

2019 CONVENTION RECAP



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March 2019 | wasb.org



Wednesday's keynote speaker

Steve Pemberton

delivers his inspirational address to school leaders at the 98th State Education Convention.

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ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE were written by freelance writers Anne Davis, Joe Quick and Brock Fritz and contributed by convention presenters as noted.

Thank you.

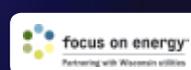
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Continued Advocacy Needed

Thank you to all the school board members, district administrators and school business officials who joined us in January for the 98th Annual State Education Convention!

Held in partnership with the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators and the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials, the convention featured dozens of high-quality breakout sessions presented by Wisconsin school districts, education researchers, business partners and other stakeholders.

This issue of *Wisconsin School News* looks back at some of the important topics covered and the featured events. If you weren't able to join us or want to expand on your learning from the convention, you can still sign up to be a Virtual Attendee and access the recordings of eight breakout sessions as well as the keynote addresses from Dr. Michele Borba and Principal Salome Thomas-EL by contacting the WASB. Mark your calendars for next year's convention — Jan. 22-24, 2020, in Milwaukee.

For those of you who attended the closing general session, you heard Gov. Tony Evers talk about his 2019-21 state budget proposal, which is expected to be released at the end of February (after this issue of the *School News* goes to print).

The proposal is expected to reflect Evers' support for expanding

school-based mental health services; adding resources to meet the needs of English language learners, students with disabilities, and gifted and talented students; providing predictable and sustainable annual increases in school resources; and promoting voucher funding transparency. However, we have a long way to go before the state budget is signed into law and there are competing state interests. (Watch the *Legislative Update* blog and your email inbox for updates about the governor's proposal.)

Your continued advocacy will be needed throughout the budget process. I strongly encourage you to attend the WASB Day at the Capitol on March 13 in Madison. All school board members and administrators are welcome as well as any community members a district invites. Attendees will be briefed on the governor's budget proposal by the administration, hear from a bipartisan legislative panel, and be provided with talking points and an overview by the WASB government relations team in the morning. Every attendee will have scheduled meetings with their legislators at the State Capitol in the afternoon. The Capitol Watch column in this issue has more information.

The executive committee of the WASB Board of Directors and I were in Washington, D.C. at the end of January for a similar event at the

federal level hosted by the National School Boards Association. While it's important to maintain year-round communications and meet with legislators in their home districts, meeting with legislators in their offices, connecting with staff and being a visible presence in the Capitol are integral components of developing strong legislative relationships. Read more about what federal issues we discussed in the Capitol Watch column as well.

On a final note, I'm pleased to report that I'll be serving on a newly created UW System task force that is intended to address the enrollment decline in teacher education and school leadership programs as well as raise public esteem for the teaching profession. We're expected to develop actionable steps and report back to the Board of Regents later this year. The task force will be co-chaired by the dean of the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Education and Dr. Deborah Kerr, superintendent of the Brown Deer School District and president-elect of the American Association of School Administrators.

While I don't expect the task force's recommendations to solve our immediate staffing issues, I'm pleased that the university system recognizes the importance of this issue and is seeking a collaborative solution. The success of our students and the future of our state depend on all of us working together. ■

Your continued advocacy will be needed throughout the budget process.

Leading for Excellence and Equity

School leaders from around the state gathered in Milwaukee, Jan. 23-25, for the 98th State Education Convention. This special issue of **Wisconsin School News** looks back on the many sessions, keynote speakers and special events from this year's convention.

Tasha Schuh captivated members at the WASB Breakfast sponsored by The Insurance Center. Tasha recounted her story of becoming paralyzed in high school after falling through an open trap door on stage during a play rehearsal. Although she'll never walk again, Tasha learned how to live life to the fullest. Her inspirational keynote focused on overcoming obstacles, persevering and making the choice to lead a positive, purposeful life.



An **interactive breakout session** led by Aaron Sadoff, district administrator of the North Fond du Lac School District and WASDA Superintendent of the Year, had attendees on their feet, talking and sharing with colleagues.



The **School Fair**, sponsored by Sodexo, showcased student projects from Elkhorn, Medford, Waupaca and Weston.





Convention attendees took advantage of the opportunity to meet with vendors, discuss their services and, in some cases, sample their work.



The **Outdoor Heritage Education Center** participated at the convention as part of the Sustainable Schools Pavilion, providing attendees a unique walk-through experience.



The **Green Bay East Red Devil Jazz Band** opened the second general session of the State Education Convention with a rousing performance.



The **Waupaca High School Madjazzers** performed in front of school leaders during the closing general session on Friday, Jan. 25.



All it Takes is a Chance

Steve Pemberton | Keynote



By the time he was a toddler, Steve Pemberton had been written off as a lost cause.

Shuttled from foster home to foster home due to an alcoholic mother and absent father, the social workers in charge predicted he didn't have "a chance in the world."

The fact that he found a chance and turned it into great personal and professional success was due to a love of books and a "family" of education mentors. Pemberton, the best-selling author of "A Chance in the World" and a corporate executive, shared his inspiring story during a keynote address at the State Education Convention.

He made it clear how much he appreciates public education and how he feels a personal debt to the support he found from educators, noting that he wanted his story to show teachers and school officials "the very reflection of what you do."

"The real impact you have is not measured in your time," Pemberton told the educators. "You do get to see progress, you get to see possibilities."

There were no apparent possibilities for Pemberton as he struggled to grow up in an abusive foster family where he was beaten, starved of affec-

tion and food, and regularly told that he was worthless. His only refuge was school and secondhand books collected for him by a kind neighbor.

"My elementary school was my sanctuary," he said. "I felt safe there. I could learn there and I was actually encouraged."

He drew inspiration from his favorite books, such as "Watership Down," which tells the story of a group of rabbits trying to find a new home. He learned it was safer to struggle than to give up.

"I was going to defy this idea that I didn't have a chance in the world," he said. "I had to fight."

Determined to go to college, Pemberton joined an Upward Bound program in high school. Ruby Dottin, the program director and a school board member, and her assistant, John Sykes, took Pemberton under their wings. He ran away from his foster home at 16 years old and spent the final months of high school living with Sykes, who helped him apply for scholarships and colleges.

He eventually won a full scholarship to Boston College and now serves on the board of his alma mater. He has worked for Walgreens and Monster.com and is currently

the chief people officer for Globoforce, a multinational company that works on ways to improve corporate culture.

Pemberton always wanted to know more about his parents and eventually learned their tragic stories. Both died young after enduring difficult childhoods themselves. He wrote his memoir to help explain his life to his three children. The book is now a motion picture.

Pemberton's keynote highlighted the people who made a difference in his life — the kind neighbor and the Upward Bound teachers — and urged his audience to take heart from his story and realize that they are changing the arc of someone's life story even if they don't realize it.

"You don't really know the effect and the impact you're having, but the children do," he said. "The children remember."

Some may put their faith in political leaders, but Pemberton suggested that society's true leaders were sitting in front of him at the convention.

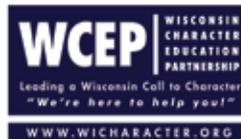
"I suggest you look to the left and to the right: that's the direction, the way forward," he said. "That's where the hope lives. That's how the arc of a life changes." ■

**"YOU DON'T REALLY KNOW THE IMPACT YOU'RE HAVING,
but the children do. The children remember."**



On a Mission to Spread Empathy

Michele Borba | Keynote



Michele Borba is on a mission to improve school culture and foster academic achievement. The arrow in her quiver is empathy. Author of “Unselfie,” Borba believes — and research bears it out — that helping students develop “emotional literacy” is the key to a better world with compassionate citizens. And she’s pretty convincing.

Borba masterfully weaves a compelling narrative using humor and poignancy to tell student-centered stories illustrating her point. She examines social competencies such as moral imagination, self-regulation, perspective-taking and altruistic leadership, which she describes as the building blocks to a better classroom and future.

Borba, a former first-grade teacher and the daughter of educators, maintains, “I am convinced the best hope we have for children lies in public education.” After the tragedy in Columbine, she began her own research and concluded, “Violence is learned, but so is goodness. Empathy is what makes a good school great.”

She bemoans the “selfie syndrome” where research indicates today’s teens are 40 percent less empathetic and that narcissism has increased 58 percent compared to the previous generation. “Around 2000 we began

to see empathy, the seeds of goodness, was going down in our kids — faster than any population in the world. The number one goal is to be rich and famous.” Borba offers, “When entitlement goes up, empathy goes down.”

Borba suggests some simple techniques to teach empathy. “With a Baby” is a component of the Roots of Empathy curriculum developed to let elementary students spend an hour monthly for the entire school year in class with the same baby to observe its development. When she sat in with a third-grade class in Alberta, Canada, it became clear that the non-speaking baby was an incredible teacher.

The third-grade teacher asks, “How does Clara feel today?” Observing clenched-fists and furrowed brow, the children suggest the baby is anxious, frustrated. A bit fussy, the children suggest smiling and singing a lullaby. Borba says, “Clara doesn’t miss a beat. She starts to smile and the kid next to me says, ‘Clara’s learning empathy.’ I turned to him and said, ‘I don’t think it’s just Clara!’”

But more than a feel-good exercise, Borba says “the students are observing emotions, body language, all different kinds of cues. By the way, higher emotional literacy and academic achievement and critical thinking skills go up. Around the

world, 800,000 kids have been exposed to programs like this. Three different longitudinal studies show emotional literacy scores go up, inclusion goes up, kids become more caring and connected. What goes down? — bullying and aggression.”

Borba concluded the illustration with a story about Darren, a kid struggling in the class — the kid you worry about. At age four he had witnessed the murder of his mother. In the ensuing years, he was shunted from one foster home to another. His teacher knew the turmoil and hoped the With a Baby program would help his healing. Darren asked the mom, “Can I hold your baby?” Somewhat apprehensive, the mother gave him the child. He cradled the baby and moved back and forth gently in the rocker. After a while, he asked the mom and teacher, “If you’ve never been loved, do you think you can still be a good dad?” Borba says this is a perfect example of compassionate conversion, when you try to see yourself in a totally different light.

Borba told the convention attendees, “I have been to so many of your schools in Wisconsin and I have to say congratulations. You’re doing something right. Some of the best character education programs I’ve seen anywhere in the world are right here.” ■

“WHEN ENTITLEMENT GOES UP, empathy goes down.”



Making Sure Every Child Reaches Their Potential

Salome Thomas-EL | Keynote



Salome Thomas-EL is committed to ensuring that “every child achieves their greatest potential.”

For this to happen, kids need dedicated adults who believe in them. In more than 20 years as a teacher and principal, Thomas-EL has nurtured his belief that every child will learn as long as the adults don’t give up — developing the mantra of “every child needs somebody to be crazy about them.”

Thomas-EL, head of school at Thomas Edison Charter School in Wilmington, Del. and author of “The Immortality of Influence: We Can Build the Best Minds of the Next Generation,” spoke about watching students overcome barriers to success and achieve their dreams.

“To know that one life is made better because you’ve had just one more breath...,” Thomas-EL said of what drives him. “Leadership is about service. If you don’t serve, you can’t lead.”

