pere, a therapy dog offers support and a calming demeanor for a young student.

“All grades benefit from the environmental programming offered at the Fallen Timbers Environmental Center of which our district is a founding member,” Thompson said.

Through a unique partnership with five other school districts and CESA 6, the cooperatively funded 450-acre Fallen Timbers Environmental Education Center provides students with environmental education field study and classroom opportunities focused on environmental stewardship.

“Sustainability measures, high-quality instruction and student performance go hand-in-hand in our district,” Thompson said.

In a report on the 2023 awardees, the Department of Education noted several areas of achievement in the district.

Reducing environmental impacts, costs

The first of three goals laid out by the federal government concerns lowering the school’s impact on the environment and reducing energy costs.

De Pere accomplishes the latter goal by tracking energy used in buildings throughout the day and modifying practices accordingly. It also implements clean energy choices when HVAC systems have been upgraded, including geothermal and passive solar energy sources at Dickinson Elementary School.

A recent outdoor athletic complex improvement made thoughtful decisions about how to manage rain water on site. The project also updated outdoor light fixtures with LED lighting and used native foliage plantings to minimize the need for energy-consuming maintenance and fertilizing.

They also regularly replace water fountains with water bottle filling stations to conserve water and reduce single-use plastics.

Improving student health and wellness

The Green Ribbon program also recognizes schools that consider how the construction, design and operations of school grounds contributes to the health of students, visitors and staff.

Each month, De Pere inspects school structures for mold, moisture and water leakage. Ground-contact classrooms are also tested for radon.

The district has purchased and underwrites the cost of three therapy dogs, which are paired with district staff. The dogs provide unconditional support for students needing a calming friend at various points in the school day. The success of the program has led to additional fundraising in 2023 for a fourth dog to be added in 2024.

In late 2022, the district purchased and began operation of its second ForkFarm hydroponic growing station. The hydroponic units produce enough lettuce to fulfill most of the need for lettuce in the school lunch program. Ultimately, the lettuce for lunch salads and entrées garnishes is grown directly at the school building where it is served.

Teaching the environment

The third goal of the Green Ribbon program recognizes schools that teach students about the interplay of human and environmental systems, including the development of civic engagement knowledge and skills.

In addition to the learning at the Fallen Timbers Environmental Education Center, nearby city parks provide added access to environmental education. This is incorporated throughout the kindergarten through grade twelve curriculum including natural sciences, English language arts, social sciences, family and consumer education, health studies, physical education and agriculture content areas.

Students enrolled in high school ecology classes spend a significant amount of time “in the field” locally, performing water quality testing and other measurements related to the area’s ecosystem.

“Together with infrastructure upgrades that have made our buildings and grounds more environmentally friendly, it is clear our commitment to sustainability is woven into the fabric of each of our schools,” Thompson said.

Pamela Pirman is communications director for the Unified School District of De Pere.

Browning Elementary School, Milwaukee Public Schools

Milwaukee Breathes New Life Into Greenhouse

By Carol Deptolla and MPS Staff

Six years ago, Raymond Unanka joined Milwaukee Public Schools as the principal of Browning Elementary School. Within days, he took note of the school’s greenhouse — vacant and devoid, serving only as a storage unit for boxes. It was concerning, and Unanka was going to do something about it.

After years of collaborative



Browning Elementary School students learn to grow a variety of vegetables in the school's greenhouse that are then raised in outdoor beds, and ultimately harvested for the community.



efforts and hard work, the greenhouse is a place where young students find joy and pride in their flourishing plants while learning about an efficient and environmentally effective way to grow food, the aquaponic system.

“It’s calming, and it’s a learning process for the scholars,” Unanka said. And it’s one that’s hands-on.

The greenhouse is just one of the ways in which Browning School has made giant strides toward becoming a green school and focusing on health. Browning has more than 250 students, from 3-year-old kindergarten through grade five.

■ Collaboration sparks greenhouse renewal

The key to Browning’s successful embrace of sustainable practices has been its Milwaukee Community Schools Partnership. The partnership strives to help schools share leadership — including the community in decision making — and to focus on culturally responsive and restorative practices, with the help of businesses and organizations.

MPS, the Milwaukee Teachers’

Education Association, and the United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County started the partnership in 2015. Now, 16 MPS schools are in the partnership.

The greenhouse’s renewal sprouted from a collaboration among Browning’s lead agency, the Silver Spring Neighborhood Center, which is housed in the same building; the Milwaukee School of Engineering; Johnson Controls, a global company making sustainable building systems that has a campus just 3 miles from Browning; and SHARP Literacy, a nonprofit program focused on hands-on and STEAM learning.

“I think a driving force for everything was this idea that we were living in a food desert,” said Gianna F.D. Holschbach, community school coordinator for Browning. At the time, the neighborhood had no full-service grocery store (one is due to open this year).

Plants such as tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers are nurtured in the greenhouse and transferred outdoors to raised beds. A food pantry in the neighborhood center has received some of the school’s harvests,

Holschbach said. Plantings were for the children and the neighbors, she noted.

As part of the project, a large solar-operated dehydrator is used to dry fruits, teaching students how drying preserves foods.

Because the greenhouse is relatively small, a video system was installed.

“Scholars who are unable to go to the greenhouse can see what’s happening” from their classrooms, Unanka said.

■ Planting seeds of learning

Tasha Seals, who teaches 3rd grade at Browning, has her students plant seeds in the classroom, where they watch them become seedlings and nurture them. Students can take their plants home in late spring or donate them to the greenhouse.

She shared that students were enthusiastic about taking inhouse field trips to the greenhouse and about the hands-on learning, too.

Latasha Holt, Browning’s parent coordinator, said the parents she’s spoken to “were excited to know their children were attending a school



*“A food pantry in the neighborhood center has received some of the school’s harvests,” Holschbach said.
“Plantings were for the children and the neighbors.”*

where greenery mattered, where gardening mattered.” It felt like a counterpoint to society’s longtime emphasis on tech, she observed. Children could dig their hands into soil.

And to complete the cycle of plant life, students learn the science and practice of composting.

The pandemic in its early phase disrupted care of the garden, which includes native plantings. That remains a challenge to be resolved, according to Holt — finding volunteers to care for plants when children and teachers aren’t available. In the summers, when the children are home, staff from the neighborhood center feed the fish in the greenhouse.

But the greenhouse and gardens became a source of ecotherapy for children and neighbors in the pandemic, as well.

A sustainable measure by Browning outside the school was turning its previously asphalt-covered playground into a space that’s green in more ways than one.

■ Children at play

Johnson Controls suggested installing a vast underground stormwater vault beneath the school’s playground. The vault salvages up to 872,000 gallons of runoff, keeping it from overwhelming the city’s sewer system and preventing the release of untreated sewage into Lake Michigan.

After the vault was installed, a 55,000-square-foot sports complex

was built atop it to replace the playground, with funding from Johnson Controls and the Milwaukee Bucks. The amenities, which include six basketball courts, a 200-meter track, a soccer field, and a futsal court, also benefit the neighbors of adjacent Westlawn Gardens. Westlawn is a LEED silver-certified green housing development opened by the city in 2012.

Another piece is Browning’s Walking School Bus. Adults chaperone young students walking to school, stopping at the students’ houses to pick them up. A Walking School Bus teaches students pedestrian safety, keeps them safe while walking, increases students’ physical activity, and helps reduce traffic congestion around schools.

Principal Unanka, one of the volunteer walkers for the Walking School Bus, found other benefits, as well.

“Those scholars were no longer late to school. They were on time,” he said. Attendance improved, and parents felt reassured when they were unable to accompany their children, Unanka added.

Those were precisely the reasons the Walking School Bus first took off. Browning’s Community School Leadership Team saw the program as a way to increase school enrollment from the neighborhood and improve attendance, said Holschbach, the community school

coordinator. The team includes school staff, students, families, community partners, and neighborhood residents.

■ Meeting challenges

As with any new program, challenges arise. The Walking School Bus at Browning is no different — primarily, the challenge is having enough volunteers to walk with children daily.

The key has been to start small, Holschbach said: First, the bus made the rounds one day a week, growing to two when it was possible. Ultimately, the goal is to offer the Walking School Bus daily. Having volunteers work in teams significantly helps to prevent bus cancellations.

Weather in Wisconsin has its own challenges. The Wisconsin Bike Fed, however, provided participants with ponchos, flashlights, hats, and gloves. In extreme cold, bus organizers gauge families’ and volunteers’ comfort level with the cold and segment usual routes to minimize time outdoors.

Additionally, working with the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee, the school saw upgrades to infrastructure that make walking and bicycling safer for students: speed bumps, additional crosswalks, and added stop signs, for instance.

Carol Deptolla is communications coordinator III at Milwaukee Public Schools.



Eagleville Elementary Charter School students learn how to reduce lunchroom waste through composting, recycling and reducing the use of plastic and paper.

**Eagleville Elementary Charter School,
Mukwonago Area School District**

**Eagleville School Community
Teams Up to Reduce Waste in
Cafeteria**

By Benjamin Kossow

A small school in rural southwestern Waukesha County is on a mighty mission to reduce its environmental impact and improve the health and wellness of students and staff.

Eagleville Elementary Charter School is the oldest and smallest school in the Mukwonago Area School District. Since 2005, Eagleville has operated as a charter school and, in recent years, focused on a host of impactful environmental initiatives culminating with the tiny school earning a big recognition.

“Our students and staff build environmental literacy and stewardship throughout the school day and the year,” said Colleen Hoyne, Eagleville principal. “Our initiatives are the result of fantastic and meaningful support from our community, our staff, and our students.”

As a community of learners, Eagleville incorporates environmental literacy and sustainability

education, while supporting outstanding academic achievement, in several ways.

■ Navigating lunchroom waste

All students and staff reduce waste through composting, recycling and eliminating the use of plastic and paper in the cafeteria. At the start of each school year, students learn about the importance of recycling and composting as well as what and how to recycle and compost at school. Some years, staff and students lead these efforts.

Other years, Eagleville has partnered with Waukesha or Milwaukee County to have experts share more about recycling and composting in their communities. A key part of the composting success at Eagleville are the school’s paraprofessionals, who have championed this work.

“Every day, our lunchroom paraprofessionals help students get their lunch waste in the right bin,” said Hoyne. “They also help students take the compost out to our bins and mix the compost. Every student has the opportunity to compost at least twice throughout the year. Older students help mentor the younger students to teach them how to compost.”

**■ New, redesigned composters
aid efforts**

Composting at Eagleville hasn’t been without its challenges. This winter, Eagleville added a winter composter to their arsenal, expanding the amount of compost the school is able to produce during the cold winter months. In addition, this summer Eagleville partnered with a former student who is redesigning the school’s compost bins for easier access to composted material. This will allow the school and its students to use more of the material in school gardens.

Students also focus on recycling their waste during lunch. Students collect all recyclable items at the end of the day. This recycling is weighed and tracked so the school can continue to grow its recycling practices. In 2021-22, Eagleville 5th and 6th grade students were recognized by PepsiCo Recycling as Recycling Stars for their outstanding recycling efforts, including weekly data collection and ongoing education efforts within the school community.

