

WISCONSIN School News

August 2020 | wasb.org

Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Inc.

CONFRONTING RACISM IN OUR SYSTEMS

Reconsidering our contributions to racial equity



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John H. Ashley
Executive Editor

Sheri Krause
Editor
Director of Communications

■ REGIONAL OFFICES ■

122 W. Washington Avenue
Madison, WI 53703
Phone: 608-257-2622
Fax: 608-257-8386

132 W. Main Street
Winneconne, WI 54986
Phone: 920-582-4443
Fax: 920-582-9951

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608-556-9009 • tmccarthy@wasb.org

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'Data Playground' Has Info on Children Nationwide

A new online hub of information on children from birth until kindergarten can help answer questions about your community's future schoolchildren.

The Early Childhood Data Dashboard, created by the University of Utah-based Sorenson Impact Center, has a wide range of data to help answer the overarching question, "How are kids doing in your community?"

For example, you could learn the number of families living in poverty, the percentage of mothers under age 18 or the percentage of child care capacity that could be lost due to COVID-19.

"It can be difficult for leaders to gauge the safety and health of young children. As a society, we struggle to objectively measure the well-being of children, especially those under 5," Kendall Rathunde, a senior associate at the center, wrote in a recent article about how the data can be used.

The health of a child can echo through their entire life. According to Rathunde, the dashboard can help local leaders "connect the dots by looking at community-level indicators correlated with long-term outcomes for children." □

Wheatland Takes Second in National STEAM Contest

A team from Wheatland Center School, a K-8 school near Burlington, earned a second-place finish in a national STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics) design challenge.

Students from Wheatland's personalized learning academy, PATHS, participated in the Biomimicry Youth Design Challenge, which asks middle and high school students to design

solutions to the climate crisis.

Wheatland's team created a concept for protecting coral reefs from UV radiation and rising ocean temperatures. They created a floating underwater shade structure inspired by giant lily pads and the UV-reflecting properties of spider webs. The students were awarded \$750 to be spent on future school projects. □

STAT OF THE MONTH

64%

Percentage of districts in Wisconsin in which part of the district is without access to broadband or cellular networks. *Source: WEMTA.org*

SURVEY: Most Districts Have Broadband, Cellular Dead Zones

Parts of nearly two-thirds of school districts in Wisconsin don't have access to broadband or cellular networks, according to a survey of school library and media technology professionals.

The survey, released by the Wisconsin Educational Media & Technology Association, shows districts' accomplishments and challenges during the pandemic while highlighting the need for more investment. Among its findings:

- **78% of districts** provided one-to-one devices for every student who needed one this spring.
- **37% of districts** were unable to provide WiFi cards or internet hotspots to students.
- **42% of respondents** spent 16 hours or more each week helping teachers provide online learning.

The full survey is available on [WEMTA.org](https://www.wemta.org). Click "Advocacy," then the "2020 WEMTA Member Survey on Virtual Learning." □

Omro Team Wins Engineering Contest

A team from Omro High School is one of five winners of a national engineering contest that challenges students to solve problems in their communities. Omro won by building a sensor to determine ice thickness in real-time and relaying it to an app called Stat-Ice. The students' goal is to help anglers and others make educated decisions about going out on the ice. About 8,000 people fall through the ice and drown each year.

Omro's team won \$100,000 in technology and supplies. They're continuing to work on the prototype and have applied for an MIT grant to help them refine it and work toward patents. □





Toward a More Equitable Education

As school leaders, we know that living up to our ideals isn't like flipping a switch. It's a matter of being honest with ourselves and pledging to be better.

And so it is with racial equity. We've made progress — racial achievement gaps have fallen nationwide — but we cannot look around and be satisfied with our disparities in education. Wisconsin continues to have one of the worst achievement gaps between Black students and their white peers.

Next comes the honesty. For a time, education leaders allowed themselves to live with educational disparities by telling themselves that they were not responsible for them.

Though there is some truth in that, as inequities also suffuse wider American life, this explanation has come to seem more like an excuse. In a long overdue acknowledgment, honesty compels us to take more responsibility for our students' outcomes.

On June 13, the WASB Board of Directors unanimously approved a statement on equity and racial justice.

They agreed that "school board members have an obligation to evaluate their policies, practices and budget decisions to promote equity and racial justice for all children."

As a way to restart and focus that conversation, the statement encourages board members to ask themselves 15 questions about access to advanced

coursework, disproportionality in discipline, challenging the status quo and more. Those questions are printed in full on page 5, and the full statement can be found on our website, WASB.org.

A statement calling for change is only meaningful if it's backed by actions.

We will be scheduling a series of online workshops and webinars focused on equity and equity-related topics over the next few months to start the conversation. And while we don't know exactly what form the State Education Convention will take, we know that equity will continue to be a major element.

This issue of Wisconsin School News explores equity and racism from several perspectives.

WASB consultant Dan Nerad contributed some initial thoughts on page 4 under the headline, "Confronting Racism in Our Systems."

I appreciated how Dan connects equity work with each and every Wisconsin district when he writes that it "cannot be left only to those districts with higher numbers of students of color, low-income students, second-language students or students with disabilities."

After all, every Wisconsin child will enter a more diverse world, and we have a responsibility to prepare them for it.

We also republished, on page 8, a mother's request for her school

district, headlined "I Need More From My Daughter's School Than Lip Service About Racism."

Her perspective — as a mother wanting justice for her daughter — lends heft to her call: "I need the district to change its practices and policies to root out the inequities and racial biases that permeate schools."

Finally, at the bottom of pages 8 and 9, find a reference to a recent Wisconsin Policy Forum analysis of teacher diversity. The report reveals that a lack of diversity is more than a cause of equity gaps in schools. It's also an opportunity for us to help more people of color potentially become teachers by ensuring they are ready for college when they graduate from high school. I encourage you to go online to read the full report.

As described in these articles, I'm gratified to see more urgency in the recognition that business as usual is not ensuring an equitable education.

Though I can neither chart a certain path nor claim it will be a smooth one, I can find plenty of reasons to be optimistic. The arc of American history suggests that we have the capacity to live out our creed. Education is an important tool to promote wider equality, but we must first come to grips with our own shortcomings.

These words alone won't change education. But they're a start. ■

On June 13, the WASB Board of Directors unanimously approved a statement on equity and racial justice.

CONFRONTING RACISM IN OUR SYSTEMS

Reconsidering our contributions to racial equity

Dan Nerad

LET ME BEGIN with a gross understatement — we live in unique times. The sudden and drastic changes we are facing as a society and in schools are new to many of us. In just the last few months, we’ve struggled to live safely during a global pandemic while being confronted by brutal examples of racism and wide-spread calls for societal changes.

Like many organizations, the Wisconsin Association of School Boards has worked to reconsider its contributions to racial equity. In June 2018, the Board of Directors approved an equity statement to guide the WASB’s efforts to ensure that all children are successful in our schools. Earlier this summer, the board approved an additional statement to specifically help school districts face racial inequalities.

These statements represent



starting points and the key question becomes, “Where do we go from here?” Schooling must be different. Not only to protect the health of our students, but because we can no longer tolerate the racism that students of color face in our schools and in broader society. We must think and act differently, but what does that mean?

Smith, Frey, Pumpian and Fisher (2017) put the issue of school equity in its proper frame by imagining a school in which:

- The student body truly represents the diversity of human experience and each member is being prepared to interact, survive and thrive as 21st-century learners and world citizens.
- The culture, educational program and support services are informed by and sensitive to the student body’s social and emotional needs such that each student is fully present and engaged in learning.

- The kind of opportunity road-blocks that cause the “haves” to receive more of what education has to offer and the “have-nots” to receive less have been identified and eliminated, and all doors are open to opportunities to engage in challenging learning experiences.
- Instructional excellence is the norm, and each member of the instructional team is not just committed to professional mastery but also supported in a way that allows for its development and demonstration.
- The student body is motivated and supported to discover their passions and advance toward positive personal, familial, social, civil and vocational goals and opportunities.

In many ways, these words provide some clarity on what equity is and what schools must do to ensure the success of all children, especially during this unusual time. These considerations must be faced whether students are learning in classrooms,



virtually or in a blended model. Some of our new models for instruction have illuminated additional equity issues that beg attention.

We also know this is not uncomplicated work, especially as we face the related challenges of racism and a changing world. No matter what differences we have in our school districts, we have the responsibility to ensure that we are preparing all children for the world they are inheriting from us — a world of vast differences. They will benefit greatly in their learning about differences, and how to live peacefully with differences, when we take a clear and present role in this

critically important work needed on their behalf. For this reason, learning about differences and ensuring a culturally relevant curriculum cannot be left only to those districts with higher numbers of students of color, low-income students, second-language students or students with disabilities. To better prepare all children, we all have a responsibility to teach and learn about our world of differences.

The other challenge is the reality that, for students of color, racism speaks to their experience in our schools and broader society. And yes, the global pandemic has illuminated this issue in perhaps unforeseen ways. Gregory Hutchings, superintendent of Virginia’s Alexandria City Public Schools, recently reported data about student engagement during school closures. The data, according to Hutchings in an Education Dive newsletter, “in a rare occasion, suggested there was no discrepancy or disparity in engagement between Black, Latino and white students. Typically, our Black and brown students don’t feel as engaged as their

In June 2020, the WASB Board of Directors approved a statement to members on equity and racial justice.

In it, they call on all Wisconsin school board members to ask themselves the following questions.

- **Does our board have an equity statement?** Are there ways to make a commitment to equity clearer to those we serve?
- **How are we ensuring that we assess** every decision with an eye toward its impact on all students?
- **How does our understanding** of the district’s demographics impact our decision-making?
- **What process do we have in place** to regularly review our policies to ensure there are no barriers to an equitable education for all students?
- **What process do we have in place** to prioritize diversity and cultural competency in hiring?
- **How have we directly addressed** the implicit bias among all of us to ensure that it does not impact our expectations for students, our governance and leadership work, the quality of our teaching or how we manage our classrooms?
- **How does our curriculum development** process ensure culturally relevant learning experiences for our students?
- **How are we ensuring** that our students of color are participating in the arts and extracurricular programs at the same level as our white students? How are we eliminating barriers that stand in their way?
- **What are we doing to remove** restrictions on access to advanced coursework?
- **How are we ensuring** that our dress codes are sensitive to cultural differences?
- **How are we addressing** disproportionality in student discipline?
- **What steps are we taking** to ensure that our students interact with a full cross-section of our society and are prepared to respectfully interact with everyone they meet?
- **How are we ensuring** that the wide variety of voices in our communities are fully represented and heard?
- **What are we doing to ensure** that student voice is encouraged and used in our decision-making?
- **How are we challenging** the status quo to ensure equity for all students?

