



We Believe In...

- *Developing the whole student in preparation for lifelong success.*
- *Developing highly trained educational leaders who support the academic, functional, and social/emotional needs of all students.*
- *Developing educational leaders with effective problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, and resources to support our families for students' success.*
- *Advocating so all students receive equitable academic, functional, and social/emotional opportunities.*
- *Engaging various stakeholders on effective practices to improve outcomes for all students.*
- *Developing and sustaining collaborative relationships among organizations and stakeholders.*
- *Developing and sustaining meaningful relationships with families to facilitate student success.*

02	PRESIDENT MESSAGE
03	ELECTION
04	GUEST ARTICLES
05	AWARDS RETIREES
06	REGIONAL NEWS
10	MEMBERSHIP
16	DIRECTORY

WISCONSIN COUNCIL
OF ADMINISTRATORS
OF SPECIAL SERVICES

4797 Hayes Rd
Suite 101
Madison, WI 53704
(o) 608.245.2511
www.wcass.org

WCASS

February
2020

Devoted to Students and Student Service Leaders Through Professional Learning, Advocacy & Educations

Organizational Goals & Priorities

PRIORITY: STRENGTHENING OF OUR ORGANIZATION

Goal 1: To increase, recruit, retain, and engage diverse membership as measured by membership rates, conference attendance, and survey results.

Goal 2: Begin initial plan of succession for the WCASS Executive Director as measured by the completion of the board-approved job description, timeline, and FTE.

PRIORITY: TO INCREASE RELATIONSHIPS AND OUTREACH WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Goal 1: Identify important and essential relationships with organizations throughout Wisconsin as measured by creating a resource chart.

Goal 2: Create learning opportunities across organizations to empower all educators to close gaps for students with barriers to their learning as measured by conference evaluations and sharing of best practices through the regional and state level.

PRIORITY: INCREASE COMMUNICATION AROUND ORGANIZATIONAL ADVOCACY EFFORTS AND INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS PARTICIPATION IN ADVOCACY

Goal 1: Increase membership participation in advocacy efforts as measured by membership survey results.

Impactful Networking

As I approach the last quarter of my term as President of WCASS, I find myself reflecting and appreciating all the opportunities that I have had through the organization to network and learn from others. I know some of us value the opportunity to “network” with peers. I’m not sure that “networking is valued across all educational leaders. Why is that? Does networking have an impact on student outcomes? If so, when? How?

If networking is something that we only do a couple times a year at the WCASS conference, then I am quite doubtful that it has a significant impact. It certainly impacts us as individual professionals, but does it really impact students? We know that networking and collaboration between teachers impacts student achievement and instructional practices, but what about the networking of educational leaders?

The first thing I should do is clarify what I mean by networking. According to Google, “Networking is the exchange of information and ideas among people with a common profession or special interest, usually in an informal social setting”. With this definition, I would like to clarify that our conference agenda and presentations do not fall into my definition of networking. That time is valuable, but I consider conferences and workshops to be coordinated or formal learning opportunities. Networking, is the time I spend chatting with peers outside of the formal professional development settings and offerings.

I can honestly say that when we met only occasionally, the local relationships reflected it. It is not surprising to hear that trusting, supportive relationships come when we spend time together and share in ways that benefit each other. In order to benefit from networking you must put the time in. This is best summed up as you get back what you put into it.

The local component to networking cannot be underestimated. I can give numerous examples of how this has impacted the districts I have worked in over the years and student outcomes. Perhaps the best example is the one I am currently experiencing. The Brown County Directors group is having an impact on student outcomes across the region. I am so thankful for the shared professional development, implementation of practice across district lines, and collaborative media efforts. As a group, we are working together on topics such as suicide crisis response, professional regional trainings, and coordinated implementation of services.

