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High School Sports Participation Drops for First Time in 30 Years

According to a report released in late August by the National Federation of High School State Associations, the number of students participating in high school sports declined for the first time in three decades during the 2018-19 school year.

Enrollment in high school sports was down more than 40,000 participants. (This doesn't necessarily mean 40,000 fewer students participated last year. Athletes are counted separately for each sport so if a student participated in two sports, he or she was counted as two participants. The study also does not include club or other community teams.)

Of the 40,000 participants, 70 percent came from football — although it remains the most popular sport for boys by a wide margin. There are still 400,000 more high school football players than the next most popular sport for boys — track and field.

According to reporting by the *Washington Post*, the decline in high school numbers are not yet part of a trend. For the 30 years prior, the number of student-athletes increased every year. In fact, there has been a 300 percent

increase in the number of student athletes since 1988.

However, there is an ongoing trend in youth sports that should be concerning to high school programs and the overall health of children. According to the Aspen Institute think tank, the number of children aged 6 to 12 regularly participating on a team dropped from 45 percent in 2008 to 38 percent in 2018.

It's important to note where the drop off in youth sports is occurring. Reports indicate steadily declining participation rates of children from low-income households. Meanwhile, children from wealthier homes are holding steady or even increasing their



participation rates but are reducing the overall number of sports they are playing in a year. Observers note that the emphasis on competitive play and elite teams are negatively impacting municipal and community teams, limiting the options for low-income students. □

STAT OF THE MONTH

40,000

Enrollment in high school sports across the United States was down more than 40,000 participants during the 2018-19 school year, the first drop in the number of student-athletes in 30 years.

Wisconsin Educators Are Finalists for National Math and Science Award

Six Wisconsin teachers are finalists for the nation's highest honor bestowed to teachers of math, science and related fields.

Wisconsin's finalists for the 2019 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching are:

- Stephanie Ballard, science, Campbellsport Middle-High School
- Katie Haas, mathematics, Edgar Middle School
- Karen Olson, science, Baraboo High School
- Constance Rauterkus, science, Oconto Falls High School
- Maighread McHugh,

STEM and mathematics, La Crosse Design Institute

- Jennifer Koziar, mathematics, Edgewood Campus School, Madison

“Wisconsin's finalists for these awards help students every day to engage and excel,” State Superintendent Carolyn Stanford Taylor said. “This requires not only expertise in their content area, but also an understanding of best instructional practices based on education research. To reach this level as an educator takes true dedication and commitment.”

Anyone can nominate a teacher for the PAEMST award. State selection

committees comprised of prominent mathematicians, scientists, teachers and other experts select finalists.

Wisconsin's finalists will be judged at the national level by a committee organized by the National Science Foundation. Awardees receive \$10,000 from the National Science Foundation, professional development opportunities and a trip to be recognized in Washington, D.C.

The award program was established by Congress in 1983 to recognize teachers for high-quality instructional programs informed by content knowledge to enhance student learning. For more information, visit paemst.org. □



School Boards, Take a Bow

As a school board member, you may not be accustomed to pats on the back but now is your time to be in the limelight. You have plenty to be proud of.

This October 6-12 is Wisconsin School Boards Week. It's a chance to enjoy some well-deserved respect and remind your communities about the work you do. I know you didn't accept this role for the commendations. Rather, you are motivated by the opportunity to help children reach their potential.

We're working with districts around the state to spread this message, and I hope to share it with you as I continue to traverse Wisconsin for this year's Fall Regional Meetings. These meetings are a special opportunity for board members to build camaraderie and share stories with other board

members in their region.

To learn more about how you can attend your regional meeting, visit our website.

At the meetings, we'll provide a look at what may be happening for the remainder of the legislative session and tell you about what your association has in the works to support you. Just as you're setting the groundwork for your district's success, we're planning ahead to give you the tools you need to succeed.

We know boards and districts can't do it alone. To honor the partnerships you cultivate with local businesses and organizations, we created the WASB Business Honor Roll several years ago.

We're delighted that the program continues to grow. This year, districts submitted more than 150 community partners to be recognized for their

work supporting their local schools and students. An upcoming issue of the *Wisconsin School News* will showcase a few of the collaborations that are enriching the academic lives of students. Sometimes that means taking the lessons students learned in the classroom out into the wider world. In other cases, your partners are bringing their expertise inside the school.

By seeking out these partnerships — we know they don't just happen by themselves — you're connecting classrooms and communities. And that's the essence of what it means to serve on a school board.

On behalf of your statewide association, thank you for your ongoing commitment and dedication to your students and your communities. ■

Your 2020 Convention Speakers Announced

The theme of the 2020 Wisconsin State Education Convention is "Expanding Your Vision," and we're proud to announce that our keynote speakers will be

Dr. Scott McLeod, Dr. Yong Zhao, Shane Feldman and **Holly Hoffman**.

An associate professor of educational leadership at the University of Colorado Denver, Dr. McLeod is one of the nation's leading experts on P-12 school technology leadership issues. He has worked with hundreds of schools, districts, universities and organizations and has received numerous awards for his technology leadership work. Dr. McLeod blogs regularly about technology leadership issues at dangerouslyirrelevant.org.

Dr. Zhao is returning to the Wisconsin State Education Convention. His first keynote, nearly 10 years ago, was one of the most popular we've ever had.

An expert on globalization and education, Dr. Zhao has

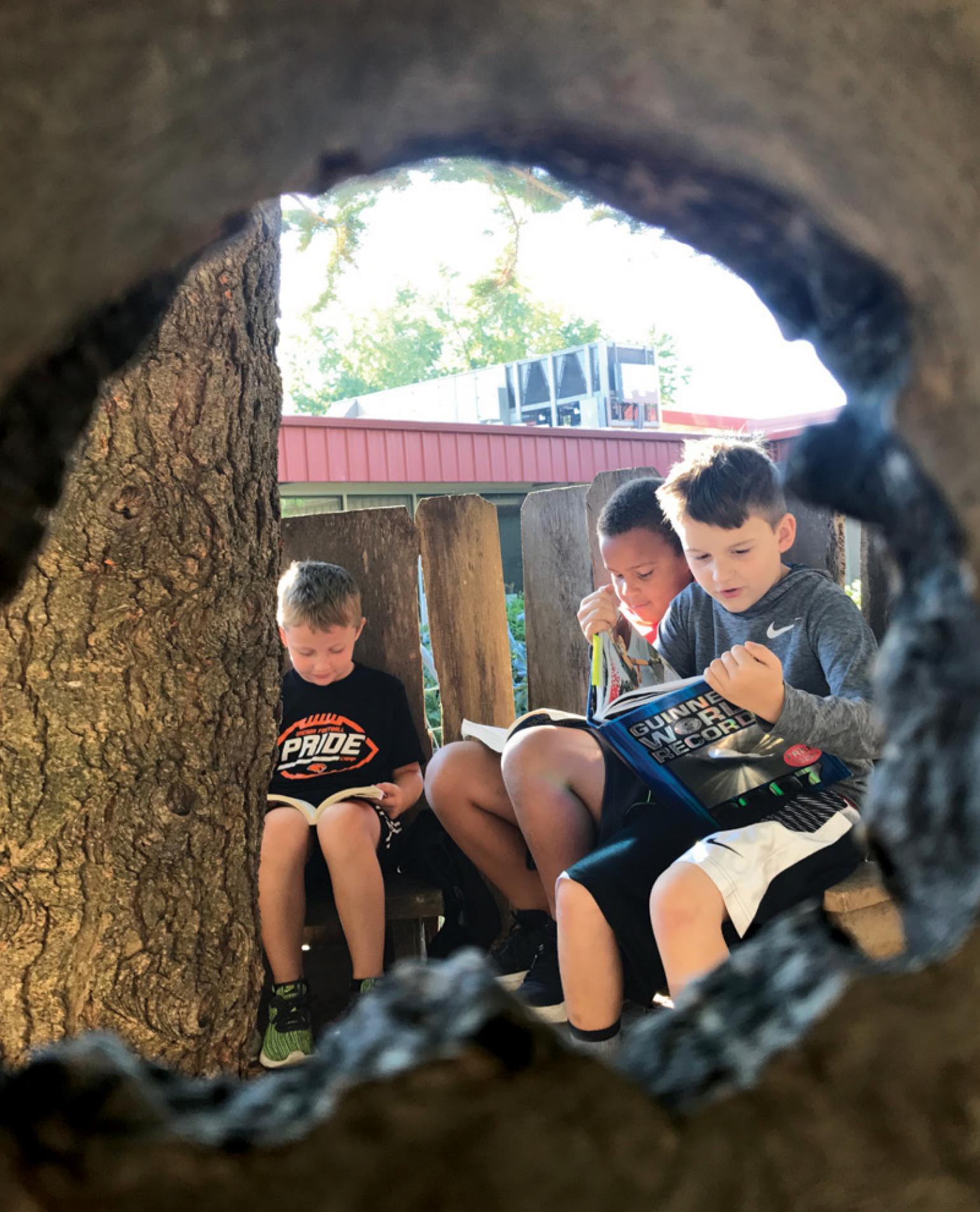
received numerous awards and published more than 30 books, including one of his most recent, "What Works May Hurt: Side Effects in Education."

Feldman is the founder and CEO of Count Me In, the world's largest student-led movement. Over the past decade, Count Me In has initiated tens of thousands of projects worldwide, contributing a value of more than \$2.6 billion to the global economy.

Hoffman is an author and motivational speaker best known for her run on the TV reality show "Survivor." She has a fascinating story of courage, leadership, overcoming adversity, teamwork and a whole lot more. You won't want to miss this breakfast keynote.

