

2018 CONVENTION REVIEW



WISCONSIN SchoolNews

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Publication of the Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Inc.



Wednesday's keynote speaker **Ravi Hutheesing** emphasizes the importance of engaging with people of all backgrounds and developing life-long learners.

— pages 6

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Bridging Generations and cultures



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ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE were written by: Shelby Anderson and freelance writer Anne Davis.
(UW-Oshkosh Professor Michael Ford contributed "Good Practices are Good for Students" on page 20.)

Thank you.

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GENEROUS CONTRIBUTIONS by the above organizations helped make the 97th State Education Convention one of the best yet.





Giving Students the Skills to Succeed

Thank you to all of the school board members and administrators who joined us in January for the 97th Annual State Education Convention. Held in partnership with the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators and the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials, the convention featured dozens of top-quality breakout sessions presented by Wisconsin school districts, education researchers, business partners and other stakeholders.

This special, expanded issue of *Wisconsin School News* looks back at some of the speakers, sessions and special events from the convention. In particular, I want to call your attention to one of our keynote speakers, renowned education thought-leader Dr. Bill Daggett — founder and chairman of the International Center for Leadership in Education.

Dr. Daggett called on school leaders to rethink our schools in terms of how rapidly our world is evolving. He challenged the audience to continually assess how we develop and support learners who will thrive in our ever-changing world.

Dr. Daggett walked through what he called the “winds of change” and described how we are entering the fourth Industrial Revolution which will be defined by the convergence of nanotechnology, biotechnology and digital technology. The depth and breadth of changes are likely to

disrupt labor markets and governance systems at a rate of change unprecedented in history. As Dr. Daggett explained, many jobs we rely on today may soon cease to exist. “If you can write an algorithm for a task, the job is gone.”

What does this mean for school boards? In the past, we knew the world would look a little different for our kindergarteners when they graduated than it does for our current senior class, but it wouldn’t be fundamentally altered. So, our programs and curriculum could gradually improve and evolve. We no longer have that luxury.

Today’s 4-year-old kindergartners will graduate from high school (assuming we retain the same K-12 structure) in 2031. How can we prepare them for a world we’re only beginning to understand?

Dr. Daggett listed the top 10 skills our future workforce will need, identifying the top three as complex problem solving, critical thinking and creativity. We need to build an entrepreneurial generation that can be adaptive, innovative and responsive to real-world, unpredictable situations. And schools can’t do it alone. We need the support and input from our communities, the private sector, and state and federal policymakers to shift the educational focus away from standards and tests to building a culture of learning that places as much emphasis on non-cognitive skills (our attitudes

and behaviors) as it does on academic skills.

There are some great examples from schools across the state that are already beginning this work. The Brillion School District, in partnership with local business partners including the Ariens Company, recently opened a STEM Exploration Station in its elementary school. An underutilized gymnasium is now a flexible, open space designed for students to explore STEM concepts with an emphasis on collaborative learning.

The Kettle Moraine School District launched the High School of Health Sciences a few years ago. In partnership with Aurora Medical Center, the Medical College of Wisconsin and ProHealth Care, students get a comprehensive and in-depth academic education paired with real-world experience in various health care areas while still in high school. In addition, numerous schools have been implementing Fab Labs to create greater opportunities for students to apply critical thinking skills to real-world problems. These are just a few examples, but they are just the start in the transformation our K-12 system will need to undergo to ensure that our students will have what it takes to be competitive on a world-wide scale.

As always, thank you for the work that you do in leading our schools. Together, we can prepare students to be successful in our ever-changing world. ■

We need to build an entrepreneurial generation that can be adaptive, innovative and responsive to real-world, unpredictable situations.

TELLING Our Story

School leaders from around the state gathered in Milwaukee, Jan. 17-19, for the 97th State Education Convention. This special issue of **Wisconsin School News** looks back on the many sessions, keynote speakers and special events from this year's convention.



Limited Edition, an a cappella group from Port Washington-Sauville High School, closed out the convention with a captivating performance. The student music groups performed at the State Education Convention with support from the WASBO Foundation.



Wisconsin Health and Physical Education, Inc. held a fun breakout session with students demonstrating brain break activities. Audience members got to participate in the activities as well.



School board members toured Milwaukee Public Schools' **Washington High School of Information Technology** to learn about the school's culinary curriculum created by the national Restaurant Association Education Foundation. As part of the tour, school board members got to sample and judge the students' work.



Students from **McDill Elementary School** in the Stevens Point Area School District discussed their school-wide movement and wellness program to convention attendees as part of the Sustainable Schools Pavilion in the Exhibit Hall.



Many of the dozens of breakout sessions included interactive activities. Here, as part of a roundtable breakout session on effective governance process, **school leaders** worked together on a hands-on activity.



The **D.C. Everest Jazz Ensemble** opened the State Education Convention with a rousing performance during the first general session on Jan. 17.



The **Sun Prairie Wind Ensemble** performed in front of school leaders during the second general session on Thursday, Jan. 18.



Bridging Generations and Cultures

Ravi Hutheesing emphasizes the importance of engaging with people of all backgrounds and developing life-long learners



In 1997, Hutheesing toured the country as a guitarist with the band Hanson. They flew all over the country, playing their hit single “MMMBop” at sold-out shows in Madison Square Garden and on all of the late-night talk shows. For Hutheesing, it was a dream come true and also an education on the millennial generation.

While Hanson’s fame was short lived, Hutheesing’s love of music and interest in the millennial generation continued. Today, he travels the world, developing meaningful connections between young people, music and education across the world. At the State Education Convention, he emphasized how important it is for school leaders to understand and embrace this group of people.

“Millennials are the largest generation now,” Hutheesing said. “They’re your colleagues. They’re your incoming teachers. They’re going to be influencing everyone.”

He shared research and polling data that showed that millennials tend to be flexible, adaptable and more liberal than previous generations.

“They want to be defined by their passions,” Hutheesing said. “They want to be entrepreneurs and they want to make a difference. They value

people and purpose over profits.”

Promoting and developing entrepreneurship in young people is more important than ever. The workforce is changing and will continue to evolve in leaps and bounds. Many traditional jobs that exist today may not in the future.

“The future is going to be a freelance gig economy and it’s our job to make sure we are preparing our students for this future,” Hutheesing said.

While many millennials are natural entrepreneurs, the challenge can be that they are often disconnected from their passions. As Hutheesing said when millennials were growing up, “They were never allowed to be bored.” They didn’t have unstructured time where they could explore and develop interests in a variety of areas.

Hutheesing speaks from experience. From an early age, he dreamed of becoming a famous guitarist like Angus Young of the band AC/DC. He didn’t have much interest in school and had to force himself to attend class and graduate from high school. In college, he attended New York University so he would have opportunities to play and teach guitar. He struggled to attend his college courses but was very successful teaching guitar lessons so he asked his college profes-

sors to tutor him. This arrangement allowed him to focus on music while still graduating from college.

As for what all of this means for our schools, Hutheesing emphasized the importance of developing life-long learners. He said students need to have the critical thinking skills to find credible information. Assessments that test students on what they know are outdated. “It’s not about what students know but rather what they can do,” he said.

“The classroom plays a very critical role in developing entrepreneurs,” he added. “The classroom has to nurture talent and provoke critical thinking.”

In closing, Hutheesing said we need to connect people across all generations and backgrounds. He added that we have more in common than we think. “We’ve got to listen and learn from each other,” he said.

This culture of acceptance and collaboration starts with education. As Hutheesing said, he believes world peace can be obtained through an education grounded in critical thinking and character.

“Education is what remains after forgetting everything one has learned. Education is not about what you know. It’s about who you are.” ■

“[Millenials] want to be defined by their passions.”



Creating Schools for the Future

Keynote speaker **Dr. Bill Daggett** says
public education needs to move forward

Keynote sponsor **WEA trust**



In the race to prepare students for the future, Wisconsin schools — and almost all public schools in the country — are falling farther and farther behind.

Educational consultant Dr. Bill Daggett broke that bad news to a full house during his keynote address.

“I’m fearful that we’re in a race to return to the past rather than prepare kids for the future,” Daggett said. “Our schools have become museums and we are so deep into it we can’t see it.”

Daggett is the founder and chairman of the International Center for Leadership in Education. During an engaging and interactive keynote address, he outlined the challenges facing schools today and the ways they need to change in order to better prepare students for their futures.

He began by complimenting Wisconsin on its “long history of good schools” and called its technical college system the best in the country. Then he noted that the state has “the least amount of significant educational reform” in the nation.

“Your schools look more like 2005 than unlike 2005 because ‘we’re good so why change?’”

And schools must change to meet the demands of what Daggett called the fourth Industrial Revolution that the world is now entering.

Constant rapid advances in technology — in particular, robotics, bio-medical systems and nanotechnology — are making jobs and whole occupations obsolete.

Researchers predict that 65 percent of current jobs will no longer exist in seven to eight years. Construction workers will be replaced by 3D printers, delivery drivers will be replaced by drones and autoworkers and farm workers will be replaced by robots.

“Technology is advancing so quickly that if you can write an algorithm for a task, the job is gone,” Daggett said. “It is transforming the American workplace.”

He believes the winners in this race will be small organizations that can multi-task and adapt quickly. Developing nations that do not have the economic systems and infrastructures that industrialized nations do will be able to change and compete more successfully in a global economy because they “don’t need to be freed from the structures of the past.”

Schools now prepare students to enter specific fields and take specific jobs and test them on memorized knowledge and data. Because technology is changing the workplace so quickly and will continue to do so, Daggett said the better approach is to emphasize non-cognitive skills like

critical thinking, creativity and problem solving over teaching and testing students on facts and figures.

“The Wisconsin state test doesn’t prepare kids to deal with skills they will need to succeed,” he said, adding that he was not opposed to testing. “They need to have knowledge, but they need to learn how to apply it.”

Emphasis on test scores has caused states to lower their academic standards, he added. There should be an emphasis on academic rigor, but it must be balanced with emphasis on applying knowledge and fostering non-cognitive skills over cognitive.

Daggett pointed to the example set by the 25 most rapidly improving schools in the country as recognized by national organizations.

“They understand that the non-cognitive skills are ultimately what leads to success in academics and life,” he said, encouraging his audience to follow their lead. “Start with non-cognitive skills, figure out what is relevant to students, let rigor take care of itself.”

And finally, don’t forget the crucial element of great teachers and their connections with students.

“It’s rigor, relevance and relationships. It doesn’t matter how you put them together,” he said. ■

“[Technology] is transforming the American workplace.”