Thomas-EL is dedicated to helping students overcome poverty, violence, neglect and low expectations. His goal is to change the community mindset around at-risk children and how they advance through the education system, stating that poverty is everywhere

but intelligence crosses all economic and racial lines.

“If we’re going to be serious about closing the achievement gap, then make sure there’s no child who needs support who does not receive that support... that there’s no educator who needs support who is not receiving that support,” Thomas-EL said of working together to break down barriers and end the cycle of poverty.

To reach at-risk individuals, Thomas-EL stresses that educators don’t “major in the minor” and get bogged down by little things – a student not bringing paper or a pencil for instance. Thomas-EL recited Joshua Dickerson’s poem, “Cause I Ain’t Got a Pencil,” that describes a student who wakes up in a home without electricity, finds unwashed clothes to wear, gets his little sister ready, and arrives on time only to be scolded for not having a pencil.

“There are children overcoming so many barriers, struggling to get to us every day,” Thomas-EL said. “If a student needs a pencil, give ‘em a pencil.”

“The children who need the most love ask for it in the most unloving ways,” he reminded the audience. To reach an at-risk child, he stressed

making a connection, getting to know them and becoming part of their world.

“It has to come from the field... it has to come from people who know them,” Thomas-EL said of who has the best chance of reaching kids.

Thomas-EL walked through his experience at Vaux Middle School in Philadelphia, where he formed a chess program for inner-city children who had no exposure to the game. The plan was to use chess to teach math, but it blossomed into life-long lessons as the students racked up multiple national chess championships.

Thomas-EL stressed to attendees that they can’t just go home and fall into the same routines. “We need to go back into our communities and challenge people,” he said. “We have to move people out of their comfort zone. The old phrase of ‘we’ve always done it that way’ is the most dangerous phrase in our profession.”

He left the audience with the “Four C’s to school success” — being crazy about kids, curious about their lives, consistent leadership and a culture of love. “Let’s stop praying for a lighter load and start praying for a stronger back,” Thomas-EL said. “We know this work is difficult, but let’s be a blessing and not a stressor to these young people.” ■

“LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT SERVICE.

If you don’t serve, you can’t lead.”

State Superintendent's Address

State Superintendent Carolyn Stanford Taylor

Editor's note: Carolyn Stanford Taylor was named Wisconsin State Superintendent of Public Instruction in January 2019 by Governor Tony Evers. She was an educator in the Madison School District before serving as assistant state superintendent for the past 17 years. Below are her remarks at the State Education Convention in January.



We may have traveled different paths, but we are here together because we believe in the power and opportunity education provides to the kids of Wisconsin. That optimism is what makes me confident in our ability to succeed working together over the coming years.

Like many of you, my story of how I found myself in education begins with my experience as a student. I grew up in the segregated south, in Marks, Mississippi. During my early childhood, I attended school with people who only looked like me. And I was taught by people from my community, people I forged relationships with who encouraged my desire to learn.

But I also saw the all-white school in my community, with equipment on the athletic fields and a swimming pool for its kids. My parents saw that too, and together with like-minded leaders, they fought to integrate our schools. I was given the opportunity, alongside my brothers and sisters, to be part of the first group of black students to attend that all-white school. It was a no-brainer for me... they had a pool!

While my experience facing down segregation took place decades ago, too many of our students still experience today's equivalent: equity and opportunity gaps. That is why, as state superintendent, I plan to continue with, and grow, the equity-based mission of the Department of Public Instruction.

For the last 17 years, I have been a part of shaping the mission and vision of the department. I am committed to

the things we believe can be done to help Wisconsin kids. And I see no reason to diverge from that path. Together, we can build on that legacy.

That starts with the state budget request from the DPI, which was built with input from the people and organizations here today. I remain committed to that task. I'm optimistic that the key areas we focused on, including increased special education funds, growth in levy authority for districts, and additional supports for mental health services, will be granted by the Legislature and governor.

As state superintendent, I also plan to grow the agency's focus on early childhood. We know many of

our students come to school a step behind their peers, with language deficiencies and significant hurdles in their way. Focusing our efforts on early grades, we can make a dent in our gaps that can be sustained for generations to come.

After my brothers and sisters and I joined our new, integrated schools in Marks, we learned quickly that just being there wasn't the end of our journey. We never used the swimming pool that drew our attention: it was filled in.

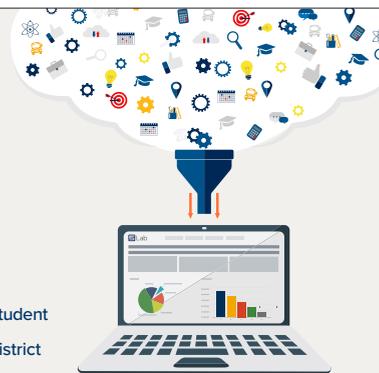
I look forward to working with you all to make Wisconsin schools more equitable, to make sure all our kids have a chance to succeed. ■

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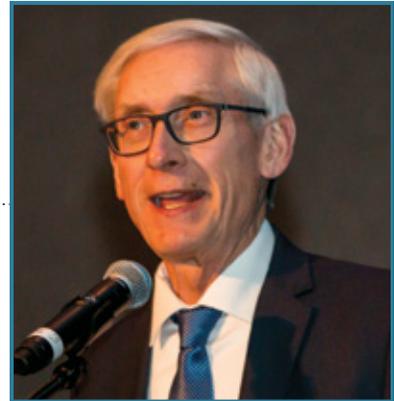
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New Governor Addresses Convention

“WHAT IS BEST FOR OUR STUDENTS
is best for our state and best for our democracy.”

— Gov. **Tony Evers**



“It’s good to be home,” were Gov. Tony Evers’ opening words when he joined the State Education Convention during the closing general session. Marking his 34th straight year attending the convention, Evers focused on his upcoming state budget proposal and the investments he is proposing for public schools.

“In my recent State of the State Address, you may have noticed that I talked about education the most, it’s my first love,” said Evers. “We

need to include in the state’s measures of success how many kids come to school hungry, lack health care coverage or lack affordable housing. The investments we make today will play out for generations to come.”

Evers announced that his proposed 2019-21 state budget will “reaffirm the state’s commitment to kids across Wisconsin.” Designed around key areas, his budget will include a five-fold increase in student

mental health funding, a \$600 million increase in special education funding, the return to two-thirds state funding of all school costs, and increased funding for other critical student needs.

“What is best for our students is best for our state and best for our democracy,” explained Evers, who asked attendees for their support in helping to make the budget proposals a reality. ■



GROWING STRONGER

A successful \$22 million referendum funded multiple additions at Weyauwega-Fremont High School, including a 400-seat auditorium, multi-purpose gym, expanded weight room and fitness area, enlarged commons, and four classrooms for science, agriscience, and PLTW programming. This, is **Building Excellence**.

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An Equal Race to Succeed

This article provides an overview of several sessions which focused on ways to improve equity and student achievement.



It's hard to compete in a race if your shoes don't fit.

Imagine then the challenges faced by thousands of Wisconsin students whose quest for academic success is hampered because they don't have full access to what they need to succeed. Equity — or ensuring every child full access to education despite race, ethnicity, gender or learning style and ability — is a hot topic in public schools these days. Several breakout sessions at the State Education Convention wrestled with the issue and highlighted a range of possible responses.

Concern started at the top.

"I look forward to working with all of you to make our schools more equitable and to make sure all of our students have a chance to succeed," Wisconsin's new Superintendent of Public Instruction Carolyn Stanford Taylor told convention delegates during the opening session.

For years, the achievement gap between white and minority students in Wisconsin has been one of the largest in the country. Multiple efforts on a state and district level have been launched to address the issue. Test scores are just one of the ways in which the gap shows up.

Jackie Drummer of Education

Works, an education consulting firm, told a breakout session on the equity gap in gifted and talented education that far fewer minority and economically disadvantaged students are identified as gifted and talented because traditional methods of identification are not culturally inclusive. Strong verbal skills are a traditional marker of giftedness, yet that can't be applied to a student who is an English-language learner.

Drummer advocated for using other non-biased assessments, such as non-verbal testing, as a way of identifying gifted and talented students. Students who don't see "kids who look like them" in accelerated classes will be less motivated to participate and their needs won't be met, Drummer said.

She also suggested giving students "easy access" to accelerated programming through participation in hands-on, "try-it" experiences like the Saturday Academy offered by Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). The program is offered through U-STARS Plus, an initiative that supports teachers in nurturing potential among students who are culturally and racially diverse or economically disadvantaged. The academy engages students in a

variety of problem-solving activities focused on scientific concepts.

Martha Lopez, an MPS elementary bilingual teacher, explained that the academy and other programs were funded under a national Javits grant designed to increase the number of economically disadvantaged and culturally and racially diverse students identified as gifted and talented. Wisconsin has received three Javits grants in the past few years.

Lopez said MPS now uses more comprehensive screening techniques to identify gifted students. The move away from just using a standardized assessment plus teacher recommendation has resulted in a huge jump in the number of economically disadvantaged students identified as gifted. Using the former screening techniques, only 33 percent of the students identified were economically disadvantaged. With the new techniques, the number increased to 70 percent.

Another diversity gap exists in the number of Wisconsin students who learn a world language. Only 38 percent of Wisconsin high school students were enrolled in a world

Using the former screening techniques, only 33 percent of the students identified (as gifted and talented) were economically disadvantaged.

With the new techniques, the number increased to 70 percent.



◀ Dr. Marcus Lewis, Ho-Chunk Nation Higher Education Director

language class during the 2017-18 school year and the number of those who were racially or culturally diverse lagged behind their white peers.

Overall, the number of students taking world languages and the number of languages offered has dropped in Wisconsin. Because there is a need for employees who can speak a second language or have been exposed to learning about another culture in today's global economy, a research team based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison prepared "The Wisconsin Language Roadmap" that was released this year. The report and its findings were presented at a breakout session. The report calls for strengthening language instruction in Wisconsin to enhance the state's economic competitiveness.

A key goal is to develop "continuous and effective language programs for all students," specifically increasing access to language instruction for students who are racially or culturally diverse.

"We need to think about how we're providing access and to whom," said Pam Delfosse, international education and world languages consultant at the DPI and one of the presenters.

The challenges will only increase as the demographic make-up of the

country and the state continues to shift. During another breakout session, keynote speaker Steve Pemberton, who led diversity initiatives at Walgreens, detailed the population shifts since 1990 that have resulted in a country that has "no clear racial or ethnic majority."

Although there has been progress, Pemberton called for a new way of addressing diversity and equity that focused on moving

beyond labels and adopting "next practices" not "best practices." It all starts with expanding access to education, he said, recalling how the United States completely revamped its science education systems to beat Russia during the space race.

"When we expand access, especially to education, we become more competitive, more relevant," Pemberton said.

He suggested focusing on individual similarities, not differences, to build inclusion and recognize that diversities bring strength and do not erase others' experiences. For educators, he recommended specific strategies for supporting diversity: building trust, asking students for suggestions, celebrating diversity, involving parents, finding books and resources that have diverse viewpoints, and developing global pen pal relationships.

"There is a bigger story of us that we can create," Pemberton said. "We just have to be more active."