■ Cutting out plastic

Eagleville has also taken steps to reduce waste by using reusable trays



and silverware. In 2022-23, students were inspired by Miranda Paul's book, "One Plastic Bag," to reduce the plastic they bring in their lunches as well. Families could purchase reusable plastic bags and for two days were encouraged to have no single use plastic in their lunches. Almost 100 reusable plastic bags were ordered. Other students purchased their own bags with their favorite designs. Students were excited to show off the ways they eliminated single-use plastic from their lunches. Students are looking to expand this program for the 2023-24 school year.

In addition to reducing waste, the Eagleville Green Team, consisting of students, worked to bring healthier choices to the school by sharing healthy snacks during lunch time. Each month the Green Team selected a healthy snack, presented it to students, and students had the opportunity to try a healthy snack they might not otherwise have known about.

Beyond the cafeteria

Eagleville's green efforts extend well beyond the cafeteria. In recent years, Eagleville has worked to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through a no-idling policy drop-off and pick-up policy, essentially discouraging families from running their cars before and after school while waiting for their children.

"This policy has not only made an impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but provided a realistic example of ways families can make a difference, both at school but also in their everyday lives," said Hoyne. Eagleville has also combined bus routes to increase efficiency and reduce emissions further.

A centerpiece of Eagleville's efforts is the unique setting and its grounds. Located in rural Waukesha County, Eagleville has several whole-school walking and running events in the adjacent school forest. In addition, students and staff use the school gardens, school forest, and Jericho Creek to get hands-on

experiences within the natural environment. The projects are tied to school curriculum and learning across a variety of areas to make learning meaningful and impactful.

For example, each year students in fourth, fifth and sixth grade practice research skills, collaboration, problem solving and math computation through the ongoing butterfly garden expansion. Groups select a Wisconsin butterfly and then research the plants that attract them. They plan what they would like to see planted, the cost and how many we can afford to purchase. Eventually, all students in grades kindergarten through sixth get to help plant in the butterfly garden.

This spring, Eagleville's students and staff were able to utilize an innovative and Earth-friendly way to reduce buckthorn and other invasive species in the school forest. The school's parent-teacher organization paid for a herd of over 70 goats to spend two weeks eating invasive species and clearing the forest floor. Students were able to learn about the benefits of this environmentally sustainable practice and see the goats in action. To maximize the environmental impact, the goats are expected to return this fall to clear the forest floor again.

The Green Ribbon award for Eagleville was a team effort involving all the school's stakeholders.

"We're fortunate to have tremendous support from our parents, including an active Parent Teacher Group and a Green Team," said Cathy Selzer-Benavides, 4th and 5th grade teacher at Eagleville. "This award is really a reflection of the Eagleville community and an example of students, staff, and community working together."

Benjamin Kossow is coordinator of assessment and data for the Mukwonago Area School District.



Eagleville students and staff employ the use of goats to combat the growth of invasive species in the school forest.



Students in a Forest Edge kindergarten class receive a healthy treat as a result of winning the schoolwide Tuesday Trivia contest.

Oregon School District

Oregon Sustainability Commitment Rooted in Policy, Culture

By Oregon School District staff

The Oregon School District has long been committed to environmental sustainability and wellness. Its Board of Education adopted a policy on environmental sustainability:

“The Oregon School District believes it is critical for the future of our planet to develop learners who are ecologically literate and environmentally responsible citizens and stewards. We believe it is important to model the district’s commitment by establishing these values and developing practices consistent with them.”

In alignment with this policy, the district has continually taken mea-

asures to implement environmentally sustainable features into school buildings and integrate sustainable concepts into classroom learning across the district.

In 2020, the district had the opportunity to take advantage of the most updated sustainability features when they built Forest Edge Elementary School. These features, along with the support of the district’s commitment to environmental sustainability made a natural connection to applying for the Green Ribbon award. The remainder of this article will discuss the environmental features incorporated into Forest Edge and the school’s efforts that contributed to Forest Edge joining other Oregon schools in earning the Green Ribbon designation.

The Forest Edge story

Forest Edge was designed with many elements that showcase the district’s value in environmental sustainability. This has resulted in Forest Edge being named the first verified net-zero energy school in the state of Wisconsin. From its 1,704 solar panels and 90 geothermal wells to “smart” windows (electrochromic glass that automatically tints exterior windows), Forest Edge is a study in conservation.

Sustainability extends to the landscaping, where instead of grass you will find an abundance of native prairie plants which grow wild in front and around school property. This decreases the need to mow and fertilize while also decreasing water usage with water efficient plantings.

Forest Edge also has a green roof element on small sections of the overhang to illustrate how it is possible to decrease stormwater runoff and naturally filter pollutants. It also demonstrates how green roofs can insulate and help keep buildings cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter, which reduces energy consumption overall.

The road to Green Ribbon

With this framework in place, Forest Edge opened its doors in 2020 and immediately adopted a focus on wellness and a green and healthy school culture that is also embraced at other district schools. A team of Forest Edge educators organized a Green and Healthy committee, which took on the task of creating both edible and pollinator gardens. Students were involved in all aspects of garden planning and planting and were assisted by staff, community master gardeners, staff and farm-to-school specialists.

Today, the Green and Healthy student leadership team not only helps manage the two gardens, but also educates their peers on recycling practices to divert as much waste from landfills as possible. They have also started a school-wide composting program, encouraging their



Classrooms use grow lights in the winter months to start seeds indoors and help transplant them into the edible garden in the spring.

peers to sort their lunch food waste into bins, which would then be taken out to the school composters.

Like other schools in the district, Forest Edge's green and healthy mindset extends into classroom lessons. For example:

- A team of Forest Edge educators developed grade-appropriate lessons about renewable energy that can be found at the school. Students can see firsthand how much energy the building uses and where the power is coming from using the eGauge energy monitor.
- Some students also participated in a fun energy competition in 2023 called Renew Our Schools, a hands-on learning experience about energy conservation and how our day to day decisions impact it. They shared their learning with peers and teachers and created energy conservation signs to hang throughout the building.
- The STEAM class regularly collects and uses recycled materials to creatively design engineering projects through the Engineering Design Process program. Students have created robots, treehouses, board games, marble mazes and many other unique designs in past years.
- Science curriculum in many grades focuses on human impact, water consumption, energy flow and being a good steward to the environment.
- Previous environmentally focused activities include field trips to the

wastewater treatment plant, environmental stewardship field trips to nature sites (with guided environmental education lessons), and individual student projects focusing on invasive species and plastic pollution. Hands-on activities such as exploring the school prairies and forests, Enviroscope wetlands kit and watershed/nonpoint pollution models are also used.

- Every classroom has a movement break incorporated into daily instruction.
- Classrooms use grow lights in the winter months to start seeds indoors and help transplant them into the edible garden in the spring.
- For celebrations including birthdays, they focus on special activities, such as parents/guardians reading a special book to the class, donating a playground ball, or inviting a family guest to visit the class, rather than sending in classroom food and treats.

Additionally, Forest Edge acquired a hydroponic grower through a grant. Students can learn how it operates, and use it to grow and harvest fruits, vegetables and herbs year round. Students oversee maintenance of the water and feeding cycle of the hydroponic system, giving them first-hand experience in how to delicately balance the nutrients and sunlight necessary to grow food indoors.

Various outdoor learning spaces are available, including three court-

yards which are frequently used throughout the year; the band, orchestra and choir classes enjoy practicing in these outdoor spaces. Movement breaks are often held in the edible garden, where students may help build garden beds, dig the soil, and pull weeds. Sixth-grade students manage the pollinator garden and learn to identify native flowering plants. Staff can be seen on the outdoor walking path during their lunch break, getting in those additional steps.

At the core of the district's values is the "whole child emphasis," which encompasses physical, social and emotional wellbeing. Our student services team — consisting of a school social worker, a school psychologist and the school's guidance counselors — all work together and collaborate closely. This team worked together to introduce two ZEN DENs to the school in 2021: one calming space and the other a movement space. Students can safely go there to either decompress with movement or sit in a quiet space to calm their bodies. Staff members are also encouraged to use this space. Additionally, the student services team has started a walking club in 2022-23 where staff and students who signed up walk outdoors once or twice a week.

The Oregon School District approach to environmental sustainability and wellness has provided the space and opportunities for Forest Edge to implement the many activities that contributed to the district achieving the Green Ribbon award. ■



A Walden III student places basil sprouts grown from seed into the hydroponic system.

From **CLASSROOM** to **COMMUNITY**

Wisconsin students prioritize sustainability and climate education

by Victoria Rydberg-Nania, *Green & Healthy Schools*

This fall, students in the rural Palmyra-Eagle Area School District and 14 other districts are having quieter rides to school thanks to new electric buses funded by a grant through the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

This move is one of many that school districts across the state are making to conserve and protect Wisconsin's natural resources while saving money and creating healthier environments for school communities.

Wisconsin has a long and proud tradition of enjoying and conserving natural resources while recognizing that the health of the state's economy and people is inextricably bound to the health of the environ-

ment. Districts across the state are taking an active role in continuing this legacy through sustainability initiatives and climate education.

■ Milwaukee to Eau Claire to the Northwoods

In March of 2020, just as the COVID-19 pandemic was starting, the state's largest school district became the first to pass a resolution designed to bring attention to climate change and develop an action plan for the district. Milwaukee Public Schools' resolution acknowledges that schools should demonstrate leadership in modeling to students climate-conscious and environmentally friendly practices.

As part of this resolution, a Climate Justice Curriculum Advisory Committee and a District Sustainability Team were created. This resolution formalized and expanded support for green initiatives in MPS, including establishing a climate justice instructional coach staff position to support classroom educators.

To protect the waters of Lake Michigan, MPS has been partnering



Victoria Rydberg-Nania



*River Falls was one of the first districts to widely implement the online game **Cool Choices in Green & Healthy Schools** to encourage sustainable actions among students and staff.*

with the nonprofit Reflo for almost a decade to redevelop schoolyards to reduce stormwater runoff and provide outdoor learning opportunities for students, among other things. Their commitment to the state’s natural resources and children’s health doesn’t stop here. This summer, Bryant Elementary School’s outdoor classroom was unveiled, which was just one of 134 being constructed or enhanced across the district funded through federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds.

Sustainability efforts are not limited to the southeast part of the state. Along the Mississippi River in La Crosse, Summit Environmental School is creating an outdoor solar classroom in partnership with Solar on La Crosse Schools — or SOLS. The proposed classroom will be a wood-framed structure shaped like a canopy.



After one and a half weeks of growth, basil sprouts are separated prior to being placed into the hydroponic system at Walden III.

Head a couple hours north and sustainability initiatives abound in Eau Claire County. Eau Claire County recently awarded grants to assist the county’s K-12 schools to establish or improve upon food waste diversion efforts and education about food waste and composting. The Eau Claire Area School District was one of the first back in 2019 to adopt a resolution “to establish goals on sustainability, renewable energy, and carbon neutrality.” Augusta School District, also in Eau Claire County, was one of the schools awarded funding for clean transportation.

Nearby, the School District of River Falls has a long standing partnership with the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, City of River Falls, School District of River Falls, and Chippewa Valley Technical College to advance actions for a more sustainable community. River Falls was one of the first districts to widely implement the online game Cool Choices in Green & Healthy Schools (see article on page 28 for more) to encourage sustainable actions among students and staff.

Sustainability projects are making their way across the great Northwoods as well. The Northland Pines School District has its third solar

panel project located at St. Germain Elementary and Montessori Learning Center site. There are also solar panels at the Eagle River school campus and the Land O’ Lakes Elementary School.

From policy to education and clean transportation to renewable energy, Wisconsin school districts are working to create a more sustainable world for future generations. In many places, students are leading the way.