Building Dreams

Alton Fitzgerald White shares how education and the arts helped him achieve his dreams

Keynote sponsor  **UnitedHealthcare**



Alton Fitzgerald White, an award-winning Broadway star, grew up poor in subsidized housing in Cincinnati. As the youngest of seven siblings, with an alcoholic father, it wasn't an easy childhood. But he found solace in the arts and the classroom.

"The arts and education literally saved my life," he said.

Alton was a very shy child but from an early age he had a dream of acting on television or singing on the radio. He looked to idols like television star Flip Wilson, singer Glen Campbell and others.

"I didn't have many people I felt I could trust growing up," he said. "I had two companions — radio and television... Listening to the radio and watching television, I fantasized about performing."

Education also played an important role in his young life. Some of the people he could trust were his teachers. He remembers sitting in the back of the classroom with the other students whose last names started with a "W" and biting his tongue when the teacher asked a question.

"The teacher would put a ques-

tion up on the board and I wanted to answer, but I was too shy and I didn't want to show off," he remembers. "Thank god for my teachers. They knew I was shy and they'd call me out, 'Alton you know the answer.' They let me know that it was okay that I loved learning and that I was smart."

He remembers that some of his teachers would ask him to stay after class and help them grade papers. For some students this would be punishment, but Alton loved the attention and validation. "My teachers reminded me that whatever I was going through, I didn't have to go through it alone."

His life changed when he was introduced to musical theater. "My education and the arts started to come together," he said. "They all put me on a path to achieve an impossible beyond impossible dream."

From his humble beginnings performing in school plays in Cincinnati, Alton eventually achieved his impossible dream and performed on Broadway. He starred in many shows, most notably "The Lion King" where he played a record-

breaking 4,300 performances as King Mufasa.

While some people may have burned out after so many performances, Alton said he gained a deep sense of gratitude. He was grateful for the hardships he had overcome and for those who had helped him along the way. He also learned to see his role and his work as service and something that was bigger than himself.

"A big part that has changed my perspective on life and my career is service and redefining what service means to me," he said. "I see service as a gift. Service reminds me that what I have to offer is a gift and it's my responsibility to take care of it."

This message is especially powerful for school board members and administrators whose work and service impacts so many but may not always receive the recognition it deserves. As Alton said, the work may not always be easy but it's important to remember the impact it has and how it can change other's lives.

"Making a difference — that quest is worth it." ■

"The arts and education literally saved my life."

Building a Better Future

State Superintendent **Tony Evers** touts the benefits of social and emotional learning

During his address at the State Education Convention, State Superintendent Tony Evers laid out some of the challenges facing Wisconsin: workforce shortage, school funding issues, and a gridlock of partisan politics. Evers offered a possible solution for schools: social and emotional learning (SEL).

Evers described visiting and hearing from numerous districts focusing on SEL from Milwaukee Public Schools to the Menominee Indian School District.

“These districts, along with many others...are teaching their students the skills necessary to set and achieve positive goals, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions,” he said.

Evers recounted a presentation from the Menominee Indian School

District at a meeting of the state superintendent’s Equity Council. He said the presentation showed that SEL doesn’t hinder academics, it improves them.

“[Menominee Indian’s] approach to dealing with the social and emotional needs of their students through strategies like daily meditation, self-advocacy, self-awareness, and reflection, does not take the place of academics — in fact, it only serves to enhance their academic performance,” he said.

It’s not just academics that stands to benefit. Evers cited a study from Columbia University that found SEL returns \$11 in societal benefits for every dollar spent. In addition, SEL focuses on developing the social and critical-thinking skills that employers value.

“These kids will be better poised to



“I’m very hopeful that future generations will be better prepared to tackle complex issues ...”

compete for the jobs of the future,” Evers said. “In fact, 59 percent of managers surveyed say they look for these skills — skills like communication, decision making, and problem solving.”

Evers said he acknowledges that “there is no panacea, no instant success, and no guarantee for future prosperity,” but added that he believes Wisconsin’s best workforce development strategy needs to come from within — “back home in our schools and communities.”

In addition to touting his support of SEL, Evers mentioned two positive developments in the state’s school funding plan — the governor and legislative leaders’ support of increasing sparsity aid and indexing the low-revenue ceiling. Still, Evers’ message was mostly focused on the good work taking place in Wisconsin school districts. Evers reminded school leaders that the work of building a better Wisconsin begins in our public schools.

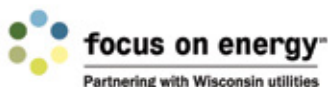
“I’m very hopeful that future generations will be better prepared to tackle complex issues and work together to find solutions, due in part to some exciting work going on today in our schools.” ■

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Dream Big

George Koonce shares his improbable journey from growing up poor to making it to the NFL

George Koonce spent nine seasons in the NFL and was part of the 1997 Green Bay Packer team that played in Super Bowl XXXII. But, speaking to school board members during the WASB breakfast at the State Education Convention, he said one of his best memories took place after he retired from football.

Koonce showed a photo of himself in cap and gown and remarked on the significance of that moment, “There I am — a kid who flunked the sixth grade and I go on to receive a PhD from Marquette University. That was probably my proudest moment.”

His improbable journey to the NFL began in North Carolina where he grew up poor as the son of a single mother. The odds were stacked against him but he learned that with the right training, education and knowledge, he could reach his dreams.

In the NFL, Koonce said he was lucky to have mentors like Reggie White. Now, as a retired player, Koonce is doing his part to mentor former professional athletes transitioning to life after sports. His PhD dissertation focused on professional athletes’ transition from sports and he wrote a book on the topic — “Is There Life After Football? Surviving the NFL.”

Koonce is thankful for the mentors he’s had in his life and is grateful to be able to return the favor to younger players. He shared a story in which he met with Chris Borland, a former football player for the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Borland excelled in his first year in the NFL but was worried about head trauma and how it might impact the rest of his life.

“I shared with him all the stuff I acquired during my research on the transition of former players,”



“You never know who you are inspiring to be great.”

Koonce said. “About three weeks later, Chris decided to retire because of concerns related to head trauma.”

Koonce said he understood Borland’s decision, adding that he had experienced significant head injuries during his playing days.

“I had 17 concussions during my career, but I would do it all over again because I love the game,” Koonce said.

Now an administrator at Marian University in Fond du Lac, Koonce shares his inspirational message with students and school leaders. As a person in a leadership position, Koonce said it’s important for leaders to encourage and support those around them. Koonce emphasized this point by sharing a story in which he was asked by former teammate Charles Woodson to introduce him when Woodson was inducted into the Wisconsin Athletic Hall of Fame. Koonce was honored. He had been teammates with Woodson but didn’t realize he had made such an impact on his career.

“He told me there wasn’t anyone else who he wanted to introduce him,” Koonce said. “You never know who you are inspiring to be great.” ■



Increased Funding for Schools

Governor **Scott Walker** praises state budget and touts historically high education funding

Speaking at the State Education Convention, Governor Scott Walker thanked school board members and administrators for their leadership and praised the recently passed state budget, which he said, provides a historically high investment for K-12 education.

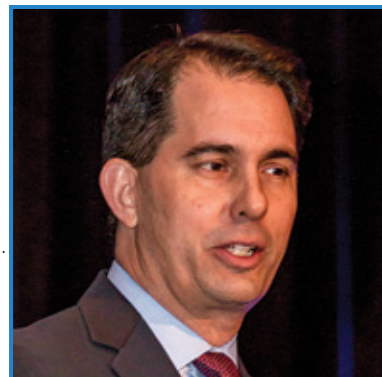
“We increased funding by \$200 per student for every school in the state this year, and we’re adding another \$204 per student on top of that next year,” said Gov. Walker. “Under our budget, we invested more in K-12 education than ever before in state history in actual dollars.”

The governor also laid out his plan to use a portion of the state budget surplus towards increasing funding for

Wisconsin’s schools. Specifically, Gov. Walker said he will use the surplus to increase sparsity aid in the 2018-19 school year by \$100 per pupil (from \$300 to \$400). The governor also said he will back legislation authored by Rep. John Nygren (R-Marinette) that would raise the low-revenue ceiling from \$9,100 per pupil to \$9,400 per pupil next year and eventually to \$9,800 per pupil by the 2022-23 school year.

Gov. Walker said the sparsity aid increase will help small, rural school districts cover expenses such as transportation costs.

“There are unique costs attributed to living in small school districts across the state,” he said. “We need to



“We need to make sure that every child across the state has access to a great education.”

make sure that every child across the state has access to a great education.”

The state budget also includes increased funding for mental health programs and support in schools. The governor said people across the state asked for mental health support for their schools at budget listening sessions.

“We included additional funding for mental health services in our schools, additional money for bullying issues and the opioid crisis,” he said. “All of this is interconnected.”

Overall, Gov. Walker said he was pleased with the outcomes of the state budget and he thanked school board members and administrators for their advocacy efforts.

“We were worried that in the JFC (Joint Finance Committee) there would be a reduction in what we proposed,” Gov. Walker said. “We made the case that this wouldn’t be acceptable. So many of you reached out to lawmakers to make the case for K-12 education.”

The governor also praised work taking place in the state’s schools including: the increase in Fab Labs, improved internet access, more students earning early college credit, and continued growth in youth apprenticeships. ■

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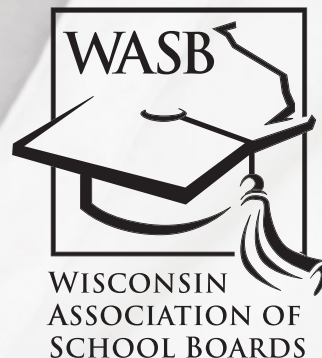
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Pre-Convention Workshops

Four in-depth workshops were held on Jan. 16 — a day before the official start of the State Education Convention.

Cultural and Legal Framework of Effective Boards



"First Amendment limitations on government regulation of speech apply to school boards at board meetings. Boards may choose to have or not have public comment periods and may limit public comments to items on the board meeting agenda or may allow comments on any topic. School boards may enforce reasonable time, place and manner rules during public comment periods, such as limits on the time any speaker may address the board. Boards should consult legal counsel before adopting rules that regulate what speakers may talk about at open public comment periods."

.....
Barry Forbes, staff counsel and
associate executive director, WASB

An Overview of an Integrated Comprehensive System (ICS) for School Board Members



"If you compare groups of kids who are pulled out of class, they are falling behind the kids who are not being pulled out of a comprehensive educational experience. Bottom line, the more a child is pulled for intervention from the core curriculum, the further behind they are."

.....
Elise Frattura, associate professor, University of
Wisconsin-Milwaukee Department of Exceptional
Education and Educational Administration

School Finance Puzzle



"A student should not be unfairly disadvantaged as a result of where she or he lives. School districts with less property value per student receive state general school aids at a higher percentage than districts with higher property values per student. The fundamental purpose of the equalization aid formula is to 'equalize' the level of resources available to each school community."