Two other breakout sessions covered specific models for supporting diversity and increasing equity in education.

Dr. Marcus Lewis, a graduate of the Black River Falls School District and director of higher education at the Ho-Chunk Nation, discussed the success of the Seeking Educational

Equity and Diversity (SEED) program in the Black River Falls district. The program is a national effort focused on professional development for teachers.

The Ho-Chunk Nation brought the SEED program to Black River Falls in 2012, where it has operated ever since. Approximately 25 percent of the district's students are Native Americans, mostly members of the Ho-Chunk Nation, while all the staff are white.

SEED began in 1987 as an experiment to support teachers serving diverse student populations within the context of professional development. Participation is voluntary. Developers believe that teachers can better respond to the needs of their students by discussing and investigating multiple human perspectives and equitable educational approaches.

Lewis, who is African American and Ho-Chunk, is a member of the Ho-Chunk Nation. Because there had been no research done on the effect of SEED in Black River Falls, he conducted a research project for his doctoral dissertation.

He interviewed three participants in detail and analyzed their responses, concluding that their involvement in SEED had been a "transformative experience" and changed the way they respond to students. They actively promoted understanding through their teaching practices, worked to include diversity in the curriculum and were more willing to discuss difficult topics, such as race, with students.

The program itself is a series of three-hour sessions, scheduled monthly throughout the school year. Participants wrestle with a variety of topics, including race, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, privilege, discrimination and systematic oppression. Discussions are frank and open-ended.

"It's not a guilt or blame thing, but just asking questions," Lewis said.

This type of training is especially important, given the diversity gap



Increasing equity and improving achievement are fundamental characteristics of community schools.

◀ *Dianna Murphy, UW-Madison Language Institute Director, and Pam Delfosse, DPI World Language Supervisor*

among educators in Wisconsin, Lewis emphasized. According to data from the DPI, 70 percent of the state's students are white, 9.1 percent are African American and 12 percent are Hispanic. In contrast, 95 percent of teachers are white, 1.6 percent are African American and 1.9 percent are Hispanic.

"I personally didn't see anyone of my color standing in front of my classroom during my entire academic career at Black River Falls," Lewis said. "Who is deciding what the curriculum looks like? It's somewhat tilted."

Another model that could increase equity and diversity is a community school. Sarah Smith, community schools director at the Sun Prairie Area School District, and Ryan Hurley, director of the Milwaukee Community School Partnership in conjunction with the United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County, presented a session on their model.

A community school is defined as a public/private partnership created to serve as an educational hub for a specific area. In addition to academic programming, the school may offer health care and social services.

"One of the myths is that this is

just for urban schools," Smith said. "It can be used anywhere across Wisconsin."

The first community school in Sun Prairie was started in 2012. Milwaukee's community school initiative began in 2014.

Increasing equity and improving achievement are fundamental characteristics of community schools, which were a strategy in the federal Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. They are designed to be vehicles for discussions about racial inequality and diversity.

In Sun Prairie, there are now three sites, an elementary school, a middle school and an alternative school, serving at-risk students. Each site has a full-time coordinator and offers a variety of programming, including after-school clubs, tutoring, school-based mental health services, family fun nights, recreational sports and grief support groups. Partners include the local YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, public library, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and UW-Extension, among others.

The early results have been promising. Chronic absenteeism has been reduced, referrals for behavior are down, the alternative school had its largest graduating class, and achievement scores for minority students have gone up.

"If you are connected to these programs, we're seeing increases in achievement," Smith said.

The Milwaukee model has grown to 10 schools for the 2018-19 year. Hurley said that the key to the

schools' success is the partnership between Milwaukee Public Schools, the Milwaukee Education Association and the United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha as well as other local agencies. The partnership's core values are shared leadership, equity and cultural relevance.

Shared leadership means that diverse voices are represented in decision-making at each site, drawing from youth and family councils and school leadership teams. The teams identify specific local issues and priorities, recruit resources and develop solutions.

One example is the Walking School Bus at Lincoln Avenue School. The leadership team identified school safety as a local priority — many families would not send their children to school because they did not feel it was safe.

The team recruited a team of volunteers who walk through the neighborhood each morning with a large cut-out of a school bus. They stop at homes, pick up students and walk them to school together.

The result has been increased attendance and community engagement, Hurley said.

Overall results at the various sites have included decreased school referrals for behavior, decreased suspensions and increased graduation rates. There have been more than 100 community partnerships developed and 800 volunteers recruited.

More than anything, the community school partnership has brought a "stronger sense of hope within the school and the community."

And without hope, there is no chance of closing the equity gap. ■

2019 WASB Delegate Assembly

The WASB positions on policy issues are generally decided by the WASB Delegate Assembly, which is comprised of one representative from each member school board and CESA board of control. The Delegate Assembly meets annually at the time of the State Education Convention in January. The 2019 Delegate Assembly met on Wednesday, Jan. 23 and took up 22 resolutions submitted by member boards. All 22 resolutions were adopted by the delegates, some with floor amendments.

Several themes addressed by the 2019 resolutions were student mental health funding, underfunded/unfunded state mandates (e.g. special education), taxpayer-subsidized private school vouchers and more. The delegates also voted to repeal several outdated resolutions in a continuing effort to keep the resolution book current and relevant.

For more information on the resolutions that were adopted, go to WASB.org, Services & Resources, Advocacy & Government Relations, and then Delegate Assembly.



JY

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Mental Health: Strategies for Your Community

An overview of several sessions, this article examines key issues, different strategies, state and local personnel resources, and potential funding.

The statistics are sobering: **Nationally** — and in Wisconsin as well — one in five teens live with a mental health condition.

Over 64 percent of the country's youth with major depression receive no mental health treatment — in Wisconsin over 80 percent of mental health incidents go untreated.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for 10- to 24-year-olds in Wisconsin

In Racine alone, 7,000 students have a diagnosable mental health disorder, but 5,600 receive no treatment.

Recognizing that mental health needs are pervasive across the state's school districts, a number of convention sessions focused on various aspects of student mental health needs, including community collaboration, conducting a needs assessment, rural and urban mental health issues/needs, student/teacher services, removing the stigma of accessing mental health, and the use (or not) of a brief mental health screener questionnaire.

■ Collaboration critical

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), Department of Health Services, and the Office of Children's Mental Health, along with many private sector partners, "encourage schools, families, and

community mental health service providers to collaborate to develop comprehensive school mental health systems," according to the DPI's school mental health framework.

Obviously, collaboration is key; but understanding others' perspective is an obstacle that must be reckoned with. Julie Hueller, the manager of the Racine Collaborative for Children's Mental Health, told session attendees, "When we started this work in 2012, we were a community of silos." As the local providers and school personnel worked

together over time, it became obvious that, "You can't do this work alone. Mental health is our top community health care need."

Spurred on by a 2012 study published by the Johnson Foundation at Wingspread, Racine began a methodical process with 80 community partners at the table to determine the best course for the community. It was clear that mental health issues were at a crisis state. By the 2015-16 school year, two school-based mental health clinics opened. In 2017-18, a fifth mental health

▼ Carol Zabel, Wisconsin Safe & Healthy Schools Center Regional Coordinator





“Whether you are a school board member, a parent, an educator, or if you work in human resources — we’re all health teachers.”

Amy Miller, community education director, Oregon School District

clinic opened in an elementary school and a community mental health clinic began operation.

“You have to get the word out there, continually making the program visible,” Jenny Miller, the manager of school-based mental health programs for Children’s Hospital, said about Racine’s program.

In the Fox Valley, the Neenah Joint School District collaborates with three community agencies, leading to a comprehensive program to screen students, provide therapy and offer parent-peer advocacy. The district also has a school-based mental health provider in all its K-12 schools.

“Everybody’s resources are

together, everybody wins. If you walk away with anything from this presentation, I can’t say enough about true collaboration — you’re all a different part with the same mission.”

Neenah has a mental health coordinator in every school and partners all agree that this is critical to the program’s success, while stating that the model helps identify consistent messages to school counselors, develop better problem-solving strategies, and create more opportunity for novel approaches to problems.

“It’s more efficient and you can save a lot of money when you have someone who can bring it all together,” Jensen said.

“You will accomplish more by working together with community partners. We have numerous partners and that really has been at the core of helping us improve services for our kids,” Oregon School District Superintendent Brian Busler said. “Family engagement is a real high priority for us. When we can engage a family in the school, it just changes things.”

Amy Miller, Oregon’s community education director for school wellness, stressed the importance of consistent messaging and marketing across the district.

“One message is easy — every one of us is a health teacher,” Miller said. “Whether you are a school board member, a parent, an educator, or if

you work in human resources — we’re all health teachers.”

Miller noted that Oregon has rural schools and says it was important that all the school personnel at various sites were giving students the same message. T-shirts were provided across all schools and to community members with the message, “Healthy active kids are better learners.” Across the community, from the Chamber of Commerce to the library to the senior citizen center, people embraced the message.

■ Stopping the stigma

“Mental health is impacting our kids on a daily basis. If we don’t get the resources in the buildings to help them, then our kids can’t learn, they can’t be successful, they can’t be healthy,” Neenah Superintendent Mary Pfeiffer said on a video for the community. “We have to have multiple conversations to get rid of the stigma of mental health.”

“We’ve had thousands of kids’ parents fill out the screener. This has been a tremendously effective program — one that’s getting out in front of mental health issues,” Mike Altekruze, Neenah’s mental health coordinator, said. “Trying to get to kids earlier has been extremely successful. I think this has also been a program that has helped to reduce the stigma toward mental health. We’re helping these kids and their families to understand it’s okay to get healthier.”

Carol Zabel, western region coordinator of the Wisconsin Safe & Healthy Schools Center, offered

Nothing will happen without a concerted effort on the district’s part to identify needs, talk about them, and move forward with the community’s assistance.

stretched,” Katie Jensen, director of access and outreach for Catalpa Health and one the Neenah’s community partners, said during the convention. “When you coordinate and (community stakeholders) work

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a telling student vignette about the stigma of mental health. A close friend of a middle school student had committed suicide and Zabel sensed the girl was distracted, distant. Zabel noted the girl was noticeably affected when Zabel said, “it’s almost like I hear her voice.”

Later, Zabel asked, “What was that look all about?” The student responded, “So you hear her, too, Mrs. Zabel?” Digging deeper, the student said that in the morning, when everyone is at their lockers, she sometimes thought she heard her friend laughing. When Zabel asked if the girl had talked to anyone else, the student responded, “Mrs. Zabel, even I know it’s crazy if you’re hearing voices.”

State budget priority

The state’s major education organizations have all identified mental health needs as a priority for the 2019-21 biennial state budget. At the WASB’s Delegate Assembly in January, four of the 22 resolutions were related to mental health.

Based on these resolutions, the WASB supports adequate professional health services for all schools, collaboration, comprehensive student screening in every school, professional development for all staff to recognize and respond to student needs, professional mental health counselors/services, and public information related to mental health. The WASB’s resolutions set the direction of the association’s lobbying efforts.

The adopted 2019 resolutions also support state funding for community schools where community partners and the school district provide a wide range of support services for students and their families. Delegates also voted to support a revenue limit exemption for mental health services identified at the local level. In the approved school safety resolution, delegates supported including mental health services as a component. Additionally, a resolution passed recognizing that “adverse childhood experiences” can affect a child’s

development, requiring counseling and other support.

