




WISCONSIN SchoolNews

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Wednesday's keynote speaker **David Horsager** shared his eight pillars of trust: clarity, compassion, character, competence, commitment, connection, contribution and consistency.

— pages 6

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SPECIAL 2017 CONVENTION REVIEW ISSUE

- 3 Viewpoint** — *Your Advocacy Leads the Way*
- 4 It Starts With Us** — *Photos from Convention 2017*
- 6 The Qualities of Trust** — *Keynote: David Horsager*
- 8 Saved By School** — *Keynote: Liz Murray*
- 10 Building Dreams** — *Keynote: Fredi Lajvardi*
- 12 Sustainable Funding** — *State Superintendent Tony Evers*
- 13 Moving & Learning** — *Dr. JoAnne Owens-Nauslar*
- 14 Before the Convention** — *Pre-convention Workshops Recap*
- 15 Delegate Assembly** — *2017 WASB Delegate Assembly*
- 16 Superintendent of the Year** — *Called to Lead*
- 17 Business Manager of the Year** — *Gratitude and Thanks*
- 18 Setting Up Children for Success** — *Session Recap*
- 19 Helping Minority Students Succeed** — *Session Recap*
- 20 Partnerships and Persistence** — *Session Recap*
- 21 Redoing a Referendum to Succeed** — *Session Recap*
- 22 Changing the Conversation About Student Mental Health** — *Session Recap*
- 24 Advocacy is All About Relationships** — *Session Recap*
- 25 From Passive to Active Learning** — *Session Recap*
- 26 A Coordinated Effort to Nurture the Whole Child** — *Session Recap*
- 27 Breaking Down the Social and Emotional Gap** — *Session Recap*
- 28 Offering Help and Hope** — *Session Recap*
- 29 "Programs are Going to Increase"** — *Session Recap*
- 30 Free Speech is Changing** — *Session Recap*
- 31 Hands-on Learning** — *Session Recap*
- 32 Accomplishments** — *Recognizing school leader award winners*
- 35 Student Awards** — *Award-winning students, student video team*
- 36 Legal Comment** — *Student Fees*
- 40 Association News** — *2016 WASB President Stu Olson; 2017 WASB Board of Directors*
- 42 Capitol Watch** — *Governor's 2017-19 Budget Unveiled*
- 45 Service Associates**

ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE were written by: Shelby Anderson, Joe Quick and freelance writer Anne Davis. Student Freedom Gobel also contributed an article.

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Your Advocacy Leads the Way

Thank you for your advocacy! Throughout the state, school officials, community leaders and parents have been pressing state leaders for more school funding. The governor and legislators are listening.

In early February, Gov. Scott Walker released his 2017-19 state budget proposal, which includes a \$200 per pupil increase in school funding along with additional funding for rural schools, school-based mental health programs, and other initiatives. These proposals closely align with the WASB's legislative agenda. The governor's budget proposal may not be perfect, but it includes important steps in improving public school funding and he deserves to be commended for recognizing this need.

We have a long way to go in the budget process before any additional dollars are confirmed and there likely will be a strong debate on the amount of funding that goes to schools versus the amount that goes to transportation or income tax cuts. And there likely will be healthy debate on the governor's budget proposal to create lifetime teacher licenses as well as an anticipated debate on lifting the per-district caps on vouchers. See this month's Capitol Watch for an in-depth analysis of the governor's state budget proposal.

Your continued advocacy is needed throughout the budget process. This month, the WASB is hosting a Day at the Capitol on March 15 for school board members and administrators. Attendees will be briefed on the governor's 2017-19 state budget proposal by Department of Administration Secretary Scott Neitzel and hear from a bipartisan legislative panel featuring state Sen. Luther Olsen (R), Sen. Minority Leader Jennifer Shilling (D), Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R) and Rep. Sody Pope (D). The WASB government relations team will provide talking points and arrange afternoon meetings with legislators for every attendee.

The WASB Day at the Capitol will also feature a forum with the final two candidates for state superintendent of public instruction. This issue of the *Wisconsin School News* went to print before the spring primary but it's likely that the final choices will offer two distinct visions for public education for voters at the April general election.

While we need to follow the state debates closely and make our voices heard in Madison, there is likely to be a dramatic shift in education policy in Washington, D.C. as well. In late January, several members of the WASB board of directors, our lobbyists and I participated in the National School Boards Association Federal

Advocacy Institute. We were briefed on federal legislative activity and met with our state's federal representatives.

Our conversations on Capitol Hill focused on urging the Wisconsin congressional delegation to work to ensure that the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is faithfully implemented, that the Child Nutrition Act and the Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Act are both reauthorized and modernized, and that Congress lives up to its promises to fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for students with disabilities, Title I for economically disadvantaged children, and Impact Aid for districts strapped for cash by the presence of federally tax-exempt property such as military installations and tribal lands. They were productive exchanges.

This is an exciting time for public education, with a renewed focus on schools as an economic engine and a key supplier of tomorrow's workforce. As school leaders we need to ensure that our support for greater investments in public education is heard in Madison and Washington and we need to ensure that the public schools in each of our communities maximize the investments our leaders are proposing to make in them and in our students. ■

This is an exciting time for public education, with a renewed focus on schools as an economic engine and a key supplier of tomorrow's workforce.

It Starts With Us

Earlier this year, school leaders from around the state gathered in Milwaukee for the 96th State Education Convention. In this special issue of **Wisconsin School News**, we look back at the many sessions, keynote speakers, and special events from this year's convention.



Students demonstrated hands-on STEM learning for school leaders at the Project Lead the Way booth in the **Exhibit Hall**.



Michael Jaber, coordinator of instructional technology for the Sheboygan Area School District, works with school leaders after his session on new technologies and tools in education, such as Double Robotics, Myo Armband, Spheros, virtual reality and more.



Several **informal break-out sessions** allowed school leaders to meet and discuss important issues and challenges facing schools. In this session, school board members and administrators discussed challenges and opportunities regarding school district social media use.



Special educators, administrators and school board members are recognized at the State Education Convention. Here, **Kirk Holliday**, a member of the De Soto Area School Board, was recognized for serving 20 years on the school board. See page 32 for more award winners.



The **Bay Port High School Wind Ensemble** from the Howard-Suamico School District performed in front of several thousand school board members and administrators during one of the convention's general sessions.



The **Kenosha Indian Trail High School and Academy Wind Ensemble** performed during the first general session. All three student music groups received standing ovations from the audience.



Senior Jack Burlingame, a saxophonist with the **Fort Atkinson High School Jazz Ensemble**, performs a solo during its performance. The three student music groups were selected with the help of the Wisconsin School Music Association and supported by stipends from the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials Foundation.

View more photos from the convention at <http://johnohara.zenfolio.com/wasb2017>



The Qualities of Trust

David Horsager discusses the traits of trustworthy leaders



Keynote sponsor



Fundamentally, I think a lack of trust is the biggest cost we have,” said keynote speaker David Horsager, bestselling author of “The Trust Edge.”

Horsager pointed to Volkswagen’s emission scandal and swimmer Ryan Lochte’s blunder at the Rio Olympics as examples of where a loss of trust cost millions of dollars. In the business or school setting, Horsager said that when trust increases, employee outlook, morale, motivation, and retention also increase.

To build and maintain trust, Horsager discussed his eight pillars of trust: clarity, compassion, character, competence, commitment, connection, contribution and consistency.

When it comes to clarity, Horsager said leaders need to have a clear and practical vision of how they are going to accomplish something. “There are three key questions in establishing clarity: How am I going to get there? How am I going to get there? How am I going to get there?” Horsager said. “If you don’t have a how, nothing changes.”

To emphasize the importance of competence, Horsager gave an example of a dentist. They can have clarity, compassion, and character,

but, unless they also have competence, you’re not going to trust them to fix a cavity. More importantly, Horsager said, people trust those who stay fresh, capable and confident in their professional roles.

Exhibiting commitment to your role also helps build trust. “People trust those who stick in the face of adversity,” Horsager said. “Think of those people who have had a lasting legacy in this world ... The thing they have in common is that commitment and sacrifice were central.”

In the case of leadership, Horsager added that leaders need to exhibit and model commitment before they can expect their teachers or community members to show commitment. “Trust isn’t given, trust is earned,” he added.

Exhibiting commitment can also help a school district or company that has lost trust. Horsager said that demonstrating commitment is the number one way to regain trust. “The only way to rebuild trust is to make and keep a new commitment,” he said.

Not surprisingly, “connection” or an ability and willingness to work with others is also crucial to trust. “We trust those willing to work together,” Horsager said. He dis-

cussed research that found that the most magnetic trait a person can have is gratitude. “If you build gratitude into your home, your classroom, or your school board, all the negativity goes away.”

Horsager said the “king” of the eight pillars of trust is consistency. “For good or bad this is why we like McDonald’s,” Horsager said. He added that this is why we don’t like the moody person who can be unpredictable. In a school setting, he emphasized the importance of holding all teachers and staff to the same consistent standards. “Consistency and sameness are trusted,” Horsager added.

Horsager concluded by saying that every leadership issue related to trust can be solved with one of the eight pillars of trust. He also added that modeling these positive traits can not only impact and improve trust in your school district, but can also improve a school’s culture.

“The impact of your schools, as much as things are changing, is still the major impact on the community,” Horsager said. “You have a greater opportunity to affect and effect positive change than anyone else.” ■

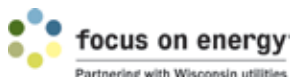
“Trust isn’t given, trust is earned.”



Saved by School

Keynote speaker **Liz Murray** tells how education got her off the streets and into Harvard

Keynote sponsor



At 15 and homeless, Liz Murray had pretty much given up on school. Teachers had tried to help her overcome her difficult life but not much had made a difference. She would show up for class occasionally to get a hot meal and a bus pass.

Two years later, school saved her life.

Murray, the author of “Breaking Night: A Memoir of Forgiveness, Survival, and My Journey from Homeless to Harvard,” shared her story of overcoming almost insurmountable obstacles.

Murray and her sister grew up in the Bronx with drug-addicted parents. Although they tried to do their best for their children, what money there was went mostly for heroin and other drugs. Despite efforts at intervention by well-meaning teachers, Murray quickly became “probably the worst student.”

After her mother, who was HIV positive, became seriously ill, the family lost their home and Murray was on the streets. Because she had experienced violence from staff members of a youth detention facility, she had a great fear of the

system and felt safer living on her own.

She crashed on friends’ couches or rode subway trains all night to stay warm. On the rare occasions she showed up at school, it was only to get a bus pass or a meal. By the time she was 17, she had one high school credit.

Her mother’s death and pauper’s funeral was a transformative moment. Murray started to pay more attention to the ‘what if’ scenarios that played out in her brain — ‘What if I go to school regularly?’ or ‘What if I do well and graduate?’

Because her academic record was so poor, she was rejected by every high school she applied to until she tried the Humanities Preparatory Academy, a public charter school, and met the school’s founder Perry Weiner, an English teacher.

“You never know when you meet a person who is going to change your life,” Murray said. “He accepted me as a person 100 percent, but he held me accountable 100 percent.”