Visit [WASB.org](https://www.wisconsin.gov) to read the complete statement.

white counterparts. This is the first time that we're seeing no disparity. That to me is concerning because it means Black and brown students who don't feel safe in school are feeling more welcome now, (while) remote. That is shocking."

Each of us should take pause at what Hutchings has shared. Those of us who have spent our lives in public education know how important school and schooling is — and, frankly, wake up every day to do right by our students. But the reality is that our good intentions are not enough. We must confront racism in our schools. It can no longer be ignored or tolerated.

It is also true that many of us are going to need help confronting this reality. Many of us, as white educators, did not have to face these realities growing up. Part of this will be helped by an admission that we do not have many of the answers, but we will strive every day to create more just school districts and we will commit to getting out of our own personal comfort

zones. Now more than ever, the lives of our Black students call for us to do this work. We are, after all, their litmus test.

In the same Education Dive article, Black educators offered the following solutions:

- Implicit bias and cultural awareness training for teachers, administrators and staff.
- Trauma-informed school guidance counselors.
- Culturally inclusive curriculum.
- Ethnically and racially diverse school boards, administrators, teachers and staff.
- Alternative disciplinary practices instead of suspensions and expulsions.

These and other things will need to be considered as we address the ugly racism in our midst.

As a final point, and not to make this work even more complicated, we all need to own our current reality and the collective work needed to

have school be a more just place for all children. This work must be owned by the entire organization — not just delegated to those who currently have the predisposition, skills or specialized job description. This likely will require us to admit our own vulnerabilities in what we have accepted in the past or in what we do not know. The beauty may come from learning directly from children experiencing the unacceptable and intolerant realities of racism and inequities. In the end, it will be about new policies and practices, but perhaps the beginning comes with our willingness to listen. ■

Dan Nerad is a WASB search services and organizational services consultant. He specializes in addressing governance issues, issues related to excellence and equity, strategic planning and evaluation of the superintendent and board. Dan served as superintendent in Green Bay and Madison as well as in Birmingham, Michigan. His service as superintendent spanned 17 years and he has been a public school educator for 43 years. Dan was Wisconsin's 2006 Superintendent of the Year.



CHIPPEWA FALLS HIGH SCHOOL
CHIPPEWA FALLS, WI

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2020 WISCONSIN PROMISING PRACTICES CHARACTER EDUCATION AWARDS ANNOUNCED

CHARACTER EDUCATION SCHOOLS PROVIDE EXPERIENCES TO CHEER ABOUT

Some things are too good to be kept quiet. A prime example is the announcement concerning the 2020 Wisconsin Promising Practices in Character Education. Ten public schools in five school districts and one private academy qualified for the annual designation made by the Wisconsin Character Education Partnership (WCEP). The schools earned it by developing unique approaches to the development of the whole child—especially in the area of character and social/emotional learning. **What is WCEP and what is the Promising Practices Designation?** WCEP promotes the intentional, proactive efforts of educators to instill in all Wisconsin students, core universal ethical values such as integrity, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for themselves and others through character education. The Wisconsin Department of Education states: The WCEP and the University of Wisconsin's School of Education sponsor the State Schools of Character (SSOC) award program for Wisconsin. This program, in partnership with *Character.org*, recognizes schools for their exemplary character education programs. Wisconsin is one of 30 states participating in the SSOC program. SSOC winners become eligible for the National Schools of Character (NSOC) recognition. For information, visit *wischaracter.org*. The Promising Practice Designation provides an opportunity each year for WCEP to identify schools that have developed ongoing activities and programs that incorporate the school's core values and engage students, faculty, staff, and families. These activities and programs enhance the learning environment and provide models for strong character education that is embedded throughout the school's culture. This embedding of core values throughout the curriculum and all aspects of school life is an important aspect of effective character education and are present in all Promising Practices. In schools with effective character education, character is not "taught" as a course; it is incorporated throughout the school and modeled by all school staff. Studies and follow up reports are available which shows how much performance improves in Character schools whether or not those schools are private or public, urban, or rural. The Promising Practices are not only announced but the Practices shared so others may make use of the idea.

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Edgewood Elementary School Secret Agents Kindness Club

Fifth graders participate in the Secret Agents Kindness Club. They meet weekly to create plans to spread kindness by making things or writing notes to people in their school. They also discuss how well their plans worked the previous week and upon leaving the meeting take a secret mission envelope with an idea for the following week. Second graders are participating by making kindness posters.

Edgewood Elementary School Boys in Flight Experience

Edgewood Elementary also created the Boys in Flight experience, and after school program for 4th and 5th-grade boys. Participants are accepted through a lottery system. They learn skill development in physical activity, self-confidence, friendship, etiquette, and hygiene as well as grow in other character traits. The 90-minute weekly commitment is a significant contribution on the boys' part. It is a companion program to Edgewood's Girls on the Run program.

Necedah Elementary School

The Cardinal mascot represents the REDS aka character values, within which all activities operate: Respectful, Engaged, Dependable, and Self-controlled. Each month, teachers from Art, Music, and PE, select a homeroom that best demonstrated the REDS for that month. The teachers discuss with students why they were selected and good discussions ensue.

Necedah High School

The Opportunity over Outcome practice recognizes and rewards the positive contributions of all who make school athletic contests both enjoyable and educational experiences. One component has students in the WON80 Sportsmanship Club prepare Appreciation Bags with snacks to everyone from the student-athletes to the bus drivers before games. Better with a Letter shows appreciation to game officials with written thank-you notes. Team handshakes are regular and the team selects an opponent member as a Sport of the Game.

Oconomowoc High School

Oconomowoc High School took advantage of their new leadership to reshape their school culture. A staff team was empowered to identify what was negatively impacting their school culture (cell phones, advisory period structure, etc.). Then all staff participated in a summer visioning retreat to revisit core values (Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Extraordinary). They defined these values carefully in order to practice them. Ultimately this led to revising core values to Grounded (in our values) Committed (to our goals and Accountable (to ourselves and each other). Additionally, the team developed Community Commitments lessons, revised the disciplinary system to be restorative, and increased data sharing with parents/students/staff.

St. John's Northwestern Academies

St. John's in Delafield believes its Peer Tutoring Program builds character for the volunteer tutor-leadership, empathy, responsibility-while developing academic skills for the student being tutored. To decrease the number of students on academic warning, a student-led tutoring time was started using unstructured after school time. The school has data to show that over the years tutoring has been in place, student numbers on academic warning have been reduced by two-thirds.

Swallow Elementary School

Swallow Elementary School's Connecting Hearts and Hands involves inter-generational sharing. A Director of a nursing home first comes to the school to prep children as young as kindergarten about what it means to be elderly. Then senior citizens visit the students at school. Students assist seniors off the bus, guide wheelchairs, share art projects, and reading. In the process, they learn empathy. Senior citizens share stories and experiences. The school reports many students' families follow up with visits to the nursing home to see their elderly friends during summer.

Swallow Middle School

Swallow Middle School's Lead the Way gives students class time to reflect on topics they feel are relevant to contemporary students as well as what they can teach younger children to help them develop character. After a year of weekly character lessons, middle school students are asked to plan and implement a character lesson for a grade of their choice. So students learn around character education then they are given the opportunity for moral action through teaching younger students.

Swallow School District

Swallow School District's Engaging Parents in Character Education and Social Emotional Learning strengthens relationships between school and families along with partnering with parents and community in the character education process. This school district has an Article of the Month Discussion Book where parents, staff, and community members are invited to read the designated articles/book and then come together for an evening discussion. The shared reading has created a common language and understanding around social and emotional learning and has a significant impact on developing character both at home and school.

Walker Elementary School /West Allis-West Milwaukee School District

Success Skills was adopted after the staff was inspired by Thomas R. Hoer's book *The Formative Five*. Success Skills has core character traits: sportsmanship, self-control, embracing diversity, grit, empathy, and integrity. This Trauma-Informed School focuses on each trait for two consecutive months using lessons and activities. Community members are also invited to share how important these traits are to success. Families' engagement nights bring everyone together at school to discuss. Data shows decreasing office referrals and evidence of increased academic success.

- For additional information to contact school leaders, please contact: Pamela Woodard at pamwoodard@yahoo.com





I Need More From My Daughter's School THAN LIP SERVICE

FIVE WAYS districts can put real action behind their anti-racist statements

Funmi Haastrup

My daughter's school district, like many other institutions, sent a letter in June addressing the protests following the killing of George Floyd, an African American man, at the knees of Derek Chauvin, a white police officer. However, nothing in the letter from our district superintendent was reassuring, transformative or prescriptive to the traumatized psyche of Black parents who have to explain to our children — yet again — why the people who are sworn to protect and serve our communities must be approached cautiously.

While I am somewhat consoled the district addressed the issue at all, when many other institutions have been silent, I can't help but chafe at

the words that come across as though they were part of a form letter created by a public relations agency. "Just insert the name of the next murdered Black person when this happens again."

I don't need to be told to "contact the district's student-support services" to deal with the "social and emotional needs that [my] child might be facing due to these events." I need the district to change its practices and policies to root out the inequities and racial biases that permeate schools and spill over into our communities.

I'm tired of the lip service toward racial injustice. I need my school district, and districts all over the country, to take the following

actions if they are truly serious about combating racism and being a safe and supportive space for students of all races:

1. Examine policies, procedures and practices with an equity lens to root out biases that may be contributing to achievement gaps. This recommendation is the toughest one, but districts should not shy away from doing the hard things when it comes to racial justice. The reality is that inequitable systems do not require deliberate discrimination. In most districts, inequities in student opportunities and performance result despite the best intentions of the school district community.

As posited in Amanda Lewis and John Diamond's 2015 book, "Despite

New Report Analyzes Racial Diversity Among Wisconsin Teachers

One research-supported way to improve the achievement of students of color is to give them teachers who reflect their racial and ethnic background.

In June, the Wisconsin Policy Forum released a report — "A Teacher Who Looks Like Me" — analyzing teacher diversity and suggesting solutions.

Statewide, students of color comprise 30.7% of students, but only 5.6% of teachers are of color. Though these gaps are largest in the cities,

the Best Intentions: How Racial Inequality Thrives in Good Schools,” the daily interaction of systemic structural inequalities in social (who has the connections), political (who has the authority) and economic (who has the buying power) capital can create disparities without any active malice. The unconscious biases and cultural ideologies of even well-meaning educators and staff can further exacerbate these inequities. When this happens, the goals of policies and practices — even those targeted to support historically marginalized populations — differ significantly from actual outcomes. This creates persistent gaps in opportunity and, ultimately, in achievement for historically marginalized student populations.