A recommendation of the Wisconsin Legislature's Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding proposed creating a new categorical aid with payments of \$25 per pupil in 2019-20 and \$50 per pupil in 2020-21 — an estimated \$63 million in new spending. The commission's final recommendations also noted that the Legislature provided \$3.2 million in grants for the current school year. Over 180 school districts wrote grant proposals vying for the limited funds. The requests were approximately \$8 million. The commission recommended an additional \$5 million for the grants, bringing the program up to \$8.2 million.

The DPI's budget proposal, prepared before Tony Evers won the gubernatorial election, requests a "roughly \$64 million increase in mental health funding to meet pressing student and family needs," according to the department's

budget information. The agency's proposal increases the collaboration grant to \$10 million and seeks \$44 million to extend a categorical aid that matches district funds when hiring pupil services staff (the program previously focused only on social workers). Additionally, the budget requests over \$5 million to fund statewide training and support focused on preventing teen suicide.

■ Other funding options

The Wisconsin Safe & Healthy Schools Center offers a no-cost, one-day professional development workshop for school staff to help them learn ways to assess student mental health needs. While resources are not unlimited, the center is a good starting point.

The Legislature created a mental health competitive grant, managed by the DPI, with positive prospects for the program's expansion. Public/private partnerships, such as the Fox Valley consortium in Neenah, may

also be a funding source and allow entities to pool their resources. Catalpa Health, which manages clinics in Appleton, Oshkosh and Waupaca for instance, has on-site offices in 43 schools.

The United Way and other community agencies or service groups are also potential funding partners. Presenters throughout the various convention sessions uniformly advocated for getting out and talking to the community about your district's needs, and working towards tapping broader community resources.

Nothing will happen without a concerted effort on the district's part to identify needs, talk about them, and move forward with the community's assistance.

Altekruse, Neenah's mental health coordinator, was succinct in his bottom-line assessment, "If you don't get social and emotional issues under control, learning can't take place." ■

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Teacher Stress and Why It Matters

● Lake Holcombe School District

There is a growing consensus that we need to address the mental health concerns of our children. But what about our teachers?

Twenty percent of adults experience a mental health concern in a given year, and 1 in 25 live with a serious mental illness. This statistic isn't just affecting the individual lives of our teachers, it is having an impact on teacher retention, student academic and social outcomes, and school finances.

In the *Listen to Us: Teacher Views and Voice* report conducted by the Center for Educational Policy, views of teachers were consistent with other research:

- Job demands were cited as the most significant challenge faced.
- Addressing their students' emotional needs ranked as a higher concern than addressing academic needs.

- Teacher voice — the feeling of being heard, that your opinions matter — was present for teachers with high job satisfaction while lacking for teachers who wanted to leave their school. In general employment studies that look at all professional occupations, teachers rate lowest in feeling that their opinions at work matter.
- High stress and demands are decreasing the enthusiasm for teaching.

Stress and mental health are interconnected. The 2016 Penn State *Teacher Stress and Health* study examined the consequences of teacher stress and mental health:

- Students suffer emotionally and academically when their classroom teacher is highly stressed.
- 49 percent of teachers say the stress and disappointments involved in teaching aren't worth it. Teacher stress — not

money — was listed as the primary reason for leaving the profession.

- Teacher turnover has the greatest negative impact on lower socio-economic students.
- According to the Department of Labor Statistics, 40 percent of absenteeism is related to a mental health concern.

For educators across the nation, there is a definite correlation between stressors and the desire to leave the profession. What about teachers in Wisconsin? A 2017 survey of 11,000 Wisconsin educators provides specific information about teacher satisfaction rates, causes and what would convince them to stay. Not surprising, most of what educators are telling us have mental health implications.

- 65.9 percent of teachers in any building are giving serious thought to leaving; 59 percent are thinking of leaving the profession.



2017 Wisconsin Educator Survey

► Have you given serious thought to leaving the profession?

	YES	NO	Unsure
Teachers	59%	34%	7%
Administrators	38%	56%	5%
Pupil Services Professionals	43%	48%	8%
OVERALL	56%	36%	7%

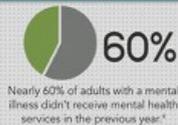
Mental Health Facts IN AMERICA

Fact: 43.8 million adults experience mental illness in a given year.



-\$193b
serious mental illness costs America \$193 billion in lost earnings every year.

Treatment in America



40%
of employees with a mental illness take time off because of it-- up to 10 days a year.



1st
Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide, and is a major contributor to the global burden of disease.¹

Mental Health by the Numbers; NAMI, 2015

Impact

- Only 20 percent list pay as their reason for leaving. Factors of leadership, climate, support and feeling overwhelmed made up over half of the reasons for wanting to leave their school — all factors within a district's control.
- Teachers with 11-20 years of experience are giving leaving the most serious thought. What are the biggest factors driving them out? The lack of teacher voice and autonomy.
- There is a disconnect between how teachers and school leaders see teacher voice in their districts. When asked if there is a “top down” leadership structure in their schools — 69 percent of teachers said yes but only 26 percent of administrators agreed.

The focus of the Wisconsin teacher survey was to learn why teachers are leaving the profession. The impact of teacher mental health — lack of decision making, feeling overwhelmed, school climate — cannot be ignored. Mental health concerns are school concerns, not only for students but also for staff.

What can be done? Research has identified the primary sources of teacher stress and a starting point for addressing them:

SOURCE OF STRESS: Schools that lack strong principal leadership, a healthy school climate and a collegial, supportive environment.

How to address it: Implement mentor programs and programs for principals such as *Leading for Learning* and move school climate up the priority list.

SOURCE: Job demands continue to escalate.

How to address it: Evaluate what initiatives are effective and “strategi-

Teaching is one of the most stressful occupations in the U.S.

High levels of stress are affecting teacher health and well-being, causing teacher burnout, lack of engagement, job dissatisfaction, poor performance, and some of the highest turnover rates ever.

cally abandon” those that aren't. Teachers are saying the list is too long.

SOURCE: Limited sense of autonomy and decision-making power.

How to address it: Novice teachers find comfort in prescriptive programs, experienced teachers do not. Give teachers a voice, let them lead. Remember, among all professional occupations, teachers rate lowest in feeling their opinions at work count.

SOURCE: Teachers own social and emotional competence. Not everyone comes into the building with the same level of self-efficacy.

How to address it: Bring social-

emotional learning into your building. As students build skills, teachers learn with them. Mentor programs and building a healthy school climate will also have a positive impact.

The stress and mental health of our educators must be a priority. Our teachers' work environment is our students' learning environment. ■

For more information, visit:
stretchedcounselor.com/teacher-stress-mental-health.html

Barb VanDoorn is a 4K-12 School Counselor for the Lake Holcombe School District and the 2017 Wisconsin Special Services Teacher of the Year.

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Want to take advantage of the professional development even if you were not able to attend the convention? Contact the WASB to subscribe to the 2019 State Education Convention Virtual Attendee option. Eight breakout sessions on a range of topics and two keynotes were recorded. Members who attended the convention can add the option to their registration at a reduced rate.

Leveraging Learning-Centered Teacher Evaluation

• UW-Madison and the school districts of Cashton, Kettle Moraine, Baraboo, Franklin and Wausau

Five years into the statewide Educator Effectiveness System, what do we know about local district evaluation efforts to support ongoing educator development? The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) recently supported a two-year study in which researchers at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the office of Socially Responsible Evaluation in Education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee studied districts that have placed educator learning at the center of their evaluation practices.

According to UW-Madison researcher Dr. Steve Kimball, the study was an opportunity to learn in detail how districts moved from a stand-alone evaluation process to one that touched on many aspects of school and district improvement.

Five principles, championed by the DPI, helped the districts transform their systems:

- 1) A context of trust encourages risk-taking and learning from mistakes.
- 2) Use of a common model of effective practice centers conversations about teaching and informs professional learning within and outside the evaluation context.
- 3) Educator-developed goals frame the evaluation process and are regularly referenced.

4) Cycles of continuous improvement are guided by specific and timely feedback to drive practice.

5) Evaluation practices are integrated with other school and district improvement strategies.

Leaders develop teachers' trust through actions that encourage teachers to take risks in setting goals for improvement without fear of failure. Wausau's director of

teaching, learning and leadership integration, Andrea Sheridan, described how they engaged educators during comprehensive training in the initial years to build a common understanding of the evaluation measures and formative evaluation uses. District and school leaders regularly communicated to keep everyone aware of the implementation process. They also listened to teachers expressing that evaluation feedback could be

RELATED SESSION

A related session at the convention, *Wisconsin Educator Effectiveness System: A Narrative Inquiry Of Novice Teacher Experiences*, took a closer look at research by Dr. Seth Marie Westfall of the Racine Unified School District. Westfall's dissertation involved studying the feedback from 12 novice teachers from one large urban school district. The participants included elementary and middle school teachers from a variety of content areas.

Westfall's conclusion indicated that while the Educator Evaluation System was designed to guide teachers and administrators in identifying and designing professional learning opportunities for growth in teacher practice and student achievement, participants in her study did not perceive the system as one of continued growth and support. Rather, participants discussed their experiences in relation to checking things off their to-do list, the lack of formative or beneficial feedback from their evaluators, and the lag in receiving feedback after an observation. □

improved, so the district invested in feedback training for school leaders.

“Wausau continues to emphasize that Educator Effectiveness is a growth model based on transparency of our evaluation practices which maintains high levels of trust between educators and administrators,” Sheridan said.

In rural Cashton, District Administrator Ryan Alderson said that the district’s small size was also its strength. With a district leadership team of four, the district was able to settle on a shared purpose of the evaluation system emphasizing educator growth. They also embraced the common model of practice represented by Danielson’s Framework for Teaching (FFT) as a guidepost for district improvement. Key initiatives, including standards-based grading, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and professional learning community (PLC) meetings are all linked to aspects of the FFT that help teachers find value in their practice and their evaluation. According to Alderson, “Aligning district initiatives with the Framework for Teaching supports their value.”

Educator-developed goals and related feedback are central to how teachers and leaders engage in the Baraboo teacher evaluation process and help to align instructional goals across the system.

“Teachers are asked to set rigorous goals that support district priorities and building-level goals to ensure collective focus for continuous school improvement,” Baraboo District Administrator Lori Mueller said.

The Baraboo district deploys math, literacy, advanced learner and PBIS coaches, as well as other teacher leaders to support educators with their goal development. District leaders meet frequently to review evaluator feedback on goals and calibrate for a high standard of feedback quality.

Judy Mueller, district adminis-

trator for Franklin Public Schools, pointed to the district’s early adoption of Danielson’s FFT and its move to a career ladder structure in helping to strategically implement the evaluation system. Judy Mueller said that, “Our teachers told us that professional growth and leadership is important to them.”

To support continuous improvement, Franklin created system specialists — teacher leaders who are trained in coaching strategies and engage with teachers in content and pedagogy-focused cycles of improvement. Describing Franklin’s approach, Director of Instruction Chris Reuter explained, “System specialists in Franklin provide job-embedded professional development that is intentional and focused on teacher development and growth, which in turn yields positive student outcomes.”

