

WISCONSIN SchoolNews

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



ROLLING OUT the RED CARPET for Public Education

*WASB Business Honor Roll highlights successful
partnerships between businesses and school districts*



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Evers Names Wisconsin Teachers of the Year

Four educators were recognized as Teachers of the Year for the 2014-15 school year. In surprise ceremonies at the teachers' schools, State Superintendent Tony Evers honored the following teachers:

- **Diana Callope**, an eighth-grade mathematics teacher at White-water Middle School (Middle School Teacher of the Year);
- **Sarah Franson**, a first- through third-grade teacher at Irving Elementary School in West Allis (Elementary School Teacher of the Year);
- **Carla Kuffel**, a mathematics teacher at Cameron High School (High School Teacher of the Year); and,
- **Andrea Pasqualucci**, a school social worker at Valley View Elementary School in Ashwaubenton, (Special Services Teacher of the Year).

"These educators bring the joy of learning to their schools and classrooms," Evers said. "The success of our students depends on great teachers who create personal relationships, connect with families, and share their passion for lifelong learning ... Excellent educators are instrumental in developing the leaders of tomorrow."

Each of the educators will receive \$3,000 from the Herb Kohl Education Foundation. This fall, a committee will select one of the four Teachers of the Year to represent Wisconsin in the National Teacher of the Year program. That individual will receive an additional \$6,000 from the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation. ■

STUDY: Keeping Freshmen on Track Key to Graduation

Education Week recently reported on a study that found increased graduation rates among high schools that focus on keeping students on track academically during their freshman year. The article points out that Chicago Public Schools has improved its graduation rate from 47 percent in 1999 to 69 percent in 2014 (it is expected to reach 84 percent in 2018). According to the article, "Researchers say the increase in recent years (since 2011) is largely attributable to the focus on keeping freshmen on track."

Researchers found that the use of an "accountability system and regular delivery of real-time, easy-to-use data

reports" allowed teachers to keep track of and monitor those freshman students who needed help.

Additionally, researchers found that students often struggle in ninth-grade because of the transition from middle school to high school where students have more freedom and responsibility. If teachers can help students be successful in their first year of high school, that success usually carries into their sophomore and junior years.

"We found if we can get a student to have a successful ninth-grade transition, it sticks," said Elaine Allensworth, a researcher at the University of Chicago. ■

STAT OF THE MONTH

64%

High school graduation rate of Wisconsin African-American students, compared to 92 percent for white students.

Source: America's Promise Alliance

Wisconsin Among Worst in Well-Being of African-American Children

A report released by the Wisconsin Council on Children & Families ranked Wisconsin last in the country in the overall well-being of African-American children. The report is based on data compiled by the Annie E. Casey Foundation's "Kids Count" report and examined 12 measures that quantify a child's success from birth to adulthood. For African-American children in Wisconsin, the report found:

- **Four out of every five** live in poor households (compared to three out of 10 white children);
- **Seven out of 10** live in single-parent families (compared to two out of 10 white children); and
- **Fewer than one in 10** in eighth-grade are proficient in math (compared to about one in two white children).

"We need to come together as a community — as a state — to say that this is an abomination that is not in keeping with our values or how we view ourselves as Wisconsinites," said Ken Taylor, executive director of the Wisconsin Council on Children & Families.

While Wisconsin ranked last, other Midwest states also ranked near the bottom. Michigan barely edged out Mississippi. Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa ranked below the national average. ■



Let's Expand Their Horizons

As school leaders, we know public education is undergoing changes. Educator Effectiveness, Common Core State Standards, standardized testing, technology — the education climate is evolving.

Change can be challenging but it can also be exciting. The use of technology inside and outside our schools is providing exciting opportunities in public education. A recent study by CompTIA, a non-profit organization that is known as the voice of the world's information technology industry, found that 78 percent of K-12 educators said that technology has positively affected the classroom and productivity of students. It's changing the way our teachers teach and the way our students learn.

In the 1990s, Wisconsin schools were considered leaders in effective technology use in schools. Since then, Wisconsin has fallen behind as it has struggled to provide quality Internet access to all corners of the state. At the same time, our child poverty rate has increased — calling into question a growing technology divide between the haves and the have-nots — and schools have been facing multiple years of budget cutbacks.

Technology may hold the potential to be the great equalizer in

student achievement and is becoming increasingly vital, but schools face hurdles in ensuring that technology is implemented effectively and the technology gap doesn't threaten achievement levels. The troubling disparities in access to the Internet and the necessary digital tools may increasingly leave children behind.

There is an obligation for the state and the technology industry to play a role in limiting the technological divide in our schools. An article in *NBC News* this summer reported that "more than two-thirds of U.S. school districts are cutting back on regular maintenance and replacement of computer equipment" because of budget troubles. And a survey by the Federal Communications Commission, reports that "half of schools and libraries that apply for federal subsidies have 'lower speed Internet connectivity than the average American home — despite having, on average, 200 times as many users.'"

If we truly want our students to be college- and career-ready, we must provide a learning environment which utilizes technology effectively and provides the human and physical connections that make learning possible. Every child deserves the resources that will prepare them to

be contributing, productive citizens.

The WASB is working with other public education groups on a proposal to significantly increase state technology funding assistance for schools. The state Legislature and governor must give this proposal serious consideration in the upcoming state budget debate. Teachers and school leaders are being creative in finding low-cost online options, but it's not just about putting a device in every student's hands. It's also about bandwidth, networking equipment, software, professional development, and leadership that is flexible and adaptable.

If used well, technology can inspire students to innovate and excel. It can open their worlds — expanding their horizons on a global scale and leading them into opportunities and careers they may never have dreamed about. Our future depends upon how well we prepare our children for tomorrow.

As a final note, thank you to all of our school board members for the work you do for our students — you are our everyday heroes. In appreciation of your efforts, the WASB is celebrating Oct. 5-11 as Wisconsin School Board Appreciation Week. Never forget that the work you do matters. ■

Every child deserves the resources that will prepare them to be contributing, productive citizens.

ROLLING OUT the RED CARPET for Public Education

WASB Business Honor Roll highlights successful partnerships between businesses and school districts

Shelby Anderson

This past summer, the WASB accepted nominations from Wisconsin public school districts for its third annual WASB Business Honor Roll. School districts from across the state submitted excellent examples of businesses supporting

and promoting public education in their communities.

The complete WASB Business Honor Roll can be viewed at wasb.org. Here's a look at some of the successful partnerships that help support Wisconsin schools.

MISHICOT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dowco and Jagemann

"Career Ready"

The Mishicot School District prides itself on its student portfolio process, which helps students pursue career interests while still in school. A couple of years ago, 13 percent of Mishicot seniors said they didn't know what they wanted to do after high school. In 2013-14, only 1 percent of seniors said they were undecided.

"A lot of that is because businesses have opened their doors to our students," said Superintendent Colleen Timm.

Two businesses in particular, Dowco and Jagemann, have worked closely with Mishicot students.

Dowco is a Manitowoc-based business that, among other things, is known for manufacturing canvas covers for boats and saddlebags for motorcycles. The company partnered with and sponsored Mishicot High School's Mini-Chopper Team. The mini-chopper program is a county-wide initiative in Manitowoc County that pairs businesses with teams of students to build a mini-chopper motorcycle and give students real-world manufacturing skills.

Timm said the program is intense. Students must follow detailed speci-

fications for the manufacturing and building of their mini-chopper. They work closely with engineers and professionals from a local business partner. Then, at the end of the school year, the team of students presents the finished product to other students and businesses from across the county.

"It's a life-changing project for some students," Timm said. "You manage a budget, work as a team, and then get on a stage and present."

Timm said one of her students — a girl that participated in the mini-chopper program several times — was approached by businesses with job offers.

A couple of years ago, **13 percent of Mishicot seniors** said they didn't know what they wanted to do after high school.

In 2013-14, only 1 percent of seniors said they were undecided.



Mishicot High School's Mini-Chopper team worked with Dowco, a Manitowoc-based manufacturer, to build a mini motorcycle. The Mini-Chopper program is a county-wide competition that introduces students to real-world engineering and manufacturing work.

“Once these businesses work with our students and see what they can do, a lot of them offer them a job on the spot or tell our students to go to college and come back and work for them,” Timm said.

Jagemann, a metal stamping and plastic-molding manufacturer based in Manitowoc, has worked extensively with the Mishicot School District — offering youth apprenticeship positions, helping with mock interviews, and offering other career support and expertise to students.

“They’ve really embraced the youth apprenticeship program,” said Tom Ellenbecker, principal at Mishicot High School.

This past school year, two Mishicot students who worked at Jagemann were offered summer jobs after their youth apprenticeship ended. Timm remembers another student, who, despite several personal challenges, showed promise. Jagemann worked with the school district to get the student set-up with a youth apprenticeship. The partnership worked great and the student, now graduated from high school, works full time at the company.

Students can earn extensive college credit at the local technical college by working on projects such as the mini-chopper or working with manufacturing and engineering firms such as Jagemann. Ellenbecker says he knows several students who decided to attend the local technical college after earning credit in high school who otherwise wouldn’t have gone to college. One student from this past school year was not plan-

ning on going to college, but after he saw how many credits he’d earned, he changed his mind.

