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WISCONSIN School News

Official publication of the Wisconsin Association of School Boa

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Wisconsin 2016 Principals of the Year Announced

In April, State Superintendent Tony Evers and Jim Lynch, executive director for the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators (AWSA), announced Wisconsin's 2016 Principals of the Year:

Associate Principal of the Year

Paul Hermes, Bay View Middle School, Howard-Suamico School District

Elementary Principal of the Year

— Melissa Herek, Lawrence-Lawson and Cataract Elementary Schools, Sparta Area School District

Secondary Principal of the Year

— Robin Kvalo, Portage High School, Portage Community School District

"School leaders know the importance of building a school culture that values every student," said Evers. "Our 2016 Principals of the Year are model educational leaders who focus on instruction and creating a welcoming and safe school environment that prepares students to be college and career ready."

"Current research demonstrates that school leadership has an enormous impact on student learning. Our Principals of the Year represent the best qualities of this critically important profession," Lynch said. ■

STAT OF THE MONTH

88.4%

Wisconsin had 57,698 students graduate from high school with a regular diploma in 2015, a graduation rate of 88.4 percent that bests the national rate of 82.3 percent (Class of 2014). Wisconsin's graduation rate remained largely unchanged from 2014, down two-tenths of a percent.

Source: Department of Public Instruction

Two Wisconsin Schools and One District Recognized by Green Ribbon Schools Program

The U.S. Department of Education honored 73 schools and school districts this year through the Green Ribbon Schools program. Among those recognized were two Wisconsin schools — Glen Hills Middle School in the Glendale-River Hills School District, and West Middleton Elementary School in the Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District. Additionally, the Granton Area School District was among only 15 districts nationwide to receive the Green Ribbon Schools District Sustainability Award.

The schools were nominated by the Department of Public Instruction after they applied to the state's Green and Healthy Schools program. Green and Healthy Schools Wisconsin is offered through a partnership between the Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Natural Resources along with the Wisconsin

Center for Environmental Education.

The Green Ribbon Schools Program recognizes schools, districts, and postsecondary institutions that demonstrate promising practices to improve the health of students, cut costs, and engage students in hands-on learning experiences. Since the U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools program began, Wisconsin has had 22 award winners.

"Wisconsin's environmental tradition continues with this year's Green Ribbon recipients," State Superintendent Tony Evers said. "They are out front on reducing their environmental impact and utility costs, improving the health and wellness of students and staff members, and ensuring effective sustainability education efforts that will ensure the wellbeing of future generations." ■

White House Recognizes Eleva-Strum Student Business and Southern Door Bus Driver

Cardinal Manufacturing, a student-run manufacturing company based in the Eleva-Strum High School, and Ted Chaudoir, a school bus driver at Southern Door School District, were recognized by the White House in two separate events in May.

Eleva-Strum High School Principal Cory Kulig and teacher Craig Cegielski met with President Obama and Rep. Paul Ryan's staff to discuss how other

schools could replicate the school's successful student business.

"We're asking the White House for help to provide resources to market this, train other schools, and help them implement a similar model in their school," Cegielski told WEAU.com.

Cegielski, who created the manufacturing business in the high school nine years ago, said students learn hard manufacturing skills such as welding but also soft skills like communication. To participate in the business, students have to apply for one of the 16 positions.

Chaudoir was honored at the White House as part of the Champions of Change program that recognizes outstanding school support professionals. He implemented a Books on the Bus program, which provides books for students to read on their way to and from school. For his work, Chaudoir also received a 2014 Celebrate Literacy Award and a Forward Together grant from WEA Trust. ■



Addressing the Teacher Shortage Issue

As we know all too well, teacher shortage issues are a challenge facing school districts, rural and urban, in all corners of our state. And it looks like it is going to get even more challenging. A recent report from the Public Policy Forum, a non-profit independent research organization based in Milwaukee, found that enrollment in teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities in the Midwest, including Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin have all experienced a reduction in enrollments. The drop has been particularly precipitous for Illinois which has seen a 57 percent decrease of enrollment in its teacher preparation programs from 2008-09 to 2013-14. And we're hearing similar stories nationwide.

The Public Policy Forum's report illustrated how school districts in the Milwaukee metro area have been losing a significant number of teachers. While the report focused on the Milwaukee area, it also included teacher pipeline statistics and analysis for the State of Wisconsin as a whole. With their permission, we've included a summary of those statewide statistics in this issue of the *Wisconsin School News*. We hope you find it informative.

In conjunction with the release of the study, the Public Policy Forum held a panel discussion on the issues at play affecting teacher shortage in Wisconsin. Dr. Pat Greco, superintendent of the Menomonee Falls School District, talked about the

challenge of retaining good educators in a district with declining enrollment and nearby districts competing for teachers.

"We steal (teachers) from one another," Greco said. "That doesn't create a pipeline plan. It actually creates part of the edge in the market."

Greco added that each school year, she is contacted by some of the district's best educators who are considering leaving for a job offer from another district.

Another panelist, John Peacock, a mathematics teacher for Milwaukee Public Schools, talked about the reasons he has considered leaving the profession, including an increased work load, shifting approaches to pedagogy (such as Common Core State Standards and standards-based grading), and, among other issues, essentially receiving a pay freeze. Peacock added that these issues are taking teachers farther away from connecting with students.

"In many ways, we've become a checklist technician," Peacock said.

The question of how we can attract and retain quality teachers is a complicated one and there is no simple solution. Public policy makers at all levels must come together to find long-term solutions.

The WASB has been working with school districts across the state to create compensation systems aimed at attracting and retaining educators. The Department of Public Instruction has surveyed districts on what they are doing to address teacher shortage

issues and has a series of regional meetings scheduled to discuss the feedback. We look forward to those discussions and hope they will provide a foundation to jump start a broader conversation about what we can do in Wisconsin to elevate the teaching profession.

While the teacher shortage issue looms large, we're also contending with a number of other policy changes at the federal level. In mid-June, the WASB Board of Directors Executive Committee, our Government Relations staff, and I will be traveling to Washington, D.C. for the National School Boards Association's Advocacy Institute to represent Wisconsin school boards and meet with our congressional delegation. We will report more on this event in the next issue of *Wisconsin School News*, but the focus will be on discussing implementation of the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which is going through the regulatory drafting process, the Child Nutrition Act reauthorization, the Perkins Career and Technical Education reauthorization, and federal funding of our schools.

Please watch for more information from the WASB. We likely will be asking districts to provide information to your congressional representatives on the impact of these laws on your districts in order to shape the reauthorizations and push for increased investments in special education and Title I funding.

Stay tuned. ■

JThe question of how we can attract and retain quality teachers is a complicated one...



Connecting Students to Health Care Careers

Kettle Moraine's High School of Health Sciences is opening doors to health care careers for students

Shelby Anderson

For Spencer Scherwinski, a senior enrolled in the Kettle Moraine High School of Health Sciences, a typical school day looks quite different. Before school, he goes out on calls with a local EMT team; later in the morning at school, he takes several AP courses, participating in various dissections and other hands-on projects; and, a couple times a week, he works a shift as a certified nursing assistant (CNA) at a nearby hospital.

"The experiences I've had over the past two years have been some-

thing most students could only dream about," Scherwinski said, who can cite witnessing a childbirth among those experiences.

A lot of Scherwinski's learning takes place in the "real-world" and the classes and courses that he takes in school are dictated by his interests. The High School of Health Sciences, known as HS², offers students personalized learning with a focus on health care careers. The district made the school possible with some outside-the-box thinking and through key partnerships with local health care professionals.

Building Partnerships

It all started when the district reached out to Aurora Health Care. The nearby hospital had built a new facility and the district asked to use one of its halls for a professional development day. The hospital opened its doors to the district and a relationship between the two developed.

Dr. Pat Deklotz, superintendent of the Kettle Moraine School District, said that the district quickly realized that the partnership could be good for more than just professional development space. Soon they

“The experiences I’ve had over the past two years have been something most students could only dream about.”

— Spencer Scherwinski, senior at Kettle Moraine High School of Health Sciences

came up with the idea of opening a health care-focused charter school within the high school. That idea became a reality in 2014.

“There is a shortage of people entering the workforce in the health care career pathway and there wasn’t a good understanding among our students about the myriad of roles that are supported in the health care industry,” Deklotz said.

Additionally, opening a charter school focused on health care was exactly the kind of innovative learning that the Kettle Moraine school board supports in its mission and vision.

“Part of our board’s mission statement is the idea of learning without boundaries,” Deklotz said. “We want to continue to rethink how we engage our students in their learning.”

However, the school board did hesitate at establishing a charter school because it didn’t want to relinquish control of the school to a governance counsel. However, the Kettle Moraine school board controls the expectations of the school through the contract language. According to Deklotz, the school board now views the school’s governance counsel as a strength because it consists of professionals from the health care industry who have expertise in the field.

Since that initial partnership with Aurora Health Care, two other organizations joined — ProHealth Care and the Medical College of Wisconsin.

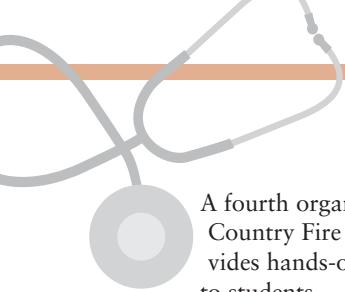
ProHealth Care is a community-based health care system located in southeastern Wisconsin. The organization sends one of its doctors to regularly visit the school and lead

hands-on activities like human tissue dissections. The Medical College of Wisconsin, one of only two medical colleges in Wisconsin, is getting increasingly involved in outreach education opportunities with schools in the Milwaukee-area. Tim Sobotka, program manager of the Education Outreach Program, sits on the governance counsel of HS² and teaches a course at the school.

“Part of our mission and vision is to help educate about the science and health care fields at all levels,” Sobotka said. “They’re going to be our future doctors and health care professionals.”