Thanks to the steady support of Weiner and other teachers and their constant push to get her to achieve

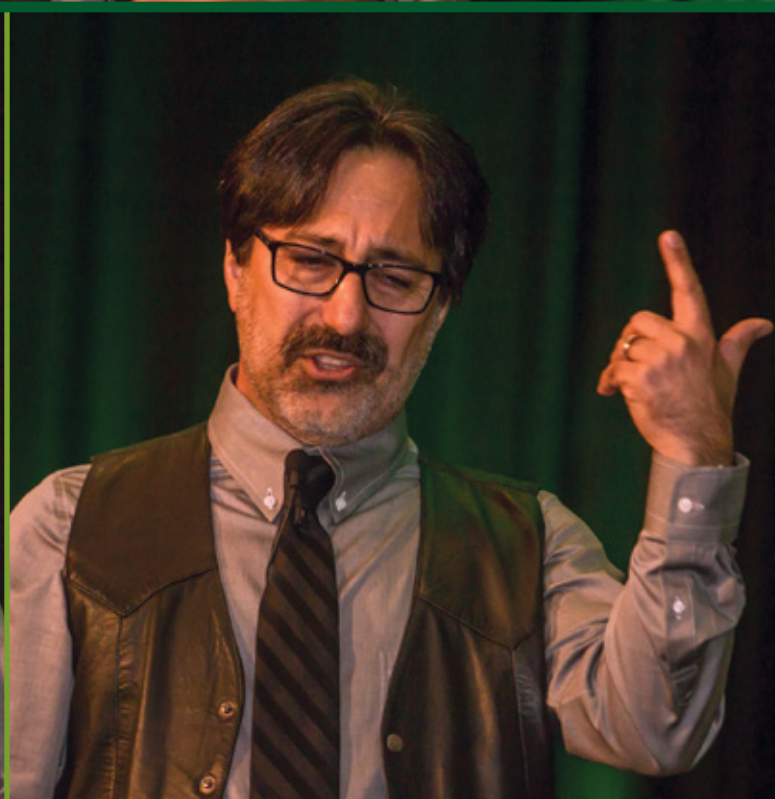
her full potential, she finished four years of high school in two years, taking classes at night and on weekends, all while still homeless. On a class field trip with Weiner, she visited the Harvard campus and was awestruck. She applied and got in but had no idea of how to pay for tuition. Then, she saw an advertisement for a four-year scholarship from the *New York Times*. They wanted someone who had to overcome challenges. Liz had no problem identifying a few. She won the scholarship and went on to graduate from Harvard in 2009.

Today, Murray is married with two children, and is working on her master’s degree in psychology.

She told the crowd that she worries sometimes that the difficult times and many pressures in public education could cause them to turn off and give up. She encouraged them not to obsess over the enormity of the issues and just “do what you can do.”

“My life was transformed in the context of advocates. I was surrounded by them and I learned to be one,” she said. “You all look like rock stars to me. Please don’t ever give up. You are changing lives.” ■

“You never know ... who is going to change your life.”



Building Dreams

Renowned STEM educator **Fredi Lajvardi** shared his students' amazing story

Keynote sponsor **WEAtrust**



When Fredi Lajvardi began his career as a science teacher at Carl Hayden High School, an inner-city school in Phoenix, he was quickly frustrated by the lack of interest among his students. So, he started an after-school club to try and engage students in hands-on projects.

One day, Lajvardi took his students to an electric car competition. Students saw the cars and wanted to build one. Lajvardi was skeptical given that the competition wasn't open to high school teams and that they knew nothing about building an electric car. He told his students that they could compete if they got a rule book and an okay from the competition director. One of Lajvardi's students disappeared for about 10 minutes and came back with a copy of the rule book and a signed note from the director that they could compete the following year. Lajvardi was a little overwhelmed, so he asked for help.

"I got experts in the field to come in and talk to the students," Lajvardi said. "I saw my role as a teacher change to be not so much a provider of content, but someone who could get kids the information they needed."

The club moved on from electric cars to robotics and really hit its stride, engaging even more students, including girls. Lajvardi also saw students get interested in science and engineering careers.

"All of a sudden, they're taking the classes that they normally run away from," Lajvardi says.

In 2004, a small team of Lajvardi's students signed up for a new competition — the Marine Advanced Technology Education ROV Competition. Lajvardi and his students decided, since it was their first year, that they would learn more if they competed in the college division, which included teams from MIT and other prestigious engineering schools.

The students patched together a robot with spare parts that didn't look great, but proved to be innovative. After the first day of the competition, the underwater event, the team was surprised to be in third place.

However, Lajvardi didn't have high hopes for his team in the last two rounds of the competition — the presentation and technical writing. He remembers sitting in the waiting area outside the hall where teams were presenting their robots

and answering questions from the panel of judges. While this portion of the competition took most teams about 40 minutes, his team was out in only 20 minutes.

"Right away I thought, 'What happened?'" Lajvardi said. But his students reassured him that it had gone well. The judges were impressed with their grasp of the metric system and the simplicity and clarity of their presentation.

At the awards ceremony, the third-place team was announced and it wasn't Lajvardi's team. He remembers thinking that they probably got fourth or fifth place, but then he started adding their points together and realized they had done much better. When they were announced as the first-place team, beating MIT, Lajvardi couldn't believe it.

The story of Lajvardi and his team of students was told in the book "Spare Parts," which became a movie in 2015 starring George Lopez. The tagline from that movie is "If life doesn't give you a dream, build one."

"I tell my students that you're the only one who can decide whether or not you're going to succeed," he said. ■

"If life doesn't give you a dream, build one."

Sustainable Funding

State Superintendent **Tony Evers** calls on state leaders to move beyond a “Band-Aid” approach to school funding

During his tenure as State Superintendent, Tony Evers has made it a point to visit schools and hear from students across the state. Recent trips included a visit to St. Croix Falls to make pottery with students and a trip to Hortonville to learn about the district’s mental health work. Another visit took him to the newly consolidated Herman-Neosho-Rubicon School District. One common refrain he has heard from school leaders at these and other districts is the need for more school funding.

“When I’m in a district, I always ask school leaders, what can we do at the DPI to help you?” Evers said. “While the reasons differ from district to district, all roads generally lead back to one place — funding.”

Evers noted that Governor Scott Walker addressed school funding in

his State of the State Address, talking about the need to increase the per-pupil revenue limit. Additionally, Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R-Burlington) has formed a blue ribbon panel to address school funding.

Evers recognized advocacy efforts of school leaders and community groups as crucial to getting increases for school funding into the next state budget.

“This movement, from the governor and Legislature — it happened due to pressure from you — through continued successful referenda and discussion by boards and members,” he said.

However, Evers also made it clear that school funding in Wisconsin needs to expand beyond “Band-Aid” solutions. He discussed his Fair



“At the local level, kids are simply more important than political labels.”

Funding for Our Future plan, which he submitted to the Legislature.

“It’s based on the idea of transparency, fairness in distribution, and protecting all districts during the initial years from losing money due to the change,” Evers said.

The Fair Funding for Our Future Plan would mean an increase of 9.7 percent or \$138,544 for the Three Lakes School District and 23.5 percent or \$652,635 for the Montello School District.

“We have to work together to make those figures a reality, and we cannot let funding be a Republican or a Democratic issue,” Evers said. “Voters from across the political spectrum are passing referenda all across this state. At the local level, kids are simply more important than political labels.”

In closing, Evers left school leaders with a number — \$38,000 — the average per-pupil amount of money recent presidents have spent annually on their own kids’ schools.

“We’re not asking for \$38,000 a kid — we’re asking for a reasonable, sustained commitment from the state.” ■



Moving & Learning

Dr. JoAnne Owens-Nauslar urges school board members to promote and encourage healthy, active learning

Keynote sponsor



“Physical movement and brain development go together. What makes us move also helps us think.”

Dr. JoAnne Owens-Nauslar (Dr. Jo) — a nationally renowned physical activity advocate and past president of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education and the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance — gave a high-energy address to school board members on the important relationship between movement and learning.

She cited research that found that half of students don’t learn in the traditional classroom setting. “Some of us can’t do sit-and-get,” she said.

As a student herself, Dr. Jo said she struggled to stay focused in the classroom and was one of those students who couldn’t sit still. The good news is that movement and learning go hand in hand. Dr. Jo talked about new research that has found that the pre-frontal cortex, the part of the brain associated with learning, is also tied to movement.

“Physical movement and brain development go together,” Dr. Jo said. “What makes us move also helps us think.”

With this information, Dr. Jo is a big proponent of using brain breaks and other activities in the classroom. She included high-energy breaks in her speech in which she had attendees stand up and talk with others with specific missions such as ‘turn to the person next to you and tell them you’re happy they’re here.’

“The brain research tells me that after 11 minutes of inactivity, the

brain begins to turn off,” she said.

Dr. Jo pointed to the high rates of childhood obesity and escalating health care costs calling it an “energy crisis.” She urged school board members to support active, healthy lifestyles in their schools, adding that many students need to move.

“Children will move with or without our permission,” she said. “So why wouldn’t we have something for them to put that energy into.”

It’s not just a crusade for physical fitness either, Dr. Jo said the research is clear that physical activity promotes learning.

“Healthy, active children stand a better chance for school success,” She told school board members. “It’s about eating, sleeping and moving. We are making it too complex, it’s really simple.” ■



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Pre-Convention Workshops

Four in-depth workshops were held on Jan. 17 — a day before the official start of the State Education Convention. Attendees learned about school finance, brain development, culturally relevant leadership, and school board governance.



Culturally Relevant Leadership: Strategies for Success for ALL Students

“Students must have opportunities to participate in learning experiences that connect them with larger contexts. They need to get outside of the school building and they need people outside the building to come in. We need to give them all kinds of experiences.”

Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings, Kellner Distinguished Professor in Urban Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison



Pediatric Brain Development: From Conception to Maturity

“Your brain changes its physical structure based on where you are and who you are with ... The kid at school, the kid at home and the kid with his friends can be different people ... That’s why we need to find a way to be involved in all the different patterns of our kids’ lives. They can be incredibly different kids.”

Dr. Brian Fidlin, clinical psychologist, Milwaukee Psychiatrists & Psychologists Chartered



Improving School Board Effectiveness: A Balanced Governance

“If you really want to stay around and make a difference on the board, you’re going to have to learn how to play with the team. Board governance is a team effort.”

“Do you use your voice as a school board member to tell and sell or do you use your voice to listen? We find that board members who listen rather than tell and sell are more effective.”

Dr. Thomas Alsbury, professor of educational leadership, Seattle Pacific University



School Finance Puzzle

“The state Constitution calls for the Legislature to establish school districts that are as equal as practicable. The school funding formula, although not perfect, strives to provide equal funding to all districts. To meet the criteria laid out in the state Constitution, Wisconsin has arrived at a formula that, at its most elemental level, says ‘revenue limits minus state general aid equals local property taxes.’ Given that revenue limits account for 85 to 95 percent of most school district operating funds, understanding the basics of this concept is important for school board members and administrators.”

Bob Avery, director of business services, Baraboo School District

2017 WASB

Delegate Assembly

Delegate Assembly approves resolutions on mental health supports, school start date, funding and more

The **2017 WASB Delegate Assembly** convened on Wednesday, Jan. 18 and approved 16 of the 17 resolutions recommended by the WASB Policy & Resolutions Committee. The delegates addressed school funding, mental health supports, school start date, weapons possession on school grounds, revenue limits, and among other issues, recovery school districts.

The positions adopted by the annual WASB Delegate Assemblies are added to the association's resolution book, which is used to set the WASB legislative priorities.

For the complete recap of the 2017 WASB Delegate Assembly, visit wasb.org. Select "Advocacy and Government Relations" and then "Delegate Assembly." ■



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Called to Lead

Superintendent of the Year **Damian LaCroix** remains optimistic during turbulent time for public education

In 2003, Damian LaCroix was hired as superintendent of the Howard-Suamico School District. He was the district's fifth superintendent in six years. The district had lost its last two referendums and was on the verge of losing a third. LaCroix remembers being at a school event when a parent turned to him and asked, "Did you even think about it before you said yes?"