Districts should conduct periodic equity audits to identify when their efforts and outcomes don’t line up. These regular check-ins can prompt districts to examine the root causes of such gaps and allow schools and communities to design realistic and sustainable strategies to closing them.

2. Hire diverse professionals for schools and the central offices. My fourth-grade daughter has never had a teacher of color, and I fear she never will. Even though our school district is in the top 20 of the most diverse districts in my home state of Massachusetts based on student demographics, white teachers make up 95% of the teaching staff. The central-office staff is also disproportionately composed of white people.

Research shows that district staff, especially those who spend a majority of their time in front of students, need to reflect their communities as much

as possible to set historically marginalized students up for success. The studies on the importance of representation in the teacher workforce are well known. When policies and practices are being developed, there should be a diverse coalition in the central office to advocate the needs of those typically underrepresented.

3. Provide continuous training and support on becoming an anti-racist district. Conscious and unconscious biases of staff (educators and administrators as well as support and operations staff) impact the implementation of district and school institutional practices (e.g., human resources, student programs, behavior policies) to create inequitable student opportunities. Continuous training and support for all district staff members will help mitigate some of these biases and create an environment where all staff feel responsible and empowered to act against racist behaviors and policies.

4. Create real partnerships with families and communities to help students succeed. Research going back to the 1970s demonstrates that when parents are involved in education — regardless of their race, ethnicity, language or socioeconomic status — children succeed in school. Schools, families and communities share the responsibility for student achievement. Equitable school and district leaders look beyond traditional definitions of parent involvement as a one-way street to a broader concept of parents as full decision-making partners in the education of their children.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing school closures have starkly exposed the need for strong school,

family and community partnerships that prioritize access and equity. In whatever form schools reopen in the fall, schools cannot go back to the surface-level engagement that characterized most family interactions.

5. Move beyond heroes and holiday curriculum to culturally relevant curriculum. Without looking at the calendar, I always know when it’s February, May and September by the reading assignments my elementary school daughter has. That is when the heroes of African American, Asian American and Latino histories are trotted out for the annual showcase.

According to the stages of multicultural curriculum transformation released by the equity education teams Equity Literacy Institute and EdChange, districts should instead work toward “seamlessly” weaving in diverse perspectives and explicitly addressing social issues as part of the curriculum. Moving from heroes and holidays to deeper curricular reform requires a thoughtful approach that includes the voices of teachers, parents, students and other community members.

Black parents and students want their school communities to be in true solidarity with them against racial injustice. Words of platitude do not comfort or suffice. True solidarity is demonstrated in actions that root out systemic inequities and replace them with new policies and practices. ■

Funmi Haastrup and her husband are parents to three Black children in a suburban Boston school district. She is also a co-founder of Equity Journey Partners, an organization that works with schools and their communities on cultural proficiency and equitable ecosystems.

they are also present in suburban and rural schools.

As people of color proceed down the pathway to becoming a teacher, the disparities quickly emerge. Just over 40% of Black and Latino high school graduates enrolled in post-

secondary education in 2018, compared with 63.5% of white students. Of those enrolling in teacher preparation programs, only 9.8% of them were people of color in 2018 (although this was an increase).

The report suggests there are ways,

such as alternative credential pathways and the removal of barriers to educational milestones, to increase the number of students of color in the pipeline to becoming a teacher — and retain them once they are there. □

Review the full report at: [wispolicyforum.org](https://www.wispolicyforum.org)



Josh and Sally Ketterhagen, respectively high school principal and elementary school counselor at the **Cedar Grove-Belgium School District**, worked with a local food pantry to distribute boxes of food at district meal sites.
(Photo by Sam Arendt, Ozaukee Press)

DISTRICTS HELPING COMMUNITIES

A look at how six districts are making a lasting impact

■ Cedar Grove-Belgium School District

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, elementary school counselor Sally Ketterhagen learned that two families in one class had suffered a job loss. It led her to ask a local church-based food pantry — then open once a month — if it could expand its hours or locations.

At the same time, Ketterhagen's district was ramping up its capacity to get food in students' hands. She found a natural fit and the district started giving away donated food

along with students' meals.

"That's how it was born and things came together quickly," she says. The Cedar Grove-Belgium School District had one pick-up site in Cedar Grove the first week, then added one in Belgium the second week.

During the first week of the partnership, the Sheboygan County Food Bank donated 100 boxes of food. When families came to pick up food for their children on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, they also received a box of food for the family.

"People started realizing it was

available and a place where they could get what they needed without judgement," Ketterhagen says.

Donations started pouring in, allowing the district to provide items like grocery store gift cards and gallons of milk along with the boxes of food. Moreover, the food pantry put together something special for the kids: bags with goldfish crackers, pudding cups and other snacks.

"They were always excited to see what was in it," Ketterhagen says.

A single mother of two daughters in the district said that the simple

process was key for her family. After her summer work hours dropped from full time to 12 hours per week, she said the Monday food pickups were more than enough to see her family through the week.

“It was difficult trying to figure out how to balance a new budget,” she said, noting that taking a majority of their food out of the equation was a big help. “It was a one-stop shop. We’d pull up to the middle school and get our lunches. It was one less trip I’d have to worry about.”

Her daughters looked forward to the snack packs, and one of the girls was enamored with a snack of cheese, dried fruit and nuts. Ketterhagen always made sure one of those found its way into the girl’s snack pack, her mom said.

“It was so great for families to have this weight lifted off their chest,” she said. “I never had to worry about feeding my children.”

■ Three Lakes School District

Though the Three Lakes School District’s fabrication laboratory had to pause its hands-on education during the pandemic, it found a way to protect residents from the virus.

In early April, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had recommended wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where social distancing is hard to do, such as grocery stores.

Though the fab lab couldn’t make cloth masks, it could make face shields. These plastic guards, which wrap around the face to block potentially infected droplets, are often used in hospitals and clinics.

The guards also turned out to be a fit for grocery stores. The Three Lakes School District fab lab, which is directed by Nathan Koch, made about a dozen for the Sentry Foods in St. Germain.

The store’s manager, Michael Frankowski, appreciates that the face shields allow employees to speak freely with customers and coworkers.

“I’ve found they work very well,” he says. “They’re very easy to clean, you just use light ammonia to wipe them down.”



Three Lakes School District fabrication laboratory director Nathan Koch shows off some of the face shields made at the fab lab.

The fab lab also donated 10 face shields to Headwaters, a Rhinelander-based social services agency that helps people with disabilities find jobs, build skills and volunteer.

Early in the pandemic, Headwaters director Jen Fealty said the agency was concerned that some of its clients might not be able to wear a mask for an extended period of time. Some people with autism, which is often accompanied by sensory issues, can’t tolerate masks.

A Headwaters staff member saw on Facebook that the fab lab was making face shields, and the non-profit contacted Koch.

Fealty says that clients use the face shields when they’re not able to socially distance.

“This is actually allowing them to get services they otherwise would not be able to access,” she says.

■ Stevens Point Area Public School District

Quality foreign language translation takes time. As the pandemic led to school closures, it was time the Stevens Point Area Public School District didn’t have.

So, district leaders recruited staff members who speak Chinese, Hmong and Spanish to translate documents and other communications, according to district director of communications Sarah O’Donnell.

Like many districts, Stevens Point also retrained employees to provide

thousands of individually prepared and packaged meals — about 6,000 of them every day. Though districts have mastered making large amounts of food daily, making individualized meals was a different challenge that required using staff who weren’t normally involved in food preparation.

Among them was Brenda Varga, typically a food service cashier who serves hundreds of students a day in the à la carte room. Though she missed chatting with students — she considers imparting them with a positive attitude a big part of her role — she took to heart serving the community in new ways.

“Reading the Facebook comments in a mom’s group about how much they appreciated us, it really makes you feel good,” she says.

Angel Burling, an educational assistant who transitioned to food service, said the new daily ritual of food service provided the children with relief amid so much change.

“Making sure kids are able to get lunch and breakfast; it’s a nice constant for the kids,” she says.

■ North Crawford School District

Making food is a way of life for many rural communities. As the pandemic forced districts to rethink how they serve families, some of them — including the North Crawford School District in the heart of southwest



(From left) Landon, Lucas and Lydia Waldvogel display books they picked up from the **Fond du Lac School District's** free mobile little library project.

Wisconsin's Driftless region — found ways to mix in local food.

North Crawford food service director Jen Kapinus said it started with providing every district family with a pound of asparagus from a local farm. The district eventually partnered with the FFA to provide cheese curds and cottage cheese from a local creamery. They also used local cheese in make-your-own-pizza kits that children could assemble and bake themselves.

“What better way to provide nutrition to kids and support our local farmers?” Kapinus says.

JoEllen Young, of Soldiers Grove, works as an educational assistant at the school and grows crops and raises cattle on her farm.

“We live in a community with a high-poverty level, so just knowing that those kiddos were still going to get really good meals ... I'm thankful,” she says.

Even as she worked part time in food preparation and delivery, Young continued to teach children.

Though the distance added new difficulties, it also added new opportunities for educators and students to share their home lives. To help one child with reading comprehension,

Young videotaped herself reading and asking him questions at the end of each chapter. The boy is fascinated by Young's farm, and the videos gave her a chance to show it to him.

“I would make sure I videotaped in front of our steers or the calves. One day I was disking (breaking up the soil with a disc-lined machine) and I explained what that was,” she says. “He got the ELA (English language arts) comprehension part and a little bit of ag (agriculture) as well.

“His mom said he was so excited because every day he had no idea where we were going to be.”

Local families have found many reasons to appreciate the deliveries of local food.

Rebecca Eby, a resident of nearby Gays Mills, says her family has been trying to limit grocery store trips. Having meals delivered helps them stay at home longer.

“The asparagus I particularly liked,” she says, adding that her family also liked supporting local dairy farmers and enjoying their cottage cheese and curds.

Eby lost her job during the pandemic, so this food was especially nice as a bright spot the whole family could enjoy.

“It was really useful to our family,” she says. “I don't think we've thrown a single thing out.”

■ **Fond du Lac School District**

In the Fond du Lac School District, mobile sites nourished student bodies and bolstered their imaginations.

Staff members donated books and collected them from the public, distributing them at a different food service site each day of the week.

Volunteers laid out the books at each location — organizing them by age level and inviting children to take them. There was no need to return them. By June 4, the Fond du Lac School District had distributed 1,357 books to local children.