These three organizations — Aurora Health Care, ProHealth Care, and the Medical College of Wisconsin — are represented on the school’s governance counsel.





A fourth organization, Lake Country Fire & Rescue, provides hands-on EMT training to students.

■ Life at HS²

HS² occupies its own wing at Kettle Moraine High School. It is separate from but also a part of Kettle Moraine High School. The two schools run on the same schedule, which allows students enrolled in the charter school to take courses in the high school.

Walking into the wing of HS², you can tell that it is different. HS² is outfitted with flexible learning spaces and an assortment of learning environments to suit different student learning styles. In addition to an open-concept classroom, the school also has two lab spaces. It may look chaotic to some but Stephen Plum, director of HS², said it's personalized learning in action.

"Personalized learning is incredibly messy," Plum said. "As teachers,

you have to be flexible and as students you have to be flexible as well."

For instance, in one of the school's math classes, several courses are being taught at once with some students taking Algebra I while others are taking pre-Calculus. Plum said it is challenging for the teachers and students but it allows for personalized learning.

One class that really epitomizes the school's personalized learning approach is a music appreciation class focused on music of the Motown era. It is taught by Tim Sobotka from the Medical College of Wisconsin. The class covers a number of different topics and issues from the history of the Civil Rights Era, to music composition and more. Students can personalize it — focusing on the history and social studies aspect of the course to get the related credits or focus on the music side of the class for an elective credit. It can be customized to fill the requirement that the student needs.

"How we do school is just so much different than traditional school environments," Plum said.

From the student perspective, personalized learning can be challenging, yet rewarding. Students get out of it what they put into it. Scherwinski noted that he was taking a math class and government class online.

"It's a little scary at first," Scherwinski said. "Your teachers are going to ask a lot of you. You have to be motivated to keep up with your work."

■ Relevant Learning

For some students at HS², their personalized learning includes working as an employee at a local hospital. With the help of Aurora Health Care, 16 students have gained certification as CNAs. Once the students are certified, they can apply for a position at the hospital.

The students go through the application and interview process.



Not all are hired but those that are gain experience (and pay) as an employee of the hospital. They work four to eight hours a week, after school or over the weekend. Plum said getting students credentialed has been a big step forward for the school and hospital, which is continually looking for qualified people. Eventually, the school hopes to train 24 students a year at Aurora Health Care.

As employees of the hospital, the students are encouraged to job shadow doctors, nurses, and lab technicians to learn more about other fields. Plum said the partnership works because the school is providing the hospital with engaged, qualified students and in turn, students are gaining learning and professional experiences. This is a process that begins when students enroll in HS².

“You can’t just go to a hospital and say I’m going to give you a bunch of high school students, that

is not going to work,” Plum said.

Students also have an opportunity to learn about emergency medicine with Lake Country Fire & Rescue. The EMTs work with the school and provide job shadowing and EMT training courses to students. While they aren’t an official partner of the school, they provide important experience and learning to students.

“Those guys at Lake Country Fire & Rescue are just devoted to education and devoted to the future,” Plum said. “For them, it really important to be involved in the process.”

Hands-On Learning

In addition to experiences outside of the school, students are also exposed to some impressive learning opportunities in the school. Dr. David Dominguese, an anatomist with ProHealth Care, one of the school’s partners, visits the school to lead various hands-on activities like human tissue dissections. This

About the High School of HEALTH SCIENCES

The High School of Health Sciences (HS²) is a public charter school that exists on the Kettle Moraine High School campus. HS² opened in the fall of 2014 and currently serves students in grades 9 through 12. The school’s governance council has established a class size of 40 students per grade.

HS² partners with ProHealth Care, Aurora Medical Center, and the Medical College of Wisconsin to provide hands-on experience and outreach for students at Kettle Moraine High School, allowing the district to directly meet the needs of area business partners. Students in HS² learn through immersive environments where they are introduced to diverse career pathways and professionals in the world of health care.

The philosophy behind HS² is that learning is a social, diverse and collaborative experience. HS² empowers students to be the architects of their own learning, making connections between relevant course instruction and their future endeavors.

The school’s vision is to make sure that students are not just learning, but learning well. Students will ultimately master a relevant course of study that equips them for success in health care, research and other related fields. □





spring, Dr. Dominguese brought in a human torso for advanced students to examine.

He said it was the first time in his career that he had a complete torso and was excited to share the learning opportunity with the students.

“The experiences that these high school students are having is just phenomenal,” Dominguese said. “I don’t believe any high school anywhere in the country is doing these sort of things.”

These learning experiences are only possible with the help of the school’s health care partners. For instance, for a high school to bring in and handle human tissue samples, the school would need someone on staff with the proper credentials. But, through its partners, like Dominguese, HS² is able to provide students with unique opportunities.

Plum said the health care partners are involved because they want to improve health care training in hopes of supporting students who will go into health care fields. In addition, the school can also offer benefits. In the case of the ProHealth Care partnership, in return for



giving students hands-on learning such as human tissue dissections, the school lets ProHealth Care use its lab on the weekends for professional development training.

Overall, the charter school doesn’t cost that much more to operate than a normal high school. For instance, the school’s lab is a rather normal high school science lab.

“We could have put a lot of money into our lab but decided against it,” Plum said. “It’s not so

much about the technology, it’s about how you’re using it.”

As of this school year, HS² has only two full-time teachers — Plum, who teaches science courses, and Maureen Muldoon, who teaches English. Since the school’s schedule is aligned with Kettle Moraine High School’s schedule, students from HS² can take other needed courses in the high school. Some students also take online courses. Next school year, as the school enrollment increases, HS² will have six full-time teachers.

The school also accepts special needs students. Currently, eight percent of the students have special needs with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The school doesn’t have any English-language learners but Plum says they could in the future, especially considering that bilingual students are in high demand in health care.

■ Student-Led Learning

When HS² first opened in 2014, it had 60 students in its first class. The school currently has 112 students. Next year, enrollment is expected to be between 165 and 170.

Plum and Deklotz are adamant that other school districts can replicate what they are doing in Kettle Moraine. Plum said if you have a local hospital, it’s likely they are



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“ I don’t believe any high school anywhere in the country is doing these sort of things.

— Dr. David Dominguese, anatomist with ProHealth Care

looking for qualified employees and may be interested in training and working with high school students.

“You can develop the partnerships, things can happen,” Plum said. “You just have to get rid of the barriers.”

It also takes a supportive school board as their decisions will guide the process and, in some cases, district policies may need to be adjusted.

“It has been beyond my expectations in providing exciting learning opportunities and creating some very deep partnerships with our community,” Deklotz said.

Student achievement has exceeded expectations as well. Students in HS² took the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Develop-

ment) assessment that is aligned with the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) and is used to compare student achievement around the world. The latest OECD results placed HS² students alongside high-achieving countries such as Singapore.

Deklotz said students are achieving because they are leading their learning. They are engaged in topics and classes that interest them.

“We are looking very hard at what it is that we can do in schools to drive engagement,” Deklotz said. “We believe very strongly that when students are engaged, it’s because the learning is relevant and once it’s relevant, it becomes rigorous. We’re not driving the work, the students

are. And it’s their passions that really bring that deeper understanding.”

This year, the first class of seniors, including Scherwinski, will graduate from HS². Many of them have college credit, others already have professional accreditation like CNA certificates. Most importantly, Plum said that all students who will graduate have a plan for what’s after high school.

“We have students who want to be doctors but we also have students that have different plans,” Plum said. “All of our students have a direction.” ■

Shelby Anderson is editor of Wisconsin School News.



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Examining the teacher shortage in Wisconsin K-12 schools

Joe Yeado



Last August, a *New York Times* headline proclaimed “Teacher Shortages Spur a Nationwide Hiring Scramble.” The article detailed how school districts across the country “have gone from handing out pink slips to scrambling to hire teachers... a result of the layoffs of the recession years combined with an improving economy in which fewer people are training to be teachers.”

What about here in Wisconsin?

Do our state and region face a shortage of teachers and, if so, what are the dimensions of the problem and what can we do about it?

Building upon our earlier analyses of teacher and school leader demographics and employment trends, we strive to better under-

stand how the teacher workforce has changed in recent years and how it is likely to change in the near future.

The educator profession in Wisconsin has been the subject of much discussion and debate in recent years, particularly during the consideration and implementation of Wisconsin Act 10. Consequently, our

analysis includes data over multiple years to capture changes in educator workforce numbers since 2009-10 and teacher preparation programs since 2008-09.

We hope the findings and conclusions of our analysis will provide insight for policymakers and the public and spark a much-needed

conversation about the future of the teaching workforce within the state and the region.

■ How many teachers are in the workforce?

We begin our analysis of the educator pipeline by seeking to understand the current state of the teaching profession and how it has changed over time. Using data from the annual Department of Public Instruction's 'All Staff' files, we can quantify the number of teachers who have left the profession in recent years.

There were 59,837 classroom teachers working in public school districts throughout Wisconsin in the 2013-14 school year. Over the past five years, the number of teachers in the state has decreased by 1,478, or 2.4 percent. To provide context, the number of students enrolled in public schools in the state increased by 0.3 percent (2,269 students). While the number of public school students has remained relatively constant over time, we have fewer teachers in the state.

Looking at the workforce from an aggregate level obscures that some districts added teachers and some districts lost teachers over the time period. There is variation from



district to district, but as a region and a state, there are fewer public school teachers in classrooms today than five years ago.

■ Age of teachers leaving the workforce

Among public school teachers throughout the state who left the profession in the most recent year, 11.8 percent were in their 20s, 21.9 percent were in their 30s, 14 percent were in their 40s, 6.4 percent were between the ages of 50 and 54, and 45.8 percent were 55 and older. The Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) is the pension system for public employees, including teachers at public school districts. The minimum retirement age under WRS is 55 years old with reduced benefits, and age 65 with full benefits. For our analysis, we assume that

As a region and a state, there are fewer public school teachers in classrooms today than five years ago.

