SPECIAL 2027 CONVENTION PREVIEW

WISCONSIN SchoolNews

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



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Convention 2027

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2027 WISCONSIN STATE EDUCATION CONVENTION

KNOW before you GO

Welcome to the Wisconsin State Education Convention!

Three days can go quickly, so a little preparation can make a big difference. Use this guide to know what to expect, plan your time and make the most of your convention experience.

▶▶▶ BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

1. Know the basics

The Wisconsin State Education Convention takes place every January at the Baird Center (400 W Wisconsin Ave.) in Milwaukee. Preconvention workshops are held on Tuesday, while the event runs Wednesday through Friday. The convention brings together school leaders from across Wisconsin for keynote presentations, breakout sessions, networking opportunities, an Exhibit Hall and more.

2. Plan your schedule — but leave room for the unexpected

Visit WASB.org/convention, download the State Education Convention Mobile App, review the schedule and identify the sessions you most want to attend. Pick four priorities each day:

1. Attend sessions you really want to learn from.
2. Talk to someone at a networking opportunity, such as the Networking Reception, WASB Breakfast, Education Tour, WASBO Luncheon or WASDA Luncheon.
3. Set aside at least 30 minutes to visit the Exhibit Hall.
4. Write down at least one note to bring back to your district.

3. Download your handouts ahead of time

Breakout session handouts are available digitally through the convention website and app. There will not be an onsite printing station. If there are presentations or resources you know you want in print, download or print them before arriving.

▶▶▶ GETTING TO THE CONVENTION

1. Where do I park?

The Baird Center has public parking at 501 W. Kilbourn Ave. and 500 W. Wells St. Parking is limited, so consider one of the nearby parking options:

- 330 W. Wells St. Garage
- 6th & State Lot
- Isaac's Garage
- MATC Surface Lot
- Hilton City Center Garage

Check the Baird Center website for current parking information, rates, maps and accessibility details.

2. Will there be shuttle service?

Yes! Complimentary shuttle service, courtesy of Lamers Bus Lines, will run approximately every 20-25 minutes between the Baird Center and the following participating downtown hotels:

- Aloft
- Courtyard by Marriott
- DoubleTree Hotel
- Hilton Garden Inn
- Hyatt Place
- Milwaukee Marriott Downtown
- Saint Kate Arts Hotel

Pick-up locations

Baird Center: Ground-floor doors on Wells Street, near the corner between Ballrooms A/B and C/D

Hilton Milwaukee City Center Hotel: 6th Street entrance, at the end of the Broadcasters Hall of Fame hallway

3. Will the skywalks be open?

While the Baird Center has agreed to keep the skywalks open during the hours below, Baird Center staff have the final say. Please consult with the Baird Center staff at the entrances to the building as these hours may be subject to change.

Hilton & Hyatt skywalk hours:

Mon — 8 a.m. – 6:30 p.m.
Tue — 6:30 a.m. – 9 p.m.
Wed — 6:30 a.m. – 9 p.m.
Thu — 6:30 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Fri — 6:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.

▶▶▶ MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR CONVENTION

1. Build your foundation

If you're early in your board service, the convention is a great place to build your foundation of knowledge. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Thousands of school leaders at convention were once first-time attendees, too, and they would be happy to help.

2. Don't just attend sessions — connect with people

Some of the best convention experiences happen between sessions. Make a goal of meeting at least three people you didn't know before convention.

3. Take advantage of the Exhibit Hall

Before convention, write down one or two challenges your district is currently working on. Then use the Exhibit Hall to look for ideas and resources related to those challenges.

4. Bring information back to your district

Keep a running list throughout the convention:

1. What did I learn?
2. What surprised me?

Dan Rossmiller



Leading Today, Shaping Tomorrow

I have a lot of time to think in October. I write after making one of the most beautiful drives in our state. Hayward to Minocqua by way of a couple of our state's northernmost school districts, with fall colors seemingly at their peak.

We live in a beautiful place. A place filled with amazing leaders, educators and students.

As I drive to and from our Fall Regional Meetings, I think about the WASB's place in that infrastructure. It's no secret public education is facing challenges, but traveling the state reminds me of how connected we are. We have a team of dedicated leaders tackling those challenges together.

New leaders are on the horizon. You'll soon be reading Viewpoint columns written by Ben Niehaus, our director of member services who will be serving as interim executive director upon my Feb. 1 retirement. Ben will do a good job, and I believe the WASB Board of Directors will hire a capable executive director. The board values your input in the process, and I hope you were able to provide feedback via the survey that we emailed Oct. 1.

My last chance to see you as the WASB executive director is the 2027 Wisconsin State Education Convention. Our recent WASB member survey found that first-time convention attendees rate their experience less favorably than those who've attended multiple times. As I've mentioned in my regional meeting remarks, we're taking the following steps to improve the convention experience for newcomers:

1. A "Know Before You Go" guide and video covering key information.
2. A prominent Help Desk and "Ask Me" buttons for WASB staff.
3. Highlighted breakout sessions recommended for first-time attendees.
4. An improved Wednesday morning orientation session.
5. A welcome at Wednesday evening's networking reception.

Find information about these items and more throughout this issue. I'm looking forward to seeing you in Milwaukee. Until then, let's continue leading today while shaping the leaders of tomorrow. ■

3. What could we try?
4. Who should I talk to when I get home?

Consider taking five minutes at the end of each day to jot down your biggest takeaways. □

▶▶▶ LOGISTICS

1. What security measures are in place?
We work closely with the Public Safety Department, and no person can enter the Baird Center without passing through weapons screening detectors.

2. What do I do in case of an emergency?
To report a medical crisis or other emergency using a Baird Center house phone, dial 414-908-6000, ext. 1. This is the fastest way to get a response from Baird Center security.

3. Is food available at the Baird Center?
Yes, the Baird Center contracts with a vendor to provide all food and beverages for conventions. The WASB is required to work with the designated vendor, and the Exhibit Hall features a cafeteria with a full menu of lunch and snack items. Therefore, no outside food or beverages are welcome in the Baird Center.

4. How do I check in?
Before the convention, you'll receive an email with a QR code that can be used at self-registration stations located on the third floor of the Baird Center. Simply scan your code, follow the on-screen instructions and print your badge. You can also search for your badge using your first and last name. Traditional check-in options will still be available for those who prefer in-person assistance.

5. Is Wi-Fi available?
Yes. The Baird Center provides free Wi-Fi, but it can become slow when many people are using it simultaneously.

6. What if I need a mobility scooter?
Electric scooters are available for rental from On the Go Mobility. Email mail@onthegomobility.com for more information.

7. What if I have a question that isn't answered here?
WASB.org/convention is your central source for all convention details. Additionally, contact the WASB at info@wasb.org or 608-257-2622.

We'll see you in Milwaukee!

An extended KNOW BEFORE YOU GO document and video will be sent to all convention registrants prior to the event.

Wednesday General Session



10 a.m. – Noon | Baird Center, Ballroom C/D

The **Jefferson High School Vox Ensemble** will open the State Education Convention with a special performance. Administrators and educators of the year will be recognized during the general session, along with the student art award winner. State Superintendent Jill Underly and Milwaukee Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Brenda Cassellius have been invited to address the opening general session.

PRESIDING: **SHELLY SEVERSON**
WASDA President, School District of Black River Falls



WEDNESDAY, JAN. 20, 2027 | GENERAL SESSION KEYNOTE

Rebecca Heiss

WEDNESDAY KEYNOTE



Dr. Rebecca Heiss understands the threat of change. As a stress physiologist, she is dedicated to helping us overcome our instinctual limitations — the ancient, often subconscious, fears that hold us back from our optimal performance and our happiest lives.

As the author of two books, "Springboard" and "Instinct"; founder and CEO of the leadership 360-review mobile application, icueity; and a professional speaker, Rebecca has found her calling in helping others recognize the power of transforming stress into the fuel.

A former educator, Dr. Heiss spent much of her earlier career in the classroom at both the high school and college levels. Today, she shares her Fear[less] Stress formula to transform fear to fuel from stages around the world as a full-time speaker, facilitator of her Fear[less] Masterclass and Fellow at Furman University's Center for Innovative Leadership.

Rebecca's "Fear[less]" message inspires hope and actionable insights to train our brains to work for us, rather than against us, in times of change and uncertainty. With surprising humor and palpable energy, she wins over her audiences with interactive, inspiring and timely takeaways.

Rebecca lives in South Carolina with her spoiled dogs, Guinness and Murphy, and every day tries to live her life motto: "Spread Happy."

Sponsored by: KRAUS-ANDERSON

Following her keynote, Rebecca Heiss will step outside the ballroom to hold a book signing, featuring copies of "Instinct" and "Springboard."

Thursday General Session



3 – 5 p.m. | **Baird Center, Ballroom C/D**

The **Tomah High School Wind Ensemble** 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 Sandie Anderson will reflect on her past year as president before handing the gavel to the 2027 president.

PRESIDING: **SANDIE ANDERSON**
WASB President, Wild Rose School District



THURSDAY, JAN. 21, 2027 | **GENERAL SESSION KEYNOTE**

Dr. Adolph Brown

Born in the heart of the inner city, while spending summers in rural Virginia with his grandfather, Adolph was reared to be hardworking and reflective. Having had a single parent mother in the housing projects, having been the first of his family of five to graduate high school, and having had his oldest sibling and only brother murdered when he was only 11, Adolph's life and work have been a voyage of discovery.

Adolph is a recovering middle school special education teacher, distinguished university professor, graduate college dean and business owner. He is an educational and clinical psychologist, master teacher, humorist, author and philanthropist, donating one-third of his consultation fees to support a scholarship endowment for hardworking young people.

Adolph is a deep thinker, active listener and engaging presenter who was once the youngest-tenured full university professor in the United States. He often gives talks to today's youth on yesterday's life lessons; as well as instructs master classes to teachers on how to reach EVERY student. He has a "head" for adults and a "heart" for kids as he facilitates over 100 ALL grade levels student assemblies a year.

Adolph now lives in Virginia with his lovely wife, Marla. They have eight kindhearted children.

THURSDAY KEYNOTE



Sponsored by: UnitedHealthcare

Friday General Session



10:30 a.m. – Noon | Baird Center, Ballroom C/D

The **Stoughton High School Norwegian Dancers** will open the final general session of the State Education Convention and treat the audience to a special performance. The Wisconsin governor will be invited to address the general session.

PRESIDING: **AUDRA BROOKS**
WASBO President, Medford Area Public School District



FRIDAY, JAN. 22, 2027 | GENERAL SESSION KEYNOTE

Jeff Utecht

FRIDAY KEYNOTE



Jeff Utecht, an author, keynote speaker and consultant is a recognized thought leader on the future of work, artificial intelligence and human-centered leadership. Over the past 25 years, Utecht has worked as a classroom teacher, instructional leader, international school administrator, consultant and entrepreneur. His career has taken him into leadership conversations with school systems, government agencies and organizations around the world.

Today, Utecht works with educational leaders, business executives and organizational teams navigating one of the most significant shifts in modern history: the convergence of artificial intelligence and changing human expectations about work, learning, leadership and culture. Utecht is the author of "Human Still Required: Leading Schools — The Work Machines Can't Do" and "The Next Turn: Work, AI, and Human Expectations." His work focuses on helping leaders understand what remains uniquely human in an increasingly automated world and how organizations can build trust, judgment, creativity and adaptability into their cultures.