“The free mobile little library project was created to give students access to books during school closure due to COVID-19,” said Nicole Kamphuis, a reading specialist at Chegwin Elementary School. “Reading, in any form, offers the unique opportunity to grow one's mind and expand our thinking, regardless of physical location. As we navigate this pandemic, we must continue to find opportunities to support our students and our community.”

Fond du Lac parent Stephanie

Waldvogel said her children were excited to get books at the mobile library. “They love reading and it was a great alternative since the public library was closed,” she said.

Fond du Lac was hit with the coronavirus early, as the county had the highest number of cases state-wide at one point. Hand sanitizer was in short supply, and the recently closed school did not need its cache, so it donated 22 gallons of sanitizer to a local hospital.

■ Greendale School District

As the pandemic hit and schools closed, parents in law enforcement, health care and other essential industries were thrown into an immediate child-care bind.

Early on, the Greendale School District surveyed its families on their need for child care and made a plan to meet their needs, according to communications director Kitty Goyette.

The district decided to provide free child care for parents working in health care, law enforcement and

as first responders. Eligibility was determined by who was a “Tier 1” worker, as defined by the state of Minnesota, which mandated districts provide free child care for children of Tier 1 and 2 workers.

Greendale’s free child-care program began March 24 and was open every weekday from 6:30 a.m. until 6 p.m. Students could stay up to 10 hours a day. At most, the district had 15 students in free child care at one time. All told, 29 students were served for free.

Keeping essential workers free from coronavirus was critical, and the child-care center took many steps — like health screenings, masking and frequent hand washing — to keep kids safe.

Staying healthy was critical to Rachael Hartlein, a mother of two who works as a labor and delivery nurse at Aurora Sinai Medical Center in Milwaukee.

“They screened, took temperatures and washed hands religiously, but they also had the children well-spaced out and that put me at ease,” Hartlein

says, noting she was hardly at ease when the pandemic struck. “When I found out the schools were shutting down because of coronavirus, I felt complete and utter panic.”

Child-care options were either extremely expensive or far from her home. A widow, Hartlein did not have family to rely on locally and was forced initially to send her children to stay with family in Indiana. After the Greendale School District developed the child-care program, the kids returned and it fit Hartlein’s needs like a glove.

“If I could have formulated the perfect scenario where my kids were taken care of when I worked, this would have been that scenario,” Hartlein says, observing that the free program also lifted a financial burden. “I would pay anything to make sure that my children were in a safe environment, but during the pandemic when I’m nervous about being laid off ... it was scary to think about draining my bank account for daycare.” ■

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The Student VOICE

The missing link for a successful start to school in the COVID era

Dr. Michelle McGrath

The past six months have created significant personal challenges for all of us as well as for education systems across the country. The cracks we've seen in our education system have given us all ample incentive to restructure schools to best serve our young people.

As I work with my colleagues from across the state and country, there is one piece that I'm always most concerned with — where are the student voices in the decision-making process?

Students' time spent amid quarantine, virtual learning sessions, missed athletic events, canceled graduations and civil unrest affected each of them in different ways. Even though it is important to get back “to normal” and back in school, it is

even more important to listen to student voices and create time for them to reflect on their experiences.

“It is now time to listen, learn and lead,” says Russ Quaglia, a leading expert in student voice,

So that's what I did. I turned to students across Wisconsin to understand what they learned over the past six months, what they fear as they head back to school, and what they want adults to know for making decisions moving forward.

As unfortunate as the pandemic and quarantine are, it provided our young people a great deal of perspective this spring. A student from Dane County expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to work at her own pace and prioritize her coursework. A very active and engaged student from

the Green Bay area shared the benefit of finally overcoming the “fear of missing school.” She explained that accessing an online curriculum allowed her the flexibility to plan for absences and work ahead, diminishing the anxiety she had experienced in the past when she had to miss school for athletics or a field trip.

All the students I spoke with agreed that it was important to keep instruction and online meetings short and succinct. This allowed them to meet virtually with teachers, something that's not usually an option. The students also agreed that having resources online made it easier to learn. The prevailing sentiment was that, although they missed the in-person connections, they realized that a lot of time at school is

“wasted time.” Having the opportunity to engage online for their education streamlined their learning and gave them more time to do what they needed or wanted.

The students had a great deal of insight to share regarding racial inequities and disparities. The students I spoke with crossed racial,

would fill their hallways. A student from the Milwaukee area expressed his sadness that students need an SRO in their hallways to feel safe. He wondered if there are other options for schools to explore to promote safety and trust. The students discussed the need to increase the number of mental health professionals, social workers

comments. “Division does not build community, unity does.”

What saddened me the most was the responses when I asked my last question: “Do you feel comfortable sharing your voice?” Students said, “Why even bother? It’s just not worth the trouble because nothing changes if I do share my voice;” and “If I share something that is not what the majority embraces, I will get criticized.”

As I reflect on the words of these students and look to the future, I encourage school staff, boards and administrators to engage students in the decision-making process. You cannot move anywhere successfully if you are not moving there together. This time in history will have a lasting impact on our students. It is vital that we listen to their ideas, engage them in the process, and meet their needs for a vibrant, equitable world.

At the Wisconsin Association of School Councils, it is our mission to educate, engage and empower young people. I encourage you to do the same. To learn more, visit us at wasc.org. ■

Dr. Michelle McGrath is the executive director of the Wisconsin Association of School Councils.

One student shared that, “It was exciting to see schools and organizations call an audible and get things done.”

gender and socio-economic lines from urban, suburban and rural schools. Regardless of demographics, they agreed that racism should not be tolerated and that increased training for students and teachers should be made a priority.

A student from the Milwaukee area expressed concern that school districts lack the curriculum that accurately reflects the full truth of the struggles minorities have encountered. A student from the Dane County area shared that because districts in Wisconsin lack diversity, she feels it’s harder to empathize, yet knows it’s even more important to be educated about the systemic racism and hidden biases that are found in local communities.

Another student from Dane County shared that it was time for educational leaders in his district to not just “talk the talk, but also walk the walk.”

They all said they have spent the last several months listening and learning, including how important it is to look for reputable information sources and not just rely on what shows up in their social media feeds. What impressed me most was that every student, regardless of background, felt comfortable having these hard conversations — sharing what they experienced and what reforms they believe are necessary.

On the topic of the role of school resource officers, the students were divided. Most had positive experiences with SROs and believed they deterred negative behavior in their schools. A student from central Wisconsin believes that if they didn’t have an SRO, more violence and disruption

and counselors in our schools as well as elevate the presence of educators. They all agreed that you can’t put a price on trust or safety.

Overall, students shared that the last few months taught them a great deal, including how to be more efficient and learn on the fly. One student shared that, “It was exciting to see schools and organizations call an audible and get things done.” They are proud of what they and their teachers accomplished and have a new appreciation for their parents, their health and the resources they do have.

“Our society doesn’t work when we think only about ourselves, rather, it thrives when we think about each other,” one student shared in his final

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Build Trust

THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Rely on communication avenues your stakeholders value

Joëlle Doye



Mineral Point School District staff members compiled weekly collages to share motivational messages with their students.

As I write this article, it's mid-June. This magazine will be published in August. It's hard enough to write for a print delay during normal times, but the pandemic makes it almost a certainty that some of what I say will be outdated by the time you read this.

That's one of the biggest challenges as we plan, hopefully, to have in-person schooling in some capacity this fall. Communicating with authority is nearly impossible, but you can continue to communicate with honesty and transparency.

Trust through communication isn't built overnight. Hopefully, you have spent a great deal of time and effort in your communities building trust. Continue to rely on the communication avenues your local stakeholders value. It's paramount to meet your community where it is and with the information it's seeking.

Additionally, it's never too late to invest in communication. Sometimes it takes a crisis situation before people see the true value of something; in this case, that might be communication.

Be vulnerable

Most people are very understanding during difficult times because everyone is in a vulnerable position. It's OK to admit you don't have the answers and OK to show that school leaders are human, too.

I recently read a CNN article about a New Jersey school headmaster who went on Facebook Live to answer questions about what school might look like in the fall. The reporter, who is also a parent of a child in the school, cited "the immense effort, thought, integrity — and above all the humility — that went into his presentation." The school leader "did not promise perfection. Rather, he showed vulnerability." Now, Facebook Live might not be your cup of tea, which is fine, but consider other authentic ways to reach your stake-

Mineral Point kindergarten teacher Bridget Beinborn participates in the staff parade.



holders as school begins.

In their new book, "When Kids Lead: An Adult's Guide to Inspiring, Empowering, and Growing Young Leaders," Todd Nesloney and Adam Dovico quote 14-year-old Elise as saying, "A leader is someone who isn't afraid to let themselves be vulnerable by sharing their experiences and mistakes in the hopes that someone else listening may learn and grow from them...a leader is a spark of hope." If there were ever a time to drop the ego some associate with

floor for any major discussions in your district. As it pertains specifically to the pandemic, discuss the when, how, why and who in your plans — and run the "what-if" scenarios with each of your target audiences. If your communication leaders aren't at the table before the fire starts, don't expect them to be able to successfully put out a raging inferno.

Hold your values close

When crafting communication, always link back to the values of your school community. Student and staff safety, academic learning, mental health and legal requirements should continually be talking points reinforced in communication.

Words have great power.

Be prepared for questions and criticism

Many of the hiccups with virtual learning this spring were overlooked because most schools were tossed into the fire without a robust emergency learning plan in place. Parents and taxpayers were, for the most part, understanding. However, that might

As President Theodore Roosevelt stated,
"People don't care how much you know,
until they know how much you care."

school leadership, that time is now. As President Theodore Roosevelt stated, "People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care."

Communicators on the ground floor

A good rule of thumb is to make sure your school district's communication leaders are always on the ground



Josephine, Colette and Elizabeth show appreciation for teachers during the staff parade.

not be the case when school resumes in the fall. They will expect us to have the kinks worked out, internet connectivity addressed and the online learning process improved as staff have undergone additional training. This ideal system might be extremely difficult with budget cuts and the lack of internet access plaguing many districts, but we need to be prepared to answer these questions.

■ Have a clearinghouse

I venture to guess most, if not all, schools have a hub on their website for communications related to COVID-19. I hope it goes without saying that this information needs to be updated regularly. Train your stakeholders to look there for the latest information or if they missed a message. Also consider having a human clearinghouse — if you're fortunate enough to have a designated school communicator on staff, it should be this person.

Looking over messages for consistency and clarity is important. There's serious information overload these days. It's important to find the right balance of communication — not overwhelming stakeholders while providing the information they need in a timely manner. A designated set of eyes can help ensure unified messaging takes place in your

district. If you haven't done a communications audit, now is the time to take inventory of what forms of communication are happening in your district, who is responsible for them and how effective they are.