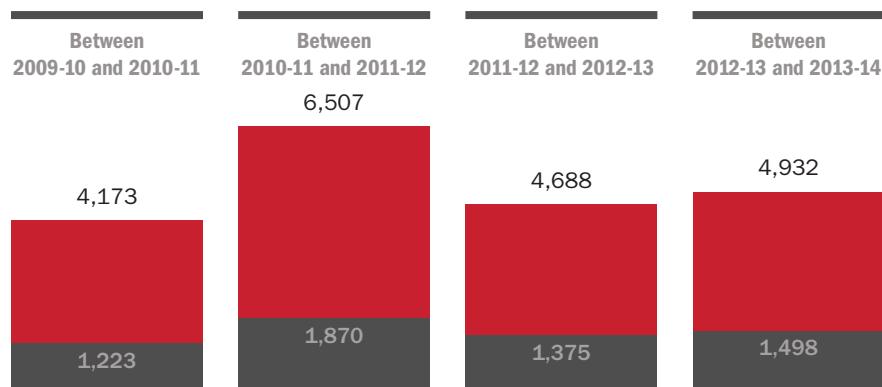
teachers age 55 and older who left the workforce have retired.

It is not surprising that retirement-eligible teachers make up the largest group of those leaving the workforce. The data also reveal, however, that in districts throughout Wisconsin, 54.1 percent of the teachers who leave are doing so prior to retirement. Young teachers in their 20s and 30s comprise nearly 34 percent of those who leave the profession. This finding suggests that public school districts in the state have difficulty retaining young teachers.

Young teachers in their 20s and 30s actually comprise a smaller percentage of those leaving in the most recent year as compared to 2009-10 (37.5 percent). While there has been a percentage decrease for this group over time, however,

Number of Teachers Who Have Left the Workforce Between School Years

■ State of Wisconsin
■ Metro Milwaukee



Come in We're HIRING

the actual number of teachers in their 20s and 30s leaving the profession

sion has increased, further underscoring the need to address retention efforts.

■ Why are teachers leaving the profession?

Apart from retirement, teachers leave the profession for any number of reasons. This does not make the teaching profession necessarily different from any other kind of job. However, with the rise in teachers leaving the workforce in recent years, we wanted to know if there were common themes among those departing. Understanding some of the reasons why teachers leave the profession can help inform strategies and policies to improve teacher retention.

We conducted a survey of human resource officers at school districts throughout Metro Milwaukee to ask for the three most common reasons teachers give for leaving the workforce. While this is not a substitute for interviewing every teacher who leaves the profession, the high-level answers provide valuable insight.

MONEY: Survey respondents listed money as the most frequent reason teachers leave the profession. The average starting salary for a new teacher in Wisconsin ranges from the low \$30,000s to low \$40,000s, depending on the district. By comparison, the median starting salary for a new college graduate in 2014 was \$45,478.

FAMILY: The second-most frequent reason for leaving the profession is family. Survey respondents uniformly cited instances of teachers not returning to the workforce after having children. This finding should

perhaps prompt districts to consider policy changes that better accommodate the challenges of working parents.

DEMANDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE JOB LEAD TO BURNOUT: Many survey respondents listed changing demands and expectations of the job as a reason for leaving the profession. In recent years, teachers have encountered a number of structural changes to their job, including the adoption of new academic standards, new state assessment exams, accountability metrics, and performance-based compensation in some districts.

■ How many students are enrolled in teacher prep programs?

In 2013-14, there were 8,887 students preparing for their initial teacher license. About 69 percent of enrollments — 6,138 students —

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District Administrator, Dodgeville School District



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Percentage of Wisconsin Teachers Who Left Between School Years, by Age Group

	Between 2009-10 and 2010-11	Between 2010-11 and 2011-12	Between 2011-12 and 2012-13	Between 2012-13 and 2013-14
Under 25	2.3%	1.4%	1.6%	1.6%
20s	15.8%	10.8%	12.7%	11.8%
30s	21.7%	16.0%	21.6%	21.9%
40s	12.4%	8.9%	15.1%	14.0%
50 to 54	4.9%	3.9%	5.9%	6.4%
55 and above	45.6%	60.3%	44.6%	45.8%

were enrolled at a public university, while 2,749 students attended a private program. The vast majority of students — 95.5 percent — attended a traditional program that culminates in a bachelor's degree, while 402 students were enrolled in alternative, accelerated programs that help college graduates prepare for teacher licensure.

A casual look at the data shows the number of students enrolled in teacher preparation programs has declined sharply over the six-year period. Statewide, enrollment levels have fallen 27.9 percent, from 12,323 students in the 2008-09 school year. Public universities saw the biggest impact of the decline with enrollments falling 31.5 percent over the six years. Private colleges experienced a decline of 18.2 percent over the same period. Indeed, 28 of the 41 programs in the sample saw enrollments fall since 2008-09.

The number of students who complete teacher preparation programs in Wisconsin colleges and universities has also declined. Since 2008-09, the number of students completing teacher preparation programs statewide has decreased by 6.6 percent (266 students). Wisconsin's decline in completers is part of a larger national trend. Across the country, the number of teacher prep program completers is down 18.4 percent.

■ Teacher retention efforts

The question of how best to retain teachers deserves a longer and more detailed discussion than we can provide in this report. However, a few common themes arose from our research and conversations with teachers.

COMMUNICATION: It is important for school leaders to clearly express expectations and then work to provide the supports necessary to help teachers reach those standards.

and to place employees in roles that are mutually beneficial. Additionally, recognition is important, and publicly acknowledging good work can help foster a strong school culture.

MENTORING: Pairing teachers with a more experienced mentor can provide a number of benefits. Mentors help provide insight and guidance to hone the craft and create highly effective teachers. Mentors can be particularly valuable to new

The number of students enrolled in teacher preparation programs has declined sharply over the six-year period.

This communication is especially important at a time when Wisconsin academic standards and state assessment exams are changing from one year to the next. Communication starts with teacher orientation and the on-boarding process, but it should continue throughout the year. Regular check-ins can provide teachers — and especially new teachers — with feedback that can help adjust and improve their efforts. These check-ins also can help school leaders understand the goals and desires of their teachers

teachers, but this practice should be available to more experienced teachers as well. Connecting groups of teachers through mentoring can help create a sense of teamwork as well as a support network for teachers. This support — from school leaders, mentors and colleagues — can help prevent teachers from feeling burnt out and leaving the profession.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Whether hosted at the school, or sending teachers to off-site



conferences, professional development opportunities allow for sharing and learning best practices. Off-site conferences and workshops can be particularly effective. Not only do they expose teachers to new topics, but they also signal that the school is investing in the staff member and cares about his or her development. Limited resources prevent schools and districts from sending all teachers to these events, but care should be taken to ensure access to professional development opportunities.

Policy Options

In this section, we propose a set of policy options to ease teacher shortage and bolster the profession. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but rather to spur a

conversation on the future of the teaching profession in our state.

In addition, we acknowledge that several of these options would require additional public funding. Implementing these or other policy options may also require changes to the state funding formula to allow districts greater flexibility to raise and spend money, or may require a greater commitment of state resources. This undoubtedly will be a challenge given state and local budget constraints, but the scope of this problem may demand that funding obstacles be overcome.

PROMISE PROGRAMS FOR TEACHER PREPARATION: As our research has shown, enrollment levels in teacher preparation programs throughout Wisconsin have experienced a decline in recent years. A targeted scholarship initiative could incentivize students to enroll in and complete teacher preparation programs. Students participating in the

program would agree to enroll in and complete a teacher preparation program in Wisconsin. Upon graduation, these students would agree to work in a Wisconsin school for a set period of time, perhaps five years. In exchange, students would receive a grant to help pay for tuition and fees.

TEACHER LOAN FORGIVENESS:

Student loans have become a near ubiquitous facet of attending college. For the class of 2014, 70 percent of Wisconsin students graduated with student loan debt, with an average debt amount of \$28,810. The federal and state governments have loan forgiveness program for graduates seeking teaching careers in public schools, however both of these programs have limitations. The existing Wisconsin Teacher Education Loan program provides a foundation to build on. Policymakers may consider increasing program funding to benefit greater numbers of students.

STUDENT DEBT ASSISTANCE:

Under a debt assistance program, borrowers would receive a payment for each year they work in a school, with the payment amount increasing with each additional year of service. For example, a teacher may receive \$1,000 in debt assistance in their first year, \$1,500 in his or her second year, and so on.

CHANGES TO SALARY STRUCTURE:

Finding ways to increase educator salaries may go a long way toward retaining current teachers and encouraging people to enter the profession. Some districts have altered their salary structures by introducing performance-based compensation. Under this model, teacher salaries are determined, in part, by evaluations, and those evaluations may be linked to increases or bonuses that allow take-home pay to exceed previous step levels.

PART-TIME TEACHER EMPLOYMENT:

MENT: This could provide greater flexibility, particularly related to child care, while also keeping the teacher engaged in the classroom and school culture. □

Addressing Teacher Shortage in Wisconsin

As part of an effort to get a better handle on teacher shortage, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has surveyed school districts to see how they have responded to shortages. The data gathered is being shared throughout the various CESAs. Together, with data still to be gathered from Wisconsin educators and teacher preparation programs, it will be used to develop a plan to address shortage issues.