The consistency in the region is improving interagency collaboration, community partnerships, and providing consistency across our districts. I won’t go on about all that we have shared, but please feel free to reach out to Amy Schuh, Caroline Mihalski, Claudia Hendrickson, Jennifer Garceau, Nicole Borley, Sarah Johnson, Sheryl Delarwelle, or Tammy Nicholson to learn more. Our group has expanded to include directors from other counties that chose to be a part of our collaboration efforts.



4-5

DPI-WASBO-WCASS |
Federal Funding
Kalahari | WI Dells



6-8

WCASS |
Spring Conference
Chula Vista | WI Dells

I consider our local director meetings networking. Some may consider the RSN meetings as networking when they don’t involve formal presentations or have a collaborative/open discussion and problem solving component.

I must admit, I haven’t jumped into the research to answer this question. Those of you that know me well realize that isn’t my style. I have reflected on my own personal experience over the last twelve years as a director. I believe networking can have a significant impact on student outcomes and implementation of practice. In my experience I think a few components are critical for Impactful Networking. Impactful networking must include the following:

- Consistent connection
- Strong local/regional component
- Proactive focus on student needs and services
- True sharing, fully open and transparent, not competitive

Networking must happen consistently, much like teacher collaboration. We cannot meet weekly or daily like teachers in a PLC format, but we must meet consistently in order to have an impact on students. I have worked in five different school districts and three different CESA regions over the last twenty years.

We have a shared drive of common artifacts, procedures, and materials. I am so thankful for the contribution of each of these great leaders and how they each share openly for the benefit of all.

We have all been a part of networking that isn’t positive or student focused. In brief segments, this is beneficial as we support each other through challenging situations or tasks. However, the networking that impacts students the most has a much different feel to it. It isn’t a response to a situation, although that too is beneficial on a much smaller scale. The most proactive networking has a systems change focus.

It involves changing and implementing services and supports with consistency across a region or school system. One might argue that this has been an increased focus at DPI as they look at implementation science and how to move school systems forward as well. I have found it is easier to change or move the system when it involves other neighboring systems making the same or similar adjustments.

With school report cards, open enrollment, athletics, and so many other things we compete with each other. What I have enjoyed the most about networking locally is the feeling and approach that we are all in this together. As pupil services directors we have the greatest opportunity to truly network and collaborate rather than compete. We can come together around topics such as suicide prevention, mental health, equity, transition services, and many more. Truly sharing openly our materials, expertise, processes, and the credit for what moves us forward. Learning from each other and having the support of each other and agencies that function across our communities.

My hope is that you are already a part of an impactful network. If not, I hope that you take a step forward by reaching out to others in your area. If you already have a group, but it doesn't feel impactful, have a courageous conversation about how to change that. We can get so much further with each other. Start with looking at yourself. Remember you get what you put into it and any change starts with you and how you show up for others. Look forward to seeing you very soon.

WCASS President

Jerry Nicholson | jnicholson@depere.k12.wi.us



17-18

State Superintendent's Conference
Glacier Canyon Lodge | WI Dells



3-5

WCASS |
Winter Conference
Radisson | Green Bay

Election Time! 2020-21 Ballot

Watch for the Ballot in your email starting on April 1

2020-21 WCASS Board Candidates:

TREASURER CANDIDATES

Caroline Mihlaski

Director of Special Education and Student Services
Wrightstown Community School District

Amanda Mack

St. Francis School District
Director of Student Services

PRESIDENT-ELECT CANDIDATES

Dr. Kelly Kapitz

Director of Special Education
Marathon County Special Education

Lisa Misco

CESA 8
Special Education Director

Begin with the End: *Helping Students with Disabilities Successfully Transition into Adult Life*

In Wisconsin and across the nation, schools are finding success with a more effective approach to preparing students for post-secondary success. This means transitioning away from a traditional textbook-oriented attitude toward a hands-on strategy that integrates each student's strengths, preferences and interests into a tailored, career-driven education, beginning in middle school and continuing through high school and beyond. Wisconsin's Academic & Career Planning (ACP) was developed with the philosophy that equipping students with the tools to make more informed choices about post-secondary education and training will lead to more satisfying careers and lives. This strategy applies to all students and is especially important when considering the education of students with disabilities. These students are historically underrepresented in post-secondary education and the work force and may need additional supports.