“That student told me, ‘How can I not go to college, I’m almost done with my degree,’” Ellenbecker said. “His experience working with our business partners and earning college credit was the reason he is going to college.” □

TOMAH AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT Marcus Ho Chunk Cinema

“Stars for a Day”

Whether they know it or not, Tomah Superintendent Cindy Zahrte says the Marcus Ho Chunk Cinema contributes to the positive behavior of students within the Tomah Area School District. The theater has long donated movie passes to the school district, which are used as incentives for students in the district’s successful PBIS program.

2014 WASB Business Honor Roll

View the complete 2014 WASB Business Honor Roll at wasb.org.

Select “Communications” and then “Business Honor Roll.” The WASB thanks the participating school districts and businesses for their work on behalf of their students and communities.



Thanks to a partnership with Marcus Ho Chunk Cinema, students at Tomah Middle School were treated like stars on the first day of school.

For the past couple of years, the theater has also provided the middle school with velvet ropes and decorations for the first day of school. When students arrive, they get the red carpet treatment with teachers and administrators outside greeting them and giving them high-fives as they enter the middle school.

"I think all of our students really enjoy it," principal Steve Buss said. "It's a true demonstration of how doing the small things can really go a long way."

The Marcus Ho Chunk Cinema has also served as a venue for the high school's post-prom party. Owner Kathy Vroman lets students commandeer the theater after midnight. Students have the entire place to use for playing games and cards, socializing, eating, and enjoying a selection of popular movies.

"Our partnership with the Marcus Ho Chunk Cinema has been in place since the theater opened its doors in Tomah," Zahrte said. "They were willing to assist us right from the start with reduced rates and special showings for our students and they continue to expand opportunities in assisting the school district as needs arise." □

MUSKEGO-NORWAY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Inpro Corporation

"Making a Better Place"

Inpro Corporation, an indoor environmental facility company based in Muskego, provides support to nearly every school in the Muskego-Norway School District. They have donated and mounted signage for the middle and elementary schools, they donated furniture to the high school, and, among other efforts, they provide mentors and opportunities for the high school's Project Lead the Way

(PLTW) program.

Muskego High School's PLTW senior capstone class, Engineering Design and Development, has especially benefited from the partnership with Inpro Corporation. This past school year, the company engaged the class in a "prototyping challenge." Students had several meetings with Inpro personnel on an actual problem. Inpro gave the students some materials and parameters and challenged them to help come up with solutions. The students took the materials back to the classroom and worked on solutions for an intense two weeks and then made a presentation to Inpro executives.

"It changed my students' point of view," said Karen Lindholm-Rynkiewicz, technology teacher at

The Inpro Corporation has helped the Muskego-Norway School District in many ways, including providing special projects and opportunities for Muskego High School's Engineering Design and Development class.





Tom and Bill Halquist of Halquist Stone Company are recognized by Hamilton School Board President Gabe Kolesari for their financial support.

Muskego High School. “It helped students understand what engineering in the real world is all about.”

Inpro also provides mentors and judges for PLTW events and has given tours to middle school students. Last year, they gave a scholarship to a senior attending college pursuing an engineering career.

As a company focused on indoor environmental quality and products, Inpro also works closely with the school district’s facility manager, sharing best practices and information regarding vendors and contractors. In fact, the partnership between the district’s facility manager and Inpro played a key role in a donation of more than \$10,000 in furniture to the school district.

School Board President Rick Petfalski said Inpro executives are looking to help in any way they can, as evidenced by a recent \$5,000 donation to the football boosters club.

“They just believe in making Muskego a better place and they recognize that one of the best ways to do that is to support their local schools.” □

“[Halquist Stone Company] serves as a role model for community service because of **partnership activities and financial contributions which support students.”**

— Hamilton Superintendent
Kathleen Cooke

HAMILTON SCHOOL DISTRICT Halquist Stone Company

“Rock-Steady Support”

For more than 20 years, Tom Halquist, owner of Halquist Stone Company in Sussex, has quietly supported the Hamilton School District through various partnership activities and financial contributions.

Halquist assisted in the establishment of the Hamilton Education Foundation, which has contributed more than \$1 million in grants and opportunities to promote rigorous instructional practices in the school district.

Last school year, the Halquist family hosted Dozer Day, which served as the Hamilton Education Foundation’s premier fundraising event. For this special event, the Halquist stone quarry was turned into an amusement park for children

of all ages. Profits from the fundraiser supported grants and innovative programming which increased student achievement in the Hamilton School District.

Recently, Halquist Stone Company pledged to construct new athletic fields for school and community use on Hamilton School District property. The donation, which exceeds \$200,000, will enable soccer, softball and baseball fields to be constructed.

“Halquist Stone Company has been an outstanding business partner of the Hamilton School District for over 20 years,” said Superintendent Kathleen Cooke. “The company serves as a role model for community service because of partnership activities and financial contributions which support students.” ■

Anderson is editor of Wisconsin School News.



Collaborating for student success | *Mary Ellen Havel-Lang*

What happens when 16 under-achieving fourth- and fifth-graders are tutored twice a week by high school students or students are taught how to use a crock pot? What does it look like when financial literacy is discussed with adults while their school-aged children are with mentors and their preschool children are provided child care? Sun Prairie is finding out.

The community school initiative began in Sun Prairie during January 2012, at two sites — an elementary school and alternative high school “community.”

A community school is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement leads to improved

student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone — all day, every day, evenings and weekends.

“Community schools are an inspiring grassroots collaboration involving many people and organizations in our community,” said Tim Culver, district administrator. “It has united many elements of our community in support of children and families.”

■ Collaboration

Community schools are all about collaboration. About three years ago, the City of Sun Prairie’s Youth and Families Commission completed an assessment of the school district, with an emphasis on growth, the increase in diversity, youth criminal activity, education, and activities for youth. Once the report was published, the commission was approached by the YMCA of Dane County, which introduced the community schools concept. Representatives from the commission and the YMCA spoke with Culver and introduced the initiative. Community leaders were gathered to discuss the direction the community was



headed, diversity, poverty, and whether this was going to be a good step. After several Saturday morning meetings, these leaders gave the go ahead.

The non-profit YMCA stepped up to be the fiscal agent for the effort. There is a formal memorandum of understanding between the school district and the YMCA to address roles and responsibilities, use of the buildings, insurance, and program management.

Since that initial partnership with the City of Sun Prairie and the YMCA, we now have 26 community partners. Some approached us, some we approached.

“One of the great experiences of working in a community school

effort is realizing that meeting a need that has been identified is not contingent on one organization’s ability but rather realizing that the strengths of many organizations can lead to great and fast results when we work together,” said Dan Moritz, YMCA’s community schools manager.

■ Funding through Partnerships

Philosophically, a commitment has been made that students and their families should be able to participate in programs for free or at little cost. Most of our partners do provide services in that manner. The objective is to have people participate.

This leads to the money question — where is the funding coming from? We started small. There was a three-year commitment from Summit Credit Union. Madison Community Foundation funded a grant request, again, for three years. Our elementary site has been adopted by a UW fraternity, which sponsored a fundraising dinner dance. Local service organizations have provided monetary and volunteer support. Additionally, the school district and YMCA have provided in-kind staff and monetary support.

We partnered with Herzing University’s Principles of Marketing class, which provided three marketing plans. This not only benefits the initiative, but gives the students

Since the initial partnership with the YMCA, the City of Sun Prairie now has 26 community partners.



real-life scenarios in which to spend class time. We are also partnering with Herzing University for our logo contest. As a result of our work with Herzing, their academic dean has joined our executive team, which helps guide the program.

The governance structure is a thing to behold. There are six teams that meet regularly: executive; fund development; assessment, outcome and evaluation; communication and marketing; site leadership; and community engagement. Staff from the school district and YMCA participate along with the city, parents, students, businesses, service organizations, the faith-based community, and community members. There is one paid staff — the program manager — who is an employee of the YMCA. Programming and planning is led by each site leadership team. These teams consist of the program manager, principal, students, grandparents, parents, and school staff. The programming is based on needs assessments from parents and students, with input from the school staff — the “community.”

■ Student Success

Now back to those results. Here’s what happened with the reading and math scores last year of Westside Elementary School fourth- and fifth-graders who participated in the Kids Achieve Together (KAT) program:

“The data on our first year of KAT suggests that the achievement gap in reading narrowed for participants,” said Principal Rick Mueller.

While the mean reading growth for all fourth- and fifth-grade students at Westside Elementary School was 9.7 points (more than one year growth) the mean growth of students involved in KAT was 13.4.

This after-school program also provides a healthy snack and a half hour of physical activity. Anecdotally, teachers said their students were more eager to be at school and more prepared for class when they participated in the program.

One of the KAT volunteers is Luke Waldbillig. Luke is a senior at Sun Prairie High School, vice-chair

MORE INFORMATION ON Community Schools

Visit the Coalition of Community Schools at communityschools.org for more on the community schools model.

Other Websites:

Sun Prairie Community Schools:
[http://ymcadanecounty.org/
community-schools-news](http://ymcadanecounty.org/community-schools-news)

Illinois Federation of
Community Schools:
<http://ilcommunityschools.org/>

of the Youth and Families Commission, and very active in the administration of community schools.

“As a volunteer, it is the people that keep me coming back,” Luke said. “Seeing the smile on a kid’s face who just had fun spending nearly 12 hours at school, the gratefulness of a mom who is taking a class that she wouldn’t be able to take otherwise, and the passion of

my fellow volunteers really inspire me to stay involved in my community and give to something that will far outlast me.”

The students at our alternative high school were able to keep their crock pots if they completed the class. One can smell the fruits of their labors during the day when they cook for the school attendees and staff.