Meanwhile, in Madison and elsewhere, legislators are actively discussing various approaches to the teacher shortage. Among the ideas being raised are:

- **Expansion of teacher loan forgiveness programs.** In the 2015-16 session, lawmakers created a rural teacher loan program by reallocating funding aimed at boosting the number of minority teachers; however, no new funding was provided. Efforts will be made to boost funding in the 2017-18 session.
- **Proposals to allow persons certified to provide instruction in Wisconsin technical colleges to teach high school students.** In the 2015-16 session, lawmakers approved allowing a permit to teach industrial arts subjects to be issued to an applicant who is certified to teach an industrial arts or similar subject in a technical college. Efforts may be made in the 2017-18 session to extend this approach to subject areas beyond industrial arts. □

Conclusion

Overall, we find that there is a shrinking supply of new teachers to replace a steady stream of existing teachers leaving the workforce. Moving forward, this dwindling supply will make it harder to replace each teacher vacancy. Specific research findings include the following:

- The number of teachers leaving the workforce has increased 22.5 percent in recent years.
- More than a quarter of the teaching workforce in Metro Milwaukee is over age 50, and as this group ages, departures are likely to become more numerous.
- According to local school district human resources professionals, aside from retirement, most teachers leave for money or family obligations.
- Enrollments in Wisconsin

teacher preparation programs are down 27.9 percent, from 12,323 students in 2008-09 to 8,887 students in 2013-14.

- Teacher prep program completers are down 6.6 percent in recent years — from 4,007 to 3,741 — and will likely continue to decline for the next several years.

Schools are an integral part of a healthy and vibrant community. Teachers, in turn, are an essential element of schools. The data and findings presented here paint a concerning picture about the teacher workforce in our region. Wisconsin faces a dwindling supply of teachers who will be in high demand from districts throughout the state and even from other states. This will make each future teacher vacancy harder to fill.

Armed with this information, we

encourage policymakers, school leaders, and the public to have an honest conversation about what the teaching profession should look like. Collaborative partnerships and focused attention can better support current teachers and encourage new teachers to ensure a steady and stable supply of educators for the schools and children in our state. ■

Joe Yeado is a senior researcher with the Public Policy Forum.

This article was excerpted from the Public Policy Forum's report "Help Wanted: An analysis of the teacher pipeline in metro Milwaukee." Reprinted with permission from the Public Policy Forum.

Note: The data used in this report primarily come from three sources: the 'All Staff' files compiled by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction; Title II reports produced by the U.S. Department of Education; and institutional data on teacher preparation programs from a number of colleges and universities in Greater Milwaukee.



WASB Business Honor Roll

Has a local business been particularly helpful to your district this year? Nominate them for the 2016 WASB Business Honor Roll!

Selected businesses and partnerships will be given statewide recognition and highlighted by the WASB.

To nominate a business, visit WASB.org (under Communication Services). Deadline: **Friday, August 19.**





2015 Mineral Point grads
Jane Dickler and
Bryce Fitzsimmons.

A Day to Celebrate Education

Graduation day gives school board members a special opportunity to reflect on public education in their communities

Shelby Anderson

One of the highlights of this time of year in our schools is graduation day. Not only is it a celebration of students and the culmination of their public K-12 school careers, it also brings together school board members, administrators, staff and entire communities.

For school board members, graduation is a special day. Most of the school board's work takes place in the board meeting room. Graduation day gives board members an opportunity to reflect and celebrate the role they have had in promoting student success.

"School board members are the Rosie the Riveters of public education," says Patrick Sherman, who

serves on both the Genoa City J2 and Lake Geneva school boards. "We are not on the front lines and seldom receive praise or glory. But our efforts on setting policy and approving course work that raise student achievement, ensuring every child is successful, are integral to graduation day."

Amy Mason, school board president in the Chippewa Falls Area Unified School District, also sees graduation day as an opportunity to recognize the work of the district and, of course, the students.

"For me, it's a time of celebration," she says. "Our students' years of hard work have culminated in them receiving their diploma, and it's a

celebration of the time and effort our staff has spent providing them with a top-notch education."

Jan Berg, president of the DeForest Area School District, is always impressed with how much graduation day means to the community. One year, during her graduation day speech, she asked people to raise their hands if they were community members who didn't have children, grandchildren, etc., graduating that day.

"There were more hands raised in that group than you would have thought," she said. "Community members were there to see that class of students graduate because this is an event that is important to the community as a whole."

“One of my very favorite things about being a school board member is getting to see the students walk across the stage and accept their diploma.”

— Amy Mason, school board president,
Chippewa Falls Area Unified School District

Mason has gotten the same impression at her district’s graduation ceremonies.

“We have a very tight-knit community in Chippewa Falls, and our graduation day reflects that,” she said. “The gymnasium is packed with family and friends who have come to help graduates savor their success and send them off to embark on the next chapter of their life.”

The importance of education is on full display at graduation day. Sherman remembers one year he received a call from a veteran who had been a senior in high school in 1944. The man never graduated because he enlisted to serve in the armed forces for World War II. The man had heard about recently passed legislation that allowed veterans to receive a diploma

if they left school to enlist in the armed forces.

“I offered him two options — this could be done at a board meeting or he could take part in that year’s graduation ceremony, cap and gown and all,” Sherman said. “He choose to take part in the full ceremony. It was a very special graduation day. I introduced him as ‘the last graduate of the class of 1945 and the first graduate of the class of 1998.’”

This year’s graduation day will be especially meaningful to Mason.

“One of my very favorite things about being a school board member is getting to see the students walk across the stage and accept their diploma,” she said. “I’ve had the wonderful opportunity to hand our students their diploma. This year’s graduation will be bittersweet for



Mineral Point School Board
President Larry Steffes
congratulates 2015 graduate
Elise Powers.

me, as I’ll have the very special privilege of giving my son his diploma.”

Sherman has also had the opportunity to give his three children their diplomas.

“Having served on a school board for over 25 years, it was my honor to hand each of my three children their diplomas and hug them on stage,” Sherman said. “There are few greater feelings than those moments.” ■



Photo courtesy of DeForest Area High School Yearbook

Academic Research of School Board Conflict

Identifying and addressing unproductive conflict on Wisconsin school boards

Michael R. Ford



If you are a former or current school board member, I think it is safe to assume that you are no stranger to group conflict. Conflict is at the heart of the democratic governance process.

Once on the board, members debate, ask questions, vote, and then do it all over again. Wisconsin communities are diverse in their thinking and policy preferences, and logically our state's representative institutions follow suit.

Hence, a certain level of conflict on school boards is to be expected. It serves a purpose. Without conflict, a school board may become nothing more than a rubber stamp for administrators. Worse yet, a conflict-averse board may fail to consider good policy ideas for fear of rocking the boat. Worst of all is when a board falls into a state of group-think, in which members ignore the needs of the very people they were elected to serve.

On the other hand, too much conflict on a school board will grind substantive progress to a halt, lead to entrenched coalitions, and have a broadly negative impact on organizational performance.

Examining Board Conflict

In a recently published peer-reviewed article, Douglas Ihrke, professor of Public and Nonprofit Administration at the University of Wisconsin-

Milwaukee, and I explore the sources of negative group conflict on Wisconsin school boards. The article, which appeared in *Public Policy and Administration*, builds on previous studies of small group dynamics that, in general, have shown a negative relationship between conflict and governing performance on public and nonprofit boards. In the article, we define conflict as unproductive board member disagreements, *i.e.*, disagreements over issues unrelated to the core task of governing a school district.

One of the reasons we wanted to look at this topic is the oft-repeated assumption that school boards are politicized to the point of negatively impacting student performance. Our suspicion, which proved correct, is that there is actually large variation in the levels of group conflict on individual Wisconsin school boards. Boards are complex, and it is impossible to understand their impacts based on a few anecdotes of boards captured by special interest groups.

In late 2013 and early 2014, Dr. Ihrke and I surveyed Wisconsin school board members from across the state in order to test several

hypotheses on the causes of negative school board conflict. We had a response rate of more than 23 percent. We measured conflict by asking board members their level of agreement with the following statements:

- Conflict among some school board members is high.
- Disagreements between board members often become personalized.
- During board negotiations, prior conflicts often resurface.
- School board coalitions (two or more individual members joining forces) tend to form along predictable lines (*e.g.*, political party, male/female, etc.)

The statements, all used in previous studies of municipal governance, get at four negative conflict types. The first is perceptions of high general conflict, generically defined. The second is relationship conflict, which is personal animosity between board members. The third is entrenched conflict, which is when board members are unable to move on from past disagreements. The last is coalition conflict, where board members disagree on their policy preferences for reasons unrelated to a substantive governing issue, such as ideology.

Findings

After surveying Wisconsin school board members, we came to some interesting findings for our hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: School boards overseeing lower performing school systems are more prone to conflict.

We found no evidence to support this. After controlling for student, district, and board member demographics (which we did in all of our models), there was no link between a district's overall DPI report card score and board conflict.

The absence of a relationship was surprising to us and a clear indication that the nature of the conflict-performance relationship needs further examination in future research. It is possible, and somewhat supported in our findings, that the district racial and socioeconomic variables commonly found to predict academic performance in school districts are the focus of board debates and conflicts. In other words, boards may conflict over the root cause of low district academic performance rather than the low performance itself.

Hypothesis 2: Stability, as indicated by low levels of board turnover, lowers perceived conflict levels.

We suspected that stable boards, *i.e.*, those with very little turnover in the previous five years, would have lower levels of board conflict. We were wrong. We found no relationship between stability and conflict.

This finding is perhaps an indicator that a high degree of board stability can be a double-edged sword. Whilst, it may allow for the establishment of norms, but it may also enable the formation of predictable coalitions. Interestingly, there is a significant relationship between board members having three or more years of experience and lower levels of perceived total conflict and personalized disagreements. So while overall board stability is not necessarily a net positive or negative, having a board consisting of more experienced members is likely to have a positive influence on board relations.

Hypothesis 3: Positive board member-superintendent relations are an indicator of low conflict.

Here we were correct. Board members who viewed their superintendent as a governing partner have significantly lower levels of conflict than those who did not.

Hypothesis 4: Ideological diversity increases conflict on school boards.

If school boards are overly politicized, one would expect ideologically diverse boards to have higher levels of conflict. We found no evidence of this. The presence of shared political beliefs among board members serving together did not lower conflict.

Hypothesis 5: Boards overseeing more challenging student populations exhibit higher levels of perceived conflict.