Curriculum Matters!

While educators remain the most powerful scholastic influence on student development, having the appropriate resources can be a game-changer for students with disabilities. Often, educators don't have access to effective tools and curriculum that help their students succeed in career and life education. Many times, teachers are left to find free or cheap online materials that fail to provide students with a real skills-building program. Alternately, they may be provided materials that use cartoons or graphics to allow students access to materials written at a certain grade level. These materials are typically not age-appropriate and, as evidence shows, not as effective as project-based learning, which uses a combination of real-life pictures, video modeling and hands-on experience. Teachers need the support of a curriculum that teaches students with special needs the critical career education and employability skills to help them become job and life ready. Curriculum should be of high quality and comprehensive. Resources should be nationally-validated, evidence based and have proven outcomes for students.

Project Discovery is one such program. It offers hands-on career exploration kits, is approved and validated by the US Department of Education, and is structured around evidence-based practices for teaching job skills to all students, including those with intellectual and other developmental disabilities.

Engage Students' Interests

In keeping with the philosophy of ACP, identifying and encouraging academic and career interests is just as important as developing knowledge and skills. Students, including those with disabilities, have a much higher chance of scholastic and employment success if they are excited by the relevance of their studies to their work. This philosophy is echoed in schools and other educational facilities across the country.

Dondie Roper is the PALS program director at the Arc Gateway in Pensacola, Florida. PALS is a two-year post-secondary program for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. According to Ms. Roper, 'One of the keys to all students' success is to find what it is they love to do'. For this purpose, the Arc uses innovative curriculum with titles such as 'Carpentry', 'Greenhouse Work' and 'Caregiver'. Each of these trade-specific resources presents multiple careers to explore, using real job tools to learn real job skills.

Meet Students Where THEY Are

Using differentiated instruction to manage differing levels of experience and capability is another challenge familiar to all educators, especially those who teach students with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. Curriculum that sticks to a 'one-size-fits-all' strategy often frustrates learners who would gain from more robust ... or more simplified instruction. 'Our teachers often struggled to adapt the general curriculum for students with significant educational challenges,' explains Luke Hartman, the Director of Education at Liberty Point Behavioral Healthcare in Staunton, VA.

In order to teach content to learners with different abilities, curriculum should contain multiple reading levels and other supports such as audio, visual schedules and video modeling. 'By using Project Discovery, we have differentiated instruction built into all of our hands-on activities.' Using these strategies, Liberty Point vocational instructors have seen success bridging the gap between multiple learning levels present in the same group of students.

Active Learning Leads to Successful Skill Building: See It. Hear It. Do It!

After identifying student interests and using differentiated instruction to teach content, teachers work with their students to learn & practice job skills in the safety of the classroom. The instructors at Liberty Point used their vocational classroom to apply their students' new skill sets. After the students completed the activities in the Small Engine Repair kit using the provided engine, our teachers found an engine from an old rototiller, explains Dr. Hartman. 'The students were able to translate much of what they had learned and gained a great deal of confidence from their newly acquired skills.' This illustrates the importance of using real tools to develop real skills for real jobs.



Think Beyond the Classroom - Connect to the Community

Finally, in order for classroom efforts to come to full fruition, students need the support and resources to apply what they have learned to further pursuits in their community

In conjunction with specific job skills, students need comprehensive job preparation and independent living skills. Providing soft skill support for students in areas such as 'interviewing for a job' and 'living on your own' is critical. In the hands of competent and inspired educators, these resources have the capability to bolster students' post-secondary success by giving them the ability to apply the job skills they have acquired and live a fulfilling, independent life.