According to Wendi Tavs, principal at the Prairie Phoenix Academy, the community school model brings many needed resources to the school. The school gets outside help with student factors that include: poverty; onset of mental health conditions, usually occurring in late teens; self-medicating with alcohol or drugs for anxiety or depression; single family home structure; and, trauma experienced earlier in life that they have not worked through.

“Some of the most common examples are loss of a parent, continual verbal abuse, addictive parent in the household, and transient life styles — many students have been to four or more school districts in their life time,” Tavs said.

Services at the community school are based on these needs and those identified via assessments completed by the students and their caregivers. This makes each site tailored to meet the needs of their “community.”

“Every aspect of community schools in Sun Prairie is focused on providing opportunities to students and families who need them, but also to those who want them that have the desire to succeed at whatever comes their way,” Waldbillig said. “It’s more than just an after-school program or a cooking class; it’s a community lifestyle and a complete paradigm shift to holistic care of the community.” ■

Mary Ellen Havel-Lang was a member of the Sun Prairie School board for 12 years; serving five years as president. She was also a member of the WASB Board of Directors. She is currently the Chair of the Sun Prairie Youth and Families Commission.



“As a volunteer, it is the people that keep me coming back.

Seeing the smile on a kid’s face who just had fun spending nearly 12 hours at school, the gratefulness of a mom who is taking a class that she wouldn’t be able to take otherwise, and the passion of my fellow volunteers ...”

— **Luke Waldbillig**, Sun Prairie High School senior and vice-chair of the Youth and Families Commission



Starting the Conversation

Steps and strategies to connect with your state representatives

Terrence Falk

For a number of years, state senators and assembly representatives got pelted with questions by school officials at an annual school forum in Medford. It might as well have been the throwing of the rotten tomatoes that were left over from the fall harvest.

“Gotcha questions,” is what Rick Eloranta calls it. Eloranta, an Owen-Withee school board member, saw that some school board members took great delight in backing their elected representatives into a corner. Individual school board members

and administrators would clutch the microphone ripping into long, rambling speeches until someone asked, “What is the question?”

People stopped coming. The Medford forum could draw from over 20 school districts in the area.

“The last year we used the ‘gotcha’ method, we had only one legislator and four candidates, and the other legislators did not come,” says John Gaier, district administrator for Neillsville. From a high of about 150 school officials, the Medford forum now only attracted less than

half that number.

“It made the legislators look bad and it was unsatisfying to the school board members,” says Eloranta. Yet legislators told school officials “We need to hear what your people think ... we need to hear your stories.”

So the Medford forum changed directions. Organizers began sending out questions to legislators in advance so they could come with better researched answers. At each forum, a panel of school officials would give a presentation on a couple of hot topics of the day such



If legislators get to know you as a person,
they are more likely to treat you with respect
and listen to your point of view.

as Common Core State Standards, vouchers or transportation. Legislators asked questions of the panelists in a real attempt to become better educated on the issues.

And the elected officials and school officials started coming back. At the most recent forum, every state representative except one was there. School officials now number well over a hundred.

And the benefits continue long after the forum is over.

“Administrators are stating that they are fielding more phone calls from legislators where they weren’t getting phone calls before,” says Eloranta.

■ Establishing Relationships

The Medford forum illustrates what works and what doesn’t in working with elected officials.

“Find ways to establish relationships,” says Senator Tim Cullen of Janesville.

If legislators get to know you as a person, they are more likely to treat you with respect and listen to your point of view.

Cullen has been on both sides of the microphone, first as a member of the state legislature, then as a school board member, and again returning as a state senator in 2010.

Jack O’Meara, a lobbyist and communication consultant for various educational organizations in Wisconsin, echoes Cullen’s recommendation.

“Get to know them,” O’Meara said. “Know who they are. Before you even talk to them, do some research ... Look for some common ground,” simple things like the same hobbies, restaurants, or places you have visited.

“Develop a relationship before there is a crisis,” says O’Meara. You can’t be “just complaining how terrible everything is. You also want to highlight the positive.” You want them to think of “public schools as a good investment as opposed to a drain on their resources, just one more thing they are spending money on. Think of the stories you want to tell them of why it is a good investment for the state to be supporting your schools.”

Make Advocacy a Habit

School boards should develop a legislative program to communicate their positions to legislators and others and to stay informed of important issues. A school board should:

- Adopt a board policy that establishes a legislative program. Sample policies are included in the WASB Legislative Advocacy Toolkit.
- Identify a Legislative contact, or a key person or committee, to track legislative issues and communicate the school board’s position. Inform the WASB of the name of the key person or committee chair. In addition to the electronic Legislative Updates, he or she will receive additional calls to action and may be contacted for targeted lobbying efforts.
- Identify three to five legislative priorities and a timetable for communicating them to legislators and others. (The WASB legislative priorities are adopted on a biennial basis and are available on the WASB website wasb.org.)
- Discuss at least one legislative issue during each school board meeting.
- Develop and nurture relationships with legislators and key staff members. A sample of a two-year advocacy strategy is included in this toolkit.
- Call on the WASB government relations staff for additional information, sample board resolutions, talking points and letters to the editor.

Taken from the WASB Legislative Advocacy Toolkit. To view the entire toolkit, visit wasb.org. Select “Advocacy & Government Relations” and then “Effective Advocacy Tips.”

“Give the legislators something of value that they can use: some statistics or facts about how a piece of legislation might affect schools in their district,” says Gaier. “When you are going to talk to a legislator about a certain issue, make sure you have your facts straight. Understand the issue. And what is really



State Rep. Gary Hebl (D-Sun Prairie) meets with Susan Fox and Susan Manning of the Monona Grove School Board.

important is to tell your district's story. Know what the impact might be on your district."

"When you meet with legislators, you don't have to talk about politics; talk about education," says Cullen.

After being elected in 2010, the Beloit school district administrator asked Cullen to come down in

December to brief him on what was going on in their district.

"That was extremely helpful... They didn't ask me to do anything." But from then on, Senator Cullen states that the people in Beloit are some of the first people he now asks when it comes to educational issues.

■ Contacting Legislators

School board members might think that the best time to contact their elected officials is right before an

election. After all, politicians are trying to get every vote, and they may be willing to make promises to you that they might not be willing to make at a different time of year. But Senator Cullen believes that this may be the worst time to push your agenda. After all, no bills are going to be passed during an election cycle. Instead contact your representative right after the elections, in late November or December. This is often a honeymoon period where

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

Publication Title: Wisconsin School News	Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	Actual No. Copies Published in September
Publication No.: 688-560	Total No. Copies (Net press run)	4,408	4,361
Filing Date: September 2014	Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541	4,193	4,167
Issue Frequency: 10 issues/year	Paid/Requested In-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541	0	0
No. of Issues Published Annually: 10	Other Classes Mailed through USPS	0	0
Annual Subscription Price: \$60.00 / \$94 fgn. / \$60 Can.	Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation	4,193	4,167
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Publisher: Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Inc. 122 West Washington Avenue, Suite 400, Madison, WI 53703-2178	Free Distribution Outside the Mail	136	136
Executive Editor: John Ashley 122 West Washington Avenue, Suite 400, Madison, WI 53703-2178	Total Free Distribution	146	146
Editor: Shelby Anderson 122 West Washington Avenue, Suite 400, Madison, WI 53703-2178	Total Distribution	4,339	4,313
Owner: Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Inc. 122 West Washington Avenue, Suite 400, Madison, WI 53703-2178	Copies not Distributed	69	48
The purpose, function and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes have not changed during the preceding 12 months.	Total	4,408	4,361
I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. Shelby Anderson, editor.	Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation	97	97



Legislators usually have deep knowledge on only a couple of subjects. That means legislators often must rely on others to give them that knowledge base.

temper settle down and serious work begins. Elected officials are far more willing to talk about true educational policy and even reach across to members of the other party in order to get things done.

“It is important to understand that legislators face a variety of challenges whether it’s on health-care, education, or taxes,” says O’Meara. “They are hearing from a lot of different people every day on many issues ... Legislators are pulled in a lot of different directions.”

“We are generalists,” says Senator Cullen. “If you bring up any topic that you could possibly consider, each of us knows five minutes about it ... We know 30 minutes on a few subjects.” Legislators usually have deep knowledge on only a couple of subjects. That means legislators often must rely on others to give them that knowledge base.

Cullen relies on other senators he trusts on some key issues or a friend he has back in his district who has a good handle on particular subjects. Other legislators rely heavily on their staff members. Don’t be insulted when you are asked to meet with a staff member rather than the elected official. Staff members are usually highly prized and trusted, and their opinions matter.

■ Getting Your Voice Heard

School board members may feel that they have an elected official that is so set in his or her ways, so ideological, that no amount of contact is going to make any difference. But you have to keep trying, says O’Meara. “Even if you think it is falling on deaf ears,

because you never know when your contacts have an impact.”

“Boards make a mistake in not having meetings” with their elected officials, says Cullen. Without those meetings, you are not getting your legislators on the record on how they feel. “It may not be what the board wants to hear at all.” But without those meetings, “You are really giving them a pass.”

Gaier tries to contact his legislators at least every other month. Find out how they wish to be contacted: email, phone calls, or face-to-face.

“You’re not going to win every battle,” says Gaier. But school board members might be winning far more than they realize. “We don’t do a good job of keeping track of those things that never come to a vote.” Because some school officials get involved early on in the legislative process, many bills that would have

been detrimental to public education never made it to the legislative floor.