Students lead the way

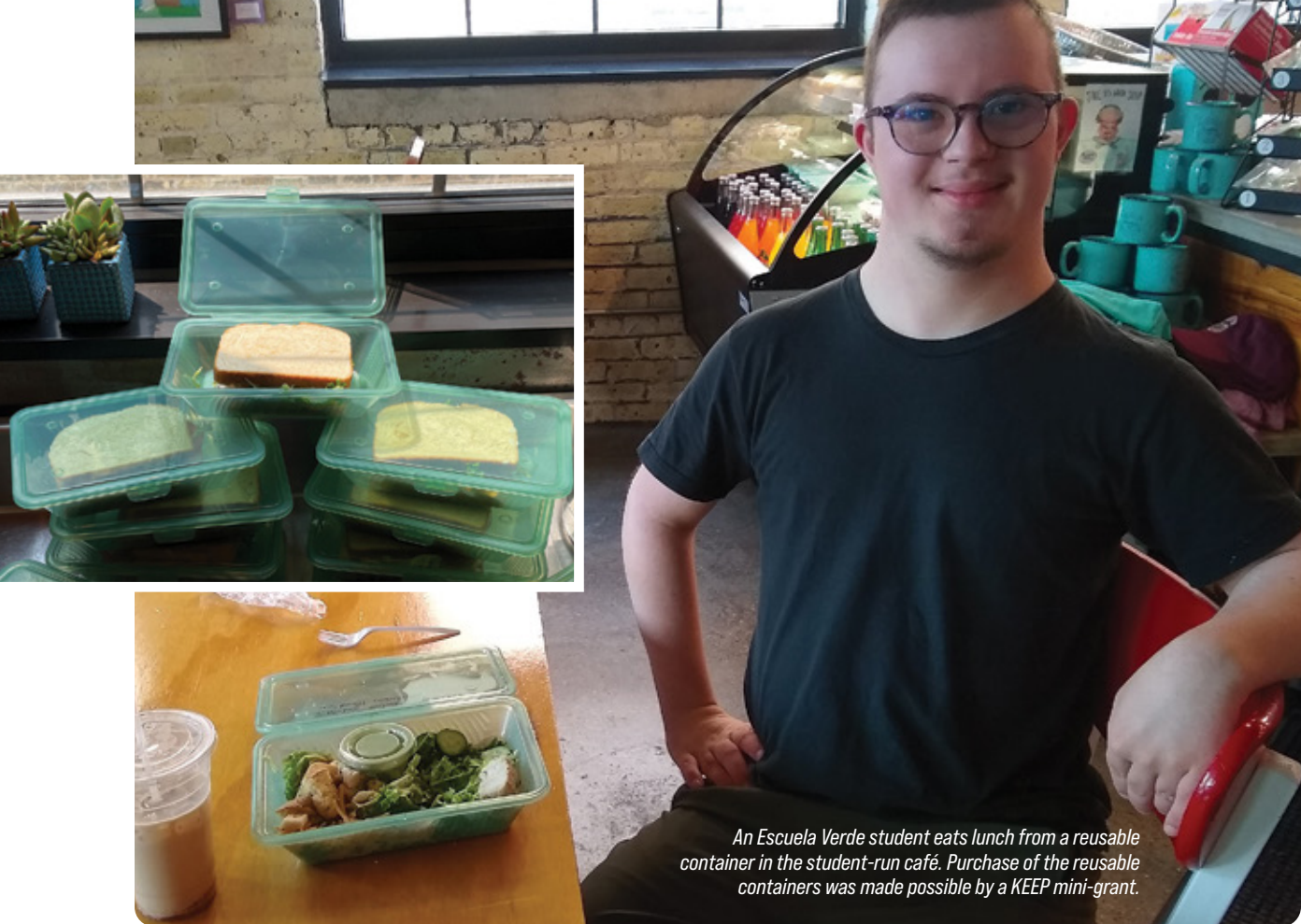
Youth across the state are demonstrating passion for issues around sustainability and climate education. In Sheboygan, a South High School senior is starting a local action team for Wisconsin’s branch of Action for the Climate Emergency, or ACE, a national organization that supports high school and college students to take action, according to the Sheboygan Press.

Hundreds of pounds of food are being diverted from the waste stream through Compromise Compost, a new small business run by students in North Fond du Lac that uses a biodigester to convert food waste to renewable energy.

Student-led efforts have gained traction in the past few years. In 2021, students in Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District persuaded the school board to pass their resolution “To address Global Warming through Clean Energy, Waste Reduction, Sustainable Choices, and Environmental Education,” which calls for goals to meet 100% of all district operations energy needs with renewable energy by 2035.



To support the Milwaukee Public Schools Climate Justice resolution, the district worked with Green & Healthy Schools Wisconsin and other partners to establish TeachWisconsinClimate.org — a repository for educators to find instructional resources to support climate education in any subject area.



An Escuela Verde student eats lunch from a reusable container in the student-run café. Purchase of the reusable containers was made possible by a KEEP mini-grant.

Madison-area students also organized to form the Dane County Youth Environmental Committee and have established an annual Dane County High School Climate Action Conference.

Opportunities like the Green Team Mini-Grants from KEEP — Wisconsin’s K-12 Energy Education Programs often provide the catalyst for such initiatives (see the article on page 24 for more).

Recognizing sustainability efforts

In addition to all the local environmental, health and economic benefits these efforts yield, schools, districts, educators and youth can gain state and national recognition as well.

Educators and students can receive recognition for sustainability efforts through local, state and national awards programs such as the following:

- Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education (wae.org/awards).

- Green Schools Consortium of Milwaukee (gscm.refloh2o.com).
- Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators (opens in October; epa.gov/education/presidential-innovation-award-environmental-educators).
- President’s Environmental Youth Award (opens in October; epa.gov/education/presidents-environmental-youth-award).

School and district sustainability efforts are encouraged and supported through programs like Green & Healthy Schools Wisconsin and U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools. Forty-three schools, districts and early learning centers in Wisconsin have received recognition from the U.S. Department of Education through the Green Ribbon Schools, and Green & Healthy Schools Wisconsin has more than 700 schools who are striving to reduce environmental impact,

improve health and wellness, and increase environmental literacy. All schools are invited to receive recognition through these programs.

Learn more at ghs wisconsin.org.

Getting started

With everything else schools must focus on, considering sustainability may feel overwhelming and not be a priority. However, the stories presented here provide a few ways to get started:

- 1. Start small.** Focus on what can be done, instead of what can’t be done. Looking at how sustainability can be integrated into school board policies is a solid place to start.
- 2. Find partners.** Schools and districts do not operate in isolation. Community organizations, other governmental agencies, and funding partners make this work happen and can help provide leadership and focus when educators get swept up with the business of the school year.



Nineteen school districts received funding for green transportation efforts, including electric and propane/compressed natural gas (denoted with an *):

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Augusta School District | 11. Minocqua J1 School District |
| 2. Coleman School District | 12. Mondovi School District |
| 3. Colfax School District* | 13. Palmyra-Eagle Area School District |
| 4. Edgar School District | 14. Parkview School District* |
| 5. Granton Area School District | 15. Pepin Area School District |
| 6. Highland School District* | 16. Random Lake School District |
| 7. Lac du Flambeau #1 School District | 17. Tri-County Area School District* |
| 8. Lakeland UHS School District | 18. Wild Rose School District |
| 9. Lomira School District WI | 19. Winter School District |
| 10. Melrose-Mindoro School District | |



3. Provide multiple entry points.

Financial savings may be one entry point for community members, health and wellness may be another. Connecting with nature may appeal to parents with young children. Consider sustainability efforts broadly and examine the multiple ways in which people value this work.

4. Engage youth. Students are the future and want to ensure they have the same opportunities to connect, explore and engage with our place in the ways that so many Wisconsinites have come to love.

5. Get recognized. Garner community support through gaining local,

state, and national recognition for efforts, even as early as the first goal setting meeting. Reach out to Green & Healthy Schools Wisconsin who can provide resources to support your school district's journey. ■

Victoria Rydberg-Nania is an environmental education consultant at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.



Tee Wakacak (Spirit Lake) mural created by Hoocak (Ho-Chunk) artists in the new entrance of Jack Young Middle School, Baraboo School District

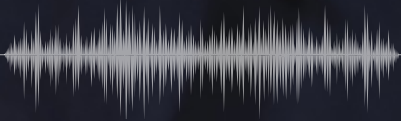
HOW
COMMITMENT
LOOKS

At CG Schmidt, equity is about more than achieving a goal. It is a promise for growth. We foster partnerships between the district and local and underrepresented workforces to improve learning facilities and create spaces that uplift communities and support our future leaders. As your trusted building partner, we strive to build a better tomorrow, together.



MILWAUKEE // MADISON // CGSCHMIDT.COM

Combating ‘Swatting’ IN SCHOOLS



How to identify hoax calls
about shooters

by Ted Hayes, M3 Insurance

School districts throughout Wisconsin have been experiencing a troubling scenario: a phone call comes in about an active shooter within the school. Law enforcement responds to the call only to determine it was a hoax.

These incidents of “swatting” are on the increase throughout the country. Swatting is the action of placing hoax phone calls to report serious crises (bomb threat, active shooter, etc.) to local law enforcement. The crank call is made to fool law enforcement into sending their Special Weapons and Tactics team to respond to the fake emergency.

In 2022, National Public Radio reported that 182 schools in 28 states received false calls about threats between Sept. 13 and Oct. 14. Many

of these swatting incidents occurred within minutes of each other and may be coming from the same group.

With the country still on edge after the Uvalde mass shooting, the chaos caused by these false threats may lead to serious injuries or even worse. Swatting incidents can be particularly dangerous, as law enforcement officers often enter school buildings with force and guns drawn.

The following swatting indicators and mitigation strategies were produced jointly with the New Jersey State Police Cyber Crimes Unit, the Intelligence and Analysis Threat Unit at the Regional Operations Intelligence Center, the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness and the FBI.

Swatting indicators

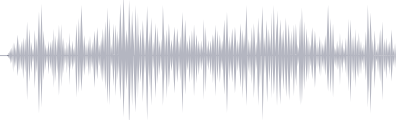
The following are indicators that school districts can use to identify a potential swatting incident.



Ted Hayes

- The swatting call is the only incoming call to report an active shooter or ongoing emergency situation. If a shooting has occurred or an active shooter scenario is unfolding, multiple calls to dispatch from witnesses or victims are likely.
- The incoming telephone number is spoofed or blocked. Swatting

In 2022, National Public Radio reported that 182 schools in 28 states received false calls about threats between Sept. 13 and Oct. 14.



calls using Voice over Internet Protocol services will appear as all zeros or nines, blocked, unavailable, or one of the default Skype numbers: (661) 748-0240, (661) 748-0241 or (661) 748-0242.