Demonstrating the power of strategic integration, Kettle Moraine Superintendent Patricia Deklotz shared that the evaluation system supports the district’s instructional

delivery system, which emphasizes personalized learning for students.

“Along with our system of micro-credentials, through professional practice goals, and student learning objectives we are personalizing learning for teachers and aligning their efforts with the goals of the school and district,” Deklotz explained.

Kettle Moraine also implemented a career pathway approach that includes teacher leadership opportunities and a director of learning role that provides teachers with content-like evaluators and relieves principals from some of the evaluation workload.

Each of these innovative districts has embraced educator evaluation as central to their professional learning system. As documented in the learning-centered study, their experiences inform the DPI, school districts, and professional associations seeking to promote educator growth and student learning through meaningful teacher evaluation systems. ■



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Bringing School and Community Together

• Franklin Public Schools

The development of career-ready graduates is a primary goal for school districts across the state of Wisconsin. The ability to achieve that goal begins with a vision for student learning focused on innovation, collaboration and the cultivation of employability skills. Nick Kohn, director of strategic leadership for the Franklin Public School District, discussed how to get started during the Wisconsin State Education Convention.

“Having a clear vision for where you want to be is the most important first step,” he said. “You need to clearly articulate what opportunities you will use to help students learn and practice employability skills in an authentic way.”

Alignment with the district mission, vision and strategic plan is also needed to ensure the right level of support is in place to move the planning process forward.

Regular collaboration with a diverse stakeholder team is vital to the cultivation of a career-readiness vision for students.

“One of our biggest assets has been the work of our district education for employment team,” stated Kohn.

This 30-member team includes parents, students, industry and higher education representatives, alumni and board of education

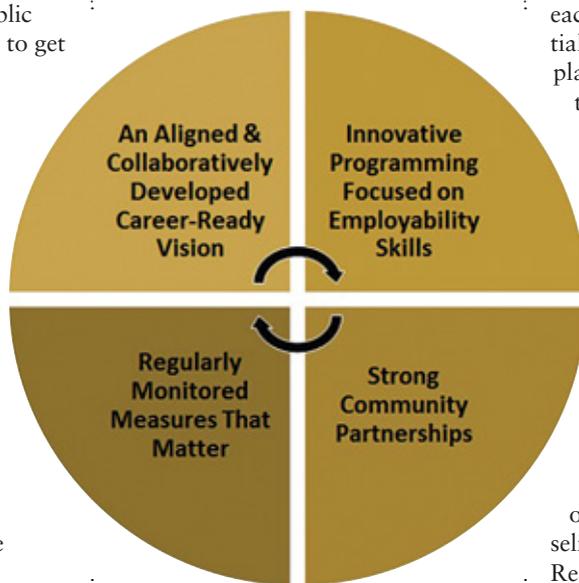
members. The focus of the meetings is on generating ideas, not on asking for dollars or resources. School board member Debbie Larson, a member of the team, reflected on her experience by saying, “Hearing from our community partners has made a

In Franklin, the establishment of a career-ready vision has led to the development of robust learning pathways in high-demand fields such as nursing, engineering and manufacturing. Within each pathway, students follow an aligned and rigorous course sequence that includes transcribed credit. Students within each pathway earn industry credentials and engage in work-based placements such as youth apprenticeships and internships. Every student also participates in one of eight senior capstone course experiences. These courses are designed to bridge the gap between theory and practice, emulating a work-based environment alongside supportive community mentors.

“Our community partnerships have allowed us to better understand which skills and mindsets students need in order to ‘Be Ready,’” school counseling system specialist Katharine Reid said of the impact of the capstone courses. “Ultimately, through these capstone courses, our students emerge more qualified to make solid career and postsecondary decisions, leaving with hands-on skills and the confidence to pursue a career.”

Once demand is created within course offerings, a strategic approach is needed to recruit and retain community partners who can assist in providing authentic experi-

tremendous difference in my own life, so I know it’s made a difference in the lives of kids in our district.” The collaborative work of the education for employment team has led to the development of a comprehensive career-ready vision for the district, highlighting the actions necessary to achieve that vision.



**“OUR PARTNERS HAVE THE UNIQUE ABILITY TO CREATE A VENUE FOR STUDENTS
to take all of their knowledge and abilities from the classroom
and transfer them into the real world.”**

ences for students. In Franklin, this led to the formation of the Saber Business Alliance, a group of industry professionals and representatives from higher education who actively work with Franklin students in a variety of ways. The work in forming and expanding this alliance has been coordinated by Rachel Fredricks, Franklin Public School’s community experience coordinator who has seen Franklin’s partnership base grow from 30 partners to more than 120 partners in just two years.

“Our industry and higher education partners provide truly transformational learning experiences for our students,” Fredricks said. “Our partners have the unique ability to create a venue for students to take

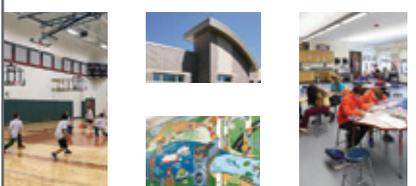
all of their knowledge and abilities from the classroom and transfer them into the real world.”

In addition to the experiential benefits for students, the formalization of the Saber Business Alliance has also created opportunities for district partners to network and learn from each other, as well as be recognized for their ongoing support.

These three ingredients — a collaboratively developed and aligned career-ready vision, innovative course offerings focused on the cultivation of employability skills, and strong community partnerships — have provided the conditions necessary for students to be successful in high school and beyond. That said, Frank-

lin’s efforts have also included a vital fourth step, the regular monitoring of data to assess program effectiveness and help make adjustments. This includes data related to the district’s career- and college-ready profile, the National Student Clearinghouse, student engagement data, and community partner expansion and retention information. According to Kohn, one of the most valuable pieces of data rests in the experiences shared by students.

“Our students recognize the value in these experiences, and continue to share stories of how they have been positively impacted by these opportunities,” he said. “In many ways, that’s the most important data we can collect.” ■



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Artificial Intelligence

Ensuring Students are College, Career and Community Ready for 2030 and Beyond

• Oshkosh Area School District



The term A.I. is being used with increasing frequency and finding its way into everyday communication. A.I. stands for artificial intelligence and, until recently, was rarely discussed outside of technology publications and science fiction novels. A.I. is a key part of the fourth industrial revolution we are currently experiencing. Most people are familiar with the previous three revolutions, which were characterized by mechanization and steam power, mass production and electricity, and the digital revolution and computers. What many are not aware of is that we are in the midst of the fourth revolution, which has the potential to disrupt nearly every sector of our economy.

Chances are that you are using A.I. every day and may not even know it. When you shop at Amazon,

Walmart or look for a movie on Netflix, you are being fed suggestions based upon what their A.I. knows about you. People are relying on intelligent assistants like Cortana, Google, Siri and Alexa in their everyday lives. Gmail has started giving users suggestions on how to finish sentences based upon what it knows about you. Google Photos analyzes the photos in your library to suggest services and allow you to find photos based upon who is in them, where they are taken, or even by what you were wearing.

In the book, “Thank You for Being Late,” author Thomas Friedman discusses the reasons for this “age of acceleration” that we find ourselves in. He explains how globalization, climate change and technological advancement are all

accelerating and human beings are struggling to keep up. He talks specifically about pivotal moments such as the introduction of the iPhone in 2007 and when Watson, IBM’s artificial intelligence, successfully beat human beings at chess and the game show Jeopardy in 2011. These advancements are tied to nearly unlimited computing power and cloud storage while being linked to the growing number of internet-connected devices like the Amazon Echo, Google Home and Ring Doorbell. They represent an exponential change and potential disruption to our economy. Friedman takes an

Table 1: Trending and Declining Skills

2018 Today	2022 Trending ↑	2022 Declining ↓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analytical thinking and innovation ▪ Complex problem-solving ▪ Critical thinking and analysis ▪ Active learning / learning strategies ▪ Creativity, originality and initiative ▪ Attention to detail, trustworthiness ▪ Emotional intelligence ▪ Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation ▪ Leadership and social influence ▪ Coordination and time management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analytical thinking and innovation ▪ Active learning / learning strategies ▪ Creativity, originality and initiative ▪ Technology design and programming ▪ Critical thinking and analysis ▪ Complex problem-solving ▪ Leadership and social influence ▪ Emotional intelligence ▪ Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation ▪ Systems analysis and evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Manual dexterity, endurance and precision ▪ Memory, verbal, auditory and spatial abilities ▪ Management of financial, material resources ▪ Technology installation and maintenance ▪ Reading, writing, math and active listening ▪ Management of personnel ▪ Quality control and safety awareness ▪ Coordination and time management ▪ Visual, auditory and speech abilities ▪ Technology use, monitoring and control

optimistic approach and describes a world where artificial intelligence can lead to intelligent assistants that will amplify human capacity. He also focuses on the fact that collaboration and human interaction will be key in this A.I. enhanced world.

So, we need to ask ourselves: Are we preparing students for a world where they will need to learn, unlearn and relearn at a rapid pace? Are we creating a multi-dimensional education system that leverages all disciplines and prepares students with the skills that will be in demand after they graduate from our school systems? The World Economic Forum's *In the Future of Jobs Report 2018* highlights the skills that are in demand today along with those trending and declining by 2022. As you review the skills that will be in decline by 2022 (see Table 1), it is reasonable to assume that jobs requiring repetitive tasks or those where an algorithm can be written to mimic human work will be automated. School systems must focus on

creating authentic learning activities that mirror the conditions found in the world that students will find upon graduation.

To prepare students for their future, school systems must have a high-quality, fast and reliable technology infrastructure. This includes a state-of-the-art network with sufficient bandwidth for every user. All teachers and students should have access to computers to work on learning activities, create, research and communicate with each other. Teachers should also have access to a wealth of embedded professional development, ideally offered by trained technology integrators who can help curate and train them on the right tool for the right task. Once these conditions are in place, the focus can move to creating standards-based personalized learning opportunities for students.

Fortunately, the state of Wisconsin has created Instructional Technology Literacy standards which clearly outline what students should know

and be able to do in the future economy. These standards are designed to be integrated into all curricular areas, leveraging existing learning activities provided in a personalized learning environment where students have voice, choice and pacing options. School districts that are mindful of the future while taking proactive steps in the present will ensure that their students are college, career and community ready, not only in 2030 but beyond. ■

David Gundlach, Deputy Superintendent,
Oskosh Area School District

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Designing a Framework of Innovation

Promising Practices Through Five Levels of Input

• Norris School District

As the Norris School District entered the 2015-16 school year, the board of education made a bold move to achieve its mission of “changing lives through the power of learning” by embracing a learner-centered educational delivery system and building a culture of innovation with leadership at all levels. The shift brought the district from a culture of brick and mortar instruction, compliance and accountability to a culture where learner agency prospers and engagement and leadership at all levels is predominate.

In the new ecosystem, each learner has a profile that reflects who they are and who they want to become. Each profile informs the learner’s plans and pathways so that relevant and contextualized learning experiences support competency attainment across four dimensions: academic, employability, citizenship and wellness. Rather than preparing lesson plans, members of a newly designed interdependent learning network confer with learners, align resources and ensure that each learner has the opportunity to engage in relevant and contextualized learning experiences as part of their open-walled pathways.