“Talk to legislators back in your district, not just coming up to the capitol,” says Cullen. “Get to them early, long before anything has been proposed.”

School board members may not realize just how powerful they can be, says Cullen.

“A school board member has a microphone in a local community,” Cullen said. “They can speak out, and the press will report it. You don’t come with campaign contributions, but you do come with a microphone.”

In the end, legislators know that they should be listening to you. ■

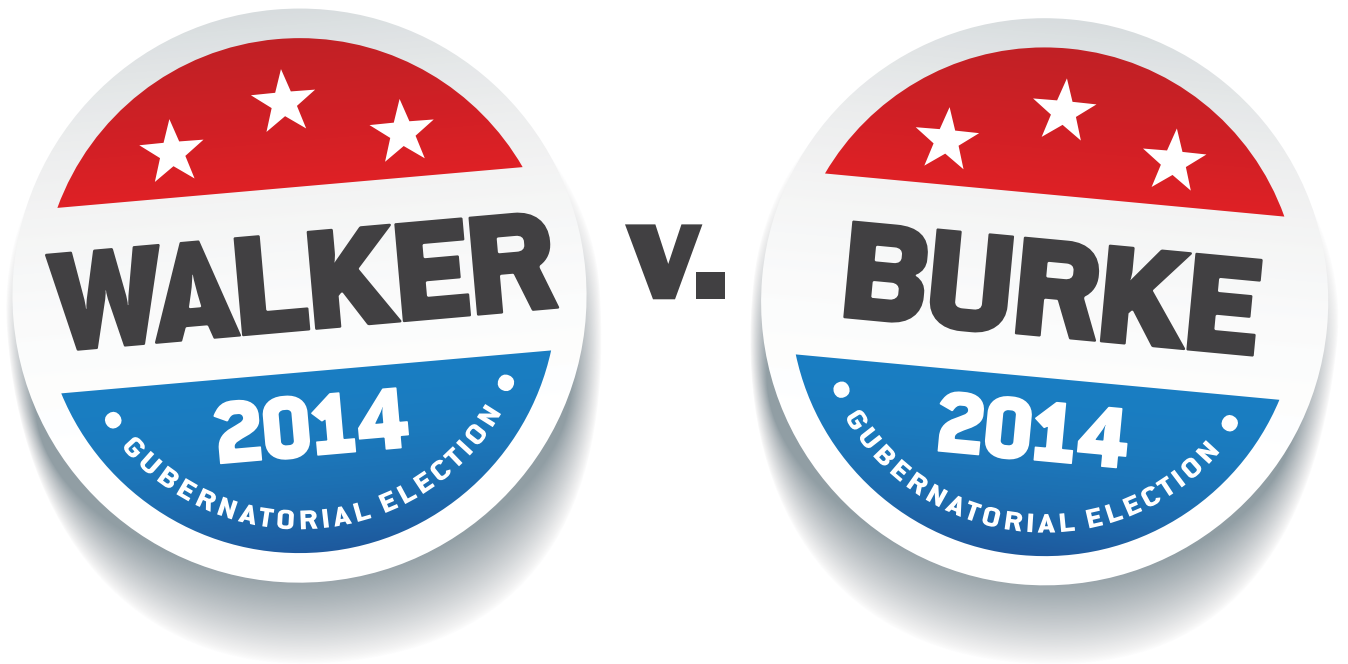
Terry Falk is a member of the Milwaukee Board of School Directors and a member of the WASB Board of Directors. He is the WASB liaison to WSPRA. For more information about WSPRA, visit wspra.org.

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This November, Wisconsin residents will choose between incumbent Governor Scott Walker and challenger Mary Burke for the next governor.

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

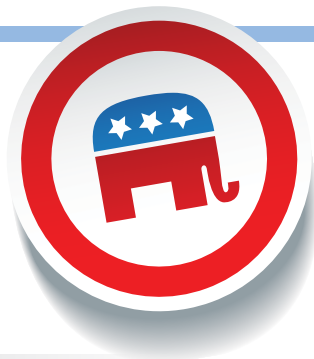
response to the survey request stated "our campaign will not be completing any interest group surveys or interviews." Mary Burke's responses follow.

Why should you be elected governor in November?

Mary Burke: I'm running for governor because I love Wisconsin, and

I know we have everything it takes to be a thriving, top 10 economy in the country. A growing, thriving economy ensures 1) jobs to keep our young people in our communities; 2) strong schools, colleges and universities; 3) safe, vibrant communities and 4) a lower tax burden. But we are lagging the country and other Midwestern states in coming out of





Learn more about Scott Walker by visiting his campaign website: scottwalker.com

Learn more about Mary Burke by visiting her campaign website: burkeforwisconsin.com

the Great Recession. In fact, we're dead last in the Midwest — 10th out of 10 — in private sector job creation over the last three years. I know we can do better than that, but we need leadership that is willing to set aside the politics and focus on common sense solutions.

My top priority is jobs and we won't compete effectively for jobs without strong education. I've spent most of my career in the private sector, and I know what it means to build the Wisconsin success story. At Trek, the division I led grew from \$3 million to \$50 million in sales annually, helping Trek grow to nearly 1,000 Wisconsin jobs. That real-world experience — and being held accountable for the results — informs my approach.

In my jobs plan, "Invest for Success," I lay out five core strategies I'll use to create more jobs and opportunity, based on my experience

in business and education. My approach is to take on the tough challenges and make sure every community, whether rural or urban, in every corner of the state, is thriving.

What is your vision of the future of public education in Wisconsin?

MB: My vision for public education is based on first-hand experience over the last six years of working to improve public education, including serving on my local school board. It is also based on my conversations with superintendents in towns and cities across Wisconsin. Whether it is Rhineland, Alma or Wausau, I see the opportunities but I also understand the challenges.

Improving the quality of K-12 education means making sure every student graduates from high school job- or college-ready, with a career

plan in place. We will do this through adequate funding for public education, well-supported implementation of more rigorous standards, great teachers in the classroom, and greater accountability.

As governor, I will be a strong partner with local communities and local school boards to not only understand the challenges but work together to overcome them.

As governor, what policies or strategies would you promote to improve overall student achievement and narrow the achievement gap between students of different backgrounds?

MB: I am committed to working every day as governor to strengthen public education and support our students, from K-12 to our technical colleges and university system so





that they are prepared to enter the workforce or enroll in college.

Nearly every school district across Wisconsin is facing challenges to deal with higher levels of poverty with reduced resources. In just six years, the share of low-income Wisconsin students has risen from 32 percent to 42 percent. Poverty in Wisconsin is a statewide issue. And yet nearly half of the school districts saw a decrease in their state aid for the 2014-15 school year.

These are tough challenges but we can overcome them. Six years ago, I created a program called AVID/TOPS, designed to narrow the achievement gap. AVID/TOPS is a partnership between local public high schools and the Boys & Girls Club. Nearly 750 students are enrolled in AVID/TOPS this fall. Over 90 percent of graduating students have gone on to two- or four-year college, the vast majority of whom are the first in their family to attend college.

This is just one example of how we improve student achievement. But overall we need adequate funding for public education, well-supported implementation of more rigorous standards, effective teachers in the classroom and a strong partnership between the state and local school districts.

How would you help K-12 schools to further integrate the use of technology that equips students

and teachers with the 21st century learning tools they need to succeed?

MB: Technology in the classroom continues to play an increasingly important role in ensuring that students are prepared for the jobs of the future. In his first term, Governor Walker turned down a \$23 million grant from the federal government that would have ensured that high-speed Internet would be available in more of our classrooms and local libraries. This was a missed opportunity because students in rural schools can greatly benefit from expanded offerings through technology.

Technology investments must be evaluated carefully. They should enhance, but are not a substitute for, good teaching. As governor, I will work with local school districts to support wise investments in technology to keep Wisconsin schools and students competitive.

Since 2009-10, annual adjustments in state-imposed revenue limits have not allowed school districts to bring in revenue to at least match the rate of inflation. As governor, would you support allowing annual adjustments in revenue limits to increase by at least the rate of inflation?

MB: I support local schools being able to increase per-student spending by the rate of inflation without increasing the average homeowner's property taxes. In order for that to work, we have to add state support and grow our economy. For example, if Wisconsin's economy had grown at just the national average over the past three years, the

state economy would be \$4 billion a year larger. With that additional tax base, the state could more adequately fund our priorities — including schools. We must have a growing economy for our schools and communities to thrive.

What is the proper role of the state in funding schools and what should be the proper mix of state and local revenues to operate schools? Do you support increasing state general equalization aids to restore Wisconsin to two-thirds state funding?

MB: Public schools are the fabric of our communities and the foundation of our economy, and I am committed to working every day as governor to strengthen them. It's clear that our current model of funding is short-changing school districts throughout Wisconsin, particularly in rural communities.

The situation is not getting any better. In the 2014-15 school year, nearly 50 percent of school districts saw their state aid cut. At the same time, there were huge increases in private voucher and charter school funding and \$30 million in tax deductions for private school tuition.

Governor Walker's proposal to increase the statewide voucher program is the biggest threat to adequate state funding for schools. Recent revenue estimates suggest that our state's 2015-2017 budget will face significant challenges, and getting to two-thirds funding will require a large investment. My commitment is that I will make public education a top priority and I will not divert scarce resources to the expansion of private voucher schools.