For more information, visit the convention website at WASB.org. **Registration opens Nov. 1.** We look forward to seeing you in Milwaukee and expanding your vision! □





Digging In

GREEN & HEALTHY SCHOOL INITIATIVES ACROSS WISCONSIN

From classrooms to cafeterias to outdoor spaces, Wisconsin school districts are working to develop green and healthy initiatives. Thanks to the efforts of Lesley Sheridan, outreach specialist at the Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, the following highlights have been gathered from districts around the state.

■ **Green and healthy initiatives** go beyond the classroom and beyond the building in the **OREGON SCHOOL DISTRICT ...**

► *Lisa Eiche, a third-grade teacher at Netherwood Knoll Elementary School in Oregon:*

As you pull into the parking lot of Netherwood Knoll Elementary, you can tell that the Oregon School District values outdoor education. From the parking lot, you can see an outdoor classroom, several garden beds, a compost area and a hoop house.

Outdoor education supports our district's core values: the whole child, educational equity, relevant and empowering learning experiences, caring and professional educators, and strong family and community partnerships. All these values are wrapped tightly in outdoor and environmental education.

We've been told that just the name Netherwood Knoll evokes an image of a magical place. Thanks to the outstanding efforts of dedicated staff members and amazing volunteers who care for and maintain the beautiful outdoor classroom areas and, our gem, the arboretum, Netherwood Knoll Elementary does indeed feel like a magical place.

All the outdoor areas are accessible to teachers and students. Teachers are encouraged to utilize the outdoor spaces and are provided with a grow light, seeds and other

materials to help students grow vegetables, fruits and flowers in the school community garden. When school is out for the summer, volunteers donate the crops to Oregon's community food pantry. During the school year, students pick and eat from the garden with permission.

For the past few years, the Arboretum Committee has planned and executed an all-school event called Gardenpalooza. Volunteers plan what each teacher will plant and where. They also help the students and teachers plant their classroom-grown seedlings in the garden beds in and



Students at Netherwood Knoll Elementary School in the Oregon School District grow flowers, fruits and vegetables in their school garden.

around Netherwood Knoll. Classrooms raise monarchs and release them in the Monarch Waystation that was planted by students. A parent volunteer on Monarch Watch comes into the classroom to tag and aid in their release in September and early October.

We believe that our impact through garden-based education and outdoor education inspires our students to think about their choices in healthy eating and taking care of the environment around them. Being outside is great for brain growth. We also believe that students should have equitable access to nature so we have a wheelchair garden bed to help ensure students with differing abilities are included.

Some teachers use the outdoor spaces regularly — teaching their regular curriculum outdoors and sometimes using nature to teach — while others use it only when there is time after the mini lesson and work time. Students have expressed that they love being outside and some don't even realize that learning is occurring.

Students have readily signed up to be part of the compost team, making sure that uneaten fruits and vegetables as well as napkins are put into our compost areas. We have a Green Team, a group of fourth-graders who took it upon themselves to collect markers to recycle through the Crayola program and were involved in a storm drain mural painting project in the community.

As we continue into the new school year, our volunteer committee members hope to introduce more of the new Wisconsin Standards for Environmental Literacy and Sustainability and combine them with the curriculum that teachers are already using so all teachers feel comfortable teaching outside and getting kids involved in environmental education. □

■ They're taking stock of outdoor spaces and inventorying trees with a Community Tree Map in the **WAUNAKEE COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT ...**

► *Todd Shucha, science instructor, Waunakee High School:*

In the fall of 2017, Waunakee High School students began a project to inventory the trees at all the district's schools. Data points, including tree height, diameter, crown spread and health condition, are being collected and curated using the Wisconsin Community Tree Map, an interactive tool recently developed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

This tool allows users to visualize trees in their community, calculate their benefits, and produce maps, charts and other graphics. While collecting data for this tool has mostly been done by municipal land managers, parks and private forestry staff, Waunakee High School teacher Todd Shucha worked with the DNR urban foresters to inventory the trees around his school with an ecology class.

Students worked in small teams to identify the trees, take measurements and pictures, and upload the data to



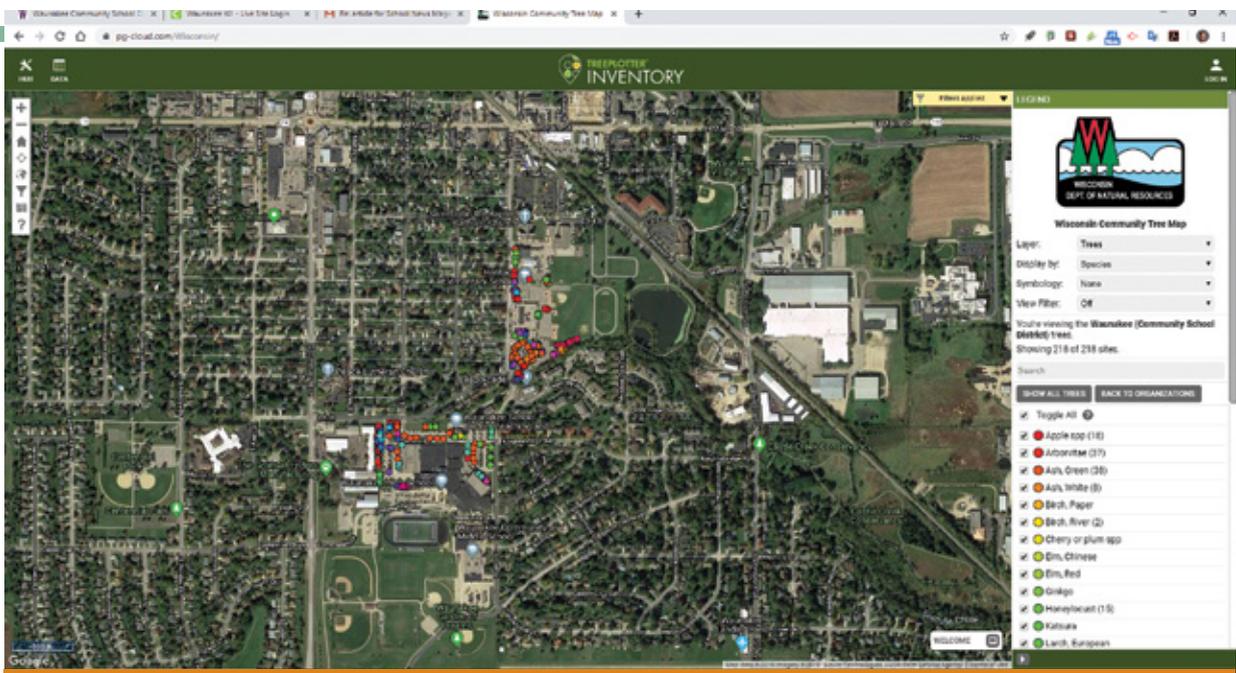
the Wisconsin Community Tree Map, with Shucha proof-reading and verifying entries prior to final inclusion.

Students are given the opportunity to recognize that they can make meaningful contributions to greater scientific understanding of our environment. Students can see and share the results of their work on an easily accessible platform, explore the map in their broader community, and examine interactive stats, reports and ecosystem benefits of trees in the urban landscape. It provides a gateway into a broader conversation about the students' connections to their environment, and how decisions made about that environment have measurable and meaningful impacts.

To date, Waunakee students have inventoried more than 200 trees at the high school and the district's Heritage Elementary School. The data collected has assisted the district's building and grounds department in identifying problem trees for removal and replacement and may be used in the district's long-range budget planning. Tree inventorying will continue in the fall of 2019, with



Waunakee High School students measure and identify the trees on school grounds.



the goal of adding another 100 or more trees to the Wisconsin Community Tree Map and planting several replacement trees.

Shucha sees a huge opportunity in dealing with the emerald ash borer infestation, as ash trees make up a large percentage of trees in many schoolyards. In the

future, he hopes the experience evolves to the point where students will be involved in broader discussions on how to improve the school grounds, such as installing native plant restoration gardens, food gardens or mini-orchards.

For more information about the Wisconsin Community Tree Map, visit pg-cloud.com/Wisconsin.

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■ **Homing in** on energy efficiency within its buildings in the **DARLINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT ...**

► *Lee Black, building and grounds supervisor, and Denise Wellnitz, retired district administrator:*

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, an average building wastes a third of its energy consumption. While facility upgrades are expensive, energy efficiency projects can be worth the investment since they save money in long-term efficiency.

A 2015 feasibility study for the Darlington Community School District was completed by Hoffman Planning, Design & Construction, Inc. Following the study, the school board committed to green and energy efficiency upgrades for their facilities and approved a \$4 million, two-year energy efficiency project with McKinstry. The first project was the installation of a 156 kW solar photovoltaic system on the roof of the elementary/middle school building in January 2016 to convert light into electricity. At the that time, it was the largest photovoltaic system in a Wisconsin public school.

The additional improvements completed during the summers of 2017 and 2018 included:

- Upgrading every light fixture, including exterior egress lighting, to LED.
- Replacing the entire roof with an extremely durable synthetic rubber membrane and improving the insulation.
- Replacing old unit vents with high-efficiency rooftop units and installing variable air volume units in every room.
- Upgrading building controls to allow for better control over the heating/cooling system, and the ability to schedule occupancy periods for heating and cooling cycles.