The transformation in the Norris School District is being realized through the use of a design model where all learners and leaders exercise voice in creating relevant,

powerful practices to support the educational model.

“As a professional learning team, we engage in continual reflection to identify challenges and assess the distance between our current reality and our vision,” Norris District Administrator Johnna Noll said.

Noll and the district’s director of development, Paula Kaiser, lead the team in weekly design sessions where the team identifies the most significant challenges and barriers to reaching the

“This process may take significant time, but the value derived is too powerful to ignore.” — Jennifer Nuss

vision of learning. The design process distinguishes the promising practices and includes actions to “problem solve through challenges.” The team works through multiple levels of input and iterations to communicate, internalize and create a visible change in practice. This ultimately leads to responsive, enduring practices that are part of the culture.

At different stages along the design process, the visibility of the vision is evaluated through each member’s unique lens. The members assess whether the practice is competency based, develops agency and is socially embedded, open-walled and allows for personalized, relevant contextualized application across each of the four dimensions.

The design process gives the team an opportunity to engage members at the right point to build deep understanding prior to and during implementation. While there are defined steps, this process is not always linear. Noll explained, “The team often fluctuates back and forth between the levels as we implement, learn, reflect and revise our practices to meet the needs of the learners we are currently engaging.”

Noll and Nuss detailed how each design challenge includes a four-step process with “five levels of input” so everyone’s voices are captured and included in the design.

STEP 1: Define and Document.

This step starts with a very small group that identifies the WHY — to outline the objectives — and the HOW — to create the deliverables and success criteria.

STEP 2: Communicate and Internalize.

In this step, the goal is to communicate the promising practice widely and include more people in the design conversation to refine and further develop the WHAT — how the vision will become a reality.

“This is where we take advantage of our five levels of input strategy – directors, specialists, coaches, learners and extended community members,” said Noll. The team at Norris continuously iterates during

this step as different team members join the conversation to build and challenge the current design thinking. Communication is critical in the implementation process. “Communicating widely among all stakeholders provides the opportunity for everyone to engage and internalize the process and builds agency across all levels of the organization,” she stressed.

STEP 3: Visible Change in Practice. This is where all stakeholders will start to see a visible change in practice. Through the design process,

everyone is encouraged to take risks and push the limits of what they believe possible.

STEP 4: Responsive Teaching and Learning. In the final step, the primary goal Noll said, “is to shift from the initial practice to an enduring practice that will become the fiber of who we are and what we do. Taking time to reflect and iterate through this process helps ensure our work does not become a fad and trail off when the next promising practice is developed.”
Learner agency and the design

process at Norris develops leaders at all levels.

“The learning process for youth and the design process for adults empower all of us to think and act independently and achieve our goals by actively getting involved, making decisions that impact our own experiences and initiate autonomous learning,” said Nuss. “This process may take significant time, but the value derived is too powerful to ignore. It cultivates leadership at all levels to drive the community vision forward.” ■



Design Process

Design Challenge

What barriers are between the reality of our current state and our vision?
What is the next best place to realize the vision?



(OTD + OTL + OTR + OTP) + Coaching = ~~FAD~~

Breaking Tradition

Creating a 45-15 (Year-Round) School Calendar

● Tomah Area School District



Implementing a 45-15 (year-round) calendar at Lemonweir Elementary School, one of Tomah Area School District's eight elementary and Montessori schools, during the 2017-18 school year was five years in the making. It required significant time researching the impact on student achievement, increased communication strategies and a proclivity for handling the unknown — all while managing the normal day-to-day activities.

During the convention, the district shared what they have learned so far:

- **A 45-15 school calendar is the only calendar** the Department of Public Instruction will approve that allows school to begin prior to Sept. 1. In a 45-15 school calendar, students attend school for 45 days and then have a 15-day break. During the break, five days are vacation days with no activities. The other 10 days are organized similar to summer school, with enrichment and intervention classes. Transportation, breakfast and lunch are provided and reimbursed through state aid as they would be for summer school.
- **A 45-15 school calendar has not been shown to dramatically increase student achievement.** Nicki Pope, Lemonweir's principal, asserts, "This calendar is not a silver bullet that will automatically impact state assessment or school report card

results." However, the research does suggest that it is most beneficial for students with special needs and low socio-economic status and can minimize the loss of reading and math skills, often referred to as the "summer slide."

- **Communication with all stakeholders is critical.** The Tomah Board of Education wouldn't move forward until they had 90 percent buy-in from teachers and 80 percent buy-in from parents. There were repeated communications in a variety of forms — electronic, paper, social media, television, radio and video — to educate parents and the community.
- **It is impossible to have all the answers to questions that arise.** New procedures for transportation, food service and payroll had to be specifically developed. "There is no dry run for a new school calendar," said District Administrator Cindy Zahrte. "You have to accept that questions and problems will arise which you hadn't thought of or even considered."
- **Parental choice is a significant reason why** a district may opt to implement a 45-15 calendar. According to Pam Buchda, a Tomah school board member, "The district had created a public charter Montessori school because parents were looking for choices

for their children. We then moved on to the 45-15 calendar as another option for families who were interested in such a calendar to best address their needs."

- **The most important factor in the success of the calendar** was the support from the board. There was no hedging, second guessing, blaming or criticism. Rather, the board was committed to moving forward and allowing the administrative team to work through any problems without fear that the next issue might result in cancelling the implementation of the 45-15 calendar.

"This is only our second year of implementation of the 45-15 calendar, but we are very happy with the satisfaction we hear from students, parents and teachers," Zahrte said. "It is too soon to measure any academic gains, but close to 80 percent of students are participating in the enrichment and intervention sessions and we have seen a decrease in truancy. The high attendance rate has helped to mitigate child care issues. We believe that viewing student achievement through the lens of less academic loss and improved attendance is reasonable. Also, having options for schooling in the era of open enrollment is a significant reason why a 45-15 school calendar is of value to the Tomah Area School District." ■

Moving Beyond One-Size-Fits-All

The Benefits of the Flexible-Modular Schedule

• Pulaski School District



Consider for a moment that the schedule at your school was flexible enough to provide your learning community all that it needs each week. If a schedule could do everything you needed, would it be worth the effort to make a change? The work currently occurring at Pulaski High School provides an example of how the overhaul of a schedule can provide a timely and meaningful impact on learning for all involved.

Pulaski High School switched from a seven-period day to a flexible-modular (Flex-Mod) schedule during the 2015-16 school year. It changed nearly every routine and procedure within the building. “Since moving to the new schedule, students have become more independent in their learning and are gaining the skills needed to better navigate their post-secondary lives,” said Jeremy Pach, Pulaski High School principal. “The graduate surveys show consistent feedback indicating many of our students feel better prepared for post-secondary rigor and self-advocacy.”

Flexible modular scheduling is a type of academic schedule where a day is broken into 10-, 20-, 30- or

40-minute modules, or “mods.” This design functions under the philosophy that time should serve students, instead of students serving time. While the Flex-Mod is highly customizable, there are some standard types of offerings that occur with regard to class formats, known as course “phasing.” There are generally three types of phasing that teachers can elect to use: large group, lab and small group.

The large group is generally composed of 60 or more students and is entirely dependent upon the amount of space available to host a large group. The purpose of the large group is to instruct a great number of students at one time in a lecture-style setting. Items that work well for completion in the large group include informational presentations, guest speakers and videos. In this model, information that would have been delivered by multiple people in multiple classrooms is delivered one or two times, resulting in the use of the same vocabulary and delivery of a consistent message for all students.

A lab class is very similar to the well-known, traditional classroom. It consists of 20-30 students com-

pleting conventional classroom work. Finally, the small group classroom setting allows for groups of 10-15 (or fewer) students to meet for in-depth discussions, clarification and deeper analysis of content. Additionally, it can be a time for prescribed intervention.

“During the design of the Pulaski Flex-Mod, we were apprehensive that having multiple teachers instructing the same class to students over the course of a week could cause some disconnect between teachers and students,” Associate Principal Lindsey Mathys said. “With this in mind, we focused on developing a stronger relationship with students in our homeroom, where a few students from each grade are assigned a teacher for a daily 25-minute session. Homeroom allows staff to disseminate information, check grades, talk about weekend activities, establish study habits, share ACT study tips, conduct safety drills, watch student-developed weekly announcements and, in general, have an experience that leaves the student feeling more connected to our high school.”

Pach invited schools to contact them to learn more. “Pulaski High School has held 10 informational visits over the past year, which clearly shows, in our view, a need among secondary school systems to better address the changing demands on students and teachers to prepare students for their post-secondary lives that traditional schedules simply cannot achieve.” ■

To learn more about the Flex-Mod, visit:
pulaskischools.org/high/flexmod

Or, listen to the “what about” series at:
pulaskischools.org/high/flexmod/what-about-series.

Accomplishments | RECOGNITION

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



■ School Board Honorees

Caren Diedrich of the Sun Prairie Area School District (pictured) was congratulated by WASB President Mary Jo Rozmenoski (left) and Executive Director John Ashley for serving 20 years on the school board.

Other 20 year honorees included: Allan Faber, Spring Valley; Brian McCutcheon, Port-Washington-Saukville; David Tuttle, Norris; Gary Lewis, Edgar; James Beistle, Unity; Janet Opiela, Wabeno Area; Jeff Redmon, Saint Croix Central; Joanne Propson, Stockbridge; Joe Lingnofski, Menasha; John Fuerst, Bowler; Julie McKenna, Racine; Katie Maloney, Green Bay Area; Kelly O'Connell-Perket, Port Washington-Saukville; Kurt Radke, Norwalk-Ontario-Wilton; Loren Hanson, Elk Mound Area; Mary Kuhn, North Crawford; Patricia Wolter, Lake Geneva-Genoa City UHS; Randy Nilstuen, Arcadia; Raymond Mueller, Hilbert; RJ Rogers, Mauston; Steve Garvey, Freedom Area; Steve McClelland, Union Grove UHS; Thomas Jaster, Lomira; Virginia Schlais, New London; and William Parsons, Stockbridge.

The following school board members were honored for **30 years of school board service:** Bill Yingst, Sr., Durand-Arkansaw; John Druszczak, Lake Geneva-Genoa City UHS; Thomas Slota, Greendale; and David Ziolkowski, Goodman-Armstrong Creek.

Rita Kasten of the DC Everest Area School District was posthumously recognized for completing **40 years of service.** In addition, Robert Langham of Birchwood completed **45 years of service** in 2018.

Teachers of the Year

State Superintendent Carolyn Stanford Taylor and former U.S. Senator Herb Kohl honored the teachers of the year: Elizabeth Gulden, Baraboo School District (pictured); Maggie McHugh, La Crosse; Sarahi Monterrey, Waukesha; Benjamin Grignon, Menominee Indian; and Michael Wilson, St. Croix Falls.



Principals of the Year

State Superintendent Carolyn Stanford Taylor and Joe Schroeder (right), associate executive director of the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators (AWSA), recognized the principals of the year: Scott Walter, Menomonee Falls; Mike Kruse, Stoughton; and Justin Szews, Lakeland UHS (pictured).