.....
Bob Soldner, director, School Financial Services,
Department of Public Instruction

The R Factor: Take Ownership of the One Thing You Can Control



"People tend to romanticize the past and dream of the future. It leaves them caught between a past that controls them and future that avoids them. While the past is important for education, you can't be good yesterday. While the future is important for vision, you can't be good tomorrow. Today is all you get."

.....
Brian Kight, CEO, Focus 3

2018 WASB Delegate Assembly

Delegates passed resolutions on vouchers, referendums, WIAA autonomy, "No Time to Lose" recommendations, and school finance issues

The **2018 WASB Delegate Assembly** met on Wednesday, Jan. 17 and approved all 13 scheduled resolutions and one late resolution put forth by the Wauwatosa School District. Resolutions covered a variety of important education issues such as per-pupil reimbursement for transporting voucher students, safe and welcoming school environments, school funding, hours of instruction, and referendum restrictions.

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

For the complete recap of the 2018 WASB Delegate Assembly, visit <http://bit.ly/2G2PFgm>. ■



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Focused on Improvement

Superintendent of the Year Pat Greco reflects on success

Pat Greco, superintendent of the Menomonee Falls School District, knows schools are facing wicked challenges. Greco, who was recognized by the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators as Superintendent of the Year, believes by working together, Wisconsin school leaders can overcome those challenges.

“Trying to lead is difficult,” she said. “Doing it alone is impossible.”

Greco recalled her childhood as the daughter of two hardworking parents — a Chicago police officer and a waitress. For Greco, education was important and a way to improve her life, “It was a lifesaver for me.”

When she started her career in education administration, Greco knew the importance of mentoring others from her own positive experience when she first became a principal.

“The most important aspect of leaders is to develop leaders,” she said.

As Greco moved into her current position as superintendent, Greco became interested in the principles of improvement science. Specifically, she focused on Lean Sigma Six — a methodology that collaborative teams can use to improve performance by removing waste, reducing variation and becoming a more efficient and effective organization. Greco said the focus on a collaborative methodology fits well in public education and excited her school board.

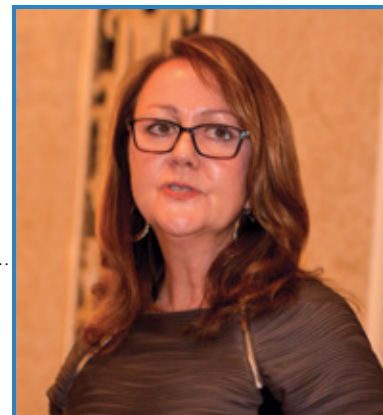
“This is a team sport,” she said. “Our school board is deeply com-

mitted. They wanted a skilled leader in improvement and I wanted a skilled board focused on improvement.”

The Menomonee Falls School District’s Lean Six Sigma work focuses on getting everyone involved from support staff to administration and has been recognized by organizations like the Carnegie Foundation. More importantly, the district has seen improvement in its graduation rate and Advanced Placement participation and a decrease in student suspensions.

Every district is facing its unique set of challenges, Greco urged school leaders to continue their work on behalf of their students.

“I see some of the best work



“Our school board is deeply committed. They wanted a skilled leader in improvement and I wanted a skilled board focused on improvement.”

I’ve ever seen in my career in public education and some of the most wicked challenges,” she said. “Together, I think we can make dreams come true.” ■

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'Stretch and Grow'

School Business Manager of the Year **Chad Trowbridge** encourages colleagues to grow as school leaders

Sometimes taking a little risk is the right way to go. That's the message Chad Trowbridge, executive director of business services and finance at the Chippewa Falls Area Unified School District, shared with his colleagues as they recognized him as the 2018 Wisconsin School Business Official of the Year.

"I would encourage all of you to take a chance on yourselves, to stretch and to grow, and to take a chance on others," said Trowbridge. "It's a tough time to be in education but it's also an awesome time. We can make a difference."

Trowbridge, who has been in Chippewa Falls for 14 years, was

nominated by Chippewa Falls Superintendent Heidi Eliopoulos for being a "pillar of our school district as well as our community."

Trowbridge is active in the local YMCA and United Way organizations. He is also a senior lecturer in the Educational Leadership Department at the University of Wisconsin-Superior.

In his acceptance speech, Trowbridge thanked his family and colleagues at Chippewa Falls as well as all those who had helped him throughout his career. After graduating from college, he took a job as a bookkeeper in the New Auburn School District. He was encouraged to take on more responsibilities and



took other jobs. He entered a master's program at UW-Superior and joined Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials (WASBO) on the advice of his superintendent.

"Throughout my career, I feel like people have taken a chance on me," he said. "None of this came easy. I'm proud to grow as a leader every day."

In closing, he urged his colleagues to "get out to classrooms and get involved with kids" and always remember to take a chance. ■

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Good Practices are for Good Students

Research shows that board governance and consistent policymaking translates into real student gains

SESSION *Making the Most Out of Your School Board: Tips for Translating Governance to Outcomes* | **Presenter** UW-Oshkosh: Michael R. Ford, assistant professor

Today, the overwhelming majority of American K-12 students receive a publicly funded education in a district governed by a democratically elected school board.

Yet, the very concept of the traditional school board is under attack. The model's fiercest critics argue school boards are captured by interest groups, populated by members chosen in low-turnout or uncontested elections, and, on balance, pose a barrier to improving academic outcomes for students.

Here in Wisconsin, this is not just idle criticism, school voucher and independent charter school policies are placing more students into schools outside the authority of a democratically elected school board. But what is really known about school boards and academic achievement? What, if anything, can boards and their members do to improve student performance?

In a series of studies on school boards and their members, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Professor Douglas Ihrke and I find that school boards do in fact have the capacity to impact student outcomes by improving their governance practices.

How? First, we find that adherence to a governance model or philosophy over time allows consistent policymaking and policy alignment with school staff that translates into real student gains.

An effective governance model has several features. It is fully transparent. All stakeholders should have access to organizational structures and processes. Second, it is understood. Both those serving within an organization and the clientele of the organization should have a full understanding of how the organization functions. Third, it fosters efficient communication. Different committees and sub-committees should be able to communicate with each other quickly through established and understood channels. Fourth, it is logical and mission-driven. Organizational governance structures should reflect the mission of the district, and be logically designed to put decision-making authority in the hands of those most qualified in any specific policy area. Fifth, it is inclusive of all stakeholders. Those serving in formal positions should be representative of the organization as a whole.

We also find that school boards that place a higher priority on strategic planning are experiencing test score gains. Though not surprising, the finding suggests boards should engage in some type of planning process whenever a change in board membership occurs to ensure everyone is on the same page as to where the board wants the district to go.

Related, we also found student achievement gains linked to board member agreement as to the meaning of accountability in their district.



"School boards do in fact have the capacity to impact student outcomes by improving their governance practices."

— Michael R. Ford, UW-Oshkosh

From a practical standpoint, boards should create an accountability statement that makes it clear to one another, as well as the superintendent and citizens, what accountability means to them. Doing so creates a real benchmark by which board performance can be judged.

Lastly, we identify a link between positive group dynamics on school boards and higher student attainment. Specifically, boards that minimize relationship conflict, rally around the flag after a decision has been made regardless of individual positions during deliberations, and remain free of ideological coalitions perform better.

So, what does this mean for Wisconsin school board members?

Though governance does not directly impact performance, there are real steps boards can take to create the conditions in which real student performance gains can occur. Mainly, boards should work to create alignment and transparency in their governing structures, group dynamics and modes of communication, planning, and approach to key concepts such as accountability. ■

— Michael R. Ford

Transitioning Back

Neenah program helps students get back on track after extended absence

SESSION *Transitional Learning Center (TLC): School Re-engagement for Students*

Presenters Neenah Joint: Mary Pfeiffer, district administrator; Tracy McClowry, TLC coordinator; Ann Hatch, school psychologist; Kristin Mahoney, school counselor

Students miss extended periods of school for a variety of reasons — health issues, mental health challenges, concussions, car accidents, etc. Transitioning back into the classroom can be difficult. For the past two years, the Neenah Joint School District has run a Transitional Learning Center (TLC) at its high school to help students get caught up and re-integrated into the school community.

Kristin Mahoney, school counselor, said the first few days back from an extended absence can be stressful for a student.

“If you can imagine, as a student, it can be very overwhelming to be handed three weeks of school work,” she said. “We can help work with those students and prioritize what is most important.”

It’s not just about getting caught up with school work. A lot of classroom work at Neenah High School includes collaborative projects. Missing school can leave students feeling like they’ve lost their place in the school.

“We have found that the students that we’ve worked with not only are struggling with missing school work but also with comradery,” Mahoney said.

Tracy McClowry, TLC coordinator, works with students who have missed school and their parents

to help support those students, make sure they regain their footing in the school and, ultimately, graduate on time.

In a typical case, when students first come back to school they might spend their entire first day or two in the TLC. After that, students come to the TLC during a study hall or release period.

“After they get reengaged, they can transition back in and leave the TLC,” McClowry said. “It really looks different for each student, we create a customized plan for each student.”

“Typically, students are there for a week,” Mahoney said. “Some students do need longer. The door is never closed on them even when they transition back into the school.”

The program has proven to be a big help to parents with children who have missed a large amount of school or who are struggling with mental health issues. It allows the parent to not worry about their child’s academics and instead focus on helping their child get better. It has also helped support those students with truancy issues. While the initial plan wasn’t to focus on those students, staff has found that the TLC has been very effective in helping truant students.

The presenters shared some positive data from the first two years the



“If you can imagine, as a student, being handed three weeks of school work, it can be very overwhelming. We can help work with those students and prioritize what is most important.”

—Kristin Mahoney,
Neenah Joint School District

TLC has been in operation. For instance, 93 percent of students who used the TLC improved their grades in half of their classes and 38 percent improved grades in all classes. Of the 19 seniors the TLC has supported, 18 have graduated on time.

Student testimony has been positive as well. The presenters shared videos of students they have helped transition back into the classroom. One student had been in a severe car accident and needed a series of surgeries to recover. For her, the idea of getting back to school and graduating on time seemed unlikely, “It helped me to achieve something that I didn’t think was possible.” ■

Different Districts, Different Paths to Referendum Success

Every school district is different so the way they hold referendums should be different, too

SESSION *One Size Does Not Fit All! Facility and Referendum Strategies that Work*
Presenters Juda: Traci Davis, district administrator; McFarland: Andrew Briddell, district administrator; New Glarus: Jennifer Thayer, district administrator; J.H. Findorff & Son Inc.: Christin Mlsna, director of education market and communication services; Plunkett Raysich Architects: Steve Kieckhafer, partner, architect

A panel of speakers from three very different school districts, which all recently held successful referendums, shared their processes and strategies.

