



Engaging Students is First Step

A new school year is here! Nothing is more inspiring than the enthusiasm students and staff bring to their first days of school. As we begin the new year, it's important to recognize our talented and dedicated educators and support staff. They set the tone for a successful school year, working directly with our students.

Our public education students come to us with varying perspectives, backgrounds and abilities. Their diversity is our strength. Some students come to us ready to go. Others need more support. Educators who actively reach out to and connect with their students are those who find the most success. Once we engage with students, there is no end to what they can do.

In this issue of *Wisconsin School News*, we feature articles written by the state's 2017 teachers of the year. Our top educators were each invited to write a short article on any topic they chose. This was their opportunity to give their perspective to school board members. There was no effort to coordinate their message. So, it was interesting when their articles came in and we discovered that, in their own way, they each wrote about engaging with students and how districts can be supportive of that work.

From developing a framework for addressing mental health to using a puppy cam to keep students focused and on task, each of the teachers wrote about getting to know students on a personal level and finding ways to enrich their lives to educate the whole child. As Chris Gleason,

the 2017 Middle School Teacher of the Year and a national teacher of the year finalist put it, "Education is so much more than just a test score or even the content of our curriculum."

I hope you'll take their words to heart and look for ways to further support your teachers and staff throughout the school year.

They need school boards to do their part — make sure the district has a well-communicated vision, the district policies are up-to-date and customized to best meet local circumstances, the board-superintendent team is productive, and the budget is aligned to the district's goals. They need leaders who are focused, supportive and willing to be creative — like those in Rio who took a chance on an experimental forest kindergarten program and allowed their teachers to regularly send children outdoors all day to learn and play.

You can also make a difference beyond the board table. Consider the message from Robin Elvig of the Altoona School Board who writes about taking the lead in your community with youth engagement and setting the bar high. Whether it's getting involved in a group like a local Boys and Girls Club or simply making a point to say hello to the young people you meet at the grocery store, your actions can set a powerful example for others to follow.

The WASB is here to help you be the best board member you can be. This fall, the WASB has numerous

professional development opportunities for school board members and administrators. We will be hosting a series of workshops in September and October focused on a variety of school board governance issues including using data, operating effectively as a board and community engagement. The WSAA/WASB School Law Seminar taking place Oct. 20 in Madison also provides school leaders with important information and insight into school law issues. A pre-seminar workshop from the WASB will focus on board-superintendent relations.

Plan to attend a Regional Meeting this fall. Starting in September and running through October, these meetings celebrate the accomplishments of our school board members. A pre-meeting workshop is available to educate members about the impact of the 2017-19 state budget. For information or to register for these events, visit wasb.org.

Planning for the annual State Education Convention is underway. This issue features a short article from Ravi Hutheesing, a cultural entrepreneur, who will be one of the keynote speakers at the 97th State Education Convention in January. We will be releasing more details about this premier professional development opportunity this fall.

I believe there is no limit to what our teachers and students can accomplish if given the support and opportunities to do so. Here's to a successful 2017-18 school year! ■

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