■ Keep contact information current

Remind families to keep current phone numbers and email addresses in your student information system. When the pandemic hit, many school districts had families who were upset that they didn't receive initial communication, only to find out they had either unsubscribed from the district's communication or not updated their contact information when they changed jobs or phone numbers.

■ Ask for their opinion

Keep the lines of communication open with surveys of your staff, students and stakeholders. A note of caution — don't survey if you're not prepared to act on the information you receive. One of the quickest ways to lose trust is to keep asking people for their opinion and then not take it into advisement. I would normally suggest incorporating face-to-face conversations to truly take the pulse of your stakeholders. However, that's difficult these days.

Old-fashioned phone calls might become fashionable again.

■ Have a robust social media presence

Post regularly on your social media channels to help keep your content seen by your followers. Social media is the perfect place to celebrate students and staff by showcasing all of the good things happening in your schools — pandemic or no pandemic. People are looking for feel-good stories on their social media feeds. Schools can, and should, deliver.

Remember that you don't need to post everything on social media. Consider your audience — some topics are better left for direct communication with families and staff. Once items are posted, monitor comments for questions, concerns, misinformation and negativity, and respond appropriately.

■ Lean on others

There's no shame in reaching out to colleagues in other districts. There's no need to be a martyr in education, especially now. Whether you're looking for a survey template or just need a listening ear, connectedness is very important. School leadership can be a lonely profession, and even though we have access to more technology than ever before, we are in a loneliness epidemic just as much as we are in a disease pandemic. I encourage you to check in regularly with colleagues — find those who are like-minded as well those who challenge you to think differently. It's refreshing and good for mental health, both yours and theirs.

I heard a suggestion recently to try and reach friends on Friday afternoons, as people tend to be in a better mood with less on their plates and the weekend approaching. Therefore, they're more open to conversation. Additionally, be intentional about making time to connect with others. As we know, we are all busy beyond belief — what gets scheduled gets done. Don't leave connection to chance.

If you're like me, you feel like

we've been running a race with no finish line for the last six months or so. It's exhausting. Working in crisis mode for an extended amount of time is not easy or healthy. However, that's our current reality as school leaders. There's no getting around the fact this will, perhaps, be the most trying year any of us have faced in our careers. It's likely some school leaders will decide to leave or retire from their professions. We need each other, as well as strong leadership, now more than ever.

Despite all of this, the bottom line is good communication before the pandemic is still good communication during the pandemic. You don't need to reinvent the wheel. Continue to be strategic, transparent, honest and caring. The rest will fall into place. Relationships are at the center of everything we do. ■

Joëlle Doye is the communications director for the Mineral Point Unified School District and president-elect for the Wisconsin School Public Relations Association.



Arrow proudly displays his birthday yard sign delivered by his teacher, Deb Molle.

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Crowdfunding

THE RIGHT WAY

DonorsChoose and your district | *Keya Wondwossen*

DonorsChoose was founded in 2000 by Charles Best, who developed the organization out of his Bronx history classroom to fight education inequity.

The nonprofit was built with the idea that people would want to help public school teachers get extra resources for their classrooms — if they could see exactly where their dollars were going. Teachers from across the country create projects

requesting the resources their students need most, and donors of all stripes support the projects that most inspire them.

Donors who give to classrooms through DonorsChoose also support local district goals and initiatives.

In Wisconsin, DonorsChoose works closely with organizations like Herb Kohl Philanthropies while national partners like Google and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation support teachers throughout the nation.

Funds raised through corporations, organizations and individuals help

teachers throughout Wisconsin.

Thanks to donations sent through DonorsChoose, the Menominee Indian School District's Paul Schwaller gave high school students the chance to explore robotics in the classroom. When her school closed its doors due to the coronavirus, Green Bay Area Public School District teacher Anne Lindsley used DonorsChoose to give her fourth-grade students journals so they could practice writing and have a place to express themselves. Finally, although in-person professional development conferences are on hold, Lorri Arnce in

the Cambria-Friesland School District was able to complete her National Board Teacher Certification thanks to funding through DonorsChoose.

DonorsChoose also has a free District Partnership Program to work closely with school districts interested in using the crowdfunding platform as an intentional part of their fundraising strategy. Benefits include a dedicated district landing page, communications support and first notification of funding opportunities.

In Wisconsin, Milwaukee Public Schools, the Barron Area School District and the Howard-Suamico School District are members of the partnership program. Teachers at Milwaukee Public Schools have raised nearly \$4 million for project requests, and more than half of that funding has come from out-of-state donors.

In the past 20 years, more than four million DonorsChoose donors have generated \$970 million toward public classrooms. In Wisconsin, DonorsChoose has raised more than \$15 million for classrooms across

the state. Furthermore, the DonorsChoose team works hard to inspire funders from outside teachers' personal networks. In fact, 75% of all donations come from individuals and organizations that don't personally know the teachers they're supporting.

■ **Addresses the unique needs of district administrators through crowdfunding best practices**

Crowdfunding can be a powerful tool to gain classroom resources, and DonorsChoose is designed to address the specific transparency, accountability and safety needs of public school students, teachers and administrators.

The DonorsChoose team has partnered with organizations like the National School Boards Association and AASA — the School Superintendents Association — to ensure the platform is setting the bar for preK–12 crowdfunding best practices.

■ **Financial transparency and accountability**

Crowdfunding sites that purchase and send resources directly to verified schools, instead of depositing cash into teachers' personal bank accounts, are best at ensuring accountability and integrity. Along with this, DonorsChoose offers radical transparency — giving administrators and school boards free, automatic reports on the resources going to their district. Individuals can even select how often they would like to receive these reports.

■ **Control of internal materials and supplies**

When resources are received through a crowdfunding platform, those resources should become school property that benefits students. The best crowdfunding sites notify principals when items are being shipped to schools and provide line-by-line reporting of every item upon request, resulting in clear documentation. DonorsChoose supports these policies and, along with offering free reporting, notifies principals by fax every time a resource is shipped.

■ **Student safety and privacy**

Crowdfunding sites used by teachers must have mechanisms and protocols for protecting student privacy as well as the ability to work with districts to meet their individual needs. Every DonorsChoose project is reviewed before posting to make sure the organization is not collecting or sharing any information that would put students at risk.

Many districts codify policy to ensure teachers and stakeholders are fully aware of safe crowdfunding best practices. A strong policy defines the opportunity and also lays out best practices.

■ **Keeping students learning during COVID-19**

When students in under-resourced communities cannot go to school, their home resources will define their education. The COVID-19 pandemic



The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to further widen educational inequity gaps in the United States.



threatens to further widen educational inequity gaps in the United States. During the first wave of school closures in March, DonorsChoose surveyed more than 4,000 teachers to understand their needs and concerns. Among the most glaring issues:

- **68% of students** lacked sufficient resources at home to continue learning.
- **97% of teachers** worried that coronavirus will negatively impact their students' learning.
- **92% of teachers** did not have the resources to run a remote learning program.

Teachers often know which of their students are experiencing homelessness and need hygiene items, which of their students need laptops or tablets to complete assignments, and what books to send each of their students. Teachers also know which district buildings are open for delivery, which students have high-risk family members, and where families are currently receiving school-backed resources and information.

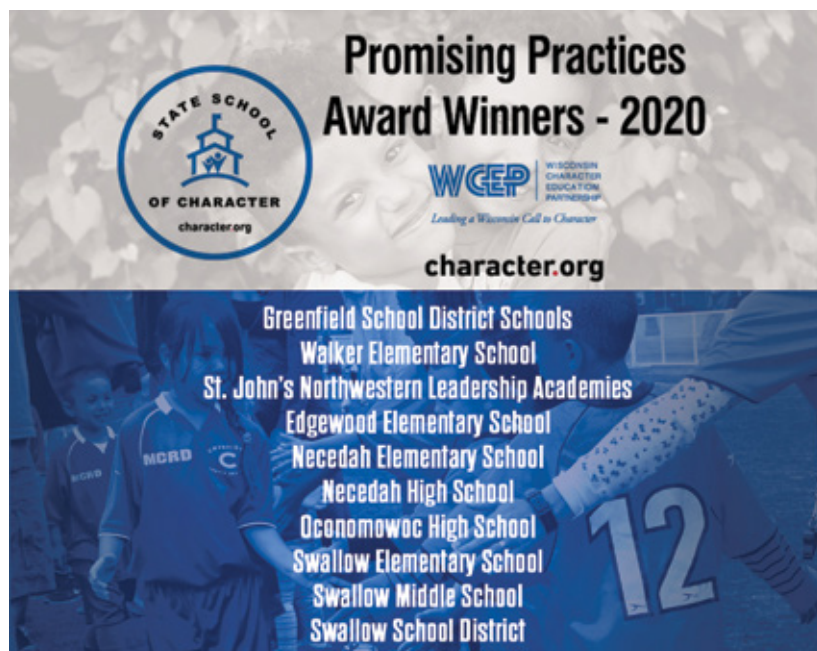
Traditionally, DonorsChoose delivers funded resources directly to the requesting teacher's school — an option not currently possible for the majority of districts. In an effort to help teachers and students at home, DonorsChoose launched Distance Learning Projects. This new project type allows teachers to request

resources to be shipped to an address of their choosing, whether that's to the teacher's home or directly to a student. In line with DonorsChoose's accountability measures, the organization is only allowing educators to opt into this approach if they complete an additional online verification process.

In the early weeks of distance learning, trends began to emerge regarding the type of resources teachers were requesting. When

teachers request resources for students, they're frequently trying to recreate the classroom environment in a student's home with books, educational kits, games and basic supplies like pencils and paper. When teachers request resources for themselves, connectivity devices are key. Teachers are requesting laptops and document cameras at high rates, in addition to visual teaching aids like mini whiteboards and magnetic letters.

Whether school districts are





looking to boost STEM learning, build libraries with culturally relevant texts or support their COVID-19 response, DonorsChoose can help achieve those goals — as it has done for more than 1,750 schools across Wisconsin. ■

For more information on how your district can leverage DonorsChoose at no cost to your educators and schools, feel free to reach out to Keya Wondwossen, director of advocacy and public partnerships, at keya@donorschoose.org.

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WASB RESOURCES

WASB FOCUS subscribers can refer to the *December 2018* issue, which addressed crowd-funding. It includes specific legal and policy considerations, a list of questions school officials should ask, and sample policies. Subscribers can sign in on [WASB.org](https://wasb.org) to access the FOCUS archive.