Based in Seattle, Wash., Jeff believes the future belongs to organizations that learn how to combine technological capability with human wisdom.

Utecht's keynote is just the beginning. You'll have additional opportunities to engage with him throughout the convention, including breakout sessions. Immediately following his keynote, step outside Ballroom A/B from 12-12:30 p.m. to meet Utecht and have copies of his books signed.

THURSDAY, JAN. 21, 2027 | WASB BREAKFAST KEYNOTE

Scott Levy

BREAKFAST KEYNOTE



Crystal Ballroom, Hilton Milwaukee City Center | 7–8:30 a.m. | Registration required, **$47**

Join Scott Levy, author of "Why School Boards Matter" and a member of a public school board in New York, for a sit-down breakfast before listening in on his keynote exploring how boards are in a unique position to solve pressing educational challenges. He'll discuss avoiding initiative fatigue, fostering a positive district climate, engaging productively with the community and driving local accountability. He will also remind attendees of the essential role school boards play, empower them to tackle challenges together, and share why very K-12 stakeholder has a vested interest in understanding how school boards shape education. Along with his local school board service, Levy has served as president of a regional school boards association, chairman of a children's hospital, investment banker, adjunct lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and executive director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence.

Immediately following his keynote, Levy will hold a book signing outside the Crystal Ballroom at the Hilton Milwaukee City Center.



★ WASDA Luncheon

Thursday, Jan. 21, Noon—1:15 p.m.

Registration required, $59 | Hilton Milwaukee City Center

Hosted by the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators, featuring the 2026 Superintendent of the Year.

★ WASBO Luncheon

Thursday, Jan. 21, Noon—1:15 p.m.

Registration required, $59 | Hilton Milwaukee City Center

Hosted by the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials, featuring the 2026 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. 19 | 1:30–5 P.M. | BAIRD CENTER | PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED

★

Long-Range Facilities Planning: From Vision to Reality

With aging buildings, changing instructional needs, shifting enrollment and limited resources, districts need informed decision-making. This session will be broken into three sub-topics: long-range facilities planning, working with stakeholders to implement the plan, and maximizing the district investment. Participants will leave with practical tools, templates, peer examples and expert guidance.

Beaver Dam: Mark DiStefano. Burlington: Jill Oelslager. Franklin: Annalee Bennin. Gibraltar: Brett Stousland. Howards Grove: Shannon Kilton. Monroe: Joe Monroe. Wauwatosa: Nicole Marble. Plunkett Raysich Architects: Nicholas Kent, Devin Kack, Melissa Thompson

★

Measures That Matter: A Board Playbook for Asking the Right Questions

School boards often act as passive recipients of dense reports rather than drivers of improvement. This interactive four-hour workshop with the WISExplore Leadership Team empowers boards to transition to proactive oversight by integrating 2025-26 state report card data with local evidence. Using the WISExplore "3-Legged Stool" model, participants will balance student performance with adult practices and systems data. Attendees will gain a framework to align resources with high-priority needs, driving tangible progress toward district goals.

CESA 3: Lisa Arneson. CESA 6: Mary Ann Hudziak. CESA 8: Stephanie Feldner. CESA 12: Amanda Popvich

★

When Conversations Get Tough: Leading with Confidence, Trust and Purpose

Community and board conversations can quickly become challenging — especially when emotions run high and perspectives differ. This interactive pre-convention workshop will equip board members and administrators with practical strategies to listen effectively, navigate disagreement, de-escalate conflict, and engage their boards and communities in productive dialogue. Learn how intentional communication can build trust, strengthen relationships and keep the focus on what matters most — students and their schools.

WASB: Patti Vickman, Cheryl Stinski, Todd Gray

★

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 and learn 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.

Waunakee: Steve Summers. WASBO: Mike Barry



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2027 State Education Convention

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Explore the complete convention schedule and breakout session descriptions at **WASB.org/convention.**

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

ADVOCACY

From Advocacy to Influence: A Legislative Linkage Model for School Boards

The Howard-Suamico School District has developed a sustainable legislative linkage model that fosters ongoing dialogue, relationship-building and collaboration around public education issues. Learn how to build advocacy coalitions, strengthen communication with policymakers and ensure local education priorities are heard at the state level.

Howard-Suamico: Scott Jandrin, Greg Klimek, Vanessa Moran, Mark Smith

Strategic Planning for Mutual Success: A Charter School Partnership

Learn how a district can support all students through an effective district-authorized charter school partnership. The Cedar Grove-Belgium School District authorizes Rocket Academy, a public instrumental charter school for juniors and seniors interested in advanced manufacturing trades. Explore how to establish and maintain a partnership that supports unique learning models for students.

Cedar Grove-Belgium: Elizabeth Freeman, David Friend, Tera Rogers

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

NOTE: Sessions with stars next to the title are geared toward new school board members.

BOARD DEVELOPMENT

Accelerating Student Outcomes Through Principal Development and Retention

Strong principal leadership is associated with higher student achievement and increased teacher satisfaction and retention. That is why investing in principals is not an additional initiative — it is a multiplier for every district priority. Explore how to support school leadership excellence, including urban, suburban and rural examples of student learning gains.

AWSA: Yaribel Rodriguez

★ Calling All New Board Members

Join this dynamic networking session crafted specifically for new board members, offering valuable group networking opportunities to set you up for success in your board service journey. Engage in insightful discus-

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 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 to find more information, including the date and time of each session.

sions on building effective relationships with fellow board members and deepen your understanding of your roles and responsibilities. You'll gain practical tips on proven listening and questioning strategies, with advice that experienced board members have found invaluable. Connect with peers, learn best practices and enhance your board experience from day one!

WASB: George Steffen, Patti Vickman

● Elected to Lead, Expected to Know: A Guide to Special Education

Special education touches nearly every corner of district operations. It is one of the most legally complex, financially significant and personally meaningful areas a board member will oversee, yet most board members arrive at the table without a single hour of special education training. This session changes that.

WCASS: Danica Lewis

★ Fast Track to Leadership: Elevating New Board Members from Day 1

A comprehensive onboarding program is designed to bring new board members up to speed with the district's mission, vision, strategic plan and board norms. Learn how to equip board members with an understanding of their legal responsibilities and the processes necessary for smooth transitions pre- and post-election.

WASB: Dan Mallin, Pat Mans, George Steffen

● From Conflict to Clarity: Strengthening School Board Decision-Making

School boards navigate complex decisions in environments shaped by financial pressures, community expectations and increased public scrutiny. This session draws on dissertation research conducted in the Kenosha Unified School District to examine how boards make decisions in practice and how those decisions are communicated and understood by the public.

Kenosha: Dr. Carl Bryan

● Leading in Partnership: The Board President–Superintendent Relationship

When built on trust, clarity, communication and mutual respect, the board president and superintendent partnership can strengthen governance, support effective leadership and set the tone for the entire board–superintendent team. Explore practical strategies for building and sustaining a strong relationship, including communicating routines, managing differing perspectives, avoiding surprises and more.

WASB: Ben Niehaus

● Maximizing Board Excellence: The Power of Continuous Improvement

Discover how the WASB Annual Board Development Tool can help your board strengthen its effectiveness and elevate its governance practices. This research-based survey provides boards with clear, actionable insights into their performance, supported by a step-by-step guide for analyzing results. Examine how boards are using the tool to set goals, improve board operations and enhance their impact on student success.

WASB: Kelly Thompson, Patti Vickman. School Perceptions: Rob DeMeuse

★ Prepare New Board Members With a Complete Onboarding Process

De Pere School Board turnover led to dysfunction and strife among members. In a reflection meeting,

Pre-Delegate Assembly **DISCUSSION**

Tuesday, Jan. 19 | **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.

it was noted that none of the new members had any orientation other than meeting with the superintendent. The solution? Create an onboarding process to train new board members. In a way, re-orientating current board members!

De Pere: Jeff Dickert

Stay Out of Trouble With Strong Policy

This session will spotlight key policy areas across board governance, operations, and staff and student matters that boards should keep front of mind to ensure clarity, compliance and alignment with board intent. Leave with practical insights and takeaways to review with their boards and administrative teams.

WASB: Scott Mikesh, Ben Niehaus

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A Consolidation Playbook: Engaging Your Community

When a high-stakes district restructuring project failed, one Wisconsin school district paused, pivoted and put the community first. This session offers a candid, step-by-step look at how the district transformed a failed consolidation attempt into a collaborative success story.

Wausau: Jim Bouché, Cale Bushman, Diana White. MDRoffers Consulting: Mark Roffers

Beyond the Ballot: Building Community Trust Through Clear Communication

How one district moved from two previously failed operational referendums to passing a critically needed operational referendum in April 2026. Review how a K-8 school district leveraged past failures into future success by using clear and strategic communication to gain trust and educate the community on the need for support.

Kohler: Melissa Schoeder. Lake Country: Kelly Hoesly, Chad Schraufnagel

Beyond the Brochure: Reaching Referendum Voters

This session shows how districts can use video to deliver the right message to the right audience at the right time. Because video shows voters what's at stake instead of telling them, complex facilities and finance questions are easier to understand. Explore how tailored video reaches families and empty nesters, and leave with a practical video strategy that complements traditional communications.

North Lakeland: Brent Jelinski. Three Lakes: Jennifer West. Captivate Media: Jake Sturgis. Nexus Solutions: Ellie Gilliam, Deb Smith

Building an Active Chamber-District Partnership for Student Success

Aligning K-12 education with regional workforce development

ONSITE REGISTRATION

When arriving at the Baird Center, proceed to the third floor for convention registration. Registration will be open on Tuesday, Jan. 19, 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.

2027 WASB **Delegate Assembly** | Wednesday, Jan. 20, 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. 20.

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. 19, 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. 20.

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.



is critical. Explore the systemic, data-driven partnership between the School District of Janesville and the local chamber of commerce. Discover how this active coalition moves beyond traditional, passive advisory committees to bridge the gap between business needs and classroom outcomes.

Janesville: Dr. Allison DeGraaf, Chris Medenwaldt. Forward Janesville: Shar Hermanson. Whiton House Consulting: Oakleigh Ryan

Building Stronger School-Community Partnerships

Build a right-sized community engagement academy that invites community members into your spaces and helps them learn about the districts. The session will provide a roadmap for implementing your own version to meet the needs of your community.

Kaukauna: Mike Slowinski. Little Chute: Heidi Schmidt. Oshkosh: Bryan Davis

Destination District or Cautionary Tale? Attracting — and Keeping — High-Quality Leaders

Gain insight into the governance behaviors and organizational patterns that attract outstanding leaders, as well as the common missteps that quietly discourage strong candidates from applying or remaining in a district. Leave with strategies to strengthen trust, stability, leadership partnerships and long-term district success.

WASB: Leslie Bergstrom, George Steffen

Double the Ask, Double the Impact: Winning Operational and Capital Referenda

A dual referendum is high stakes — and high opportunity. Explore how districts can successfully pursue operational and capital referenda together. Learn how Yorkville J2 successfully passed their dual referendum by connecting financial realities to a clear, community-driven narrative that earned voter trust.