- Installing new fume hoods in the science rooms.
- Upgrading breaker panels and installing new outlets in classrooms.
- Installing new entrance vestibules.
- Installing new welding outlets and exhaust systems in metals and agriculture shops to allow for proper air exchanges in both areas.
- Installing a new drop ceiling and grid in the entire building.
- Installing new exit signs.
- Upgrading electrical systems to allow for more technology and devices to be used, including floor outlets, charging stations and collaboration rooms.

Student presentations and open houses ensured the project brought educational value to the students and the community.

The district has continued to study the feasibility of adding additional solar systems and batteries to enable the high school and elementary/middle school to potentially move to net zero energy. The study is being supported in part by a U.S. Department of Energy grant administered by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin.

The energy efficiency measures reduced the overall operational cost of the high school. The project will pay for itself with future savings and likely save the district more money after the debt is paid in full. □

■ **Fostering the growth** of outdoor education continues at Olson Elementary School in the **MADISON METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT ...**

► *Deb Lyons, retired principal:*

Olson Elementary School, located on the far west side of Madison, is home to a richly diverse population of 430 students who speak more than 20 languages. Olson is striving to develop a green and healthy school culture, starting with Swimmy the Otter, the school's mascot.

Swimmy the Otter helps symbolically unify the school's diverse population and promotes the values of safety, respect, responsibility and being an ally. Swimmy models these values when he is quoted in morning announcements or attends special events at Olson. Swimmy's example helps illustrate ideals taught by social and emotional learning initiatives and programs.

Olson's green initiatives have exposed students to a variety of outdoor learning experiences that allow students to appreciate, take care of, and become stewards of the environment. Olson's school grounds feature a large natural prairie behind the school. Throughout the years, students of all ages have participated in outdoor projects, such as planting prairie seeds, planting straw bale



gardens, doing controlled burns of the prairie, raising and releasing butterflies, and weeding and planting rain gardens. The University of Madison Arboretum and Earth Partnerships for Schools have helped Olson develop the prairie while engaging students in a variety of learning experiences.

Olson recently celebrated its 10th anniversary. During the preparations, the staff reunited with the family of the school's namesake, Paul J. Olson – a longtime Wisconsin conservationist and school principal. He helped organize Madison's school forest, which is still being used as an outdoor conservation classroom.

To support the school's green and healthy work and to honor their father with another legacy in his name, the Olson family collaborated with the school to revitalize the tradition of all fourth-grade classes visiting the district's school forest each year. The intent is for students to apply knowledge from a classroom-based study on food webs and the role of decomposers to an ecosystem study experience. For students at Olson, the field trip allows them to explore and learn about a natural environment beyond their school's prairie.

Staff are in the process of applying for Green & Healthy Schools Wisconsin recognition. The facility was built following many guidelines of green buildings, including LEED Silver new building certification, a geothermal heating and cooling system, rooftop solar panels, and lighting in learning spaces. Over the summer, teachers at Olson collaborated with Wisconsin Green Schools Network curriculum coaches to develop mini-lesson units featuring several of the new Wisconsin Standards for Environmental Literacy and Sustainability. The goal of the lessons will be for all students to experience four different standards-aligned and inquiry-based outdoor learning activities in the upcoming year.

These efforts, combined with the school's focus on creating curriculum and outdoor learning experiences to develop healthy, well-rounded students, is how Olson is living green and matching the school culture to the purposeful ideas that informed the building design. □

■ Overhauling the cafeteria waste management was the focus of the 2018-19 school year at Carl Traeger Elementary School in the OSHKOSH AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT ...

► *Alicia Alsberg, parent at Carl Traeger:*

Carl Traeger Elementary started the journey toward becoming an official Green & Healthy School by creating a student-based Green Team during the 2018-19 school year.

The Green Team's mission is to improve the environment and reduce Carl Traeger's environmental impact through educating, reducing waste, recycling, minimizing the school's carbon footprint, and improving health and wellness throughout the community. The team turned its

focus on food waste, plastic spoons and overall disposable waste, such as plastic bags.

The team meets once a month to learn and plan ideas for increasing school sustainability. At one meeting, students participated in a waste-sorting exercise to better understand what common materials are recyclable. At another meeting, the young consumers learned how to make better purchases by considering cost per ounce and whether the packaging is recyclable.

To improve Carl Traeger's recycling processes, the Green Team assisted in labeling all the recycling and trash cans, then educated staff and students on how to sort waste properly. In addition to standard recycling, the school recycles milk cartons from meals and snacks, plastic film, such as zip-closed bags, used crayons, glue sticks and markers, and empty oral hygiene and deodorant containers. Through these programs, last year the school recycled: **1,500** oral hygiene and deodorant containers; **250+** pounds of plastic film; and **5,000** markers.

In January 2019, the Green Team conducted an audit to understand the food waste created during lunch. The audit showed that students were bringing more food than they could eat. On average, Carl Traeger produces 105 pounds of waste per day, which results in 18,900 pounds per school year.

To combat the waste, Carl Traeger has been working with the district food service to create a share table to avoid sending prepackaged food and whole pieces of fruit to the landfill while providing students with extra nourishment. A share table was launched at breakfast in May 2019 and the team hopes to have it available at lunch during the 2019-20 school year. The food collected on the share table must be thrown away after 24 hours, although the Green Team is hoping to donate the leftovers to a local food pantry.

The team plans to create a brochure to reduce food and disposable waste at lunch and encourage students to take leftovers home so parents can see what they are not eating. The intent is to open up conversations at home about how to avoid wasting food and using reusable containers instead of zip-close bags. The volunteers also hope to reduce sugar-packed lunches by educating parents about





Students gather for a Green Team meeting at Carl Traeger Elementary School in Oshkosh.

one school year. The school requested real silverware for the upcoming school year. To prepare, students spent a month practicing disposing sporks in a separate collection bin from the trash. After the students proved their ability to reduce waste, food service granted Carl Traeger the opportunity to use real silverware in the cafeteria under the stipulation that the school pays for the silverware and necessary equipment. □

■ **The ‘Cool Choices’ game** helps students and staff consider the impact of their choices on the environment in the **OCONOMOWOC AREA and CRIVITZ SCHOOL DISTRICTS ...**

the link between a healthy lunch and learning. The school launched an End the Spork project to combat excess landfill waste in the cafeteria. The district uses plastic silverware for all meals served in its schools. Carl Traeger alone can consume 34,000 spork packets (plastic spork, straw and napkin wrapped in plastic) in

► *Kelly Holtzman, advanced placement environmental science teacher at Oconomowoc High School:*

Several years ago, the Oconomowoc Area School District saw a need for parents and students to feel more

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This organization supports and encourages schools

to create safe learning environments and prepare students to understand, analyze and address the major environmental and sustainability challenges now and in the future through providing resources, recognition and certification. Administered through a partnership between the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Public Instruction and Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education, this program provides information, resources and announcements for all school staff,

community members and others interested in green and healthy initiatives and activities for Wisconsin schools.

The process to become an officially recognized Green & Healthy Wisconsin School starts by registering and providing a statement of intent to focus on at least one area: community involvement; energy; environmental health; environmental and sustainability education; health and wellness; recycling and waste management; school site; transportation or water.

There are three following levels in the program. A Seedling School has documented achievement in at least one focus area. A Sapling School has documented achievement in five focus areas and a Sugar Maple School has documented achievement in all nine focus areas. There are currently 315 participating schools.

The game created a buzz around the high school. Students who were not part of the environmental science course asked how they could join a team.

connected to the staff. The “Cool Choices in Green & Healthy Schools” game, offered by Green & Healthy Schools Wisconsin, was one avenue to connect with students and parents.

The game format is a virtual deck of cards, with each card representing a sustainable or healthy action. The class chooses a card to play and discusses that topic in depth. When a card on energy usage was chosen, the game helped students realize how much energy they and their families were using daily. The class talked about how to lower energy usage and what each person could do to accomplish that goal.

“‘Cool Choices’ really makes you think twice about the decisions you make and their impact,” student Sophie L. said. “Simple things, such as turning off lights and using reusable water bottles, can go a long way — especially when an entire school does them.”

The high school’s AP Environmental Science class has also participated in the online sustainability game. The requirements for each team change every year. One year, each team had to include at least one parent. Other years, the teams had to include at least one teacher or students from multiple grade levels. The diversity makes the “Cool Choices” platform an easy way to build camaraderie while getting students to start a conversation about their impact on Earth.

“I played ‘Cool Choices’ with the goal of making small differences with my friends for my school,” student Claire V. said. “Our impact was very good. We were able to make changes in common activities, becoming more sustainable. Working as a team was really important to the overall success. It was a wonderful experience to promote sustainability.”

The game created a buzz around the high school. Students who were not part of the environmental science

course asked how they could join a team. Students and teachers commented on someone’s “cool choice” when they turned off the lights or used a reusable water bottle.

“I think it’s an important activity to be involved in, because it makes you more aware of what you do throughout the day to improve the environment,” said Mia R., a student involved in the game. “Each time you went on (the game), you saw new ideas of what to do in the future.”

► *Crivitz Elementary School teachers Vanessa Lecy and Sydney Nasgovitz:*

The Crivitz teachers enjoyed how the “Cool Choices” game provided a fun and different way to learn about energy efficiency. The fifth- and sixth-grade science classes competed against each other to win prizes, which were provided by Green & Healthy Schools Wisconsin. The winning class from each grade level won a pizza party paid for by a grant through an area foundation.

The game allowed the Crivitz students to have discussions with the staff members who make choices that impact the environment. Members of the maintenance department explained why they used certain light bulbs, changed the paper towel dispenser and installed new heaters in classrooms.