- The swatting call is routed through a non-emergency dispatch line. Swatters using VoIP services cannot dial 911 directly so instead they look up non-emergency lines of dispatch operations.
- The caller's tone and background noise are inconsistent with the claimed emergency or threat. For example, the caller claims to have murdered a family member, coworkers, or innocent bystanders, yet their demeanor is suspiciously calm, with minimal background noise.
- The caller can be heard typing or clicking a computer mouse in the background. Swatters will conduct internet searches or use online mapping and geospatial tools during the call to answer follow-up questions and provide exterior descriptions of buildings or residences.
- The caller is unable to answer follow-up questions requesting details, such as their full name, phone number or current location. Swatting callers may attempt to provide descriptions of interiors or exteriors of buildings gleaned from photos on social media or internet searches.
- The caller mispronounces names such as city, street or building names. Swatting calls are commonly conducted by foreign malicious actors with thick accents who are unfamiliar with the local areas they target.
- The caller's story changes or escalates throughout the course of questioning. When challenged

by follow-up questions or doubts that their claims are true or legitimate, the swatting caller may intensify their threat or change key details of their story.

- The caller uses specific gun names or terminology to identify their weapon. Swatting callers often refer to weapons commonly depicted in video games, such as an AR-15 assault rifle.
- Gunshots or explosions heard in the background are inconsistent with other noise or sound fake. Swatting callers may play recordings of gunshots or live firefights from video games or the internet in order to sound as if they are shooting a weapon while on the call.
- The caller claims to be armed or suicidal and willing to shoot law enforcement.

■ How to respond

Swatting calls can be successfully mitigated using follow-up questioning to identify inconsistencies or weaknesses in the caller's storyline or to make the caller feel their attempt is failing. Those receiving the call should ask multiple questions in quick succession and repeat questions later in the call to identify inconsistencies.

- "What is your full name?" (ask again later during call, and specifically ask for a middle name)
- "Where are you calling from?"
- "What is your phone number?"
- "Why didn't you call 911 directly?" (for VoIP calls to non-emergency dispatch line)
- "I need a call back number in case we get disconnected. What is your mobile or home number?"
- "Why are you reporting yourself?"
- "Why is there no noise in the background?"

- "What is that noise in the background?" (when background noise is inconsistent with the story)
- "Why does it sound like you are typing on a computer keyboard?"
- "Are you targeting anyone in particular?"

■ Caller claims to be inside, near or on the roof of a school:

- "How did you get on the roof?"
- "Where exactly are you on the roof?"
- "How are you going to get inside the building?"
- "Do you know a student at the school?"

■ Caller claims to be inside or near a mall, hospital or other commercial venue:

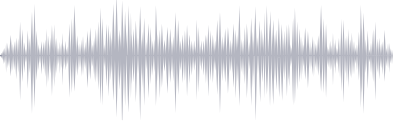
- "Where are you in the building?"
- "What are you near?"
- "Which building are you in/on?" (when there are multiple buildings in a complex)
- "Do you know an employee?"

■ Caller claims to be at a residence:

- "Where are you in the house?"
- "Is it a one or two story house?"
- "What color is the house?"
- "Who owns the house?"
- "Who else lives in the house?"
- "What are your parents' names?"

■ Caller claims they are on their way or planning to target a location:

- "Where are you coming from?"
- "Are you in a car?"
- "When will you arrive?"



Immediately reporting this information will aid in the coordination of investigations between local, state and federal law enforcement, as well as in analysis of trends and the further development of best practices, which will be shared with all partners.

1. Exact time and date the call was received.

2. Victim telephone number that received the incoming swatting call.

- If the call was directed to a non-emergency dispatch line and routed through multiple extensions, attempt to provide the original receiving line number and extension.

3. Victim's telecommunications provider (for example, Verizon, AT&T, or another carrier).

4. The incoming (swatting) telephone number.

- Was the calling number identified as one of the default Skype numbers: (661) 748-0240, (661) 748-0241, or (661) 748-0242?

- Was the call number unavailable, blocked, or displayed as all zeros, ones, or nines?

5. Detailed description of the nature of the threat.

- Incident type: For example, bomb threat, active shooter or hostage situation.
- Did the caller provide a motivation or reason for the threat?
- Did the caller specify a timeline for imminent or future threats?
- Where did the caller claim to be calling from?
- Was any background noise heard during the call?

6. Detailed description of caller.

- Did the caller provide a name to identify themselves?
- What was the caller's gender and accent?
- Was the caller's voice computerized or masked in any way?
- What was the caller's demeanor and tone (for example, calm,

agitated, excited, hysterical, emotional or confused)?

- Did the caller seem prepared with a script or preplanned responses?

Conclusion

Swatting incidents in the school setting is a difficult problem to address because law enforcement authorities are obligated to respond even if the threat is fake.

A swatting threat may be disruptive to schools, and scare parents, school staff and students.

In addition to the mitigation strategies listed here, your school district should emphasize not releasing any details about your crisis response and other safety protocols in an effort to stop unwanted threats.

Meeting with local law enforcement officials to discuss swatting response and prevention strategies is critical as well. ■

Ted Hayes is a senior risk manager at M3 Insurance.



The "Best Law Firm" is Elevating Excellence with Distinguished Attorneys, Accredited by Best Lawyers

Our law office is proud to announce that we've been awarded the 2024 "Best Law Firms" recognition. On top of this, we're also proud to announce that three of our attorneys have been honored as 2024 Best Lawyers and two of our attorneys have also been recognized as "Ones to Watch" by Best Lawyers.

Call 262-364-0300 or visit us online at www.buelowvetter.com

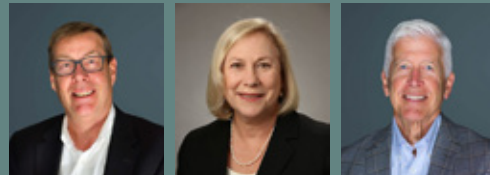
2024 Best Law Firms



Tier 1 in Employment Law Management

Tier 1 in Labor Law Management

2024 Best Lawyers



Robert H. Buikema

Mary S. Gerbig

Daniel G. Vliet

2024 Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch



Alana M. Leffler

Kirstin R. Mathers

Commitment.

Laila Edwards

Team USA | Women's Hockey
IIHF Best Forward
6'1" | Sophomore

Laila Edwards is an outstanding student athlete who has proven her commitment to her studies and her team. Since early middle school, she's been juggling big responsibilities while honing her skills and improving as a competitor: early morning practices before big tests, ice baths before hours of homework and summer training camps. Laila's actions demonstrate her commitment. She knows what it takes to be a student athlete in the classroom and on the rink.

Are you looking for commitment?

For more than 50 years, CM Regent has partnered with schools to provide flexible, scalable protection. CM Regent provides:

Claims expertise.

Risk control value-added services.

Unique product coverages.

Specialized benefit plans.

Visit cmregent.com/commitment



©2023 Church Mutual Insurance Company, S.I. CM Regent Insurance Company is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Church Mutual Holding Company, Inc. This material may include only a general description of insurance coverages and does not include all rates, terms, conditions, and limitations found in CM Regent Insurance Company ("CM Regent") policies. The insurance policy, not any general descriptions of coverage that may be found in this material, will form the contract between the insured and CM Regent, and is subject to approval from the state. Neither CM Regent nor its employees, representatives, or agents shall be liable to any party for the use of any information or statements made or contained herein. NAIC # 12356



LEARNING IN THE SCHOOL FOREST

*We asked a pair of Wisconsin teachers of the year
to send us first-person accounts of how
outdoor education happens at their schools.
These are their stories ...*

Nature Is Teacher of Science, Beauty, Community

by Brian M. Collins, 2024 Wisconsin Teacher of the Year

Mid-October is the best time to play “The Simpson’s Diversity Game,” based on the work of the scientist Edward Simpson.

The rules are simple. Stay near the middle of the school forest trail. Walk two-hundred paces. Every fifth pace, stop, reach down, and pick a leaf from the trail. Put the leaf in your bag. If there is no leaf, continue five more paces.

At the end of 200 paces, most students have between 20 and 40 leaves of different tree species in a bag. We label the bag, “Upland Forest,” and we continue down to the bog boardwalk to repeat the exercise into a new bag, “Tamarack Bog.”

A student jokes, “Does a tamarack needle count as a leaf?” The answer might not be obvious, but the answer is “Yes, it does.”

We arrive back at the lab just before the bell, piling our plastic bags into two caches, “upland” and “bog.” The next day, except for a

little condensation inside the bag, everything remains the same.

Many of the tiny invertebrates present in the leaves have become more obvious, and students excitedly tally up just how many animals went unnoticed the day before.

But our focus is the leaves. We begin the laborious but enthusiastic process of sorting leaves by species and counting them. I still have not revealed anything about the mathematical measure of biological diversity, called “Simpson’s D index,” but my students are already unwittingly building the data set.

When all leaves of all species have been sorted and tallied, students learn how to apply the index and compare the diversity of the two forested habitats’ tree species. They are very surprised to find the index for the bog to be very, very low compared to the upland forest.

It seems strange, as that is not what a bog looks like. Challenges

erupt, discussions begin, and ideas for other measures surface.

We discuss the two aspects contributing to the Simpson index — species richness and species evenness — and students start to “see” the math in the biology. Our classroom and forest are now primed for a new lesson in statistical analyses!

We could have done this exploration in the classroom with cups of beans or Legos or gummy candies, but it would have truly lacked something.

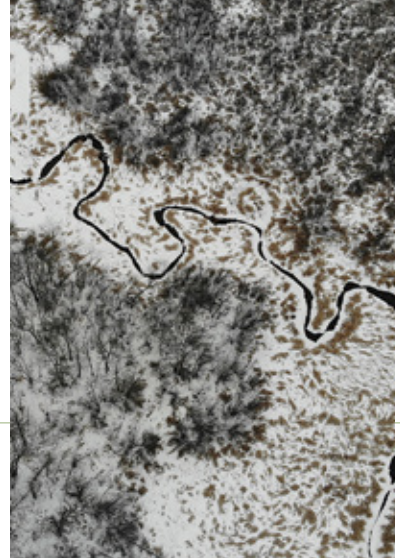
In the forest, students are feeling the benefits of real-world, hands-on science exploration in a natural setting that touches all of the senses, delivers inescapable observations,



Brian M. Collins

A school forest is a perfect place for community outreach, because every forest is part of a larger community and a larger ecosystem.

Images from Unity School Forest, taken by Brian Collins



and builds a context for the science.

The students are navigating the complexity of how math works in science, helped along by their observations and experiences from the outdoors. This school forest is doing its work!

At Unity, we are fortunate to have a school forest right on campus, along the shores of Balsam Lake, the heart of it just a six-minute walk from any classroom. As our youngest pines at the entry trail grow into an early successional forest, one could argue it is now only four minutes away. It is accessible and available to everyone.

While it might be tempting to start visualizing the agricultural and biological lesson plans that happen there, it is also a place perfectly inviting of every other subject matter and any collaboration imaginable.

School forests are for the language arts, world languages, visual arts, performing arts, physical education, mathematics, chemistry, business education, technical education, and social studies every bit as much as for agriculture, forestry and biology.

A school forest is a perfect place for community outreach, because every forest is part of a larger community and a larger ecosystem.

It doesn't take much time to figure out how your school forest is connected to what happens in the surrounding landscape. At Unity, our Rice Creek flows into Little Balsam Lake as an integral part of the Balsam Branch Watershed.

The quality of Rice Creek's water impacts and describes the quality of

Balsam Lake. Every year, we use aquatic invertebrate sample techniques to describe the relative quality and cleanliness of Rice Creek in a biotic index of stream health.