Yorkville J2: Mark Rollefson. Nexus Solutions: Kevin Hickman

How to Overcome a History of Referendum Failure

Mosinee failed 21 of its past 24 referendums before passing a November 2024 referendum by a 65% to 35% margin. Examine the strategies used not only during the referendum, but also the construction process culminating with a ribbon cutting to start the 2026-27 school year.

Mosinee: Greg Doverspike

Lights, Camera, Action: Using Video to Share Your District's Story

Every district has a story, but bringing that story to life requires clarity, intention and authentic voice. Learn how Westosha used video to showcase what makes the community unique. Hear directly from the district about why video became a powerful tool for strengthening community connection and communicating district identity.

CESA 2: Philip Anderson, Mitchell Lilly, Alyssa Montes de Oca-Northern. Westosha Central: John Gendron, Nicole Pahl

One Plan, One Team: A Unified School Safety Approach

Rural communities face unique challenges in preparing for school violence. Examine a countywide unified approach to school safety planning, active violence preparedness and reunification. Identify gaps in your own plans and leave with a checklist to strengthen your district's collaborative safety efforts.

Westfield: Michelle Johnson. Wild Rose: Craig Hayes. Waushara County: Keith Melvin

Passing the Friday Night Fish Fry Test

Advice about discussing a referendum with your taxpayers is usually vague and haphazard: "know your community," "communicate," "have open-houses." This session avoids these truisms and showcases Westfield's efforts to communicate, not campaign, for both capital and operational referendums. Gain a deeper understanding of the principles behind effective communication about complex topics. If it's not the way people talk at a Friday fish fry, it's not the way you should communicate with your residents and voters.

Westfield: Michelle Johnson. Findorff: Erika Freeman. School Perceptions: Rob DeMeuse, Scott Girard

Student Photos, AI and the Risk of Silence

As AI tools make it easier to alter and misuse images, school leaders and families are questioning whether student photos belong on district websites and social media. The privacy risks are real. So are the risks of going quiet. When a community cannot see the good things happening in its schools, districts find it more difficult to attract new families and build trust. When districts choose to stay silent, negative narratives fill the void. This session helps boards and administrators put guardrails in place to protect students while keeping authentic student voices, achievements and stories at the heart of school communications.

Lodi: Dr. Vince Breunig. Racine: Emily DeBaker. Captivate Media: Jake Sturgis

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.

Students as Storytellers

What if some of your district's most effective communicators are already sitting in your classrooms? Learn how New Auburn created a student storyteller program that helps families, taxpayers and community members see the great things happening in school every day. Learn how students capture authentic stories, strengthen community trust, build school pride and gain valuable career-ready skills.

New Auburn: Louise Cody, Austin Hiess, Kyra North. #SocialSchool4EDU: Andrea Gribble

The Human Side of Consolidation: Communicating Change

As district leaders evaluate long-term financial sustainability and educational opportunities for students, an important question emerges: Which neighboring district would be the best consolidation partner if reorganization became necessary? How can two communities be brought together around a shared vision? Gain actionable insights from two pairs of districts that successfully navigated district reorganization through transparent communication, stakeholder engagement and collaboration.

CESA 6: Lisa Sink. Greenwood: Joe Green. Hustisford: Todd Bugnacki

The Team Beyond the Field

A thriving athletic and activities department demands a unified, structurally sound leadership ecosystem with solid communication. This presentation clarifies the distinct, non-overlapping roles that superintendents, board members and business managers must play to foster programs that are fiscally responsible, legally compliant and aligned with the district's educational mission.

Mineral Point: Joelle Doye. Waterford Union: Kate Brown, Luke Francois, Jim McClowry

FACILITIES

Advancing Construction Safety for School Projects

Creating safe environments during active school construction requires a proactive, layered approach that protects workers, students, staff and the community. Explore how safety is strengthened through intentional pre-planning, continuous on-site oversight and the integration of emerging technologies.

Franklin: Andrew Daniels. CD Smith: Molly Haack, Mitch Kidd

Appleton Area School District's Path to Innovation and Change

A key element of Appleton's 2022 referendum was the creation of a new elementary school. Sandy Slope gave Appleton an opportunity to review their existing educational pedagogy and delivery model and then set new standards. Explore how the district reimagined educational delivery using Sandy Slope as the catalyst, including how their task force/committee was created to inform design and help the district understand and prioritize their needs.

Appleton: Joseph Bernhardt, Amanda Brolsma, Theresa Kischnick. Hoffman Planning, Design & Construction: Todd Bushmaker

Combining for Impact: Maximizing the Middle/High School Model

Gain insight into how to thoughtfully lead communities through exploratory consolidation discussions, reimagine program delivery and expand student opportunities through shared resources and specialized staffing. Explore how the building design supports this model, balancing cost-efficient shared spaces with necessary age-appropriate separation, to create flexible, future-ready learning environments.

Boscobel: Lisa Wallin-Kapinus. Howards Grove: Shannon Kilton. Plunkett Raysich Architects: Nicholas Kent, Molly Ryan, Melissa Thompson. Rosendale-Brandon: Wayne Weber

Doing More with Less: Rural Projects That Deliver

In rural school districts, capital projects are often led by administrators wearing multiple hats with limited resources. Equip yourself with practical, experience-driven strategies to successfully navigate those challenges. Learn how to evaluate facility needs, prioritize investments and align capital planning with long-term financial realities. Gain actionable approaches to managing projects with resources — especially when referendums are involved.

Erin: Joannie Kalina. Linn J6: Tami Martin. JP Cullen: Alex Mielke

MISD: When Culture Shapes the Classroom

The Menominee Nation High School shows how culturally grounded design can strengthen student belonging, engagement and educational outcomes. The school weaves tribal history, values and storytelling into its design while providing a modern learning environment with technology, flexibility and collaborative spaces. Hear how cultural integration, language and environmental stewardship have impacted attendance, staff retention, student pride and engagement.

Menominee Indian: Kate Mikle. Somerville Architects & Engineers: Halle Laverdure, Melanie Parma, Dan Wiitanen

To Renovate or Replace? That Is the Question

New Richmond faced a defining decision: continue investing in its aging facilities or pursue replacement. Through a thoughtful planning process grounded in community input, the district identified a clear path forward, reinvesting in its existing schools to create modern, flexible learning environments. The result is a transformation that honors the community's investment, responds to evolving educational needs and positions these buildings to support student success for the next 50 years.

New Richmond: Kristoffer Brown,

Kent Elkin, Troy Miller. Kraus-Anderson: John Huenink. Wold Architects & Engineers: Ben Beery, Tyler Ertl

Transforming Old Schools: A Phased Alternative to Building New

How can school districts address aging facilities and evolving educational needs when constructing a new school may not be financially or politically feasible? Explore how collaboration created a phased facility improvement plan that balanced educational priorities, taxpayer impact and long-term community support.

Deerfield: Anne Kessenich, Michelle Jensen. Bray Architects: Nate Considine, Matt Wolfert. Vogel Bros. Building Co.: Jay Thomsen

What Your Buildings Are Telling You

Even the most meticulously maintained buildings age. With only so much funding to support both learning and building upkeep, it can be difficult to know when to prioritize improvements. Explore how a facilities condition assessment completed with Kraus-Anderson allowed the Ellsworth to prioritize deferred maintenance, develop a clear strategic plan and ultimately complete transformational updates to its facilities.

Ellsworth: Andrew Borner, Brian Nadeau. Kraus-Anderson: John Huenink, Tim Kittila

HUMAN RESOURCES

Building a People-First Culture That Drives Success

Districts across Wisconsin face increasing challenges in attracting, hiring, retaining and developing exceptional employees. Sheboygan responded by creating a comprehensive people-first culture focused on supporting employee well-being, recognizing excellence and developing future leaders. Learn practical strategies for strengthening attraction, hiring, retention and leadership development in their own districts.

Sheboygan: Jami Hintz, Rachel Ledezma

Hiring Outside the Box: A New Model

Explore an innovative approach to superintendent hiring in a time of leadership shortages. Faced with a limited candidate pool, hear how a district selected a promising but unlicensed candidate with strong leadership potential. The board simultaneously engaged a licensed, experienced superintendent to serve as a mentor throughout the licensure process. Explore the rationale, structure, challenges and outcomes of this model.

Prairie Farm: Corey Berghammer, Bonnie Roemhild. West Salem: Troy Gunderson

Strategic Approaches to Reducing Staff Absenteeism and Rewarding Presence

Explore how to transition from traditional attendance tracking to strategic absence management while creating cultural shifts to reduce absenteeism. Dive into creating balanced policies that maintain accountability while utilizing high-impact reward systems and flexible work arrangements that motivate employees to show up and stay engaged.

Greendale/WASPA: Julie Grotophorst. Onalaska/WASPA: Sonya Ganther. South Milwaukee/WASPA: Jennifer Sielaff, WASBO: Mike Barry

Take Control of Healthcare Costs With Strategic Self-Funding

Rising healthcare costs continue to strain school district budgets, limiting investment in students and staff. The Employer Healthcare Cooperative of Wisconsin empowers districts to regain control over healthcare spending. Hear how self-funded cooperative strategies, direct contracting and independent primary care can reduce costs while improving access and quality.

HPS/PayMedix: Ashley Mahlik, Brian Marsella. EHCW: Pat Blackaller.

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.

LEADERSHIP

Beyond Compliance: Using EE to Grow and Retain Principals

This session highlights how the Wisconsin Framework for Principal Leadership and Educator Effectiveness can be leveraged as powerful tools to develop principals, strengthen capacity and drive continuous school improvement. Explore current research on leadership and retention, gain practical strategies to support principal growth and leave with ideas to transform educator effectiveness into a catalyst for sustained leadership development.

Altoona: Heidi Eliopoulos. CESA 4: Jed Kees. DPI: Jacob Hollnagel. UW-Madison: Steve Kimball, Jessica Arrigoni

Beyond the Title: Leading Through Influence, Impact and Authenticity

Leadership isn't defined by a role: it's defined by the courage to influence, uplift and create meaningful impact from wherever you stand. Explore how authenticity, humility and purpose-driven action break down barriers, strengthen teams and build trust across genders, roles and experiences.

Bristol: Michael Juech. CESA 6: Ted Neitzke. Cornell: Paul Schley. Hartford Jt. No. 1: Tara Villalobos. Saint Francis: Deb Kerr. Marion University: Aaron Sadoff. Nexus Solutions: Mary Pfeiffer

Every Teacher a Leader — The Wisconsin Teacher Voice and Leadership Framework

How do we shape the future of Wisconsin education while addressing the critical need for educator retention today? The answer lies in the Wisconsin Teacher Voice and Leadership Framework, a new framework designed to inspire and support school leaders in creating the conditions where teacher voice is a meaningful part of decision-making. Explore the six spheres of teacher influence and learn how a shift from "command and control" to "trust and inspiration" can transform school culture.