“Technology investments must be evaluated carefully.
They should enhance, but are not a substitute for, good teaching.”

— Mary Burke

“I strongly opposed the statewide expansion of vouchers.”

— Mary Burke

What is your view of local control of public education in Wisconsin? What do you believe is the state's role in governing public education? What do you believe is the local school board's role in governing public education?

MB: I am a strong proponent of local control, and there's no question that school boards play a critical role in providing a high-quality, public education throughout Wisconsin. Local school boards know what is best for their communities, and that critical function should be supported — not interfered with — by the state. While I endorse the statewide initiatives on Smarter Balanced Assessments, Teacher Effectiveness and Common Core State Standards, these must be well-supported and implemented in partnership with local school districts to provide flexibility. What is right for Green Bay may not be what is best for Alma with 300 students. Local school boards are in the best position to make these decisions.

What is your position on the Common Core State Standards in reading, language arts and math Wisconsin has adopted?

MB: As a school board member, I understand that Common Core is an opportunity, if implemented correctly, to make sure our young people are ready for the workplace or college. We absolutely need higher standards in Wisconsin — we are currently 38th in the country — and implementing Common Core correctly will do just that. Schools have the flexibility to exceed these standards and also should have flexibility in implementation because every school is different.

Do you support expanding the use of vouchers for students to attend

private schools using taxpayer dollars? If so, why, and how much of an expansion would you support? If not, why not?

MB: No, I strongly opposed the statewide expansion of vouchers and will seek to roll it back as governor. In Milwaukee and Racine, where the voucher program has been long established, I will insist on greater accountability. Governor Walker's approach of cutting funding for public education while increasing spending on unaccountable voucher schools is the wrong way to strengthen schools. I will also seek to repeal the new entitlement program Governor Walker supported that allows parents to write off private school tuition regardless of income — those dollars (\$30 million per year) should be put to use investing in neighborhood schools.

What specific steps, if any, beyond providing access to a high-quality education, do you intend to take as

governor to combat the increase in child poverty in our state?

MB: Wisconsin has seen a rapid increase in low-income students in our schools (32-42 percent in just six years). This is statewide and I hear the challenges from superintendents in school districts from Rhinelander to Alma to Wausau.

We have limited resources and as governor, I will use them wisely and ensure that they go where they will have the biggest impact. For example, there is absolutely no reason to devote nearly \$30 million annually for an income tax deduction for parents of any income level to send their children to private school. In addition, we know that nearly 80 percent of students receiving vouchers in the new statewide voucher program were already attending private school. When public resources are scarce, we should do a much better job of ensuring that help goes to those who are most in need. ■



Encouraging kids to believe in themselves can lead to amazing things. That's why Junior Achievement and Kohl's Cares partnered to bring you *JA BizTown* and *JA Finance Park*. Housed in the Junior Achievement Kohl's Education Center, these programs empower kids as they experience the challenges of adult life. With the help of JA's 90-year history, rewarding K-12 curriculum, and volunteer network, we'll continue to inspire kids to pursue their biggest dreams.

Learn more at wisconsin.ja.org

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ADVICE from Referendum Professionals

REFERENDUM PREP 101

Compiled by Roger Price, consultant, WASB Organizational Services

We reached out to professionals who work with school districts on referendums and asked them some basic questions that every school district, which is at some stage of preparation for a referendum, should know. The following article is a mix of their answers and advice, which focuses on many aspects of planning for success as well as basic referendum issues.

■ What is the process of filing for a referendum?

Many architects, contractors, legal and financial advisors have developed great resources that address the process of filing for a referendum. In addition, both the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) (dpi.state.wi.us — search for “referenda procedures”) and WASB (wasb.org — select “Communications” and then “Referendum Resource Center”) have resources available online.

■ What is the timing for the school board resolution?

There is a 70-day deadline for passing a resolution to hold a referendum. State law requires a school district to notify the DPI within 10 days after adopting a resolution to hold a referendum. The Government Accountability Board (GAB) is required to post the referendum questions to the Statewide Voter Registration System (SRVS). The district also needs to enter the referendum on the DPI School Finance Reporting Portal.

■ How can we make sure that we have the right ballot proposal giving the school district the best chance to be successful?

Optimal ballot proposals achieve two critical dimensions of alignment.

Ultimately they identify what and how much. The “what” relates to the content and purpose of the proposal. The “how much” relates to the level of taxation requested. (A third question that often needs to be addressed in informational materials is “why now.”)

To assure success, a well-designed, random-sample, scientific survey of the community (not just parents) is conducted to evaluate alignment of a potential ballot question.

■ How much time should we allow for planning a referendum?

It’s never too early to start planning. Districts often spend years working on the process of gathering stakeholder input, assessing needs, evaluating options and determining the right solution to bring to referendum. Although the amount of time can vary significantly in districts, 12-18 months of dedicated planning is typical for many of the referendum projects we work on.

■ When should we engage consultants in the process?

Districts should engage consultants as early as possible. Your consultants bring expertise in many areas and help you work through the referendum planning process. Supplement your district resources by drawing on their knowledge and services.

■ Additional Questions to Consider

Have you fully engaged all stakeholders?

Is there common understanding of both what you know about your district and what you believe the community wants for its children?

Are you positioned to assure excellence in education and all students achieve success? ■

THANK YOU

Thank you to the following professionals for their contributions to this article:

Christin Mlsna

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Jerry Dudzik

vice president;
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Steven Kieckhafer

partner;
Plunkett Raysich Architects

Passion, Creativity, and Dignity

A look at the keynote speakers for the **94th State Education Convention**

On Jan. 21-23, 2015, thousands of school board members and school leaders from around the state will be gathering in Milwaukee for the 94th State Education Convention.

The WASB is excited to introduce the keynote speakers who will join us in Milwaukee for the 94th State Education Convention. Learn more about the upcoming convention at wasb.org/convention.

WEDNESDAY

Kevin **HONEYCUTT**

THURSDAY

Richard **GERVER**

FRIDAY

Rosalind **WISEMAN**

Wednesday, Jan. 21

– **KEVIN HONEYCUTT**

Kevin grew up in poverty and attended school in 20 states. As he witnessed education around the country, he collected powerful experiences that still influence his conversations and his work with educators. He spent 13 years teaching art in public K-12 schools and for 17 years spent summers leading creative adventure camps for kids of all ages. In 1991, he received the Making IT Happen Award. The program identifies and rewards educational technology leaders around the world for their commitment and innovation.

Kevin is a technology integration specialist at an educational service center in Kansas and is serving on his local school board. He travels the country and the world sharing ideas with educators.

Kevin will draw you in with his personal story, then provide cutting-edge observations about the state of education and how we can improve it. It's not all about the tech — the teachers who saved him didn't use technology, they cared.

Thursday, Jan. 22

– **RICHARD GERVER**

A teacher in England, Gerver began his working life as an actor and advertising copywriter. He began a teaching career in 1992 and rose through the ranks fast, being identified in 1997 as one of the most outstanding teachers in the country. By 2005, he had won the prestigious School Head Teacher of the Year Award at the British National Teaching Awards for his work in leading a school on the brink of closure to becoming one of the most innovative in the world.

Gerver works closely with Sir Ken Robinson who cites Richard as one of the world's most exceptional educators; he features in Robinson's best-selling book, *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*. Gerver has been described as one of the most inspirational leaders of his generation. He argues, however, that great leadership is about serving the needs of the people that work for you and rely upon you. The three core principles that underpin Gerver's philosophy are communication, empowerment and impact.

Friday, Jan. 23

– **ROSALIND WISEMAN**

As a teacher, thought leader, author, and media spokesperson on bullying, ethical leadership, the use of social media, and media literacy, Wiseman is in constant dialogue and collaboration with educators, parents, children, and teens.

She is the author of *Queen Bees and Wannabes: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends, and the New Realities of Girl World* — the groundbreaking, best-selling book that was the basis for the movie *Mean Girls*. Her latest book, *Masterminds & Wingmen: Helping Our Boys Cope with Schoolyard Power, Locker-Room Tests, Girlfriends, and the New Rules of Boy World* was published in September 2013.

Each year, Wiseman works with tens of thousands of students, educators, parents, counselors, coaches, and administrators to create communities based on the belief that each person has a responsibility to treat themselves and others with dignity. She was one of the principal speakers at the White House Summit on Bullying. ■



A Renewed Focus

This coming school year, the WASB has pledged to revamp its advocacy and school board governance efforts

Those of us at the Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) — staff and the board of directors — believe we do a good job of serving the needs of public school districts.

As the WASB president, I am proud that the WASB continues to be the premier voice for public education in Wisconsin. And I know you all believe in our effectiveness, as all 424 public school districts in Wisconsin are dues-paying members of the WASB.

We are a member-driven organization, guided by the resolution process that leads to the important work done by your fellow board members at our Delegate Assembly at the annual State Education Convention in Milwaukee.

But there is always room for improvement, for we know the WASB must remain relevant if we are to continue providing our members a worthwhile service in the constantly evolving educational and political landscape.

Consequently, earlier this year, the board of directors — along with Executive Director John Ashley and Associate Executive Directors Bob Butler and Barry Forbes — spent time strategizing how best to provide what our members need and want.

At the conclusion, we reaffirmed

our dual purpose: advocacy and board governance. And those two go hand in hand.

In the past several years, the attacks on public education have been unrelenting, and often the arguments advanced by critics of public education bear little resemblance to the truth.