Despite the odds stacked against him, LaCroix has thrived at the Howard-Suamico School District and was named the 2017 Superintendent of the Year by the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators. Thinking back on the interview process, he said that like a lot of school leaders, he was eager to help improve the district.

"When you're called to lead, you don't think about it, you respond," LaCroix said.

Today, the school district has a lot to be proud of including a high school that has been named one of the top in the country, partnerships with local

businesses and higher education, and, among others, a certified International Baccalaureate (IB) high school diploma program. The district has also worked hard to create a culture that provides students with a safe, inclusive learning environment.

"Our new vision for the district is that we want to create authentic, innovative, connected, inspired, and experiential learning for our students," LaCroix said.

To help promote this kind of learning, the school district has focused on the theme of "What's your story?" LaCroix shared an email he received from a student in which the student praised how his teacher had created a classroom focused on respect and trust where meaningful learning opportunities could take place every day.

The district has also worked to create a collaborative environment for all teachers, administrators and staff in the district. The simple slogan, 'Who do you work for?' helps keep the focus on the common goal of supporting all students in the district, no matter what school they attend.

LaCroix also stressed the importance of advocating for your schools in your own community. When he was invited to speak before Green Bay business leaders, he took an issue of *Money* magazine that ranked some of the best cities to live in the U.S. One common trait the top cities had were strong public education systems. He stressed to the business leaders that education is an investment, not



**"Let's tell our story.
Let's go on the offense,
and if that doesn't work,
find a different way to
tell your story."**

an expense.

"Let's tell our story," he said. "Let's go on the offense, and if that doesn't work, find a different way to tell your story."

LaCroix acknowledged that the education landscape has shifted and, as school leaders, it can be hard to know where to go. Schools face challenges with achievement gaps exacerbated by childhood poverty, family and mental health issues, a shortage of teaching talent, and the uncertainty of the next two to four years. Despite this unrest, LaCroix said it is also a time for hope.

"We see the freshness of 2017," LaCroix said. "With the hope of something new comes the hope of something great ... The collective leadership we have in public education can lead to collective change ... Paradoxically, there may be no better time to be a school leader in Wisconsin." ■

"Our new vision for the district is that we want to create authentic, innovative, connected, inspired, and experiential learning for our students."

Gratitude and Thanks

School Business Manager of the Year **Jill Bodwin**
honors those who've supported her



To be successful, you need a lot of support. So Jill Bodwin had a lot of people she wanted to thank as she accepted her award as 2017 Wisconsin School Business Manager of the Year from the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials.

"I've been very blessed in my life," said Bodwin, director of business services at the Pulaski Community School District. "I've been lucky to have worked with people who believed in my potential."

Bodwin began her career at the Mishicot School District and worked at the Denmark School District before coming to Pulaski last year.

In her nomination by Tony

Klaubauf, superintendent of the Denmark School District, Bodwin was praised for her work on the district's successful referendum and on the decision to sell the district's buses and contract with an outside company.

After thanking her parents and family, Bodwin recalled her colleagues at the Mishicot School District who encouraged her to get her business manager's license.

She also thanked the women of the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials, noting with laughter that they lovingly refer to themselves as "WOW."

She enjoyed her time in Denmark and said it took a very determined

effort by the retiring business manager in Pulaski to get Bodwin to take over her job last year.

Finally, Bodwin thanked all of her WASBO colleagues.

"All of you are an important part of who I am, and I encourage each and every one of you to be the story behind someone else's best story."

As part of the award, Bodwin received \$1,500 for professional development. She will also be able to present a \$1,500 scholarship to a graduating senior at Pulaski High School this spring. ■

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Setting Up Children for Success

Consortium delivers in-home support for three-year-olds

SESSION *A Collaborative Approach to Serving Our Youngest Population* | **Presenters**
Barron Area: Craig Broeren, superintendent; Amber Carlsrud, teacher; Katrina House, director of pupil services; JoAnn Lystig, teacher; Mariah Millerman, teacher

Research shows that the first four years are the most important developmental years in a person's life. Many of the issues and challenges that students bring to school begin well before kindergarten. For schools, the more investment put into its youngest learners, the better those students will be as they progress through school. For schools, this equates to lower special education rates and a reduction in its achievement gap. However, providing an effective early childhood program for three-year-olds in a small, rural school district like Barron, located in northwestern Wisconsin with an enrollment of about 1,400 students, can be challenging.

Craig Broeren, superintendent of the Barron Area School District, said the first idea the district had was to place three-year-olds in its four-year-old program. However, this idea was scrapped as it was determined it wouldn't be good for either the three-year-olds or the four-year-olds.

Instead, to really help students, the district determined that it needed to get into the homes of students and assist parents. To accomplish this, the Barron Area School District reached out to four area districts — Turtle Lake, Clayton,

Cumberland, and Prairie Farm — and formed a consortium to share staff.

"If we are going to address the need, we're going to have to do it together," Broeren said. "We can't support a full-time or even a part-time position by ourselves, but it starts to make sense with a consortium."

Before the consortium started, Broeren had to convince his school board. Even with the consortium model, the district was going to be spending more resources on supporting three-year-olds in the district.

"The thought is that early intervention specific to their needs is going to provide you more bang for your buck," Broeren said. "Over time, this will provide more benefits to our students."

Once the consortium was established and had a mission and vision developed, staff began going out into parents' homes. Some cases can be very challenging, but staff focuses on helping and supporting parents.

"Some parents had a bad experience at school," said Amber Carlsrud, early childhood teacher. "Our job is to be there for them, not to tell them what to do."

"We're trying to provide parents with the strategies when we're not there," said Mariah Millerman, early



"Our job is to be there for [parents], not to tell them what to do."

— Amber Carlsrud,
early childhood teacher

education teacher. "So when their children come into school, they're ready."

Early in the process, parents are asked what they think staff need to focus on and from there a plan is developed. Katarina House, director of pupil services, said this parent-led approach is crucial to getting the parent to buy-in. "When we get to setting up an IEP (individualized education program) the parent has been part of it from the beginning."

Although the consortium isn't in full implementation, the member districts have begun to see the impact of this work. One student who was supported through the consortium as a three-year-old was out of special education by the end of Pre-K.

"How long would she have been in special education if she had started in the classroom?" asked Carlsrud. "How long would we have been paying for those special education services?" ■

Helping Minority Students Succeed

Verona program gives incentives to minority support staff and students who become educators

SESSION *Improving Teacher Diversity Through Grow-Your-Own Programs*

Presenters Verona Area: Jason Olson, director of human resources; Dennis Beres, board president; Frank Rodriguez, school/parent liaison; Laurie Burgos, director of bilingual programs and instructional equity

In some ways, the Verona Area School District has become a tale of two school districts.

The district — located just outside Madison — was once primarily a white affluent suburban district. As less affluent parts of the district began to grow, student enrollment increased and the district began to serve more black and Hispanic students, many from low-income households.

“We have a real mixture of very different characteristics of people,” Verona School Board President Dennis Beres said.

Although the district’s mission statement included a commitment to help every student succeed, many of the minority students were not succeeding. So the district reallocated resources and began to change its approach.

“We were done admiring the problem,” said Jason Olson, the district’s director of human resources. “We realized that if what you are doing is not working, why not try something else.”

A key strategy was to add staff positions to help the district better connect with its minority student population. Frank Rodriguez is the school/parent liaison.

“I am the bridge. I help connect families to the district,” Rodriguez said.

“We have a lot of families who feel like they are not connected to the district.”

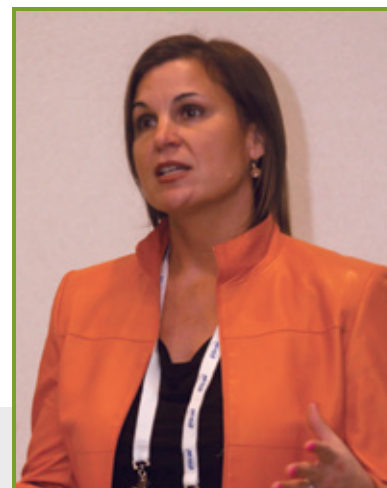
He meets with families and helps them navigate paperwork and services.

But even more important was to change the face of the district teaching staff, which was still primarily white and female. When efforts to recruit minority candidates from outside the district failed, the district decided to grow from within. Officials realized they already had many minority staff members who lived in the community.

“You can find a lot more treasure, passion and success by looking at home,” said Laurie Burgos, director of the district’s bilingual programs and instructional equity, adding that minority students tell her frequently that they want to see teachers who look like them because they can relate better to them.

And that means they are more likely to succeed.

So the district actively began recruiting its high school students and support staff to go into teaching by enrolling in a Grow Your Own partnership program with Edgewood College. Support staff enrolled in the two-year program continue to receive full pay and benefits while they are student teaching. High school students in the four-year program have



“You can find a lot more treasure, passion and success by looking at home.”

— Laurie Burgos, director of bilingual programs and instructional equity

their tuition reduced and student loans forgiven if they complete the program and agree to take a job with Verona upon graduation.

The first class in the two-year program for support staff graduated in 2016 and three of the four candidates were hired by the district. The first class of high school students are now sophomores at Edgewood.

Olson said the district also completely revamped its interview questions for teacher candidates to focus less on academic programs and more on “soft” interpersonal relationship skills like resolving conflict. In addition, they changed the composition of teacher interview teams to make them as diverse as possible.

The district’s efforts have paid off. In 2014, 4 percent of the teaching staff was racially/ethnically diverse. In 2015, it was 8 percent and this school year the percentage has risen to 11.5 percent. ■

Partnerships and Persistence

Public education helped Matt Ward become the first diagnosed autistic student to graduate from UW-Madison

SESSION *The First Autistic UW Madison Graduate — How Public Education Made His Success Story Possible* | **Presenters** Matt Ward, UW-Madison graduate; Nancy Alar, parent

Matt Ward's successful graduation from UW-Madison in 2005 as its first autistic alumnus has a solid foundation in Wisconsin's public schools. But without the critical partnerships his mother Nancy Alar forged, along with her support, encouragement and persistence, Matt's future might have been dramatically different.

Ward is a math whiz. He took algebra and calculus in grade school. He creates complex origami using as many as 60 pieces of paper. In his freshman year of high school, he placed seventh in Wisconsin on a national math test. "I'm not sure how, but being autistic has made it really easy for me to learn math," he said.

"A lot of the kids in my classes thought I was stupid because I looked and acted kind of weird. I didn't know the social rules and sometimes did strange things or made strange noises," Ward explained.

Alar's impassioned pleas for her son started at 18 months, when a private, religious day care notified Matt's parents that he would have to withdraw from the program due to his "oddities."

In retrospect, Alar said being removed from the private program was Matt's "salvation." When he started in the Monona Grove School

District, "Graduating from the UW was the furthest thing from our minds," she said.

"Everything Monona Grove did for Matt was customized," she said. "I formed a partnership with the special education director and provided training for his staff, so we could all learn together on how to do this autism thing. That proved very beneficial."

Alar kept meticulous academic and behavioral records each year and passed the chronicles of Matt's education onto his new teachers annually. "The fact that the staff we worked with had information about Matt all along, meant they were always reassuring and would say, 'No, everything is going to be OK.' That the public schools were willing to do that for us as a family was wonderful. When I was at my lowest point, they would sometimes rescue me."

Bullying was one issue that Ward faced in high school. "I think I was a target because I was so different and didn't have any friends," he said. "I even think some of the bullies would follow me around — like stalked me — to see if they could get me in trouble," he said.

