

SPECIAL **2026** CONVENTION PREVIEW

WISCONSIN SchoolNews

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

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Convention 2026

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**Interim director serving until a vote is held
at the 2025 Fall Regional Meetings.*

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Wisconsin Students Named U.S. Presidential Scholars

Four Wisconsin students have been named 2025 U.S. Presidential Scholars.

The U.S. Department of Education recognized 161 high school seniors in September for their accomplishments, the arts, and career and technical

education. Wisconsin's four honorees are Shilpa Kumar, of Brookfield East High School; Joshua Masslich, of Cedarburg Senior High School; Leonard Whipp, of West De Pere High School; and Madison's Andrew Jimenez, of eAchieve Academy. □

STAT OF THE MONTH

48.6%

Percentage of Wisconsin students who met or exceeded expectations in mathematics in 2024-25 standardized tests. *Source: Wisconsin DPI, Wisconsin Student Assessment System*

Nearly Half of Wisconsin Students Meet or Exceed Expectations

MADISON — Standardized assessment results released Sept. 25 by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction show a slight increase in student performance in both English language arts and mathematics during the 2024-25 school year, according to a DPI press release.

According to data from the Wisconsin Student Assessment System — which includes the Forward Exam, Dynamic Learning Maps, the PreACT Secure and the ACT — 47.7% of students in all tested grades met or exceeded expectations in ELA, while 48.6% did so in mathematics.

"While these test scores give us some insight into how our kids are doing academically, they represent a snapshot from

a single day and are only one piece of the puzzle," State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly said in the DPI press release.

"Recruiting and retaining great teachers in our classrooms is one of the most powerful ways we can help all kids succeed."

The Forward Exam assesses students in grades three through eight in ELA and mathematics. In the 2024-25 school year, public school students showed a slight improvement in reading performance, with overall Forward scores in reading rising by 0.3 percentage points over the previous year. On the ELA portion, public school students saw a 0.5 percentage point increase in performance. In mathematics, public school performance dipped by 0.3 percentage points. □

E-Rate Funding for Wi-Fi Hotspots on School Buses Ends

On Sept. 30, the Federal Communication Commission voted to end funding through the E-Rate program for Wi-Fi hotspots on school buses. This funding source was established in 2023 by the former FCC administration after COVID-era programs, authorized by Congress, establishing funding for these hotspots expired. Hotspots installed on school buses are designed to allow internet connectivity for students to do classwork while in transit, particularly in large rural districts where students can be on buses for up to an hour or more.

The new FCC chairman Brendan Carr in a press release cited his belief that the rules implementing this funding source through E-Rate were beyond the statutory purview of the FCC and would allow students to use the internet unregulated and unsupervised. The Wi-Fi hotspots connect to a schools' server and are required to have filters and other safeguards to comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act. □

Chair of the New Speaker's Task Force on Protecting Children Comments on the Goals and Scope of Their Work

Recently the Assembly GOP, led by Speaker Robin Vos (R-Rochester), announced the creation of four new Speaker's Task Forces. One task force this session will likely have implications for K-12 education, the Task Force on Protecting Children chaired by Rep. Lindee Brill (R-Sheboygan Falls). In a recent interview with the Wheeler Report, Rep. Brill spoke on the committee's focus, goals, timeline and potential challenges.

Rep. Brill's committee will focus on addressing youth mental health crises and the negative impacts of social media. Brill said the committee aims to explore how technology affects children in various aspects of life, including home life, development and exposure to dangers such as pornography, bullying and grooming. The committee plans to meet with experts in these areas to identify where Wisconsin is falling short in protecting children and what legislative actions can be taken to address these issues.

"We know that a majority of children now have phones in their hands, so we know that's really been the avenue to where they're getting information," Brill said. "What can we do to help come alongside parents and schools? What are you seeing that we can be doing from a state perspective, from a law perspective, to help support you in creating a mentally healthy future generation."

Visit the WASB Legislative Update Blog to learn more and stay up to date on the latest developments impacting public schools. □



Collaborate, Innovate, Elevate

For many Wisconsinites, it's time to carve pumpkins, take trips to orchards or corn mazes, drink hot spiced apple cider, bake pies and root for our favorite football team. For me, this is the season for touring our beautiful state to learn from and update WASB members at regional meetings throughout Wisconsin.

One of the things I enjoy most about the WASB Fall Regional Meetings is recognizing school board members for their progress in our WASB Member Recognition Program. I truly enjoy meeting our members, shaking their hands, presenting their awards and celebrating their commitment to public education. I wish every award winner could attend in person to receive their well-deserved recognition.

These meetings serve as both learning opportunities and social occasions. We gather around a meal to recognize our members' efforts to develop themselves as effective school board members, elect local board members as regional directors to the WASB Board of Directors, and learn from and network with board colleagues from our area. Additionally, this year's pre-meeting workshop — "Kids Can't Learn If They're Not There" — provides steps school boards can take to reduce chronic absenteeism and truancy.

For those of you who have been unable to attend an in-person meeting or workshop, the WASB will be hosting online versions. The online absenteeism workshop will be held on Tuesday, Nov. 4, while the online Fall Regional Meeting will be held on Thursday, Nov. 6. Both will begin at noon and are open to any WASB member. Pre-registration is

required at WASB.org.

My message to attendees at this year's Fall Regional Meetings was simple: school boards matter.

Your board matters. Each of you matter. Your work together matters. Your beliefs matter. Those beliefs and the actions they translate into shape whether students in your district will learn to their full potential or something less.

Another highlight of my Regional Meeting presentation is previewing the State Education Convention and inviting members to join us in Milwaukee this January. The convention is the centerpiece of our annual calendar, and a great opportunity for board members to network and grow by attending one of the 90-plus breakout sessions.

Our theme this year: Collaborate, Innovate, Elevate. That idea was on display as I visited districts across the state this fall, and we're excited to carry it forward throughout the 2026 convention. No matter your role, district size, location, or years of experience in education, there's something for everyone — and always a fellow educator or member district willing to connect and share.

I've also gotten the opportunity to meet each of our dynamic keynote speakers. We have an exciting mix this year and I'm excited to hear them deliver their messages on the Baird Center stage. Turn to page 4 to meet our speakers and get a taste of their powerful messages.

The convention is also where the annual WASB Delegate Assembly takes place. The Delegate Assembly is your opportunity to shape the direction of the WASB's policy positions. It's important that as

many boards and districts as possible participate and vote so the WASB's positions truly represent the viewpoints of our members.

There's plenty more to explore, plan for and learn in this convention preview issue. Be sure to visit WASB.org/convention to learn more and register — registration opens Monday, Nov. 3. After registering, you'll receive a link to book hotel rooms.

I'm excited to see you there. I'll also see some of you this month at the WASB Fall Legislative Conference, on Saturday, Nov. 8, in Stevens Point. Turn to page 31 to learn more about the conference and all of our upcoming events.

Finally, in today's turbulent environment, comments made by individuals associated with a school district — particularly on social media or via email — often receive intense scrutiny and, sometimes, volatile responses.

To help you navigate these situations, WASB attorneys have recorded a free webinar — offered as a member benefit — titled "Social Media, Online Communications and Email Use — The Implications for School Employees." The hour-long webinar, which can be found in the WASB Complimentary Events Video Library on WASB.org, addresses the legal and policy implications of employee communications.

As a school board member, you have accepted a unique, challenging and serious commitment. For that, I thank you and look forward to seeing you at the convention in Milwaukee in January — where together, we will collaborate, innovate and elevate to serve our schools, students and communities. ■

The Wisconsin State Education Convention, co-sponsored by the Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators and Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials, brings more than 2,000 education leaders together each January to share their passion for public education and student achievement. The following pages give a sneak peek at what to expect from the 105th convention, scheduled for Jan. 21–23 at the Baird Center in Milwaukee.

Wednesday General Session



10 a.m. – Noon | Baird Center

The **Iola-Scandinavia High School Band** will open the 105th Wisconsin State Education Convention with a special performance.

During the general session, administrators and educators of the year will be recognized along with the student art award winner.

◀ **PRESIDING: PATRICK RAU**
WASDA President, Peshtigo School District



WEDNESDAY, JAN. 21, 2026 | GENERAL SESSION KEYNOTE

Anne Marie Anderson

Anne Marie Anderson is a three-time Emmy Award-winning broadcaster, keynote speaker and author. As she walked through ESPN's doors fresh out of college, Anne Marie embarked on a career that led her into the boardrooms and locker rooms of some of the most successful franchises in sports. Utilizing the methods observed through behind-closed-doors coverage of high-performing coaches, athletes and executives, Anderson applied their penchant for taking bold, sometimes surprising, risks to her own personal and professional life.

The knowledge and experience she has gained through making one surprising career move after another has led her to becoming one of the most experienced female play-by-play announcers in the country. In "Cultivating Audacity," Anne Marie shares the system she developed to find the courage to confront her hesitation and break down barriers that stood between her and the life she wanted.

Anne Marie is known for delivering keynotes that are alternately funny and touching; she connects with the audience through the power of storytelling.

WEDNESDAY KEYNOTE



Sponsored by:  **KRAUS-ANDERSON**

Thursdays General Session



3 – 5 p.m. | Baird Center

The **Delavan-Darien High School String Orchestra** will kick off the second general session of the State Education Convention. Wisconsin school board members who have served 20, 30 or 40 years will be recognized for their service. WASB President Andrew Maertz will reflect on his past year as president before handing the gavel to the 2025 president.

◀ **PRESIDING: ANDREW MAERTZ**
WASB President, Reedsville School District



THURSDAY, JAN. 22, 2026 | GENERAL SESSION KEYNOTE

Mickey Smith Jr.

Educator. Encourager. Those are just two of the words that describe Mickey Smith Jr., who will bring a saxophone to the Wisconsin State Education Convention stage to share his unique combination of message and music.

Over his career, the eight-time Teacher of the Year and GRAMMY Music Educator Award Recipient has grown band programs in Louisiana, Texas and Florida by more than 500%, reaching over half of their student populations. A Southwest Louisiana native, Mickey champions education and the educators who make it possible. His classrooms have welcomed students from diverse backgrounds, many overcoming trauma, and he uses music to help them discover meaning, purpose and belonging.

Mickey believes modern teaching must be relationship-based, showing students they matter as much as the material. His mission: engage, educate and empower every learner through music so every child feels loved, valued and wanted.

As a teacher, all-state conductor and clinician, Mickey has shared his “Keep on Going” approach with schools and conferences across North America. He now lives in West Palm Beach with his wife, Eugenia, and their children, William and Mikayla.

Learn more at mickeysmithjr.com.

THURSDAY KEYNOTE



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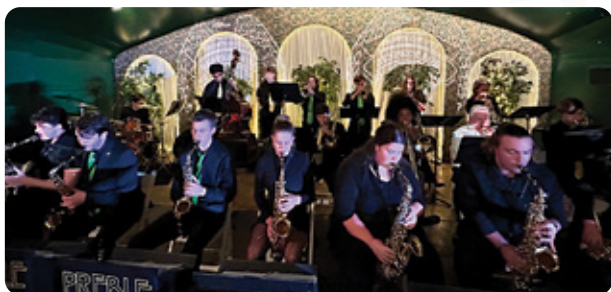
Friday General Session



10:30 a.m. – Noon | Baird Center

The **Green Bay Preble High School Jazz Band** will open the final general session of the State Education Convention. For the first time, there will also be a second musical performance, as the **Stoughton High School Norwegian Dancers** will treat the audience to a special performance. Gov. Tony Evers has been invited to address the general session before former superintendent and current Marian University President Aaron Sadoff closes out the event with a final message.

◀ **PRESIDING: MIKE KOLTRES**
WASBO President, CESA 5



FRIDAY, JAN. 23, 2026 | GENERAL SESSION KEYNOTE

Aaron Sadoff

When Aaron Sadoff takes the WASB stage in January, attendees can expect more than a motivational speech. They will experience an invitation to action: to see challenges through a lens of gratitude, to build relationships with intentional kindness, and to lead with a belief that the best possibilities are always “right now.”

A Gulf War veteran and a graduate of UW-Madison and Marian University, Sadoff has a passion for developing, leading and sustaining a community and culture of happiness. He believes that the science of happiness and positive psychology can revolutionize the way that organizations and communities are working to best impact the success of the people they serve.

Serving 25 years in education, including as the superintendent of North Fond du Lac School District, Sadoff was honored to be the 2019 Wisconsin Superintendent of the Year. He is a past executive director of the Fond du Lac Area Foundation and now serves as the 18th president of Marian University.

Sadoff is a passionate advocate for positive thinking — distilling a lifetime of experience into his book, “MindCraft: The Art of Positive Thinking Right Now.” At its core, MindCraft is both a philosophy and a practical toolkit. Sadoff invites readers to “craft their minds” much like a builder shapes a structure: with purpose, imagination and attention to detail. The book blends engaging storytelling with actionable strategies to help individuals shift their perspective, strengthen relationships and lead with optimism.