Andrew Briddell, superintendent of the McFarland School District — a suburban district outside of Madison — came to the district in 2015 just as the board was ready to commission a facility study in response to a community petition. After setting up a facility committee with sub-committees to work on various components of the project, the group gathered community input from all stakeholders. Ultimately, the board sent a three-question referendum plan to voters.

The district asked for permission to spend \$65 million on a variety of district facility improvements. There were also two questions asking for permission to exceed the revenue caps. One asked for additional funds to cover costs for expanding the facilities while the other asked for additional funds for maintaining the current school programs. All three questions passed easily in November 2016.

The process in the New Glarus School District — a district of about 1,000 students located about

30 minutes south of Madison — was much longer, according to New Glarus Superintendent Jennifer Thayer. Although the district's middle school was new, there were many other needs and the district asked Plunkett Raysich Architects to do a comprehensive assessment of the condition of the facilities.

Thayer said the district tries hard to keep its tax rate stable from year to year so officials worked with Robert W. Baird to determine how much money they could raise for facilities without increasing the tax rate. Officials helped prepare the community by talking about the facility needs before mentioning the board's interest in going to referendum. In the end, the district passed a \$5.8 million plan in 2016.

The small Juda School District in southwestern Wisconsin has about 300 students in a single building. "We had not held a referendum in 17 years when the board began to think about going to voters again," said Traci Davis, Juda's superintendent and principal.

The district did not do any formal studies but discussed facility needs for 18 months using a standing board agenda item. After hiring J.H. Findorff



"We had not held a referendum in 17 years when the board began to think about going to voters again."

— Traci Davis,
Juda School District

& Son Inc. and other partners, the board held a series of public input meetings and specifically invited a cross-section of the community. The board held tours of the building and used Google surveys to gather more input.

The initial recommendation was a \$6.2 million plan with a separate question asking for permission to exceed the revenue caps to help maintain the facilities. The board later cut the proposal to \$5.7 million and the questions passed in 2016.

The panel members also shared lessons they had learned from their process of going to referendum as well as unexpected challenges they had faced.

But despite the different strategies, the one key, common denominator in each success story was clear, consistent and comprehensive communication.

"You can never communicate enough," Davis said.

"Communicate with everybody and anybody who will give you the time of day," Briddell agreed. ■

Moving Forward with Community Trust

Oregon School District works closely with community
as it continues to grow

SESSION *A Board's Role in Positively Impacting the Student and Teacher Learning Experience*
Presenters Oregon: Brian Busler, superintendent; Steve Zach, board president

As the Oregon School District approached the 2010-11 school year, the district was facing a lot of tough challenges. The district was growing, school facilities needed to be updated and expanded, and the teacher salary schedule and collective bargaining agreement needed to be replaced. In addition to these challenges, the school board was rather inexperienced.

Fast forward eight years and the district has added on or renovated five of the district's six schools. Additionally, the district passed a recurring referendum to fund its new teacher compensation plan.

So, how did they do it? Brian Busler, district administrator, points to three factors that contribute to the district's success.

"Know what you stand for as a district... be an active learner... and choose where you spend your time," Busler said.

As for the first point (know what you stand for as a district), the Oregon School District developed the Oregon Five Values. These values came out of a visioning conference that the district held in 2015 where more than 100 stakeholders from the community came together to discuss the future direction of the school district. From the visioning conference, the district produced a paper

"The Path Forward" which outlines the five values as developed by its community members.

Steve Zach, board president, said the five values helped the school board focus its efforts.

"We were assessing every decision we make as a school board and asking, 'Does it meet these criteria?'" Zach said. "And all other stuff that didn't meet the criteria, we could throw out."

The school board also took an active role in its own development and improvement (be an active learner). They read books on school board governance and forward-thinking books from renowned education experts like Dr. Bill Daggett on the future of education. These were important as the board went to referendum and asked the community for funding to expand and improve its school facilities.

In 2012, the district went to referendum, but voters turned down the \$33 million referendum.

"That failed referendum really hurt," Zach said. "We thought we had a good plan. We went back to our constituents and asked them what went wrong. We thought we had engaged them, but we hadn't engaged them in the right way."

With help from a consultant, the Oregon School District proposed a new



**"Know what you stand
for as a district...
be an active learner...
and choose where you
spend your time."**

— Brian Busler,
Oregon School District

building referendum for \$55 million. That referendum passed in 2014.

"It passed for all kinds of reasons," Busler said. "The buildings were all designed by faculty and staff and a few community members in a very grassroots approach."

Things really came together for the district in 2016 when it was able to pass a \$1.5 million recurring referendum to fund its new teacher compensation plan. The compensation plan ensures that the district will be able to pay its teachers a competitive salary and help retain quality educators.

Looking ahead, the district sees even more growth in its future. Student enrollment is expected to increase by 50 percent in 15 years. However, with a community-adopted strategic plan in place, Zach and Busler feel confident about the district's future.

"As we move through the process of how and when do we go back to the public with another referendum, it becomes an easier sell," Zach said. "We have the trust of the community." ■

Working Together to Erase the Achievement Gap

New partnership addressing nation's worst achievement gap

SESSION *Working in Partnership to Improve Educational Outcomes Among Black Students*

Presenters Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest: Kyle Fagan; researcher; Jameela Conway Turner, researcher; Racine Unified: Chrishirella Warthen-Sutton, Office of Family & Community Engagement manager; DPI Policy and Budget Team: Carl Frederick, research analyst

It's a dismal statistic that points to a persistent and challenging problem: Wisconsin has the largest achievement gap between African-American and white students in the country.

But a new partnership between state and local partners and the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest should bring new information and strategies designed to address the complex issues creating that gap.

"It's a glaring problem. It's been a real problem," said Carl Frederick, a research analyst at the state Department of Public Instruction (DPI), during a breakout session on the new partnership.

DPI has been working on the issue for years and hopes to use existing research to collaborate with the new partnership among REL Midwest and its partners. The initiative is called the Midwest Achievement Gap Research Alliance or MAGRA.

"This way we have multiple people having the conversations," said Frederick. "There's a lot of opportunities for cross pollination."

Jameela Conway Turner, a REL researcher, explained that the group works in partnership with 10 different regions in the country and is based at the American Institute for Research. The states within REL Midwest choose the issues they wish to work on and Wisconsin selected

the achievement gap.

Conway Turner noted that the partnerships are long-term. Local partners identify the issues and provide data, which the researchers use to develop strategies for addressing the issue. The overall goal is to support and increase the local partners' ability to put strategies in place.

"It's about increasing Wisconsin's capacity for doing this work," Conway Turner said.

The Racine Unified School District is one of the local partners working with REL. Chrishirella Warthen-Sutton, manager of family and community engagement at Racine, came to the district from DPI last year. At DPI, she had worked on other initiatives designed to address the achievement gap issue.

"This is a race-specific issue," she said. "It's not just equality. It's equity."

In other words, the solution is not just providing the same type of resources to all students. It's a matter of recognizing that students have very different needs and addressing those needs. She acknowledged that there are "bright spots" in the state although there is a lot of work still to be done.

"It all comes down to the belief that all children can learn," Sutton said.

In Racine, the number of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch continues to increase. Black



"It all comes down to the belief that all children can learn."

— Chrishirella Warthen-Sutton, Racine Unified School District

students are suspended at a higher rate than white students, Sutton said, noting that research shows that just one suspension increases a student's chances of being imprisoned.

"We should be thinking about what we can do differently about how we help all children learn," she said.

Understanding the reasons behind a student's behavior is important. She related a recent incident where police came to a student's home at 4 am to arrest the mother. The children were left alone. When the student came to school the next day, he refused to talk to counselors but confided in a youth advocate.

She also believes schools should change the way language is used. Instead of calling a student "struggling," Warthen-Sutton prefers the term "striving to succeed."

All attempts to address the issue must be fluid enough that it gets into every classroom and to teachers, "the people on the front line," she added. ■

Supporting Future Teachers

Former teacher of the year says it's time to start
supporting students interested in teaching

SESSION *Building a High School to Teacher Prep Program Pipeline*

Presenter Mauston: Leah Lechleiter-Luke, teacher

In 2010, Leah Lechleiter-Luke, a Spanish teacher at Mauston High School, was named Wisconsin's teacher of the year. The recognition earned her invitations to special councils and education groups focused on improving education. By participating in those special groups, Lechleiter-Luke said it became obvious education was facing a big challenge.

"In all of those circles, everyone is talking about the teacher shortage," she said. "It is a reality that everyone in education is living in right now."

She shared data that showed the U.S. needs to hire 1.5 million new teachers by 2020. Meanwhile, only 5 percent of students who took the ACT in 2015 indicated an interest in going into teaching. In addition, about one-third of new teachers leave the profession within three years.

"I think we can do a better job," Lechleiter-Luke said. "And it starts with the high school students we have in our schools."

Lechleiter-Luke pointed out that there are strong student organizations for students interested in areas like business and agriculture. She added that she thought it was funny that in schools, which are full of educators, there aren't many groups or clubs for future teachers.

Interested in starting some kind of future teachers club, Lechleiter-

Luke began compiling a list of Mauston High School graduates who have gone into teaching and she began getting a list of current students who expressed an interest in the profession. In 2015, the Mauston School District, which has about 475 students, had two students interested in teaching. In 2016, that number increased to five students. That slight increase might be due to the fact that in 2016, Lechleiter-Luke formed a future teachers club.

The club is a local chapter of a national program called Educators Rising, which is dedicated to supporting and promoting aspiring teachers.

In Mauston, Educators Rising meets three times a week. Students hear from guest speakers like a new teacher in the district or a specialist. They visit other school districts and see examples of rural, suburban, and urban schools. They have also made a visit to the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and met with the dean of education.

Through a partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, students can take an introductory education course. Lechleiter-Luke is credited to teach a college education course — Individual, School and Society.

Lechleiter-Luke said involvement in the club helps students find out if it is a career they are interested in.



"I don't sugar coat anything. I tell the students that this is a hard job. If you're up for it, we'll support you."

— Leah Lechleiter-Luke,
Mauston School District

"I don't sugar coat anything," she said. "I tell the students that this is a hard job. If you're up for it, we'll support you."

She added that, unfortunately, many educators in Wisconsin are frustrated with their profession and might even tell students not to go into education. She said that you should encourage teachers to speak positively, yet honestly about the profession.

"We have to stop telling our students, 'Don't go into teaching, don't do it,'" she said.