Alar added, "It's so important to suppress bullying — to have other people understand how awful it feels to be bullied."



"[When Matt started in the Monona Grove School District] graduating from the UW was the furthest thing from our minds."

— Nancy Alar,
Matt Ward's mother

Ward's life took an important turn with the high score on the national math test. He joined the school math team, took Advanced Placement math classes, experienced success and was embraced by his teammates who overlooked his "oddities." By the end of high school he had gained independence, which led to part-time jobs.

He continued to have a support team (mom, disability coordinator, county case manager, paid aide and others) at Madison College and UW-Madison.

Today, Ward works at the Madison Central Public Library and has an art studio where he creates origami.

"Being autistic is part of who I am," he said. "Sometimes I have problems, but I am satisfied with my life. I enjoy my jobs and hobbies and am proud of my accomplishments. I really like living in my own apartment. Being able to read speeches like this makes me feel like I finally have a voice of my own." ■

Redoing a Referendum to Succeed

Durand-Arkansaw School District refocuses communication efforts to pass referendum

SESSION *Going to Referendum? What We Learned the Second Time*

Presenters Durand-Arkansaw: Greg Doverspike, superintendent; SDS Architects, Inc.: Laura Eysnogle, interior designer; Tom Twohig, principal architect; Market & Johnson, Inc.: Jason Plante, vice president; Baird Public Finance: Lisa Voisin, director

Unable to financially support three buildings, officials in the small Durand-Arkansaw School District knew they had to do something. And after their first attempt — a \$19 million building plan in two questions — was defeated by voters, they knew they had to do something else.

So they did. A second, smaller building plan at \$13.48 million with a single question was approved by voters a year later.

“There’s no real blueprint for how to pass a referendum,” Durand-Arkansaw District Administrator Greg Doverspike said. “Every district is different and you have to find what applies to your district.”

The process started in 2013 when the school board began thinking about commissioning a facility study to review the district’s building needs. The district, which was the result of a consolidation in the 1990s, had two elementary schools and a combined middle school/high school building.

The study was finished in 2014 and results sent to an ad hoc community committee made up of 20 people from “all walks of life.” The committee considered options produced from the study by outside experts and rated them according to priorities set by the committee.

The group developed the first building plan, which included \$17.5 million to remodel the middle school/high school building and maintain both elementary schools plus another \$1.5 million for improvements to district athletic fields.

Because they were so confident of a victory, a yes committee was never created. The district had a series of four community hearings with presentations about the plan and building tours. Each session lasted three hours and only drew a handful of people. The referendum failed.

The second time around, school officials reduced the size of the building plan by permanently closing one of the elementary schools and dropping improvements to the athletic fields.

They also made major changes to their communication strategy. Instead of holding community hearings, district representatives spoke to civic groups.

They formed a yes committee and also got help from retired staff members and recent high school graduates who used social media.

Instead of presenting all the information all at once, they decided to present smaller chunks of information under a single theme on a weekly basis. A flier with the week’s theme



“Every district is different and you have to find what applies to your district.”

— Greg Doverspike,
Durand-Arkansaw District
Administrator

went home in students’ backpacks and Doverspike wrote a weekly article for the local newspaper on the same theme. The fliers were placed at local gathering places around the community and sent to rural post office boxes.

Another key to the referendum’s success was the decision to communicate clearly what would happen if the referendum did not pass. The board voted on a list of cuts, which included cutting middle school sports, and made it clear that the elementary school would be closed even if the vote failed.

Lisa Voisin, a director with Baird Public Finance, helped the district with the referendum. She said board members and other school officials needed to understand the tax impact of the referendum, including the timing and the fact that the debt levy is separate from the operations levy. Even if state aid changes, a district going to referendum should stick with a conservative and consistent number to avoid voter confusion, she said. ■

Changing the Conversation About Student Mental Health

Developing a multi-tiered approach that addresses the “whole needs” of students

SESSION Youth Mental Health Training Needs and Solutions | **Presenters** Green Schools Network: Erin Green, treasurer; DPI Student Services/Prevention and Wellness: Christie Gause-Bemis, consultant; Waupaca: Gregory Nyen, superintendent

Mental health issues, like anxiety and mood disorders, present big barriers to student learning. And the first step towards breaking down those barriers is to change the way we talk about them.

That was the recommendation of Greg Nyen, superintendent of the Waupaca School District, one of a trio of speakers who discussed the

need for new ways to help students with mental health issues.

“There’s a stigma around the words ‘mental health’ that comes from the words we use,” Nyen said. “We don’t need our students to feel ashamed.”

Instead of ‘mental health,’ he suggested schools should talk about ‘brain health,’ a term that carries a less negative connotation and could



Statistics show that 20 percent of youth ages 13-18 are living with a mental health issue.

make it easier for students to seek help when they need it.

Statistics show that 20 percent of youth ages 13-18 are living with a mental health issue, with over-third

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in danger of dropping out of school. Nyen, who worked as a psychologist before going into education administration, suggested that schools should use a multi-tiered system of support for students with mental health issues rather than focus on a more traditional response-intervention method.

The multi-tiered approach addresses the “whole needs” of the child, academic and behavioral. Instead of automatically responding with discipline to a child swearing in class, a teacher can learn to recognize the trigger behind the behavior. A child who can’t read would rather act out and get thrown out of class before admitting the real problem — his lack of literacy skills, Nyen said.

Erin Green, a retired business official from the Greendale School District, discussed the effect of trauma on students’ mental health. More and more students today are exposed to daily trauma such as physical, mental or emotional abuse by a parent or bullying by peers. The trauma physically affects the students’ brains,

causing anxiety, depression, eating disorders and other symptoms and interferes with learning.

Helping students with mental health issues is expensive and many school districts have found it increasingly difficult to do so given budget constraints.

In the Stevens Point Area Public School District, where Nyen served as director of student services, there was staff training to help teachers learn to focus less on the behavior of students and more on the mental health needs triggering the behavior. School counselors and pupil service staff provide direct services although positions are often reduced during budget cuts.

A teacher was placed at a day treatment center so a student with severe issues could receive medical attention and academic instruction in the same facility. The district also set up satellite clinics at all schools so students could receive services there. Additionally, there was a cost-sharing arrangement with a local mental health provider.

Green shared the Greendale model where the district partnered with Aurora Health Care to provide mental health services for students and staff through an extended Employee Assistance Program. The district pays for up to six sessions per issue per year for a student or family member. Aurora also provides training for staff on a range of issues.

Because physical and mental health are linked, Greendale has also arranged with Aurora to provide an on-site clinic for student and staff medical needs. The clinic is staffed by a nurse practitioner and open three days a week.

Christie Gause-Bemis, from the Department of Public Instruction’s Student Services/Prevention and Wellness team, shared the many resources available to districts through the department. ■

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Advocacy is All About Relationships

Howard-Suamico school board members discuss strategies to develop relationships with legislators

SESSION *The Art of Advocacy from a School Board Perspective*

Presenters Howard-Suamico School District: Mark Ashley, board president; Lisa Botsford, board member; Teresa Ford, board member; Laura Barnard, board member

The Howard-Suamico School Board envisions its legislative advocacy as a triangle — the WASB, their board of education and the school district's legislators.

"All are great resources," school board member Lisa Botsford said. "It's important to build on all of these relationships. The ultimate goal is that you have a relationship with your legislators, that you can openly talk to them and be a resource for them. The whole theme for this topic is building relationships."

Botsford cautioned, "You don't want to be the type of person who only comes to your legislator when you have a problem. You need to build a relationship before there's a problem."

Board president Mark Ashley also stressed that, "A successful relationship is a balance of sharing and listening. It's not rocket science. You want to be both a resource and a sounding board for legislators."

District officials and board members have also built key relationships with legislative staff. Joint Finance Committee co-chair Rep. John Nygren (R-Marinette) — who has parts of eight school districts in his legislative district — is one of Howard-Suamico's legislators.

Nygren's staffer Caroline Krause joined the district presenters at the convention offering, "(Staff) make a point to bring issues to our legislator's

attention," after contact with constituents. "If I have a meeting with people, I am absolutely going to talk about it with my boss." For board members, Krause said, "Communication is the most critical component of building a relationship with legislators. You guys are the experts. We rely on you for information."

Ashley impressed upon attendees, "Develop a relationship with staff like you would with a legislator. When you meet with a staffer, you're talking to someone who is going to have input on the decisions."

There are various methods to communicate with legislators, such as — inviting them to school events, sending them your district newsletter, writing letters, forwarding school board-passed resolutions on pertinent issues, and holding regular face-to-face meetings and periodic phone calls to touch base.

Audience members bemoaned efforts to talk with legislators who opposed many of the issues board members advocated for. Board member Teresa Ford admitted, "You have to be persistent. There will be times you won't convince them, but it's important that they understand what's going to happen in their district's schools."

"Try to find common ground. Is there a neutral third party who can help?" Ford said, suggesting a local business person who is also a school

"You have to be persistent. There will be times you won't convince them ..."

— Teresa Ford, Howard-Suamico board member

advocate. Others suggested the student perspective is unique and of interest to legislators as is the perspective of local realtors.

Howard-Suamico presenters pointed to their successful efforts to raise the low-revenue ceiling a couple of years ago. Howard-Suamico is the second lowest per-pupil spending district in the state. The district's advocates were focused, using a single piece of paper to explain the issue, impact to the district, and suggested legislative remedy.

The Howard-Suamico team urged attendees to build communication channels and keep them open, be focused in your advocacy, and always remember to thank legislators — publicly if practicable. Keep it simple, tell a story about children or a program and its success, be reasonable in your request.

"Each district has their own story to tell," Ford said. "If you don't tell the story of your district, who's going to?" ■



From Passive to Active Learning

Personalized learning helps students develop skills to be life-long learners

SESSION *Personalized Learning: Ideas + Research + Application = Results*

Presenters CESA 1 Institute for Personalized Learning: Ryan Krohn, director; UW-Madison: Richard Halverson, Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis professor; Elmbrook: Dana Monogue, assistant superintendent for teaching and learning

What do students need to be active members of today's society?" asked Ryan Krohn, director of the CESA 1 Institute for Personalized Learning. Attendees responded that students need to know how to think, problem solve, be creative, communicate, and access and apply quality information in their learning.

These are skills that personalized learning systems help develop and promote in students. Personalized learning empowers students to co-design their learning and develop skills to be life-long learners.

Although it varies in each school district, in a personalized learning system, a student's "learner profile" is developed. This identifies a student's strengths and weaknesses. Using the learner profile, students and teachers develop customized learning paths used by students to reach their individual learning goals. Ultimately, in personalized learning, there should be a shift in the role of the learner from passive to active.

"One of the things we're really grounded in is seeing students as a resource," Krohn said. "How do we design a classroom that allows the student to be a co-designer of their classroom experience?"

Richard Halverson, a professor in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at UW-Madison, has been studying personalized learning in

Wisconsin school districts and shared findings from his research.

Halverson emphasized the importance of educators turning learning over to students. This doesn't have to be complex, it can be as simple as helping the student find the space or pace that best suits their learning.

Technology also plays a big role. In addition to laptops or tablet computers, Halverson pointed to software like Google Classroom, an online tool that helps teachers track individual student progress and communicate with them.

Halverson also found that schools invested in personalized learning make a conscious effort to confer with students — to build in time each day to check in with each student. This step is about building a relationship with all students and can be key to drawing failing students back into their learning.