FRIDAY KEYNOTE



THURSDAY, JAN. 22, 2026 | WASB BREAKFAST KEYNOTE

Dave Weber

Crystal Ballroom, Hilton Milwaukee City Center | 7–8:30 a.m. | Registration required, \$45

Dave Weber is an internationally recognized speaker, humorist, author and trainer in helping people make progress on purpose and he has the track record to prove his techniques work. Since 1987, Weber has been one of the country's most sought-after speakers. His high energy and entertaining style have made the former school board member a crowd favorite.

The Atlanta native has spoken to tens of thousands of educators from all 50 states. He's also authored two bestselling books: "Sticks and Stones Exposed: The Power of Our Words," and "Leadership Redefined: The 12 X's of Success for TODAY'S Leader." Weber's presentation, "I am Sick & Tired of Being Sick & Tired," will share research-based, cutting-edge information on the top-25 warning signs when experiencing unhealthy levels of stress. He'll also go over cures and coping mechanisms to help you prevent stress from getting to unhealthy levels.

BREAKFAST KEYNOTE



★ WASDA Luncheon

Thursday, Jan. 22, Noon – 1:15 p.m.

Registration required, \$49 | Hilton Milwaukee City Center

Hosted by the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators, featuring the 2025 Superintendent of the Year.

★ WASBO Luncheon

Thursday, Jan. 22, Noon – 1:15 p.m.

Registration required, \$49 | Hilton Milwaukee City Center

Hosted by the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials, featuring the 2025 Wisconsin School Business Officials of the Year.

COMPLIMENTARY REGISTRATION

FOR ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS

School district administrative assistants are invited to attend the State Education Convention with complimentary registration.

Eligible individuals must be designated as administrative assistants in the WASB database.



Pre-Convention Workshops

TUESDAY, JAN. 20 | 1:30–5 P.M. | BAIRD CENTER | PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED



Beyond the Score: Equipping School Boards to Use Data for Informed Decision-Making

In WASB's Key Work of School Boards, members are urged to "analyze data by improvement, not just results." This hands-on workshop equips board members to interpret Wisconsin's school and district data using WISEdash Public and the State Report Cards. Participants will explore key indicators — achievement, growth, attendance and more — through live demos and guided activities. We'll also unpack DPI's new standard-setting process and changes to rating categories. By session's end, board members will better understand how report card data is determined, how to avoid common pitfalls, and how to use data to support informed governance, goal setting and advocacy.

CESA 3: Lisa Arneson, director of school improvement; CESA 6: Mary Ann Hudziak, co-director, learning and assessment; CESA 8: Stephanie Feldner, director of curriculum, instruction and assessment



School Finance Puzzle

Learn about the major components of the Wisconsin school finance system using a hands-on, interactive approach from members of the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials and the School Finance Team for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Attendees will become acquainted with the basics of the budget cycle, revenue limits, equalization aid, property taxes and referendums while learning how these components interrelate and impact board decision-making. Leave the workshop with increased confidence in discussing school finance concepts and fostering an environment of trust in your community for the benefit of students.

WASBO, Wisconsin DPI

Baird Center Security

Security is at the forefront of our concerns. Weapons screening detectors will be located at every entrance to the Baird Center. All individuals must pass through these screeners to enter the facility.

Operated by the Wisconsin Center District Public Safety Department, the detectors were first implemented in 2025. Since then, improvements — including upgraded screening devices — have been made to enhance efficiency and streamline the entry process.

During the convention, to report a medical crisis or other emergency with the Baird Center's house phones, dial "EMERGENCY-6165" instead of "911" to guarantee the fastest response.





Our Students, Our Future: Empowering Boards and Superintendents With Governance

If you became a superintendent or ran for school board to focus on student learning and continuous improvement, this workshop is for you. Hear from three districts with governance models that ensure every board policy focuses on student learning, district leaders are held accountable to clear expectations, the board stays focused on district long-term health, and the district fosters trust in the community for the benefit of all students.

*Eau Claire, Sun Prairie and Verona Area
school districts*



The Women of WASB: A Deep Dive Into the 4 Cs

Women rise by lifting one another. Join in this inspiring opportunity to connect with other women leaders from across the state to amplify your leadership through the four Cs: compassion, confidence, communication and connection. The workshop takes a deep dive into each of these themes using recent works from women authors. Join us and become part of a vibrant community where women's strength and voice are acknowledged and nurtured.

Hartford J1: Tara Villalobos, superintendent; Neenah: Mary Pfeiffer, former superintendent; St. Francis: Deb Kerr, superintendent

TITLE IX TRAINING SERIES



Provide your staff with mandated Title IX training.

The WASB and Boardman & Clark updated their Title IX Training Series this summer. This series is based on the 2020 Title IX regulations and includes training for Title IX coordinators, investigators, all employees and more.

Subscribe now and begin training.

Visit the WASB Portal to subscribe and start providing the training to all staff members in your district. The 2025-26 subscription rate is \$395 for members and complimentary for Policy Resource Guide subscribers. To order, contact subscriptions@WASB.org.



COLLABORATE INNOVATE ELEVATE

2026 State Education Convention

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Visit the convention website at [WASB.org/convention](https://wasb.org/convention) for the complete schedule of breakout sessions.

ADVOCACY | BOARD DEVELOPMENT | COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT | FACILITIES | HUMAN RESOURCES
LEADERSHIP | SCHOOL FINANCE | SCHOOL LAW | STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT | TECHNOLOGY

ADVOCACY

● Building Community Support for Tax Levy Transparency

The Green Bay Area Public School District and community members successfully obtained approval from the city council to add language to the property tax bill highlighting the amount the district levies for vouchers. This session will share the steps taken by the Board of Education, efforts to engage the community about the need for increased transparency, strategies for building allies and key lessons learned along the way.

Green Bay: Lori Blakeslee, Laura McCoy. Champions 4 Green Bay Public Schools: Denise Gaumer-Hutchison

● School Administrators Alliance 2026 Legislative Update

Now that the 2025-27 state budget

is finalized, School Administrators Alliance Executive Director Dee Pettack breaks down the key take-aways and priorities. Get an insider's perspective on how the new budget will impact your district and what the SAA will focus on this year.

School Administrators Alliance: Dee Pettack

● Stronger Together: Addressing Mental Health Needs Through Community Connections

Rural schools often lack the resources needed to provide appropriate and adequate support to all learners. With the help of creative funding and an outside community partnership, all Montello students are eligible to receive therapy-based interventions from a licensed therapist.

Montello: Barb Beyer, Elizabeth Calnin, Yedda Olson

● Share Your Story! The Why, What and How of Hosting a Legislative Day

Stoughton annually hosts elected officials to showcase the district and community while advocating for public education. A Legislative Day provided a platform for representatives to engage directly with students, educators and administrators. Events like this allow for authentic conversations and give students a direct voice in shaping their educational future. Leave with a framework to develop or enhance a Legislative Day in your district.

Stoughton: Dan Keyser

● WASB Legislative Update

Learn about the state budget and legislation affecting public K-12 schools that may be enacted in the upcoming legislative session. Receive tips on how to respond effectively as advocates for your district, schools and students.

WASB: Chris Kulow, David Martin

Breakout Sessions
Sponsored by:



A key feature of the State Education Convention is the wide variety of breakout sessions available to attendees. This year's selection of more than 90 breakout sessions touches on nearly all aspects of education leadership. Whether you're from a large or small district, urban or rural, a first-time attendee or a convention veteran, there are sessions for everyone.

Where did these sessions come from? A team of school board members, administrators and business officials reviewed more than 200 proposals and identified the sessions they'd want to attend. Our goal is that every session gives attendees valuable insights to take home to their community.

Sessions are organized here by one of 10 themes. Visit [WASB.org/convention](https://wasb.org/convention) to find more information, including the date and time of each session.

BOARD DEVELOPMENT

● **Calling All Board Presidents and Aspiring Leaders**

School board presidents and aspiring leaders can improve by building a working group as we navigate our own challenges and opportunities in our respective districts. Join us for this opportunity to have an initial, collective conversation. Be inspired to return home and continue similar conversations with neighboring districts.

WASB: *Ben Niehaus*

● **Calling All New Board Members: Building Connections and Knowledge**

Engage in insightful discussions on building effective relationships with fellow board members and deepen your understanding of your roles and responsibilities. Gain practical tips on proven listening and questioning strategies, with advice that experienced board members have found invaluable. Connect, learn best practices and enhance your board experience from day one!

WASB: *Cheryl Gullicksrud, Randy Guttenberg, Ben Niehaus, Bruce Quinton, George Steffen, Cheryl Stinski, Kelly Thompson, Patti Vickman*

● **Fast Track to Leadership: Elevating New Board Members From Day 1**

Learn how to equip board members with an understanding of their legal responsibilities and the processes necessary for smooth transitions. A comprehensive onboarding program

ensures that new board members are knowledgeable about district goals and achievements, informed on how the board conducts its work and ready to make impactful decisions for the success of our schools.

WASB: *Dan Mallin, Patrick Mans, George Steffen*

● **From Vision to Impact: Reimagining Board Leadership for the Future**

Explore a reimagined model of school governance — where alignment isn't just strategic, it's transformative. Discover how vision-driven leadership, board coherence and authentic community connection form a three-part engine for lasting student impact. This session introduces a governance framework designed to reduce fragmentation, increase transparency and empower all stakeholders to move forward together.

DeForest: *Gail Lovick, Ann Stettbacher, Rebecca Toetz, Kathy Williams*

● **Strengthening Board Policies: A Hands-On Approach to Updates and Maintenance**

Join St. Croix Central leaders as they share their journey in updating and maintaining board policies using the WASB Policy Resource Guide. In 2022, district leaders committed to align their policies with current practices. Discover how they used a hands-on approach to comprehensively review their policy book and develop a sustainable strategy for keeping policies current.

Saint Croix Central: *Kalli Jordan, Lance Rongstad, Tim Widiker*

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

● **A Long-Term Plan for Operational and Facilities Efficiency**

Facing aging facilities, declining enrollment and the goal to maximize taxpayer money, Menasha partnered with consultants to create a data-

Pre-Delegate Assembly **DISCUSSION**

Tuesday, Jan. 20 | 7-8 p.m. | Crystal Ballroom, Hilton Milwaukee City Center

This discussion session gives delegates an opportunity to seek any needed clarifications of the resolutions forwarded to the Delegate Assembly by the WASB Policy and Resolutions Committee. Delegates may also propose emergency resolutions to the Policy and Resolutions Committee. This session will also include a review of parliamentary procedure for delegate assemblies.

This will be an informational session only. Members are encouraged to ask questions, but no action will be taken, and no debate will be allowed.

driven, community-informed long-range facilities plan. With two successful referenda, Menasha shows how smart planning, clear communication and sustainable design can deliver lasting value and student success.

Menasha: Brian Adesso. EUA: Kit Daily, Bob Morris. Miron Construction: Theresa Lehman, Megan Prestebak

● **A Year of Community: Increasing Engagement While Celebrating Our Supporters**

Districts are searching for efficient and meaningful ways to engage stakeholders in their communities. Walworth Jt. School District #1 has developed a campaign that celebrates their existing support while increasing community engagement — and it can be replicated in any community. "A Year of Community" celebrates the unwavering support and shared commitment to nurture and uplift the next generation.

Walworth: Phill Klamm

● **Beyond School Walls: Building Thriving Community Learning Ecosystems**

Imagine a dynamic learning land-

scape where every community becomes a classroom and learning happens seamlessly between homes, vibrant "learning hubs" and real-world field sites. Dive into the transformative journey of shifting from traditional district models to powerful, community-based learning ecosystems. Through compelling storytelling and a deep exploration of a learner's authentic journey, you'll discover the "why" behind this revolutionary approach.

Norris: Johnna Noll

● **'But We Don't Teach Agriculture in Our District'**

Think your school doesn't teach agriculture? Think again! Agriculture connects to everything. Three Wisconsin educators will share practical strategies for using agriculture as a lens to enhance core subjects and inspire curiosity. Attendees will gain ready-to-use, cross-curricular

ideas and discover how agriculture can enrich learning.

Fennimore: Emily Kamps. Milwaukee: Joshua Gonzalez. St. Mary School: Mary Cooper. Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation: Elizabeth Schaefer

● **Launching Success: Funding and Operating On-Site Daycare**

Discover how Spencer is addressing workforce challenges and supporting families through on-site childcare. Learn how Spencer leveraged community partnerships, creative funding strategies and thoughtful planning to build and operate these centers. Attendees will gain practical insights into budgeting, staffing, licensing and aligning early childhood care with district goals. Ideal for districts exploring on-site childcare solutions.

Spencer: Jordan Buss, Michael Endreas, Jason Gorst

ONSITE REGISTRATION

When arriving at the Baird Center, proceed to the third floor for convention registration. Registration will be open on Tuesday, Jan. 20, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. and re-opens on Wednesday at 7 a.m. For more details, watch for upcoming WASB emails regarding the onsite registration system as the convention approaches.

2026 WASB Delegate Assembly | Wednesday, Jan. 21, 1:30 p.m. | Baird Center

Vote on the policies that will guide the association's legislative agenda. Delegates will meet in Ballroom A/B of the Baird Center at 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 21.