Dondie Roper at the Pensacola Arc sees all these elements as part of a whole: 'We take the long-term approach for all students, including those with special needs and at risk. First, find what they love. Second, learn what they need to learn. Finally, put it to use in the community.'

Wisconsin's Academic and Career Planning (ACP) is a key part of the overall vision for every student to graduate high school and be college and career ready. By identifying evidence-based curriculum that leads to better post-secondary outcomes, Wisconsin educators are joining others throughout the country in preparing learners of all levels for career and life success.

Education Associates

President

Tim Hagan | thagan@educationassociates.com



Awards & Retirees

Each year WCASS recognizes an Outstanding Director of the Year. This Special Education/Pupil Services Administrator is nominated by peers as an exemplar for other Directors. Requirements of the award include:

- Actively participated in professional organizations
- Develop and implement innovative programs that positively influence the fields of special education/pupil services
- Positively impact the administration of special education/pupil services and/or the preparation of special education/pupil services administrators
- Dedicated years of service to special education and/or pupil services

This year WCASS has recognized John Peterson as Outstanding Director of the Year. John was nominated by peers and colleagues who describe him as an individual with a strong work ethic, a strong collaborator and communicator, positive energy, and who above all else is willing to do whatever is necessary to implement positive change in his districts and in our profession. Congratulations, John!

Reminder that nominations for the Rising Star Award, for directors who are in their first three years of service, are being accepted now through May 15. Information on making a nomination, as well as the nomination form, are located on the [WCASS Rising Star webpage](#).

Please Email Diane (DIANE@AWSA.ORG) 2020 Spring Retiree Names to be recognized during the WCASS Spring Conference

Awards & Social Chair

Erikke Nystrom-Grothaus | nystrom-grothause@cesa5.org



Including Students with IEPs in an Equitable Multi System of Supports

I was in the 5th grade in 1975, the year PL 94-142 was implemented to guarantee free appropriate public education to each child with a disability. Due to overcrowding in my school, that fall I began attending a newly constructed elementary school built with this anticipated legislation in mind. There was an entire wing designed especially for the kids with the most significant disabilities, containing not just desks and books but therapy balls, wheelchairs, and parallel bars. I hadn't been in the presence of someone with a visible disability before, and became quickly intrigued by the unique and separate education they received. Instead of pursuing the traditional rite of passage as a safety patrol that year, I volunteered during lunch recess as a peer model. My school's interpretation of least restrictive environment at the time invited kids without disabilities to walk over to that part of the building and either tutor or engage socially with the kids with disabilities. Inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classrooms with any genuine intent was (and often still is) outside the paradigm of what it meant to provide an appropriate education for every student.

Fast forward 27 years to 2001 and the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, a landmark report in shaping the way we think about and deliver educational services. The report set us on a course for developing multi level systems of supports to ensure success for every student by prioritizing the need to 1) embrace a model of prevention rather than failure and 2) view students with disabilities as general education students first. The model of prevention rather than failure is operationalized through implementing an equitable multi level system of supports.

In contrast to the reactive approach of waiting for students to fail and then providing support, a system of supports provides equitable services, practices and resources to every student based on their responsiveness to effective instruction and intervention throughout their educational experience. An effective system of supports inherently recognizes students with disabilities as general education students first, a proactive approach to the struggle we experience in moving toward meaningful inclusion under a wait to fail model.

Today, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides a more articulated definition of what it means to provide an appropriate education for students with disabilities. Meaningful inclusion supports opportunities for students with disabilities to learn alongside rather than just be in the presence of, their non-disabled peers in general education environments. These days most schools provide some form of a continuum of educational experiences for students based on their academic, social, and emotional needs. [Wisconsin's Framework for Equitable Multi Level Systems of Supports](#) (MLSS) defines eleven key features of a system for maximizing the success of every student. Special education services are integral to developing a successful system of supports and ensures students with disabilities are provided the specialized supports they need in addition to what is delivered universally to every learner.