The students, in turn, made recommendations to the maintenance department on potential changes that could make the school more energy efficient. One big concern for the students was that Crivitz does not use “gray water” in the irrigation system. Some of the students also approached the principal and middle school science teacher to discuss how they could develop a compost and garden area outside the school.

For more information about the Cool Choices in Green & Healthy Schools game, visit coolchoices.com/case-studies/green-healthy-schools-ghs. ■

CONNECT. EXPLORE. ENGAGE.



Implementing Wisconsin's New Standards for Environmental Literacy & Sustainability

Wisconsin has a long tradition of connecting students with the outdoors. The state established the first school forests in 1928 and, two years later, became the first in the nation to require conservation education in its K-12 schools. Although much has changed since then, Wisconsin continues to be a leader. In 2018, 20 years after the adoption of the original environmental education standards, the state adopted new Environmental Literacy & Sustainability standards to help districts meet requirements to integrate environmental education

in their curriculum.

In addition to providing teachers with an opportunity to shift instruction to increase student engagement and apply reading, writing, speaking and listening in meaningful experiences, the new ELS standards provide districts with an opportunity to rethink how students connect, explore and engage in learning across subject areas.

■ Explore Curriculum Opportunities

Connecting, exploring and engaging with the places where we live, work and play helps us to understand the

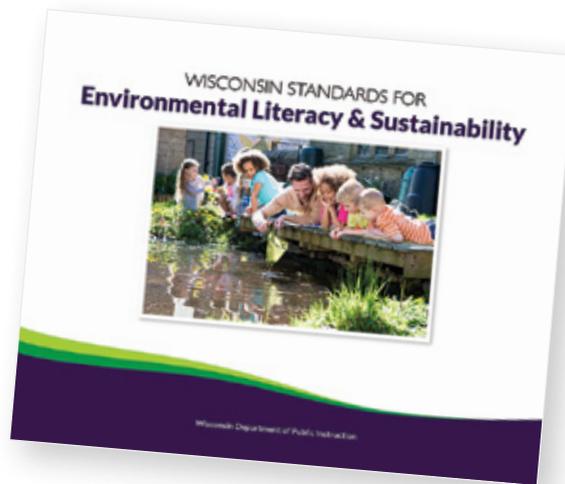
complex interdependence between people (cultural systems) and the planet (natural systems) and provides opportunities for a local, real-world application of learning. This place-based approach, coupled with the use of the outdoors as a context, has been shown to increase student academic achievement and behaviors such as school attendance and the ability to focus.¹

Place-based learning enables students to draw on concepts from many disciplines, requiring an interdisciplinary approach for implementation. Twenty-nine educators representing more than a

dozen subject areas participated in the writing of the new ELS standards, which can be integrated into science, social studies, English language arts, mathematics, physical education, health, the arts, agriculture, family and consumer sciences, design and engineering, and other career and technical education fields.

The DPI has been working this past year in collaboration with the Wisconsin Green Schools Network and a number of elementary schools to look closely at how districts are implementing the standards. In one urban school, the principal and teachers wanted to take all their K-12 students outside at least once each week for lessons. Teachers worked with curriculum and instructional leaders over several weeks to use the broad themes from the ELS standards to connect learning across science, social studies and writing and align units with the seasonal resources available on their school site.

At another elementary school, teachers integrated the standards and outdoor inquiry as a core part



of their English language arts units of study. A third school used the ELS standards to create a place-based approach for their STEM units. Teachers across many subject areas are finding opportunities to help their students connect, explore and engage in learning.

At the middle- and high-school level, educators have been able to link ELS performance indicators to every subject area. Here are a few examples:

- **Business education.** Evaluate personal mental models of well-being, equity, social and environmental welfare, economic health and concern for living beings.
- **Family and consumer science.**

Analyze how the movement of renewable and nonrenewable natural resources through acquisition, production, consumption and disposal creates systems of commerce, and examine the influence of supply and demand on the system.

- **Mathematics.** Weigh related measures of supply, demand, impact and payback.
- **Physical education.** Analyze the effects of environment and time outdoors on mental, socio-emotional and physical health.

Wisconsin's ELS standards also support the social development and academic-skill building found in the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards for our youngest students. For example, a kindergarten teacher from an urban school committed to engaging her students in "outdoor education" once a week, all year long. These students explored the forest ecosystem on school grounds and learned about animal and plant habitats and adaptations while also practicing and gaining foundational

The **Wisconsin Environmental Literacy & Sustainability standards** can be found on the DPI environmental education website at: dpi.wi.gov/environmental-ed.

The **WiseLearn database** is available at: WLresources.dpi.wi.gov.



skills in learning across academic and social domains.

The recent revisions to Wisconsin's science and social studies standards encourage students to investigate phenomena and ask questions about the world around them. The ELS standards add to that by calling for students to lead inquiry and investigation, design and implementation, and reflection and evaluation. Our environment, made up of both natural and cultural communities, provides a relevant, rich and ever-changing context for this learning.



Engaging Instruction

During the 2018-19 school year, a third-grade team at a rural elementary school in Adams County used Wisconsin's new ELS standards for "Literacy in Action." Faced with low literacy scores, the teachers wanted to increase student engagement by providing hands-on, relevant learning experiences. Using the instructional blocks for both reader and writer workshops, students conducted research about where they lived — both in the classroom and out in the community.

Students used a variety of texts, including primary sources, online articles and first-hand "reading of the landscape."

Students wrote about their findings and published multimedia projects. The final, field-based event was a day of learning in a local state park where students interacted with Department of Natural Resources professionals, emeritus professors and other community volunteers. Teacher and student responses were positive and hopeful. One of the children described it as "the coolest

project" he'd ever done. A new teacher said she'd never seen her students so excited about reading and writing. The team plans to not only continue, but expand this type of inquiry-based instruction. (Note: The writing lesson outline is available on the Department of Public Instruction's WiseLearn database.)

Connect With the Standards

The Wisconsin ELS standards can fit into any subject area to help districts meet their requirement for a "kindergarten through grade 12 sequential curriculum plan" in environmental education and to integrate environmental objectives and activities into curriculum "with greatest emphasis in art, health, science and social studies education."

DPI consultants have been helping districts and educators understand the requirements for environmental education, apply the revised standards and consider their integration as new curricula are adopted.

The revised ELS standards reflect best practices for learning including:

- Seven standards organized into three interconnected strands: connect, explore and engage
- Learning priorities identified for each standard
- A K-12 progression of performance indicators within each learning priority

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One of the children described [ELS] as “the coolest project” he’d ever done.



Another structural change, especially noticeable at the elementary level, is the formation of two grade bands (K-2 and 3-5).

Content shifts include an integration of systems-thinking practices throughout seven standards formed around the broad themes of:

1. Sense of place
2. Networks, nested systems and interdependence
3. Diversity, health and resilience
4. Cycles and flows
5. Change and adaptation
6. Dynamic balance and sustainability
7. Inquiry and engagement

A variety of resources are in development to assist educators and districts with the three-year suggested rollout of the standards and will be posted on the DPI environmental education website during the 2019-20 school year. (For more about the rollout timing, see the article “Understanding and Implementing the 2018 Wisconsin Standards for Social Studies” by Kris McDaniel in the April 2019 issue of the *Wisconsin School News*.) Teachers can access free lessons and activities aligned with the ELS standards in the WiseLearn database.

When learning fosters active participation in both natural and cultural systems, our schools, our communities and our students

benefit. As more schools implement the standards, feedback from districts and classroom educators will inform future resource development to strengthen implementation. ■

School districts can learn more by contacting Victoria Rydberg, DPI environmental education and service-learning consultant at victoria.rydberg@dpi.wi.gov or 608-266-0419.

¹ Abram, A. (2017). What Green Spaces can do for your Mood. *TIME*. Available from: time.com/4881665/green-spaces-nature-happiness/; Lieberman, Gerald A. and Hoody, Linda. (1998). *Closing the Achievement Gap: Using the Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning*. San Diego, CA; and Louv, Richard (2005) *Last Child in the Woods; Saving Our Children from Nature-deficit Disorder*. New York, NY.



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The Wisconsin Porcupine Project

INSPIRED A GENERATION OF STUDENTS AND RESEARCHERS

Niki Wilson, Science Writer

One of Matt Schuler’s most memorable experiences as a high school student was meeting a 14-year-old porcupine named Altoona. It was 2001, and Schuler was working alongside project lead Richard Thiel to research porcupines in the Sandhill Wildlife Area in central Wisconsin. Though Thiel, then in the role of educator for the Wisconsin Department of Natural

Resources, had suspected porcupines lived long lives, there had not been studies to confirm the suspicion. It was a defining moment that ultimately helped hook Schuler on biology for life — he’s now an assistant professor of ecology at Montclair State University in New Jersey.

Schuler was one of hundreds of Wisconsin high school students who conducted research on porcupines in the SWA between 1996 and 2010. Under Thiel’s supervision, they handled almost every aspect of the job: tracking porcupines on snowshoes, identifying dens where traps could be laid, and capturing the spikey rodents for study in the lab. Once Thiel sedated the porcupines, the students recorded their age, weight and size; counted the number of parasites, such

as lice, on them; and determined if they were male or female.

“I realized I was really having fun,” says Schuler, who prior to the project was considering a career in biomedical engineering. “It was much better than sitting in a lab — which I enjoyed — but this was a lot more engaging for me.”

Schuler attributes a large part of the program’s success to Thiel. A wildlife ecologist, Thiel was not interested in “a rehash of material” the students had already learned elsewhere. He wanted the students to be a part of a unique project, to be “conducting cutting-edge science.” Thiel traveled around Wisconsin giving presentations on the project in schools to encourage students to volunteer and worked with their parents and teachers to manage



“It was much better than sitting in a lab — which I enjoyed — but this was a lot more engaging for me.”