Before heading to the convention, each school board should be certain that its delegate (and alternate) understands the board's positions on the resolutions and is prepared to vote accordingly. Decisions reached by the Delegate Assembly help set the statewide education agenda.

A pre-Delegate Assembly discussion will be held at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 20, in the Crystal Ballroom at the Hilton Milwaukee City Center Hotel. New delegates are invited to a Convention/Delegate Assembly orientation meeting in Ballroom A/B at 8 a.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 21.

Please note: Delegates must pick up their credentials directly outside the Delegate Assembly hall during designated hours (see website for details). Credentials are handled separately from convention registration materials to ensure that one representative from each member board can participate.



● **Developing a Community-Advised SRO Program**

La Crosse reimaged its SRO program through a community-advised process. This session will highlight how the district balances student safety with community trust by using law enforcement data, supports and an active advisory committee. Presenters will offer a roadmap for developing responsive, student-centered SRO programs.

La Crosse: Aaron Engel, Curt Teff

● **Elevating Partnerships via CTE, YA, ACP and Learner Profiles**

Pulaski will share its multi-year journey expanding career and technical education through a dynamic CTE Advisory Committee, extensive business and community engagement, youth apprenticeship experiences, and development of a Future Ready Learner Profile. Hear directly from students, educators and industry partners while exploring how surveys, forums and focus groups have shaped programming.

CESA 7: Adam Strassburg. Pulaski: Jennifer Gracyalny, Shelby Kaisershot, Jenna Posbrig, Allie Space. WASBO: Danielle Bosanec. Skywrite Group: Erik Lambrecht

● **Empowered Communities, Kindergarten-Ready Kids**

How can communities boost school readiness without relying solely on school budgets? This session introduces Reading Engagement for Early Learners while exploring local partnerships and the REEL Toolkit.

Whether just starting or expanding early literacy efforts, attendees will leave with ready-to-use tools and a roadmap to build sustainable, community-driven literacy ecosystems.

CESA 3: Lisa Arneson, Tarasa Lown

● **Empowering School Communities: Stakeholder-Driven Strategic Planning**

Discover how Manawa partnered with the WASB to reimagine its future through a Stakeholder-Driven

Strategic Planning Framework. This collaborative process produced a living, community-driven plan that guides real decisions and drives continuous improvement. Learn how Manawa identified shared priorities and set strategic goals — and how this five-phase process can be adapted to help your district turn community voice into focused action.

Manawa: Ryan Peterson. WASB: Cheryl Gullicksrud, Cheryl Stinski, Patti Vickman

● **Improving Literacy Through School-Community Partnerships**

Only 31% of Wisconsin's fourth and eighth graders are proficient in reading, and Wisconsin has the widest racial reading gap in the nation. These outcomes are not indictments on intentions or educators; it's a call to action for schools and communities. Oshkosh believes Wisconsin's persistent literacy challenge is solvable. Explore how strong leadership and partnerships can confront literacy inequities and accelerate reading growth.

Oshkosh: Sam Coleman, Bryan Davis, Anthony Miller, Molly Smiltneek

● **Real Talk: Parent Focus Group Listening Sessions**

Structured as community circle-style sessions, Real Talk centers the voices of parents and caregivers to share insights, concerns and ideas that directly inform district policies and practices. The goal is to increase involvement and access, enhance academic success, increase students' sense of belonging and build a more supportive and responsive school community.

Stevens Point: Sam Dinga

● **One Vision, Many Voices: Concerts as Community Catalyst**

What happens when music education moves beyond the stage and becomes a centerpiece of academic excellence, advocacy and community connection? Explore how one district reimaged the traditional music performance and built an immersive experience that drew in families, civic leaders, alumni and local organizations. Discover how creative standards-based curriculum, student voice and the arts can build lasting community support for public education.

South Milwaukee: Deidre Roemer, Aimee Swanson

● **Passing a Referendum in a Politically Divided Community**

In November 2024, West Allis-West Milwaukee achieved a significant victory in a politically divided community with a history of failed referendum efforts, passing two ballot questions by wide margins. This session will explore how district leaders built trust, aligned messaging to district priorities, and used a multi-pronged communication strategy to inform and mobilize voters.

West Allis-West Milwaukee: Carolyn Hahn, Aaron Norris, Tarrynce Robinson

● **Referendum Approval Through Community Engagement**

Learn how Belleville passed an operational referendum using a community-based approach that started with electors and students writing the referendum question and then designing the community engagement plan.

Belleville: Kyle Loshaw, Kelsey Schmit, Jim Schmitt, Katie Woehrle

Calling all NEW school board members ...

First term on your school board? Want to improve your learning curve and share some first-term challenges with fellow new members?

Join our **Wednesday afternoon session** to connect, collaborate and cultivate new relationships as you become familiar with WASB member services and resources.

● Rooted in Referendum Results

With referenda on the rise, it's vital for clarity to cut through noise and produce results that invest in your school community. Presenters, who have combined to pass 11 referenda over the past 13 years, will share lessons learned and innovative ideas. Regardless of when your referendum takes place, your referendum communication plan starts right now. Tailor a campaign that fits your needs and provides the best chance for success.

Frederic: Kyle Luedtke, Mineral Point: Joelle Doye, Waterford: Luke Francois

● Sustaining Momentum: Community-Led Planning for Rural Resilience

Thriving rural communities are built when schools and local stakeholders work hand in hand to create and sustain a shared vision of hope and opportunity. Presenters will share how Gilman partnered with UW-Extension's Design Wisconsin to

catalyze long-term, community-led planning efforts. Using tools like community surveys, one-on-one conversations, focus groups and forums, the process uncovered a common vision and mobilized local energy toward implementation.

Gilman: Walter Leipart

● Using Social Media to Build Trust and Advance Strategic Goals

Struggling to build community trust, improve culture or engage families? You're not alone. Leaders from Rhinelander and Osceola will share how they've transformed social media into a strategic tool to build support, elevate voices and progress toward district goals. One district passed a referendum. One didn't. Both have powerful lessons to share on how social media helps lay a foundation of connection, transparency and trust.

Osceola: Rebecca Styles, Rhinelander: Eric Burke, #SocialSchool4EDU: Andrea Gribble

● The Mauston Story: Third Time's A Charm

Following two unsuccessful operational referendums, the Mauston board adopted a resolution to consider the dissolution of the district, and an independent auditor warned that the remaining fund balance would be depleted within two years. Hear the compelling story of how a district and community came together to achieve a victory in passing an operational referendum. Attendees will gain insight into how a dedicated group of community advocates led to a dramatically different outcome.

Mauston: Joel Heesch

● Who's Telling Your Story: Real Strategies for Real Connection

Schools often turn to communication in times of need, but what if the real work starts long before the ask? This session explores how strategic storytelling can foster community

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pride, build trust through transparency and keep all residents connected to the district's mission. Learn how to create a year-round communication plan that showcases the impact of public education.

CESA 6: Jillian Aykens. Hortonville: Todd Timm

FACILITIES

● 10 Critical Insights to Ensuring Successful Facility Projects

Revolutionize your school facility projects! The presentation details the 10 things you need to know before beginning any facility planning process — grounded in lessons learned from successful projects across Wisconsin. Attendees will walk away with a clear understanding of how to align facility goals with educational priorities, ensure fiscal responsibility, engage stakeholders and avoid costly missteps.

Green Bay: Cale Pulczynski. Marshfield: Ryan Christianson. Neenah: Mary Pfeiffer. Nexus Solutions: Kevin Hickman

● Aftermath! Preparing and Managing a Severe Storm at Your School

This fast-moving session will outline a severe hailstorm that damaged Evansville, Platteville and West Salem. Panelists will answer attendee questions, discuss what they have learned from this event and share insights on storm preparation, steps to take in the immediate aftermath, the claims management process, tips for working with contractors and more.

Evansville: Nathan Perry. Platteville: Demetri Andrews, Jim Boebel. West Salem: Shawn Handland. TRICOR: John Gibson

● Beyond the Blueprint: Agile Facility Planning

Explore a multi-phase facility planning journey, from initial study through referenda and community engagement to the start of construction. This case study offers valuable

insights into the importance of thorough facility studies, stakeholder communication and the ability to adapt to evolving external factors.

Monroe: Joe Monroe, Ron Olson. CG Schmidt: Dan Chovanec, Sarah Dunn. PRA: Steven Kieckhafer

● Breaking the Language Barrier

Do you sometimes find yourself lost or confused when the conversation turns toward school facility projects? Does it seem that your design and construction firm is speaking a completely different language? If yes, you're not alone. Join the session as panelists "break the language barrier" and explain what many of those challenging construction terms and processes mean.

New Holstein: Dan Nett. Peshtigo: Susan Kaphingst. Shawano: Kurt Krizan. Hoffman Planning, Designing & Construction: Jody Andres, Kim Eparvier, Matt McGregor, Chris Peterson

● Building Safe Havens: Improved School Security in Rural Communities

Hear strategies and solutions to improve the safety and security of schools in rural communities. The objective is to develop a comprehensive security framework that effectively aligns with the community's needs and available resources.

Clinton/WSSCA: Brandon Loomer. Elkhorn: Brielle Loomer

● Learning Places Matter: The Third Educator in the Room

Explore cutting-edge research on learning design and its impact on student outcomes, staff well-being and community engagement. Gain practical insights into creating inspiring learning spaces that will create a legacy for all.

Sauk Prairie: Jeff Wright. St. Francis:

IMPORTANT REMINDER

The state's **Open Meetings Law** and **Code of Ethics** apply to school board member and administrator attendance at the State Education Convention.

A Legal Comment with details is under "Home" at WASB.org/convention.

Deb Kerr. Waunakee: Monica Kelsey-Brown. PRA: Melissa Thompson

HUMAN RESOURCES

● Energizing Engagement: Strategies to Inspire and Retain School Staff

Keeping high-quality staff engaged, motivated and committed is more crucial than ever. This session explores practical, research-based strategies to foster employee engagement and build a positive work culture. This session provides the tools to turn intention into action, creating an environment where every staff member feels valued and engaged.

CESA 1: Sandy Stefczak. Greendale: Julie Grotophorst

● Leadership in Focus: The New WASB Superintendent Evaluation Framework

Discover the updated WASB Superintendent Evaluation Framework, redesigned with boards in mind. The 2025 version features an intuitive online platform, simplified criteria, greater consistency, superintendent input opportunities and structured goal-setting tools. Learn how this streamlined process strengthens board governance, supports superintendent continuous improvement and elevates leadership — all while keeping the focus on student success.

WASB: Kelly Thompson, Patti Vickman

● New Teacher Compensation Model: From Collaboration, Information and Process to Implementation

Merton created a new teacher compensation model through a process of deep study, data reviews and collaboration with a Teacher Compensation Team. Explore the process that was used to create a new model

that was driven by teachers within the district's parameters.

Merton: Ron Russ

● **Pay Your Staff, Not the Insurance Company**

Get an inside look at how several districts have controlled their health care spending while exploring how group purchasing is designed in the best interest of the districts, not the vendors. Learn how this strategy revolves around improving population health, consumerism and overall experience for district staff.

Edgerton: Tad Wehner. Monticello: Al Brokopp. Waunakee: Brian Grabarski, Steve Summers. USI: Al Jaeger, Jacob Syndergaard

● **Strategic Succession Planning: Building Sustainable Leadership for the Future**

This panel will explore how to proactively identify and prepare future leaders to ensure seamless transitions and organizational stability. Through deliberate succession planning and leadership development, districts can build a strong leadership pipeline — reducing the risks of urgent, unplanned changes and sustaining district success over time.

Crivitz: Kelly Robinson. DeForest: Rebecca Toetz. WASB: Randy Guttenberg, Pat Mans, Bruce Quinton

● **The New Era of Pharmacy Benefits**

Discover the current dynamics, trends and cost concerns under the pharmacy benefit while considering different innovations in management. The presenters will discuss the pharmacy landscape, key trends for 2026, specialty drugs, GLP-1s, New PBM

contracting methodologies and more.

M3 Insurance: Bec Kurzynske, Connie Perry

● **Strategic Teacher Compensation: Aligning Pay with Priorities**

A key factor in attracting, motivating and retaining top talent is having a fair and transparent compensation strategy. Hear a strategic overview of teacher compensation. Presenters will share sample models they've used to attract and retain talent and key factors that are important when designing a compensation structure.

Elmbrook: Pam Casey. Fort Atkinson: Mandy Turnbull. Onalaska: Sonya Ganther

LEADERSHIP

● **Building a Culture of Transparency Through Data**

Districts must turn data into meaningful action. Hear how district leaders can build a culture of transparency by using data intentionally with boards, leadership teams and community stakeholders. Superintendents will share strategies and discuss how data-driven conversations provide context, clarify direction and build trust.

Colby: Patrick Galligan. New Glarus: Jennifer Thayer. ECRA Group: Adam Cibulka

● **Change-Ready, Resilient Schools**

School leaders need more than governance. You need resilient change capability. This hands-on session delivers practical tools and a proven,

people-centered framework to build change readiness while maintaining trust and student focus. Leave with an actionable roadmap to implement change without burnout.