Our hypothesis that boards overseeing more challenging student populations exhibit higher levels of perceived conflict, is supported with a significant caveat. Overall, there is a statistically significant relationship between the percentage of minority students served by a school district and negative conflict types: The higher the percentage of minority pupils, the higher the perceived level of board conflict. However, boards overseeing districts with higher percentages of special needs pupils actually exhibit lower levels of conflict. These findings beg the question; why would one set of students increase conflict while another decrease conflict?

We believe the answer has to do with the existence of clearly outlined federal laws and procedures for special needs students in American states. Under federal law, pupils suspected of having special needs are evaluated, and, if the existence of special needs is confirmed, given an Individual Education Plan (IEP) in consultation with their parents and teachers. In contrast, no clear set of policies from the state or federal government dictates how school boards are to deal with problems of racial achievement gaps in schools. There is clear disagreement among policy makers on how best to deal with low minority achievement in

One of the reasons

we wanted to look at this topic is the oft-repeated assumption that school boards are politicized to the point of negatively impacting student performance.

Wisconsin (and elsewhere), making this a likely area for school board members to conflict.

Conclusions

Looking back on our findings, our overall conclusion is that the best course of action for Wisconsin school boards looking to lower levels of board conflict is to make efforts to improve board-superintendent relations.

Taking proactive steps, including formal board development and strategic planning exercises, can mitigate unproductive conflict.

Future research should focus on whether our findings hold true in other states, particularly those with structural and demographic differences with Wisconsin.

In addition, a greater understanding of the relationship between small group dynamics on school boards and measurable academic performance can be obtained by further questioning the relationship (or absence of) between conflict and performance. Does conflict impact performance rather than the other way around? Do school boards focus on the root causes of poor performance rather than the performance itself? Are key measures of academic performance missing something?

Answering these questions will further strengthen the findings presented here, and further the ability of public organizations to take informed steps to improve their governance behaviors. ■

Michael R. Ford is an assistant professor of public administration at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh.

Working FOR YOU

W A S B R E P O R T T O T H E M E M B E R S H I P



The WASB works for our members through events, advocacy efforts, policy services, board governance, legal services, and publications. The WASB is here to serve school boards and the students they educate.

Built on a tradition of providing high-quality service to member districts, WASB membership provides school boards with a statewide voice in public

education and valuable member services.

Below are highlights of the 2015-16 Report to the Membership outlining the many services and benefits that membership provides for your district. For more information about WASB services, publications, and events, visit wasb.org or contact us toll-free at 877-705-4422.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2015-16 REPORT TO THE MEMBERSHIP

Legislative Update

Launched the **Legislative Update** blog, which provides real time updates of important legislative activities, and allows members to receive notifications when new stories are posted.



Responded to more than **4,480** law-related inquiries from members in **371** districts.



Provided training and information to more than **4,400** school board member and administrator attendees at more than **50** WASB conferences, workshops, webinars, gatherings, and seminars.

Assisted **86** percent of districts (**366**) via the WASB Policy Library and/or other policy services.

Recognized **29** Service Associates as reputable, valuable partners of public education.



Responded to more than **850** individual requests from member districts for sample policy information.

Completed **9** successful superintendent searches and helped many other districts via presentations and advice by WASB superintendent search consultants.



Served **17** school districts and assisted numerous others through presentations and consultations by the Organizational consultants.

Offered the Annual Board Development Tool Survey to **435** school boards and CESA boards of control.

A NOTE ON LEGAL AND POLICY SERVICES

As indicated by the numbers in this report, the WASB is happy to assist member school districts with any legal and policy-related questions. Providing assistance and support to all of our members is the top priority of the WASB.

However, not all legal and policy inquiries can be handled or resolved with a single phone call or email. Simple

questions that can be answered quickly are considered a part of member services and are answered without additional cost to the district. For questions that require a greater level of involvement, member districts have the option to work with WASB staff under the WASB legal and policy services fee.

If you have any questions, please contact the WASB at info@wasb.org or call toll free at 877-705-4422. ■

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE JANUARY 2016 MEMBER SURVEY

In January, the WASB asked members to give their impression of WASB services, events and products. Thank you to those who took the time to respond. Below are some highlights from the survey results.

► Which WASB events are important to you?

Top three responses:

- Annual State Education Convention
- New Board Member Gatherings
- Fall Regional Meetings

► What professional development would have been helpful as a new member?

Top two answers:

- Board member legal roles and responsibilities
- How to work effectively as a board member

Editor's Note: Responses to these questions stayed the same from the 2014 Member Survey. As a result, many of the WASB workshops throughout 2015-16, including the 2016 Spring Academy Workshops, have focused on these two topics: board member legal roles and responsibilities, and how to work effectively as a board member.

► What are the critical decisions facing your school board in the next 12 months?

Top two responses:

- Referenda
- Budget

Editor's Note: The upcoming 2016 Summer Leadership Institute will feature a series of sessions on school finance, budgeting and planning for a referendum. In addition, there will continue to be relevant sessions at the annual State Education Convention featuring districts that have recently passed a referendum and experts discussing whether a referendum is needed, and if so, how best to approach a referendum.

When asked how the WASB could improve its services, there were a number of suggestions but no overwhelming uniform response. However, the comments about improving the WASB website were particularly relevant as the staff will be embarking on a website redesign later this year with the intent of releasing a new design in 2017. According to the survey results, the vast majority of members visit the WASB website on a regular basis. Less than 10 percent said that they visit the website once a year or not at all. To provide greater input, visit the WASB website to take a short survey specific to the website.

Are You Receiving WASB Emails?

As your member association, the WASB wants to ensure that you are receiving all of the timely legislative updates, legal and policy notices, and meeting invitations that you are entitled to receive with your membership.

If you are not receiving WASB emails or would prefer they be sent to a different email address, please contact us at info@wasb.org or by calling toll-free 877-705-4422 and provide us with your current, preferred email address.

You may need to whitelist "robust.wasb.org" if your WASB emails are being blocked. Contact the WASB or district IT for assistance.

The WASB is committed to working with member school boards to strengthen local governance and advocacy of Wisconsin public schools. Make sure you are receiving WASB emails to benefit from the full range of services. □

Drones in Schools

Rules, regulation and the associated risks of using drones in schools

The use of remote controlled unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or drones in our schools has increased as technology has advanced and drones have become less expensive to purchase.

Before taking flight with drones to enhance the learning experience, school boards must consider that these drones are flying in Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) controlled airspace and the FAA has regulations and rules that school boards should be aware of. Here are some pertinent rules and regulations:

- 1)** Unless you are flying for hobby or recreational purposes you will need FAA authorization via a Section 333 grant of exemption to fly an UAV. Currently, accredited educational institutions do fall under the definition of “hobby or recreational purposes” under certain circumstances. In general the following must apply to be considered “hobby or recreational” within a school:
 - a.** There can be no compensation tied directly to the demonstration or sole instruction of operating a UAV.
 - b.** The operation of a UAV by a student must be one component of a broader curricula. Stand-alone courses on flying a UAV are considered commercial and require FAA authorization.

c. Faculty may assist students in connection with a course that requires UAV operations, provided the student maintains operational control of the UAV, and the faculty participation is incidental and secondary to the student.

- 2)** Drones cannot be flown within five nautical miles (about 6 standard miles) of an airport. If a drone is going to be flown within this distance to an airport, one must obtain a letter of agreement with that airport’s management if not otherwise permitted by a Certificate of Waiver (COA) issued to the exemption holder.
- 3)** A drone cannot fly higher than 400 feet above ground level and must be operated within visual line of sight of the pilot-in-command at all times. This requires the operator/pilot to be able to use human vision unaided by any device other than corrective lenses, as specified on the pilot’s FAA-issued airman medical certificate or driver’s license.
- 4)** Do not fly over populated areas or over people. While this is a regulation, it is also a good risk management tip. There have been incidents of people losing fingers and their faces being maimed, resulting in required plastic surgery due to the power of the fast moving propellers of UAV’s. It is recommended to stay at least 25 feet way from people and vehicles.
- 5)** All drones must be registered with the Federal Aviation Administration (see “For More Information” on the next page). A \$5 fee applies.
- 6)** The UAV is typically between .55 and 55 pounds in weight; however this depends on what the exemption grants. Less than 55 pounds is most common, and further, the exemption outlines which models the exemption holder is authorized to operate.
- 7)** Do not fly drones anywhere near manned aircraft.
- 8)** The FAA recommends that the drone be flown at a local model airplane club as they will be



Before taking flight with drones ... school boards must consider that these drones are flying in Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) controlled airspace ...

very clear on the regulations and have open space. If a local club is not accessible, then it is recommended to fly over an area that is not populated.

9) Stay away from situations that may be considered an invasion of privacy.

Of course, school boards always want to have an adult properly trained on the regulations, proper operation of the drone, and safety procedures when operating the UAV. Tom McMahon of the Association of Unmanned Vehicle Association says that most drones have very thorough instructions that come with the drone when bought new and further training can be found at <http://bit.ly/fly-robotics>. Lastly, The Academy of Model Aeronautics' website (ama-

flightschool.com) has resources and learning opportunities for UAV users.

A reasonable estimate for the cost of insuring drones under 55 pounds is about \$1,000 annually for a \$1,000,000 limit, and there are higher limits available for an additional premium. The coverages might include aircraft liability, physical damage to the drone itself (optional physical damage coverage for camera systems), premises liability, and non-owned aircraft liability. Aircraft are excluded on your school's package policy. If you have any questions feel free to contact Tom McGreevey of Arthur J. Gallagher of Wisconsin at Tom_McGreevey@ajg.com 920-380-2223. ■

Arthur J. Gallagher of Wisconsin is an endorsed agency through the WASB Insurance Plan. For more information, visit wasb.org and select "WASB Insurance Plan."

POLICY MATTERS

The June issue of *The FOCUS*, WASB's comprehensive policy publication, will discuss drone usage in schools and related policy issues. *The FOCUS* is available on a subscription basis. For more information, visit wasb.org. Select "Policy" and then "Policy Publications."