— Matt Schuler, Altoona High School alumnus

logistics for the winter field season. Thiel even taught the students orienting skills to prevent them from getting lost.

“I can’t even imagine how much work he would have gone through to set up the project,” Schuler says.

The work paid off in more ways than one. It has become the foundation for multiple scientific research papers, including one released in late 2018 that examined the response of SWA porcupines to the return of the fisher — a predator that reappeared midway through the study after being absent from the landscape for more than 70 years.

The authors of the study, including Schuler and Thiel, found that the presence of fishers drastically changed life for porcupines in the SWA. They developed shorter lifespans, grew more slowly, lost more weight in the winter when

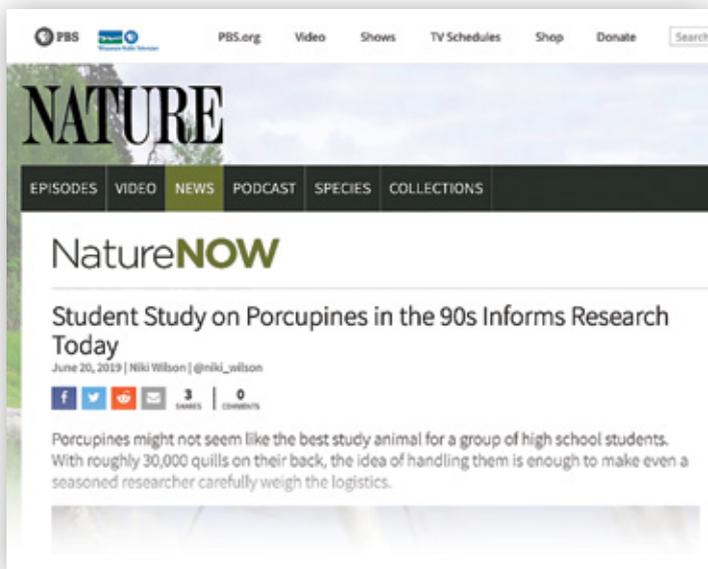


food was scarce, and birth rates declined. It’s the kind of information that can only be understood within the context of a long-term data set like the one the students collected.

“It gives you trends that you can’t see in a two-year master degree program or a five-year PhD,” Thiel says of the benefits of conducting the study with high school students.

Thiel is now retired, but Schuler would like to pick up where he left

off. He hopes to work with a group such as Posse, a foundation that helps connect students from diverse backgrounds to projects with college professors in order to spark their interest in science, technology, engineering and math. There are many children who grow up in cities without experiencing nature. Schuler wants to give them “a chance to get outside and explore.” ■



PBS Nature recently featured the porcupine research and Wisconsin students’ role in it.

- ▶ *Student Study on Porcupines in the 90s Informs Researcher Today:*
<https://to.pbs.org/31CJafI>
- ▶ *When Porcupines Live in Fear:*
<https://to.pbs.org/31FTxio>

Wisconsin high schools

that contributed to the porcupine research project:

- Altoona
- Augusta
- Black River Falls
- DC Everest (Schofield)
- Hortonville
- John Edwards (Port Edwards)
- Lincoln (Wisconsin Rapids)
- Little Wolf (Manawa)
- Logan (LaCrosse)
- Marshfield
- Mauston
- Middleton
- Necedah
- Pittsville
- Richland Center
- Ripon
- Sparta
- Stevens Point
- Tomah
- Waupaca
- West Salem
- Weyauwega



“Kids win, farmers win, schools win, and communities win.”

— The National Farm to School Network



Farm to School in Wisconsin

ENGAGING STUDENTS, BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES

The benefits of ensuring exposure to local food go beyond child nutrition — they engage communities and teach us about the origin of our food. With the growth of local food outlets, such as food hubs and farmers markets, now is a great time for students to understand where their food originates by taking part in local agriculture. Farm-to-school programs work to accomplish exactly that.

The farm-to-school movement encourages the use of regionally and locally grown foods in school

cafeterias and classrooms to support surrounding communities and local economies. According to the National Farm to School Network, “This creates a more equitable food system and safer food supply, helps the environment, promotes public health and expands nutrition education.

“Farm-to-school takes education from the classroom to the kitchen and countryside, integrating math, reading and science with local foods,” according to the network. “When students get involved in hands-on learning with local foods, it enhances

their emotional growth and engagement and exposes them to a wider variety of fruits and vegetables.”

Across the United States, the farm-to-school movement continues to bloom with 42,587 schools taking part (as of school year 2013-14); that’s 23.6 million students involved and working with local producers, foods and food systems, according to the National Farm to School Network. In Wisconsin, 1,401 schools and 565,559 students have taken part in farm-to-school initiatives.

Farm-to-school efforts come in





many shapes and sizes. A variety of activities can expose students to local foods, ranging from the implementation of a school garden and taste tests to nutrition education in the classroom and incorporating local foods on the school's menu. Steps can be done on a daily, weekly, monthly or annual basis. No effort is too small.

► **Brooklyn Elementary School**, a 2018 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School in the Oregon School District in south-central Wisconsin, takes part in the farm-to-school movement. It utilizes nutrition

education in the classroom, taste tests, farmer visits and farm field trips.

Throughout the 2018-19 school year, Brooklyn Elementary facilitated nine local food taste tests involving apples, turnips, broccoli sprouts, rhubarb, chives and honey. The students also participated in 21 hours of nutrition education and hands-on learning in their school's garden. During a field trip to a nearby park, a local producer showed students how to harvest and process maple syrup. The school also hosted a local dairy farmer, who talked to students about her work and the importance of dairy production on a family farm.

► **The Washburn School District** in northern Wisconsin has made sustainability an integral part of the school culture and curriculum. Recognized as a Green & Healthy School in 2009, the Washburn School Board created a green and healthy schools coordinator position to advance innovative district farm-to-school initiatives, including oversight of environmental projects, curriculum review, professional development for all staff, and integration of school gardens with the district food service program.

As reported on the Environmental Education in Wisconsin website, Washburn's school grounds



Join the 2019 Great Lakes Great Apple Crunch! | Thursday, Oct. 10, 2019 – Noon

All K-12 schools, higher education institutions, early care settings, businesses and other organizations across Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio are invited to crunch into a locally or regionally grown apple at noon on Oct. 10. Last October, more than 1.5 million students, children, teachers and others crunched for the Great Lakes Great Apple Crunch. Visit [facebook.com/GreatLakesGreatAppleCrunch](https://www.facebook.com/GreatLakesGreatAppleCrunch) for more information and to register your site.

include a 6,400-square-foot vegetable garden and orchard, a steep sledding hill, a forested area for interpretive play, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife habitat restoration site, a pond, and an outdoor classroom that overlooks Lake Superior.

The district partners with community organizations, including the Alliance for Sustainability, the University of Wisconsin-Extension, and a variety of area farms that provide produce and milk to the cafeteria.

Schools across the state are taking advantage of federal, state and local programs and initiatives that are committed to the cultivation of the farm-to-school movement. The Wisconsin Farm to School Network consists of groups, including schools, hospitals and local businesses, dedicated to farm-to-school activities. The network promotes events such as the Great Lakes Great Apple Crunch on October 10 and the Wisconsin Chili Lunch scheduled for November 14. Participants are also involved in the upcoming Farm to School Census and the Harvest of the Month Program.

To further cultivate the power that schools have over their communities' food systems, the Green & Healthy Schools Wisconsin program recognizes achievements schools make in nine focus areas. Four of these nine areas overlap with the vision of farm-to-school: community involvement, environmental and sustainability education, school site, and health and wellness. As of June 2019, there were 482 active participants with the Green & Healthy Schools Wisconsin program. Schools can further their recognition by applying for the U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School program, a sustainability award granted to schools that take a comprehensive approach to greening their school.

The Green & Healthy Schools Wisconsin program also works with members of the Wisconsin AmeriCorps Farm to School Program, which provides a community-based, school-centered approach to addressing childhood obesity and

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improving nutrition while increasing access to local foods. Wisconsin's AmeriCorps Farm to School Program coordinator, Kara Ignasiak, describes farm-to-school as a "multi-dimensional intervention program" that not only exposes students to new foods, but also exposes educators to the benefits of local foods and expands the market for local producers.

Wisconsin hosted 15 AmeriCorps Farm to School programs in the 2018-19 school year.

► **The Juneau County Health Department** hosted AmeriCorps service member Charitee Seebecker. She assisted with school gardens, local procurement and took part in the creation of a farm-to-school coalition that helps "foster a culture that celebrates healthy, local food choices to promote healthy minds and bodies through education, community partnerships and role-modeling." In a

local news report, Seebecker explained, "Our goal is to focus on local procurement, farmer engagements and getting locally procured food into the school breakfast or lunch menus." An action plan for the upcoming school year has been developed to bring together best practices on activities such as farm visits, gardening and cooking, serving seasonal foods in school cafeterias, and offering food-based, hands-on lessons.

Nutrition education was another significant piece of Juneau County's progress, with 434 students attending more than five nutrition lessons and taste testing numerous locally grown food including cranberries, kohlrabi, okra and asparagus. In addition, the food service directors for five schools in the county were educated on local procurement and seven schools introduced educational engagements with farmers in their classrooms and on field trips. One of these

engagements involved beekeeper Melissa Barnes, who brought hives (without bees) into a classroom and explained how local honey is made.