Wipfli: Amy Almond, Daniel Bashore

● **Listening as Leadership: Elevating Voices Through Superintendent Advisory Councils**

Discover a replicable model of Superintendent Advisory Councils that has elevated authentic voice, trust and strategic alignment. By creating structured advisory councils, superintendents can meaningfully engage diverse perspectives from their school communities, strengthening governance and public trust. Superintendent Advisory Councils move engagement from one-time input to ongoing collaboration that redefines leadership as a practice of listening, learning and responding together.

Verona: Tremayne Clardy

● **Moving a Strategic Plan to Strategic Action**

Discover four essential keys to developing and implementing a strategic plan that not only gets accomplished but also achieves remarkable outcomes. Leave with practical tools to help engage communities, build accountability and transform strategic goals into meaningful actions. *Merton: Rebecca Imes, Ron Russ. Excel Leadership: Brian Kammers, JoAnn Sternke*

● **Same Storm, Different Boats: The Importance of Coaching School Principals**

As district leaders face the challenge of inducting new principals, they must develop a customized approach to address the individuality of their new hires. Learn strategies to design a Principal Coaching system that builds trust, strengthens the coach/principal relationship, and creates a sustainable pipeline for leadership development within your district or region.

CESA 4: Jed Kees. CESA 6: Jeff Carron

MOBILITY SOLUTIONS

Electric scooters are available for rental from On the Go Mobility.

Contact them at 414-228-7100 or mail@onthegomobility.com before you arrive in Milwaukee to make arrangements. On the Go Mobility will bring a scooter to your hotel or the convention center for you.

IMPORTANT: The convention center does not have scooters available on site. You must call ahead.

School Finance 101

Feeling overwhelmed by school finance?

WASBO and WASB are teaming up for several school finance sessions, including “Finance 101.” Join WASBO Executive Director Mike Barry and WASB Consultant Roger Price in room 103 C/D from 8:45-11:45 a.m.

on Jan. 22, to gain confidence in financial oversight.

WASB and WASBO

NETWORKING RECEPTION

Wednesday, Jan. 21 | 4:30–5:30 p.m.
Hilton Milwaukee City Center



Unwind with colleagues and enjoy refreshments in a relaxed yet classy atmosphere, featuring complimentary hors d'oeuvres.

All attendees and exhibitors welcome.

SCHOOL FINANCE

● Smarter Systems: Leveraging AI for Teacher Evaluation and Curriculum Renewal

Discover how AI can streamline and strengthen two core pillars of educational improvement: teacher evaluation and curriculum refinement.

Walk away with concrete strategies and tools that can help your district move from data overload to insight-driven action, ultimately supporting more effective teaching and learning.

Pewaukee: Mike Cady, Colin Jacobs, Anthony Pizzo, Tammy Yundt

● Staff-Led Mentorship for Retention and Growth

Teacher retention and high-quality teaching in every classroom are great predictors of student success in any district. Building a school team that is collaborative, connected and supported is vital to onboarding new staff, but also to retaining veteran staff. By implementing a multi-year mentorship program, districts can internally develop a sustainable program that achieves all your building-wide goals.

Fontana: Kara Bolly

● The 30,000-Foot View: 4 Leadership Questions to Focus on What Matters

This session equips district leaders to serve their people, streamline processes and measure what matters — clearly and effectively. Gain insights into focus, systems frameworks, key

processes and mission alignment. Walk away ready to work smarter and drive lasting improvement in your district.

Milwaukee: Jenelle Zito. Pewaukee: Larry Dux. Excel Leader: JoAnn Sternke

● Tools for Transformation: Aligning, Engaging and Achieving District Goals

Join three superintendents from diverse districts as they share the powerful yet practical tools that helped them transform vision into reality. Walk away with strategies to help you lead more productive meetings, align your teams with purpose, and drive progress with confidence and clarity.

CESA 6: Ted Neitzke. Fond du Lac: Matt Mineau. Kaukauna: Mike Slowinski. Oshkosh: Bryan Davis

● Why Every District Needs a Technology Leader at the Cabinet Level

This fireside chat, hosted by WETL, offers an insightful dialogue centered on how visionary leadership in educational technology can illuminate new pathways to student success, enhance operational efficiency and cultivate a future-ready learning environment. As education increasingly relies on digital tools, having a strategic technology voice at the leadership table is essential.

Columbus: Mike Ziegler. Elmbrook: Dan Scott. Green Bay: Amy Jaeckel. Oconto Falls: Brigit Kyle

● A Monthly Financial Scorecard for Your District

CESA 5's monthly board reports tie to the financial monitoring standards created by WASBO and WASB. This session will share the tools they've created, including an easy-to-understand budget vs. actual monthly comparison report and a monthly cash monitoring report. The presenters will show their monthly checklist of key performance indicators that districts can use to ensure the business office is on track to be successful.

CESA 5: Mike Koltes, Derek Sliter

● Debt 101: Understanding the Basics of Borrowing and Repayment

Gain a clear understanding of how debt works — from issuing bonds to managing repayment. This session explores recent referendum trends, key borrowing concepts and practical strategies for debt management. Join us to gain the knowledge and tools needed to navigate the complexities of debt with confidence.

Baird: Debby Brunett, Jordan Masmica

● Federal Education Funding Update

Presenters will explain how federal funds get from Washington, D.C. to Wisconsin districts, describe how allocation amounts from the two largest federal sources — IDEA and Title I, Part A — are determined,

VISIT THE CONVENTION WEBSITE

The convention preview information published in this special issue of the Wisconsin School News is subject to change.

Visit [WASB.org/convention](https://wasb.org/convention) for the detailed convention schedule and the latest updates and announcements. A complete printed convention guide will be provided at registration in Milwaukee.

and share how federal funding can be used to support local needs. The speakers will also provide information regarding the federal education funds that would typically be available on July 1, 2026.

DPI: Shelly Babler

● Finance 101: What Board Members Need to Know

Boards are asked to learn new jargon while making million-dollar decisions that impact children, buildings and taxpayers' money. Therefore, public trust is critically affected when "surprise" information suddenly appears. This session will elaborate on the Financial Monitoring Benchmarks, review essential finance topics, and provide insight on how boards can be accountable to external stakeholders.

WASB: Roger Price. WASBO: Mike Barry

● Fuel for Learning: The Critical Role of School Lunches

Explore the connection between nutrition and student success. This session examines how your school lunch program can fuel both learning and your district's financial success.

Menasha: Brian Adesso. Chartwells K12: Haley Chavez

● Instructional Trends & Budget Bends: What's Coming Next

Stay informed about the latest developments in curriculum, instruction and student support. Learn about key instructional trends and required legislation impacting teaching and learning — and the financial implica-

tions that may occur because of them.

Sun Prairie: Stephanie Leonard.

WASBO: Danielle Bosanec

● Mastering the Art of School Finance Storytelling

Explore the importance of crafting and sharing your district's financial story in ways that resonate with diverse stakeholders. Empower your district with communication tools that turn data into a compelling narrative, ensuring transparency and fostering stronger connections with your community.

Racine/WSPRA: Emily DeBaker.

WSPRA: Debbie Brewster.

● Right-Sizing District Facilities for Declining Enrollment

Many Wisconsin districts are making difficult decisions about closing buildings and right-sizing facilities. West Bend confronted this challenge while planning a major capital project to address outdated environments and aging infrastructure. Learn how financial investment and transparent communication led to a successful referendum in fall 2024.

West Bend: Lenny Hanson, Jennifer Wimmer. EUA: Kit Dailey, Katie LaCourt. Findorff: Erika Freeman

● The Board's Role in Financial Oversight

Do you know if your board is meeting the mark with financial accountability? Hear how Financial Monitoring Benchmarks help assess the expectations you should have in monitoring and assessing your district's policies, overall finances and

current budget while strategically planning for future budgets.

WASB: Roger Price. WASBO: Mike Barry

● The Importance of a Highly Qualified Business Manager

A highly qualified school business manager plays a critical role in building a fiscally sound, high-performing district. This session introduces board members to the F.I.S.C.L. framework developed by WASBO to define excellence in the profession. Learn how statewide standards and aligned professional learning support and retain business leaders in Wisconsin schools.

WASBO: Mike Barry, Danielle Bosanec

● The Price of Parallel Systems: How Policy Shapes Three K-12 Education Systems

How does Wisconsin school finance policy treat voucher and independent charter schools? How does that relate to and affect resources for public schools? How does public support for three K-12 education systems affect Wisconsin's overall budget? How have these systems changed over time? And what can Wisconsin learn from the growth of publicly funded private school options in other states?

WASBO: Anne Chapman

● The State of School Finance

Join us for a review of the key K-12 education provisions in the 2025-27 state budget; what they mean for public, charter and voucher schools; how the latest shifts in federal education policy might affect Wisconsin schools; and other developments.

WASBO: Anne Chapman

● Winning Hearts and Votes: A Playbook for Research-Based School Referendum Success

Gain invaluable insights into Wisconsin's referendum landscape while learning research-backed strategies for successful rural operational referendums. Receive a comprehensive

playbook and leave with tools to assess referendum readiness, identify success factors and implement strategies that build support.

Ladysmith: Jason LeMay

SCHOOL LAW

● Academic Accountability and Progress Monitoring

Explore how data-driven decisions can drive academic improvements by focusing on key assessments, metrics and terminology. Learn how districts can set realistic academic goals based on student data and develop strategies for continuous improvement. Turn data into actionable insights for achieving educational success.

WASB: Cheryl Gullicksrud, George Steffen, Kelly Thompson

● Title IX and DEI in the Courts: Navigating Federal Court Interpretations

This session delves into recent federal court decisions that have significantly impacted the interpretation and enforcement of Title IX. Attendees will gain insights into how these developments influence policies and best practices for compliance.

Von Briesen & Roper: Mark Kapocius

● Access to Public Records & Personnel Files

Districts are frequently subject to public records requests, and districts face significant liability if they do not respond in a timely and accurate manner. This session will cover the basics of Wisconsin's public records law with a special emphasis on responding to requests for information contained in employee personnel files.

WASB: Ben Richter

● New Developments in School Law

WASB staff counsel will review significant developments in school law over the last year — covering new laws, administrative rules and important court decisions.

WASB: Bob Butler

● NIL and Student-Athletes: Impacts of the WIAA Rule and More

In April 2025, the WIAA approved a new rule allowing student-athletes to earn compensation from certain name, image and likeness opportunities. Student-athletes and school officials have been facing many questions related to this rule. This session will review the details, discuss the impact and highlight other legal updates.

Beloit: Dan Gratz, Boardman & Clark; Rick Verstegen

● Student Discipline — Legally Compliant Expulsions

Expelling a student can be a difficult decision. This presentation will address state and federal laws relating to pupil expulsions and how to avoid common legal pitfalls, providing a roadmap for expulsion determinations and examining steps districts must take before, during and after an expulsion.

WASB: Scott Mikesb

● Transgender Student Rights: Where Are We Now?

Attendees will be guided through the current legal landscape of the law and leave with an understanding of the status of transgender student rights, as well as practical guidance to assist in charting the course for their district.

Atolles Law: Chrissy Hamiel, Kylie Owens

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

● Against the Odds: 'How One Rural School Ranks Among the Best'

What does it take for a small, rural district to rise to the top? Explore how the district's intentional practices, community partnerships and focus on improvement have created a culture of excellence.

Sevastopol: Aaron Hilts, Randi Ryskoski, Sue Today

● Belonging in Action: How Student Voice Transformed Our Schools

What happens when students are trusted to lead school culture work? Platteville students and educators will describe how their efforts have shifted student engagement, staff mindset and academic outcomes.

Platteville: Emily Zachary

● Building a Data-Informed Student-Driven District

Explore a case study in achieving excellence through building a data-informed, student-driven district. WISEdash Local's customized dashboards helped Watertown rethink its approach to data-driven decision making.

Watertown: Kris Meloy. WISEdash Local: Shelby Renoos

● Empowering Student-Led Green Teams

This session introduces the new

Catch a Milwaukee Event!

Make the most out of your time in Milwaukee with live entertainment. Catch the **Milwaukee Bucks in action at Fiserv Forum** as they host the defending champion Oklahoma City Thunder on Wednesday, Jan. 21 at 7:30 p.m., then welcome Nikola Jokić and the Denver Nuggets on Friday, Jan. 23 at 7 p.m.

Prefer Broadway? Head to the **Marcus Performing Arts Center for "Hamilton,"** with performances at 7:30 p.m. each night during the convention.

2026 EDUCATION TOUR

Hayes Bilingual School

THURSDAY, JAN. 22 | \$10, pre-registration required

Discover the heart of **Hayes Bilingual School**, where more than 600 Milwaukee Public Schools students thrive as bilingual learners and innovative scholars. Tour the campus and see how the focus on biliteracy and cutting-edge STEAM education prepares students for success.

Attendees will experience viewing the Fab Lab engineering laboratories and STEAM Project Showcase, and learn from teachers and current Hayes parents about how their school impacts students and the community.

SHUTTLE PICK-UP/DROP-OFF is at the ground floor doors of the Baird Center on the corner of W. Wells Street and N. Vel R. Phillips Avenue (between Ballrooms A/B and C/D).