Yes, we have our challenges in public education and we must do a better job of serving the needs of all our children. However, public schools across Wisconsin have never been more vibrant as we customize our educational offerings to ensure that all our students are successful.

In public education, we educate every child, every day. Every child, every day.

WASB's advocacy includes the obvious — lobbying legislators and the governor's office — but goes far beyond that. Our Stand Up for Public Education website is but one example. Working with other groups that advocate on behalf of Wisconsin's 800,000 public school students is another.

Rest assured that John Ashley and his staff are on point in this advocacy effort. But all school board members must also play a vital role in their own communities. And that's where enhanced board governance and the WASB come into play.

Professional development for

school board members has never been more vital. As the elected representatives in our communities, we are ultimately responsible — along with our superintendents if we truly value a team approach — for a myriad of educational initiatives.

Let the WASB help you become better informed. Many of you have already engaged — in the New Board Member Gatherings, at the Spring Academy, at the Summer Leadership Institute, at a variety of webinars, and at the Fall Regional Meetings now taking place.

Down the road, consider attending the Legislative Advocacy Conference in Stevens Point in November and, next year, the State Education Convention in Milwaukee and the Day at the Capitol in Madison.

I'm reminded of a quote from futurist Alvin Toffler that I think stresses the importance of professional development and continual learning. He said this: "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn."

Thank you for your service on behalf of our children. Remind those in your communities of the vital role of public education: we educate every child, every day. Every child, every day. ■

In public education, we educate every child, every day.
Every child, every day.

Upcoming Events

WSAA/WASB EMPLOYMENT & SCHOOL LAW SEMINAR

The 2014 Employment & School Law Seminar, held in partnership with the Wisconsin School Attorneys Association, will take place Oct. 16-17 in Wisconsin Dells.

The two-day event features 16 sessions covering a wide-range of school law topics, including: employee handbooks, school policy, immigration and education, the Affordable Care Act, and much more. Respected school law attorneys from across Wisconsin including the WASB legal services staff will be present.

Jim Kroom of von Briesen & Roper, and Dan Chanen of Milwaukee Public Schools, will present a session on effective and correct use of school resources officers in schools with an eye towards

protecting students' and employees' rights while also helping local law enforcement keep the school safe.

JoAnn Hart of Boardman & Clark, and Gary Ruesch of Buelow Vetter Buikema Olson & Vliet, will provide a labor law update on Act 10 and discuss the new roles of collective bargaining, employee handbooks, the role of the union, and other issues.

Geoffrey Lacy of Todd W. Martin Law Office, will lead a session on immigration and public education—focusing on issues such as immigration law school district need to be aware of, rights of undocumented students and parents, and more. □

For more information or to register, visit wasb.org.



LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY CONFERENCE

The new school year has brought numerous changes, including new state assessments and teacher evaluations. It also brings uncertainty about state academic standards, school report cards, voucher expansion, and funding.

This year's WASB Legislative Advocacy Conference, taking place Nov. 8 in Stevens Point, is designed to give school board members information they can use when advocating with their legislators or explaining these issues to their communities.

Our goal is to help school board members speak confidently about the key education issues that will be debated in the upcoming 2015-16 legislative session. Whether you are engaging your communities or your legislators, this conference will help you to become a more effective advocate for your schools.

Dr. Julie Mead, an educational leadership professor at

the University of Wisconsin-Madison, will discuss voucher schools, independent charters and the implications they have on public schools. Another session will provide an in-depth look at the history and purpose of the Common Core State Standards and the role of school boards regarding academic standards.

Dan Rossmiller and Chris Kulow of the WASB Government Relations will walk school leaders through the critical education issues that will be front and center in the 2015-17 state budget debate. The session will help school leaders prepare to advocate effectively on behalf of their school districts. Sen. Luther Olsen (R-Ripon), Senate Education Committee Chair, and Rep. Steve Kestell (R-Elkhart Lake), Assembly Education Committee Chair, will also participate in this session. □

For more information or to register, visit wasb.org.

Convention Student Art Contest

Entries Due Nov. 14

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards, in cooperation with the Wisconsin Art Education Association, encourages Wisconsin students to submit a piece of artwork for the State Education Convention Art Exhibits and Awards.

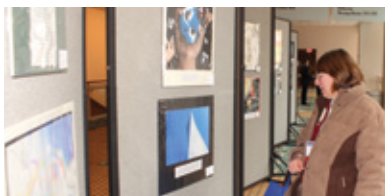
The contest is open to all Wisconsin public school students enrolled in grades 7-12. Each piece of work submitted in accordance with the entry criteria will be exhibited at the 2015 State Education Convention in January in Milwaukee.

Each piece of art must address the contest theme of "Inspiring Excellence."

What do you think of when you hear this term? What is your interpretation? How do we as a people, a culture, a society inspire excellence in others? How do we inspire excellence in ourselves? Using any media or combination of media (digital media is not accepted), students

are welcomed to create an original work of art (not graphic design) showing your interpretation of the term "Inspiring Excellence." □

For more information, visit wasb.org/convention and select "Call for Proposals."



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(Note: The "Quick Check" does not provide an analysis of specific policies.)

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- Combine the Policy Manual "Quick Check" with a subscription to the WASB Policy Resource Guide and save \$600.

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Convention Student Video Team

The WASB is seeking a team of two or more talented students from one school district to produce a video that highlights some of the exciting events, sessions, and performances at the 94th State Education Convention.

The State Education Convention takes place January 21-23, 2015, in downtown Milwaukee. The Convention is attended by school board members, superintendents, administrators, educators, and other public education stakeholders from Wisconsin. The WASB will

give students and a teacher adviser full access to the Convention. The student team will be responsible for providing their own equipment. The WASB also requests the student video team capture highlights from at least one full day at Convention.

For more information, contact Shelby Anderson at 608-512-1701 or sanderson@wasb.org. Or visit the Convention website, wasb.org/convention. Select "Call for Proposals" and then "Convention Student Video."



Wisconsin School Board Appreciation Week is Oct. 5-11

In recognition of the thousands of school board members throughout the state, the WASB has set Oct. 5-11, 2014, as Wisconsin School Board Appreciation Week. This week is designed to recognize the contributions made by Wisconsin's school boards who are charged with governing public education under state law. The WASB has prepared a kit, which includes a sample press release, activities, and more to help school districts recognize their school boards. Find the kit at wasb.org.

Select "Communications" and then "Wisconsin School Board Appreciation Week."

2013-14 REPORT TO THE MEMBERSHIP

Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Inc. Condensed Statement of Activities For the Year Ending June 30, 2013

REVENUE	
Membership Dues	\$ 1,736,719
Program Revenue	\$ 1,945,900
Interest & Investment Related Income	\$ 16,506
Other Income	\$ 22,946
Total Revenue	\$ 3,722,071
EXPENSES	
Program Expense	\$ 2,815,428
Office Operations	\$ 775,509
Total Expenses	\$ 3,590,937
Change in Unrestricted Net Assets-Operating	\$ 131,134
Depreciation & Other Non-Operating Expenses	\$ 79,176
Change in Unrestricted Net Assets	\$ 51,958

Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Inc. Condensed Statement of Financial Position June 30, 2013

ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Investments, Cash, & Cash Equivalents	\$ 1,743,736
Accounts Receivable	\$ 130,141
Deferred Costs & Prepaid Expenses	\$ 45,210
Inventories	\$ 30,286
Accrued Interest Receivable	\$ 4,566
Total Current Assets	\$ 1,953,939
Property & Equipment, Net	\$ 102,573
Total Assets	\$ 2,056,512
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	
Current Liabilities	
Deferred Revenue	\$ 453,421
Accounts Payable, Payroll Taxes, & Benefits Payable	\$ 202,154
Short Term Portion of Capital Lease	\$ 9,754
Short Term Portion of Note Payable	\$ 5,718
Total Current Liabilities	\$ 653,047
Long Term Liabilities	
Long Term Portion of Capital Lease	\$ 6,452
Long Term Portion of Note Payable	\$ 33,955
Total Liabilities	\$ 693,454
Net Assets	
Unrestricted	\$ 1,335,304
Temporarily Restricted	\$ 27,754
Total Net Assets	\$ 1,363,058
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$ 2,056,512

Prepare for the 2015-17 Budget Debate

Build Relationships with Your Legislators



Even though the Legislature is not in session, there is a lot going on in Madison.

State agencies are preparing and submitting their budget requests for the 2015-17 state budget.

One state agency budget submission we'll be watching closely will come from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Historically, the DPI submits its budget request in two parts: the first covers the department's operations; the second covers the department's request regarding school funding (state aids, revenue limit adjustments, major new initiatives).

The department submits the latter request after state general aid amounts for the current school year are certified for each district on October 15. This allows comparisons of budget proposals and amendments to be made to the most current aid figures. The DPI is expected to submit this portion of its request in early November.

While there is a lot going on in Madison, there also needs to be a lot going on in the local communities you represent.

The 2015-17 state budget will be a critical one for public school funding. One reason is that current law provides for no increases in either revenue limits or "per-pupil aid" beyond the 2014-15 school year. In addition, most state categorical aids, including special education

categorical aid, have been frozen for the last five years after having been cut in 2009-10. If state tax collections continue to lag behind projections, this may limit the state's ability to increase funding for public schools.

The WASB is asking the governor and lawmakers to allow school district revenues to increase by at least the rate of inflation and to increase special education categorical aid funding. We recognize that weaker than expected state tax collection figures may make some legislators hesitant to support these requests. School leaders — board members and administrators — working at the local level and making the case with their legislators will be critical in this effort.