FOR MORE INFORMATION on the safe operations of hobby and enthusiast drones, refer to the website knowbeforeyoufly.org. This website is a result of a collaboration of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) and the Association of Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVS). To register a UAV/drone with the Federal Aviation Administration, visit the website registermyuas.faa.gov.



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We work with K-12 clients to develop and implement 21st-century facility improvements for long-term success. Our team of experts has been delivering performance for over 25 years, bringing meaningful solutions to K12 schools in the Midwest. Our comprehensive approach to planning, funding, design, energy conservation, construction and commissioning has helped define Nexus as *The Point of Performance*.

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Gratitude and Persistence

Thanking those who've helped us this past legislative session

At our Legislative Update Blog (wasblegupdate.wordpress.com), we post advocacy tips for school board members every month. Recently we focused on utilizing "Persistence and Gratitude" in our advocacy efforts with lawmakers. The idea being that school board advocates who take the time to follow-up — to demonstrate their ongoing commitment not only to the policy issues at hand, but to building a long-term and genuine relationship with their lawmakers — will have far more success than those who ask once and never ask again.

A great way to do that is by showing gratitude to legislators for authoring bills that are positive for public education. As a board member, think about all the tough decisions you make and how much you appreciate it when a constituent offers thanks. Legislators feel the same way. Close the loop and let them know you're paying attention to what they do.

■ **GRATITUDE: WASB-Supported Bills Enacted into Law**

We are going to follow our own advice in this Capitol Watch and start by showing gratitude to legislators who authored bills that were supported by the WASB and were enacted into law this session. Please

take a moment to drop your legislator an email or call thanking them for supporting one or more of these bills that are helpful for your school district (especially if they are one of the authors of the bill). A voice vote means it essentially passed unanimously.

Sales and Use Tax Exemption

(Act 126) — The WASB thanks state Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) for authoring this legislation and successfully shepherding it through the legislative process with strong bipartisan support. Under this act, the purchase of building materials by a contractor that are used in a school, local government, or non-profit facility in this state is exempt from the sales and use tax. The bill passed the Senate on a 32-0 vote and the Assembly on a voice vote.

School Board Members as Volunteer Coaches (Act 92)

— The WASB thanks Tomah school board member Nancy McCoy for being the driving force behind this legislation. We would also like to thank Sen. Julie Lassa (D-Stevens Point) and Rep. Nancy VanderMeer (R-Tomah) for authoring this bill. This act allows a school board member to serve as a volunteer coach or extracurricular activity supervisor. The bill passed the Senate 29-2 and the Assembly on a voice vote.

Truancy Notifications (Act 52) simplifies the process for notifying parents and guardians that their child is habitually truant by allowing first class mail or electronic communications (email, etc.) to be used rather than certified or registered mail. The WASB thanks Rep. Eric Genrich (D-Green Bay) and Sen. Nikiya Harris Dodd (D-Milwaukee) for authoring the bill, which also permits the school attendance officer to simultaneously notify the parent or guardian by an electronic communication. The bill was approved by both houses of the Legislature on a voice vote.

Mental Health Services in Schools

(Act 294) prohibits the Department of Health Services (DHS) from requiring a mental health clinic or a licensed treatment professional to designate a school site as a clinic office in order to provide outpatient mental health services at the school. It also requires DHS to provide Medical Assistance reimbursement to licensed treatment professionals for mental health services provided at a school, regardless of whether the school site is designated as a clinic office or whether the licensed treatment professional is employed by, a contractor of, or affiliated with a clinic. A big thank you to authors Rep. Joel Kitchens

Think about all the tough decisions you make and how much you appreciate it when a constituent offers thanks ... legislators feel the same way.

FIND LEGISLATORS AND CANDIDATES

- **Wisconsin State Legislature** — legis.wisconsin.gov
 - Find who your state legislators are
 - Get contact information (email, phone, address)
 - See how they voted on bills
- **Government Accountability Board** — gab.wi.gov
 - Candidates running for the state Legislature
 - Candidate contact information

(R-Sturgeon Bay) and Sen. Devin LeMahieu (R-Oostburg). The bill was approved by both houses of the Legislature on a voice vote.

Rural Teacher Loan Program

(Act 359) modifies the state's existing teacher loan program to provide for loan forgiveness to certain teachers employed in school districts in rural counties. The WASB thanks Rep. Romaine Quinn (R-Rice Lake) for working with the WASB on this bill. The bill was passed by the Assembly on a vote of 94-0 and in the Senate on a 31-1 vote. Next session, we'll work on adding more funding to this program.

CPR Mandate (Act 390) requires school boards to provide instruction in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in any health education course offered to pupils in grades 7 to 12 and to provide instruction about automated external defibrillators to pupils in grades 7 to 12, beginning in the 2017-18 school year. Although the WASB did not support this bill, we are including it here because WASB staff worked with the bill authors and representatives of the American Heart Association (AHA), one of the bill's main backers, to mitigate the financial impact on schools to comply with the mandate. The WASB thanks authors Sen. Jerry Petrowski (R-Marathon) and Rep. John Spiros (R-Marshfield) for listening to our financial concerns and their significant effort to address those concerns.

PERSISTENCE: Bills That Will Likely Resurface

Here's where some persistence can make the difference. School board member advocacy was a big reason why several high profile bills were defeated this past session. That being said, defeated bills are like zombies. They have a knack for coming back from the dead as new bills and/or getting thrown into the state budget the next session. It will be important in the coming weeks and months to get your legislators and candidates

The 2015-16 Legislative Session by the Numbers

Session began January 3, 2015 and ended March 15, 2016

1,830 bills introduced

392 bills enacted into law

WASB monitored 118 bills; took a formal position on 79 bills (For/Against/Neutral)

Supported 38 bills; 23 of those were enacted into law

Opposed 19 bills; only 3 were enacted into law

60.5% of the bills WASB supported became law

84% of the bills we opposed did not become law

on record on these issues prior to the election.

With the election season rapidly approaching, half of the state Senate and all Assembly seats will be up for election this fall. It is never too early to plan and get items on legislators/candidates' schedules. Forums are relatively easy to set up (see sidebar on next page). The WASB can provide assistance by contacting legislators, drafting invitations, and developing potential questions. Here are some bills you may want to ask about when meeting with legislators and candidates:

Referenda/Borrowing Restrictions

(AB 481), introduced by Rep. Michael Schraa (R-Oshkosh) and Sen. Duey Stroebel (R-Saukville), would have placed restrictions on school district referenda ballot dates and implemented a moratorium on referenda (and other mechanisms for borrowing or raising revenue) following a failed referendum. The WASB strongly opposed this bill because it is anti-local control, did not show trust in locally elected officials and was extremely restrictive and inflexible for school boards. Thanks to our members responding to WASB alerts, contacting their lawmakers and testifying at hearings, this bill died in committee. However, some lawmakers have indicated they want to restrict referendum dates for all local units of government next session.

Firearms on School Grounds

(AB 846), authored by Rep. Rob Brooks (R-Saukville), would have permitted a person who has a license to carry a concealed weapon to possess a firearm on the grounds of a school and in a building on the grounds of a school where instruction is provided unless the school board posts signs at all entrances. Under current state law, concealed carry licensees may not carry firearms in or on school grounds. The WASB opposed this bill based on a resolution adopted by the Delegate Assembly and it died in committee.

Energy Efficiency Revenue Limit Exemptions (SB 337) would have ended the revenue limit exemption for school energy efficiency projects. Authored by Sen. Frank Lasee (R-De Pere) and Rep. Adam Neylon (R-Pewaukee), this bill will likely resurface next session as evidenced by a recent Wisconsin Taxpayer Alliance report and media coverage regarding the increase in schools utilizing this exemption and the property tax impact.

Crime Reporting Mandate (AB 517) would have imposed a statewide mandate on high schools to report certain crime-related incidents to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The bill, authored by Rep. John Jagler (R-Watertown), placed the responsibility for reporting these

incidents on school officials rather than on law enforcement agencies that have these statistics and it provided no additional funding for school districts to cover these additional costs and responsibilities. The bill was passed by the Assembly on a voice vote but died in committee in the Senate. It was scheduled for a vote in the Senate Education Committee but was pulled from the agenda after concerns were raised by the WASB and others.

School Changing Rooms (AB 469) would have instituted a state mandate regulating the use of restrooms and locker rooms by pupils. Authored by Rep. Jesse Kremer (R-Kewaskum) and Sen. Steve Nass (R-Whitewater), this bill would have also included a com-

plaint process and allowed parents to sue the school district for money damages or other remedies that are largely undefined in the bill. The WASB opposed this bill because we believe that it is generally better that these types of decisions are handled at the local level by people who are familiar with the individual situations and community values. A number of Wisconsin school districts have done just that through local school board policy-making. The WASB was also concerned about the lack of precedent for or clarity in the lawsuit provision. With new federal guidance being issued and a new president being elected this fall, this issue will certainly continue to be relevant. Rep. Kremer has indicated he will be bringing the proposal back next session, possibly expanded to other units of government. ■

10 STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL LEGISLATIVE/CANDIDATE FORUM

A more detailed look at setting up forums can be found in the WASB Advocacy Toolkit on our website, wasb.org.

1. Determine whom to invite

Legislative and school district boundaries typically lend themselves to determining which legislators and/or candidates to invite. Consider partnering with other districts who share legislators in common to help boost interest.

2. Decide on a format

If the attendance is expected to be relatively small or you are inviting just one legislator/candidate, you may want to hold a roundtable meeting to foster a conversation between all of the participants. If the attendance is expected to be larger with multiple legislators/candidates, a more structured forum may be appropriate.

3. Select a date, time and site

Work with legislators/candidates to pick a location and date that works with everyone involved.

4. Establish ground rules

During the forum, consistency and fairness are essential to a successful forum and give each legislator/candidate an equal opportunity to communicate his/her message. You may also want to require that audience questions be written in advance so that your moderator can screen them.