- **8:45 a.m.** Begin boarding the shuttle
- **9 a.m.** Shuttle departs from the Baird Center
- **9:15 - 11:15 a.m.** Tour of Hayes Bilingual School
- **11:30 a.m.** Shuttle departs
- **11:45 a.m.** Arrive at the Baird Center

Green Team Toolkit from FOCUS ON ENERGY®, designed to support student-led energy-saving initiatives. Learn how Green Team Mini-Grants help fund student-driven sustainability projects.

Chippewa Falls. Focus on Energy: Heather Feigum. WCEE: Heather Phelps

● Harnessing Data's Power for Teacher Planning and Student Learning Outcomes

Hear how to accentuate data visualization of performance patterns within the multi-tiered systems of supports. Key takeaways include staff leveraging of the data warehouse, pattern identification, PLC frameworks and continuous improvement cycle templates.

De Pere: Josh Gauthier, Nick Joseph, Adam Kraemer, Christopher Thompson, Kathy Van Pay. Racine: Janell Decker, Danielle Dekker-Shircel, Soren Gajewski

● If Walls Could Talk, What Would Your Students Say About Belonging?

Discover how one district elevated student voice and uncovered pow-

erful insights through belonging and engagement walks. This innovative approach helped staff look beyond traditional data points and hear why some students feel disconnected. Learn how the walk-throughs led to actionable data.

CESA 6: Laurice Snyder, Kim Walters. Waunakee: Tiffany Loken

● It ALL Matters — Students With Disabilities' Academic Growth

Hear how Campbellsport reimaged interviews, new teacher support, a student-driven service model and the team approach to best support students with disabilities in showing improvement in growth data. Attendees will be exposed to out-of-the-box strategies to improve the growth data of their students with disabilities, special educator retention and attraction, and student behavior data.

Campbellsport: Sally Kellman

● Leveraging Staff Members as Instructional Coaches

Learn how to leverage rockstar staff members as instructional coaches to improve school culture, use data to

maximize student growth, and bridge communication between teaching staff and administration.

Riverdale: Kelly Schaefer, Lynn Tarrell, Cheri Wilkinson

● Math That Moves the Needle for Student Outcomes

Swallow leaders attribute a substantial portion of their success to their K-8 math program. Discover tools and strategies that leverage learning systems to identify students, intervene and redirect them toward success.

Swallow: John Marzion

● Opening Doors: Connecting Students & Employers

Students are often unaware of career options in their communities. Opening Doors is a scalable process that connects students, businesses and community leaders to bridge this gap. Learn how a student survey, business input tool and matching system can boost engagement and address workforce needs.

CESA 1: Sue Doyle. Marinette: Sarah Anderson. Nicolet: Greg Kabara. Peshtigo: Patrick Rau. School Perceptions: Rob DeMeuse

● Student Success Starts With Board Strategy

Understand WI administrative rule PI 8.01(2)(e) requirements for developing and maintaining a board-approved comprehensive K-12 guidance and counseling plan. Through utilizing district data sources, participants will learn how to identify gaps to inform policy work and resource allocation.

Elk Mound: Cindy Bourget, Chris Hahn. DPI: Andréa Donegan. WSCA: Stacy Eslick

● Tackling the Attendance Crisis

Chronic student absenteeism is on the rise, creating significant challenges for academic success and long-term student outcomes. Explore attendance issues and the kinds of data that can inform the status of attendance in their district. Examine your

governance role in addressing attendance concerns, with an emphasis on how the essential elements of effective board leadership align with improving student engagement.

WASB: *Randy Guttenberg, Cheryl Stinski*

● Turning Mandates Into Momentum: Act 20 Without the Teacher Burnout

Beloit Turner responded to Act 20 by creating a universal report card. This tool aligns with Redefining Ready! metrics, supports the district's MTSS framework and includes every child. Learn how teachers, leaders and interventionists engaged in the design process to inform a meaningful, sustainable solution that centers on student readiness.

Beloit Turner: *Christopher Koeppe, Dennis McCarthy, Mike Sindahl*

● X's and O's With the WIAA

This panel discussion explores the process and purpose of how the WIAA works with member schools to assist and serve their needs — and the needs of their student-athletes.

WIAA: *Stephanie Hauser*

TECHNOLOGY

● AI in the Classroom: Ethical Frontiers and Practical Implications

Explore key ethical issues surrounding the use of AI in education; analyze how AI impacts students and teaching practices; identify risks and benefits; and apply an ethical decision-making framework.

Washington-Caldwell: *Kevin McCormick*. UW-Madison: *Aaron Aguilar, Emily Hall, Sarah Ripp, John Surdyk*

● Automate to Elevate: Creating a Blueprint for AI Integration

This session will showcase how a blueprint for AI integration can help ensure tools are leveraged effectively

across all areas of a district. Join this exploration into systems and tools that will automate operations to elevate learning.

Palmyra-Eagle: *Ryan Krohn*. Waterford: *Tony Spence*. WASBO: *Danielle Bosanec*

● Building a District-Wide STEAM Program That Works

This session shares Lodi's journey in building a K-12 STEAM program that's scalable and sustainable. After outlining the district-level vision and strategic planning, the presenters will describe how the technology department launched, implemented and evolves the STEAM experience. Leave with a clear understanding of how to begin or enhance a STEAM program.

Lodi: *Vince Breunig, Matthew Horan, Tyler Potter*

● More Than Buzz: Using AI to Achieve Real Change

The real power of AI isn't in emailing, grading or paperwork — it's in the opportunity to rethink school as we know it. This session shares year two insights from LIFT-oFFS, a growing initiative of 16 rural Wisconsin districts using AI

not as a tech add-on, but as a catalyst for transforming instruction, roles and student outcomes.

Eleva-Strum: *Cory Kulig*. Whitehall: *Mike Beighley*. CESA 4: *Chelsea Adams, Abby Fernan, Jennifer Riggle, Christy Tainter, Britni Walz*

● Take Action: 5 Things You Can Do to Safeguard Against Cyber Threats

Learn how the escalating sophistication and frequency of cyber threats pose significant risks to our educational institutions. These threats extend beyond mere IT disruptions, impacting student learning, safety, data privacy and the overall trust within our communities.

Elmbrook: *Mark Hansen, Dan Scott*

● The Kids Are Ahead of Us: Responsible Engagement with AI Tools

Drawing on focus group research from Wisconsin students, this session explores the gap between students' perceptions of how they are using AI tools and how their teachers think they are using them, what they want to learn about AI, and more.

WASBO: *Danielle Bosanec*. Tony Frontier Intentional Teaching & Learning: *Tony Frontier* □

A photograph of a young woman with long brown hair, wearing a red shirt and a grey backpack, holding a pink folder. She is standing in a school hallway with yellow lockers in the background.

Renovating & Constructing
BEST IN CLASS FACILITIES
Through Thoughtful Planning & Execution.

WHERE COLLABORATION TAKES FORM
WWW.INGENSAINC.COM

Celebrating the Arts

Talented student performance groups and the work of student artists from around the state will be proudly displayed at the State Education Convention.

STUDENT PERFORMANCES



Student music groups presented in partnership with the Wisconsin School Music Association and the WASBO Foundation.

General Session, Wednesday, Jan. 21

Iola-Scandinavia High School Band

General Session, Thursday, Jan. 22

Delavan-Darien High School
String Orchestra

General Session, Friday, Jan. 23

Green Bay Preble High School Jazz Band;
Stoughton High School
Norwegian Dancers

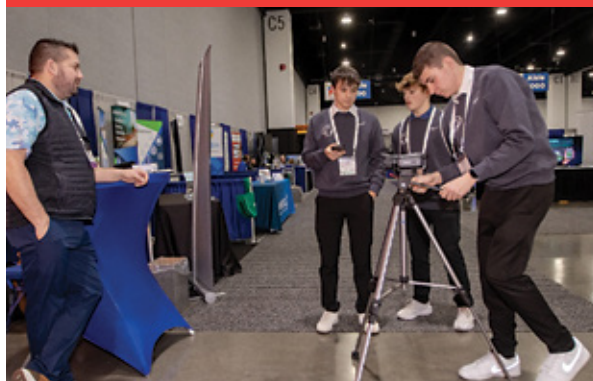
STUDENT ART CONTEST



In partnership with the Wisconsin Art Education Association, the WASB holds an annual art contest showcasing the work of Wisconsin student artists. The theme of this year's contest: Community. Award-winning pieces from this year's contest will be displayed at the 2026 State Education Convention.

Sponsored by:  **Performance
Services**

STUDENT CONVENTION VIDEO TEAM



The WASB is seeking a team of two or more talented students to produce a video highlighting the 2026 Wisconsin State Education Convention. The WASB is taking applications from interested student teams. One team will be selected to attend at least two days of the convention and produce a five-minute video highlighting some of the convention's activities, speakers and events. Please send nominations or questions to RJ Larson at rjl Larson@wasb.org.

Visit WASB.org/convention for more information and to watch last year's video. Select "Call for Proposals" and then "Convention Student Video Team."

Exhibit Hall

Innovative solutions to shared challenges.

The Exhibit Hall at the Wisconsin State Education Convention features hundreds of businesses and organizations focused on providing products, services and support to public schools. We encourage you to visit and interact with experienced school partners and learn about innovative new products and services.

Look for these Exhibit Hall attractions:

■ WASB COMMONS

The WASB encourages members to stop by the WASB Commons, relax, connect with staff members and learn about the numerous services and products designed to help you lead your school district.

■ SUSTAINABLE SCHOOLS

Visit the Sustainable Schools booth to meet community partners and providers who can help your district develop a roadmap to clean energy.



Kiel eSchool Zen Space

Visit the Digitarium dome with Between the Lakes Virtual Academy & Kiel eSchool. Relax and enjoy the night sky, the Milky Way and the Aurora Borealis in an immersive virtual experience. Programs run 5-15 minutes — stay for one or experience them all! Find the dome at booth 137.

EXHIBIT HALL BREAKFAST

A light complimentary breakfast will be available to convention attendees in the Exhibit Hall to welcome everyone to the convention.

WED., JAN. 21: 9-10 a.m. | Sponsored by:

Burke
PLAY THAT MOVES YOU.

Quartz

Findorff

network
health



Dream Flight USA

Giving students space — and STEM — to learn!
Visit the unique STEM Shuttle in booth 147 and see how it motivates students in upper elementary and middle schools to learn. Students are challenged by the hands-on workstations aboard the shuttle.

■ SCHOOL FAIR

Interactive Exhibits Put Spotlight on Students

The School Fair in the Exhibit Hall features interactive exhibits by school leaders, teachers and students from around the state. Here's a taste of the exhibits that will be featured on the first two days of the convention:

● A Podcast for the Times

Hear Hoover Elementary third-grade students discuss and record a live episode of their class podcast, which features student-led discussions on school culture, current events, personal interests and more.

West Allis-West Milwaukee School District

● Empowered to Lead: How Student Voice is Reshaping School Culture

Through visual displays, student-created materials and live conversations with student leaders, attendees will see how student-led efforts have led to lasting change in school climate, peer relationships and community connection.

Platteville School District

● Community Partnerships to Support Professional Skills

Learn how Racine Unified and its chamber of commerce built a 6-12 professional skills system, with rubrics, resources and outcomes like certificates and transcript seals that districts can replicate.

Racine Unified School District

● Taking Robotics to the Next Level

The West Allis Central High School Robotics Team will demonstrate their latest robot designs while discussing collaboration strategies, problem-solving approaches, competitive robotics and STEM principles.

West Allis-West Milwaukee School District

DEDICATED EXHIBIT HALL TIMES

The State Education Convention offers a lot to do and see. Below are designated breaks so you can carve out time to visit the Exhibit Hall.

WED., JAN. 21: 9-10 a.m.; 12-1:30 p.m.; 2:30-3:30 p.m.

THURS., JAN. 22: 9:45-10:45 a.m.; 11:45 a.m.-1:45 p.m.

2026 Convention Schedule

All events take place at the Baird Center unless otherwise noted.