Today, the club has about 25 students and continues to grow. Lechleiter-Luke encourages interested schools to look into forming their own chapter of Educators Rising (educatorsrising.org) and form partnerships with organizations like post-secondary institutions.

"This is a priority we all share," she said. "We need to pull together as a team and help support these students." ■

Teaching Through Technology

Successful 1:1 initiatives focus on teaching and learning

SESSION *Sustaining a 1:1 Initiative: It's Not About the Stuff*

Presenter Pewaukee: Amy Pugh, chief information and technology officer

Amy Pugh, chief information and technology officer for the Pewaukee School District, said the number one rule in operating a successful 1:1 program is supporting students and teachers.

"It should be about teaching and learning," she said. "You really shouldn't be focusing on the technology itself."

That might be counterintuitive, but Pugh emphasized that if students and staff are not comfortable using the technology, then they're not going to use it.

In the Pewaukee School District, the district's 1:1 initiative came from its strategic planning. Pugh said that technology has long been a focus of the district, but the district has deliberately viewed technology as part of learning and not a stand-alone piece.

The district formed a committee to research a 1:1 initiative when the board of education requested that the district look into it. The committee examined more than 1,000 1:1 programs.

The district decided to invest in a 1:1 program and from the beginning, the focus was on professional development for teachers and administrators.

"Everyone needs to be behind the 'why,'" Pugh said. "It really needs to be about curriculum integration and it needs to be part of a curriculum redesign process."

During the 2008-09 school year, the district tested out its new 1:1 initiative with its eighth-grade students. Each student was assigned a

small laptop, given an orientation, and taught best practices. Halfway through the school year, the district deemed the pilot program successful and looked at expanding it. Each school year, another couple of grade levels were added to the 1:1 program until 2014, when it was implemented in grades 2-12.

Throughout this process, Pugh said professional development has been essential to the program's success. The district has five full professional development days built into the school calendar where teachers can choose what they want to learn. Pugh said those days have been very important because they have been able to offer sessions on technology integration. Additionally, the district has a summer professional development academy that has been another venue to provide further training to teachers.

Looking back on the implementation process, Pugh said the district's information technology (IT) staff was crucial.

"If students and teachers are depending on technology, it's important that it works," she said. "If you don't have adequate IT and support staff and you have a lot of down time, teachers are going to move on to something else."

Looking ahead, Pugh is excited to get students more involved in supporting the district's technology. She is developing a student-run helpdesk. Students will be trained during the



"If students and teachers are depending on technology, it's important that it works."

— Amy Pugh, Pewaukee School District

summer by the district's IT staff to troubleshoot technology issues. When the students aren't working on hardware fixes, they will be working on earning IT certifications.

"That's going to take some stress off our IT staff and also give those students authentic, experiential learning," Pugh said.

At the end of the session, Pugh addressed some practical issues related to 1:1 initiatives. One attendee asked how the district monitors students' internet searches. Pugh said that the district has a secure firewall and the laptops have filtering software so that even if they are used off campus, they can't access suspicious websites. However, Pugh admitted the system wasn't perfect and that training students about best use practices is a priority.

"It's important that we provide authentic opportunities for our students to learn how to be good digital citizens," Pugh said. "Our students learn about issues related to copyrights, passwords, and how to do a good internet search." ■

Using Feedback to Move Forward

Feedback is a positive word in the
Black River Falls School District

SESSION *Using the “Gift” of Feedback to Move Your Organization Forward*

Presenters Black River Falls: Shelly Severson, district administrator; Jill Collins, director of business services; Stephanie Brueggen, director of curriculum & instruction; Mary Jo Rozmenoski, board president

“Too often people associate feedback with criticism,” said Shelly Severson, superintendent of the Black River Falls School District. “Feedback is a gift. It’s a simple concept but it is really very, very, very important.”

Severson and others from Black River Falls shared the story of how feedback from students, staff and community helped shape and inform an ongoing district improvement program. When Severson took over as superintendent, she could see that teachers felt overwhelmed by all the competing demands on their time. There was no sense of organization, no unified vision for moving forward.

Parents, too, were frustrated because they felt that each building had its own rules and each time their students moved to a different building and grade there was a sense of starting over.

So, Severson encouraged the district to begin a strategic planning process. They hired an outside agency to gather data from all stakeholders — parents, students and staff — on the positives and negatives in the district. School board members and administrators went over the data and sent it to a strategic planning committee, asking them to identify themes that were then shared with staff and administrators.

The committee developed a vision and values for the district and solicited staff and students for their feedback. The resulting strategic plan was organized under four “pillars” — student success, our people, community engagement, and finance and facilities. Specific goals, initiatives and measures were developed under each pillar.

There were multiple measures. Initiatives were designed to be broad enough to allow for unexpected changes yet specific enough to actually bring change. The entire process gave the district a “road map” for moving forward.

By gathering so much feedback and using it to create the plan, there was buy-in by stakeholders. No one is taken aback when an initiative is introduced.

“It’s not a surprise,” said Stephanie Brueggen, the district’s director of curriculum and instruction. “It’s more of that we’re staying the course of a very well thought-out process.”

The plan is reviewed three times a year to monitor progress and allow for any necessary adjustments.

Placards with the district’s vision and values are displayed at every school entrance and in every instructional space and meeting room. A pamphlet with the vision and values is handed out to newcomers. The four pillars from the plan are used to



**“Feedback is a gift.
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— Shelly Severson,
School District of Black River Falls

organize the district’s annual meeting and all board agendas.

“Every time people see the agenda, they see our vision,” Severson said. “They know these are the goals.”

Feedback remains a critical part of district operations. Each year, separate surveys are sent to students, staff and families to measure their satisfaction with what is happening. Questions are made to be as similar as possible each year so that the responses can be compared from year to year. A community survey is sent out every three years.

The district uses Google forms for its survey and the response rate is over 50 percent at each building. Data is shared with the entire community via the website, newsletters and other communication.

The district makes a point of responding to feedback. One example was changing an early release day from Wednesday to Friday based on parent feedback. Overall satisfaction is high and there is rarely any truly negative response, according to Severson.

“People don’t take potshots because we have created a culture where feedback is a gift,” she said. ■

Telling Their Story

School communicators help share our schools' many good stories and much more

SESSION *Building a Solid Communications Presence from the Ground Up*

Presenters Howard-Suamico: Brian Nicol, communications coordinator; Damian LaCroix, district administrator; Mineral Point: Joelle Doye, director of communications; Luke Francois, district administrator

The field of school communications is growing in Wisconsin. According to a survey conducted by the Wisconsin School Public Relations Association (WSPRA), about 50 school districts in the state had a communications professional in 2013. That number has now grown to more than 85 districts and continues to increase.

Brian Nicol, communication coordinator for the Howard-Suamico School District, and Joelle Doye, director of communications for the Mineral Point Unified School District, described their roles and urged school leaders to expand their communications presence.

Nicol and Doye agreed that one of their top priorities as school



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school districts in
Wisconsin have
communication staff.

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communicators is to tell their districts' stories.

"We've seen teachers and administrators take for granted the good stories in their districts," Nicol said. "You almost become numb to it."

As a former journalist, Doye regularly wrote stories on the local district but understood she was only scratching the surface.

"I told education stories all the time as a journalist, but I was able to tell only a fraction of those stories," she said. "We have so many wonderful things in our district to celebrate."

In many districts, communication responsibilities are put on the plate of the superintendent who is already busy. In Mineral Point, before Doye was hired, the school board told Luke Francois, district administrator, that the district needed to be more transparent and communicate more often. Francois spent a year increasing communication efforts and went back to the board who told him the district still needed more communications work.

"I spent a year working on our communications, I didn't even make

a dent," Francois said. "I learned that I couldn't be superintendent and communications director."

Doye was first hired as half time and then moved up to full time. Despite Mineral Point being a smaller district, Francois said that doesn't mean they don't need a communications person, "Even more so as a small district, we need to tell our story."

In Howard-Suamico, before a communications person was hired, Damian LaCroix, district administrator, said he would get requests from media and have to turn them down because he was busy with other responsibilities.

"More often than not I was passing on these opportunities or ignoring them entirely," he said. "I knew we were missing a big opportunity to tell our story. And if we don't tell our story, someone tells it for us."

When Nicol began as the district's communications coordinator,



he was surprised to discover a number of people within the district making communication efforts on behalf of the district. Nicol coordinated these efforts and developed a higher-level communications strategy for the district. Nicol was also surprised to find how much internal communications within the district was appreciated and needed. For example. The simple act of creating a basic newsletter for the district's principals helped improve trust and collaboration in the district.

In Mineral Point, Doye has helped the district expand and coordinate its communication efforts. Doye said she views her role as being another face for the district in the community. Because of her role, the district has been able to do things like organize and hold forums for school board candidates, "coffee with community" events, and open houses in the schools. Internally, Doye has developed efforts and ways to recognize staff members and has involved students in the district's communication work — the district's athletics Twitter account is entirely student run.

Nicol and Doye have brought a lot to their districts and helped them tell their stories. However, LaCroix said a lot of school leaders still question if they can hire a communications person.

"A lot of school leaders ask, 'Can we afford to do this?'" LaCroix said. "I think that's the wrong question. I think the right statement is you can't afford not to do this." ■

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Understanding the Toll of Trauma

Building empathy and focusing on trauma and mental health issues

SESSION *Understanding ACES and Trauma-Informed Care in the School Setting*
Presenter Somerset: Patricia Schachtner, board member

Drug addiction, domestic violence and mental illness leave invisible scars but take a real toll on children and teachers every day.

That was the message presenter Patricia Schachtner brought to her audience. She was pleased to find many school board members in attendance and spoke directly to them.

“It’s really important for you to empathize with what’s happening in your community,” Schachtner said. “Because it has a direct impact on your classroom.”

The medical examiner for St. Croix County, Schachtner is also a member of the Somerset School Board.

To learn about what types of challenges are facing students and staff, she suggested calling local law enforcement and getting a copy of the phone calls to the 911 emergency number.

For example, in 2016, there were 94,000 calls to 911 in St. Croix County. That included 873 calls for a domestic violence situation and 171 calls for assault.

If school officials take the 911 information and correlate it with the results of the district’s youth risk behavior study, they can begin to see how traumatic influences are affecting students and staff, Schachtner said.

Because mental health issues often remain hidden due to the stigma attached to them, school officials sometimes don’t understand the burden the issues place on families. Treatment brings expensive medical bills, which is a burden in and of itself.

Schachtner also warned that the state foster care system is becoming overburdened, which means children in foster care don’t always get the help they need.

“Every district has kids in foster care who are not getting all the services,” she said.

Trauma comes in many forms — for teachers, it could be the death of a student. For students or teachers, it could be the death of a parent or other family member. Such traumas can lead to bad behavior in the classroom or drug or alcohol addiction.