Dana Monogue, assistant superintendent for teaching and learning in the Elmbrook School District, shared her district's experience in establishing a personalized learning system. Monogue said the work started about four years ago when the district began an honest conversation about how they were serving their students.

"We found that we were doing a good job of teaching to the middle," Monogue said. "We weren't serving the needs of our lowest-performing



Richard Halverson,
UW-Madison

Schools invested in personalized learning make a conscious effort to confer daily with students.

students and our most gifted students weren't growing at an acceptable rate."

The district started small — adopting a workshop-style reading and writing approach in its elementary schools and moving from rows of desks in its classrooms to more flexible learning spaces.

Additionally, the district invited any interested teachers to form a small cohort to receive professional development and establish personalized learning models in their classrooms. Today, the cohort model has been replicated several times over and now all 500 of the district's teachers have a personalized learning action plan supported by their principals.

Monogue reported that since the district adopted a personalized learning approach, it has seen improvements in its report card data.

"Not only are we closing gaps, but we're raising achievement," Monogue said. "All of our schools rated either proficient or advanced on the last report card. That was not the case four years ago." ■

A Coordinated Effort to Nurture the Whole Child

Successful student health strategies take a coordinated effort by the whole school and the whole community

SESSION *Utilizing Coordinated School Health Policy Strategies to Promote Student Achievement*

Presenters DPI: Eileen Hare, education consultant; Children's Hospital of Wisconsin: Bridget Clementi, vice president of community health; Katie Harrigan, director of community education and outreach

Keeping students healthy and engaged in order to succeed academically is a constant challenge for schools everywhere. And in order to be effective, strategies can't go half way. There has to be a coordinated effort by the whole school and the whole community to nurture the whole child.

That was the message that Eileen Hare, a physical education and activity consultant with the Department of Public Instruction, and Katie Harrigan, director of community education and outreach at the Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, communicated to school leaders.

Many children are coming to class with "health disparities," ranging from drug use and mental health issues to not enough sleep or inadequate nutrition, even in suburban, affluent districts, Hare noted. Because there is a clear research link between health disparities and lack of achievement, districts are trying to address the issue with a variety of solutions but too often the solutions are isolated from each other and end up being ineffective.

"We have all these different things in our building but they're not very coordinated," Hare said. "How can we combine our efforts?"

The answer is to address the needs of the total child. The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model was developed by the ASCD

(formerly known as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) and is an expansion and update of the Coordinated School Health Approach.

The model makes the child the focal point and is based on five tenets for academic success: the child should be healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged. To accomplish that goal, the model suggests a coordinated effort by the entire school with support from the outside community.

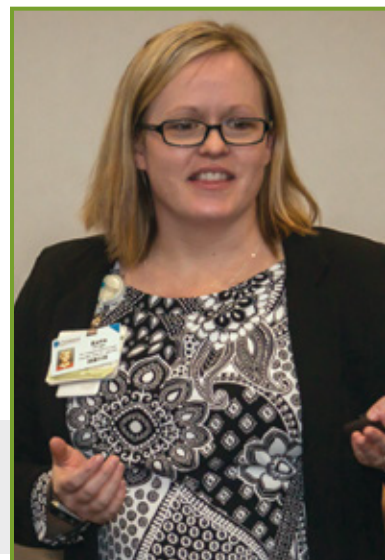
"It's not another program or initiative. It's a framework for school health," Hare said. "It will look different in every district. It will look different in every school environment in a district."

Harrigan discussed the ways the Children's Hospital works as a community partner with schools to support this model. It is a natural extension of the hospital's mission.

"Our vision is to have Wisconsin kids be the healthiest kids in the nation," she said.

The Children's Hospital has partnered with 10 schools in the Milwaukee Public School District that draw from three neighborhoods on Milwaukee's north side. Each school has a school nurse to provide basic medical care for students.

In addition, the partnership has created two separate positions that connect the schools and the



"Our vision is to have Wisconsin kids be the healthiest kids in the nation."

— Katie Harrigan, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin

community. Community health workers or navigators go into the neighborhoods where students live and help residents deal with all sorts of basic issues such as finding a job or dealing with a utility shut-off.

Each school also has a designated school health coordinator to facilitate wellness efforts in the building, identify needs specific to the site, and work with staff to develop an action plan to meet those needs. The coordinator could be a parent or a teacher, Harrigan said.

In surveys of principals and others involved in the effort, there seems to be strong support for the initiative and an agreement on the mission and goals.

Although it is still early, "we feel like we are moving in the right direction," Harrigan said.

Because school staff changes, it is important to "embed" the initiative and make it part of the school culture to be sustained over time, she added. ■

Breaking Down the Social and Emotional Gap

Developing soft skills are crucial to sparking genuine learning

SESSION *Narrowing and Closing the Achievement Gap Must Begin with Addressing the Social and Emotional Gap* | **Presenter** UW-Milwaukee: Gary Williams, director of the Institute for Intercultural Research (and president of the Brown Deer School Board)

When talking about closing the achievement gap, people often point to outside factors, such as poverty, that contribute to the gap. However, Dr. Gary Williams, director of the Institute for Intercultural Research at UW-Milwaukee and president of the Brown Deer School Board, said we need to spend more time and focus on what we can do in the classroom to change students' lives.

"Research shows us that effective teaching can overcome the effects of poverty," Williams said.

To Williams, effective teaching begins with building relationships with students. In fact, Williams contends that teachers must close the social and emotional gaps in their classrooms before they can engage and teach students. And, unlike the achievement gap, which is a gap that exists between students, the social and emotional gap is something that exists between students and teachers. To be effective, Williams said, teachers must have genuine dialogue between themselves and their students.

Williams recalled one story in which an elementary school teacher had a student who was disengaged and disrupting the classroom. The teacher sat down with the student and asked him about his interests. The student said he liked snakes. That weekend, the teacher went out

and checked out a pile of books from the library on snakes and handed them to the student the following Monday. The student was interested in the books but kept coming up to the teacher to ask what a certain caption or sentence said and the teacher quickly understood why the student was disengaged — he couldn't read.

Using only books on snakes, the teacher helped the student catch up to his classmates. The student learned how to read two grade levels in one school year.

"That was a teacher who was having a dialogue and discussion with a student and she felt competent enough to do something about it," Williams said. "The role of our teachers is immeasurable."

In this work, the role of soft skills like resiliency, grit, perseverance, civility, grace, making good decisions, and building nurturing relationships are crucial in establishing a classroom where students feel safe and can learn.

"Sometimes these skills are almost viewed as an afterthought," Williams said. "But you have to begin with building these skills before you can help students learn."

Although students come to the classroom at different levels regarding soft skills, Williams said most students have a basic understanding of right and wrong and



**"Research shows us
that effective teaching
can overcome the
effects of poverty."**

— Gary Williams,
UW-Milwaukee

how to play and work with others.

"Maybe they're not fully developed, which is why the role of the teacher is important to develop some of those social-emotional skills," Williams said. "If a student is going to be successful in the classroom and later in life, they need these skills."

Part of this approach is also changing how teachers view students. Williams said we need to look at all of our students and see what they bring to the classroom. For instance, when a student is disruptive or over-energetic in the classroom, it's easy to say that student is unmotivated. In that situation, Williams said, the teacher needs to reach out to the student.

"Get to know that student," Williams said. "Get to know what motivates them and use that to drive learning and engagement."

As to how to promote this approach in schools, Williams emphasized professional development opportunities for teachers. He added that curriculum and resources are available from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) at casel.org. ■

Offering Help and Hope

CESA 6 H.O.P.E. Center helps districts across the state support low-income families and students

SESSION *High Expectations and Opportunities for Poverty in Education*

Presenters CESA 6 HOPE Center: Tere Masiarchin, coordinator; Jackie Schoening, coordinator



Responding to calls from districts concerned about how to help their students and families living in poverty, staff at CESA 6 decided to offer hope. Literally.

The High Expectations and Opportunities for Poverty in Education (H.O.P.E.) Center is now open at CESA 6 to help districts across the state respond to and support the growing number of families and students who live in poverty. The center's coordinators, Jackie Schoening and Tere Masiarchin, discussed the issue of poverty and the ways they can help schools cope.

According to Schoening, statistics show that one in five children in the U.S. live in poverty. Poverty levels are defined by the federal government and change each year. For a family of four, the 2016 poverty level is having an

annual income at or below \$24,036.

Poverty frequently leads to low achievement in school. Because they don't have the same resources as their more affluent peers, children in poverty start school with fewer verbal skills.

"They start school behind already," Schoening said.

Dropout rates are higher because students may have to go to work or provide child care for their siblings.

Poverty can be linked to other issues as well. Schoening noted that in the geographic area served by CESA 6, the youth suicide rate is more than double the state rate, which is already high. Suicide is now the number two cause of death among children, behind accidents.

Schoening said that they aren't sure why the youth suicide rate is so high in the CESA 6 area. But she recounted

a tragic story of a teen from an immigrant family with six children. The parents had lost their jobs. The teen killed himself by stepping in front of a train, leaving a note explaining that he wanted to make more money available to provide for his siblings.

"Kids listen to what we talk about. He knew they didn't have money," she said.

In 2014, as poverty rates began to rise and they were starting to hear more districts identify poverty as an issue, CESA 6 decided to find some way to help. Schoening and Masiarchin went through the Total Trainers program developed by Eric Jensen, the author of "Teaching with Poverty in Mind" and "Poor Students, Richer Teaching."

Jensen said the stresses caused by poverty mean the brains of students in poverty are different than their peers. She offered strategies for engaging students and helping them achieve.

A key to helping families in poverty is understanding what their life is like. Schoening and Masiarchin recommended exercises such as the online simulation at playspent.org or a half-day workshop simulation offered by the University of Wisconsin-Extension.

The H.O.P.E. Center offers staff development, online book studies, reviews of district services to identify gaps and develop an improvement plan, coaching, and suggestions for ways to engage families. By joining the center, districts can also take part in a quarterly review where they can compare efforts with other districts.

For more information about the H.O.P.E. Center, visit cesa6.org. ■

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“Programs are Going to Increase”

School finance experts warn school leaders about the oncoming increase of vouchers and independent charters

SESSION *Impact of Vouchers and Charters on Wisconsin Public Schools*

Presenters DPI School Financial Services: Bob Soldner, director; Green Bay Area: Andrew Sarnow, business manager; Oshkosh Area: Susan Schnorr, business manager



Bob Soldner, DPI

The numbers aren't particularly startling, but they are telling. While K-12 funding is \$4.6 billion of the state's general fund — almost one-third of general tax spending — the voucher/independent charter programs cost \$142.2 million, just 2 percent of the state's general taxes. While 2 percent may not sound like a lot, Bob Soldner, director of financial services for the Department of Public Instruction, explained it is still a big dollar amount and is expected to grow.

“I do think the programs are going to continue to increase,” Soldner continued. “That’s the history of the Milwaukee voucher program. The Legislature changes the rules, historically, to allow a bigger pool of children and families to be eligible.”

In addition to the independent charter school program, there are currently four separate voucher programs — a statewide program, two programs specifically for the Milwaukee and Racine school districts, and a special needs scholarship program. “Everybody gets a little of their aid reduced,” due to a first draw of \$62.2 million in general aids for the independent charter school program, explained Soldner. “But you can levy for the loss of that aid.”

The statewide voucher program is \$16.7 million and affects 182 districts and the special needs scholarships — in its first year — cost \$2.4 million, affecting 22 districts. “It’s a radical change in how we fund schools. It’s not a big number right now,” Soldner said. “But history tells me it will continue to grow.”