Sheboygan Falls Middle School

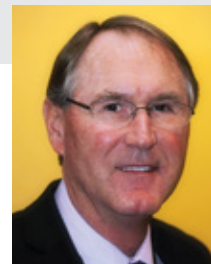


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Learning From Our Past, Going Forward Together

We are living through disruptions to education and wider society unheard of in recent memory. Our schools have been without a playbook, yet they've adapted to keep children safe while continuing to educate them.

As the WASB looks forward to its centennial next year, I'm learning more about the history of Wisconsin schools and boards. Though there is no pandemic how-to in that history, the past does have lessons relevant to today's upheavals.

It was a little more than 100 years ago that schools were closed statewide due to the 1918 flu pandemic, which claimed 50 million lives worldwide. It struck Wisconsin hard, killing about 7,500 that fall alone.

But on the scale of that tragedy, Wisconsin's outcome marked a success. Fast action, including on the part of schools, blunted the pandemic's impact here.

In early October 1918, Wisconsin's state health officer ordered all boards of health to close schools, theaters and other public gatherings. The statewide, comprehensive order — truly unprecedented at the time — went further than most places.

Just as today, Wisconsin public school staff stepped up to serve their communities during the 1918 pan-

demic, even when their buildings were closed.

Milwaukee teachers went house-to-house to visit the sick and tally influenza cases. At risk to their own health, teachers disseminated information and helped the health department keep track of the epidemic. Milwaukee had only a few years earlier, in 1915, opened its first health stations in schools. That was one manifestation of the attitude that in the 1930s earned Milwaukee the title of "the healthiest city."

In Neenah, school nurse S.M. Connor reported to her school board that she'd made 1,216 home visits, spoken to the community about public health, took children to doctors and examined them in schools.

At the time, school breakfast and lunch were not widespread. But teachers, including the domestic science teachers in Wausau, stepped up to cook meals for people too ill to cook for themselves.

It took a collective effort to respond to the pandemic and ensure a safe environment for children to learn and thrive. That lesson is just as true today. The more we unite and take steps to combat the pandemic — both individual and collective — the more our children will be able to be in school, which is the best place for a

sound, equitable education.

As I look back 100 years, of course I can't help but also note the founding of the Green Bay Packers in 1919. And there is naturally, a Vince Lombardi quote for every occasion. One that rings especially true today speaks to the attitude we will need to rise to the occasion:

"Individual commitment to a group effort — that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work."

As important as it was then, it's likely even more important now — school leaders need to lead by example in bringing their communities together to overcome hardship. It starts with school board members leading with respect through courtesy, civility, open-mindedness and preparedness with their fellow board members.

Boards also need to be mindful of their relationship with their superintendent and ensure a strong, trusting relationship that allows the superintendent to adapt and be responsive to the changing dynamics of our current environment. Remember, an unsatisfied leader has plenty of job opportunities these days.

As we did 100 years ago, we will find the resolve to defeat the pandemic. I'm sure Lombardi would have something to say about that. ■

The more we unite and take steps to combat the pandemic — both individual and collective — the more our children will be able to be in school, which is the best place for a sound, equitable education.

2020 Governance and Advocacy online workshops

In August, the WASB will host two online workshops: one on leadership, the other on advocacy. Visit WASB.org for details and registration.

WORKSHOP 1

Leading With Certainty During Uncertain Times

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 5 | THURSDAY, AUG. 6

7–8:30pm *(The content is the same each evening)*

People are looking to you for clarity and direction.

How do we lead during these uncertain times?

This online workshop will focus on essential leadership strategies that will guide participants in making difficult decisions, communicating with stakeholders and uniting one another.

Participants will have the opportunity to dialogue with other members and learn best practices to assist in the next steps so you can lead with certainty in these uncertain times.

WORKSHOP 2

Advocating Effectively With Legislators

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 12 | THURSDAY, AUG. 13

7–8:30pm *(The content is the same each evening)*

Rough estimates suggest a \$2 to \$3 billion state revenue shortfall will have to be addressed.

State school aid, which accounts for roughly one-third of the state's budget, could face devastating cuts. School leaders need to be prepared to advocate effectively to minimize the harm to schools and student learning from potential drastic cuts in state aid and revenue limits.

This online workshop is designed to help you develop relationships with lawmakers and their staff that will make you better, more effective legislative advocates for your students and your schools. It will prepare you to communicate about the serious challenges our state and our public schools face in the months ahead.

New WASB Region 15 Interim Director: Cherie Rhodes

Cherie Rhodes of the Slinger School Board has been appointed by the WASB Board of Directors as the interim Region 15 director until this fall's regional meeting. She succeeds Reverend Lester Spies of the Germantown School Board.

Cherie holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in human resources. She currently works for United Airlines. Cherie has been serving on the Slinger School Board since 2012, and has been the clerk since 2014. In 2017, Cherie began a two-year term as a member of the WASB Policy and Resolutions Committee representing Region 15. □



WASB COVID-19 RESOURCE PAGE

Your central clearinghouse for information related to COVID-19 — including the reopening of schools — is our resource page at WASB.org. This wide-reaching resource is broken into 19 categories that touch on virtually every aspect of preK-12 education that's been affected by the pandemic.

New WASB Website for TITLE IX Overhaul

Every school district must make policy changes as a result of changes to Title IX, which covers sexual harassment, discrimination and assault. The changes take effect in August. The new WASB site offers resources to identify many of the decisions that districts are required or permitted to make in order to implement the new regulations.

Visit the Hot Policy Topics page at WASB.org to help you update your district harassment and nondiscrimination policies and procedures.

100 YEARS



OF SERVICE

Celebrating 100

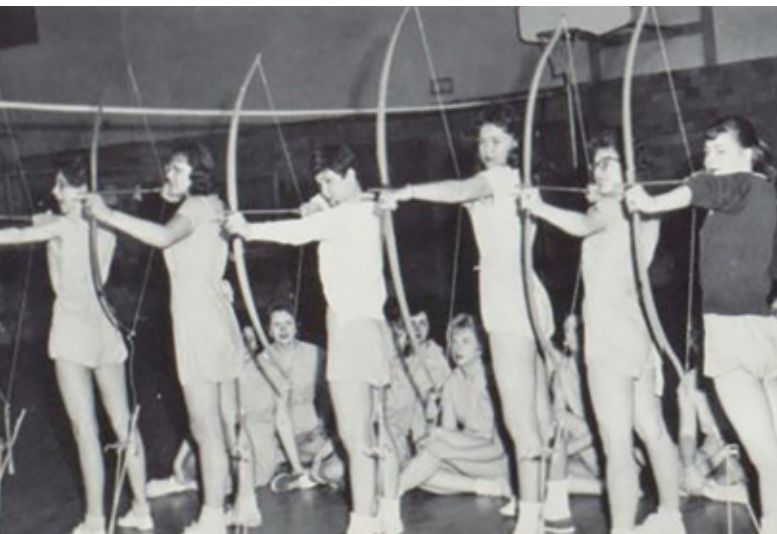
In recognition of the upcoming centennial anniversary, the WASB is featuring a decade of highlights from the association's past in each issue of the *Wisconsin School News* through early 2021.

In this issue, let's trip into the 1960s ...

1960's

The decade began with a challenge from a youthful president to "... ask what you can do for your country," and a Baptist minister from Georgia dreaming of a day when children would "not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

Some would argue it was a decade of turmoil, defined by increasing racial strife with change coming quickly. The decade was marked by assassinations, the Cuban missile crisis, fire hoses, police dogs, the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, anti-war protests and cities burning during summers of discontent. But, amidst the perceived chaos, there were the Beatles, Neil Armstrong's moonwalk, the Miracle Mets, Head Start, the Voting Rights Act and Sesame Street. □



In 1960, Wausau East High School taught archery.



A question is fed into a "computer" created by the mathematics club at John Marshall Junior High School in Milwaukee. This was a project in observance of American Education Week in November 1963.

Wisconsin Historical Society, WHS-8330

■ THE WASB

1961. The WASB directors approve hiring Madison attorney James Clark as special counselor. His first Legal Comment for the association focuses on open meetings and is published in that year's October Wisconsin School Board News. The law firm, now called Boardman and Clark, continues to be the association's legal counsel.

1965. The WASB sponsors the first "legislative drive-in" in May, designed to update members on pertinent federal and state legislation.

1967. The WASB directors approve renting office space in Madison.

1968. The WASB hires Senn Brown as publications director and Ken Cole to assist members on personnel issues. Senn would become the association's first dedicated lobbyist and remain with the association until retiring in the early 1990s. Ken would become the association's second executive director, retiring in 2005.



By the end of the 1960s, the WASB had four employees:
(left to right) Senn Brown (publications director), Margaret Brill (office manager), George Tipler (executive secretary) and Ken Cole (special services director).

■ OUR STATE

1961. Gov. Gaylord Nelson signs the nation's first mandatory seatbelt law for front-seat passengers.

1961. The Menominee Indian Reservation becomes the state's 72nd county.

1964. Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs) are created, authorizing 19 regional offices to provide education services. Each operating board of control is comprised of area school board members.

1965. The state's school compulsory attendance age is raised to 18.

1966. Kathryn Clarenbach of Madison is elected the first chairwoman of the National Organization for Women.

1967. The oleomargarine ban is repealed; and the Green Bay Packers defeat the Kansas City Chiefs in the first Super Bowl.

1969. Milwaukee priest James Groppi and welfare reform advocates take over the state Assembly chambers demanding more help for the poor.

■ OUR NATION

1960. NASA launches the first weather satellite.

1962. Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" is published, describing the adverse effects of DDT and ushering in the modern environmental movement.

1963. The world is introduced to "Little Stevie Wonder, the 12-Year-Old Genius" by Motown and Maurice Sendak's whimsical book "Where the Wild Things Are."

1964. The U.S. Surgeon General's cigarette report maintains, "Many kinds of damage to body functions, and to organs, cells and tissues occur more frequently and severely in smokers."

1965. "The Sound of Music" starring Julie Andrews sets box office records while the Rolling Stones release "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction."

1966. Bill Russell of the Boston Celtics becomes the highest paid (\$125,000) and first black coach in professional sports.

1967. Great-grandson of a slave, Thurgood Marshall is appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

1968. "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" debuts on the Public Broadcasting System, focusing on children's social/emotional growth.



Advocating Amidst Uncertainty

Funding and flexibility will be key as schools start the 2020-21 school year

Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, state and federal advocacy will be crucial for Wisconsin schools to have the resources and flexibility they'll need to reopen this fall — and remain open going forward.

Everyone is hoping for a return to regular, in-person instruction as soon as possible. President Donald Trump and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos want this to happen so badly that they're advocating the denial of federal funds to schools that don't bring students back into the physical classroom at the start of the fall term.