Superintendent of the Year

Aaron Sadoff (middle) of the North Fond du Lac School District was recognized as the Superintendent of the Year by Wisconsin Association of School District Administrator President Steve Bloom (left) of Palmyra-Eagle and Executive Director Jon Bales (right).





■ **Business Official of the Year**

Marta Kwiatkowski of the Rhinelander School District was recognized as the Business Official of the Year by Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials Executive Director Woody Wiedenhoef (left) and President Kent Ellickson (right) of Onalaska.



■ **Special Services Director of the Year**

Ken Kassees (right) of the Kettle Moraine School District was recognized as Special Services Director of the Year by Gary Myrah, executive director of the Wisconsin Council of Administrators of Special Services (WCASS).

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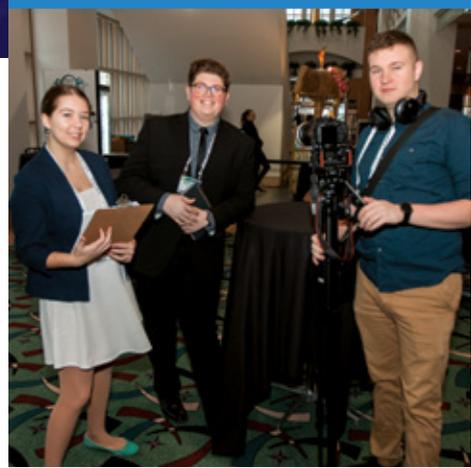
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Student Awards

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

Each year, student artists from across Wisconsin are invited to participate in an annual art contest held in partnership between the WASB and the Wisconsin Art Education Association and sponsored by Liberty Mutual Insurance. Award-winning pieces from the following students were proudly displayed at the 2019 State Education Convention.

- 1st** — **Erika Mullen** (pictured below), Berlin Area School District
- 2nd** — **Emilie Haworth**, Nicolet Unified School District
- 3rd** — **Anika Byrne**, Nicolet Unified School District
- 4th** — **Avery Mitchell**, Nicolet Unified School District
- 5th** — **Haley Piontek**, Wausaukee School District
- 6th** — **Payton Willis**, Oshkosh Area School District
- 7th** — **Courtney Peterson**, Wausaukee School District
- 8th** — **Averi Roloff**, Oshkosh Area School District
- 9th** — **Katelyn Mitala**, Kimberly Area School District
- 10th** — **Alexa Steidl**, Kimberly Area School District



Student Video Team

The WASB invited school districts to apply to have students attend the State Education Convention, tape highlights and produce a video. A group of students from Tomah Area High School took on this task and helped us capture the events, speakers and highlights of the 98th State Education Convention.

Special thanks to the Tomah students and teacher Brian Kibby.

Visit the convention website (wasb.org/convention) for a link to their video. ■

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2019 Day at the Capitol

School leaders to gather on March 13



Join school board members and administrators from around the state on March 13 to take our message to the Capitol! With the Legislature beginning its review of Governor Evers' budget proposal, it is an ideal time to talk with your local legislators and *tell your story*. It is your opportunity to build relationships and support for your schools.

To make your meetings with legislators as effective as possible, start thinking about and preparing your message in advance. Some things to think about:

- What are the biggest challenges facing your district's budget?
- Where do you want to see your district in five years, in 10 years? What are the barriers?
- What can your district do to build support for stable, predictable funding to allow your district to get to where you want it to be? (What stories can you tell about programs, teachers, etc. that your district has lost due to funding? How difficult is it to attract and retain good teachers? What could your district do if you had stable, predictable funding that keeps pace with inflation that you aren't able to do now?)

- What must happen at the state level to allow your district to receive stable, predictable funding? (What are you asking your legislators to do in the 2019-21 state budget? E.g., allow an increase in per-pupil revenue limits to keep pace with inflation, allow low spending/revenue districts an adjustment in their per-revenue limits so they don't fall further behind?)

Much like the dynamic two years ago, we have the advantage of the governor proposing a significant increase to schools in his budget and public opinion polls suggesting voters support increasing the state's investment in our public schools. Now we need to make sure the Legislature also knows how important that investment is to our schools and the students they serve.

The 2019 Day at the Capitol makes it easy. The WASB will schedule meetings with legislators for you and provide talking points in advance to help you prepare. *Register today at WASB.org!*

Day at the Capitol Agenda

Wednesday, March 13
Monona Terrace, Madison, WI

8:30 am – Registration and Continental Breakfast

9:00 am – Welcome:

- Brett Hyde, WASB President

2017-19 State Budget:

- Gov. Evers Administration

9:45 am – Legislative Panel:

- Sen. Luther Olsen (R-Ripon), Senate Education Committee Chair, Budget Committee Vice-Chair
- Sen. Chris Larson (D-Milwaukee), Senate Education Committee Ranking Member
- Rep. Robin Vos (R-Rochester), Assembly Speaker
- Rep. Gordon Hintz (D-Oshkosh), Assembly Minority Leader

10:45 am – Break

11:00 am – WASB Legislative Priorities:

- Dan Rossmiller, WASB Government Relations Director
- Christopher Kulow, WASB Government Relations Specialist

Noon – Networking Lunch

1:00 pm – Visits with Legislators

WASB Advocates with Our Congressional Delegation in Washington

Immediately following the State Education Convention, members of the WASB Executive Committee

One key priority for Republican lawmakers and the governor is enacting a school accountability measure.



Pictured left to right: former Racine school board president and current state Representative Robert Wittke, Burlington Supt. Peter Smet, WASB director Rosanne Hahn, and Assembly Speaker Robin Vos from the 2017 Day at the Capitol.

headed to our nation's Capital to join with school board members from across the country to lobby their members of Congress.

Before heading to Capitol Hill, the WASB delegation received issue briefings and advocacy training sponsored by the National School Boards Association (NSBA) as part of the NSBA's annual Advocacy Institute.

One of the key items in the NSBA's agenda is to urge Congress to update and reauthorize the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which was last reauthorized in 2004.

The WASB delegation joined in urging that a reauthorized IDEA should help ensure that all students with disabilities achieve their full potential and include provisions to encourage schools and families to work collaboratively in support of positive education outcomes for all students.

In particular, the WASB urged that two specific and somewhat technical changes be made to IDEA to protect students and staff. These changes would attempt to address incidents in which students with disabilities act out in ways that

(directly or indirectly) cause physical injury to others. Too often, under the current law, if the child's individualized education program does not allow for an alternative placement prior to the incident, schools are unable to place the student in an alternative educational setting while other options for that child are considered and evaluated.

Another key request was to urge our Congressional delegation to update the federal law governing student educational records and privacy known as the Family Education Records and Privacy Act (FERPA). One specific change the WASB seeks would allow the disclosure of the specific disciplinary actions a district has taken in response to a student who uses or credibly threatens to use a dangerous weapon to cause harm to other persons in the school or similarly threatens school safety. Current FERPA restrictions on the release of such information have hampered certain Wisconsin districts in responding to public concerns about school safety.

The WASB proposal does not ask for school officials to be able to name or disclose personally identi-

able information about the alleged perpetrator to individuals who were not directly involved. Rather, it asks that school officials be able to disclose that they took a corrective action (*i.e.*, suspension, expulsion, alternative placement, etc.), notwithstanding that in a specific school community, particularly one that is quite small in population, such disclosure might allow someone to deduce the student's identity.

In addition, the WASB encouraged Congress to increase funding for federal Impact Aid and to reject proposals to eliminate funding for the Payments for Federal Property component of Impact Aid.

Impact Aid payments are a significant source of revenue for numerous Wisconsin school districts. It compensates school districts for the loss of local tax revenue that occurs when a district has federal land within its boundaries, such as Native American tribal land or a military installation, that is exempt from local taxation. School districts cannot receive property taxes for that land, even though children who attend schools in those districts reside there. ■

‘Take the Best of the Past Forward’

2018 WASB President **Mary Jo Rozmenoski** reflects on the WASB’s productive year

Wrapping up her year as president of the WASB, Mary Jo Rozmenoski of the Black River Falls School Board called on board members and administrators to “create the future and take the best of the past forward.”

Rozmenoski became a school board member after the tragic loss of her adult son and becoming highly active in organ donation advocacy.

“I made a choice to be a voice and advocate for quality education by becoming a school board member,” Rozmenoski said. “I chose to go out of my comfort zone and share my son’s life story while being an advocate for an educational system that celebrates differences and honors the diverse needs of all. When I started, I thought I was going to be an advocate for hands-on learning, but I came to realize that what I was really advocating for was equity.”

Rozmenoski reported that in 2018, the WASB Board of Directors approved the following equity statement:



“We affirm in our actions that each student can, will and shall learn. We recognize that based on factors including, but not limited to, disability, race, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status, not all students receive equitable educational opportunities. Educational equity is the intentional allocation of resources, instruction and opportunities to meet the specific identified needs of students and staff in

the local school community.”

Rozmenoski called on board members “to advocate for and secure policies that truly enhance safe learning opportunities so that every Wisconsin student graduates with the critical thinking skills needed to be college and career ready.” She also asked them to see that “educators are inspired, supported and empowered to teach every student.” ■



Hyde to Lead WASB in 2019

Taking over as WASB president is Brett Hyde, a school board member in the Muskego-Norway School District. Bill Yingst, Sr., a member of the Durand-Arkansas School Board, was elected as the 1st vice president and Sue Todey of the Sevastopol school board was selected 2nd vice president. Hyde will serve a one-year term as WASB president.

(Left) Brett Hyde receives the gavel from 2018 WASB President Mary Jo Rozmenoski.

2019 WASB BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Front row, left to right Andrew Maertz, Reedsville (Region 8); Tony Baez, Milwaukee (Region 14); Linda Flottum, Turtle Lake (Region 1); Mary Jo Rozmenoski, Black River Falls (Region 6 and Immediate Past President); Bill Yingst, Sr., Durand-Arkansaw (Region 4 and 1st Vice President); Sue Today, Sevastopol (Region 3 and 2nd Vice President); and Capt. Terry McCloskey, USN Retired, Three Lakes (Region 2).

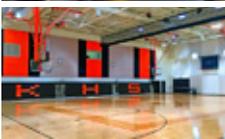
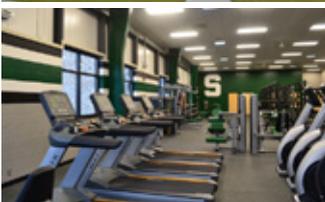
Back row, left to right Brett Hyde, Muskego-Norway (Region 11 and President); Tom Weber, Sun Prairie (Region 12); Bill Wipperfurth, Lodi (Region 10); Mike Humke, Dodgeville (Region 9); Cheryl Ploeckelman, Colby (Region 5); Lester Spies, Germantown (Region 15); Barbara Herzog, Oshkosh (Region 7); and Rosanne Hahn, Burlington (Region 13).