- **First Floor:** Breakout Sessions, Coat Check, General Sessions, WASB Delegate Assembly
- **Second Floor:** Art Exhibit, Breakout Sessions, Skywalk to Hilton and Hyatt
- **Third Floor:** Bookstore, Exhibit Hall, Registration

TUESDAY | JANUARY 20

- 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. **REGISTRATION**
- 1:30 - 5 p.m. **PRE-CONVENTION WORKSHOPS**
- 7 - 8 p.m. **PRE-DELEGATE ASSEMBLY DISCUSSION**
Crystal Ballroom, Hilton Milwaukee City Center

WEDNESDAY | JANUARY 21

- 7 a.m. - 5 p.m. **REGISTRATION**
- 8 - 9 a.m. **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**
Including CONVENTION/DELEGATE ORIENTATION
- 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. **BOOKSTORE**
- 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. **EXHIBIT HALL**
- 9 - 10 a.m. **DEDICATED EXHIBIT HALL TIME**
EXHIBIT HALL BREAKFAST, morning refreshments sponsored by BCI Burke, Quartz, Findorff and Network Health.
- 10 a.m. - Noon **GENERAL SESSION Anne Marie Anderson**, keynote speaker (Sponsored by Kraus-Anderson); **Iola-Scandinavia High School Band**, student performance; **AWARD PRESENTATIONS:** Educators and administrators of the year; Wisconsin Student Art Award
- Noon - 1:30 p.m. **LUNCH; DEDICATED EXHIBIT HALL TIME**
- 1:30 p.m. **DELEGATE ASSEMBLY**
- 1:30 - 2:30 p.m. **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**
- 2:30 - 3:30 p.m. **DEDICATED EXHIBIT HALL TIME**
- 3:30 - 4:30 p.m. **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**
- 4:30 - 5:30 p.m. **NETWORKING RECEPTION**
Crystal Ballroom, Hilton Milwaukee City Center

THURSDAY | JANUARY 22

- 7 - 8:30 a.m. **WASB BREAKFAST**
Crystal Ballroom, Hilton Milwaukee City Center; **Dave Weber**, speaker
- 8 a.m. - 3 p.m. **REGISTRATION**
- 8:45 - 9:45 a.m. **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**
- 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. **BOOKSTORE**
- 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. **EXHIBIT HALL**
- 9 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. **EDUCATION TOUR** (*times subject to change*)
- 9:45 - 10:45 a.m. **DEDICATED EXHIBIT HALL TIME**
- 10:45 - 11:45 a.m. **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**
- 11:45 a.m. - 1:45 p.m. **LUNCH; DEDICATED EXHIBIT HALL TIME**
- Noon - 1:15 p.m. **WASDA and WASBO LUNCHEONS**
Hilton Milwaukee City Center
- 1:45 - 2:45 p.m. **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**
- 3 - 5 p.m. **GENERAL SESSION Mickey Smith Jr.**, keynote speaker (Sponsored by UnitedHealthcare); **Delavan-Darlen High School String Orchestra**, student performance; **SCHOOL BOARD SERVICE AWARDS**

FRIDAY | JANUARY 23

- 8 - 9 a.m. **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**
- 9:15 - 10:15 a.m. **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**
- 10:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. **GENERAL SESSION**
Aaron Sadoff, keynote speaker; Gov. Tony Evers (invited), speaker; **Green Bay Preble High School Jazz Band** and **Stoughton High School Norwegian Dancers**, student performances

Convention Hotels

Room blocks for the 2026 convention will open on **Monday, Nov. 3, at 8 a.m.** Convention registration will open at the same time. When you register for the convention, **you'll receive a confirmation email that includes a link to book hotel rooms.** Hotel reservations must be made no later than **Friday, Dec. 19, 2025.**

The WASB is once again partnering with Visit Milwaukee to offer a universal hotel booking experience through the Meetingmax platform. **All hotel reservations must be made through this centralized system**, which you will be able to access through the link provided in your confirmation email. Last year marked our first time using this system, and we've taken your feedback to heart. Visit WASB.org/convention to view the improvements made to ensure an efficient, user-friendly booking process.

Please note that Visit Milwaukee charges a non-refundable service fee of \$5 per night for each room.

- ▶ **Aloft Milwaukee***
- ▶ **Courtyard Marriott Milwaukee Downtown***
- ▶ **DoubleTree by Hilton Milwaukee Downtown***
- ▶ **Hilton Garden Inn Milwaukee Downtown***
- ▶ **Hilton Milwaukee City Center**
- ▶ **Hyatt Place Milwaukee Downtown**
- ▶ **Hyatt Regency Milwaukee**
- ▶ **Milwaukee Marriott Downtown**
- ▶ **Saint Kate Arts Hotel***
- ▶ **SpringHill Suites Milwaukee Downtown**

***Complimentary shuttle service** provided by Lamers Bus Lines will run approximately every 45 minutes between the Baird Center and the designated convention hotels on Wednesday, Jan. 21, and Thursday, Jan. 22.

The WASB provides housing blocks as a courtesy to attendees to provide lower, negotiated room rates. **Hotel blocks close on Dec. 19.** If possible, please cancel unneeded room reservations before the deadline to give other districts an opportunity to take advantage of the lower rates.

For further assistance, contact the Visit Milwaukee Housing Bureau at housing@milwaukee.org or 800-578-0111.



CONVENTION 2026

Wisconsin State Education Convention

January 21-23, 2026 • Baird Center • Milwaukee

REGISTER ONLINE! [WASB.org/convention](https://wasb.org/convention)

Use this registration form to help your convention attendees select their meals and events. Then use this information to register online at [WASB.org/convention](https://wasb.org/convention).

FULL NAME

SCHOOL DISTRICT

FIRST NAME FOR BADGE

ADDRESS

Your Title for Badge PLEASE CHECK ONLY ONE

- ☐ Administrator ☐ Business Official ☐ Teacher
☐ Administrative Asst. ☐ CESA Administrator ☐ Other: _____
☐ Board Member ☐ Principal _____
☐ Buildings/Grounds ☐ Superintendent _____

CITY / STATE / ZIP

TELEPHONE

EMAIL ADDRESS

Dietary Restrictions (if selecting a meal)

- ☐ Please specify restrictions: _____
☐ Requested for (name): _____

Other Considerations

If you have a disability or other need that requires special provisions or services, please check this box and explain below.

- ☐ Yes, I would like assistance for (please explain): _____

To opt out of convention-related emails from exhibitors, check here: ☐

(NOTE: This opt out does not apply to post-convention emails resulting from an attendee allowing an exhibitor to scan his/her badge on site.)

Complimentary Spouse Registration

Spouse registration is complimentary, but meals and special events must be purchased separately.

- ☐ Yes, please register my spouse

SPOUSE'S NAME

SEND COMPLETED FORM TO:

ATTN: Convention Registration
Wisconsin Association of School Boards
122 W. Washington Ave., Suite 400
Madison, WI 53703
info@wasb.org | fax 608-257-8386

REGISTRATION DEADLINES

EARLY BIRD: must be received by **Dec. 15, 2025**

STANDARD: **Jan. 2, 2026**

Meal Reservation Deadline: **Jan. 2, 2026**

CANCELLATIONS

No refunds will be given unless
cancellation is received by
5 p.m., Jan. 2, 2026.

REGISTRATION

PEOPLE

TOTAL

EARLY BIRD Registration

WITH FULL PAYMENT ONLY

Must be received BY Dec. 15, 2025

_____ × \$325 = \$ _____

STANDARD Registration

Payments received AFTER Dec. 15, 2025

_____ × \$360 = \$ _____

SPECIAL EVENTS

PRE-CONVENTION WORKSHOPS, TUESDAY, Jan. 20

☐ **WORKSHOP:** School Finance Puzzle _____ × \$95 = \$ _____

☐ **WORKSHOP:** Beyond the Score:
Equipping Boards to Use Data for
Informed Decision-Making _____ × \$95 = \$ _____

☐ **WORKSHOP:** Our Students, Our
Future: Empowering Boards and
Superintendents With Governance _____ × \$95 = \$ _____

☐ **WORKSHOP:** The 'Women of WAS':
A Deep Dive Into the 4 Cs _____ × \$95 = \$ _____

EDUCATION TOUR, Thursday, Jan. 22

☐ **EDUCATION TOUR:**
Hayes Bilingual School _____ × \$10 = \$ _____

MEAL FUNCTIONS

☐ **WASB BREAKFAST**
7 a.m., Thursday, Jan. 22 _____ × \$45 = \$ _____

☐ **WASDA LUNCHEON**
Noon, Thursday, Jan. 22 _____ × \$49 = \$ _____

☐ **WASBO LUNCHEON**
Noon, Thursday, Jan. 22 _____ × \$49 = \$ _____

REGISTRATION, SPECIAL EVENTS, MEALS

GRAND TOTAL \$

METHOD OF PAYMENT

☐ **CHECK FOR \$** _____ enclosed, payable to the WASB.

☐ **BILL THE DISTRICT** using PO # _____

WASB OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Rec'd _____ Check # _____

P.O. # _____ Amount \$ _____



2026 EXHIBITORS by Product Categories

NOTE: This is a complete listing of exhibitors as of press time. Find an updated list at WASB.org/convention, in the 2026 State Education Convention Guide or on the convention's mobile app.

★ 2026 Convention Sponsor ♦ WASB Service Associate ▲ WASB Endorsed Insurance Agency

Administrative Software and Integration Tools

Aviben
CESA 7
DistrictIQ
Frontline Education
Infinite Campus
jmc
Otus
SchoolData Solutions
SchoolStatus
♦ Skyward, Inc.
WISEdash Local

Associations, Non-Profits, and Government Agencies

Board of Commissioners of Public Lands
CESA 1
CESA 2
CESA 5
CESA 6
CESA 9 Statewide Programs
Focus on Energy
Professional Insurance Agents of Wisconsin, Inc.
Sustainable Schools
WEA Academy
Wisconsin Association for Equity in Funding
Wisconsin Association of School Boards (Commons)
★ Wisconsin Association of

School Business Officials
Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators
Wisconsin Association of School Personnel Administrators
Wisconsin DOJ - Office of School Safety
Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletics Association
Wisconsin PTA
Wisconsin Public Education Network
Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance
Wisconsin School Music Association
Wisconsin School Public Relations Association

Athletics: Equipment, Seating, Surfacing

AstroTurf Great Lakes
Brock USA
Fisher Tracks, Inc.
GT Grandstands, Inc.
H2I Group, Inc.
J W Industries, LLC
Mammoth Sports Construction
Marshfield Book & Stationery
Midwest Sport & Turf Systems - Synthetic Turf
Musco Sports Lighting
ProStar Surfaces
Southern Bleacher Company

SPRINTURF
Summit Commercial Fitness, Inc.

Audio, Video, Multimedia Equipment and Design

DMM Productions
Musco Sports Lighting

Business Services

#SocialSchool4EDU
Ampersand, Inc.
★ ♦ Baird Public Finance
CCAP Alert
CESA 2
ESS
♦ Foster & Foster Consulting Actuaries, Inc.
Healthy School Meals for All-WI/ School Nutrition Association of WI
Heartland Business Systems
Immel Construction
PensionPortal.com
U.S. BENCOR/MidAmerica
★ ♦ WEA Member Benefits

Communications, Telecommunications, Technology

Captivate Media + Consulting
Diamond Assets
DMM Productions

♦ JP Cullen
SchoolStatus
Sustainable Schools
Wisconsin Educational Technology Leaders - WETL

Distance and Online Learning Services

★ Candor Health Education
CESA 9 Statewide Programs
Destinations Career Academy of Wisconsin
eAchieve Academy - Wisconsin
Kiel eSchool/Between the Lakes Virtual Academy
Rural Virtual Academy
WEA Academy

Educational Management and Consulting and/or Research

#SocialSchool4EDU
★ ♦ Baird Public Finance
BARR Center
Captivate Media + Consulting
CESA 1
CESA 10
CESA 5
CESA 6
CESA 8
Creative Learning Systems

DistrictIQ
ECRA Group, Inc.
Edustaff
♦ EMC Insurance Companies
ESS
FranklinCovey Education
Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates
jmc
♦ Plunkett Raysich Architects, LLP
★ Wipfli LLP
Wisconsin Association for Equity in Funding

Enrichment Programs and Curricular Programs

CESA 9 Statewide Programs
Creative Learning Systems
Curriculum Associates
Destinations Career Academy of Wisconsin
Dream Flight USA
eAchieve Academy - Wisconsin
FranklinCovey Education
Kiel eSchool/Between the Lakes Virtual Academy
LAB Midwest, LLC
MasteryPrep
National Inventors Hall of Fame
Professional Insurance Agents of Wisconsin, Inc.
Right At School
Rural Virtual Academy
Sustainable Schools
Wisconsin PTA
Wisconsin School Music Association

Facilities: Architecture, Design, Engineering

ATS&R Planners/Architects/Engineers
♦ Bray Associates Architects, Inc.
Demco, Inc.
DSGW Architects
♦ Eppstein Uhen Architects, Inc.
Eriksson Engineering Associates, Ltd.
Excel Engineering, Inc.
Forward Space
Groth Design Group, Inc.
♦ Hoffman Planning, Design &

Construction, Inc.
HSR Associates, Inc.
inBYLT
ISG
JSD Professional Services
Kapur & Associates, Inc.
Larson Engineering, Inc.
LHB, Inc.
Mammoth Sports Construction
McKinstry
MSA Professional Services, Inc.
★ Nexus Solutions
OPN Architects, Inc.
★ ♦ Performance Services, Inc.
♦ Plunkett Raysich Architects, LLP
Point of Beginning, Inc.
Ramaker & Associates, Inc.
★ Rettler Corporation
River Valley Architects
SitelogIQ
Somerville Architects & Engineers
Southern Bleacher Company
TADI (Traffic Analysis & Design Inc.)
Veregy
Vogel Bros. Building Co.
Wendel
Wold Architects and Engineers
Zimmerman Architectural Studios, Inc.

Facilities: Construction, Construction Management, and/or Consulting

Allied Facility Partners
Athletic Field Services, Inc.
Balestrieri Environmental & Development, Inc.
♦ C.D. Smith Construction, Inc.
CESA 10
♦ CG Schmidt, Inc.
Custofoam Corporation
Helm Service (HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical & Controls)
♦ Hoffman Planning, Design & Construction, Inc.
HSR Associates, Inc.
Huffman Keel Partners
inBYLT
Intertek - PSI
ISG
★ ♦ J.H. Findorff & Son, Inc.