Bayfield: Richard Erickson. CESA 10: Amy Traynor

From Plan to Progress: Using Parallel Goals to Drive Strategic Plan Implementation

Even the strongest strategic plan can lose momentum without a system for implementation and accountability. Examine one approach to developing annual parallel goals for the board and the superintendent that directly support strategic plan implementation. Learn how the district uses its annual Board Governance Retreat to establish aligned leadership goals, identify measurable action steps, monitor progress through a scorecard and evaluate results throughout the year.

Mequon-Thiensville: Mary Gavigan, Matthew Joynt, Jason Levash

Hardwire, Don't Hope: Systematizing Leadership Excellence Across Your District

Leaders often navigate a paralyzing maze of disconnected initiatives, resulting in team member fatigue and diluted impact. Stop hoping for alignment; start hardwiring it to ensure consistent execution and maximize impact on student outcomes. Learn how executive leaders from four organizations helped leaders cut through complexity and bring improvement practices to scale across leadership teams.

Altoona: Heidi Eliopoulos. CESA 9: Al Betry. D.C. Everest: Casey Nye. Holmen: Kristin Mueller. Studer Education: Casey Blockowiak

Leadership in Focus: A Better Way to Evaluate, Align and Lead

Ready to take the guesswork out of superintendent evaluation? This engaging session highlights the WASB Superintendent Evaluation Framework in action — featuring a user-friendly online platform, streamlined tools and structured goal setting that bring clarity and consistency to the process. Discover how this practical, collaborative approach strengthens governance, supports continuous improvement and keeps the focus on student success.

WASB: Kelly Thompson, Patti Vickman

The Collective Impact of School Board Leaders Working Together for Stronger Schools

Gain insight into how all five La Crosse County school board leaders are collaborating to strengthen student outcomes through shared purpose and collective impact. This session highlights how board presidents are unifying around what's best for students by exchanging best practices and working through common challenges together. Hear how this peer network helps presidents enhance their effectiveness and navigate complex issues with confidence.

Bangor: Julie Meyers. Holmen: Jennifer Dieck. La Crosse: Trevor Sprague. Onalaska: Aaron McDonald. West Salem: Catherine Griffin

The Future of Wisconsin Is Being Decided Right Now

The decisions school boards and district leaders make over the next few years will influence Wisconsin's communities, workforce and economy. This session will elevate stories from districts, statewide organizations and industry leaders helping shape Wisconsin's future. Hear what organizations are seeing, doing and learning and what lessons are emerging for those determined to lead rather than react.

CESA 4: Jennifer Riggle, Britni Walz. Eleva-Strum: Cory Kulig. Whitehall: Mike Beighley.

The Power of an Aligned Governance Team

Explore how the Middleton-Cross Plains board and superintendent work in concert to serve the district and the greater community. Mutual trust and respect, open and honest communication and feedback, a newly revised mission and vision, and a future-preparedness framework for student success are serving as foundational elements for success.

Middleton-Cross Plains: Bartlett Durand, Bob Hesselbein, Dana Monogue

The Ripple Effect: How Women Leaders Shape Culture, Inspire Growth and Empower Others

Every interaction creates an opportunity to influence, inspire and lead. Explore how intentional leadership creates a ripple effect that strengthens organizational culture, fosters belonging and empowers others to grow. Gain practical strategies for building authentic relation-

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.*

WASB Legislative Update

Interested in advocacy?

Join WASB's Chris Kulow and David Martin in room 103 A/B from 8:45-9:45 a.m. on Jan. 21, to learn about the state budget and legislation affecting public K-12 schools. Receive tips on how to respond effectively as advocates for your district, schools and students.

NETWORKING RECEPTION

Wednesday, Jan. 20 | 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.

ships; creating allies among colleagues, community partners and stakeholders; and supporting the next generation of leaders.

Hartford Jt. No. 1: Tara Villalobos. Saint Francis: Deb Kerr. Nexus Solutions: Mary Pfeiffer

When Safety Becomes a Crisis: Building Trust Through School District Communication

Explore school safety through the lens of crisis communication and community trust, emphasizing how leadership messaging shapes public perception during critical incidents. Examine governance-level questions school boards and superintendents should consider before, during and after safety incidents. Leave with practical frameworks to strengthen trust, improve communication consistency and lead more confidently under pressure.

Racine/WSPRA: Emily DeBaker. Stevens Point/ WSPRA: Sarah O'Donnell

SCHOOL FINANCE

An Introduction to School District Consolidation and Dissolution

School district consolidation is in the news, as is school district dissolution. Do you know the difference? Explore policy drivers, financial implications, operational considerations and community engagement requirements tied to consolidation. Discover how to evaluate options carefully and navigate this sensitive process with transparency and strategic foresight.

DPI: Bob Soldner

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.

Medford: Audra Brooks. Baird Public Finance: Debby Brunett, Jordan Masnica

Emerging Instructional Requirements and Their Impact on Your Budget

Stay informed about the latest developments in curriculum, instruction and student support. This session highlights key instructional trends and required legislation impacting teaching and learning and the financial implications that may occur because of them. Be prepared for the impacts in your community and how to proactively address changes that are happening.

WASBO: Danielle Bosanec

Federal Education Funding Update

The speakers will explain how federal funds get from Washington D.C. to Wisconsin school districts, describe how allocation amounts from the two largest federal sources IDEA and Title I, Part A are determined; and share how federal funding can be used to support local needs. The speakers will also provide any information regarding the federal education funds that would typically be available on July 1, 2026.

DPI: Shelly Babler, Rachel Zellmer

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 local taxpayers' money. Therefore, public trust is critically affected when "surprise" information suddenly appears. This session will elaborate on the Financial Monitoring Benchmarks, review essential school finance topics, and providbe insight on how boards can be accountable to external stakeholders of the district's finances.

WASB: Roger Price. WASBO: Mike Barry

Finance Aspect of the School Nutrition Program

Addressing the financial aspect of the school nutrition program. Help find solutions to keep your program in the "black."

Menasha: Brian Adesso. Chartwells: Haley Chavez

Explore Milwaukee!

Make the most out of your time in Milwaukee. From outstanding local restaurants and breweries to museums, historic attractions and entertainment venues, you'll find plenty to do during your stay.

Sports fans may want to check the schedules for the Milwaukee Bucks, Marquette Golden Eagles, UW-Milwaukee Panthers, Milwaukee Admirals or Milwaukee Wave to see if a game is happening while you're in town.

Making Money Make Sense: Creative Strategies for Telling Your School Finance Story

School finance is complex — but your community's understanding of it shouldn't be. Behind every budget is a story: a story of student needs, strategic choices, limited resources and the impact of every dollar. Learn how to transform that complexity into communication that is clear, human and compelling. Explore storytelling frameworks that help audiences understand why financial decisions are made, not just what they are.

Racine/WSPRA: Emily DeBaker. WSPRA: Debbie Brewster

Speak the Same Language: Bridging the Gap from the Boardroom to the Breakroom

In an era of tight budgets and even tighter scrutiny, superintendents, board members and business officials are often the ones holding the "hot potato" of financial reality. But in Wisconsin's current political climate, how you say it is just as important as what you're saying. We're stripping away the jargon and giving you a tactical communication toolkit to navigate the uphill battle of school finance.

Mineral Point: Joelle Doye. River Falls/ WSPRA: Jennifer Ames. Sauk Prairie: Jeff Wright. WEAC/ WSPRA: Christina Brey

Special Education Funding Decoded

Special education funding is one of the most consequential and misunderstood areas of school finance. Explore how special education is funded in Wisconsin through multiple interconnected layers. Understand why each layer matters for effective governance and what makes Wisconsin's funding model structurally distinct from most other states, and what that means for local districts.

WCASS: Danica Lewis

The CESA Showcase: The Price is Right for Wisconsin Schools!

Come on down and step into our game show session, where we bring the high-energy fun of The Price is Right to uncover the incredible power of your CESA partnership! Learn what services and opportunities are available from CESAs to help your district win big.

CESA 5: Mike Koltes. CESA 8: Nick Curran. CESA 9: Hilary Cordova

The Importance of a Highly Qualified School Business Manager

A highly qualified school business manager plays a critical role in building a fiscally sound, high-performing school district. This session introduces school board members to the F.I.S.C.L. framework — Financial Management, Improvement, Sustainable Operations, Communication and Leadership — developed by WASBO to define excellence in the profession. Learn how statewide standards and aligned professional learning help support effective business operations in Wisconsin school districts.

WASBO: Mike Barry, Danielle Bosanec

The School Board's Role in Financial Oversight

Do you know if your school board is meeting the mark with financial accountability? Are you aware of your board's fiscal policies? Listen in as the WASB and WASBO share a set of Financial Monitoring Standards to assess the expectations you should have as board members in monitoring and assessing your district's policies, overall finances and current budget while strategically planning for future budgets.

WASBO: Mike Barry

The State of School Finance

With the 2027-29 state budget season in full swing, examine some of the key factors driving the current state of school finance in Wisconsin.

WASBO: Anne Chapman

Using Next-Generation Financial Forecasting to Predict Shortfalls and Needs

How do you know if a budget shortfall is on your horizon? How do you communicate the need for a referendum to a skeptical community? Discover a financial forecasting model that's designed for Wisconsin's unique funding formula and empowers superintendents and school boards to stress-test financial scenarios, identify structural deficits early and build data-driven timelines for community conversations.

CESA 5: Mike Koltes, Derek Sliter

SCHOOL LAW

Managing Title IX with Confidence

Ensuring Title IX compliance in

schools is challenging, complex and rarely straightforward. Walk through realistic school scenarios and provide guidance on how to comply with Title IX, address community concerns, and avoid messy and expensive legal pitfalls.

Middleton-Cross Plains: Chris Mand. Renning Lewis & Lacy: Tess O'Brien-Heinzen

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, Kara Conley

The Board's Role in Multilingual Learner Success

As Wisconsin's multilingual learner population grows, legal responsibilities remain while guidance evolves. School boards and district leaders need practical ways to meet requirements while advancing student achievement. This session will clarify state and federal requirements, interpret district and school data, and ask better board-level questions about multilingual learner outcomes, staffing, budgets, family communication and program effectiveness.

CESA 2: Gretchen Lettau, Fran Veguilla. Middleton-Cross Plains: Mandi Sersch-Morstad. Verona: Rosamaria Laursen

'They Said What?' Understanding the Limits of First Amendment Protection

Freedom of speech is an essential right. However, this right is not absolute. The limits of freedom of speech in a school setting have been established by decades of case law regarding student and employee speech. School officials need to keep informed about the most recent cases in order to apply this legal framework to modern issues. Apply these developments through a guided discussion of hypothetical scenarios involving speech by students and employees.

Boardman & Clark: Brian Goodman

Tough Calls: Reductions in Force

The number of reductions in force being contemplated, or implemented, are on the rise. This session will cover statutory requirements, contractual obligations and procedural due process considerations. Takeaways will include best practices for board action, notice requirements and strategies for minimizing legal exposure when difficult staffing decisions become necessary.

von Briesen & Roper: Mark Kapocius

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

A School That Thrives on Flexibility for Families

This session will share a unique approach as a virtual charter school that "significantly exceeds expectations." Examine a hybrid delivery model grounded in three pillars: personalized learning, health and wellness, and service learning.