► **The Oregon School District** hosted AmeriCorps Farm to School member Jenna Sward during the 2018-19 school year. She helped schools implement nutrition education, hands-on learning in the school gardens, taste tests and farmer visits. Students from five schools collectively spent more than 60 hours participating in hands-on learning in school gardens and the district's 50-foot hoop house that was donated by the Oregon Rotary Club in 2011 along with a large composter. In the spring and fall, students grow greens for their school's salad bar in the hoop house. The outdoor garden provides other produce for their summer school gardening and cooking programs, and donations to the local food pantry.



*from the kitchen
right to the classroom*



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LEARN MORE

- **Environmental Education in Wisconsin**
eeinwisconsin.org
- **AmeriCorps Farm to School Program**
bit.ly/dpi-farm2
- **National Farm to School Network**
farmtoschool.org/our-network/wisconsin
- **Green & Healthy Schools Wisconsin**
bit.ly/dpi-gh

Regardless of a school's level of farm-to-school participation, all should take part in the third Farm to School Census, which was scheduled to launch in September. The census examines school districts throughout all 50 states and their farm-to-school activities. The U.S. Department of Agriculture uses the census data to develop new resources, tools and policies to strengthen and grow farm-to-school programs nationwide.

The census will primarily focus on farm-to-school activities that occurred in the 2018-19 school year. You can help by encouraging your school's nutrition department to complete the census this fall. Make sure your district's hard work on its gardens, nutrition programs and agricultural education endeavors are represented.

To celebrate Farm to School Month this October, consider

implementing farm-to-school initiatives, participate in the census, and learn more about how local foods improve your community. Share your farm-to-school successes and challenges with us at dpif2s@dpi.wi.gov. ■

Ansley McLeod is a nutrition program consultant and farm to school specialist with the School Nutrition Team for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Buelow Vetter is Growing Stronger



From left to right: Attorneys Mary S. Gerbig, Lisa M. Bergersen and Saveon D. Grenell.

Buelow Vetter Buikema Olson & Vliet continues to lead the way among school law firms with the addition of three high-caliber attorneys – Mary Gerbig, Lisa Bergersen and Saveon Grenell.

- Mary has over 20 years of experience representing school districts, CESAs, and municipal employers throughout Wisconsin. She recently received the George Tipler Award for Distinguished Service in School Law. Her expertise in the areas of general school law and special education law is an exciting addition to Buelow Vetter's top-rated school law practice.
- Lisa is an experienced litigator with a wealth of experience in municipal law and labor and employment law. She has represented public and private sector employers for nearly 20 years, and she most recently served as the Human Resources Director for the City of Pewaukee.
- Saveon's experience as an Assistant City Attorney for the City of Milwaukee and as attorney for Milwaukee Public Schools makes him another perfect addition to our team of experienced attorneys who provide legal services to schools, municipalities and corporations throughout the state.

The Solution Starts Here.

Welcome to the team,
Mary, Lisa and Saveon!

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Thanks to the Boards That Submitted Resolutions to the WASB

Resolutions are being vetted by the Policy & Resolutions Committee, which will determine whether they advance to the Delegate Assembly

A hearty *THANK YOU* to the school boards that submitted resolutions for consideration by the WASB Policy and Resolutions Committee!

Individual school boards provide the policy guidance and direction that informs the WASB's legislative agenda and legislative advocacy efforts on your behalf. Boards initiate this process by adopting resolutions and submitting them to the WASB.

This year the WASB received resolutions on numerous topics including:

- Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding recommendations
- Dyslexia
- English language learners
- Hmong history curriculum
- Mental health
- Native American mascots
- School report cards
- School safety
- School technology funding
- Social and emotional learning
- Special education funding
- Transportation

The WASB is a member-driven organization. Our positions on policy issues are determined by resolutions adopted by the WASB Delegate Assembly, which meets annually at the time of the State Education Convention in January.

The resolutions adopted by the delegates become official positions of the WASB, are published in our Resolution Book, and remain in force until amended or repealed.

The process begins months earlier. Individual boards initiate this process by adopting board resolutions on various education-related topics and submitting them to the WASB by the September 15 deadline.

Once these resolution ideas are submitted, the WASB Policy and Resolutions Committee, comprised of about 25 school board members appointed by the WASB directors representing all 15 WASB regions, reviews and evaluates the resolutions and determines which ones will advance to the Delegate Assembly.

Three things can happen to the resolutions. The committee may advance a resolution as submitted, it may modify a resolution and advance it, or it may turn it down.

Once a resolution is advanced, delegates do not merely have an opportunity to cast an up or down vote. They can propose and adopt amendments to the resolution on the floor of the Delegate Assembly.

If a resolution is turned down by the Policy and Resolutions Committee and not advanced to the Delegate Assembly, that is not necessarily the end of the story. Under the WASB Bylaws, resolutions that are turned down by the committee are still afforded an opportunity to be

brought to the Delegate Assembly floor. At the appropriate order of business, the delegate from the member board that originally offered the resolution may be recognized and move consideration of the resolution. If two-thirds of the delegates vote in favor of the motion for consideration, the resolution may be considered by delegates. At that point, the resolution is debated as any other and can be amended. It requires a simple majority vote for adoption.

The Policy and Resolutions Committee will meet on November 1 to finalize its recommendations. In the event an issue arises between November 1 and the time of the Delegate Assembly which could not have been presented earlier due to the emergency nature of the subject, a procedure exists for bringing forward an emergency resolution. Such an emergency resolution must be presented to the Policy and Resolutions Committee at its meeting on the evening preceding the Delegate Assembly to be considered for presentation at the Delegate Assembly the next day.

This is a member-driven process. The WASB staff does not advocate for or against submitted resolutions during this process. The role of staff is to facilitate discussion and debate by the Policy and Resolutions Committee and the delegates. ■

This year the WASB received resolutions on numerous topics.



WASB 2019 Legislative Advocacy Conference

Saturday, Nov. 2, 2019 | STEVENS POINT

FEATURED SESSIONS

Advocate for Your Students with Dan Rossmiller and Chris Kulow, Government Relations staff for the WASB

Your students and staff count on you to be their voice with state lawmakers. Explore effective advocacy strategies you can implement before the 2019-20 legislative session ends.



Trends in School Resources and Equity with Anne Chapman, Senior Researcher for the Wisconsin Policy Forum

Demographic trends, teacher workforce diversity, and the roll-out of federal, school-level financial reporting could influence future school district resources. Take a deeper dive into these factors and how they

can be used to equitably meet the needs of all students.

Anne Chapman is a senior researcher for the Wisconsin Policy Forum. Her work focuses on K-12 education issues. She also conducts research related to arts and culture, local government finance, and nonprofits/philanthropy. Before joining the Forum, Chapman worked for the Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau, the United Way of Salt Lake and the United States Peace Corps in Mali.

Education and Public Opinion in Wisconsin with Charles Franklin, Professor of Law and Public Policy and Director of the Marquette Law School Poll

The public's opinions of their schools matter. Learn about recent polling on K-12, including the most recent state budget, from one of the nation's premier experts on polling and public opinion.

Nationally recognized government scholar and pollster Charles Franklin has been director of the Marquette Law School Poll since its inception in 2012. Franklin has used the poll to track political races of interest to voters and explore additional public policy issues. In 2005, Franklin co-founded Pollster.com, an award-winning website for the analysis of polling data. He is a past president of the Society for Political Methodology and an elected fellow of the society.



State Financial Condition and K-12 Funding with Bob Lang, Director of the Legislative Fiscal Bureau

The state's fiscal condition is crucial to K-12 education funding. Learn about the status of state finances from the state's foremost authority.

Director Lang has led the Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau since July 1977. The Bureau provides fiscal and program information and analyses to the Legislature, its committees and individual legislators. Lang has taught a graduate seminar on educational finance at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He was an economics, government, social problems, and world history teacher at Muskego Senior High School from 1965-1968 before serving in the U.S. Army in Vietnam.



Legislative Panel with State Sen. Luther Olsen (R-Ripon) and State Rep. Joel Kitchens (R-Sturgeon Bay)

The co-chairs of the Blue-Ribbon Commission on School Funding, who are two of the most influential state lawmakers on K-12 education, will update attendees on the commission's recommendations and other legislation under consideration.

Sen. Luther Olsen was elected to the Senate in 2004, after serving in the state Assembly for 10 years. Olsen also serves on the Executive Committee and Steering Committee for the Education Commission of the States and formerly served as the Co-Chair of the Education Committee for the National Conference of State Legislatures. He is a past member of the Berlin School Board, where he served as president for nine years.

Rep. Joel Kitchens was first elected to the state Assembly in 2014. For more than 30 years, he managed his own veterinary practice and served as a farm animal veterinarian in Door and Kewaunee counties. Kitchens was elected to the Sturgeon Bay School Board in 1999 and after two years was elected president of the board, serving for 13 years until he resigned to run for the Assembly. ■

Fall 2019 Regional Meetings

The WASB Fall Regional Meetings are continuing through October. Join us to network with other board members, celebrate accomplishments, and learn about the WASB's activities and plans.

These meetings feature an in-depth Legislative Update and a report from WASB Executive Director John Ashley.

Prior to your Regional Meeting, take part in an optional workshop with an experienced WASB attorney regarding strategies to retain and compensate teachers.