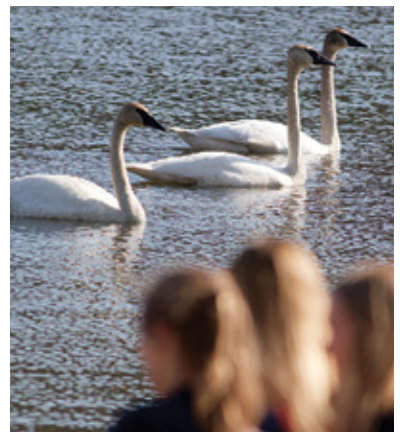
The relative abundance of clean water species such as dobsonfly larvae, stonefly larvae, and caddisfly larvae speaks volumes about the condition of the inflow. In key years, we have delivered reports to the Balsam Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District, sharing the good news about how well their strategies are benefiting the ecological community and human community alike. Students collaborate in the technical report, and the neighborly connections that result are priceless.

Every school forest should be registered in the Wisconsin School Forest Program, and every school forest should have a governing committee. The truth is that no human body will outlive a school forest.

Great people make for great stewardship, but bylaws and trusts ensure that future generations will continue to honor a tradition of stewardship and, hopefully, the remarkable educational opportunities that arise with that stewardship.

Every year, we have monitored many aspects of the ecosystem. My students engage in citizen science, creating records that help describe the ecological context and, in time, the ecological processes of our landscape.

Through natural beauty, innovative natural resource studies, larger citizen science projects, technical writing and scientific illustration, Unity's school forest has helped to springboard more than a dozen stu-



Continued from page 21

dents into successful pursuits of natural resources degrees and careers. Still, some of the most powerful moments have come in how student affect responds to natural beauty.

Unity's school forest is spectacular in mid-October. Autumn is at its best with maple, basswood, aspen and tamarack in peak colors.

Many years ago, our school hosted an exchange student from a

warm climate in Italy. As we walked out onto the trail of our school forest, I noticed she had stopped.

I soon discovered she was crying. I walked to her side and asked if she was okay, she turned and smiled.

All around us, bright yellow leaves slowly fell to the ground.

She said, "It is so beautiful. I have never seen anything like this in my life."

Suddenly, my eyes were attuned and reunited with the richness of nature all around us. I promised

myself to never assume a student had seen what I had seen or learned what I had grown used to, to never be immune to nature's beauty, to keep my senses open, to stay a child somewhere in my heart.

A school forest is a treasure to be enjoyed by all, and nature is always an outstanding teacher. ■

Brian Collins is a science teacher at Unity High School in Balsam Lake. He is also a 2024 Wisconsin Teacher of the Year and Wisconsin's representative to the National Teacher of the Year program.



In the Forest, Walls to Learning Come Down

by Lori Danz, 2022 Wisconsin Teacher of the Year

I'm standing on a dirt road, arm in the air, waving at a yellow school bus driving away in front of a cloud of dust. On the bus, I see the faces of 43 kindergarten students pressed against the windows waving back at me.

Most have a smile on their face. I have a smile on my face. I couldn't stop smiling if I tried. I'm exhausted. They're exhausted!

Today, I have hiked countless trails, collected water samples from a pond and bent down and then stood up endless numbers of times to look at what those 43 eager minds wanted to share and ask about. Our lesson that day focused on wetlands and life cycles and included reading, writing and exploring wetlands.

My exhaustion is the mental

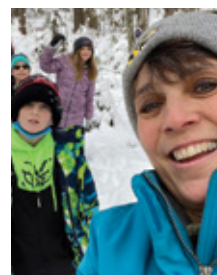
fatigue that comes from listening to and trying to respond to a constant barrage of questions and "look at this!" Despite this mental fatigue, I feel an exhilaration that only a successful day of teaching can bring.

Those kindergarten students who just drove away on the bus don't realize any of this. They are simply traveling back to school to share stories in a body that is physically exhausted from learning and exploring their world in a new way.

This is what outdoor education looks like. It is not, as one legislator implied to me, "creating tree huggers." (Although I have no issue if any of my students have a desire to hug a tree!) It is not taking students outdoors to memorize the names of plants and animals. It is

not teaching only science.

Today, outdoor education is synonymous with outdoor learning. It is a way to engage students in their learning in an outdoor setting instead of inside a building. It offers students the chance to create a relationship with our natural world and with each other. It creates curiosity and most importantly, offers students the freedom to explore the concepts they are learning in their traditional classrooms through a new perspective.



Lori Danz

When students are exposed to learning in an environment that is not a traditional classroom, they often feel free to be authentic.

The experience of teaching and learning in an outdoor classroom is often magical, with not only the deep learning of the content that occurs, but with the relationships that develop between the teachers and their learners, as happened with the kindergartners.

Another perfect example of this happened last spring when I, together with our middle school choir teacher, planned a day of learning at our school forest for her choir students.

Her goal was to expose her students to nature as they rehearsed for their upcoming concert planned for that week. Her theme for the concert was “Breaking Trail.” Ms. Grimm’s musical selections focused on the themes of grit, perseverance and inclusivity for the students to perform.

She integrated the story of Emily Ford, the first African American to hike the entire Ice Age Trail across Wisconsin. As an LGBTQ woman, Emily maximized her challenge by hiking and camping during the coldest months of winter. No other woman has accomplished this feat. Together, Ms. Grimm and I collaborated to engage students in nature to experience its effect on their performance.

Immersing the students in the sounds, smells and sensations of being in the woods would free them from the typical constraining mechanics of their classroom and open their minds to the emotions of song.

Over the course of that day, students explored the geologic history of Wisconsin. They watched a documentary about Emily and discussed the personal and physical challenges she experienced on her hike. They discussed challenges each of them had faced. They hiked to a bog carved out by an ancient glacier.

Along the way, students struggled through brushy tag alder, mosquitoes and gnats. And they sang!

Initially, developing a lesson that integrated science, music and personal reflection felt daunting. Outdoor classrooms open our minds, as teachers and learners to think and plan beyond a singular content area.

Our “classroom” has no walls that dictate the content-specific topics we teach during a certain scheduled hour of the day. Every person in the forest learned that day. We not only learned content. We also learned about each other and ourselves. The joy, energy and camaraderie felt by those students that day as they boarded the bus back to their traditional classroom would be felt long after they returned to their regular choir classroom.

The role of public education is to help our children grow and learn as human beings; to learn about their world, their role in society and most importantly to learn about themselves and each other.

When students are exposed to learning in an environment that is not a traditional classroom, they often feel free to be authentic. I often witness them shed the role they often play to conform in their regular classrooms.

It may be that of the “good student,” “the class clown” or the student who simply wants to blend in and not be noticed. I have found that the forest does not discriminate. All students find they have skills that often go unnoticed in the typical classroom.

The traits many try to hide are not only needed to help their group succeed during an outdoor lesson, but are also essential for personal success, and perhaps most importantly, to succeed in society.



What pieces of the day’s lesson will students take with them from their days at the forest? I am confident that the power of the wind, the smell of the wet soil, the sounds of the birds, and even the bites of the mosquitoes will stay with them and be a part of the music they sing.

And they’ll have the realization that, unlike a traditional classroom, the natural world has no walls. ■

Lori Danz is a biology teacher and school forest coordinator at the Superior School District. She was a 2022 Wisconsin Teacher of the Year and Wisconsin’s representative to the National Teacher of the Year program.



At Newline Community Café, run by students of Escuela Verde, a mini-grant made the purchase of reusable containers possible.

Mini Grants. BIG IMPACT.

KEEP spotlights students stepping up

by Heather Phelps, K-12 Energy Education Program



Chippewa Falls students used their grant to fund a thermal imaging drone to map heat loss.



At Walden III in Racine, basil sprouts are ready to be separated and placed in a hydroponics system.

From small beginnings, great things can develop.

KEEP, Wisconsin's K-12 Energy Education Program, created the Mini-Grant Program to fund student-led projects to reduce the carbon footprints of their school communities. The effects of these programs are already being felt across Wisconsin.

In 2022-23, 13 student teams received mini-grants from KEEP with projects covering a wide range of energy and carbon-saving initiatives.

Several schools directly reduced energy usage in classrooms by adding motion-sensor switches, replacing lights with LEDs or adding power strips to turn electrical devices off.

Some focused on gardens, using hydroponics, aquaponics and solar watering systems to demonstrate alternative, energy-efficient agricultural methods and provide local, organic food to their cafeterias.

Others designed methods to reduce their school's waste through composting and vermiculture, trash clean-up, and reusable containers. Glen Hills Middle School is even sending teacher Lalitha Murali to space to run the experiments they've developed about the behavior of carbon dioxide in microgravity!

We'll go into detail on three 2022-23 grant recipients, but first we'll provide an update on the recipients of the first KEEP mini-grant, a group of Chippewa Falls High School students.

Chippewa Falls continues the work

Their project, explored in the October 2022 issue of Wisconsin School News, used a thermal imaging drone to map heat loss from their school.

But the students didn't stop there. Soon, they were installing air quality monitors at the high school and applying for a million-dollar grant from the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin for energy efficiency upgrades. In spring 2023, the Chippewa Falls Green Team was chosen as the Wisconsin School of the Year and the National Senior Rookie of the Year by the National Energy Education Development Project.

These students have already made an impact at their schools and reduced their carbon emissions, contributing to a healthy state and a safe climate. With Chippewa Falls as an example, it's clear that with the skills and experience they've gained there's no end to the difference they can make.

Finding 'phantom loads' in McFarland

McFarland students Izzie Tobin and Calista Mignon wanted to reduce energy consumption in their school while educating staff and students on the issue.

McFarland High School was already participating in Renew Our Schools, a statewide competition for schools to reduce their energy usage (measured through an eGauge data-logger installed on their electric meter). Izzie and Calista decided to support the Eco Club's effort by

applying for a KEEP mini-grant to install advanced power strips to turn off classroom electronics.

"We believe that by informing staff about how the power strips work and providing data on how much energy they save, the staff is more likely to use the power strip and maybe even purchase more for their classroom," they wrote.

They began their project by using a watt meter to calculate that teachers' desk setups were drawing 6-7 watts of energy even when computers and smartboards were turned off — sometimes known as a phantom or vampire load. Once they installed an advanced power strip to turn devices completely off, only .1 watts of power were consumed.

After researching the emissions from local power plants, the group calculated that in three weeks the new power strips saved a total of 48 kWh of energy, preventing 100 pounds of carbon dioxide from being released into the atmosphere.

Izzie also presented at the Summer Institute for Climate Change Education's Wisconsin-Michigan Cohort Day to share the project with educators around the state and inspire them with ways to support their own students' environmental initiatives.



Heather Phelps

JOIN THE MINI-GRANT PROGRAM

KEEP's Mini-Grant Program is a way for student groups in Wisconsin to receive funds to reduce the carbon footprints of their school communities, supporting Wisconsin's utilities' goals of net-zero emissions by 2050. After a group of K-12 students contacts KEEP to express interest in applying (the 2023 fall deadline is Oct. 27), KEEP arranges a virtual meeting with the group to discuss their project and what baseline data — energy consumption, waste, etc. — they'll need to collect

about their school. The students use this data to write a full grant application, explaining their project, detailing their process, and calculating their exact budget. Fall grant applications are due Dec. 8, 2023. A second round of grants will be offered in the spring semester. In May, students will report out on their finished projects, sharing photos, quantitative and qualitative data, and lessons learned from their efforts.





McFarland High School students used a mini-grant to track phantom loads and install advanced power strips to turn off classroom electronics.



At Walden III, basil and lettuce flourish after four weeks in the hydroponic system.