While there will be competing demands for resources in the state budget, school leaders should feel comfortable asking for at least inflationary increases. School costs are not stagnant and asking lawmakers for a controlled and predictable increase in funding is responsible and justifiable. Other groups will not be shy about asking for increased funding and neither should public school leaders.

We'll have a clearer picture of the state's finances when new state revenue estimates are released on November 20. However, we already know what your district's needs are. Those needs likely won't change

regardless of the state's finances.

The new 2015-16 Legislature will convene in January. School boards should use the time from now and January to get better acquainted with the legislators who will represent your areas, whether they are newly elected or veteran lawmakers. *[On page 12 in this issue of Wisconsin School News, you'll find tips on how to build better working relationships with the legislators who represent you. We encourage you to read and follow those tips.]*

The key is to build relationships. While you should know what you are going to ask for, don't just make requests—provide some context, help your lawmakers understand your situation and how they can help you, and thank them for being good listeners. Avoid trying to play "gotcha."

Most legislators are not education experts. They may or may not understand that the new school year has brought numerous changes, including more rigorous teacher evaluations and new state assessments aligned to new state standards in English language arts and math. They may not understand your concerns that the new legislative session will bring uncertainty about state academic standards, school report cards, voucher expansion, and school funding. Help them to understand.

School boards are in the educa-

While there is a lot going on in Madison, there also needs to be a lot going on in the local communities you represent.

tion business. And part of that business is educating the policy makers who represent us in Madison about how the decisions they will be called upon to make will affect our schools and our school children.

When your board meets with those who will represent your district in the Legislature, make sure you let them know about the efforts you are making to raise student achievement, including graduation rates and ACT scores, and provide more career and technical education opportunities. Explain the many changes you are working to implement. Let your lawmakers know how reductions in revenue limits and frozen categorical aids have affected your students and your district's efforts to boost student achievement. And be sure to explain how you would use additional resources to improve student opportunities.

Another conversation you may want to have with your lawmakers is about a number of education policy reform initiatives that are certain to be debated in January. Already, key legislators have signaled that several initiatives that did not pass during the 2013-14 legislative session will re-surface when the 2015-16 Legislature convenes in January. These include proposals to:

- Lift the enrollment cap and the income-eligibility cap on the statewide voucher system;
- Give legislators greater oversight and control over state academic

standards and the process for formulating state academic standards; and

- Change the state's school accountability system (*e.g.*, by reformatting the report cards, and/or creating a state accountability council to decide whether and how to impose sanctions on low-performing schools).

A great way to prepare for these conversations is by attending the WASB Legislative Advocacy Conference on Nov. 8 in Stevens Point.

This year's conference is designed to give you information you can use when advocating with your legislators or explaining the key issues facing your district to your communities.

Our goal is to help school board members speak confidently about the key education issues that will be debated in the upcoming 2015-16 legislative session. Whether you are engaging your communities or your legislators, the conference will help you to become a more effective advocate for your schools.

At the Legislative Advocacy Conference you'll:

- Learn about the history and development of the state's new academic standards in English language arts and math, the concerns they are intended to address, and the ongoing role of school boards and local control in determining curriculum and instruction.

- Get a clear picture of how the combination of Wisconsin's aging population and competing budget demands (such as transportation funding needs, growth in Medicaid spending, income tax reforms and reductions, etc.) will impact the state's ability to support its public schools.

- Hear how these trends and conditions make it more important than ever for school boards to forge strong relationships with the lawmakers who represent them.

- Explore how the state budget process works and get expert tips on how to impact the budget debate and put your board in the best position to successfully advocate for the needs of your district and its schoolchildren.

- Learn more about the state's existing report cards and school accountability system, why some lawmakers want to change the report cards, as well as the issues surrounding how to measure school performance in a fair but transparent manner, and the controversies that, to date, have thwarted attempts to bring private voucher schools into the accountability system.

We hope to see you on Nov. 8. In the meantime, study the candidates' positions on education, make sure to vote on Nov. 4, and plan to have conversations with those who will represent your districts. ■



2014 WASB LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY CONFERENCE



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Providing Equal Opportunities to Students with Disabilities in Extracurricular Athletics

In January 2013, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) in the federal Department of Education issued a “Dear Colleague” letter (DCL). The DCL sets forth guidance for school districts on their obligations under federal law to provide students with disabilities equal opportunities to benefit from extracurricular athletic programs.¹ The DCL defined the term “extracurricular athletics” to include all club, intramural, and interscholastic teams including freshman, junior varsity, and varsity teams, at all educational levels. According to the OCR, the DCL does not add requirements to the law, but instead provides information and examples to explain how the OCR evaluates whether districts are complying with their legal obligations.

The DCL was prompted by a 2010 report from the U. S. Government Accountability Office which found that students with disabilities are not being afforded an equal opportunity to participate in athletics and are missing out on critical health and social benefits provided by such activities. To be compliant with the DCL, districts will need to implement its directives in the context of their athletic programs, including conducting individualized inquiries regarding students with disabilities and providing any necessary modifications, aids, and services to such students in order to allow them equal opportunity to participate in athletics. This Legal Comment will discuss the details of the DCL and provide advice for district officials in addressing these issues.

■ Current Law²

The OCR is a federal agency that enforces various laws, including Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), a federal law prohibiting disability discrimination in the services, programs, and activities of local governments (including public school districts) that receive federal financial assistance. Section 504 requires districts to provide qualified students with disabilities an opportunity to benefit from the districts’ programs equal to that of students without disabilities.³ With respect to elementary and secondary educational services, a student is “qualified” if he or she is (1) of an age during which persons without disabilities are provided such services; (2) of any age during which it is mandatory under state law to provide such services to persons with disabilities; or (3) a person to whom a state is required to provide a free appropriate public education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. A student with a “disability” is one who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such impairment.

While Section 504 requires equal opportunity, it does not give a qualified student with a disability an absolute right to be on an athletic team despite ability or require districts to create separate and distinct activities for students with disabilities. Section 504 requires only that

students with disabilities have equal access to existing extracurricular athletics through appropriate modifications, aids, and services.⁴

■ OCR Directives

The DCL released by the OCR is not considered law. Instead, the Department of Education considers it a “significant guidance document” issued to assist districts in meeting their obligations under Section 504 and to provide members of the public with information about their rights under federal law. The DCL contained two primary directives.

Avoid Assumptions About A Disability. First, the DCL stated that decisions about a student’s participation must be based on the same nondiscriminatory criteria applied to all prospective participants. According to the DCL, Section 504 prohibits districts from operating athletic programs based on generalizations, assumptions, prejudices, or stereotypes about a disability.

The DCL provided an example of such unlawful stereotyping. In the example, a student who has a learning disability and who is considered a person with a disability under Section 504 tries out and is selected for the high school lacrosse team. The coach, who is aware of the student’s disability, assumes a child with ADHD would not be able to play successfully under the time constraints and pressure of a lacrosse game. Based on this assumption, the coach decides not to play the student in games.

Districts will not be relieved of their obligations under federal law by relying on rules or requirements of interscholastic federations, athletic associations, clubs, or leagues.

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The DCL explained that this coach would be found by the OCR to have violated Section 504 by denying the student an opportunity to participate on the team, solely because he relied on characteristics that he believed were associated with the student's disability. While the student does not have a mandatory right to participate in the games, the decision of whether to allow the student to participate must be based upon the same criteria that the coach uses for all other players (*e.g.*, performance during practice).

Make Individualized Inquiries About Students. Second, the DCL explained that districts must make individualized inquiries about students with disabilities to ensure equal opportunity. While districts are not required to change the nature of selective teams (students with disabilities must compete with others and legitimately earn a place on the team) or compromise student safety (a district may adopt “bona fide safety standards”), OCR maintains that districts must consider whether the safe participation by a student with a disability can be assured through reasonable modifications or the provisions of aids and services.

If a reasonable modification is required for a student with a disability to participate in athletics, the OCR states that the district must provide it, unless it would result in a fundamental alteration of the nature of the extracurricular activity or put an undue financial burden on the district's program. A “fundamental alteration” is an alteration that “alters such an essential aspect of the game that it would be unacceptable even if it affected all competitors equally (such as adding an extra base in baseball)” or a change that gives “a particular player with a disability an unfair advantage over others.” According to the OCR, if a student receives aids or services at school as part of a Section 504 plan or an Individualized Education Program (IEP), or if the district provides the aids or services to other students

through IEPs, the district will rarely, if ever, be able to argue that the provision of the aids or services to a student with disabilities in athletics would result in a fundamental alteration of the program. As for undue financial burden, the OCR has clarified that, in most cases, providing reasonable modifications and necessary aids should not create burdensome new costs for districts. Thus, districts will rarely be relieved of their duty to provide them based solely on cost.

The DCL provided an example where a district that failed to make a modification necessary to allow a student with a disability an equal opportunity to participate violated the law. The DCL explained that a high school student who has a disability under Section 504 due to a hearing impairment may be interested in running track (particularly, sprinting events such as the 100 and 200 meter dashes) for the high school team. At tryouts, the student uses the coach's visual cue to start the race. Based on his times, he qualifies for the team. Before the first meet, the student asks that a visual cue be used at the meet at the same time as the starter pistol to alert him to start the race, a practice that is consistent with two neighboring districts who use the same system. The neighboring districts report that their runners easily adjusted to the visual cue and did not complain about being distracted by the visual cues.