She warned that alcohol remains the number one addiction problem and often leads to hard drug use.

Schachtner reminded attendees that district employees may have addiction problems as well.

“It’s up to board members because you’re the employers here,” Schachtner said. “You need to advocate for Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) programs for employees.”

It is important for board members to be aware of trauma and be empathetic. There is also a need



“When it comes to doing our job, emotional and mental well being should be right up there with test scores.”

— Patricia Schachtner,
School District of Somerset

to teach resilience in schools to help those experiencing trauma develop coping skills, according to Schachtner.

“As we have focused on test scores, we haven’t really focused on resilience,” she said. “When it comes to doing our job, emotional and mental well being should be right up there with test scores. We need to make sure everyone has the right tools to make sure schools are successful.”

She believes a key component to recognizing and dealing with the impact of trauma on students, staff and families is to reduce the stigma around mental illness and addiction. And the place to begin is the classroom.

“It really starts with us,” Schachtner said. “Schools are the pulse of our communities. If your schools are safe, your community is safe.” ■

Redefining the Path to Success

School leaders share how student success is about more than just grades

SESSION *Redefining College and Career Readiness in Wisconsin Schools*

Presenters New Berlin: Laura Schmidt, strategic advisor to the superintendent; Kellie Sanders, chief academic officer; Antigo Unified: Colleen Timm, district administrator



Laura Schmidt, New Berlin

Graduating from high school should mean that a student is ready to enter the workplace or go on to college. In reality, many students are far from ready.

Statistics show that 70 percent of high school students enroll in college but only 46 percent get a degree. Just 30 percent meet ACT benchmarks for readiness.

With new state laws adding more requirements for Wisconsin school districts to demonstrate that their students are career and college ready, the time for closing the gap is now, according to a panel of presenters who discussed a new initiative for measuring readiness.

Laura Schmidt, chief strategic adviser to the superintendent, and Kellie Sanders, chief academic officer — both of the New Berlin School District — shared their district's experience using "Redefining Ready!," a program developed by the AASA (American School Superintendents Association). Also on the panel was Colleen Timm, superintendent of the Antigo School District.

One of the main goals of Redefining Ready! is to expand the traditional indicators of post high school readiness beyond standardized test scores.

"We have students who learn in a variety of ways so we need to have ways that they can demonstrate their readiness," Schmidt said.

The AASA developed a new list of readiness indicators based on comprehensive research. Among some of the key findings were: course attendance is eight times more predictive of success as a freshman than eighth-grade test scores; students who successfully complete Algebra 2 are twice as likely to complete a four-year degree; and completing community service to fulfill class requirements enhances the average odds of college graduation by 22 points.

Redefining Ready! has indicators for college ready, career ready and life ready. In addition to a 2.8 GPA and standardized testing benchmarks, the indicators for college readiness include completion of an AP class, passing an AP or IB exam, and completing Algebra 2 and a dual credit college or math course. Other indicators include completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), taking a math class beyond Algebra 2, and participating in a career pathway course sequence and college academic advising.

Indicators for career readiness include 90 percent attendance rate, 25 hours of community service, a work-based learning experience and two or more organized co-curricular activities, among others.

With new requirements for academic and career planning in the state budget approved last fall and upcoming changes to the state report

card format, Schmidt said Redefining Ready! can help districts with their efforts although much of the work is unfunded.

"Accountability has been an issue. Funding has been an issue," she said. "But, in the end, career and technical education is still good for kids."

Sanders and Timm shared the way they have incorporated the new indicators into their measurement of student readiness. New Berlin's efforts include building an online template that students and parents can access to measure students' progress towards readiness. Their website contains detailed information on the multiple indicators and benchmarks used throughout a student's school career.

Before coming to Antigo, Timm used the Redefining Ready! indicators and research to help create a comprehensive program of improving and measuring student achievement at the Mishicot School District. She has continued those efforts in Antigo but warned audience members that the effort does require new time-intensive data collection methods.

Antigo and New Berlin are members of the Wisconsin cohort of Redefining Ready! which was launched at the State Education Convention. For more information, visit wasda.org/?page=WIReady228. ■

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

Anita Jagodzinski, school board member for the Holmen School District, was congratulated by WASB President Terry McCloskey for serving 20 years on the school board.

Other 20-year service award winners are: Gary Andrews, Cuba City; Janis Berg, DeForest Area; Dale Bergsbaken, Bonduel; Laurie Boomsma, Randolph; Elmer Busick, Wausaukee; Jeffrey Caine, Dodgeand; Paul Corcoran, Richland; Sandra Gallagher, White Lake; Bill Haskins, Lancaster Community; Mark Helmer, Prescott; Scott Herzog, Coleman; Tom Hopper, New Lisbon; Donald Horstman, Cumberland; Susan Jones, Fond du Lac; Eugene Kegler, Waterloo; Jay Klemann, Wautoma Area; Robert Kordus, Dover #1; Daniel Kotek, Westby Area; Kenneth Luety, Clinton Community; Scott Mills, Viroqua Area; Nanette Mohr, Gillett; Robert Nigh, Viroqua Area; Stu Olson, Shell Lake; Debra Rasmussen, Baldwin-Woodville Area; Linda Reetz, Berlin Area; Larry A. Schaefer, DC Everest Area; Gary Smith, Lakeland UHS and Lac du Flambeau #1; Gary Stanek, Riverdale; Marlene Stueland, Marshfield; Sandra Weix, Elmwood; and Andrew Zellmer, Montello.



■ 30-Year Service Award

John Haslam, school board member for the South Milwaukee School District, was recognized for serving 30 years on the school board.

Other 30-year service award recipients are: Howard Dahl, North Cape; Mark Finger, Berlin Area; Diane Helms, Fennimore Community; Gene Hogden, Gale-Ettrick-Trempealeau; Allan Tiedt, Freedom Area; and Gary Vose, Kettle Moraine.



■ 40-Year Service Award Alfred Zitlow, school board member for the Arrowhead Unified High School District, was honored for serving 40 years on the school board.



■ Teachers of the Year

State Superintendent Tony Evers and Sen. Herb Kohl honored the teachers of the year (from left): Matthew Miller, North High School, Sheboygan School District (special services teacher of the year); Brent Zinkel, Wausau East High School, Wausau School District (high school principal of the year); Jill Runde, Indian Mound Middle School, McFarland School District (middle school teacher of the year); and Mary Ellen Kanthack, Brookwood Middle School, Genoa City J2 School District.



■ Principals of the Year

State Superintendent Tony Evers and Joe Schroeder, associate executive director of the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators (AWSA), recognized the principals of the year (from left): Daniel Westfahl, Brookfield Elementary School, Elmbrook School District; James Murray, Waukesha STEM Academy, Waukesha School District; and Superintendent Eric Runez accepting the award on behalf of Doug Crowley, DeForest Area High School, DeForest Area School District.



■ **Global Educator of the Year**

Claudine Clark, a teacher at Madison East High School, was honored as Global Educator of the Year.



■ **Special Services Director of the Year**

Janis Chapman of the Kewaskum School District, was recognized as Special Services Director of the Year by Gary Myrah, executive director of the Wisconsin Council of Administrators of Special Services (WCASS).

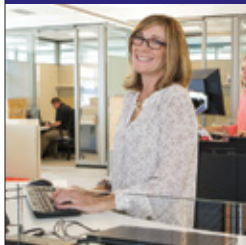
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Student Awards

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

Each year, student artist from across Wisconsin are invited to participate in an annual art contest held in partnership between the WASB and the Wisconsin Art Education Association. Award-winning pieces from the following students were proudly displayed at the 2018 State Education Convention.



- 1st** — **Alyssa Hardrath** (left), Merrill Area School District
- 2nd** — **Kai Devyne**, Kimberly Area School District
- 3rd** — **Paige Levinson**, Kimberly Area School District
- 4th** — **Aviva Levin**, Nicolet Union High School District
- 5th** — **Madelyn Wilmot**, Osceola School District
- 6th** — **Courtney Peterson**, Wausaukee School District
- 7th** — **Madelyn Titera**, Kimberly Area School District
- 8th** — **Jack Clements**, Reedsburg School District
- 9th** — **Lily Riebe**, Juda School District
- 10th** — **Makenna Lindsey**, Central High School District of Westosha



Student Video Team

The WASB invited school districts to submit an application to have students attend the State Education Convention, tape highlights, and then produce a video. A group of students from Union Grove High School was selected to take on this task and helped us capture the events, speakers, and other highlights at the 97th State Education Convention. Special thanks to Union Grove School students and teacher William Wald. Visit the convention website (wasb.org/convention) for a link to their video. ■

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Truancy Options and Procedures

A direct negative correlation exists between truancy and student achievement. In addition, truancy is associated with higher rates of unintended pregnancies, criminal behavior, greater instability in career paths, higher rates of unemployment, and lower lifetime earnings.¹ Given the importance of regular school attendance, Wisconsin law requires children between the ages of six and 18 years to attend school regularly during the full period and hours that the school is in session.² This compulsory attendance statute is enforced, in part, through a variety of remedial statutory provisions which address the consequences for unexcused student absences from school.

According to statistics from the Department of Public Instruction, statewide, student attendance rates have averaged approximately 95 percent since 2008.³ In order to secure regular attendance, districts have a variety of approaches they can take, including detention time, additional assignments, and prohibiting participation in extracurricular activity. When such measures do not resolve attendance issues, districts have the option to seek court intervention to assist their efforts to compel attendance. This *Legal Comment* examines the statutory truancy provisions, districts' procedural obligations under them, and the enforcement tools available to incentivize school attendance.

■ “Truancy”

A student is “truant” when he or she is absent without an acceptable excuse for all or part of one or more days in which school is held and the school attendance officer, principal, or teacher has not been notified of the legal cause of the absence by a parent/guardian.⁴ Districts can individually establish what constitutes “part of a day,” which can be set in terms of minutes, hours, or half-days. School boards must also establish a written policy specifying the reasons for which students may be permitted to be absent from school.⁵ These typically include, but are not limited to, documented physical or mental illnesses, appointments, attendance at school-approved events, and approved vacations. Parents/guardians may excuse their child's absence in writing before the absence, but not for more than 10 days in a school year. However, there is no statutory limit regarding how many days a parent/guardian may excuse a student from school because of illness.⁶ The time during which a student is absent from school as a result of a suspension or expulsion is not considered as an absence under the truancy statute.⁷

For students in special education, the issue of excessive absences and truancy should be addressed in the context of the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. Further, excessive absences can trigger a district's obligation under

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), requiring the district to refer a student for evaluation under the law.