■ Fresh, local food in Walden III

Jamillah Jallow is the Green School club president at Walden III Middle/High School in the Racine Unified School District. She has big plans for the school.

She’s hoping to eventually make it net-zero — meaning it meets all of its own energy needs through on-site renewable energy generation — with an outdoor classroom equipped with a solar array and outdoor gardens.

To ignite their net-zero dreams, the group is starting with hydroponics.

“To reduce the carbon footprint of produce we have started growing plants using hydroponics,” Jamillah wrote. “This process allows students to be involved in the product they are eating from start to finish. By growing food ourselves we are greatly reducing the carbon footprint of our school and educating students about the process along the way.”

The school used the mini-grant funds to buy supplies for their Fork Farms hydroponics system and grow

more plants. So far, the students have grown basil, lettuce and flowers.

Both students and teachers are asking questions about the hydroponics system, including how they can do something similar at home. After spending this past year experimenting, the group is planning to expand with classroom lesson plans, videos on social media and school daily news and planting more regularly to make food and plants for fundraising.

They’re also hoping to start visiting elementary schools to educate younger students about the environment.

To study the carbon saved by the hydroponics system, the students researched where most lettuce in Wisconsin comes from (Monterey County in California), the energy used for growing lettuce via traditional agricultural methods, and the fuel required to transport the lettuce to Wisconsin.

They found it takes the equivalent

of nearly 12,000 kWh of energy to grow and truck a load of California lettuce to Wisconsin. In contrast, the hydroponics system uses less than 15 kWh of energy a week to run the lights and water pump, the only energy requirements of the system.

The students did face one major setback. Over spring break, the building lost power and the settings for both the water and light remained off for a couple of days.

Their growing plants had to be removed and used immediately, preventing the lettuce and basil from growing to full maturity. To prevent this from going to waste, they had salad parties for the staff, green school and home groups involved in the growing process. It worked out pretty well and the teachers really appreciated having fresh basil.

It was a good learning experience, as it taught students to consider a backup or way to go in if this happens again.

■ Escuela Verde cuts down on plastic waste

Escuela Verde, an independent charter school in Milwaukee, runs Newline Community Café.

A student barista, Ricardo “Ricky” Perales Perea, observed: “The mission of Escuela Verde is

Equally exciting are the ways that these projects are inspiring teachers, students, administrators and community members even beyond those directly participating in the projects.

sustainability, so it's weird that we are not being conscientious about our waste in the café."

Prior to the grant, all the food was served in disposable containers, which weren't consistently recycled. To reduce the waste from those containers, the café baristas applied for a grant to buy re-usable containers to package food in the café.

Students calculated, "If we could prepare even half of our to-go food in reusable containers, over the course of one year we would save around 830 plastic containers from being thrown out."

Preliminary data shows the group is being even more successful than predicted. Despite only one of the planned three types of containers arriving promptly, the café sold 269 items packaged in reusable containers in only six weeks. At that rate, the team estimates they'll eliminate 180 pounds of plastic per year from the waste stream.

Enthusiasm for the project spread quickly. Each student barista created a poster to share about the new containers and remind students to return them.

To encourage reuse, customers who return their containers for washing get a piece of candy, which also doubles as more advertisement when other students ask how to get their own.

While the delay in receiving many of the containers was disappointing, it just ended up inspiring students' creativity in new ways.

Students stepping up

KEEP is proud of the way that all the students involved in the Mini-Grant Program have stepped up to make a difference in their schools. Equally exciting are the ways that these projects are inspiring teachers, students, administrators and community members even beyond those directly participating in the projects. We can't wait to see what ideas these students will come up with in the future and where this year's group of new applicants will take the program next.



Escuela Verde student baristas work on designing promotional materials for the new containers used at the Newline Community Café.

More about KEEP

KEEP, Wisconsin's K-12 Energy Education Program, was created to promote energy education in Wisconsin schools with a vision of communities making informed energy decisions now and for a sustainable future. With support from Alliant Energy, Madison Gas & Electric, We Energies, Wisconsin Public Service, WPPI Energy and Xcel Energy, KEEP leverages teacher education to improve and increase energy literacy in Wisconsin's K-12 schools as a means of contributing to statewide energy savings.

KEEP provides professional development, place-based lessons and activities, kits and resources and capacity-building partnerships. KEEP is part of the Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education, which is part of UW-Stevens Point. Visit KEEPprogram.org to learn more. ■

Heather Phelps is a KEEP educator resources specialist with the K-12 Energy Education Program (KEEP).

YOUR GOALS. OUR MISSION.

Wisconsin public school districts face unprecedented challenges and opportunities. The attorneys at Renning, Lewis & Lacy, s.c., are dedicated to helping you meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities.



RENNING
LEWIS & LACY

Your goals • Our mission

Green Bay • Toll Free: (844) 833-0830
Madison • Toll Free: (844) 626-0901
Oshkosh • Toll Free: (833) 654-1180

law-RLL.com



Students using game to make **‘Cool Choices’**

by Xia Lowery, *Green & Healthy Schools*

Wisconsin students are trying out an interactive online game that rewards students for participating in sustainable actions.

The game, called “Cool Choices,” provides science-based education in areas of water and energy conservation.

The game has been implemented in the River Falls School District with the participation of the River Falls Municipal Utility, which engaged the community in a friendly competition across multiple schools.

Classrooms at each school earned

points by making “cool choices,” or actions that help the environment and save money. When playing Cool Choices in classroom mode, the teacher polls the classroom daily and counts how many students participated in a sustainable action.

In team mode, which allows individuals to form teams of five to eight players, each person participates in individual, daily actions to earn points that contribute to the team score. Teams play against other teams in the same game to gain points and earn prizes.

When the game began, students

played one card each day and by the end of the six-week period, participants could play up to three cards every day. Cool Choices cards are online cards that categorize sustainable behaviors, including one-time actions and investigative activities where students assess their own practices.

The categories include wellness, travel, energy, water, school, recycling and community. Students engaged in activities such as “I used a reusable water bottle today” and “I visited a local park.” They even uploaded photos for the photo chal-



Cool Choices cards are online cards that categorize sustainable behaviors, including one-time actions and investigative activities where students assess their own practices.

challenge cards, which allow students to share their Cool Choices actions with other players.

“The classrooms had a lot of fun helping their teachers select the cards,” said Chuck Eaton, principal of Rocky Branch Elementary School in the River Falls School District.

By playing Cool Choices, students are saving the school money. Cool Choices uses vetted savings assumptions, which assign savings to each sustainable action a player makes.

For example, the “carpool to school today” action will use assumptions about commuting distances and fuel efficiencies to estimate gasoline savings, which are then converted into dollars and carbon emissions. At the end of the game, Cool Choices provides a savings analysis to schools that details the new savings associated with the new actions participants adopted during the program.

Students started bringing these behaviors home with them.

“When the kids were fired up about it, they brought it home and families got involved,” Eaton said.

Collectively, students and staff throughout the River Falls School District took 3,044 actions to reduce resource consumption, improve wellness, and increase environmental awareness through Cool Choices.

“River Falls elementary school students and staff logged thousands of sustainable actions and were rewarded in a fun and engaging way,” said Susan Schuller, then senior outreach specialist at the Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education at UW-Stevens Point.

The teachers had friendly compe-



titions to be the highest-scoring class each week. When motivated staff and students explore the sustainable practices and healthy choices their school makes, it can lead to better school practices. The overall goal is to use the game to transform teachers’ and students’ daily actions into permanent habits.

“The Cool Choices game has definitely raised staff awareness on how they can contribute to sustainability and the conservation of resources at school, but the game has also led to people talking to others and sharing ideas on how our district’s policies and choices affect our students,” Eaton said.

Marlene McIlheran, a River Falls science teacher, used the game to supplement the earth sciences/environmental curriculum and saw it as a huge success.

“The format was engaging for students and offered up new ideas on how to ‘be sustainable’ as we explored water, energy, and transportation use in students’ immediate lives,” McIlheran said. “For a performance assessment, students designed sustainable communities in which each student came up with ways to make the community efficient and sustainable.”

For this classroom, Cool Choices was able to offer excellent ideas on areas/solutions students can consider

for sustainable projects.

The 2023-24 school year marks the first year the Cool Choices game will be offered to Wisconsin schools after COVID-19. The Cool Choices in Green & Healthy Schools game starts this January and is a six-week program that is free to all K-12 Wisconsin public and private schools.

The program is aimed at reducing resource consumption, improving health and wellness, and increasing environmental literacy in schools.

“I am thrilled to again have the opportunity for Green & Healthy Schools to play Cool Choices. The game makes visible the daily habits and behaviors that often go unnoticed. Playing Cool Choices in Green & Healthy Schools provides the whole school community with a way to develop a culture of sustainability,” says Victoria Rydberg-Nania, environmental education consultant at the Department of Public Instruction.

Cool Choices is offered by Green a Healthy Schools Wisconsin, which is a movement of schools, community partners and state agencies working together to catalyze a culture of sustainability and wellness in all Wisconsin schools.

Over the last year, partners — including DPI and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources — have been updating the Cool Choices game to make it accessible and fun for students of all ages.

Schools can learn more and register to play a demo game this November at ghswisconsin.org ■

Xia Lowery is the Green & Healthy Schools Cool Choices Intern.

Fall Brings Opportunity

Government relations focusing on resolutions, fall conference



As Dan Rossmiller explained in his Viewpoint column, fall is a busy season at the WASB, with many opportunities for school board members. Government relations is no exception. Along with seeing you at your Fall Regional Meeting, the WASB staff will be working on school board resolutions and their vetting for the Delegate Assembly and inviting you to attend the Fall Legislative Conference.

We are excited to offer the following agenda of timely and important topics for school board members and your work. It is a great opportunity to learn and network with fellow board members. Did we mention the location is the newly remodeled Heidel House Hotel and Conference Center on Green Lake?

Professor Charles Franklin, director of the Marquette Law School poll, will join us to discuss public opinion about schools. Why has support for public school funding fallen in relation to property tax relief in recent polls from historic highs just a few years ago? Is it cyclical? Is it a result of the pandemic? Why does the public appear to support private school vouchers? These are just some of the questions he may address.

Michael Ford from UW-Oshkosh will discuss school board governance in an environment of partisan cul-

ture-war politics. How can you effectively navigate these divisive issues within your community and board while still being able to keep the focus on student achievement?

Sarah Kemp from the UW-Madison Applied Population Laboratory will showcase updated research focused on the impact of demographic trends and the pandemic on student enrollment. What impact will declining enrollment have on the future of public school funding and district viability?

It is not hyperbole to say that 2023 Wisconsin Act 20 is a landmark overhaul of early literacy instruction in the state that will have major impacts on all school districts. Laura Adams, policy initiatives advisor from the Department of Public Instruction, will go through the changes and new requirements that districts will be implementing.

State Rep. Joel Kitchens, R-Sturgeon Bay, in his role as chairman of the Assembly Committee on Education, has been intimately involved and a lynchpin for rare examples of bipartisan agreement between the governor and Legislature, including the aforementioned reading changes and school funding in the state budget. I will sit down for a one-on-one conversation with Rep. Kitchens to discuss these agreements as well as the K-12 issues of the day at the Capitol. We will also

for the first time provide attendees with the ability to submit questions for Rep. Kitchens in advance.

You can find a more detailed agenda for the Fall Legislative Conference in Association News on the following page.