Despite the success of the visual cues in other districts, the district refuses the student's request. While the district reached an individualized determination that the modification is necessary for the student to compete, it denied the request because it was concerned that the visual cue may distract other runners and trigger complaints. As the DCL explained, while the district could set the benchmarks for speed and skill, it would be required to provide a reasonable modification if necessary, unless it would fundamentally alter the nature of the activity. Because the student met the require-

ments for speed and skill, and because the visual cue would not alter the fundamental nature of the activity, the district was required by the OCR to provide it.

On the contrary, a modification may provide a student an unfair advantage over others and not be required. In this respect, the DCL provided an example, involving a high school student who is born with only one hand, is a student with a disability under Section 504, and seeks to participate on the school's swim team. Although the student has the required swimming ability and wishes to compete at meets, she asks the district to waive the “two-hand touch” finish it requires of all swimmers at swim meets and requests that she be able to finish with a “one-hand touch.” The school district refuses the request because it determines that permitting the student to finish with a “one-hand touch” would give the student an unfair advantage over the other swimmers.

The DCL explained that modification of the two-hand touch is necessary for the student to participate. However, in making the individualized inquiry, if the district determines that eliminating the two-hand touch would give the swimmer an unfair advantage over other swimmers who are judged on the touching of both hands, a complete waiver of the rule would constitute a fundamental alteration and not be required. In that case, the district would still be required to determine whether other modifications might be available to permit the student's participation, such as judging the student to have finished when she touches the wall with one hand while her other arm is simultaneously stretched forward.

■ Additional Opportunities

Finally, while the DCL emphasized that students with disabilities should not be unnecessarily separated from students without disabilities, if a student cannot participate in an existing activity even with reasonable

modifications or aids and services, the district should consider creating additional opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in separate or different extracurricular athletic activities. If created, the DCL emphasized that any such additional opportunities should be supported by the school district in the same manner that the district supports other athletic activities.

For example, the DCL noted that an increasing number of districts are creating disability-specific teams for sports such as wheelchair tennis or wheelchair basketball. Districts unable to field a whole team can also (1) develop district-wide or regional teams, (2) mix male and female students, or (3) offer “allied” or “unified” sports teams where students with disabilities participate with students without disabilities. In short, if a district has students unable to participate in athletic activities because of disabilities and no modifications, aids, or services can be provided to allow participation, districts should think creatively to expand the opportunities in athletics for these students.

■ NSBA Criticism

The DCL has garnered significant criticism from the National School Boards Association (NSBA). In a letter to the OCR, the NSBA criticized the OCR for issuing informal guidance that “expands the substance and applicability of federal law and rules administered by US Ed” without allowing for input of important stakeholders that is essential to the formal rule-making process. Specifically, the NSBA argued that the document expands the requirements under Section 504 as they relate to extracurricular athletics, increases the potential for litigation against districts, and oversteps the authority of districts to direct their own interscholastic athletics.⁵

Most notably, the NSBA raised the concern that the DCL seems to

require a district to convene a Section 504 team to assess the student’s needs for modifications, aids, and services in the context of athletics.⁶ In a response letter, the OCR clarified that a Section 504 team does not necessarily have to convene when a student wants to take part in athletics. Rather, the individualized inquiry may be made by a coach or staff member consulting with the student or the student’s parents, a district official who is able to address adaptations to standard rules or practices in district athletics, or a teacher who might advise on a modification that could support a student with a developmental disability. The key is that district officials make good faith, timely efforts to determine whether modifications, aids, or services are needed for a student with a disability to participate in athletics. Significantly, the OCR also confirmed that the DCL does not articulate any legal requirement under Section 504 that an IEP or Section 504 plan address participation in extracurricular athletics.

■ Conclusion

In implementing the directives in the DCL to be compliant with this OCR guidance, district officials should review their discrimination policies to ensure that they include athletics and should work with athletic staff to ensure they understand that discrimination against students with disabilities is strictly prohibited. Districts will not be relieved of their obligations under federal law by relying on rules or requirements of interscholastic federations, athletic associations, clubs, or leagues. A district’s obligations under federal law supersede any rule of these organizations that limits or precludes participation on the basis of a disability. In addition, district officials should train staff to make individualized inquiries of students with disabilities and assist them in finding creative ways for students with

disabilities to participate in extracurricular athletics, including creating additional opportunities or expanding athletic programs to accommodate more individuals.⁷ ■

■ Endnotes

For additional information on related topics, see *Wisconsin School News*, “Accessibility to School Events by Individuals with Disabilities” (February 2005) and WASB *Legal Notes*, “The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act: Parts I and II” (Spring 2005 and Summer 2005).

1. Dear Colleague Letter Regarding Extracurricular Athletics, 60 IDELR 167 (OCR Jan. 25, 2013), available at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201301-504.pdf>.
2. This *Legal Comment* addresses federal disability law. Section 118.13, Wis. Stats., likewise prohibits discrimination in public schools on the basis of a disability. No such parallel guidance has been issued by the Department of Public Instruction.
3. 29 U.S.C. s. 794; 34 C.F.R. s. 104.
4. Background and Fast Facts: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-201301-504.html>.
5. Letter to Seth M. Galanter, Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights from Francisco M. Negron, Jr., General Counsel, National School Boards Association, dated May 21, 2013, available at [https://nsba.org/sites/default/files/reports/Letter%20to%20Hon%20Seth%20Galanter%20\(Re-DCL-1-125-13\)May%202013.pdf](https://nsba.org/sites/default/files/reports/Letter%20to%20Hon%20Seth%20Galanter%20(Re-DCL-1-125-13)May%202013.pdf).
6. A Section 504 team is a group of individuals at the district knowledgeable about the student (including parents) who determine the student’s eligibility under Section 504 and the appropriate modifications, aids, and services needed to accommodate the student.
7. The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services issued a guidance document in August 2011, which includes suggestions for additional opportunities and may be a helpful reference document for districts. See, *Creating Equal Opportunities for Children and Youth with Disabilities to Participate in Physical Education and Extracurricular Athletics* (August 2011), available at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/equal-pe.pdf>.

This Legal Comment was written by Michael J. Julka and M. Tess O'Brien-Heinzen of Boardman & Clark LLP, WASB Legal Counsel.

Service Associate Q&A

Ryan Barbieri of Willis of Wisconsin talks about the rapidly changing insurance climate

Editor's note: Each issue, we pose questions to a WASB Service Associate to share the good work that these businesses do with Wisconsin public schools.

Q. *What can school board members do to stay on top of insurance issues?*

A. Employee benefits are often one of the top expenses of a district. With that being said, it is very important for school board members to understand what drives these costs. It is also important for school board members to understand the value of these programs to employees. Competitive benefits are just as important as competitive wages in the realm of attracting and retaining good employees. Remember ... a good education starts with a good educator!

Q. *Making any changes to benefits can be a sensitive area for employees. What can districts do to make these changes go smoothly?*

A. Employee benefits, in particular health insurance, is one of the most sensitive areas of an employee's total compensation package. To make these changes go smoothly, districts should follow three simple protocols:

1: Begin The Planning Process Early — strategic planning should take place roughly six months out from a renewal. This is the time when we consider possible changes in plan or insurance carrier, and try to measure employee impact. This is also when

we should consider the district's budget situation for the year.

2: Communication Is King — communicate with employees early and communicate with employees often! In today's age of multi-media technology we can touch our employees via paper, mobile application, video and online campaigns. Districts have a diverse workforce — we need to be diverse in our communications.

3: Post-Implementation Follow Up — When big changes occur provide employees the opportunity to get questions answered following the effective date of the plan.

Q. *What are some benefit-related issues that you think might be big issues for school districts in the future?*

A. Health care reform has changed the landscape for how benefits are offered to employees. With the ACA in place now, employers will want to offer affordable coverage (to avoid fees) but not have a plan that is valued too highly (to avoid the Cadillac Excise Tax.) One of the future approaches to accomplish this effectively is by exploring a private exchange solution. This will certainly be a consideration in the not too distant future.



Ryan Barbieri is senior vice president of Human Capital Practice at Willis of Wisconsin



Q. *What is a private exchange solution?*

A. A private exchange solution is one that blends the old and new. Employers purchase health insurance through a health insurance marketplace in a defined contribution model and then the employees can choose a health plan from those supplied by the participating payors. The federal government has paved the way with Healthcare.gov and The Insurance Marketplace. Employer-sponsored plans are now exploring how this could be beneficial to both the district and employees alike. ■

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Health care reform has changed the landscape
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- When Worlds Collide: Cops, Teachers and Kids
- Going Forward Under Act 10 (And Other Laws)
- Compensation Models: How to Attract and Retain High-Quality Teachers
- Administrator Contracts
- The First Amendment in Public Schools
- Employee Grievance Hearings
- Fair Labor Standards Act Exemptions
- And much more!



2014 LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY CONFERENCE

At this year's WASB Legislative Advocacy Conference, our goal is to help school board members speak confidently about the key education issues that will be debated in the upcoming legislative session.

Whether you are engaging your communities or legislators, this conference will help you become a more effective advocate for your schools. Sessions include:

- Private Vouchers, Independent Charters and the "Public School Advantage"
- History and Purpose of the Common Core State Standards
- The 2015-17 State Budget - Preparing for Your Advocacy Role

**VISIT WASB.ORG FOR COMPLETE
INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER**

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