♦ JP Cullen
JSD Professional Services
Kapur & Associates, Inc.
Kraemer Brothers, LLC
★ Kraus-Anderson
Larson Engineering, Inc.
Mammoth Sports Construction
Market & Johnson, Inc.
McKinstry
♦ Miron Construction Co., Inc.
★ Nexus Solutions
★ ♦ Performance Services, Inc.
♦ Plunkett Raysich Architects, LLP
Point of Beginning, Inc.
★ Rettler Corporation
♦ Scherrer Construction Company, Inc.
Schmidt Custom Floors
Schneider Electric
SitelogIQ
Southern Bleacher Company
Upper90
Veregy
★ ♦ VJS Construction Services, Inc.
Vogel Bros. Building Co.
Wendel

Facilities: Flooring and Wall Coverings

Badger Mats
Baseman Bros. Inc.

Elevate97
FieldTurf – Beynon Sports – Tarkett Sports
ProStar Surfaces
River Valley Architects
Schmidt Custom Floors
Stalker Sports Floors
Summit Commercial Fitness, Inc.

Facilities: Furnishings and Shelving

Advanced Technologies Consultants
Demco, Inc.
Forward Space
Marshfield Book & Stationery
Midwest Educational Furnishings, Inc.
River Valley Architects
Systems Furniture Installations
WB Manufacturing
Wold Architects and Engineers

Facilities: Hardware, Doors, Windows, Lab Equipment

H2I Group, Inc.
Innovative Office Solutions

Facilities: Lighting

Energy Performance Lighting
Helm Service (HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical & Controls)

DOWNLOAD NOW! 2026 CONVENTION APP



The 2026 WI State Education Convention App will be available soon.

The app for Android and iPhone includes the complete convention schedule, maps, session descriptions and more. Download it today and start planning your week in Milwaukee.

Sponsored by:



Musco Sports Lighting
Schneider Electric
Somerville Architects & Engineers
Upper90

Facilities: Mechanical Systems, Energy Services

Advanced Technologies Consultants
ATS&R Planners/Architects/Engineers
Complete Control Inc.
Data Wrangler by CLOCworks, Inc.
Excel Engineering, Inc.
Focus on Energy
Helm Service (HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical & Controls)
inBYLT
ISG
KLPD Global
Larson Engineering, Inc.
LHB, Inc.
McKinstry
North American Mechanical, Inc.
PBBS Equipment Corporation
★◆ Performance Services, Inc.
Schneider Electric
SitelogIQ
Somerville Architects & Engineers
Upper90
Veregy
Vogel Bros. Building Co.
Wendel
★ Wipfli LLP
Wold Architects and Engineers

Facilities: Roofing

Custofoam Corporation

Financial Services, Consulting and Accounting

Ampersand, Inc.
★◆ Baird Public Finance
Board of Commissioners of Public Lands
Data Wrangler by CLOCworks, Inc.
Frontline Education
★ HPS/PayMedix
◆ PMA Financial Network, LLC
Tri-State Wealth Advisors
U.S. BENCOR/MidAmerica
★◆ WEA Member Benefits

★ Wipfli LLP
Wisconsin Public Finance Professionals, LLC

Food Service Management, Equipment and Products

CESA Purchasing
Data Wrangler by CLOCworks, Inc.
Elior School Dining
Healthy School Meals for All-WI/
School Nutrition Association of WI
jmc
SFE, LLC
Taher, Inc.
Whitsons Culinary Group

Health Services

Aurora Health Care
Empify Health
OSMS - Orthopedic & Sports Medicine Specialists
Prairie States Enterprise, Inc.

Higher Education

Anatomaage
Midwest Educational Furnishings, Inc.

Information Management Services and Consulting

Diamond Assets
Frontline Education
Wisconsin Educational Technology Leaders - WETL
WISEdash Local

Insurance: Health, Dental, Vision, LTD, Life and Long-term Care

Ansary & Associates, LLC
CESA 7
◆ Community Insurance Corporation/WCA Group Health Trust
★ Delta Dental of Wisconsin
◆ Foster & Foster Consulting Actuaries, Inc.
★ HPS/PayMedix
◆ ▲ M3 Insurance
◆ National Insurance Services
★ Network Health

Prairie States Enterprise, Inc.

★ Quartz
◆ R&R Insurance Services, Inc.
Robin by HealthPartners
Security Health Plan of Wisconsin, Inc.
The Insurance Center
◆ ▲ Tricor Insurance, Inc.
Tri-State Wealth Advisors
★◆ UnitedHealthcare
◆ ▲ USI Insurance Services

Insurance: Property and Casualty

Ansary & Associates, LLC
◆ Community Insurance Corporation/WCA Group Health Trust
◆ EMC Insurance Companies
Liberty Mutual Insurance
◆ ▲ M3 Insurance
◆ R&R Insurance Services, Inc.
The Insurance Center
◆ ▲ Tricor Insurance, Inc.
◆ ▲ USI Insurance Services
★◆ WEA Member Benefits

Insurance: Third-Party Administration

Aviben
Centivo
Diversified Benefit Services, Inc.
◆ National Insurance Services
Prairie States Enterprise, Inc.
Security Health Plan of Wisconsin, Inc.
Student Assurance Services, Inc.
The Insurance Center
◆ ▲ Tricor Insurance, Inc.
U.S. BENCOR/MidAmerica
★◆ UnitedHealthcare

Insurance: Workers Compensation

Ansary & Associates, LLC
◆ Community Insurance Corporation/WCA Group Health Trust
◆ EMC Insurance Companies
Liberty Mutual Insurance
◆ ▲ M3 Insurance
◆ R&R Insurance Services, Inc.
◆ ▲ USI Insurance Services

Janitorial Services, Cleaning Supplies and Equipment

CESA Purchasing
Dashir Management Services, Inc.
Innovative Office Solutions
Schmidt Custom Floors

Legal Services

Boardman & Clark, LLP, Attorneys at Law
◆ Buelow Vetter Buikema Olson & Vliet, LLC
Quarles & Brady LLP
◆ Renning, Lewis & Lacy, s.c.
◆ von Briesen & Roper, S.C.
Wisconsin Association of School Boards (Commons)

Management, Consulting and/or Research

Aviben
Captivate Media + Consulting
DistrictIQ
Fulcrum Education Solutions
Huffman Keel Partners
Neola, Inc.
◆ School Perceptions

Office and School Supplies and Equipment

Advanced Technologies Consultants
Board of Commissioners of Public Lands
CESA Purchasing
Demco, Inc.
Innovative Office Solutions
Marshfield Book & Stationery
Midwest Educational Furnishings, Inc.

Photography, Yearbooks and ID Systems

★ Cahill Studios of Photography
DMM Productions

Playground and Sporting Equipment

★ BCI Burke/Lee Recreation
Brock USA
SPRINTURF

Summit Commercial Fitness, Inc.

Policy Services

Boardman & Clark, LLP, Attorneys at Law

Neola, Inc.

◆ Renning, Lewis & Lacy, s.c.

Wisconsin Association of School Boards (Commons)

Professional Development

#SocialSchool4EDU

AVID

BARR Center

Boardman & Clark, LLP, Attorneys at Law

CESA 1

CESA 10

CESA 2

CESA 5

CESA 6

CESA 7

CESA 8

CESA 9 Statewide Programs

Curriculum Associates

FranklinCovey Education

Fulcrum Education Solutions

Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates

Rural Virtual Academy

WEA Academy

Wisconsin Association of School Personnel Administrators

Wisconsin Educational Technology Leaders - WETL

Wisconsin School Music Association

Security and Alarm Systems Consulting and Design

CCAP Alert

Complete Control Inc.

Excel Engineering, Inc.

Toepfer Security

Signs and Scoreboards

Elevate97

H2I Group, Inc.

Strategic Planning, Management Consulting

Allied Facility Partners

Diamond Assets

◆ Excel Leadership, LLC

Fulcrum Education Solutions

Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates

HSR Associates, Inc.

Huffman Keel Partners

KLPD Global

◆ National Insurance Services

★ Nexus Solutions

Survey Services

Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates

Ramaker & Associates, Inc.

★ Rettler Corporation

◆ School Perceptions

Teaching Services

Anatomage

BARR Center

★ Candor Health Education

CESA 8

Destinations Career Academy of Wisconsin

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2025 Regional Meetings

The WASB's Fall Regional Meetings are wrapping up!

Thank you to everyone who has attended thus far. WASB staff appreciate the opportunity to visit each region, celebrate our members, connect with education leaders and engage in meaningful discussions about the work ahead.

The final in-person meeting — **Region 5** — will be held at the **Holiday Inn Wausau-Rothschild on Nov. 4**, and a virtual meeting will be held on Nov. 6 for members who were unable to attend in person. WASB consultants and legal staff will host "Students Can't Learn If They're Not There"—a student absenteeism workshop that will be held virtually at noon on Nov. 4 and in person at 4:30 p.m. on Nov. 6. The workshop leads right into the 6 p.m. Region 5 meeting, which will see members vote on a WASB regional director.

The member fee is \$42 for the meeting, which includes dinner, and \$75 for the pre-meeting workshop. Register for both and receive a \$10 discount. Visit WASB.org for more details and to register.

WASB School Law Conference

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Fall Legislative Conference

Join your peers and education advocates at the 2025 Fall Legislative Conference on **Saturday, Nov. 8, in Stevens Point**. This event offers a unique opportunity to gain insight into the future of public education and hear from experts on some of the most pressing issues facing your students and communities.

Visit WASB.org to register, book hotel rooms and see the agenda, which features:

- **Federal Update** – Jared Solomon, COSSBA/BOSE Public Affairs Group Senior Policy Advisor
- **Understanding the 2025-27 State Budget:** Communicating Impact Locally – WASB Consultants
- **Panel: Tracking Legislative Issues at the Board Level** – Wisconsin School Board Members
- **Recent Research and Trends in K-12 Education** – Sara Shaw, Wisconsin Policy Forum Deputy Research Director
- **Legislative Discussion** – Chris Kulow, WASB Government Relations Director; Wisconsin State Legislators

CORRECTION: On page 24 of the October issue of Wisconsin School News, Barbara Herzog was mistakenly listed as being from Richmond. She is a board member of the Oshkosh Area School District and serves as the Region 7 WASB director.

STATE EDUCATION CONVENTION

Registration for the 2026 Wisconsin State Education Convention, scheduled for Jan. 21–23 in Milwaukee, **opens on Nov. 3, 2025**. Hotel room blocks also open at 8 a.m. on Nov. 3. A link to book hotel rooms will be included in a confirmation email upon convention registration.

Proposals are still being accepted for:

Art Exhibit — Nov. 15 deadline

Student Video Team — Nov. 28 deadline

To learn more and submit your proposals, visit WASB.org/convention

Upcoming Webinars

■ STUDENTS CAN'T LEARN IF THEY'RE NOT THERE

NOV. 4 | 12–1:30 p.m.

Join us for a focused **90-minute online workshop** that begins with a clear overview of Wisconsin's compulsory attendance laws, presented by WASB legal counsel. Then, WASB consultants will share proven, practical strategies that districts across the state are using to improve attendance and re-engage students.

Register now — and help ensure every student has the opportunity to succeed. **The workshop has a \$75 registration fee and will be recorded, allowing registrants to watch it at their convenience.**

■ ADMINISTRATOR CONTRACTS

NOV. 12 | 12–1 p.m.

This presentation covers all aspects of administrator contracts, including the drafting of contracts, contract terms, application of section 118.24 Wis. Stat. to administrator nonrenewals and more. WASB staff counsel will also cover state and federal court decisions on administrator contracts, including the *Klaus v. Eau Claire School District* case.

Visit WASB.org now to register for a \$70 fee. The live webinar will be recorded and emailed to registrants to watch at their convenience.

■ WASB LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE VIDEO UPDATE

NOV. 19, DEC. 17 | 12–1 p.m.

Each month, WASB staff counsel and government relations staff address current topics of interest to WASB members. The topics are typically driven by recent developments affecting schools in the state Legislature, Congress, governmental agencies and the courts.

This webinar is complimentary, and no registration is required. The Zoom link will be emailed to you as the event approaches.

Browse the WASB's catalogue of recorded webinars on the Online Events page at WASB.org.

How Does the WASB Set Our Legislative Advocacy Positions?

You can get involved in shaping our policies!



Whether you're a new board member or have served for 20-plus years, if you have engaged with the WASB to any extent, it's likely you have heard the phrase "the WASB is a member-driven organization." What this means is that our mission, goals, services and more are all crafted and refined in large part through the direction of our members: public school boards.

WASB's official positions on education issues (referred to as resolutions) are no different. These resolutions are refined, evaluated and adopted by our membership and help inform the annual WASB Legislative Agenda. So, what does this process look like from start to finish? And how can you get involved?