If a student is “truant,” a district must notify the parent/guardian and direct that the student be returned to school or that the parent/guardian provide an acceptable excuse. This notice must be given by the end of the second school day after receiving a report of the unexcused absence. This notice can be given by electronic communications, personal contact or telephone call of which a written record is kept. If these three methods are not successful, the district can provide the notice by first class mail.⁸

■ “Habitual Truancy”

A “habitual truant” is defined as a student under the age of 18 who is absent from school without an acceptable excuse for part or all of five or more days on which school is held during a school semester.⁹ When a student is “habitually truant,” the school attendance officer is obligated to provide notice to the student's parent/guardian.¹⁰ The notice must be provided either by registered, certified, or first-class mail. The school attendance officer may provide a supplemental notice of habitual truancy by sending an electronic communication

Because regular school attendance is a critical component of education, a variety of mechanisms are in place for districts use to incentivize students to attend school and to ensure parent/guardian support in the districts' efforts.



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BLR-2314-2b

to the parent/guardian at the same time the officer issues the mandatory mailed notice.

The notice must include the following: (1) a statement of the parent's/guardian's responsibility under the compulsory attendance law; (2) a statement that the parent/guardian or student may request program or curriculum modifications, and that the student may be eligible for enrollment in a program for children at risk; (3) a request that the parent/guardian meet with the appropriate school personnel within 10 school days after the date the notice is sent to discuss the student's truancy; (4) the name of the school personnel with whom the parent/guardian should meet, as well as the date, time, and place for the meeting; and (5) a statement of the penalties that may be imposed on the parent/guardian if the parent or guardian fails to cause the student to attend school regularly.¹¹

Enforcement Mechanisms

When a student meets the statutory definition of a "habitual truant," a district may initiate proceedings in juvenile, municipal, or teen court seeking formal enforcement options. A juvenile court has jurisdiction over a child who is less than 17 years of age, and is alleged to be truant, in one of two ways: (1) through the filing of information alleging that the child has violated a municipal truancy ordinance; or (2) through the issuance of a citation to the child alleging that the child has violated a municipal truancy ordinance and directing the child to appear in juvenile court.¹² A municipal court may obtain jurisdiction over a student over 12 and younger than 18 years old when the student is alleged to have violated a municipal truancy ordinance and is issued a citation directing the student to appear in municipal court.¹³ A district can also refer the student to a teen court if one has been established in the student's county of residence, the student and parent/guardian consent, and the

student has not successfully completed a teen court program within the prior two years.¹⁴

Under any of these options, the school attendance officer must provide evidence that the appropriate school personnel have, within the school year during which the truancy occurred, performed all of the following four activities: (1) met with the truant student's parent/guardian to discuss the student's truancy, or have attempted to meet with the student's parent/guardian and received no response or been refused; (2) provided the student with the opportunity for educational counseling to determine whether a change in the student's curriculum would resolve the truancy issues, and have considered such curriculum modifications; (3) evaluated the student to determine whether learning problems may be the source of the student's truancy, and if so, have taken steps to overcome the learning problems (however, the child need not be evaluated if tests administered to the child within the previous year indicate that the child is performing at his or her own grade level); and (4) conducted an evaluation to determine whether social problems may be the cause of the student's truancy and, if so, have taken appropriate action or made the appropriate referrals.¹⁵

If district personnel cannot perform one or all of the required activities because the student, or his or her parent/guardian, fails to cooperate with the district, two statutory exceptions may excuse the district from compliance with these requirements. First, the school attendance officer is not required to hold a meeting with the parent/guardian of the habitually truant student if the school attendance officer requests such a meeting and that meeting is not held within 10 school days after the date on which the notice is sent. In addition, the requirement to provide educational counseling to evaluate whether a change in curriculum would correct the problem,

and the requirement to evaluate whether social issues are the cause of the truancy problem, will be considered fulfilled if the school attendance officer provides evidence that the school district was unable to carry out such evaluations because of the student's absence.¹⁶

In addition to these exceptions, a Wisconsin appellate court has held the requirement that the initial truancy letter contain a statement requesting a meeting with the parent/guardian within 10 days is not a prerequisite to a juvenile court order finding that the juvenile is in need of protection or services.¹⁷ In that case, the district sent a letter to the student's mother in January informing her that her son was habitually truant under Wisconsin law. The district, however, did not send a notice to the student's mother requesting a meeting to discuss the student's truancy. Instead, the district referred the student to the county's Health and Human Services department. In March, the district met with the mother to discuss her son's behavior and attendance problems. The meeting was not preceded by a formal notice to the mother requesting the meeting. Subsequently, the juvenile court concluded that student was a habitual truant in need of protection or services.

The family appealed this juvenile court order, arguing that the district was required to provide notice of the meeting before actually holding the meeting, and because the district did not provide evidence to the court that notice of the meeting was given to the mother, the juvenile court did not have sufficient evidence to prove that the meeting was held before the juvenile petition was filed. The court concluded that the notice requirement was not a prerequisite to a juvenile code order, because the juvenile code makes no reference to a notice requirement among the four required district activities which must occur before juvenile court referral. Therefore, because it would be contrary to the statutory language

to incorporate the notice requirement as an additional prerequisite to a juvenile code order, the school attendance officer was under no statutory obligation to present evidence that it provided notice of the meeting in order to support the juvenile petition. Thus, for the purpose of supporting a juvenile court petition, a meeting regarding a student's habitual truancy need only occur at some time after notice about a truancy problem is provided to the parent/guardian and before the juvenile petition is filed.

■ Enforcement Tools

Districts have a number of different options in their efforts to remedy "habitual truancy." However, a district cannot deny a student credit in a course or subject solely because of the student's unexcused absences from school. The district's attendance policy must specify the conditions under which a student may be permitted to take examinations missed during absences.¹⁸

Courts have the power to sanction the parent/guardian. Any adult who knowingly contributes to truancy can be found guilty of a Class C misdemeanor. In addition, a parent/guardian whose child has been found guilty of violating a truancy ordinance can be ordered to participate in counseling at the parent's/guardian's own expense and/or attend school with the truant student.¹⁹ A parent/guardian can also be held responsible for any fines that the student receives and for the cost of any counseling or for supervised work ordered.

Municipal courts enforcing local truancy ordinances are also provided with the power to impose a variety of measures including: suspension of the student's driver's license for not less than 30 days nor more than one year; participation in a counseling or community service program; home

detention; attendance in an education program; revocation of the student's work permit; participation in a teen court program; placement of the student on formal or informal supervision; an order for the student to report to a youth report center after school; court-ordered school attendance; a forfeiture of not more than \$500 plus court costs; and any other reasonable conditions, including a curfew, restrictions as to places the student may be, or restrictions on associating with other children or adults in the evening.²⁰

Juvenile courts have similar powers, but also the power to order the following: placement of the student in the home of a parent, relative, non-relative (for up to 30 days), foster home, treatment foster home, group home, or child-caring institution; electronic monitoring; a transfer of legal custody from a parent to a relative, to the county department, or to a licensed child welfare agency; provision of special treatment or care as identified in an evaluation; development and implementation of an integrated service plan; outpatient alcohol or drug treatment or education; drug testing; participation in a wilderness challenge program or other experiential education program; participation in a juvenile offender education program; and vocational assessment, counseling, or training.²¹

■ Conclusion

Because regular school attendance is a critical component of education, a variety of mechanisms are in place for districts to use to incentivize students to attend school and to ensure parent/guardian support in the districts' efforts. Districts have the option to move through a range of rehabilitative to punitive measures, including court intervention, to address truancy issues. Those

options, however, require districts to carefully follow specific procedures to access those measures. Districts are advised to review periodically their truancy policies and procedures to ensure the use of proper and effective truancy reducing measures. ■

■ End Notes

1. "What Works Wisconsin — Research to Practice Series #5 "Finding effective solutions to Truancy." University of Wisconsin-Madison and University of Wisconsin-Extension (July 2007), fyi.uwex.edu/whatworkswisconsin/files/2014/04/whatworks_05.pdf.
2. Wis. Stat. s. 118.15(1)(a).
3. Department of Public Instruction, dpi.wi.gov/wisedash/about-data/attendance.
4. Wis. Stat. s. 118.16(1)(c).
5. Wis. Stat. s. 118.16(4)(a).
6. Wis. Stat. s. 118.15(3)(a) and (c).
7. Wis. Stat. s. 118.16(1m).
8. Wis. Stat. s. 118.16(2)(c).
9. Wis. Stat. s. 118.16(1)(a).
10. Wis. Stat. s. 118.16(2)(cg).
11. Wis. Stat. ss. 118.16(2)(cg)1.-4.
12. Wis. Stat. ss. 118.16(6)(a)1., 938.12; 938.125; and 938.13 (c).
13. Wis. Stat. ss. 118.163 and 938.17(2)(a)1.
14. Wis. Stat. s. 118.16(6)(a)2.
15. Wis. Stat. ss. 118.16(5)(a)-(d).
16. Wis. Stat. s. 118.16(5m).
17. *Richland Co. H.H.S. v. Brandon L.Y.*, 2008 WI App 73, 312 Wis. 2d 406, 753 N.W.2d 529 (Wis. Ct. App. 2008) (cert denied).
18. Wis. Stat. s. 118.16(4)(b).
19. Wis. Stat. ss. 118.163(2)(k) and 938.342(1m)(a).
20. Wis. Stat. ss. 118.163(2) and 938.342(1g).
21. Wis. Stat. s. 938.34.

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

Telling WASB's Story

2017 WASB President **Terry McCloskey** looks back at WASB's successful year

When he began his term as 2017 WASB President, Capt. Terry McCloskey of the Three Lakes School Board, called on Wisconsin school board members to "Tell Our Story." At this year's State Education Convention, McCloskey, wrapped up his term as WASB President by telling the WASB's story from the past year.

There were many successes. Advocacy efforts led by the WASB in early 2017 helped shape federal and state policy. In March, Gov. Scott Walker presented his 2017-19 education budget at a press conference at Waukesha South High School. WASB Executive Director John Ashley, McCloskey and WASB immediate past president Stu Olson were among those who helped the governor introduce the education budget.

As the state budget took shape, advocacy efforts continued through the summer and fall. Wisconsin school leaders used a new tool from the WASB called Voter Voice, which allows school leaders to easily contact lawmakers and be a voice for public education.

In November, the state budget was signed by the governor.

"It was a budget favoring Wisconsin education," McCloskey said. "We did not win everything, but we did well."

Overall, McCloskey said he is proud of the WASB's advocacy efforts.

"Lobbying is hard to assess," he said. "Words matter and often a small change in a good bill makes it better and a word added or subtracted from a bad bill can help to make it better. WASB is proud of our lobbying work in 2017."