Visit WASB.org to register online. Registration fees for the Regional Meetings vary based on location. ■



FALL 2019 REGIONAL MEETINGS SCHEDULE

Region 1

Oct. 15 – Ashland, Best Western – The Hotel Chequamegon

Oct. 16 – Rice Lake, Lehman’s Supper Club

*Region 2 | Oct. 17 – Minocqua, Norwood Pines Supper Club

Region 3 | Sept. 25 – Green Bay, Rock Garden/Comfort Suites

Region 4 | Oct. 23 – Menomonie, Off Broadway (by Stout Ale House)

*Region 5 | Oct. 24 – Rothschild, Holiday Inn

Region 6 | Oct. 22 – Black River Falls, Black River Falls High School

*Region 7 | Oct. 30 – Neenah, Bridgewood Resort

Region 8 | Sept. 24 – Kiel, Millhome Supper Club

Region 9 | Oct. 8 – Fennimore, Southwest Tech

Region 10 | Oct. 2 – Wisconsin Dells, Trappers Turn

*Regions 11 & 15 | Oct. 29 – Pewaukee, Holiday Inn Pewaukee/Milwaukee West

Region 12 | Oct. 10 – Sun Prairie, Meadow View Elementary School

Region 13 | Oct. 3 – Elkhorn, Monte Carlo Room

Region 14 | TBD – Milwaukee, Milwaukee Public Schools Administration Building

* Denotes regions with elections for WASB Board of Directors

2019 REPORT TO THE MEMBERSHIP

Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Inc.

Condensed Statement of Activities for the Year Ending June 30, 2019

REVENUE	
Membership Dues	\$ 1,923,029
Program Revenue	\$ 2,230,885
Interest & Investment Related Income	\$ 82,979
Other Income	\$ 40,565
Total Revenue	\$ 4,277,458
EXPENSES	
Program Expense	\$ 2,985,721
Management & General	\$ 982,466
Total Expenses	\$ 3,968,187
Change in Unrestricted Net Assets-Operating	<u>\$ 309,271</u>

Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Inc.

Condensed Statement of Financial Position, June 30, 2019

ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Investments, Cash, & Cash Equivalents	\$ 2,517,616
Accounts Receivable	\$ 185,903
Deferred Costs & Prepaid Expenses	\$ 180,108
Accrued Interest Receivable	\$ 6,381
Total Current Assets	\$ 2,890,008
Long Term Investments	\$ 598,000
Property & Equipment, Net	\$ 116,984
Total Assets	\$ 3,604,992
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	
Current Liabilities	
Deferred Revenue	\$ 854,700
Accounts Payable, Payroll Taxes, & Benefits Payable	\$ 245,783
Short Term Portion of Capital Lease	\$ 8,608
Total Current Liabilities	\$ 1,109,091
Long Term Liabilities	
Long Term Portion of Capital Lease	\$ 35,832
Total Liabilities	\$ 1,144,923
Net Assets	
Unrestricted	\$ 2,430,588
Temporarily Restricted	\$ 29,481
Total Net Assets	\$ 2,460,069
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$ 3,604,992

■ 2019 LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY CONFERENCE See page 25 for complete session details

Saturday, Nov. 2 | STEVENS POINT

Get the knowledge and resources you need to be an effective advocate for your students and your schools. The program includes sessions with some of the state's foremost experts on Wisconsin's finances and public opinion polling. See page 25 for details.

Bob Lang, the director of the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, will provide an overview of the state's fiscal status and the implications for K-12 funding. Charles Franklin, director of the Marquette Law School Poll, will talk about recent polling on the public's attitudes toward K-12 education.

Anne Chapman, a senior researcher with the Wisconsin Policy Forum, will explore trends in school funding while the WASB government relations team will provide effective advocacy strategies for school boards. The day will close with a panel featuring two of the most influential state lawmakers on K-12 education.

Visit WASB.org for more information and to register.



■ Interested in History? Take an Active Role in the WASB Centennial



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Upcoming WASB Webinars

■ Administrator Contracts

October 9 | 12-1 pm

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

Presenter: Ben Richter, Staff Counsel

■ Public Participation at Board Meetings

October 23 | 12-1 pm

Public comments at meetings can present a difficult balancing act for school boards. While providing regular opportunities for members of the public to offer input is important, the school board also needs to carefully manage its meeting time and encourage constructive discourse. This webinar will identify the relevant legal and policy considerations that a board can use as a guide when it identifies a need to refine its current approach to public participation during meetings.

Presenter: Scott Mikesh, Legal and Policy Services Counsel

Please note: These webinars, and all previous ones, are recorded and available on demand. WASB members can purchase any webinar and watch when their schedule allows. Upcoming live and pre-recorded webinars are listed on the webinar catalog page at WASB.org. In addition, links to past webinars are available in the Policy Resource Guide.



School Board Member Communications

Primary among school board members' duties is voting on matters at properly noticed school board meetings. In order to effectively discharge that duty, board members must be able to communicate facts and opinions on those matters and other issues relating to district operations. This not only includes discussion and information sharing at board meetings, but also involves communications outside of board meetings with administrators, staff, board members and members of the public. With increasing frequency, board members are also maintaining official social media pages to communicate with the general public.

As a general proposition, the First Amendment to the United States Constitution provides broad protections for board members to engage in such communications. However, there are limits to those protections as they apply to communications of board members acting in their official capacity. Additionally, board policies and procedures frequently establish rules regarding board member communication. This *Legal Comment* will review some of the common issues surrounding board member communications and the potential limitations on those communications.

■ Communication at Board Meetings

Board members have great latitude

to express their opinions during board meetings. This type of expression is known as “pure speech,” and it receives the greatest protection under the First Amendment. Pure speech falls outside the protection of the First Amendment only if it is established that such speech constitutes a clear and present danger to society and that danger outweighs the interest in allowing the speech, or pure speech can be regulated if that regulation is narrowly tailored to serve a compelling government interest.

Boards sometimes experience challenges with certain board members because of the content or manner of their speech. As set forth above, boards generally cannot restrict or regulate the content of a board member's speech. For example, in one case, a federal court ruled that a city council could not suspend a member because that member accused the council president of receiving a bribe with respect to an issue before the council. In doing so, the court concluded that suspending the member was an unconstitutional intrusion on the right to freedom of speech guaranteed by the First Amendment and that the allegation of bribery did not give rise to a clear and present danger to society justifying such an imposition on pure speech.¹

Boards have greater latitude under the First Amendment in

regulating the time and manner of board member speech as long as they are not attempting to regulate the content of that speech. Any regulation of pure speech based on its content must be narrowly tailored to serve a compelling government interest; a standard that, in practice, is rarely met. However, a board member who continues to speak after a parliamentary motion to close debate has passed is not engaged in pure speech but rather is engaged in a type of action known as “speech plus,” which is entitled to a lower degree of protection than pure speech.² One common way boards can regulate “speech plus” to ensure efficient and orderly meetings is to adopt rules of procedure and decorum, such as *Robert's Rules of Order*.³ If a board enforces these rules consistently and not based on the content of the speaker's communication (including the speaker's viewpoint), such enforcement is unlikely to violate any board member's First Amendment rights.

Another way board member communications are regulated is by operation of the Wisconsin Open Meetings Law, which permits discussion of certain topics in closed session, including certain matters involving personnel issues, negotiations, competitive contracts and legal advice.⁴ Boards can limit board member discussion of such issues to properly noticed closed sessions related

If board members use their personal email addresses to discuss district business, those personal emails become public records subject to retention and disclosure.

to the statutory basis for the closed session without infringing on board member First Amendment rights. In addition, individual board members generally do not have the right to unilaterally decide to disclose the contents of closed session discussions without authorization from the board. For example, the Wisconsin Attorney General has opined that no one, including a member of the board, has the right to violate the private and secret nature of a closed session by recording the proceedings.⁵ Disclosure of the contents of closed sessions not only violates the purpose for holding such discussions in closed session, it can be detrimental to the trust of the other board members and can impair board members' willingness to discuss such topics candidly. A board member who discloses confidential information without authorization, including the contents of closed session meetings, potentially faces serious consequences, including criminal felony prosecution for misconduct in office⁶ and the loss of statutory immunity from legal action, district insurance coverage and the right to reimbursement for legal costs.⁷

The Wisconsin Open Meetings Law permits board members to discuss, but not take action on, any matter raised by the public during a properly noticed public comment period.⁸ However, the Wisconsin Attorney General advises that any such discussion should be brief with more extensive deliberation being deferred to a later meeting when more specific public notice can be provided.⁹

■ Communications Outside of Board Meetings

Board members have a similar First Amendment right to engage in discussion about district matters outside the scope of properly noticed board meetings. However, this right also has limitations. For example, board members must speak only in their individual capacities and not on behalf of the board unless specifically authorized by the board to speak on its behalf. Additionally, the

Wisconsin Open Meetings Law places a number of limits on the ability of board members to communicate outside of board meetings.¹⁰

Under the Open Meetings Law, a meeting of a governmental body occurs whenever there is a purpose to engage in governmental business and the number of members present is sufficient to determine the body's course of action.¹¹ In such cases, that meeting cannot take place unless it has been properly noticed. Thus, board members cannot engage in discussion of district matters with a quorum or negative quorum of the board present when that "meeting" has not been properly noticed. A negative quorum of the board is the number of board members necessary to defeat an action that is likely to come before the board.

While a board member may discuss matters that might come before the board with other individual board members so long as the members do not constitute a quorum or negative quorum, such discussion must avoid resulting in a "walking quorum." A walking quorum occurs when board members participate in a series of meetings or communications with less than a quorum or negative

quorum of the board, but as a result of these meetings, a sufficient number of members to determine the board's course of action come to a tacit or express consensus over an issue that is likely to come before the board. A walking quorum can be created through a series of in-person meetings or when board members communicate with each other through the phone, text messaging or email. A walking quorum violates the Open Meetings Law, and any board action that is taken at or following a walking quorum is potentially voidable.¹²

It is generally not a violation of the Wisconsin Open Meetings Law for a board member or administrator to provide one-way information to the rest of the board through email. However, these emails should caution against using the "reply all" function so that a board member does not inadvertently create a walking quorum by responding to all recipients of the email.