Little Chute: Kelly Lamers, Heidi Schmidt, Angela Wachtel

Beyond the Plan: Unifying a District from the Boardroom to the Classroom

Running a school district is a daunting task; how can a leader create buy in from the school board, principals, educators, support staff, learners and the community to all move in the same direction? Hear how the use of metrics within Franklin's board-adopted strategic plan led to parallel internal and public facing dashboards holding them accountable to ensuring programs were impacting their learners.

Franklin: Annalee Bennin, Mark Grunske, Jessica Moe, Ann Sepersky, Jenna Taylor

Every Student a Reader: A District's Commitment to Deepening Literacy Practice

What happens when educators examine literacy practices collaboratively through a science-based and special education lens? Educators from Westosha Central share their multi-year journey to strengthen literacy outcomes for some of the district's most striving readers.

CESA 2: Kris Statz. Westosha Central: Kari Radzik

From Shortage to Strength: Building a Grow-Your-Own Teacher Education Program

Four years ago, Hortonville faced a shortage of qualified applicants for special education positions. Committed to maintaining high-quality programming, the district turned to an existing strength — Hortonville High School's Family and Consumer Science Educational Pathway. Learn why students now serve as interns and classroom helpers to gain experience while supporting teachers and students.

Hortonville: Thomas Ellenbecker, Stephanie Halverson

Future-Proof Your CTE Program by Aligning with Industry Demands

The workforce is changing rapidly, but is your CTE program keeping

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** for the detailed convention schedule and the latest updates and announcements. A complete printed convention guide will be provided at registration in Milwaukee.

2027 EDUCATION TOUR

Fairview School

THURSDAY, JAN. 21 | $10, pre-registration required

Step away from the Baird Center and inside Fairview School, a K4–8 school leading the way in STEM, with a comprehensive Project Lead the Way program, hands-on learning in robotics and coding, and a strong focus on arts and whole-child development.

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 Fairview School
- **11:30 a.m.** Shuttle departs
- **11:45 a.m.** Arrive at the Baird Center

pace? This presentation examines how schools can assess, update and expand career training offerings to align with current industry demands. Explore strategies for incorporating new technologies, updating curriculum, strengthening industry partnerships and securing resources for program growth.

Mosinee: Matthew Lindsey. DPI: Thomas McCarty.

● Implementing a Portrait of Graduate: Onramps for School Districts

What does it take to move a Portrait of a Graduate from vision to reality? This session explores Wisconsin's Portrait of a Graduate framework and the systems-level shifts needed to ensure all learners develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary for success in school, career and community life.

DPI: Chris Gleason, Josh Robinson, Laura Roeker

● 'It Made Me Feel Like Nothing': The Make-Or-Break Freshman Year

The transition from middle to high school is one of the most consequential periods in a student's academic journey. Freshman-year experiences are closely tied to attendance, achievement, engagement and ultimately graduation outcomes. Explore what changes during the transition to high school, why those changes matter and how schools can use student data to identify students' most pressing needs.

Marinette: Sarah Anderson. Slinger: Phil Ourada. School Perceptions: Rob DeMeuse, Daren Sievers

● Launchpad: From Student to Staff

The educator shortage isn't a distant threat — it's here. Is your district ready to stop searching for talent and start building it? Take an explosive look at the "Grow Your Own" framework. This is a radical reimagining of the teacher pipeline that turns current students and community members into tomorrow's classroom stars.

Elmbrook: Dr. Emily Greiber, Dr. Bob Hall, Dr. Mark Hansen. Wauwatosa: Dr. Demond Means

● Moving the Needle: PK–12 Systems That Create Big Impact

Examine the systems and strategies that create measurable growth in student achievement and school culture. This session highlights proven approaches in intentional hiring, PLC structures, tiered intervention systems, instructional consistency, culture building, student leadership and progress monitoring.

Amery: Megan Challoner. Elmwood: Thomas Sauve

● My School's Gone to the Dogs... and That's a Good Thing!

Student mental health and school climate are critical priorities for today's schools. This session explores the proven impact of certified school therapy dog programs. Learn practical steps for launching a program, including certification, policies, risk management and community engagement. Watch Trygve, a certified therapy dog, in action and leave with resources and strategies to bring this impactful initiative to your own district.

Burlington: Troy Everson

● Partnering for Growth: Student-Centered Coaching in PLCs

Pulaski has reimagined professional learning by integrating student-centered coaching into its instructional framework for both students and staff. Presenters will share a "slow-roll" implementation that scaled coaching from pilot to a sustainable, district-wide model. Leave with a scalable blueprint for using coaching to drive student achievement and system-wide growth.

Pulaski: Becky Barry, Sara Foote, Jennifer Gracyalny, Sarah Hansen, Chrissy Makurat, Lindsey Mathys, Lydia Storby

● Reach for the Stars: Helping Special Needs Students Excel Through the Library

The library is for everyone! In alignment with Title II of the ADA, learn about three different approaches to making school libraries a space for students with the highest needs. Presenters will share the ways they have collaborated within their schools to meet students' needs and help them grow.

Brown Deer: Keegan Taylor. Kenosha: Jacob Boring. Verona: Teresa Voss

● Systems of Engagement

Chronic absenteeism rates continue to land above pre-COVID levels.

Two Rivers has seen a 25.8% decrease in chronic absenteeism since combining a multi-tiered, support-forward approach with NextPath technology. Learn how the district reviews data and enacts supports for early intervention and progress monitoring.

Two Rivers: Kyle Korinek

The AI-Ready Portrait of a Learner: Preparing Students to Navigate a Changing World

Learners don't need to be using AI today, but they must be equipped to navigate and utilize it tomorrow. Explore how future-ready competencies can be explicitly designed to help learners confidently navigate technological shifts, and leave with a practical guide to align their district's vision with the realities of tomorrow.

CESA 1: Dria Setter

The Future of Career Readiness Is Integrated

This session highlights the innovative career and transition coordinator model, designed to break down traditional silos between general education, special education and postsecondary planning. Learn how this approach has expanded access to internships, youth apprenticeships, career exploration and transition supports while creating more coherent, equitable pathways for student success after high school.

Nicolet: Greg Kabara, Melannie Litscher, Stephanie O'Connor-Reiser

When Learning Comes Naturally, Students Thrive

Outdoor education is often viewed as "less than" or "a nice extra" rather than an essential component in academic development. However, evidence demonstrates that every teacher can use outdoor education practices in traditional classrooms. This presentation will highlight the importance of redefining the goal of formal education to connect our students to the world around them.

Superior: Lori Danz

TECHNOLOGY

Automate to Elevate: Creating a Blueprint for AI Integration in Wisconsin Schools

As AI continues to transform education and operations, districts must take a strategic, system-wide approach to implementation. Learn how a blueprint for AI integration can help ensure AI tools are leveraged efficiently and effectively across all areas of a school district from teaching and learning to operations and facilities. Explore systems and tools that will automate operations to elevate learning.

Palmyra-Eagle: Ryan Krohn. Waterford: Tony Spence. WASBO: Danielle Bosanec. New Berlin: Kelli Kwiatkowski

CTE in the Age of AI and Manufacturing Innovation

The skills needed to succeed across industries are shifting. Pewaukee and Reedsburg are reimagining ways to teach CTE by transforming traditional "shop" classes into innovation hubs. These programs integrate emerging technologies and prioritize soft skills such as creativity, collaboration and entrepreneurship. Traces the journey from early ideas to the design of innovative programs and learning spaces.

Pewaukee: Mike Cady. Eppstein Uhen Architects, Inc.: Katie LaCourt. Bob Morris

Screens in Balance: Navigating the 'Screen Time' Paradox in K-12 Education

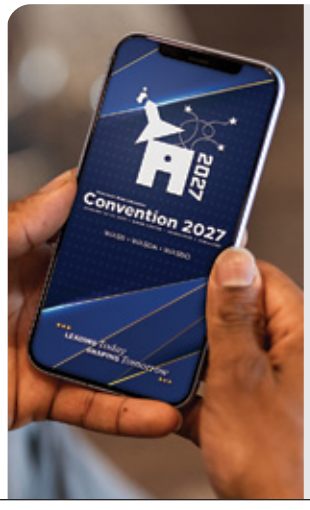
The ubiquity of screens in American K-12 schools has become one of the most pressing and controversial issues in public education. Explore the "Parental Screen Guilt" paradox — where families recognize the educational value of tech but fear its long-term impacts — and learn how to bridge this gap through strategic communication and pedagogical efficacy.

Columbus/WETL: Michael Ziegler. Elmbrook/WETL: Dan Scott

The Kids Are Ahead of Us: Responsible Engagement With AI Tools

Explore the gap between students' perceptions of how they are using AI tools and how their teachers think they are using them, effective and ineffective messages they've received from their teachers about how to use AI tools, and what they want to learn about AI. Presenters will share recommendations for school and district policies to guide appropriate uses of AI tools.

WASBO: Danielle Bosanec. AI Center for Effective Teaching and Learning: Tony Frontier □



The convention in your pocket

The 2027 Convention Mobile App includes frequently asked questions, exhibitor information and an agenda that points you to a map of each session's location. You can also find presenter handouts and rate each session.

Search for "WI Ed Conv" in Apple's App Store or Google Play Store or scan the code to the right.

Sponsored by:

DELTA DENTAL

BAIRD

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





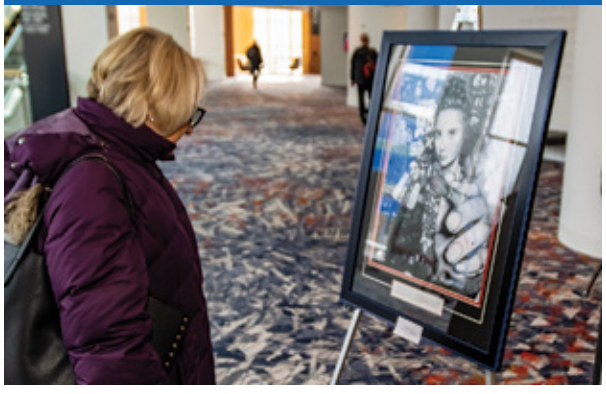
Student music groups presented in partnership with the Wisconsin School Music Association and the WASBO Foundation.

WEDNESDAY | Jan. 20
10-10:15 a.m. | Ballroom C/D
Jefferson High School Vox Ensemble

THURSDAY | Jan. 21
3-3:15 p.m. | Ballroom C/D
Tomah High School Wind Ensemble

FRIDAY | Jan. 22
10:30-10:45 a.m. | Ballroom A/B
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: *Growth*. Award-winning pieces from this year's contest will be displayed at the 2027 State Education Convention. The deadline to submit art is Sunday, Nov. 15.

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 2027 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 rjlarson@wasb.org by Friday, Nov. 20.

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. The Sustainable Schools Booth is coordinated by the Couillard Solar Foundation and partners.

Exhibit Hall Mini Sessions

Join us in the Exhibit Hall for mini sessions on the latest trends and innovations in education. Learn from experts, network with peers and discover new solutions to your challenges.

Find the mini session presentation area toward the rear of the Exhibit Hall on the right-hand side (when facing toward the back of the hall). Check the mobile app and convention agenda to find descriptions of Exhibit Hall Mini Sessions, which will be held at:

1. Wednesday, Jan. 20, 9:10 A.M.

2. Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2:40 P.M.