■ WASB resolution process

Every year, we ask our member school boards across the state to submit resolutions for consideration. These resolutions are broad policy goals that your board hopes the WASB will adopt as an official advocacy position. Our deadline every year for these resolutions is Sept. 15, and the resolutions submitted must

be discussed and approved as a resolution by your local board. By adopting these resolutions at the local level, it ensures there's general agreement and consensus on what ideas your board wants to submit.

After the submissions from local school boards are received, they move forward to the Policy and Resolutions Committee. This committee is comprised of two school board members from each WASB region, appointed by WASB Regional Directors (elected to serve three-year terms on our board of directors) who review the submissions over the course of several months. During their review, they will either approve, amend (including consolidating into existing related resolutions) or reject proposals. They do this based off of whether a proposal is timely, worthy of debate and merits consideration by the full membership — NOT based on the merits of a submitted resolution or committee members' personal feelings on an issue. In November, the committee meets to finalize the resolutions — either as submitted or amended — that will move forward to our annual Delegate Assembly.

The resolutions advanced to the Delegate Assembly are not advanced with a recommendation from the committee that they be approved by delegates — just that they meet the criteria of being worthy of debate and consideration.

During the State Education Convention in January — which, by the way, is an amazing opportunity that we highly encourage you to attend — we hold our Delegate Assembly. This gives each member school board and CESA an opportunity to vote on the proposals forwarded by the Policy and Resolutions Committee. Each member board gets one vote through an approved delegate. A majority of delegates voting for a resolution result in that resolution becoming an official policy position of the WASB. These resolutions enter our living document known as the "WASB Resolutions Adopted by Delegate Assemblies" and remain in effect unless amended or repealed by a subsequent Delegate Assembly. If your board wants to have a voice in what the WASB is lobbying on, be sure to send a delegate to the Delegate Assembly on Wednesday, Jan. 21, at the Baird Center in Milwaukee.

Every year, we ask our member school boards across the state to submit resolutions for consideration. These resolutions are broad policy goals that your board hopes the WASB will adopt as an official advocacy position.

For those seeking more details and information about our resolutions process, you can navigate to our specific WASB Delegate Assembly Webpage (WASB.org >> Services & Resources >> Advocacy & Government Relations >> Delegate Assembly). There you can find a video covering the above material, our current resolutions booklet and archived information on past Delegate Assemblies.

■ What ideas were submitted for consideration this year?

Now that the Sept.15 deadline has passed, you may be wondering what sorts of resolutions were submitted this year. Overall, we had 20 different submissions from eight school boards. While the Policy and Resolutions Committee is deliberating on which proposals meet the aforementioned three criteria, we thought it may be valuable to give our members a general sense of which proposals are circulating so you can begin to discuss them with your boards.

- Opposing Removal of Enrollment Caps in the Choice/Charter Programs

- Federal Funds Distribution
- Fine Arts Education
- Opposing Restrictions on Referenda
- Substance Abuse Treatment Aid
- Supporting Beyond Punitive Discipline
- Vocational Transition for Students with Disabilities
- Universal Free Meals
- Public Education Endowment
- Supporting DEI Initiatives
- WIAA Hate Speech Procedures
- School Safety Spending
- Local Control of Education
- Early Childhood Education Funding
- Civics Education
- School Report Card Processes**
- Opposing “Decoupling”**
- Supporting “Decoupling”

** *Multiple resolutions were submitted on this topic.*

■ Stay up to date on legislative action!

The Delegate Assembly and our resolutions process occur only once each year, but legislative action occurs throughout the year, and it can be difficult to track and stay on top of everything. Luckily, your WASB Government Relations Team is here to help in a variety of ways. If you have not already done so, we strongly encourage you to subscribe to our Legislative Update Blog. A free member benefit, subscribing to the blog will allow you to receive emails directly to your inbox every time we feel something important happens in Madison or Washington.

Already subscribed to the blog and looking for more ways to get relevant legislative information? Be sure to attend the 2026 State Education Convention! The WASB’s GR Team will be there on Thursday, Jan. 22, giving a full hour of legislative updates. You will also have the opportunity to hear from several other organizations and school districts presenting legislative topics. ■

2025 FALL LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

#WASBLEGCONF2025

For those of you reading this column right after it hit your mailbox, we are just a few short days away from the 2025 Fall Legislative Conference, held Nov. 8 in Stevens Point at the Holiday Inn Convention Center. Attendees will have the opportunity to hear from a variety of speakers, including the Wisconsin Policy Forum, WASB consultants, COSSBA, fellow school board members and legislators. It’s also a great opportunity to network with your peers from across the state.

If you haven’t already registered, it’s not too late! Visit WASB.org/2025-fall-legislative-conference to register and view the agenda.

We hope to see you there! □



Court Cases Illustrate the Complexity of FMLA Administration

Managing employee absences is a constant challenge for school districts, especially with substitute teacher shortages and the logistical challenges posed by arranging to have regular employees cover for absent employees. Frequent or long-term absences from a single employee can be especially challenging. However, board members should be aware that some of the absences might be covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which provides job-protected leave for certain employees, including those with serious health conditions, those with a family member experiencing a serious health condition, and for childbirth.

This Legal Comment will provide an overview of the federal and state FMLA. Then, it will analyze some recent FMLA cases that serve as important reminders about compliance with FMLA laws. Even though board members are not directly involved in administering family and medical leave, they should have a basic understanding of the state and federal FMLA and the restrictions those laws place on school districts. This short article can only scratch the surface of the overall complexity of FMLA administration, including the manner in which the federal FMLA and the state FMLA interact. School administrators and other supervisors routinely encounter situations involving family and medical leave

that require the school district to navigate complex interactions among local policies and state and federal laws. Applying the various statutes, regulations, policies, and handbook provisions is not a simple task. Sound risk-management principles dictate the designation and ongoing training of well-qualified leave administrators.

■ Overview of the state and federal Family and Medical Leave Acts

Federal FMLA allows a qualified employee to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for qualified reasons. Examples of FMLA qualifying reasons include the birth or adoption of a child, an employee's serious health condition, the need for an employee to care for a spouse, child, or parent with a serious health condition, and specific military situations. Employees can be approved for continuous or intermittent leave. A continuous leave covers a consecutive period of absence. Intermittent leave covers short sporadic absences over a period of time.

FMLA leave protects the employee's job and maintains their employer provided health care coverage. An employee qualifies for federal FMLA if they have worked for their employer for at least 12 months and completed at least 1,250 hours of work during that period.

There is also a Wisconsin FMLA law that is similar but not identical to the federal law. In many situations, federal and state FMLA leave will run

concurrently when the leave qualifies under both laws. However, in certain situations, employees might qualify for leave under only one of the two laws. Districts need to comply with the FMLA law that is most beneficial to the employee requesting leave.

■ Understanding medical certifications

The FMLA permits employers to require a certification from a medical provider when an employee requests FMLA leave for a serious health condition or to care for a family member with a serious health condition. Among other things, these certifications will provide an estimate of the amount of leave an employee might need. This is only an estimate, and employers should be cautious before terminating an employee for exceeding the estimate on the certification. A recent case emphasizes this need for caution.

In *Davis v. Illinois Department of Human Services*,¹ Dyanne Davis became sick at work and went to Immediate Care, where she found out she was pregnant. Ms. Davis then missed four days of work due to pregnancy-induced morning sickness. When Ms. Davis returned to work, her employer gave her its FMLA packet, which included a medical certification for her doctor to complete. Ms. Davis returned the paperwork, and her doctor indicated how often Ms. Davis would need to

Federal FMLA allows a qualified employee to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for qualified reasons.

If the employer has reasonable notice that the employee might qualify for FMLA leave, the employer should provide the employee with FMLA paperwork.

have check-ups throughout the pregnancy and stated that she would need at least six weeks of continuous leave following the birth of her child. The doctor's certification indicated that Ms. Davis's condition would not cause "episodic flare-ups." Ms. Davis was approved for both continuous leave following birth and approved for intermittent leave for her doctor's appointments. She was not approved for leave for "episodic flare-ups" because the certification did not indicate that Ms. Davis would need leave for that reason.

Ms. Davis continued to suffer from morning sickness which caused her to miss work. While working, Ms. Davis told her supervisor that she could not complete the workday due to morning sickness and wanted to use FMLA. The supervisor instructed Ms. Davis to note that her absence was FMLA related on her timecard. Ms. Davis wanted to use her accrued holiday time to cover the four-hour absence and noted that on her timecard. However, she did not realize that she only had 3 hours and 30 minutes of holiday time banked. Ms. Davis also did not note the absence as FMLA related. The employer noted Ms. Davis's absence as unauthorized because she did not have sufficient holiday leave and because her leave exceeded the scope of the doctor's certification because this absence was due to a flare-up. Her certification didn't indicate that she had a need for leave due to flare-ups. The employer implemented its progressive discipline policy, which resulted in Davis's termination. Ms. Davis sued.

The court held that her morning sickness constituted a "serious health condition involving continuing treatment by a health care provider" which entitled her to FMLA leave whenever that serious health condition prevented her from

working. There was no need to determine whether she experienced a "flare up." The employer was well-aware that Davis needed to take intermittent leave for her morning sickness. The court ultimately held that a reasonable jury could find that the employer's conduct constituted unlawful FMLA interference.

Employers must be cautious when denying an employee leave for being in excess of a medical certification. Employers should generally give the employee a chance to complete a new certification in these situations. As the court highlighted in *Davis*, an aggressive approach by an employer can lead to claims of FMLA interference.

■ What constitutes "adequate notice" of the need for FMLA leave

Employees do not need to use magic words to request FMLA. If the employer has reasonable notice that the employee might qualify for

FMLA leave, the employer should provide the employee with FMLA paperwork. After receiving the completed paperwork, the employer will then have the opportunity to determine if the employee qualifies for leave based on the paperwork.

In *Valdivia v. Township High School District 214*,² Noemi Valdivia was an administrative assistant in District 214 for six years. Ms. Valdivia received a promotion, but shortly after starting her new position she began experiencing worsening mental health. Ms. Valdivia suffered symptoms such as insomnia, weight loss, uncontrollable crying, and exhaustion. Ms. Valdivia exhibited a clear change in her work habits, including crying at work, and she shared with her supervisor in numerous meetings that she felt overwhelmed. Ms. Valdivia also asked several times to be switched from a 12-month position to a 10-month position, because she felt "time away from the workplace might

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help.” Ms. Valdivia’s supervisor refused her request to change her position. Eventually, Ms. Valdivia resigned from her position. Ms. Valdivia sued the district under the FMLA, claiming the district interfered with her rights because her supervisor failed to give her information about her right to take FMLA leave.

The court held that Ms. Valdivia did have a serious health condition which rendered her unable to perform her job functions. Furthermore, the court emphasized that the district had constructive notice that Ms. Valdivia might qualify for FMLA leave. The employee’s “clear abnormalities in behavior” were sufficient to place the district on notice of Ms. Valdivia’s potential serious health condition. Ms. Valdivia’s uncontrollable crying at work, and repeated conversations with her supervisor about her insomnia, weight loss, and need to

change to a 10-month position, was constructive notice that Ms. Valdivia may have need of FMLA.

By contrast, in *Hubbard v. Illinois State Board of Education*,³ a federal court in Illinois held that an employee stating, “I’m sick,” “I won’t be in today,” and “I’m feeling ill” was insufficient to put an employer on notice that the employee might qualify for FMLA leave. This case provides helpful guidance for employers that not every employee illness requires the employer to provide the employee with FMLA forms. However, the *Valdivia* decision cautions supervisors that they cannot bury their heads in the sand when an employee is exhibiting symptoms of a possible serious health condition that might qualify for FMLA leave.

■ Conclusion

Board members must be aware of the complexity of FMLA. While districts

might have concerns about staff shortages, employees have the right to utilize FMLA leave as established by law. School districts might need to hire short- or long-term substitutes to cover when employees take FMLA leave. Sometimes employees need this leave with little or no notice. Despite the potential challenges that such absences can create, districts must permit employees to take leave as established by state and federal FMLA laws. ■

This Legal Comment was written by Sandra Cohen & Brian P. Goodman of Boardman & Clark LLP, WASB Legal Counsel. For related articles, see Wisconsin School News: “What Board Members Should Know About Leaves of Absence, Including FMLA” (Jan.-Feb. 2023) and “Employee Eligibility for Family and Medical Leave (Apr. 2013).

1. *Davis v. Illinois Dep’t of Hum. Servs.*, 137 F.4th 641 (7th Cir. 2025).
2. *Valdivia v. Twp. High Sch. Dist.* 214, 942 F.3d 395 (7th Cir. 2019).
3. *Hubbard v. Illinois Bd. of Educ.*, No. 20-3300, 2024 WL 3203313 (C.D. Ill. June 27, 2024).

Legal Comment is designed to provide authoritative general information, with commentary, as a service to WASB members. It should not be relied upon as legal advice. If required, legal advice regarding this topic should be obtained from district legal counsel.

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► School Perceptions, LLC

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

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



SUPPORTING, PROMOTING AND ADVANCING PUBLIC EDUCATION



UPCOMING MEETINGS & WORKSHOPS



FALL LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

November 8, 2025

Holiday Inn Convention Center - Stevens Point



SCHOOL LAW CONFERENCE

February 18-19, 2026

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