Prior to a recent legislative change that shifted voucher funding to individual district's general aids, the state funded vouchers entirely from the state's general fund (mostly sales, income and excise taxes). Vouchers competed for general tax dollars like any other state program, such as transportation. “But now, the state has said, ‘We’re going to take away your state aid and if you want to stay whole, you have to raise local taxes,’” Soldner said. “They shifted the cost from the state’s treasury to your local taxes. It’s no more complicated than that. Whatever the state takes out of your general aids, you will get to levy that loss every year,” Soldner said.

As a result, the Green Bay Area

Public School District’s mill rate has increased 17 cents with an annual fiscal impact of almost \$1.2 million due to vouchers, said Andy Sarnow, Green Bay business manager.

“You can’t say your budget’s being hurt by this because it’s not,” Soldner said. “But you have to raise property taxes. That’s a different kind of hurt. But it has zero impact on your operating budget.”

Soldner and Sarnow cautioned school leaders to be thoughtful before deciding not to levy taxes for the lost aid as the implications could be consequential and long term. “If you choose (to not levy for lost aid), your following year’s revenue limit will be reduced dollar-for-dollar,” Soldner said. ■

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Free Speech is Changing

John Tinker discusses his landmark Supreme Court case and First Amendment rights in today's schools

SESSION Is Free Speech Free in 2017? From Tinker to the Internet

Presenters Salem: Steve Brown, board member (also an assistant professor of Education Leadership and Policy at UW-Oshkosh); John Tinker, plaintiff in *Tinker v. Des Moines*



How far do the arms of free speech and public opinion reach? If there is a line, where is it drawn? John Tinker, renowned civil rights activist, led a session on modern First Amendment rights.

"I decided at a young age to move against the system," said Tinker.

His history with civil activism began in 1965 while peacefully protesting and mourning the Vietnam War by wearing a black arm band along with his sister, Mary Beth Tinker, and other participants.

"We were simply expressing an idea," said Tinker. "We were mourning the deaths of both sides of the war and supporting Robert Kennedy's call for truce. It was a horrific thing to us. We felt the pain and suffering."

The school district viewed this act

of defiance as a disruption. Five students, including John and Mary Beth Tinker, were suspended. When he returned to school after his suspension, John Tinker protested by switching from a black armband to all black clothing. "You cannot kill an idea," Tinker expressed.

Contrary to the expectations of the school district, the Tinker family fought back, which led to the widely recognized U.S. Supreme Court case of 1969, *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District*.

"The school district went into this case thinking they would win, hands down," said Steve Brown, assistant professor of Education Leadership and Policy at UW-Oshkosh and a Salem school board member.

The Supreme Court ruled the

school district was wrong for their unconstitutional punishment of suspension, which was in violation of the students' First Amendment rights.

Tinker's experience of fighting for free speech in 1965 was in a physical sense — he made a public protest in a physical, public society. Advancements in technology, however, have brought on a more controversial concept when relating to free speech: the Internet. Tinker describes this phenomenon as, "an undecided area of law."

The Internet, being as contemporary and ambiguous as it is, has led to widespread debates, ironically on the Internet. With a few clicks, statements reaching potentially anyone around the globe can be made, all within the comfort of an individual's home. In more recent legal dilemmas, the Supreme Court has refused to hear cases of students disciplined for troubling actions outside of school, particularly on social media.

The general standard is this: If something causes a disruption, the school has the right to intervene, which is agreed upon by the majority of the population. But disagreements come from within that statement. What is considered a disruption? To what extent can the school intervene? When do these limitations violate the constitutional rights of students? When are these rights forfeited?

"I don't have a clear idea of where this is going to go," Tinker divulged. "Things have been shaken, but sometimes that's a good thing. I am not going into this new future with fear." ■

Story written by: Freedom Gobel, student, Ronald Wilson Reagan College Preparatory High School, Milwaukee Public Schools

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Hands-on Learning

The makerspace movement promotes hands-on learning for students of all ages

SESSION *Makerspaces, Fab Labs, Innovation and Project-Based Learning*

Presenter Racine Unified: Terri Tessmann, supervisor of STEAM and personalized learning

In the late 1990s, the makerspace movement began when Mel King, a professor at MIT, trained homeless youth in the city to fix computers. From that project, the South End Technology Center in Boston was born — a two-block-long building where people from the community can do anything from learn how to weld, build a computer, or make crafts.

Terri Tessmann, supervisor of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) and personalized learning at the Racine Unified School District, said makerspaces have evolved and can now be found in libraries, community centers and schools across the country. Makerspaces come in all different forms and sizes. They can range from the large South End Technology Center to a table in the back of a classroom with old computer parts or appliances for students to take apart and build.

“A makerspace can be just about anything you want it to be,” Tessmann said. “It’s just a creative space.”

It’s more about the idea and philosophy behind the movement than it is a physical space. It’s about getting students — both boys and girls — engaged and interested in hands-on, technical learning.

Tessmann described one project in which she challenged students to charge a cell phone by using a bicycle. First, she asked teachers to donate old bicycles. In response, she received three dozen bikes. Students designed systems that generated electrical power from the wheels,

others tried developing a system mounted on the handlebars that used solar power. The project required students to learn about circuits and voltage.

“Talk about problem-solving; they never would have done that out of a book,” Tessmann said.

Many of these projects develop skills such as collaboration, critical thinking and other soft skills that businesses so often say students today are lacking.

Tessmann said this kind of learning also exposes students to all sorts of different experiences, roles, and knowledge. So often, students don’t know what might interest them.

“We never ask them about what they’re curious in,” Tessmann said. “You also help kids find skills they didn’t know that they have. This gives them a chance to excel and that is the biggest thing you can do for your students.”

Tessmann remembers one activity in which she gave second-grade students a battery, a light and wires and challenged them to figure out how to get the light to turn on. At one table sat a boy and girl and the boy was determined to figure out how to get his light turned on first. But the girl beat him to it.



“A makerspace can be just about anything you want it to be. It’s just a creative space.”

— Terri Tessmann,
Racine Unified School District

“The boy said, ‘I never knew girls could,’” Tessmann said. “And the girl said, ‘I never knew I could.’”

Tessmann recommended a number of easy makerspace projects such as a Makey Makey — a kit that allows students to turn everyday objects into touchpads. One popular Makey Makey project is to turn a banana into a musical instrument. She also mentioned Raspberry Pi, a hands-on, credit-card-sized computer that students can build off of and modify — learning about circuits, computer hardware, and coding along the way. Tessmann also recommended the Engineering is Elementary curriculum for elementary school teachers. In any makerspace activity, Tessmann said the key is to get students to use their hands to build and create. ■

MAKERSPACE IDEAS AND RESOURCES

Makey Makey | makeymakey.com

Raspberry Pi | raspberrypi.org

Engineering is Elementary | eie.org

Or contact Terri Tessmann at terri.tessmann@rusd.org

Accomplishments | RECOGNITION

The annual State Education Convention provides an opportunity to recognize some of the educators, administrators, and school board members that make public education great in Wisconsin. **Join us in honoring this year's award winners.**

20-Year Service Award

Robert Van Den Elzen, school board member for the Hortonville Area School District was congratulated by WASB Executive Director John Ashley for serving 20 years on the school board.

Other 20-year service award winners are: Bill Barhyte, Trevor-Wilmot Consolidated Graded; Diane Barkmeier, Appleton Area; Frances Bohon, Marshfield; Steve Coble, Peshtigo; Ronald Counter, Rhinelander; Gary DeVries, Randolph; Nancy Dieck, Wonewoc-Union Center; Krystal Ferg, Rosholt; David Gomm, Shiocton; Cheryl Hancock, Holmen; Kirk Holliday, De Soto Area; Marcie Hollmann, Lake Geneva J1; Brian Kammers, Pewaukee; Daniel Kempen, Bruce; Marleen Knutson, Auburdale; Roger Manke, Valders Area; Rick Opelt, Neilsville; Helen Palmquist, Prentice; Richard Pease, Adams-Friendship Area; Kent Rice, Arrowhead UHS; Larry Samet, Sheboygan Area; Patrick Sherman, Lake Geneva-Genoa City UHS; Connie Troyanek, La Crosse; and William Wipperfurth, Lodi.



30-Year Service Award

Three members of the WASB board of directors were recognized for serving 30 years on their school boards: **Wanda Owens**, Barneveld; **Nancy Thompson**, Waterloo; and **Steve Klessig**, Brillion.

Other 30-year service award recipients are: James Congdon, Mayville; Max Ericson, Northwood; Sharon Fenlon, Appleton Area; Sue Haase, Berlin Area; Debbie Ince-Peterson, Unity; and Steven Pate, Portage.





■ Teachers of the Year

Sarah Breckley, a teacher at Reedsburg Area High School in the Reedsburg School District, was honored by State Superintendent Tony Evers and Sen. Herb Kohl as high school teacher of the year.

Other teachers of the year include: Pamela Gresser, Rothschild Elementary School, D.C. Everest Area School District (elementary school teacher of the year); Chris Gleason, Patrick Marsh Middle School, Sun Prairie Area School District (middle school teacher of the year); and Barbara VanDoorn, Lake Holcombe School, Lake Holcombe School District (special services teacher of the year).



■ Principals of the Year

Robin Kvalo, principal of Portage High School in the Portage School District, was honored by State Superintendent Tony Evers as secondary principal of the year.

The other principals of the year are: Melissa Herek, Lawrence-Lawson Elementary School, Sparta School District (elementary principal of the year) and Paul Hermes, Bay View Middle School, Howard-Suamico School District (associate principal of the year). The principals of the year were honored by State Superintendent Tony Evers and Jim Lynch, executive director of the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators.



■ **Global Educator of the Year**

Linda Goldsworthy, a teacher at Rhinelander High School, was honored for being named Global Educator of the Year.



■ **Special Services Director of the Year**

Kurt Eley of the Waunakee Community School District, was recognized by the Wisconsin Council of Administrator of Special Services as Special Services Director of the Year.

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Student Awards

Congratulations to our award-winning student artists and a special thanks to our student video team

Each year, student artists from across Wisconsin are invited to participate in an annual art contest held in partnership between the WASB and the Wisconsin Art Education Association, and sponsored by Liberty Mutual Insurance. All submitted pieces were proudly displayed at the 2017 State Education Convention. Below is the list of winners.