3. Thursday, Jan. 21, 9:55 A.M.

4. Thursday, Jan. 21, 11:45 A.M.



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.
- **ASK A SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS PRO**
  Drop by WSPRA's booth during designated exhibit hall times to chat with a school public relations professional! Feel free to ask your questions about referendum, crisis communication, social media and more.
- **EZ PROMOTION & APPAREL**
  Stop by EZ Promotion & Apparel's booth during Exhibit Hall hours to grab a complimentary convention-branded t-shirt and learn how they can help your school district with branding and merchandise.
- **COMPLIMENTARY PHOTOS**
  Visit Cahill Studios of Photography's booth to get your photo taken! Get a complimentary professional photo taken for your district or take a fun group photo with your colleagues.

Cahill
STUDIOS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

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. 20: 9-10 a.m. | Sponsored by:

Burke PLAY THAT MOVES YOU. | network health | Findorff

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. 20: 9-10 a.m.; 12-1:30 p.m.; 2:30-3:30 p.m.

THURS., JAN. 21: 9:45-10:45 a.m.; 11:45 a.m.–1:45 p.m.

2027 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 19

- 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 20

- 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** **Rebecca Heiss,** keynote speaker (Sponsored by Kraus-Anderson); **Jefferson High School Vox Ensemble,** 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 21

- 7 - 8:30 a.m. **WASB BREAKFAST**
  Crystal Ballroom, Hilton Milwaukee City Center; **Scott Levy,** 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** **Dr. Adolph Brown,** keynote speaker (Sponsored by UnitedHealthcare); **Tomah High School Wind Ensemble,** student performance; ***SCHOOL BOARD SERVICE AWARDS***

FRIDAY | JANUARY 22

- 8 - 9 a.m. **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**
- 9:15 - 10:15 a.m. **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**
- 10:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. **GENERAL SESSION**
  Jeff Utecht, keynote speaker; Wisconsin Governor (invited), speaker; **Stoughton High School Norwegian Dancers,** student performance

Convention Hotels

Room blocks for the 2027 convention will open on **Monday, Nov. 9, at 8 a.m.,** one week after registration opens Nov. 2. When someone registers for the convention, the attendee, the person who completed the registration and the district's WASB contact will each receive a confirmation email that includes a link to book hotel rooms. Hotel reservations must be made no later than **Monday, Dec. 21, 2026.**

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. Once a reservation is made in Meetingmax, attendees will receive an initial confirmation email from Meetingmax acknowledging that the reservation has been successfully submitted. This email serves as your confirmation that a reservation has been made.

Please note that this initial email does not include your hotel confirmation number. Confirmation numbers are issued directly by each hotel according to their processing schedule. Some hotels send confirmations within a few days, while others — including the Hilton and Hyatt — finalize and send confirmations closer to the reservation cutoff date of December 21, 2026.

*Please also 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 20–25 minutes between the Baird Center and the designated convention hotels on Wednesday, Jan. 20, and Thursday, Jan. 21.

The WASB provides housing blocks as a courtesy to attendees to provide lower, negotiated room rates. **Hotel blocks close on Dec. 21.** 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 2027

Wisconsin State Education Convention

January 20-22, 2027 • Baird Center • Milwaukee

REGISTER ONLINE! 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.

FULL NAME

FIRST NAME FOR BADGE

Your Title for Badge *PLEASE CHECK ONLY ONE*

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

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):

_____

SCHOOL DISTRICT

ADDRESS

CITY / STATE / ZIP

TELEPHONE

EMAIL ADDRESS

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, 2026**
STANDARD: **Jan. 4, 2027**
Meal Reservation Deadline: **Jan. 4, 2027**

CANCELLATIONS

No refunds will be given unless cancellation is received by 5 p.m., Jan. 4, 2027.

REGISTRATION

	# PEOPLE			TOTAL
EARLY BIRD Registration *WITH FULL PAYMENT ONLY* *Must be received BY Dec. 15, 2026*	_____	× $335	= $	_____
STANDARD Registration *Payments received AFTER Dec. 15, 2026*	_____	× $370	= $	_____

SPECIAL EVENTS

PRE-CONVENTION WORKSHOPS, **TUESDAY, Jan. 19**

☐ **WORKSHOP**: Long-Range Facilities Planning: From Vision to Reality	_____	× $ 99	= $	_____
☐ **WORKSHOP**: Measures That Matter: A Board Playbook for Asking the Right Questions	_____	× $ 99	= $	_____
☐ **WORKSHOP**: School Finance Puzzle	_____	× $ 99	= $	_____
☐ **WORKSHOP**: When Conversations Get Tough: Leading with Confidence, Trust and Purpose	_____	× $ 99	= $	_____

EDUCATION TOUR, Thursday, Jan. 21

☐ **EDUCATION TOUR**: Fairview School	_____	× $ 10	= $	_____

MEAL FUNCTIONS

☐ **WASB BREAKFAST** 7 a.m., Thursday, Jan. 21	_____	× $ 47	= $	_____
☐ **WASDA LUNCHEON** Noon, Thursday, Jan. 21	_____	× $ 59	= $	_____
☐ **WASBO LUNCHEON** Noon, Thursday, Jan. 21	_____	× $ 59	= $	_____

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 $ _____



2027 EXHIBITORS by Product Categories

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

★ 2027 Convention Sponsor ◆ WASB Service Associate ▲ WASB Endorsed Insurance Agency

Administrative Software and Integration Tools

Aviben
BoardBook
CESA 7
FirstNet Built with AT&T
GDC IT Solutions
Infinite Campus
jmc
◆ Skyward, Inc.
The Priton Group
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
WISEdash Local

Associations, Non-Profits, and Government Agencies

Board of Commissioners of Public Lands
CESA 1
CESA 11
CESA 2
CESA 5
CESA 6
CESA 9 Statewide Programs
Focus on Energy
Sustainable Schools
WEA Academy
Wisconsin Art Education Association
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 Department of Justice - Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
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
B.R. Bleachers
Fisher Tracks, Inc.
J W Industries, LLC
Kiefer USA
Marshfield Book & Stationery
Midwest Sport & Turf Systems - Synthetic Turf
ProStar Surfaces
Shaw Sports Turf
Southern Bleacher Company
Summit Commercial Fitness, Inc.

Audio, Video, Multimedia Equipment and Design

Amplify Graphics & Branding
Educators AV
FORTÉ
Mainstage Theatrical Supply, Inc.

Awards and Recognition Programs

Wisconsin PTA

Business Services

#SocialSchool4EDU
Ampersand Public Advisors, LLC
★ ◆ Baird Public Finance
CCAP Aler
CESA 2
★ EZ Promotion & Apparel
◆ Foster & Foster Consulting Actuaries, Inc.
Heartland Business Systems
Immel Construction
PensionPortal.com
Security Check Me, LLC
The Alliance
The Priton Group
Vistelar
★ ◆ WEA Member Benefits

Communications, Telecommunications, Technology

Audio Enhancement
BIG 3 Communications
BoardBook
Captivate Media + Consulting
CENTEGIX
FirstNet Built with AT&T
FORTÉ
GDC IT Solutions
Honeywell Technologies
◆ JP Cullen
Sustainable Schools
Wisconsin Educational Technology Leaders - WETL

Distance and Online Learning Services

ACT Education Corp
Candor Health Education
CESA 9 Statewide Programs
Destinations Career Academy of Wisconsin
eAchieve Academy - Wisconsin
IXL Learning
Marian University
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 11
CESA 5
CESA 6
Creative Learning Systems
ECRA Group, Inc.
◆ EMC Insurance Companies
ESS
Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates
jmc
PeopleBench
★ ◆ Plunkett Raysich Architects, LLP
Wipfli
Wisconsin Association for Equity in Funding

Enrichment Programs and Curricular Programs

ACT Education Corp
Benchmark Education
CESA 9 Statewide Programs
Creative Learning Systems
Curriculum Associates
Destinations Career Academy of Wisconsin
Dream Flight USA
eAchieve Academy - Wisconsin
IXL Learning
Rural Virtual Academy
Sustainable Schools
Wisconsin Historical Society
Wisconsin PTA
Wisconsin School Music Association

Facilities: Architecture, Design, Engineering

ATS&R Planners/Architects/ Engineers
◆ Bray Associates Architects, Inc.
Demco, Inc.
DSGW Architects
Engberg Anderson
◆ Eppstein Uhen Architects, Inc.
Eriksson Engineering Associates, Ltd.
FEH Design
Forward Space
Groth Design Group, Inc.
Hallberg Engineering, Inc.
◆ Hoffman Planning, Design & Construction, Inc.
HSR Associates, Inc.
inBYLT
ISG
JSD Professional Services
Larson Engineering, Inc.
LHB, Inc.
McKinstry
MSA Professional Services, Inc.
★ Nexus Solutions
OPN Architects
★ ◆ Performance Services, Inc.
★ ◆ Plunkett Raysich Architects, LLP
Point of Beginning, Inc.
Ramaker & Associates, Inc.
★ Rettler Corporation
River Valley Architects
Schneider Electric
SitelogIQ
Somerville Architects & Engineers
Southern Bleacher Company
TADI (Traffic Analysis & Design Inc.)
Terrazzo & Marble Supply Companies
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.
Building Solutions
◆ C.D. Smith Construction, Inc.
CESA 10
◆ CG Schmidt, Inc
Custofoam Corporation
Express Elevator
★ ◆ Findorff
Helm Service (HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical & Controls)
◆ Hoffman Planning, Design & Construction, Inc.
HSR Associates, Inc.
Huffman Keel Partners
IDEAL CRANE RENTAL, INC.
inBYLT
ISG
◆ JP Cullen
JSD Professional Services
Kraemer Brothers, LLC
★ Kraus-Anderson
Market & Johnson, Inc.
McKinstry
◆ Miron Construction Co., Inc.
★ Nexus Solutions
Nicholas & Associates, Inc.
★ ◆ Performance Services, Inc.
★ Rettler Corporation
Samuels Group
◆ Scherrer Construction Company, Inc.
Schmidt Custom Floors
Schneider Electric
SitelogIQ
Southern Bleacher Company
Terrazzo & Marble Supply Companies
Upper 90, a Centrix Company
Veregy
★ ◆ VJS Construction Services, Inc.
◆ Vogel Bros. Building Co.
Wendel

Facilities: Flooring and Wall Coverings

Amplify Graphics & Branding
Badger Mats
Baseman Bros. Inc.
Elevate97
Emmons Business Interiors
FieldTurf – Beynon Sports – Tarkett Sports
Gerflor USA
Kiefer USA
ProStar Surfaces
Schmidt Custom Floors
Shaw Sports Turf
Stalker Sports Floors
Summit Commercial Fitness, Inc.
Terrazzo & Marble Supply Companies

Facilities: Furnishings and Shelving

Advanced Technologies Consultants
Demco, Inc.
Duet Resource Group
Emmons Business Interiors
Engberg Anderson
Forward Space
Marshfield Book & Stationery
Midwest Educational Furnishings, Inc.
Samuels Group
School Specialty
Systems Furniture Installations
Virco Manufacturing Corp.
WB Manufacturing
Wold Architects and Engineers

Facilities: Lighting

Energy Performance Lighting
Hallberg Engineering, Inc.
Helm Service (HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical & Controls)
Mainstage Theatrical Supply, Inc.
Musco Sports Lighting
Quality Controls Service and Solutions, Inc
Somerville Architects & Engineers
Upper 90, a Centrix Company

Facilities: Mechanical Systems, Energy Services

Advanced Technologies Consultants
ARAMARK K-12 Education
ATS&R Planners/Architects/ Engineers
Complete Control Inc.
Express Elevator
Focus on Energy
Hallberg Engineering, Inc.
Helm Service (HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical & Controls)
Honeywell Technologies
inBYLT
ISG
LHB, Inc.
McKinstry
North American Mechanical, Inc.