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Governmental Immunity

A Wisconsin statute protects school districts and their officers and employees from lawsuits based on negligence for acts done in the exercise of legislative, quasi-legislative, judicial or quasi-judicial functions.¹ Wisconsin courts have interpreted “quasi-judicial” and “quasi-legislative” acts as *discretionary acts*, and governmental officers and employees are entitled to immunity for such acts.² Districts and their employees are not afforded immunity, however, in two circumstances. These exceptions to immunity arise if a district employee fails to carry out a ministerial duty or fails to respond to a known danger that, in essence, creates a ministerial duty to act.

The first exception to immunity applies when a governmental officer or employee is negligent in performing or failing to perform a ministerial act, *i.e.*, an act that involves the performance of a simple and definite duty imposed by law. Wisconsin courts have stated that a duty is ministerial “only when it is absolute, certain and imperative, involving merely the performance of a specific task when the law imposes, prescribes and defines the time, mode and occasion for its performance with such certainty that nothing remains for judgment or discretion.”³ The known danger exception to governmental immunity applies when a public officer or employee knows of a danger that is

so compelling that the officer or employee has an absolute, certain and imperative duty to act to lessen the danger.

In a recent Wisconsin Supreme Court case, *Engelhardt v. City of New Berlin*⁴, the court was asked to review the circumstances in which an eight-year-old girl drowned while attending summer camp at a city pool and to reverse 40 years of case law interpreting the statute providing immunity to governmental bodies, including districts and their employees, for alleged negligent acts. This Legal Comment will review that case law and discuss the *Engelhardt* decision as it applies to districts.⁵

Ministerial Act Exception

Wisconsin courts have been asked to apply the ministerial act exception to governmental immunity in several cases involving school districts. For example, one case held that a teacher’s decision to move a gym class indoors and to use a partially deflated soccer ball was a discretionary act and, thus, the district was immune from liability for damages caused when a student suffered an eye injury while playing soccer with the deflated ball.⁶ In another case, a student was injured when a volleyball standard toppled. This had occurred before and there was some suggestion that a supervisor had ordered the safety director to bolt the volleyball standard and

pole together, which was not done. The court noted that if the safety director had been ordered to bolt the two pieces together, the safety director would have had a ministerial duty to follow that directive and his failure to do so would have precluded immunity from suit. However, no such directive was given and the court concluded that the safety director’s general duty to provide safe equipment provided discretion as to how to address the safety issue involving the volleyball standard and did not give rise to a ministerial duty. Thus, the safety director was immune from suit.⁷ Finally, a district was sued after a sexual relationship developed between the plaintiff student and one of his teachers.⁸ The suit alleged that the district was negligent in hiring, training and supervising the teacher. The court dismissed the suit on the grounds that the hiring and supervising of a teacher is a quasi-judicial or discretionary act.

Known Danger Exception

The Wisconsin Supreme Court has stated that the known danger exception is very limited, “having rarely been asserted successfully,” and has cautioned that in order to trigger the known danger exception, there must be present the type of “extraordinary events” that are best exemplified by the facts in *Cords v.*

Districts and their employees are not afforded immunity if a district employee fails to carry out a ministerial duty or fails to respond to a known danger.

Anderson.⁹ In that case, two people in a group hiking after dark in the Parfrey's Glen recreational area fell from a dangerous trail into a gorge, causing serious, permanent injury. Four years before the accident, the defendant park manager knew "that the paths at Parfrey's Glen went near the edge of a sheer drop off right into the glen and that the trails never had any rail, sign or protective devices of any kind warning people or advising them not to use the upper trail."¹⁰ Although, the park manager knew that these trails were especially hazardous at night and that there were no signs warning of the hazard, he never informed his supervisor and made no recommendations that warning signs be erected, even though it was his job to make recommendations for public safety at the glen.

The court held that, under these circumstances, the park manager had an absolute, certain or imperative duty to either place signs warning the public of the dangerous conditions, or to advise his superiors of the dangerous conditions, so they could take appropriate action. The court concluded that the park manager's duty here was so clear and so absolute because of the known danger, that it fell within the definition of a ministerial duty, and denied him governmental immunity from the lawsuit filed against him.

The same was found to be the case in *Voss v. Elkhorn Area School District*, where a student suffered extensive injuries to her teeth when she fell while wearing "fatal vision goggles" during an exercise in health class that was designed by the teacher to reproduce the effects of intoxication.¹¹ While wearing the goggles, the students tried walking in a straight line, shooting a ball at a garbage can and standing on one leg. The plaintiff was injured when the teacher threw a tennis ball for a group of students to retrieve to show them how difficult it was to perform simple tasks while wearing the goggles. Unfortunately, a few boys collided with each other, resulting in

the student tripping and hitting her mouth on one of the steel desks.

The court concluded the known danger exception applied because the teacher knew of the perils of conducting the exercise since the goggles not only distorted vision, but also impaired depth perception and one's sense of balance. Before the student tripped and fell, some of the male students had collided with each other and a female student had stumbled and fallen onto her knees. The court commented that "it should have been self-evident to the teacher that the activity was hazardous and the only option was to put an end to it."¹² Unlike in other cases where the known danger exception was not applied, the teacher here was well aware of the perils posed by the fatal vision goggles and the hazard was obvious.

In *Heuser v. Community Insurance Corporation*, a student sued the school district for negligence after he severely cut himself removing the cover from a scalpel he was instructed to use to dissect a flower in an eighth-grade science class.¹³ The court held that the known danger exception applied. The court noted that (1) the plaintiff's injury occurred after two students in a previous class that day had been cut while using the scalpels to dissect a flower; (2) the teacher filled out two student accident report forms after the first two incidents and responded that her recommendation to prevent similar incidents was to limit scalpel use or to use scissors instead; (3) she continued to allow the students to use scalpels without providing scissors as an option; (4) she did not demonstrate proper scalpel technique or instruct the students how to cap or uncap the scalpels; and (5) none of the injured students had been engaged in horseplay. The court held that the teacher was at fault for doing nothing in the face of personal knowledge that using the scalpels raised a safety issue. She could have used scissors, done the dissecting for the students, supervised each student, or given them detailed instructions about how to use the scalpels,

starting with removing the cover. If she had done something instead of nothing, the court said, immunity would have applied. Under the circumstances, the "teacher had the same ministerial duty as the teacher in *Voss* to 'stop the activity the way it was presently conceived.'"¹⁴

■ **Engelhardt**

Eight-year-old Lily Engelhardt attended a field trip to an aquatic center operated by the city. Her mother advised the trip coordinator that Lily could not swim and inquired whether she should go on the optional trip. The trip coordinator advised her that they would evaluate Lily's swimming ability and that there was a shallow and zero depth area in which Lily could play. At the pool, the new campers who had not been given a swim test, including Lily, were told to find a leader before getting into the pool, but were not directed where to find them. When most of the children were in the water, but before all staff members were out of the locker room, Lily was found unresponsive in the pool and she later died.

Lily's parents brought suit against the city alleging the city was negligent. The city sought dismissal of the suit on the grounds of governmental immunity. In opposing this effort, the parents requested that the court abandon its past decisions which determined immunity status on whether the alleged negligent acts were discretionary or ministerial. Instead, they argued that the immunity determination should be focused on and guided by the language of the immunity statute. This grants immunity only for quasi-legislative or quasi-judicial acts, which clearly was not involved in the alleged city negligent act. The court majority declined to overturn its 40 years of precedent.

Notwithstanding its reluctance to overturn past case law, the court concluded that the city was not entitled to immunity because the danger to which Lily was exposed as an eight-year-old non-swimmer was compelling and self-evident.

Reviewing the cases outlined above, the court concluded that the obvious dangers involved resembled those situations that applied the “known danger” exception. The court held that the coordinator and others had a ministerial duty to give Lily a swim test before allowing her near the pool and did not do so. As a result, the parents were allowed to pursue their negligence claim against the city.

Of interest is the concurring opinion authored by Justice Rebecca Dallet. She agreed with the parents’ request to overturn past precedent, stating that “the artificial distinction between a ministerial duty and discretionary act is impracticable and the resulting decisions regarding the limits of governmental immunity have been labeled ‘jurisprudential chaos.’” Justice Dallet would do away with any immunity analysis which involves assessing whether the alleged negligent acts were ministerial or involved a known danger. Instead, she would return the analysis to the terms of the immunity statute and determine whether the facts were within the narrow confines of legislative or judicial activities. Under this analysis, she would conclude that the city was not entitled to immunity because the city’s actions involving Lily were not in the exercise of quasi-legislative or quasi-judicial activities.

Justice Dallet indicated that if she had to utilize existing case law in her analysis, she would conclude that the “known danger” exception did not apply to this case. She is of the view that while the circumstances at

the pool were an accident waiting to happen, the danger was not so compelling to give rise to a duty to act. She noted that no one saw Lily near the edge of the deep area of the pool, in which case the city employees would have been required to take immediate action. Instead, the alleged city negligence occurred at an earlier moment when the city employees had several discretionary options available to keep Lily safe. Because of this, the case did not present a known, present and compelling danger which required an immediate “self-evident, particularized, and nondiscretionary” response.

■ Conclusion

In order for a district and its employees to be immune from a negligence lawsuit, their activities must fall within the scope of quasi-judicial or quasi-legislative activities, defined by the courts to include discretionary acts. Immunity does not apply to cases involving ministerial acts or those involving known dangers. However, as the *Engelhardt* case shows, the determination of whether actions are ministerial, discretionary or involve known dangers is subject to court interpretation and assessment, of which reasonable minds can differ. Because the immunity standards do not lend themselves to black and white rules and are subject to case-by-case factual analysis, it is difficult to prospectively provide a set of guidelines to inform district action. However, it is clear from the

decisions on immunity that the greater the danger and risks to students, the more likely a court is to find that a “known danger” exists. In those situations, district personnel must make sure to follow any adopted guidelines and/or policies as to how to proceed. ■

■ End Notes

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

1. Wis. Stat. s. 893.80(4).
2. *Bauder v. Delavan-Darien Sch. Dist.*, 207 Wis. 2d 310, 313, 558 N.W.2d 881 (Ct. App. 1996).
3. *Id.* at 314.
4. 2019 WI 2.
5. For related articles, see *Wisconsin School News*: “Exceptions to Governmental Immunity for Employee Negligence” (September 2010); “School Officials’ and Employees’ Civil Liability Protection” (May 2002); “Indemnifying and Insuring Employees’ Actions” (December 2007); and *WASB Legal Note*: “Government Employee Discretionary Immunity” (Winter 2003).
6. *Bauder*, 207 Wis. 2d at 314-15.
7. *Kimps v. Hill*, 200 Wis. 2d 1, 15-16, 546 N.W.2d 151 (Wis. 1996).
8. *Kimpton v. Sch. Dist. of New Lisbon*, 138 Wis. 2d 226, 405 N.W.2d 740 (Ct. App. 1987).
9. 80 Wis. 2d 525, 259 N.W.2d 672 (1977).
10. *Id.* at 536-537.
11. 2006 WI App. 234, 724 N.W.2d 420.
12. *Id.* ¶ 20.
13. 2009 WI App. 151, 321 Wis. 2d 729, 774 N.W. 2d 653.
14. *Id.* ¶ 34.

The determination of whether actions are ministerial, discretionary, or involve known dangers is subject to court interpretation and assessment, of which reasonable minds can differ.



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