As WASB members continue their advocacy efforts this year, McCloskey called attention to two items impacting education. The first is the formation of a statewide response to "No Time to Lose," a report from the National Conference of State Legislatures. The second is to implement strategies for Wisconsin's responses to the Every



Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

In closing, McCloskey thanked his wife Mary Ann for her support and his fellow school board members.

"Thank you to my Three Lakes School Board who always gave me their great support," he said. "I also want to thank the WASB Board of Directors for their wisdom and support over the last year. And lastly, I want to thank the staff of WASB for their tireless work in support of all Wisconsin districts." ■



Rozmenoski to Lead WASB in 2018

Mary Jo Rozmenoski was elected by the WASB Board of Directors as the 2018 WASB president. Rozmenoski (pictured with 2017 President Capt. Terry McCloskey) is president of the Black River Falls School Board and has been a WASB Director since 2014.

Joining Rozmenoski in leading the WASB is Brett Hyde, a school board member in the Muskego-Norway School District. Hyde was elected 1st vice president. Bill Yingst, Sr., a member of the Durand-Arkansaw school board, will serve as 2nd vice president. Rozmenoski will serve a one-year term as WASB president.

2018 WASB Board of Directors



Back row, left to right Andrew Maertz, Reedsville (Region 8); Ron Frea, Pewaukee (Region 15); Brett Hyde, Muskego-Norway (Region 11 and 1st Vice President); Rosanne Hahn, Burlington (Region 13); Wanda Owens, Barneveld (Region 9); Barbara Herzog, Oshkosh (Region 7); Stu Olson, Shell Lake (Region 1); and Andy Zellmer, Montello (Region 10).

Front row, left to right Tom Weber, Sun Prairie (Region 12); Tony Baez, Milwaukee (Region 14); Bill Yingst, Sr., Durand-Arkansas (Region 4 and 2nd Vice President); Capt. Terry McCloskey, USN Retired, Three Lakes (Region 2 and Immediate Past President); Mary Jo Rozmenoski, Black River Falls (Region 6 and President); Sue Today, Sevastopol (Region 3); and Cheryl Ploeckelman, Colby (Region 5)



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Legislative Session is Wrapping Up

Clock is ticking as 2017-18 Legislature moves into its final weeks



Following a surprise Democratic victory in a January special election to fill a vacant Senate seat in northwestern Wisconsin (congratulations to Patty Schachtner, a Somerset school board member), Gov. Scott Walker, in his State of the State address, unveiled an ambitious legislative agenda for the remainder of the 2017-18 session. The agenda includes money for low-spending and rural schools, a child tax credit, a rural economic development plan, a health care stability plan, and welfare reform.

With only a few floor dates left in 2018, the Legislature has been in a rush to push the governor's proposals as well as a package of bills to address problems with the state's foster care system and a host of other individual bills out of committees and onto the floor.

As of this writing, the state Assembly is preparing to enter what could be its final week of floor sessions. The state Senate is likely to meet at least once in March.

This month's column takes a look at some of the key bills affecting K-12 public education that the WASB is most involved with as the two-year legislative session winds down.

■ Assembly Bill 835/Senate Bill 690

Sparsity Aid Increase/Low-Revenue Ceiling Adjustment

The WASB strongly supports these identical companion bills and

securing their passage is one of our top priorities for the remainder of the session. The Assembly version (AB 835) has been passed by the Assembly and is now available for Senate action.

Under the bills, beginning in 2018-19, school districts that qualify for Sparsity Aid under current law would receive a payment equal to \$400 per pupil, an increase of \$100 per pupil over the current amount.

In addition, under the bills, the low-revenue ceiling would increase to \$9,400 per pupil in 2018-19, and by an additional \$100 per pupil each year until it reaches \$9,800 in 2022-23. Under current law, any district with base revenue per pupil that is below a statutorily specified amount (currently \$9,100 per pupil) may increase its revenues up to that amount without seeking referendum approval.

The original bill would have prevented at least nine districts from using the adjustments to the low-revenue ceiling provided in the bill for up to three years because voters in those districts had turned down an operational referendum held during or after the 2015-16 school year.

Based on urging from the WASB and others, the bill was amended to give districts another chance to go to their voters to use the low-revenue ceiling increase if they had a recent failed operational referendum.

A separate provision in the amendment addresses a situation in

which voters in a district rejected — at the same election — both a borrowing referendum and a referendum to raise the revenue limit that was tied to the school construction project for which the borrowing was requested. Under the amendment, such a district would not be subject to the three-year freeze and could utilize the low-revenue ceiling adjustment without obtaining approval from the district's voters.

The Assembly version of the bill (AB 835) is on the Senate's Feb. 20 calendar for a vote on concurrence (or final passage). We expect the bill to pass and be sent to the governor.

■ Assembly Bill 693

The so-called "Teacher Protection Act"

The WASB opposed this bill in its original form and continues to oppose it. Nearly everyone who testified at the Jan. 11 public hearing was in opposition, including all of the other public education advocacy groups and groups representing students with disabilities.

The author, Rep. Jeremy Thiesfeldt (R-Fond du Lac) has introduced two substitute amendments in an attempt to muster support for passing at least some vestige of the original bill.

The second of these, Assembly Substitute Amendment 2 (ASA 2), is stripped down to the point that the legislation would provide only for the right of a teacher to terminate

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his or her employment if he or she is the victim of a “physical assault” as defined in the bill or of a violent crime as defined under state law. (See Wis. Stat. s. 939.632 (1) (e).) The physical assault or violent crime could occur while the teacher is on school premises, at or in transit to a school-sponsored activity, or otherwise engaged in official duties on behalf of the school district.

The WASB continues to have strong concerns about the proposal even in its watered-down form. These include:

1) Although ASA 2 still conditions a teacher’s right to terminate his or her contract without penalty, including the payment of liquidated damages, upon the teacher providing the school board with a law enforcement report documenting the physical assault or violent crime within two months of the incident, the bill doesn’t specify a time frame within which the teacher must (or may) exercise this right. Thus, it appears a teacher could decide to terminate their contract at any time without penalty, whether in the current year or in five years or in 10 years, etc., so long as he or she provided the school board with a law enforcement report documenting the physical assault or violent crime within two months of the incident covered in the report.

2) The definition of “physical assault” is problematic and has not been changed even though problems have been pointed out consistently as the legislation has been discussed. Under the bill, “physical assault” means “the knowing or intentional touching of another person, by use of any body part or object, with the intent to cause physical harm.” This definition does not require any element where the act causes bodily harm or any element that the act is done without the consent of the person harmed. *(Compare this with the statutory*

definition of Battery in s. 940.19. Wis. Stat.)

3) The phrase “at or in transit to a school-sponsored activity” is also problematic. A teacher could be traveling to an event in his or her own vehicle and be assaulted by someone not even remotely connected to the school district and still avail himself or herself of the “right to terminate” provision.

The bill is currently in the Assembly Judiciary Committee where a vote on moving it along is scheduled for Feb. 20.

■ Assembly Bill 496/Senate Bill 402

Suspending and Expelling a Pupil for Possessing a Firearm at School

The WASB strongly supports this bill at the request of a number of school boards and administrators. It would restore local discretion with respect to bringing expulsion proceedings in cases involving a student who brings a firearm on to school grounds.

With one important exception, school boards exercise almost complete discretion in determining the appropriate length and other conditions of an expulsion – all the way from allowing immediate reinstatement,

to permitting conditional reinstatement, to deciding that the term of the expulsion shall last until the student is no longer age-eligible to attend public school unless the board modifies the firearms-related expulsion mandate on a case-by-case basis.

The exception is that any time school officials conclude that a student has possessed a firearm (which is defined to include not only guns but also various “destructive devices”) while at school or while under the supervision of a school authority. The school district must suspend the student, commence expulsion proceedings, and expel the student from school for at least one year.

School districts accepting certain federal funds also must have a policy in place that is consistent with these mandates and that requires a referral of all firearms-related and weapons-related incidents to law enforcement.

Federal law, however, provides for two exceptions that permit a school board to not suspend/hold an expulsion hearing in the specific situations involving:

- 1) A firearm that is lawfully stored inside a locked vehicle on school property; or




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- 2) The possession of a firearm for an activity approved and authorized by the school board if the school board adopts appropriate safeguards to ensure pupil safety.

The bill restores local control over school discipline procedures in certain, specified circumstances to local the school board. The bill does not affect criminal law nor does it affect law enforcement decisions related to students who bring firearms onto school grounds. Students could still face sanctions under existing criminal statutes regarding possession of firearms or other dangerous weapons on school grounds.

School boards already have the authority under current law not to expel students in these situations; however, they must go through the expulsion hearing process. We question why the state mandates suspension and an expulsion hearing even in cases where the school board can

readily determine the matter was a mistake by the pupil and that the health and safety of the pupil and/or others was not put at risk. In these cases, school administration, in accordance with the school board's adopted student code of conduct, would not have initiated the expulsion process absent the requirement in state law to do so.

The WASB also recognizes that increasing numbers of school districts are sponsoring trap shooting teams, which by definition are school-approved activities that involve firearms. In addition, many districts would like to provide hunter safety courses on school grounds with school board approval. This bill addresses these circumstances by clarifying the procedure schools must follow regarding school discipline and explicitly spelling out exceptions. These are significant issues in many rural school districts.

Finally, it is important to note

that while the bill removes a mandate, it does not add any new mandates. The bill in no way restricts a school board's authority to suspend or expel a student in any situation involving a firearm on school grounds. Any school district that wants to maintain a policy of automatic suspension/expulsion in all cases involving firearms can still do so. This bill would not require any board to change its student code of conduct.

The Assembly version of the bill (AB 496) passed the Assembly on a voice vote (unanimously) on Jan. 23. The Senate version of the bill (SB 402) was recommended for passage on a unanimous 5-0 vote by the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee on Jan. 30. Both bills are available for Senate floor action and we expect this legislation to be taken up, passed and sent to the governor in March before the current session ends. ■



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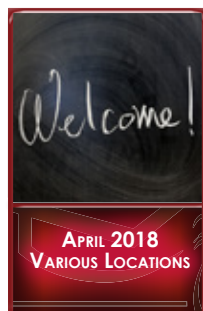


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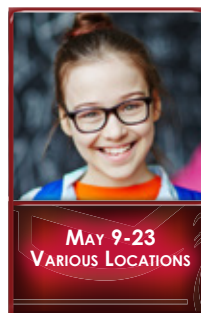
2018 NEW SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER GATHERINGS



Will a new member be joining your school board in April? If so, plan to attend a WASB New School Board Member Gathering with them during the third week of April.

The gatherings provide an informal orientation for newly elected members to begin learning about their role and the WASB services available to them.

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