Policy and resolutions process

At this writing, we are just a few days away from the Sept. 15 deadline for member school boards to submit resolutions to the WASB suggesting a position on a timely issue. Once these resolutions are submitted, the Policy and Resolutions Committee, comprised of about 25 school board members appointed each year from across the state, reviews and evaluates them to determine which ones will advance to the Delegate Assembly.

The resolutions adopted by the Delegate Assembly become official positions of the WASB and are published in our Resolutions Book. These resolutions are not law or legislation; they simply provide direction to the government relations staff when said issue arises in the Legislature.

Government relations staff will be evaluating everything during the policy and resolution process and communications with delegates with the goal of having a more productive and efficient Delegate Assembly in 2024. ■

It is not hyperbole to say that 2023 Wisconsin Act 20 is a landmark overhaul of early literacy instruction in the state that will have major impacts on all school districts.

2023 FALL LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

SATURDAY, NOV. 4 | GREEN LAKE | #WASBLegConf2023

FEATURED SESSIONS

The 2023 Fall Legislative Conference, held Saturday, Nov. 4 in Green Lake, is your chance to put your finger on the pulse of the future of public education in Wisconsin. Join a conversation about the latest issues affecting children in your communities.

Attendees will learn from expert presenters about timely topics, including significant changes to reading instruction, public opinion on education, the trends and impact of declining enrollment and board governance in a politicized era.



Declining Enrollment: How Demographics and the Pandemic Affect Wisconsin's Schools:

Recent research focused on the impact of Wisconsin's demographic trends and the pandemic on student enrollment. Explore how enrollment in public schools is changing.

Sarah Kemp, Researcher, Applied Population Laboratory, University of Wisconsin-Madison



Wisconsin's New Reading Landscape:

The DPI played a significant role in the development of 2023 Wisconsin Act 20, a landmark law that introduces major changes in early literacy instruction. This session will take a detailed look at the new requirements and other provisions included in this law.

Laura Adams, Policy Initiatives Advisor, Department of Public Instruction



Public Opinion and Public Education:

Public opinion about schools has shifted over the past dozen years, at times in support of public schools and at times away from them. Charles Franklin looks at all these trends with a reminder that opinion changes, and today

is not the same as yesterday.

Charles Franklin, Director, Marquette Law School Poll



Effective School Board Governance in an Era of Politicization:

Michael Ford will discuss the rise of partisan culture-war politics on local school boards. He will present research on the benefits of non-partisan education governance, discuss threats to impactful governance practices on

Wisconsin school boards and share best practices for using governance to improve student performance. Attendees will leave the session with practical tools to improve their school board's performance amid competing partisan agendas.

Michael Ford, Associate Professor of Public Administration, Director of the Whitburn Center for Governance and Policy Research, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh



Conversation With Assembly Education Chair:

WASB Government Relations Director Chris Kulow will sit down with Rep. Joel Kitchens, chairman of the Assembly Committee on Education, to discuss the issues of the day at the state Capitol, including his bill to make major changes to

reading instruction, examples of bipartisan agreement between the governor and Legislature and what we can expect in the rest of the 2023-24 legislative session.

Chris Kulow, WASB Government Relations Director and Rep. Joel Kitchens, R-Sturgeon Bay



Share your excitement for the 2023 Fall Legislative Conference online. Download our social media graphic to spread the word about your participation at #WASBLegConf2023.

Find the graphic and suggested post ideas by going to WASB.org, selecting "Training & Events" and clicking on the "2023 Fall Legislative Conference" icon. Find the image to share and suggested text by clicking the "Join the Conversation" box.

Be sure to use #WASBLegConf2023 in your posts so we can find and share them.

2023 FALL REGIONAL MEETINGS SCHEDULE



The WASB Fall Regional Meetings are continuing through October.

Join us to network with other board members, celebrate accomplishments, and learn about the WASB's activities and plans.

These meetings feature an interactive, engaging activity about school board accountability, an in-depth Legislative Update and a report from WASB Executive Director Dan Rossmiller. Prior to your Regional Meeting, take part in an optional workshop with an experienced WASB attorney regarding board member responsibilities under public records law.

Visit WASB.org to register online. Registration fees for the Regional Meetings vary based on location.

- Region 1** | Oct. 18 – Ashland, Best Western/The Hotel Chequamegon
Oct. 19 – Rice Lake, Lehman's Supper Club
- Region 2** | Oct 17 – Minocqua, Norwood Pines Supper Club
- Region 3*** | Oct. 25 – Green Bay, Rock Garden/Comfort Suites
- Region 4** | Oct. 4 – Menomonie, Off Broadway Banquet Center
(by Stout Craft Co.)
- Region 5** | Oct. 3 – Rothschild, Holiday Inn & Suites
Wausau-Rothschild
- Region 6*** | Oct. 5 – Galesville, Gale-Ettrick-
Trempealeau High School
- Region 7** | Oct. 26 – Neenah, Bridgewood Resort Hotel
& Conf. Center
- Region 8*** | Oct. 24 – Kiel, Millhome Supper Club
- Region 9** | Sept. 27 – Fennimore, Southwest Tech
- Region 10** | Oct. 11 – Wisconsin Dells, Trappers Turn
- Regions 11 & 15** | Oct. 10 – Brookfield, Embassy Suites
- Region 12*** | Oct. 12 – Sun Prairie, Sun Prairie West High School
- Region 13** | Sept. 26 – Burlington, Veterans Terrace
- Region 14*** | TBD – Milwaukee, Milwaukee Public Schools
Administration Building
- Online** | Nov. 1 – Open and complimentary to all members
** Denotes regions with elections for WASB Board of Directors*

Online Learning Platform

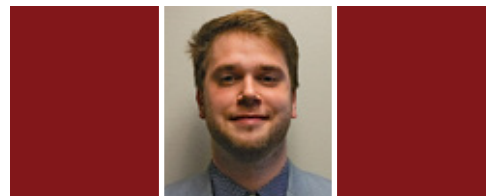
A comprehensive source of on-demand training for school board members and administrators. Access hundreds of hours of content including sessions on:

- The roles and responsibilities of school board presidents
- Complaint procedures and the chain of command
- Community engagement
- School board goal setting

Visit WASB.org for more information and to subscribe



Online Learning Platform | 608-257-2622 | 877-705-4422 | Visit wasb.org



Government Relations Specialist Joins WASB

David Martin has joined the WASB as government relations specialist.

David graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a degree in political science/international relations.

Most recently, David had experience in high-profile statewide political campaigns and grassroots organizing.

We are extremely pleased to have David join us as a member of our team.



School Board Week Planning Kit Available

Oct. 1-7 is School Board Week in Wisconsin.

Head to WASB.org to find a Wisconsin School Board Week Planning Kit. It will include:

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



WASB Connection Podcast

The purpose of a school board's financial reports is simple: to convey the school district's financial health, now and in the foreseeable future. They're also a great opportunity for school board members to learn and show they're earning the trust of parents and taxpayers.

This month's episode of the WASB Connection Podcast features a discussion with two experienced school leaders on different sides of the board table: Larry Dux, a longtime board member in Pewaukee; and Michael Barry, executive director of the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials, or WASBO.

They'll talk about the connection between continuous financial monitoring and community trust, especially in an era of increased referendums.

.....

“Even if you're a first-, second-, third-year board member, it's still your responsibility to monitor the financial operation and to ask questions and good administrators welcome that and use it as an opportunity to either teach or to explain or to make a point. ... It doesn't have to be adversarial.”

— Michael Barry, executive director of the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials

.....

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

UPCOMING ONLINE WORKSHOPS AND WEBINARS

■ SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS (TWO-PART SERIES)

OCT. 19 AND OCT. 25 | 12-1:30 p.m.

This two-part webinar presentation covers election processes, deadlines and notices as well as campaign finance regulations.

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

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

Part 1 (Election Notices and Procedures): Oct. 19 at noon

Part 2 (Campaign Finance): Oct. 25 at noon

■ ADMINISTRATOR CONTRACTS

NOV. 1 | 12-1 p.m.

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

■ FMLA: STATE AND FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

NOV. 8 | 12-1 p.m.

This webinar will review requirements under the Wisconsin and Federal Family and Medical Leave Act, including eligibility for leave for birth or adoption; serious health conditions of employees, parents, spouses and children; and the various leaves available to military service men, women and their families. Employer notice and documentation requirements will be covered along with employer and employee rights and obligations during and after FMLA leaves.

■ SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER PUBLIC RECORDS LAW ONLINE WORKSHOP

DEC. 6 | 12-1:30 p.m.

More than ever, individual board members find themselves being asked to respond to public records requests for records that are in their possession or where they are a record subject mentioned in the responsive record. This workshop will address individual board members' responsibilities under the public records law, answer frequently asked questions that board members have regarding their records and run through scenarios that board members may face regarding public records, including archiving records, responding to records requests and the unique records responsibilities that may come with social media use.



6 Things Board Policies Should Address Regarding Workplace Harassment

Workplace anti-harassment policies are designed to facilitate the internal resolution of complaints regarding harassment based on protected classes (e.g., race, sex, religion, age, sexual orientation, etc.) established by federal, state, and local employment laws. While there are numerous legal issues involved in drafting and revising these policies, this Legal Comment will identify some of the key legal issues that these policies should address. Board members should keep these issues in mind when they are reviewing and revising school board policies related to workplace harassment.

1. Defining harassment in board policy.

Workplace harassment policies need to, at a minimum, cover all harassment based on legally protected class because such harassment is a form of discrimination prohibited by law. A well-drafted policy will provide a clear process that allows employees that are victims of, or witnesses to, workplace harassment based on protected class to easily report the harassment to an appropriately trained individual who is able to investigate the complaint and, if harassment is found, take appropriate steps to stop the harassment and ensure that it does not recur.

Some board policies on workplace

harassment might extend the definition of harassment to include additional protected classes, such as physical appearance including hairstyle, weight, piercings, and tattoos, even when such a class is not established by applicable federal, state, or local law. Such an expansive policy is not legally required but, instead, reflects a policy decision of the board to prohibit harassment based on those additional protected classes. Similarly, some anti-harassment policies prohibit conduct that isn't based on a legally protected class, and might otherwise be characterized as bullying or workplace violence. Broadening the definition of harassment that is covered by the board policy requires the district to utilize the rigid and formal procedures described in the anti-harassment policy to address this additional conduct. This exceeds a district's legal obligation. Therefore, boards should exercise caution and consult with legal counsel before adopting such a broader anti-harassment policy.

By contrast, anti-harassment policies can be drafted only to address harassment as defined by applicable law. Other unacceptable conduct would then be addressed under a separate workplace bullying/violence policy or a general workplace misconduct policy. Similarly, some anti-harassment policies specifically state that they do not apply to allegations of workplace harassment under Title IX, which has unique legal standards and

processes that must be applied in applicable situations.

2. Ensuring that the policy is clear and reasonable.

Federal law provides a defense for employers that are sued for harassment if the employer creates an anti-harassment policy that demonstrates reasonable care was taken to implement procedures to address harassing behavior and the complainant employee unreasonably failed to utilize the procedures outlined in that policy. To strengthen a district's ability to rely on this defense, an anti-harassment policy should be written in plain language. It should be easy for a potential victim of harassment to review the policy and know exactly how to file a complaint.