■ Electronic Communications and Social Media Use

In addition to other types of records, the Wisconsin Public Records Law applies to any email sent or received

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by a board member regarding matters within the board’s authority, and these emails must be maintained and disclosed as required by law and applicable board policy.¹³ The subject matter of the email, not the location where the email is stored, determines whether an email is a public record. If board members use their personal email addresses to discuss district business, those personal emails become public records subject to retention and disclosure. Text messages also must be retained and disclosed if they pertain to district business. For this reason, the best practice is for board members to use only district-provided means of electronic communication for district business, such as a district-provided email address that can be backed up, retained and disclosed pursuant to the district’s adopted records retention schedule and the Wisconsin Public Records Law.

By contrast, an email that is purely

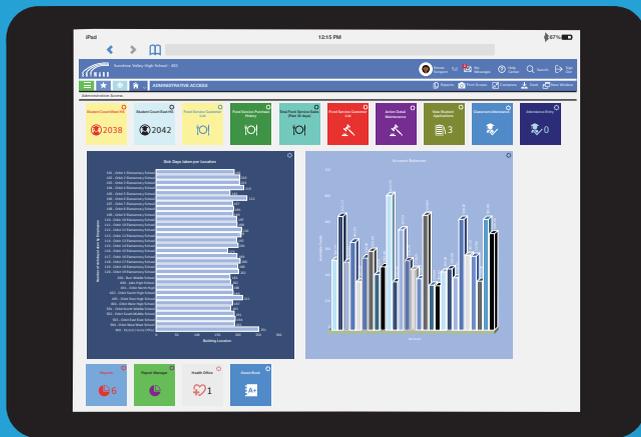
personal to the board member is not subject to retention and disclosure regardless of whether the email is stored on a personal email account or a district-provided email account.¹⁴ However, the Wisconsin Attorney General has cautioned that messages that contain any material relevant to governmental functions and responsibilities are public records subject to retention and disclosure. Record custodians can, however, redact the purely personal information from these emails prior to disclosure in response to a public records request.¹⁵

If a board member creates a personal blog, that blog can be a public record subject to retention and disclosure if the content of the blog pertains to matters within the board’s authority. Similarly, a Facebook group can be a public record, even if the group is private or only available to the board member’s Facebook “friends.” The Wisconsin Attorney General opined

that a Google group website called “Making Salem Better” that was maintained by the Salem town chair was a public record even though the group was only accessible to certain individuals. It was the content of the record and not its form that determined whether it was subject to retention and disclosure.¹⁶

If board members use social media sites for public purposes, they likely cannot block members of the public from their sites based on the viewpoints the members of the public express. In *Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University v. Trump*,¹⁷ President Donald Trump was sued by seven named plaintiffs when he blocked them from interacting with his Twitter account because they disagreed with his policies.¹⁸

The Second Circuit Court of Appeals concluded that, because the president used the account on a daily basis to communicate and interact with the public about his



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administration, the president was acting in his official capacity when he blocked users from his account. In addition, the account was open to the public and had features that encouraged public interaction. By opening this account for use by the general public, the president created a public forum, and he violated the First Amendment rights of those users who he blocked from accessing it based on the viewpoints those users expressed. The court also held that, while the president retained his First Amendment right to control the content of his own Twitter messages, blocking the plaintiffs from the interactive elements of his Twitter account, such as users' ability to "like" and reply to messages, violated the plaintiffs' First Amendment rights.

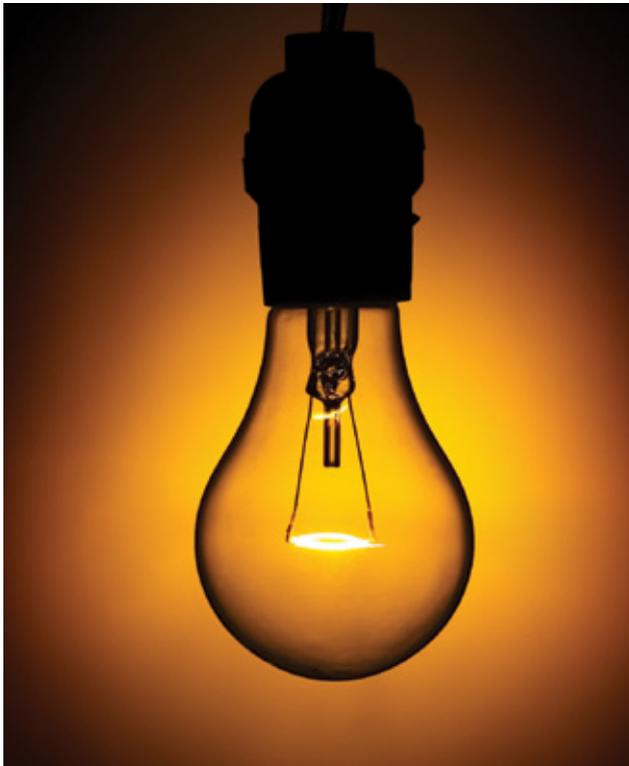
Similarly, in a case decided by the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin, several Republican legislators were sued by One Wisconsin Now for blocking the

organization from their Twitter pages.¹⁹ The court held that the legislators acted under the color of state law in creating and maintaining their respective Twitter accounts in their capacity as state legislators, the interactive portion of the legislators' Twitter accounts were designated public forums, and the defendants engaged in content-based discrimination when they blocked One Wisconsin Now from their Twitter accounts.

The court emphasized that a non-interactive medium of communication, such as a blog, might not create a designated public forum. However, Twitter, like other social media platforms, contains numerous inherent interactive features that reflect an intent to designate a public forum for interaction with and between the public. The court held that the legislators blocked One Wisconsin Now based on the content of the organization's messages.

However, in order to regulate the organization's speech based on content, the legislators had to present the court with evidence that blocking One Wisconsin Now from their Twitter accounts was necessary to serve a compelling state interest and that blocking the organization was narrowly tailored to achieve that interest. The legislators did not meet that burden and could only present unsubstantiated claims that the organization made crude and offensive comments on their Twitter accounts.

Both courts stated that their rulings do not apply to private, personal social media accounts of public officials. Nevertheless, a board member who maintains a presence on social media should be cautious of using his/her private social media account for official business because it could convert that account into an official account, which would limit the board member's right to deny access to it.



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Conclusion

Board members must communicate through a variety of means and to a variety of constituents to effectively discharge their duties. Those communications are generally protected by the First Amendment, but there are limitations on such communications. Board members should be familiar with their obligations under the law and under board policies and procedures regarding their communications. In addition, boards that wish to limit a board member’s communications should consult with legal counsel to assess that action within the confines of the First Amendment, board policy and procedures, and other applicable laws. ■

End Notes

1. *Kucinich v. Forbes*, 432 F. Supp. 1101 (N.D. Ohio 1977).
2. See *United States v. O'Brien*, 391 U.S. 367 (1968).
3. *Sarah Corbin Roberts et al., ROBERT’S RULES OF ORDER* (11th ed. 2011).
4. Wis. Stat. s. 19.85.
5. See 66 Wis. Op. Att’y Gen. 318 (1977) (OAG 97-11).
6. Wis. Stat. ss. 946.12, 939.50(3)(i).
7. Wis. Stat. ss. 893.80(4), 895.46(1) (a).
8. Wis. Stat. s. 19.83(2).
9. Letter from Paul M. Ferguson, Assistant Att’y Gen., to Dean Y. Sales (Aug. 4, 2017), www.doj.state.wi.us/sites/default/files/dls/ompr/20170804-sayles.pdf.
10. Wis. Stat. ss. 19.81-98.
11. *State ex rel. Newspapers, Inc. v. Showers*, 135 Wis. 2d 77, 398 N.W.2d 154 (1987).
12. Wis. Stat. s. 19.97(3).
13. Wis. Stat. ss. 19.21-39.
14. *Schill v. Wis. Rapids*. Sch. Dist., 2010 WI 86, 327 Wis. 2d 572, 786 N.W.2d 177.
15. Memorandum from J.B. Van Hollen, Att’y Gen., to Interested Parties (July 28, 2010), www.doj.state.wi.us/sites/default/files/dls/memo-ip-schill.pdf.
16. Letter from J.B. Van Hollen, Att’y Gen., to Gail A. Peckler-Dziki (Dec. 23, 2009), www.doj.state.wi.us/sites/default/files/informal/20091223-peckler-dziki.pdf.
17. 928 F.3d 226 (2d Cir. 2019).
18. @realDonaldTrump is a separate Twitter account from the official Twitter account of the president of the United States, @POTUS. @POTUS is passed from one president to the next, whereas @realDonaldTrump was used by Trump prior to his decision to run for office and will likely be used by him after he leaves office.
19. *One Wisconsin Now v. Kremer*, 354 F. Supp. 3d 940 (W.D. Wis. 2019).

This *Legal Comment* was written by Michael J. Julka, Steven C. Zach, and Brian P. Goodman of Boardman & Clark LLP; WASB Legal Counsel. For additional information on related topics, see Wisconsin School News “Closed Sessions” (Aug. 2018), “Remote Participation in Board Meetings” (Oct. 2018), and “Board Duties and Obligations and Potential Ramifications for Non-Compliance” (Apr. 2016).

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