5. Send the invitations

Send each legislator/candidate, school board member and administrator a written invitation four to six weeks in advance. Include the program format and ground rules.

6. Notify the media

Inform the local media about the forum as well as any parent, teacher and other civic groups who may be interested in attending.

7. Recruit a speaker, moderator and timer

You will need one person from the host school district to open the forum, introduce the legislators/candidates and moderator, and make the closing announcements. A time-keeper will be needed if you expect legislators/candidates to stick to specific limits. Sometimes local newscasters are willing to serve as moderator. This can boost attendance and credibility.

8. Finalize the logistics

Depending upon the format, you may want to provide a podium or head table, microphones and water for the speakers.

9. Take notes

During the forum, make note of the legislators'/candidates' positions and any commitments they provide. This will be useful in future communications and allow you to better hold them accountable for their votes.

10. Follow up

Send thank you letters to the participating legislators/candidates, any school district staff who assisted in making the arrangements, the moderator, timer, and any other volunteers. Then, make plans for your next legislative forum.

Upcoming Events

■ July 16, 2016: Summer Leadership Institute

HYATT REGENCY, GREEN BAY

School board members are invited to the Summer Leadership Institute, taking place July 16 at the Hyatt Regency in Green Bay. This event will provide school board members and administrators an opportunity to network with colleagues from around the state and gain the knowledge necessary to successfully lead your school district and improve board governance.

Participants can choose from a wide variety of sessions covering student achievement, governance, referenda, teacher compensation, school funding and more to customize their experience. The

day will wrap up with a legislative update and interactive visioning session on the future of public education funding.

Sessions will feature WASB experts, and include some of the most popular sessions from the annual State Education Convention in January.

Attendees can also participate in an optional pre-conference tour of Lambeau Field. The tour will take place Friday, July 15, the day before the conference. *For more information about the WASB Summer Leadership Institute and Lambeau Field tour, visit wasb.org.* ■



WASB | Webinars



■ Upcoming WASB Webinars

The WASB hosts a series of webinars throughout the year on legal, policy, and other important school leadership topics. Here is a look at the upcoming webinars from the WASB:

■ Annual and Special Meetings:

Notice, Procedures and Powers June 15 | noon – 1 pm
Barry Forbes, Associate Executive Director and Staff Counsel

This presentation will review the notice requirements for annual and special meetings, cover meeting agendas and procedures, and discuss the division of powers between the annual meeting and the school board in common school districts.

■ Fair Labor Standards Act: New Federal Rules

June 22 | noon – 1 pm
Bob Butler, Associate Executive Director and Staff Counsel

The Department of Labor has proposed new rules regarding the Fair Labor Standards Act. This interactive webinar will cover the new proposed rules set to go into effect in July 2016. The webinar will provide detailed analysis of the rules and the impact of the rules on school

districts. In addition, the webinar will cover topics such as: who is covered by the FLSA (employees, volunteers and independent contractors); how the FLSA affects employees' pay and hours; and what is compensable time.

■ School District Referendums: Legal & Policy

Considerations July 13 | noon – 1 pm
Barry Forbes, Associate Executive Director and Staff Counsel

More and more school districts are going to referenda for funding and facilities. This interactive webinar will cover the legal and policy considerations that you should consider before going to referenda. The webinar will provide detailed analysis of the different types of referenda; the procedure and timing of referenda; the use of district funds and resources during a referenda; the roles of the board, individual board members and staff during a referenda; and how districts, staff, and boards may interact with third party groups, e.g., "vote yes," "vote no," etc. ■

Please note: These and all previous webinars are recorded and available on demand. WASB members can purchase any webinar and watch when their schedule allows. Upcoming live and pre-recorded webinars are listed on the WASB Webinars page at wasb.org (select "Meetings & Events" and then "Webinars").



Website and Educational Technology Accessibility

School districts increasingly rely on websites and education technology as a means of communicating information to the public — as well as delivering educational services and curriculum to students. Over the past few years, the Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has increased its enforcement activity regarding the accessibility of websites and education technology under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). This activity has resulted in resolution agreements and consent orders at the significant expense, both in time and money, for the affected districts. This *Legal Comment* provides an overview of the accessibility requirements under Section 504 and the ADA with respect to districts' websites and education technology, OCR enforcement activities, and common accessibility issues addressed by OCR.

■ Overview of Federal Law

Section 504 prohibits discrimination by federally funded entities, including school districts. It provides that “[n]o qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity which receives Federal financial assistance.”¹ The ADA contains similar language and protections.² OCR is charged with enforcing Section 504 and the ADA.

A school district may not directly, or through contractual, licensing, or other arrangements, discriminate on the basis of disability when providing any aid, benefit, or service.³

A school district must also provide individuals with disabilities the opportunity to participate in or

benefit from its activities in a way that is equal to that given to others. An “equal” opportunity to participate in school activities has been interpreted to mean a “comparable” opportunity, such that reasonable differences, or modifications, in the manner of participation are not only allowed, but also required if they mitigate rather than accentuate disabling conditions. Nevertheless, the aid, benefit, or service provided by the district must be as “effective” in providing the individual with a disability an equal opportunity to participate as with others.

In addition, the ADA requires that districts “take appropriate steps to ensure that communications with applicants, participants, members of the public, and companions with disabilities are as effective as communications with others.”⁴ Thus, districts must provide auxiliary aids and services to students, parents, and members of the public who have disabilities to the extent necessary to support communications with them that are as equally effective as communications with other persons. The purpose of the effective communication regulations is to ensure that the person with a vision, hearing, or speech disability can communicate with, receive information from, and convey information to, the district.

The most significant sources of guidance for districts on the issue of accessibility of websites and education technology are a June 29, 2010, Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) and an OCR Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document clarifying and expanding upon the DCL.⁵

The DCL concerned the use of electronic book readers and other emerging technology in classrooms. The letter was spurred by a series of settlement agreements between the Department of Justice (DOJ), which enforces the ADA at the post-sec-

ondary level, and colleges and universities that had used the Kindle DX e-reader in the classroom as part of a pilot study with Amazon. Although the e-readers were capable of reading books aloud, there was no similar text-to-speech function for the menu and the navigational controls, leaving the devices inaccessible to those with visual impairments. After the individual Kindle cases were settled, OCR issued a DCL to clarify educational institutions’ obligations under Section 504 and the ADA regarding accessibility of educational technology.

The DCL explains that requiring use of an emerging technology in a classroom environment when the technology is inaccessible to a population of individuals with disabilities is discrimination prohibited by Section 504 and the ADA “unless those individuals are provided accommodations or modifications that permit them to receive all the educational benefits provided by the technology in an equally effective and equally integrated manner.” The FAQ states that schools must ensure that students with disabilities have the opportunity to “acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services” with “substantially equivalent ease of use” and in “as timely a manner” as other students.

The FAQ makes clear that its advice applies to elementary and secondary institutions. In addition, it applies to all forms of emerging technology and all school programs and activities, whether “brick and mortar,” or “virtual.” In particular, the FAQ singles out online courses and other online content, explaining that the principles enumerated in the DCL apply to “online programs that are part of the operations of the school, *i.e.*, provided by the school directly or through contractual or other arrangements.” Thus, according to OCR,

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district websites, class blogs, and online courses must all meet the accessibility standards imposed by Section 504 and the ADA.

Common Accessibility Issues

There have been a number of recent resolution agreements between districts and OCR regarding district website and education technology accessibility. These agreements highlight a number of common problems with districts' website and education technology accessibility under Section 504 and the ADA.

Images. People with disabilities that affect their vision often use assistive technology to access information displayed on a computer screen. Screen reading software and refreshable Braille displays "read" the text on the computer screen and produce audio or tactile versions of that text that can be accessed by those with vision-related disabilities. However, these technologies can only process text; they cannot interpret photographs or charts or otherwise provide information about images appearing on the screen. In order to make images and charts accessible to those using screen reading software or Braille displays, computer programmers can include hidden alternative text describing the image that can be read by these assistive technologies.

Documents. PDF and other image-based document formats are often not properly formatted (or "tagged") to be readable by screen reading software. In addition, unlike regular webpage or word processor text, they are often not accessible to people with low vision that use programs to enlarge text or change the font and color settings.

Videos. Videos posted on webpages may pose accessibility problems for people with disabilities that impair hearing or vision. Videos without captions, or with captions that are out of sync with the video, are not accessible to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. In addition, people who are blind or have low vision may not be able to access videos without audio descriptions narrating what is

taking place in the video, or without playback controls that can be "read" by screen reading software and manipulated with keyboard controls.

Enforcement

OCR has initiated investigations of a number of districts related to the accessibility of district websites and online course technology.

Northborough-Southborough Public Schools.⁶ OCR received a complaint under Section 504 and the ADA that the Northborough-Southborough Public Schools website was not accessible to individuals with disabilities who require assistive technology. As part of the OCR investigation, the Department of Education reviewed the website and found numerous problems including lack of keyboard accessibility controls; controls that were improperly labeled, alternative text and tags that did not match buttons; lack of synchronized captioning of videos; PDFs without tags; and screen reader incompatibility. In addition, the district did not have a policy on website accessibility, nor did it have a policy or practice of ensuring that third-party vendors or contractors meet website accessibility standards. OCR found that the district had violated Section 504 and the ADA and required that it enter into a resolution agreement to come into compliance with the law.

South Carolina Charter School District.⁷ OCR entered into an agreement with South Carolina Charter School District to ensure compliance with Section 504 and the ADA for students with disabilities in the District. OCR initiated the compliance review to assess whether the seven South Carolina Internet-based public charter schools provided equal access to persons with disabilities, including students and parents. Specifically, OCR's investigation sought to determine whether persons with disabilities had an equal opportunity to access each school's website and online learning environment.