Therefore, a policy should:

- Designate at least two individuals (preferably one male and one female, if practical) who can receive harassment complaints to ensure that the employee does not have to report the harassment to the alleged harasser;
- List the name, job title, and contact information (including email and phone number) for those designated individuals;
- Specify which employees have a duty to report to those designated individuals if they witness

The goal of the policy is to facilitate easy reporting so that the district can take prompt action to stop the harassment and prevent its recurrence.

or receive reports of harassment, and specify a deadline by which to make such a report;

- Designate an individual who will receive reports of harassment against the district administrator (commonly, the board president); and
- Prohibit retaliation against anyone who reports in good faith under the policy.

The goal of the policy is to facilitate easy reporting so that the district can take prompt action to stop the harassment and prevent its recurrence.

■ 3. Confidentiality in harassment reporting.

Reporting harassment is a difficult thing for many employees to do. Sometimes, complaining employees will specifically request that their report be confidential. In anticipation of this concern, some policies even state that reports of harassment will remain confidential. Unfortunately, it isn't possible for reports to stay confidential. In order to investigate the complaint, it will likely be necessary to disclose some of the information in the report, such as the name of the reporter, the alleged victim, and the alleged harasser. Additionally, the report might be the subject of litigation which could result in disclosure. A written harassment report is also a record subject to the Wisconsin Public Records law, although the district records custodian will have to carefully decide at the time of the request whether it is appropriate to disclose the record, with or without redactions.

Because the district can't always keep the report confidential, the anti-harassment policy shouldn't suggest that reports will be kept confidential. However, a policy should emphasize its anti-retaliation provisions. One reason harassment victims are hesitant to disclose that they are victims is because of fear of retaliation. Drafting strong anti-retaliation language can help encourage victims to come forward and report.

■ 4. Time frames for investigation and taking action.

A harassment complaint is serious. Therefore, when administrators receive a harassment complaint, they should take prompt steps to commence an investigation, determine if harassment occurred, and, if so, take prompt and effective steps to stop the harassment and prevent its recurrence. However, the law has not established a specific timeframe by which an investigation must begin or be completed. Some policies contain rigid timelines such as permitting only 14 days to investigate potential harassment. For a small investigation, such a timeline is achievable. On the other hand, some harassment investigations require investigating multiple claims against multiple individuals involving conduct that could span years. Such an investigation will be much harder to complete in 14 days and, possibly, even in 30 days.

To allow ample time to investigate, harassment policies should provide flexible time frames for the investigation. A policy might state, "The investigation will generally be completed in 30 days, except if the investigator determines that a longer time frame is appropriate." However, in practice, a victim of harassment might focus too much on the "30 days" and could miss the language creating flexibility for the investigator. To address that, some policies do not provide a specific timeframe at all. For example, a policy might state, "The investigation should be completed promptly based on the complexity of the allegations and other relevant circumstances as determined by the investigator."

■ 5. Don't prohibit employees from reporting potentially harassing conduct — even if the conduct happened a while ago.

Harassing conduct that occurred years ago will inherently be harder to investigate. In some cases, it might not be possible to gather sufficient evidence to substantiate a

potential complaint regardless of the actual merits of the complaint. Nevertheless, harassment policies should not limit the period during which an employee can report. Even conduct from years ago should be investigated to the extent possible and a determination reached based on the available evidence. While there are time limits by which an employee who was the victim of harassment must file a complaint to an administrative agency or court, those timelines do not directly apply to internal workplace complaints. The district is often better served to investigate regardless of the timeliness of the complaint. For example, if a district decided not to investigate a complaint because it happened too long ago, the alleged harasser might harass another employee in the future. The district will then have to explain why it chose not to investigate that complaint, which, if addressed, might have prevented the additional harassment from occurring.

To facilitate prompt reporting, it is appropriate for a policy to suggest or recommend that harassment be reported promptly whenever possible to facilitate an appropriate investigation. Nevertheless, the policy should also state that a complaint should be still filed regardless of timeliness.

■ 6. Who makes the final decision on the merits of a harassment complaint?

Some policies state that the investigator should make a recommendation to the district administrator or designee regarding whether harassment occurred and what steps should be taken as a result. Those policies often state that the district administrator's decision will be final.

Other policies provide either the victim or alleged perpetrator with the right to appeal the initial determination to the school board. Such policies warrant caution. Boards should evaluate the types of harassment allegations that are covered by the policy's complaint procedure and

account for any specific legal requirements that may apply. For example, allegations of sexual harassment under Title IX contain specific requirements relating to investigators, decision-makers, and appeals.

Additionally, the determination as to whether harassment occurred requires both factual and legal conclusions. Board members often do not have specific training in these areas. At a minimum, if a policy allows the determination to be appealed to the board, the board should work closely with legal counsel to ensure legal compliance.

Board members often want to be involved in harassment determinations because of their importance to the district. However, if harassment is determined to have occurred, board members may have to participate in termination proceedings involving the

harasser. Those proceedings require board members to be impartial as to the merits of the harassment claim. Even if the harassment doesn't warrant termination, if the perpetrator is disciplined, the perpetrator could grieve that discipline under the board's grievance procedure. The board may be involved in the resolution of the grievance, which also supports keeping the board out of the initial determination so board members can remain impartial. Ultimately, there likely will be an important role for the board in responding to an allegation of harassment, even if there is no role for the board or board members in the determination phase.

Conclusion

Harassment complaints can be complex and emotionally charged issues for school districts. However,

a carefully drafted harassment policy can facilitate the prompt and thorough resolution of such complaints. As board members review and revise harassment policies, they should be aware of the key issues that should be addressed in a harassment policy. Having a quality workplace harassment policy in place will allow the district to conduct thorough and proper investigations and to take steps to stop the harassment and prevent it from recurring. That helps protect the district legally and also provides credibility to the outcome of these important investigations. ■

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: "Verbal Sexual Harassment" (Mar. 2002); and "Recent Rulings Under the Sexual Harassment Law" (Nov. 1999).

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.

2023 REPORT TO THE MEMBERSHIP

**Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Inc.
Condensed Statement of Activities for the Year Ending June 30, 2023**

| REVENUE | |
|---|---------------------|
| Membership Dues | \$ 2,230,608 |
| Program Revenue | \$ 2,054,622 |
| Interest and Investment-Related Income (loss) | \$ 139,634 |
| Other Income | \$ 46,732 |
| Total Revenue | \$ 4,471,596 |
| EXPENSES | |
| Program Expense | \$ 2,859,993 |
| Management and General | \$ 1,342,435 |
| Total Expenses | \$ 4,202,428 |
| Change in Unrestricted Net Assets-Operating | \$ 269,168 |

**Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Inc.
Condensed Statement of Financial Position, June 30, 2023**

| ASSETS | |
|--|---------------------|
| Current Assets | |
| Investments, Cash and Cash Equivalents | \$ 3,728,125 |
| Accounts Receivable | \$ 424,790 |
| Deferred Costs and Prepaid Expenses | \$ 461,955 |
| Accrued Interest Receivable | \$ 9,832 |
| Total Current Assets | \$ 4,624,702 |
| Long-Term Investments | \$ - |
| Property and Equipment, Net | \$ 66,231 |
| Total Assets | \$ 4,690,933 |
| LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS | |
| Current Liabilities | |
| Deferred Revenue | \$ 1,474,476 |
| Accounts Payable, Payroll Taxes and Benefits Payable | \$ 389,925 |
| Accrued Lease Liability | \$ 23,194 |
| Short-Term Portion of Capital Lease | \$ 15,143 |
| Total Current Liabilities | \$ 1,902,738 |
| Long Term Liabilities | |
| Long-Term Portion of Capital Lease | \$ 1,110 |
| Total Liabilities | \$ 1,903,848 |
| Net Assets | |
| Unrestricted | \$ 2,757,500 |
| Temporarily Restricted | \$ 29,585 |
| Total Net Assets | \$ 2,787,085 |
| Total Liabilities and Net Assets | \$ 4,690,933 |



Educational Services and Products

2023 WASB SERVICE ASSOCIATES

HIGHLIGHTED BUSINESSES are members of the WASB Endorsed Insurance Agency Program.
Learn more at wasb.org/wasb-insurance-plan.

Architecture, Engineering and Construction

► **Bray Architects**

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

Architecture, interior design, planning, referendum support.

► **C.D. Smith, Construction, Inc.**

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

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

► **CG Schmidt**

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

Construction management, general contracting, design-build.

► **Eppstein Uhen Architects**

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

Architectural design and service leader known for inspired design.

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

800-236-2370
jandres@hoffman.net

Integrated planning, design, and construction firm that partners with Wisconsin school districts to provide everything from facility assessments, referendum services, renovations, and additions, to new design and construction, to solar and energy upgrades, enhancements, and more.

► **J.H. Findorff & Son Inc.**

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

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

► **JP Cullen**

608-754-6601, jpcullen.com
Marissa Young,
marissa.young@jpcullen.com

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

► **Miron Construction Co., Inc.**

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

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

► **Performance Services**

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

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

► **Plunkett Raysich Architects LLP**

414-359-3060
skramer@prarch.com, prarch.com

Architectural and interior design services.

► **Scherrer Construction Company, Inc.**

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

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

► **The Boldt Company**

920-225-6216
theboldtcompany.com

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

► **VJS Construction Services**

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

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

Computer Hardware, Software, Consulting

► **Skyward, Inc.**

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

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

Financing, Banking, Consulting

► **Baird Public Finance**

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

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

Insurance and Employee Benefits

► **Community Insurance Corporation**

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

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

► **EMC Insurance Companies**

262-717-3900, emcins.com
Phil.R.Lucca@EMCIns.com

Property and casualty insurance.

► **Gallagher**

262-792-2240
nancy_moon@ajg.com, ajg.com

Specializing in serving the risk management and insurance needs of public schools.

► **Key Benefit Concepts LLC**

262-522-6415, keybenefits.com
info@keybenefits.com

Actuarial and employee benefit consulting services.

► **M3 Insurance Solutions, Inc**

920-455-7263
bec.kurzynske@m3ins.com
m3ins.com

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

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

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

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

► **R&R Insurance**

262-953-7177
Alyssa.Bauer@rrins.com
myknowledgebroker.com

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

► **TRICOR, Inc.**

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

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

► **UnitedHealthcare**

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

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

► **USI Insurance Services**

262-302-2343
raeanne.beaudry@usi.com, usi.com

Our focus is financial security options that protect and assist growth. We go beyond simply protecting against the loss of assets and property.

Leadership Consulting

► **Studer Education**

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

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

Legal Services

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

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

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

► **Renning, Lewis & Lacy, s.c.**

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

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

► **von Briesen & Roper, s.c.**

414-276-1122
james.macy@vonbriesen.com
vonbriesen.com

For more than fifty years, von Briesen has delivered client-driven results to school districts throughout Wisconsin. Our team's depth and breadth of experience allows us to understand the unique challenges facing school districts today and help our clients become true leaders and innovators.

► **Weld Riley, s.c.**

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

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

School/Community Research

► **School Perceptions, LLC**

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

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

Transportation

► **Dairyland Buses, Inc.**

262-544-8181, ridesta.com
mjordan@ridesta.com

School bus contracting provider, managed contracts, training, maintenance.



SUPPORTING, PROMOTING AND ADVANCING PUBLIC EDUCATION



FALL EVENTS AND RESOURCES



2023 FALL LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

Keep your finger on the pulse of
the future of public education

Nov. 4, 2023 | Heidel House, Green Lake



WASB ONLINE LEARNING PLATFORM

Comprehensive online training
for Wisconsin School Boards

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