Meanwhile, school leaders are wrestling with how to reopen classrooms in a safe way that minimizes risks of COVID-19 spread.

Reopening schools in the midst of a pandemic presents a multitude of challenges requiring additional funding and flexibility.

Adhering to social distancing measures and health safety protocols will likely necessitate additional teachers, support staff, bus routes, buses, drivers and maintenance staff. We will also need enhanced cleaning and sanitation procedures and improved air filtration. In addition, we'll face increased costs for supplies such as masks, gloves and thermometers.

Such changes add operational

costs that districts may not be able to bear. More funding or, at a minimum, funding certainty is needed to safely reopen Wisconsin schools. It would also help to centralize the procurement of personal protective equipment in order to ensure an adequate, affordable supply.

Schools need flexibility for things such as counting students on the third Friday of September, which affects revenue limits and state aid. Flexibility would avoid an undercount if schools aren't able to provide in-person instruction on that date or if parents are reluctant to send their children into classrooms due to medical vulnerabilities. Other flexibilities may be needed for pupil transportation counts, staffing, hours of instruction, assessments, licensure and certification, and calculating attendance and truancy.

Some flexibilities can be provided by the Department of Public Instruction through rulemaking while others will require legislative action. One challenge will be getting lawmakers to convene to take up these matters in a timely fashion. Nevertheless, for any of these flexibilities to happen, state and federal decision-makers need to hear from you about what you need.

Here are some considerations to inform your advocacy:

■ Advocacy at the state level

It isn't clear whether the revenue for needed funding will be available at the state level. Wisconsin faces a severe budget shortfall due to the economic downturn. Without an infusion of federal funds, the likely result is a budget reckoning that will dramatically cut state aid to schools at a time when needs are higher.

State revenues through June 2020 are lagging nearly \$750 million behind the comparable period in the previous fiscal year. Earlier estimates put the total potential loss of state revenues at \$2 billion or more. Unemployment levels remain high. Moreover, delaying the income tax filing deadline until July 15 helped taxpayers, but made it harder to get a handle on the extent of the decline.

The second year of the state's two-year budget was built on estimates of revenue growth that did not foresee a public health emergency. Therefore, funding increases for schools are larger in the second year, totaling about \$222.5 million. Several state leaders, including Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R-Burlington), have called for a freeze on second-year state spending.

Adhering to social distancing measures and health safety protocols will likely necessitate additional teachers, support staff, bus routes, buses, drivers and maintenance staff.

SCHOOLS WILL BE ASKED TO PLAY A PART in resolving the looming revenue shortfall, so school leaders need to be proactive in telling legislators how their schools are planning to reopen safely.

Such a freeze means schools would lose the bigger second-year increases — more than half of the overall increases they anticipated when the current state budget was enacted.

Furthermore, schools could also face deep actual cuts to funding. The falloff in state revenues will likely trip the statutory trigger for a budget repair bill. This happens when previously authorized expenditures exceed revenues by more than 0.5% in a given fiscal year. When this happens, the governor must submit a bill containing his recommendations for correcting the imbalance, including whether moneys should be transferred from the state's \$654 million "rainy day" fund to the general fund.

There are practical and political considerations to determining when these cuts could occur. It likely won't be before early August, as the Department of Revenue, State Budget Office and Legislative Fiscal Bureau need time after the July 15 tax filing deadline to provide a clear picture of the extent of the shortfall.

Then come the political considerations. How will the governor propose to address the shortfall? Medicaid expansion seems very likely, as it was included in Gov. Tony Evers' original budget proposal and would capture additional federal dollars. In his exit interview with Wisconsin Eye, Sen. Luther Olsen (R-Ripon) argued

that his Republican colleagues should reconsider their opposition to the expansion in light of the unprecedented nature of the pandemic.

From the legislature's perspective, it's not politically desirable to come into session to address a budget shortfall by cutting popular programs and aid to local governments and schools right before the fall election. Therefore, they may wait to convene after the election in a "lame-duck" session or even wait until the next legislature is seated in January 2021. Regardless, the Republican legislature and Democratic governor must come to an agreement — a rarity this session. Accordingly, signs point to the process dragging on for months.

Despite the gloom and doom regarding the state's fiscal condition, there's a silver lining. In April, school referenda statewide passed at historically high rates, showing strong support for public school funding.

Schools will be asked to play a part in resolving the looming revenue shortfall, so school leaders need to be proactive in telling legislators how their schools are planning to reopen safely. They must also communicate what funding and flexibility is needed to do so.

■ **Advocacy at the federal level**

The federal government is in the best position to help schools with reopening funding and to plug potential losses in state funding. While

state governments must operate on a balanced budget and cannot print money, the federal government is not similarly constrained.

As of this writing, the U.S. Senate is scheduled to take up a new COVID-19 relief bill the week of July 20. While there seems to be bipartisan agreement that more federal relief is needed, neither the amount of funding nor how it will be distributed to schools has been agreed on. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) wants a bill costing no more than \$1 trillion, while the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives passed a \$3 trillion measure in mid-May.

The WASB sent out an action alert to Wisconsin's U.S. senators, Tammy Baldwin (D) and Ron Johnson (R), in July, urging significant federal dollars for schools. It's important to maintain dialogue with federal officials in order to make sure significant help is provided.

School leaders face many difficult decisions as they prepare for the fall — decisions that will rightly be made locally. Education will vary as each district considers how best to serve their students.

The WASB will continue to fight for local control and encourages everyone to join the online Legislative Advocacy Workshops on August 12 and 13. The workshops are intended to prepare individuals to advocate effectively for their students and schools. ■



ADA Issues During the COVID-19 Pandemic

As districts begin to bring students and staff back to school in some capacity during the ongoing public health crisis, among the challenges will be how to return to in-school instruction while ensuring everyone's safety. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, certain employees might be at a higher risk of becoming severely ill from COVID-19, such as individuals who are 65 years or older, individuals who have underlying medical conditions such as diabetes or heart conditions, and pregnant women, among others.¹

The return of in-school instruction will give rise to a number of legal issues regarding districts' and employees' rights and obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act² and the Wisconsin Fair Employment Act³ (collectively, ADA) related to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, districts are prohibited from discriminating against individuals with disabilities under the ADA and are also required to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with physical or mental limitations who are otherwise qualified to do their jobs, unless the district can demonstrate that the accommodation would impose an "undue hardship."

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which enforces the ADA, has issued two guidance documents to address these situations related to COVID-19.⁴ Significantly, the EEOC has taken the position that, during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ADA does not interfere with or prevent districts from following the guidelines and suggestions made by the CDC or state/local public health authorities regarding the steps employers should take concerning COVID-19 and encourages districts to continue to

follow the most current guidance on maintaining workplace safety.

This Legal Comment will review districts' obligations to employees under the ADA during the COVID-19 pandemic.

■ Can districts screen employees for COVID-19?

No matter the form in which return to school takes place, districts will need to address how to keep employees safe given the risks posed by COVID-19. According to current CDC guidance, an individual who has COVID-19 or symptoms associated with it should not be in the workplace. However, the ADA generally prohibits a district from making disability-related inquiries or medical examinations unless they are job-related and consistent with business necessity.⁵

However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the EEOC has concluded that, because of the nature of the pandemic and based upon CDC recommendations, districts may screen employees to determine whether they have symptoms of COVID-19. Districts can require employees to take their own temperatures before coming to work and can take employees' temperatures at school. Districts can also ask employees if they have symptoms of COVID-19 and may require their employees to self-screen each day and document the results prior to entering the workplace. If a district decides to require such screening, the district must do so for all employees and may not single out those employees with health conditions that place them at high risk. Furthermore, because these types of screening tools involve medical information, the EEOC requires that any records generated by the screening be kept confidential and separate from the employees' regular personnel files.⁶

■ Can a district prohibit employees with COVID-19 diagnoses, symptoms or known exposures from coming to work?

The ADA prohibits a district from taking an adverse employment action against a person with a "disability." The EEOC has not officially taken a position whether having COVID-19 constitutes a disability. Nonetheless, the EEOC has taken the position that employers may require employees to stay home if they have been diagnosed with COVID-19, have symptoms of COVID-19 and/or have been exposed to someone who has been so diagnosed or exposed.⁷

■ Can a district require "high risk" employees to return to work?

The CDC advises individuals who are at a higher risk for severe illness to take extra precautions to avoid contracting COVID-19. A question districts will face is whether such "high risk" employees can be required to physically return to work. The mere fact that an employee is concerned about physically returning to work because the employee or someone with whom the employee lives is perceived as "high risk" with respect to COVID-19 does not necessarily mean the employee is disabled and entitled to reasonable accommodations under the ADA.⁸ Therefore, districts may require a "high risk" employee to return to work. If a district is not going to return all employees to work, the district must ensure that its decision about which employees to return is based on objective and non-discriminatory criteria such as experience, teacher pairings or specific skill or licensure needs. Employers may not base such decisions on an employee's protected

characteristics such as age, disability, pregnancy or “high risk” status.

■ **Can a district prohibit “high risk” employees from returning to work?**

A district may not prohibit an employee from returning to work or take any other adverse employment action simply because the employee is considered “high risk” related to potential exposure to COVID-19.⁹ Unless an employee has been exposed to, diagnosed with or displays symptoms of COVID-19 or has a disability that poses a direct threat to themselves, a district may not prohibit an employee from returning to work or require an employee to work from home indefinitely solely because of the employee’s disability, age, pregnancy or other protected characteristic which creates a higher health risk if the employee contracts COVID-19. For example, it would be unlawful for a district to require all employees above a certain age to continue remote instruction while allowing younger employees to physically return to work.

Under the ADA, a district may prohibit an employee from returning to work if the employee has a disability that poses a “direct threat” to the employee’s health that cannot be eliminated or reduced by reasonable accommodation. A district must show that the employee has a disability that poses a “significant risk of substantial harm” to the employee’s own health. This determination must be an individualized assessment based on a reasonable medical judgment about the employee’s disability. When determining if a direct threat is posed, the ADA requires a district to consider the duration of the risk, the nature and severity of the potential

harm, the likelihood that the potential harm will occur, and the imminence of the potential harm.¹⁰ Analysis of these factors will likely include considerations based on the severity of the pandemic in a particular area and the employee’s own health and particular job duties.

Whether an employee’s disability constitutes a direct threat is to be determined based on the best available objective medical evidence. The CDC guidance and advice from other public health authorities are such evidence. Therefore, employers will be acting consistent with the ADA so long as any screening implemented is consistent with advice from the CDC and public health authorities for that type of workplace at that time. A determination of direct threat would also include the likelihood that an individual will be exposed to the virus at the worksite. Measures that an employer might be taking in general to protect all workers, such as mandatory social distancing, also would be relevant to the direct threat analysis.