★ ◆ Performance Services, Inc.
Quality Controls Service and Solutions, Inc
SitelogIQ
Somerville Architects & Engineers
Upper 90, a Centrix Company
Veregy
◆ Vogel Bros. Building Co.
Wendel
Wipfli
Wold Architects and Engineers

Facilities: Roofing

Custofoam Corporation

Financial Services, Consulting and Accounting

Ampersand Public Advisors, LLC
★ ◆ Baird Public Finance
Board of Commissioners of Public Lands
Frontline Education
HPS/PayMedix
◆ PTMA Financial Solutions
U.S. BENCOR/MidAmerica
★ ◆ WEA Member Benefits
Wipfli
Wisconsin Public Finance Professionals, LLC

Food Service Management, Equipment and Products

ARAMARK K-12 Education
CESA Purchasing
Chartwells School Dining Services
jmc
Taher, Inc.
Whitsons Culinary Group

Health Services

Aurora Health Care
Bridging Brighter Smiles, Inc.
Emplify Health
Prairie States Enterprise, Inc.
Smart Medical
The Alliance

Higher Education

Anatomage
Marian University
Midwest Educational Furnishings, Inc.

Human Resources and Staffing

Security Check Me, LLC

Information Management Services and Consulting

GDC IT Solutions
Wisconsin Educational Technology Leaders - WETL
WISEdash Local

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

Ansay & Associates, LLC
CESA 7
◆ Community Insurance Corporation/WCA Group Health Trust
Cottingham & Butler Total Rewards Consulting
★ Delta Dental of Wisconsin
◆ Foster & Foster Consulting Actuaries, Inc.
HealthPartners
HPS/PayMedix
◆ ▲ M3 Insurance
Marsh Agency
◆ National Insurance Services
★ Network Health
Prairie States Enterprise, Inc.
Quartz
◆ R&R Insurance Services, Inc.
Security Health Plan of Wisconsin, Inc.
The Alliance
TIC, Alera Group
◆ ▲ Tricor Insurance, Inc.
★ ◆ UnitedHealthcare
◆ ▲ USI Insurance Services

Insurance: Property and Casualty

Ansay & Associates, LLC
◆ Community Insurance Corporation/WCA Group Health Trust
Cottingham & Butler Total Rewards Consulting
◆ EMC Insurance Companies
Liberty Mutual Insurance
◆ ▲ M3 Insurance
Marsh Agency
◆ R&R Insurance Services, Inc.
TIC, Alera Group
◆ ▲ Tricor Insurance, Inc.
◆ ▲ USI Insurance Services
★ ◆ WEA Member Benefits

Insurance: Third-Party Administration

Aviben
Diversified Benefit Services, Inc.
◆ National Insurance Services
Prairie States Enterprise, Inc.
Security Health Plan of Wisconsin, Inc.
TIC, Alera Group
◆ ▲ Tricor Insurance, Inc.
U.S. BENCOR/MidAmerica
★ ◆ UnitedHealthcare

Insurance: Workers Compensation

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

Janitorial Services, Cleaning Supplies and Equipment

ARAMARK K-12 Education
CESA Purchasing
Chartwells School Dining Services
Schmidt Custom Floors

Legal Services

Attolles Law, s.c.
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
Cottingham & Butler Total Rewards Consulting
ESS
Huffman Keel Partners
Neola, Inc.
◆ School Perceptions

Marketing, Branded Merchandise, and Promotional Products

★ EZ Promotion & Apparel

Music Programs, Instruments and Products

Educators AV

Office and School Supplies and Equipment

Advanced Technologies Consultants
Board of Commissioners of Public Lands
CESA Purchasing
Demco, Inc.
Emmons Business Interiors
FORTÉ
Marshfield Book & Stationery
Midwest Educational Furnishings, Inc.
Virco Manufacturing Corp.

Photography, Yearbooks and ID Systems

★ Cahill Studios of Photography

Playground and Sporting Equipment

B.R. Bleachers
★ BCI Burke/Lee Recreation
ForeverLawn Milwaukee
School Specialty
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
Audio Enhancement

BARR Center
Boardman & Clark, LLP, Attorneys at Law
CESA 1
CESA 10
CESA 11
CESA 2
CESA 5
CESA 6
CESA 7
CESA 9 Statewide Programs
Curriculum Associates
Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates
Marian University
★ ♦ Plunkett Raysich Architects, LLP
Rural Virtual Academy
WEA Academy
Wisconsin Association of School Personnel Administrators
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Wisconsin Educational Technology Leaders - WETL
Wisconsin School Music Association

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2026 Fall Regional Meetings

The WASB's Fall Regional Meetings are wrapping up! Thank you to everyone who has attended. 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.

A virtual workshop will be held on Nov. 3 at 12 p.m. and a virtual meeting will be held on Nov. 5 at 12 p.m. for members who were unable to attend in person.

STATE EDUCATION CONVENTION

Registration for the 2027 Wisconsin State Education Convention, scheduled for Jan. 20–22 in Milwaukee, opens on Nov. 2, 2026. Hotel room blocks open at 8 a.m. on Nov. 9. When someone registers for the convention, the attendee, the person who completed the registration and the district's WASB contact will each receive a confirmation email that includes a link to book hotel rooms. **The hotel room block cutoff date is Dec. 21, 2026.**

Showcase Your District!

The 2027 convention includes several additional opportunities to showcase your students' hard work. We're currently accepting submissions for the State Education Convention Art Contest (Nov. 15 submission deadline) and the Student Video Team (Nov. 20 deadline). **Learn more at WASB.org/convention.**



Walking the Hill

Left to right: WASB Directors Bob Green, Sandie Anderson, Andrew Maertz and Larry Dux represented Wisconsin public schools on Capitol Hill in September. During the COSSBA Federal Advocacy Conference, they joined the WASB government relations team to meet with Wisconsin's legislators in D.C. to share the needs, priorities and challenges facing public schools across our state.

Upcoming **Webinars**

SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS LIVE Q&A

NOV. 4 | 12 p.m.

WASB attorneys will answer your questions about school board elections. Please come prepared to ask questions. To ensure your questions are addressed, registrants will have the opportunity to submit them in advance. The live Q&A will be recorded and made available for members to view at their convenience. Questions may be submitted prior to the live Q&A event using the form found on WASB.org/meeting-and-events/webinar-catalog.

Registration will open soon on WASB.org. This session costs $75. After registering, you will receive an email with details about joining the webinar live and accessing the recording, as well as access to two pre-recorded webinars on the 2027 elections process.

INSURANCE INSIGHTS: THE LATEST IN PROPERTY & CASUALTY COVERAGE

NOV. 10 | 12 p.m.

What's changing in school district property and casualty insurance? Representatives of the Wisconsin Association of School Boards Insurance Plan Endorsed Insurance Agency Program will highlight the latest coverage trends, emerging risks and key considerations for school districts.

This webinar is a member benefit, and no registration is required.

Watch your email for Zoom link details for this event. For those who can't attend live, this webinar will be recorded and available in the Complimentary Events Video Library (log in required).

ADMINISTRATOR CONTRACTS

NOV. 12 | 12 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 Ben Richter will also cover state and federal court decisions on administrator contracts, including the Klaus v. Eau Claire School District case.

Registration is now open on WASB.org. This session costs $75. After registering, you will receive an email with details about joining the webinar live and accessing the recording.

WASB LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE VIDEO UPDATE

NOV. 18, DEC. 16 | 12 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.

Chris Kulow and David Martin

Introducing 40 by 40: Fulfill the IDEA Promise

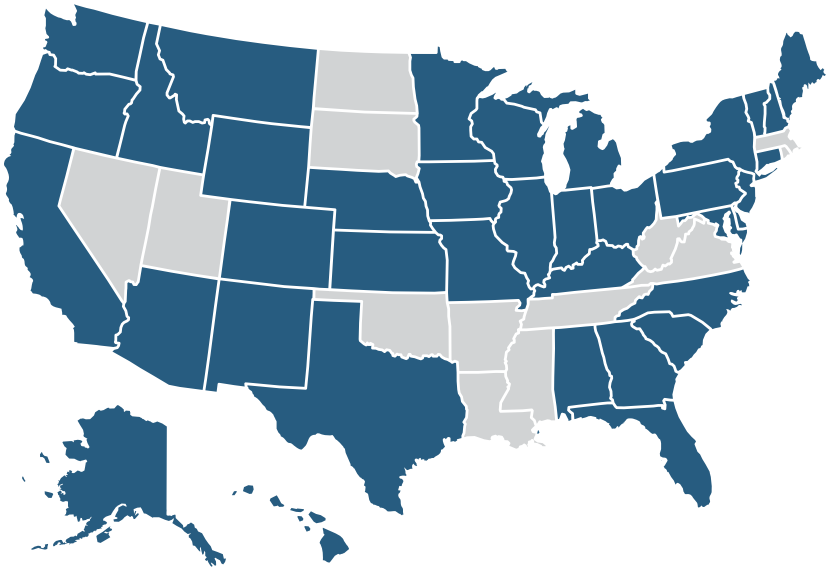
While Wisconsin has made progress on special education funding, Washington has dropped the ball

In 1975, Congress passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education act, a landmark in federal education policy that transformed the lives of children with disabilities in this country. Students with disabilities are now guaranteed a free public education in the least restrictive environment possible, ensuring all students are provided the ability to succeed.

Fifty years later, no federal policy has fundamentally changed the nature of public education more than IDEA. Public schools across the country have been happily providing services to special education students ever since. While schools have been fulfilling their requirements under the law, providing special education services is not always an easy endeavor. Costs for services have gone up dramatically in recent years and as our understanding of disabilities increases, more students with disabilities are identified and the education students with disabilities receive has changed (often leading to more one-on-one instruction or aides). In 1975, there were roughly 3.9 million students with disabilities nationwide; today that number is roughly 8.3 million.

Recognizing that they were asking school districts to take on a lot of responsibilities, the federal government pledged to fund 40% of the cost of educating students with disabilities when it passed IDEA. Every time the law has been reauthorized, that 40% funding promise has been renewed. Unfortunately, Congress has never come close to meeting that promise. Today, IDEA funding is assisting with roughly 10% of the costs of educating students with disabilities, a far cry from 40%. In fact, Congress has never even made it to 20% funding. Here is the kicker — this chronic underfunding shifts billions in costs onto states and local school districts that must meet IDEA requirements regardless of federal support.