- 1st** — Joseph Ladewig (left), Merrill Area School District
- 2nd** — Molly Korzenow, Osceola School District
- 3rd** — Ananda Van Wie, Merrill Community Schools
- 4th** — Gunnar Schwertfeger, La Crosse School District
- 5th** — Hannah Antonissen, Niagara School District
- 6th** — Nicole Goodwin, La Crosse School District
- 7th** — Makyah Goetsch, Merrill Area School District
- 8th** — Mackenzie Batten, Tomah Area School District
- 9th** — Chee Nand, Eau Claire Area Schools
- 10th** — Jordyn Pierce, Tomah Area School District

Student Video Team

The WASB invited school districts to submit an application for students to attend the State Education Convention, tape highlights, and then produce a video. A group of students from Beaver Dam High School was selected to take on this task and helped us capture the events, speakers, and other highlights of the 96th State Education Convention. Special thanks to Beaver Dam High School students and teacher Kelli Derecks. Visit the convention website (wasb.org/convention) for a link to their video. ■

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left: Columbus Elementary School, Appleton / right: Berlin Middle School, Berlin, WI



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Student Fees

Challenging school budgets lead many school boards to explore increasing revenue through the imposition of student fees. Such fees are typically assessed to support various student activities and/or to defray the costs of items used by students. However, the ability to impose such fees is subject to limitations imposed by the Wisconsin Constitution and various statutes. In particular, Article X, Section 3 of the Wisconsin Constitution provides that “The legislature shall provide by law for the establishment of district schools ... and such schools shall be free and without charge for tuition to all children between the ages of 4 and 20 years ...” This *Legal Comment* will address the authority of school boards to charge student fees and will identify other considerations boards should explore when considering whether to charge fees.¹

■ Constitutional and Statutory Limitations on Student Fees

In *Board of Education v. Sinclair*,² the Wisconsin Supreme Court addressed the authority of school boards to charge fees within the context of a student’s right to a free education guaranteed by the Wisconsin Constitution. Under *Sinclair*, three requirements must be met in order to impose a student fee: the fee cannot violate Article X, Section 3; the fee must be authorized by statute; and the fee must be reasonable. The court held that under Article X, Section 3, school boards cannot charge for the use of the school building, teacher instruction,

courses that qualify for graduation credit (even courses not required in the curriculum), and items used by students such as electronic listening devices, microfilm readers, and similar devices. With respect to electronic devices, the Department of Public Instruction takes the position that laptop computers and tablets are analogous to the electronic devices described in *Sinclair*, and that school boards cannot charge students fees for furnishing or using these devices.³

By contrast, the court held that the following items were not part of the free education guaranteed by the Wisconsin Constitution: textbooks, pencils, pens, notebooks, paper, gym suits, towels, and band instruments. Additionally, the court concluded that a school board can charge students for the cost of social and extracurricular activities if participation in them is optional and the fee is tied to the cost of the activities. Finally, the amount of the student fee must be reasonable and supported by the actual cost of the provided service.

With respect to the second requirement, the Wisconsin Legislature has enacted a variety of statutes authorizing certain student fees. For example, a school board may charge student fees for textbooks and textbook rentals, subject to any conditions established by electors at the district’s annual meeting. School boards must, however, provide books and school supplies for indigent children residing in the district.⁴ School boards can charge students for meals although some students will qualify for free or

reduced-price meals through Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) programs.⁵ Additionally, school boards can charge a reasonable fee for classes for children under four years of age, childcare programs, participation in school conservation camps, and community programs and services outside of the regular curriculum and extracurricular programs. Finally, a school board may charge a fee for athletics or extracurricular activities to a home-schooled pupil who resides in the district on the same basis as the school board charges pupils enrolled in the district.⁶

School boards cannot charge a fee to transport pupils that the district is required by law to transport. However, school boards can charge fees to reimburse the district for the cost of transporting students to extracurricular activities. Additionally, a district’s costs in transporting students to or from religious instruction must be reimbursed by either parents or the organization sponsoring the religious instruction. Finally, the school board can charge a fee to transport a pupil who the district has no other duty to transport.⁷

All student fees must be reasonable. Under the broad powers granted school boards by state law, a student fee must promote the cause of education and be supported by evidence that the fee is tied to the actual cost of the item or activity, *i.e.*, students are receiving value that is equal to or greater than the cost of the student fee.

While student fees are a potentially viable option for increasing district revenues, school boards should carefully balance the need to increase revenue with the need to provide access to school programs to all students.

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■ Limitations on Fees for Certain Programs

School boards cannot charge additional student fees for summer school to resident pupils if the district receives state aid for summer school or if the summer school class is required or credited toward graduation. In these circumstances, school boards are limited to charging fees for personal-use items and books; however, school boards must provide books to indigent children residing in the district at no cost to the student. A student enrolled in summer school who cannot pay, or has not paid, summer school fees cannot be prohibited from attending or be expelled from summer school, and cannot be otherwise disciplined or have his or her grade lowered as a result of the non-payment of fees. If the district does not receive state aid for summer school classes and the classes are not required for or credited toward graduation, school boards can charge fees for them. However, these fees must be reasonable and cannot be designed to subsidize other classes or students. School boards may charge nonresident tuition for nonresident pupils to attend summer school. By contrast, during the regular school year, school boards may only charge nonresident tuition to nonresident pupils if the nonresident pupils are not participating in a whole-grade sharing, open enrollment, or fee waiver program.⁸

School boards can charge a reasonable fee for a driver's education program that is not credited for graduation and may, but are not required to, waive these fees for indigent pupils.⁹ If the driver's education program provides graduation credits, a school board may not charge a fee for that program.

School boards cannot charge a tuition fee for Advanced Placement (AP) courses, even if these courses are more expensive than regular courses, because AP courses are credited toward graduation. Additionally, districts have a statutory duty to pay the costs of AP examinations taken by students who are eligible for free

or reduced-price lunches through the federal school lunch program.¹⁰ Indigent students must be provided with textbooks and school supplies for AP classes. Therefore, if a school board decides to charge students for books and supplies for AP classes, those fees cannot be charged to indigent students. School boards cannot charge non-indigent students more for textbooks in order to subsidize indigent students because school boards are limited to selling textbooks to students at cost.¹¹

School boards cannot charge fees for students who participate in the Youth Options program to attend an institution of higher learning or a technical college. A district must pay for any course a student takes for both high school and college credit that is not comparable to a course offered in the district. A district must generally pay for the cost of tuition and required books, fees, and materials that will not become the property of a student. A district that purchases books for a student can require the student to relinquish the books after completing the course. If a student receives a failing grade in a Youth Options course or fails to complete the course, the student's parents or an adult student must reimburse the district, at the district's request, for any payments made to an institution of higher education on the student's behalf.¹²

School boards cannot charge fees to students for their participation in the Course Options program. When a student takes a course under this program that grants college credit upon successful completion and is delivered by an institution of higher education (IHE) that offers the course to all eligible students of the IHE, the student's resident district is required to pay tuition to the IHE. The amount of this tuition is set at 50 percent of the tuition the IHE charges for the course, not to exceed 50 percent of UW-Madison tuition for a course with the same number of credits, plus any fees and/or book costs. The resident school district and IHE may negotiate a lower fee to cover actual costs, and

districts and IHEs may negotiate additional tuition and fees to be charged to the student by the IHE.¹³ Unlike the Youth Options program, school boards cannot recoup expenses from students that receive a failing grade or fail to complete classes in the Course Options program.

■ Waiving Student Fees Based on Financial Need

School boards utilizing student fees often adopt fee waiver policies for low-income families and have the authority to establish appropriate criteria for determining whether a family qualifies for a fee waiver. However, school boards must ensure that any fee waiver policy is implemented consistently, and if a school board wants to discount a family's student fees, the discount should be based on financial need, rather than be based on the total amount of fees charged to any one family.

Wisconsin law does not establish any specific criteria for determining the level of financial need to qualify for a fee waiver, except for AP examinations. One common criterion districts use is a student's eligibility for benefits under an FNS program, such as the National Student Lunch Program (NSLP) which provides for free or reduced-price lunches to certain low-income families. However, school boards should be cautious about tying fee waivers to a student's eligibility for benefits under this program. First, a family may have substantial financial hardship, but not qualify for, or might not have applied for, benefits under the NSLP. Second, a student's eligibility for benefits under the NSLP is confidential and restricted to only those persons that are directly connected with the administration of the program, unless the district obtains parental consent.

In order to use FNS program eligibility to waive student fees, districts should receive prior written parental consent to disclose eligibility information for that purpose. The district can require parents to sign an appropriate disclosure form when parents apply for the FNS or when parents ask for

the student fee waiver. Even parents who are directly certified for eligibility in an FNS program must sign a disclosure form in order for the district to disclose eligibility information. There are four requirements for the form to constitute valid consent for disclosure. First, parents must sign this disclosure form annually for each of their children. Second, the disclosure form must identify the information that will be shared and how the information will be used. Third, the disclosure form must contain statements indicating that failing to sign the form will not affect the child's eligibility for FNS program benefits and that the programs receiving this information will not share the information with others. Fourth, parents must be able to limit their consent to disclosure to only certain programs, such as the district's student fee waiver program.¹⁴

■ Collecting Unpaid Student Fees

School boards need to consider whether and how to collect unpaid student fees. Federal and state laws prohibit withholding records or report cards if student fees have not been paid. Students and parents have a right to these records which cannot be conditioned on payment of student fees.¹⁵ If informal attempts to collect unpaid fees do not result in their payment, districts have the option of pursuing their collection through formal legal action, usually in small claims court which is the exclusive jurisdiction for claims less than \$10,000. This is a streamlined and less expensive procedure than circuit court. Legal counsel is not required in small claims court, and the prevailing party can obtain costs from the non-prevailing party, including filing fees, service fees, and limited attorney fees.¹⁶

Obtaining a judgment for unpaid fees does not guarantee the collection of the judgment amount. There are formal judgment collection procedures that require additional district action if a student's parents do not volun-

tarily pay the small claims judgment, including a garnishment action on the party's property, bank accounts, or earnings in order to recover the unpaid fees. Accordingly, school boards should consider if the amount that the district could recover through these court proceedings is worth the cost and burden associated with them.

■ The Effect of Student Fees on District Revenue

Student fees will not necessarily lead to increased overall revenue for a district. While student fees do not count toward the revenue limit, increasing student fees lowers a district's shared costs, which in turn affects the amount of state aid the district receives. For districts that are positively-aided by state aid, lower shared costs will cause a decrease in state aid. For districts that are negatively aided by state aid, lower shared costs may actually increase state aid, depending on the district's position in the state aid formula. Therefore, school boards should consider the district's financial position when developing a student fee policy to assess the actual impact on overall district revenue.

■ Conclusion

In deciding whether to implement student fees, school boards must assess whether such fees are permitted under the Wisconsin Constitution and state law. Furthermore, school boards should consider the impact such fees may have on student utilization of the activity subject to the fee; *i.e.*, will imposition of a fee deter student participation. While student fees are a potentially viable option for increasing district revenues, school boards should carefully balance the need to increase revenue with the need to provide access to school programs to all students. This entails consideration of fee waivers and an understanding of what ramifications will occur with respect to students who cannot or do not pay such fees.

■ Endnotes

1. For additional information on this topic, see *Wisconsin School News*, "Student Fees and School Board Authority" (February 2006); WASB *Legal Note*, "Collecting Unpaid Student Fees: An Introduction to Small Claims Court" (June 1995); *Wisconsin School News*, "Student Fees Wisconsin Supreme Court Decision" (April 1975).
2. 65 Wis. 2d 179, 222 N.W.2d 143 (1974).
3. *Pupil Fees*, Wis. Dep't of Pub. Instruction, 29 (Dec. 6, 2016), https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sfs/ppt/School_Fees_Dec_2016_Final.ppsx.
4. Wis. Stat. ss. 120.10(15) (powers of annual meeting), 120.12(11) (textbooks for indigent students).
5. Wis. Stat. s. 120.13(10) (school meals); see, e.g., 42 U.S.C. s. 1758 (the National School Lunch Program).
6. Wis. Stat. ss. 120.13(13) (pre-4k classes), 120.13(14) (childcare programs), 118.05(2) (conservation camps), 120.13(19) (community programs), 118.133(3) (home-schooled students).
7. Wis. Stat. ss. 121.54(2) (general transportation), 121.54(7) (extracurricular activity transportation), 118.155(2) (transportation for religious instruction), 121.545 (additional transportation).
8. Wis. Admin. Code s. PI 17.05 (fees for summer classes); Wis. Stat. ss. 118.04(3) (nonresident tuition for summer classes), 121.77 (nonresident tuition).
9. Wis. Stat. s. 121.41.
10. Wis. Stat. s. 120.12(22).
11. Wis. Stat. s. 118.03(2).
12. Wis. Admin. Code ss. PI 40.05(3) (obligation to pay fees), 40.05(4) (relinquishment of books), 40.056(4) (reimbursement for failed classes).
13. Wis. Stat. s. 118.52(12).
14. 7 C.F.R. ss. 245.6(f), (i); U.S. Dep't of Agric., Memo Code CACFP 06-2016, Disclosure Requirements for the Child Nutrition Programs (2015).
15. 20 U.S.C. s. 1232g; Wis. Stat. s. 118.125(2).
16. Wis. Stat. ss. 799.01(d) (use of small claims court), 799.25 (recovery of costs).