■ **How should a district determine which accommodation to provide for an employee with a disability?**

Even if a district determines that an employee’s disability poses a direct threat to the employee’s own health, the district still cannot exclude the employee from the workplace unless there is no way to provide a reasonable accommodation, absent undue hardship. The district will also be required to assess its duty to reasonably accommodate an employee who provides the district with medical documentation requesting an accommodation if the employee has a condition that constitutes a disability that puts the employee at higher risk if the

employee contracts COVID-19.

Under the ADA, a reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment in the work environment that enables the employee to perform the essential functions of the job.¹¹ If an employee requests an accommodation, the district is entitled to request documentation supporting the request. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a district may request information from an employee about why an accommodation is needed. Possible questions for the employee might include: (1) how the disability creates a limitation on the employee, (2) how the requested accommodation will effectively address the limitation, (3) whether another form of accommodation could effectively address the issue, and (4) how a proposed accommodation will enable the employee to continue performing the essential functions of his or her position.

Whether an employee’s requested accommodation is “reasonable” depends on the specific circumstances of each work setting. When an employee requests an accommodation, the district must individually examine the employee’s request and work with the employee, and often the employee’s physician, to determine what accommodation(s) will allow the employee to safely and successfully perform the job. Employees are not necessarily entitled to the accommodation of their choice. Instead, when possible, districts must provide an employee with an accommodation that will allow the employee to safely perform the essential functions of the employee’s job while reducing the risk that the employee contracts COVID-19. The ADA also does not require that a district accommodate an employee without a disability based on the disability-related needs of a

No matter the form in which return to school takes place, districts will need to address how to keep employees safe given the risks posed by COVID-19.

family member or other person with whom the employee is associated.

Both the CDC and EEOC encourage districts to adopt flexible workplace policies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. With respect to COVID-19, reasonable accommodations might include personal protective equipment (e.g., gowns, masks, gloves) beyond what the employer might generally provide to employees returning to the workplace. Accommodations might also include additional or enhanced protective measures; for example, erecting a barrier that provides separation between an employee with a disability and others or increasing the space between an employee with a disability and others. Other possible reasonable accommodations include the elimination or substitution of particular “marginal” functions, temporary modification of work schedules to decrease contact with coworkers and/or students, or moving the location where the employee works, including in some circumstances allowing an employee to work remotely.

The ADA does not require the employer to provide an otherwise reasonable accommodation if it would pose an “undue hardship.”¹² A determination of undue hardship must be assessed on a case-by-case basis focusing on the district’s resources and circumstances in relationship to the requested accommodation. An undue hardship not only involves financial considerations, but also involves consideration of whether the accommodation would be unduly expensive, substantial or disruptive, or would fundamentally alter the nature or operation of the district.¹³

The EEOC advises that districts “must weigh the cost of an accommodation against its current budget while taking into account constraints created by this pandemic.” For example, it might be more difficult for a district to move a front-office employee to another room to facilitate better social distancing because that room might be

needed as a secondary nurse’s office for students and employees currently experiencing COVID-19 symptoms at school. Additionally, financial hardships experienced by a district during the pandemic might further support a determination of undue hardship if an employee requests an expensive accommodation.

If a proposed accommodation creates an undue hardship, districts and employees should work together to determine whether an alternative exists that could meet the employee’s needs. If a district is unsure whether a particular requested accommodation creates an undue hardship, the district should consult with legal counsel.

■ Can a district refuse to hire applicants at greater risk?

It is unlawful for a district to refuse employment, withdraw a job offer or postpone an applicant’s start date solely because the district is concerned that an applicant’s age, disability or pregnancy puts them at a greater risk from COVID-19.¹⁴ A district may screen job applicants for symptoms of COVID-19 after making a conditional job offer, as long as it does so for all entering employees in the same type of job. A district may delay the start date of an applicant who has COVID-19 or symptoms associated with it, and may withdraw such an applicant’s job offer if it needs the applicant to start immediately.

■ Conclusion

The new disability accommodation and discrimination issues created by COVID-19 should be a focus of every district’s return-to-school plan. Navigating accommodation requests and creating non-discriminatory policies require an individualized approach adapted to each district’s specific needs. In doing so, districts must not only comply with the ADA, but also their own internal leave and accommodation policies. Because of the complicated nature of

the interactions between these laws and policies, districts are urged to work with legal counsel when addressing these issues. ■

■ End Notes

1. People Who Are at Increased Risk for Severe Illness, CDC, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-increased-risk.html> (last updated June 25, 2020).
2. 42 U.S.C. s. 12101, et. seq.
3. Wis. Stat. s. 111.31-.395.
4. What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and Other EEO Laws, EEOC, <https://www.eeoc.gov/wysk/what-you-should-know-about-covid-19-and-ada-rehabilitation-act-and-other-eEO-laws> (June 17, 2020) [hereinafter What You Should Know About COVID-19]; Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act, EEOC, <https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/pandemic-preparedness-workplace-and-americans-disabilities-act> (last updated March 21, 2020).
5. 29 C.F.R. s. 1630.14(c).
6. 29 C.F.R. s. 1630.14(d)(4)(i).
7. What You Should Know About COVID-19 (section A).
8. Questions & Answers: Association Provision of the ADA, EEOC, <https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/questions-answers-association-provision-ada> (October 17, 2005) (question #4).
9. What You Should Know About COVID-19 (question G.4).
10. 29 C.F.R. s. 1630.2(r).
11. 29 C.F.R. s. 1630.2(o)(1)(ii).
12. What You Should Know About COVID-19 (question D.9-.11).
13. 42 U.S.C. s. 12111(10)(B).
14. What You Should Know About COVID-19 (question C.5).

This Legal Comment was written by Michael J. Julka, Steven C. Zach, Douglas E. Witte, and Brian P. Goodman of Boardman & Clark LLP, WASB Legal Counsel. For additional information on related topics, see Wisconsin School News, “The Duty to Provide Reasonable Accommodations to Employees” (August 2017); “Reasonable Accommodations for Employees with Mental Disabilities” (December 2009); “Employee Disability Discrimination” (February 2002); and “Determining Essential Functions under the ADA” (June 2002).



Educational Services And Products

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► VJS Construction Services

262-542-9000
cbathke@vjscs.com
vjscs.com

A top-10 construction company in southeastern Wisconsin with 65 years of experience.

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► Skyward, Inc.

800-236-7274
ben@skyward.com
skyward.com

Developer of student, budgetary and human resource administrative software exclusively for K-12 school districts.

Financing, Banking, Consulting

► Baird Public Finance

800-792-2473
BBrewer@nbaird.com
nbaird.com/publicfinance

Baird's Public Finance team provides school financing solutions including: long range capital planning, services related to debt issuance, investment advisory services and referendum assistance.

Insurance and Employee Benefits

► Community Insurance Corporation

800-236-6885
khurtz@aegis-wi.com
communityinsurancecorporation.com

Dedicated to providing school districts with the tools they need to economically and efficiently address today's changing insurance and risk management environment.

► EMC Insurance Companies

262-717-3900
philip.lucca@emcins.com
emcins.com

Property and casualty insurance.

► Gallagher

262-792-2240
nancy_moon@ajg.com
ajg.com

Specializing in serving the risk management and insurance needs of public schools.

► Key Benefit Concepts LLC

262-522-6415
info@keybenefits.com
keybenefits.com

Actuarial and employee benefit consulting services.

► M3 Insurance

800-272-2443
marty.malloy@m3ins.com
M3ins.com

The dedicated education specialists at M3 Insurance provide over 50% of Wisconsin school districts with the very best in risk management, employee benefits, and insurance services.

► National Insurance Services of Wisconsin, Inc.

800-627-3660
slaudon@nisbenefits.com
NISBenefits.com

We've been a specialist in public sector benefits since 1969. Our insured products include: health, dental, disability, life and long-term care insurance. Our financial solution products include: health reimbursement accounts, OPEB trusts (fixed or variable), special pay plan and flexible spending accounts.

► R&R Insurance

262-574-7000
jeff.thiel@rrins.com
myknowledgebroker.com

Our School Practice Group has more than 25 years of educational institution experience and a dedicated resource center designed with school district's risk and claims management needs in mind.

► TRICOR Insurance

877-468-7426
john@tricorinsurance.com
tricorinsurance.com

We now insure over 150 public schools. Our School Practice Team is made up of a diverse group of experienced individuals who are extensively trained and specialized in school insurance products, risk management, support services, loss control, human resources and claims advocacy.

► UnitedHealthcare

414-443-4094
cecelia_hopkins@uhc.com
uhc.com

Our mission is to help people live healthier lives by providing access to high quality, affordable healthcare. We are committed to improving the healthcare experience of K-12 teachers, staff, retirees and their families in the state of Wisconsin by providing better information, to drive better decisions, to help improve health.

► USI Insurance Services

608-259-3666
al.jaeger@usi.com
usi.com

Our focus is financial security options that protect and assist growth. We go beyond simply protecting against the loss of assets and property.

Leadership Consulting

► Studer Education

850-898-3949
info@studereducation.com
studereducation.com

We support the critical work of school district leaders through coaching around an Evidence-Based Leadership framework to increase student achievement, employee engagement, parent satisfaction, district support services, and financial efficiency.

Legal Services

► Buelow Vetter Buikema Olson & Vliet LLC

262-364-0300
cbuelow@buelowvetter.com
buelowvetter.com

We have decades of experience in representing school boards across Wisconsin. We advise school boards and administrators on a variety of issues from labor and employment to student discipline and expulsion.

► Strang, Patteson, Renning, Lewis & Lacy, s.c.

844-626-0901
kstrang@strangpatteson.com
strangpatteson.com

We provide legal counsel on a full range of issues that school and higher education institution clients confront on a regular basis.

► von Briesen & Roper, s.c.

414-287-1122
aphillips@vonbriesen.com
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We're dedicated to ingenuity and creativity in helping schools solve their most complex legal and organizational problems. Challenge us to help you challenge the status quo.

► Weld Riley, s.c.

715-839-7786
sweld@weldriley.com
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We provide a wide variety of legal advice and counseling to help Wisconsin school districts, colleges and CESAs address corporate-related, body politic and unique legal issues.

School/Community Research

► School Perceptions, LLC

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

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

Transportation

► Dairyland Buses, Inc.

262-544-8181
mjordan@ridesta.com
ridesta.com

School bus contracting provider, managed contracts, training, maintenance.



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