That is why the WASB has joined with 37 other state school board associations (as of this writing), with support from the Consortium of State School Board Associations, the National Rural Education Association and the IDEA Full Funding



The WASB has joined with 37 other state school board associations to launch a new grassroots effort called 40 by 40! **The goal: engage in collective advocacy to call on Congress to honor its commitment to fund IDEA at a 40% level by the year 2040.**

Coalition Member (37 States)
Not yet a member

Coalition, to launch a new grassroots effort called 40 by 40! The goal: engage in collective advocacy to call on Congress to, at long last, honor its commitment to fund IDEA at a 40% level by the year 2040. This fiscally reasonable request provides a 14-year glide path to provide Congress time to gradually increase appropriations and find ways to make it fit in the budget.

In Wisconsin, we have made significant progress in our own state budget process on special education aid. Over the past several budget cycles, we have managed to increase our own special education categorical aid to roughly 38% reimbursement. This is a great accomplishment and a milestone that few other states have achieved. However, 38% state funding plus roughly 10% federal funding leaves about half of the cost of educating students with disabilities to local school boards. Schools have no choice but to fill in the missing pieces, which places a great deal of strain on general education programming designed for all students. These are dollars we should be using to reduce class sizes, update curriculum, hire staff, expand mental health services and support academic recovery.

In the 2025-26 school year, school districts reported $2,036,777,925 in prior year aidable costs (costs incurred in the 2024-25 school year that the state partially reimburses in the 2025-26 school year). The state provided $782,408,800 in aid last school year. The federal government, through IDEA Part B grants, awarded Wisconsin $249,617,277 in 2025. Adding up the aid from the state and federal government and subtracting that from the total aidable costs districts reported shows that school districts are picking up $1,004,751,848 in special education costs themselves. That is more than $1 billion in spending that could be used to support all students and better focus on student achievement.



How can your board help in this effort

Engaging in advocacy at the state level is daunting enough, but talking with federal lawmakers can be even more intimidating. The good news is that the 40 by 40 team has created a comprehensive toolkit, designed to equip you with all the materials, talking points, graphics, presentation outlines and strategies you need to help with this effort. You can find this toolkit and more about the effort and team on the official 40 by 40 website: **40by2040.org.** The website has a plethora of information designed to make your advocacy efforts as easy as possible. Of course, we encourage you to rely on your own relationships with federal lawmakers and media, but for those who may be engaging in advocacy for the first time, this toolkit can allow you to hit the ground running.

The other good news is that this effort is truly meant to be grassroots. While communication with lawmakers is of course helpful and one part of the overall strategy of the 40 by 40 campaign, local actions such as passing board resolutions, launching social media campaigns and writing op-eds are where you can play perhaps the most impactful role.

This fall is all about getting familiar with the effort, beginning to orient our strategy and educating your communities on the impact of IDEA and its current funding levels. Beginning next spring, we will be encouraging lawmakers to prioritize IDEA funding in their appropriations requests. Hopefully, the 2028 fiscal year appropriations cycle can be the start of the glide path that gets us to the promised 40% federal IDEA funding.

We here in Wisconsin have done a great job of getting the state to understand the local budget difficulties of supporting students with disabilities. While we still have work to do on the state front, it is time to tell the federal government that Wisconsin is stepping up to meet the challenge and it is time that they do as well. ■

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Recent Litigation Against Social Media Companies Alleging Harm to Children

In August 2026, Meta Platforms, Inc., the owner of Facebook and Instagram, agreed to pay $17.1 billion to settle a federal lawsuit filed by more than 30 states, including the State of Wisconsin. The lawsuit alleged that Meta violated the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act and harmed children's mental health in violation of state consumer protection laws. Many other lawsuits against Meta and other social media companies are still pending, including some brought by school districts. This Legal Comment will review the legal arguments made against Meta and the terms of the settlement. It will also briefly describe several other cases against Meta that have recently been resolved.

Multidistrict litigation

Since Oct. 6, 2022, over 370 lawsuits filed around the country against Meta, TikTok, Snapchat and YouTube have been transferred to the United States District Court for the Northern District of California and assigned to a single federal judge for coordinated or consolidated pretrial proceedings.[1] More than 1,500 school districts across the country have joined these complaints, alleging that the districts have been hurt financially from having to manage student mental health issues and associated social problems. The complaints seek various remedies, including that social media companies remove their addictive features and pay compensation for children's mental health support.

The legal claims against Meta brought by states

One of these complaints was filed against Meta in October 2023 by a coalition of approximately 30 states, including Wisconsin. The complaint alleged that Meta knew that its social media platforms were harmful to young people and that it misled the public about those harms. The complaint further alleged that Meta engaged in a scheme to maximize profit by increasing young users' engagement with Meta's platforms by specifically targeting youth, using data harvesting and targeted advertising, and deploying features designed to capture young users' attention and to prolong their time on its platforms. The claims were based on the federal Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, 15 U.S.C. s. 6501 et seq., and on state consumer protection laws prohibiting deceptive and unfair acts and practices.

COPPA is a federal law designed to protect the personal information of children under 13 who use websites or online services. COPPA applies to operators of websites or online services that are directed to children under 13 or that have actual knowledge that they are collecting personal information from a child under 13. Before trial, Meta asked for a ruling that COPPA does not apply to its platforms because they are not directed to children and Meta does not have actual knowledge of under-13 users. The court declined that request and held that, if COPPA applies to Meta's platforms, that Meta had met none of COPPA's requirements: providing notice to parents; seeking and obtaining parental consent; and providing parents with a means of reviewing personal data collected, requesting deletion and refusing further data collection. Whether COPPA applied was a question of fact to be determined at trial.

The complaint alleged Meta violated state consumer protection laws by (i) designing and deploying platform features it knew were harmful to children, and (ii) misleading and concealing from the public its knowledge of the harm. The State of Wisconsin's claim was based on Wisconsin's Deceptive Trade Practices Act, Wis. Stat. s. 100.18(1). The States alleged that Meta's algorithms are harmful to children's mental health and

More than 1,500 school districts across the country have joined these complaints, alleging that the districts have been hurt financially...

The States alleged that Meta's algorithms are harmful to children's mental health and encourage compulsive use.

encourage compulsive use. Specifically, they alleged that Meta's use of disruptive and incessant notifications interferes with children's education and sleep by demanding children's attention when they are engaging in unrelated activities, such as attending school. They alleged that the notifications are "especially intrusive and harmful for young users, who are particularly vulnerable to distraction and psychological manipulation."

The settlement

On Aug. 26, 2026, after three days of trial testimony to a jury, the States and Meta agreed to a settlement of all claims. According to the Wisconsin Department of Justice, it is "the largest state consumer protection settlement involving a single company in history outside of the Big Tobacco settlements of the 1990s."[2] Wisconsin will receive at least $219 million, and up to $313 million. The settlement funds may be used for remedial or restitutive purposes. Examples of such purposes listed in the settlement agreement that are particularly relevant to schools include: after school or summer programs; youth mental health programming; to support the hiring of digital literacy counselors or implement phone-free school zones; and grants to school districts to accomplish a remedial purpose.

In addition to monetary payments to states, the settlement requires Meta to adopt various safety features on Instagram and Facebook in the settling jurisdictions, including:

- "School Mode": Disables push notifications and allows a parent to restrict access to all functionality other than messaging during school hours.
- "Night Access Mode": Prevents children from using the platforms other than for messaging between midnight and 6 a.m. and disables push notifications between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.
- A two-hour daily time limit for children.
- Better age verification measures.
- Safer content controls.
- Stronger parental controls.

Meta did not admit any liability or wrongdoing as part of the settlement.

Outcomes in other recent social media litigation alleging harm to children

In May 2026, Meta, Snapchat, YouTube and TikTok settled a lawsuit brought by a Kentucky school district for a combined $27 million shortly before trial was scheduled to start in federal court in California. The lawsuit was considered a "bellwether" or test case, to see how the parties' arguments played out before a jury and provide the parties in the other cases useful information.

In March 2026, Meta and YouTube were found liable for designing addictive features after a jury trial in Los Angeles County Superior Court. The individual plaintiff, KGM, alleged that she became addicted to social media as a child and that it exacerbated her mental health struggles. KGM was 20 years old when she testified at trial; she sued Meta, YouTube, TikTok and Snapchat, but TikTok and Snapchat settled the claims against them shortly before trial. The jury awarded KGM approximately $6 million in damages.

Also in March 2026, after a seven-week trial, a New Mexico jury found that Meta violated New Mexico's consumer protection law when it knowingly harmed children's mental health and concealed what it knew about child sexual exploitation on its social media platforms. Meta was ordered to pay $375 million in damages, the maximum civil penalty allowed under the applicable state law. On Aug. 6, 2026, in phase two of the same case, a New Mexico judge ordered Meta to tighten controls on children's social media accounts and to pay $567 million into a fund to remedy its role in a youth mental health crisis.[3] The judge found that Meta had created a public nuisance under state law and that abatement of the nuisance was an appropriate remedy. Of particular relevance to schools, the court found that Meta's social media platforms "rely on methods for optimizing engagement that disproportionately impact education and interpersonal relationships;" that "widespread use of social media by New Mexico children…interferes with school operations and disturbs student learning environments;" and that "Meta's platforms are uniquely responsible for social media's negative impact on New Mexico schools."[4] During the trial, Meta analogized itself to a polluting factory in order to argue that the court was limited in the restrictions it could impose on Meta. The judge accepted the analogy, concluding that:

> *just as noxious pollution produced by the factory can harm the common public right to reasonably clean air, the harmful effects of Meta's platforms on children do not stay contained by its platforms and, instead, migrate*

In addition to monetary payments to states, the settlement requires Meta to adopt various safety features...

to the internet as a whole and, perhaps most concerning, to the real world and create a common, societal burden on and harm to the affected children and their families and schools, as well as hospitals and law enforcement.[5]

Meta said that it would appeal both the jury verdict and the court's order, so there might be additional developments in the future.

Conclusion

School boards should already have adopted a policy prohibiting students from using wireless communication devices during instructional time, as required by 2025 Act 42. Litigation against social media companies has and will likely continue to illuminate social media's ability to harm students and provide funds and restrictions to address that harm. School board members might want to track future litigation and settlements which might have implications for education. ■

This Legal Comment was written by Heather Curnutt & Brian P. Goodman of Boardman & Clark LLP, WASB Legal Counsel. For related articles, see Wisconsin School News: "Legal Issues Associated With Student Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools " (May 2026), and "AI Use in School District Employment" (Apr. 2026).

1. Conditional Transfer Order (CTO-87) filed in In re: Social Media Adolescent Addiction/Personal Injury Products Liability Litigation, MDL No. 3047, dkt. no. 818, 4:22-md-03047-YGR, dkt. no. 3473 (U.S. Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation Sep. 8, 2026).
2. wisdoj.gov/PressReleases/press-release-meta-settlement.pdf
3. State of New Mexico v. Meta Platforms, Inc., 2026 WL 2288373, No. D-101-CV-2023-02838 (N.M. Dist. Aug. 6, 2026).
4. Id. at *7.
5. Id. at *14.

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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