OCR determined that the schools' websites and online learning environment were not readily accessible to persons with disabilities,

including those who required assistive technology to access the Internet. The most frequent concerns were lack of alternative text attributes on buttons, especially on video controls; lack of synchronized captioning; inaccessible PDFs; and animations that were not fully labeled. Additionally, some materials provided by third-party vendors were inaccessible. These problems prevented persons with disabilities, particularly those with visual, hearing, or manual impairments, or who otherwise require the use of assistive technology, from access to the website or the online learning environment in an equally effective and integrated manner as persons without a disability.

Michigan Department of Education.⁸ OCR received a complaint that the Michigan Department of Education's website was not compatible with assistive technology used by individuals with disabilities. The page at issue was designed to provide information and seek public comment about controversial proposed changes to special education rules. OCR investigated and found no accessibility issues with the main website, but found that it linked to videos explaining the proposed changes that were hosted on Vimeo, a third-party website. These videos were properly captioned, but individuals using assistive technology were unable to access them because the playback buttons were not properly labeled. OCR concluded that these inaccessible videos, along with inaccessible elements in PDFs, provided sufficient evidence to support finding a violation of Section 504 and the ADA. The parties entered into a resolution agreement requiring the Department of Education to ensure accessibility of the entire website which will require captioning up to 800 videos and making up to 8,000 documents accessible or removing them from the website altogether.

In addition to the cases discussed above, OCR has investigated website accessibility issues in many other districts.⁹ These cases were all

resolved with resolution agreements, which required the districts to take a series of steps to come into compliance with the law. Many districts were required to develop and post Web Accessibility Policies, conduct accessibility reviews at defined intervals, and develop and implement training for anyone responsible for creating or distributing information on a district website (including teachers who develop content for online instruction). In addition, the resolution agreements required districts to ensure that all new and existing web content is fully accessible to individuals with disabilities. Although the law does not require the use of any specific benchmark standards for website accessibility, OCR has taken the position in a number of resolution agreements that compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA standards or the Section 508 Standards is one way (though not the only way) to ensure compliance with the district's legal obligations with respect to the accessibility of its online content.¹⁰

In addition to raising complaints with OCR, private plaintiffs have also sued school districts over website and education technology accessibility issues. For example, the blind mother of three Seattle School District students sued the district under Section 504 and the ADA because she was unable to access portions of the district website and the software used in her sons' math classes.¹¹ The website contained mislabeled buttons, headings, fields, and text boxes; links that could not be activated with keyboard commands; information and controls that could not be detected by screen access software; and images without proper descriptive information. The math software, ST Math, was a required part of the math curriculum, but when her son fell behind in his assignments, she discovered that she could not log into the program to monitor his progress or access information about his assign-

ments because the website was not compatible with her screen reader.

The parties settled the lawsuit, entering into a consent decree requiring the district to designate an accessibility coordinator; conduct an accessibility audit and create a remediation plan for issues uncovered in the audit; create and maintain an accessible resource portal; add language to procurement requests and contracts requiring vendors to provide information about the accessibility of their products; and train district staff on the creation of accessible content. Costs for the district to implement the consent decree are estimated to be between \$665,400 and \$815,400 over three and a half years.

Finally, in 2010, the Department of Justice indicated that it was considering amending its regulations implementing Title II and III of the ADA to require website and education technology accessibility and it sought public comment regarding the issue. The Department had been expected to publish Title II regulations sometime in 2016, but it recently withdrew its proposed regulations and restarted the rulemaking process, asking for further public comment on issues relating to the potential application of such technical requirements to the websites of Title II entities and to obtain information for preparing a regulatory impact analysis.¹² However, districts should not wait for DOJ to issue the regulations before making their websites or education technology accessible. In *National Association of the Deaf v. Harvard University*, a federal court judge concluded that existing law and regulations provided a basis for a claim by the National Association of the Deaf and four plaintiffs that Harvard violated Section 504 and the ADA by failing to provide closed captioning for thousands of videos on their websites. The judge rejected the university's arguments that the court dismiss or stay the case while DOJ works on its proposed rules for website and education technology accessibility.¹³

Conclusion

Although websites and education technology provide exciting opportunities for districts to enhance their communication with the community and improve delivery of educational services to students, it is important to make sure that these resources are made available to everyone, regardless of disability. To avoid running afoul of Section 504 and the ADA, districts should audit the accessibility of their current websites and education technology, think proactively about accessibility when designing them, and ensure that website and education technology content from third-party vendors meets district accessibility standards. ■

For additional information on related topics, see WASB School News: "Accessibility to School Events By Individuals with Disabilities" (February 2005); "Accessibility and the ADA" (September 1992).

Endnotes

1. 29 U.S.C. §794(a); 34 C.F.R. § 104.4(a)
2. 28 C.F.R. § 35.130(a)
3. 34 C.F.R. § 104.4(b)
4. 28 C.F.R. §35.160(a)
5. Department of Education and Department of Justice, *Joint "Dear Colleague" Letter: Electronic Book Readers* (June 29, 2010); Department of Education, *Frequently Asked Questions About the June 29, 2010 Dear Colleague Letter* (May 26, 2011)
6. 114 LRP 42719 (OCR 4/5/14)
7. 63 IDELR 112 (OCR 3/20/14)
8. 115 LRP 52125 (OCR 6/22/15)
9. See, e.g., *Beaumont (TX) Indep. Sch. Dist.*, 111 LRP 47567 (OCR 2011); *Higley (AZ) Unified Sch. Dist.*, 115 LRP 26053 (OCR 1/14/15); *Argyle (TX) Indep. Sch. Dist.*, 115 LRP 49798 (OCR 6/12/15).
10. See, e.g., *Higley (AZ) Unified Sch. Dist.*; *Argyle (TX) Indep. Sch. Dist.* The WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards are available at <http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20> and the Section 508 standards are available at 36 C.F.R. pt.1136.
11. *Nightingale v. Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1, No. 2:14-cv-01286-RAJ* (W Dist. Wash. 2014)
12. http://www.ada.gov/regs2016/sanprm_statement.html; <http://www.ada.gov/regs2016/sanprm.html>
13. Case No. 3:15-cv-30023-MGM (Feb. 9, 2016)

This Legal Comment was written by Michael J. Julka, Steven C. Zach, M. Tess O'Brien and Julia K. Potter of Boardman & Clark LLP, WASB Legal Counsel.

Rethinking School Leadership

SERVICE ASSOCIATES Q & A

Q. *What is Studer Education's Evidence-based leadership framework?*

A. Our Evidence-Based LeadershipSM Framework aligns organizational goals, behaviors/actions, and processes to support the core mission of school districts — which ultimately is to provide the best life opportunities for every child through a high-quality education. Applying Evidence-Based LeadershipSM, school districts and communities envision the future, define goals that reflect the realization of that vision, and then action plan and implement in an aligned way throughout the district to achieve outstanding results. The “evidence” in the framework is about defining how we will know when we are successful and our collective actions are yielding the desired results. Evidence-Based LeadershipSM also includes a set of proven (by evidence) tactics and best practices for engaging and leading our teams to achieve these important results for children and families.

Q. *What do you think is one of the biggest challenges facing Wisconsin schools? How can schools try to meet this challenge?*

A. I'd like to mention two: change and voice. Our external environment has changed dramatically and will continue to do so. The needs of the students we serve is constantly changing. Educational standards, expectations, working relationships, accountability, school funding — all of these factors are changing. The only constant is change itself. Given this, even the most successful school

districts cannot expect to continue to improve or even maintain current results and levels of success if they continue to operate in the same way. Voice for the many stakeholders who comprise a school community is the second great challenge, and is often related to the recent changes I just mentioned. Some perceive that change has silenced voices that matter. In our work with school districts, we coach leaders on tools and tactics to access and engage with the voices of students, employees, parents, families, and board members. To meet both of these challenges, leaders require the same opportunity that high-performing districts and schools have offered teachers for decades: ongoing professional development and coaching.

Q. *How can schools develop a school-work culture that values employees and pushes them to be their best?*

A. Leaders can create great school-work cultures that value employees and empower them to achieve at high levels by connecting the heart and the mind. We have found that employees desire reasonable things from their leaders: positive relationships, approachability, efficient systems, and the tools, resources, and development needed to get the job done. These expectations mean that leaders need to skillfully motivate our heart — the passion we bring to education — and inform our minds in order to fully engage each individual. Leaders who can manage both approaches — to heart and mind — achieve that “best place to work” culture that drives team members to achieve their best.



Melissa Matarazzo is a coach for Studer Education.

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Q. *What role does or should the school board play in bolstering/maintaining employee relations/development?*

A. Good school boards understand the core mission of the district, and they expect updates on how students are performing, relative to measures that have been established and communicated. Great school boards understand that student learning is not improved by only focusing on student test scores, but by also identifying and monitoring additional organizational measures and factors that have a strong influence on student learning. Of the school-based influences, teacher quality ranks number one. The quality of the school leader is the second highest school-based influence on student achievement. When we say “school based,” we mean “things we can control” — unlike our external environment. High-performing school boards provide the resources that superintendents need to create great workplace cultures for all faculty and staff, who are the ultimate drivers of teaching and learning in our schools. ■

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Servicing schools with media implementation, management, training and speaking.

Transportation

Dairyland Buses, Inc.

262-544-8181
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School bus contracting provider, managed contracts, training, maintenance.



SUPPORTING, PROMOTING AND ADVANCING PUBLIC EDUCATION



2016 SUMMER LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

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Sessions include:

- **School Funding**
- **Effective Governance**
- **Equity**
- **School Law**
- **Policy Making**
- **Referenda**
- **Teacher Compensation**
- **Legislative Update**

**Choose your sessions to
customize your learning.**

Optional Tour:

**Join us for a tour of historic
Lambeau Field when you arrive in
Green Bay on Friday, July 15. For
more details, visit wasb.org.**

DATE:
SATURDAY, JULY 16, 2016

LOCATION:
HYATT REGENCY GREEN BAY



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

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