This Legal Comment was written by Michael J. Julka, Steven C. Zach, and Brian P. Goodman of Boardman & Clark LLP, WASB Legal Counsel.

“Local Control Depends on Trust”

2016 WASB President **Stu Olson** urges school leaders to build trust

When Stu Olson took office as WASB president in January 2016, he spoke about the importance of building trust in our schools and communities. Unbeknownst to him, trust would become a buzzword in the coming year.

“From last January to now, that word ‘trust’ has been in the news like never before,” Olson said. “I’ve got a feeling we’ll hear it a lot in 2017 too.”

In the realm of public education, there are some troubling trends regarding trust. Olson cited the PDK/Gallup Poll, which found that parents generally put their local schools in high regard but give lower grades to the national institution of public education.

At the state level, Olson noted Governor Scott Walker’s support of school choice. “When Governor Walker talks about public education, his catchphrase is, ‘I trust parents,’” Olson said. “It’s a winning message that resonates with parents, but it poses a challenge, too, by implying that the public education establishment doesn’t trust parents.”

Olson pointed to the proliferation of charter schools, home schooling,

and vouchers as another example of a lack of trust in public education. Data on the topic, while scarce, shows that some parents who choose alternatives to public education cite factors such as academics and safety. However, a majority of parents who choose alternatives to public education say that public schools don’t support the morals and values they are trying to teach their children.

“That’s not the main reason we would prefer to hear,” Olson said. “It’s not the most tangible. It’s not something we want to talk about much ... Suffice it to say, if we want to rebuild trust and have a single public education system going forward, we need to address that.”

To move forward, Olson said work needs to be done in our local school districts. Olson said one small step school leaders can take is to examine school policy such as those regarding teaching controversial topics and how the district addresses parental input on these issues. “Ask yourself: Does our district’s version inspire trust in parents, or raise eyebrows?”

Olson concluded by addressing the increasing threat of school



vouchers on public education. While there are many factors school leaders can’t control, one thing they can influence is local and state politics. Olson urged school leaders to talk with and develop relationships with their legislators.

“Trust depends on local control, and local control depends on trust,” Olson said. “Local control is safe to the extent the Legislature trusts school boards to govern their districts. The WASB is a bulwark for local control, but the strongest influence lies with each of you talking with your legislators.” ■

McCloskey Elected to Lead WASB in 2017

Capt. Terry McCloskey, USN Retired, WASB Region 2 director, was elected by the WASB Board of Directors as the 2017 WASB President. McCloskey is a member of the Three Lakes School Board.

Region 6 director Mary Jo Rozmenoski, president of the Black River Falls School Board, was elected 1st Vice President. Brett Hyde, region 11 director and a member of the Muskego-Norway School Board, was elected 2nd Vice President.



Board Member Wins Complimentary Registration

Daniel Pulver, a member of the Pardeeville School Board, won a complimentary registration to 2018 State Education Convention. The WASB handed out tickets to board members at its Regional Meetings last fall. School board members entered those tickets into a drawing in the Sustainable Schools Pavilion in the convention exhibit hall and Pulver’s ticketed was selected. Thanks to those school board members who participated!

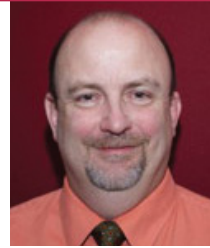
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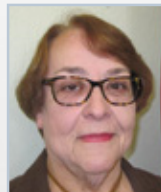
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Governor's 2017-19 Budget Unveiled

A closer look at how the proposed budget aligns with the WASB's requests



Governor Scott Walker unveiled his 2017-19 state budget proposal on Feb. 8. This month's column takes a closer look at key education provisions in the governor's proposal and how they match up with the WASB's legislative agenda and budget requests.

Key Items from the Governor's Budget Proposal & WASB Positions

■ **Per-Pupil Categorical Aid**

WASB Request: Provide an additional \$200 per student in each year of the biennium through increases in per-pupil aid or increases in revenue limits coupled with increases in general (equalization) aid sufficient to hold statewide school property taxes steady.

Governor's Budget: Proposes to increase each school district's allotment of per-pupil categorical aid from the current \$250 per pupil by adding \$188 in 2017-18 and an additional \$180 in 2018-19. If sufficient savings accrue from the state's proposed shift to self-insurance for state employees' health coverage, those aid payments would increase by \$12 in 2017-18 to \$200 per pupil and by \$24 in 2018-19 to \$204 per pupil. Assuming the higher figures,

schools would receive a total of \$450 per pupil next year and \$654 per pupil the following year.

Legislative leaders, however, have expressed skepticism and could decide to approve less than what the governor is proposing. School leaders will have to be prepared to argue strongly to maintain the aid levels the governor has proposed.

No increase in revenue limits is proposed in either year. While the governor directs \$73 million to equalization aid in the second year, that funding will go toward property tax reduction due to no recommended revenue limit increase.

■ **Sparsity Aid**

WASB Resolution: The WASB supports providing sparsity aid based on enrollment size and population density (students per square mile), provided that, if any formula changes are made, additional funding will be provided to maintain sparsity aid payments to districts currently eligible. The WASB also supports creating a separate allotment for sparsely populated districts with larger enrollments, designed so that districts with lower enrollments would receive higher amounts than districts with higher enrollments.

Governor's Budget: Proposes to increase sparsity aid payments by \$100 per pupil (from \$300 to \$400) for school districts with enrollments of 745 or fewer students that meet sparsity aid criteria (less than 10 students per square mile). In addition, the governor proposes to add a second tier to the sparsity aid program to provide \$100 per pupil to districts with enrollments between 746 and 1,000 students that meet sparsity aid criteria.

This increase is sufficient to ensure that sparsity aid payments won't be prorated as they have been in the past. Adding in the proposed increase in per-pupil categorical aid, districts that qualify for sparsity aid in either enrollment category would see a total per-pupil increase in spendable resources of \$300 in 2017-18 and \$304 in 2018-19.

■ **High Cost Transportation Aid**

WASB Request: Provide additional funding for high-cost pupil transportation aid to districts with pupil transportation costs that exceed 150 percent of the statewide average cost per pupil. WASB's proposal eliminates the need to prorate reimbursements. Additionally, create a second tier to the program to provide at least

School leaders will have to be prepared to argue strongly to maintain the aid levels the governor has proposed.

To make the case for the funding increases and to make your positions known on other proposed budget provisions, we encourage school board members and administrators to attend the WASB Day at the Capitol on March 15.

some reimbursement to districts with per-pupil transportation costs that are significantly above average (*e.g.*, between 125 and 149 percent of the statewide average), yet don't qualify for aid under the current program.

Governor's Budget: Proposes to add \$10.4 million to fully fund high-cost transportation aid in both years of the budget, eliminating the need to prorate payments. The 2015-16 reimbursement rate was prorated at roughly 60 percent of the amount qualifying districts were eligible to receive. There is no provision to add a second tier.

■ Mental Health Supports

WASB Request: Provide state grant funding to support school-based mental health programs, supports and services in districts that wish to partner with third-party providers (*e.g.*, social services organizations and medical providers) to provide such services on-site.

Governor's Budget: Proposes \$6.5 million over the biennium to assist districts in providing mental health services in schools, including in partnership with social service agencies and other community mental health providers.

■ Preserving Local School Board Governance

WASB Request: Do not propose:

- Restrictions on scheduling of school district referenda;
- Unfunded state mandates;
- School district takeover proposals; or
- Expansion of vouchers/independent charters.

Governor's Budget: Although the WASB staff is still reviewing the budget details, it appears the governor did not include any of these items in his budget proposal. Legislative leaders have expressed support for lifting the enrollment and/or income caps on the statewide voucher program to further subsidize private schools in Wisconsin. There likely will be legislative efforts to restrict school referenda during budget deliberations.

■ Staff Licensure/Recruitment

WASB Resolutions: The WASB supports reasonable efforts to provide pathways to licensure for teaching candidates in subject or content areas where there is a shortage of licensed teachers. Potential candidates should have a bachelor's degree and qualified to be in a classroom as demonstrated by appropriate experience, knowledge and skills in the subject or content area, and rigorous training in pedagogy, assessment, and classroom management.

The WASB supports proposals providing the continuing proof of growth requirements for licensure.

The WASB supports state and federal initiatives to assist rural school districts in their efforts to attract and retain high-quality staff, including student loan forgiveness programs and grants for teachers who commit to work in rural school districts for at least a minimum number of years as determined by the Legislature.

Governor's Budget: Proposes that teaching and administrator licenses would be lifetime, rather than subject to a five-year renewal, other than in cases of misconduct. The

elimination of renewal requirements would apply to licenses issued after the effective date of the budget bill.

Because criminal background checks are currently conducted by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) each time licenses are renewed, this would no longer occur on a regular basis. Instead, the budget would transfer responsibility for conducting periodic background checks to the local school board that employs the individual license holder.

Among other changes to licensure, the proposed budget plan would:

- Repeal the requirement that a teacher must have a job offer in Wisconsin in order to receive a teaching license based on licensure in another state.
- Authorize college professors or technical college faculty to teach in high schools without a DPI teaching license if the faculty are in good standing with their employing institution and have a bachelor's degree.
- Clarify that school districts may compensate student teachers.
- Create a new Teacher Development Program to support collaboration between schools of education (in particular, the UW's Flexible Option Program) and school districts to provide intensive curriculum and classroom training for certain school employees to earn a teaching license. Collaborating entities will be allowed to seek project funds from Wisconsin Fast Forward, a program administered by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.

■ Other Proposals

The governor's budget proposes to eliminate the revenue limit exemption for future energy efficiency projects, noting that property tax levies associated with this exemption have grown 115 percent in the last three years. The governor argues it is necessary to prohibit any new increases in school district revenue limits for energy efficiency projects in order to mitigate these property tax increases. School districts would instead be required to go to referendum for these projects. The WASB opposes eliminating this exemption and will lobby the Legislature to remove its repeal from the budget bill.

The governor's budget also proposes combining and reforming the

Course Options and Youth Options programs to simplify college credit attainment for high school pupils and school districts through creation of a new Early College Credit program. Specifically, the governor recommends: restoring the part-time open enrollment program; creating a new program to govern traditional dual enrollment for college credit; enhancing the affordability of college credit attainment by statutorily limiting per-credit charges; clearly delineating the responsibility for payment of the costs of college credit; combining transportation aid programs; and providing state funding through the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development to expand participation and offerings for the new Early College Credit program. The WASB is

still evaluating these changes as of this writing.

The governor's budget repeals several state mandates, including statutory requirements that school boards: schedule a minimum number of hours of instruction at particular grade levels, and hold a school board meeting at least once each month. The budget proposal also repeals statutory language specifying the required hour and date for annual school district meetings. Instead, each school board would decide when to hold its regular meetings and would determine the date and time of the annual meeting unless the electors at the annual meeting determine to hold the annual meeting at a different date and time. ■

For more on the governor's budget proposal follow the WASB Legislative Update Blog: wasblegupdate.wordpress.com

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