One of the pitfalls in an IEP team determining a student has an educational disability and the need for special education is the tendency to believe that the disability label in and of itself renders a student less capable of mastering age or grade level standards. Variations in ability are after all social constructs, ideas widely accepted but not necessarily representative of reality.

Thus, rather than removing disability related barriers to allow for access to grade level learning as special education was intended, we tend to stop teaching to grade level standards and teach students with disabilities at their current level of attainment. This well-intentioned shift in instructional practice has resulted in a perpetual gap between them and their peers who have not been given a disability label. This shift in instructional practice also reinforces the implicit biases (unconscious attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions) we hold that contribute to lowered expectations for students with disabilities.

High quality instruction within an equitable multi level system of supports is defined the same for students with a disability as for those without a disability. Thus, recognizing students with disabilities as general education students first means providing them with curriculum, instruction, and assessment that is:

1. engaging and differentiated through principles of universal design for learning,
2. standards based,
3. data driven,
4. research or evidence based, and
5. culturally and linguistically responsive to the student being instructed.

High quality instruction ensures meaningful access by students with disabilities to the same rigorous, standards based, grade level instruction provided to students without disabilities. This includes students with significant disabilities who may be supported through modified instruction or, for a very small number of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, instruction aligned with alternative standards.

High quality instruction ensures meaningful access by students with disabilities to the same rigorous, standards based, grade level instruction provided to students without disabilities. This includes students with significant disabilities who may be supported through modified instruction or, for a very small number of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, instruction aligned with alternative standards.

Unfortunately, meaningful access is often interpreted as simply ensuring students with disabilities are physically placed in the presence of high quality instruction provided to students without disabilities in general education settings. In contrast, meaningful access for students with disabilities within an equitable system ensures:

- 1..opportunities to use and benefit from instructional materials and services provided in any setting (general education, special education, community and vocational),
2. age and/or grade level learning expectations are maintained (developmental, academic, behavioral, social, and emotional),
3. progress is made in mastery of grade level standards,
4. participation in general education settings to the maximum extent appropriate with reasonable accommodations and supports to remove barriers that may preclude access to meaningful participation, and
5. instruction is connected to grade level standards and the universal curriculum when delivered in a setting other than general education.

To accomplish this, special education services, which include specially designed instruction, related services, supplementary aids and services, and program modifications and supports for staff are integrated within a well-designed and equitable multi level system of supports (MLSS). They can be found throughout the continuum, levels, or tiers depending on how a system is defined, and look different for each student with a disability.

For example, specially designed instruction is one form of tier three, or intensive intervention within an equitable MLSS determined by a student's IEP team as necessary to address that student's disability-related needs. Since the purpose of specially designed instruction is to remove barriers to learning and progress toward mastery of grade level academic, social, and emotional standards, the vast majority of students with disabilities are best served within general education settings most of the time and assessed in relation to grade level standards. Thus, specially designed instruction may look essentially the same as an intensive general education intervention if a student with an IEP has a disability-related need for a targeted skill that is the same as a peer without a disability. In this instance, an outside observer might see no difference in the instructional experience of both students. Specially designed instruction is typically provided when a student's needs in a particular area are intensive and interventions are more likely to require sustained time and effort in order for the student to maintain adequate rates of progress over time. Another important distinction is that special education is a civil right for students with disabilities under IDEA who have historically been marginalized, excluding them from accessing the free appropriate public education available to their non-disabled peers. An important consideration is that while students with disabilities are receiving specially designed instruction, they continue to have meaningful access to all the resources available to students without disabilities within the school and district. This is best accomplished when special and general educators collaborate on instructional design for all students. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction provides additional guidance on the [role of special education in an equitable multi level system of supports](#) on their website.

With meaningful inclusion and access for students with disabilities so clearly defined, what prevents us from providing it consistently? Advancing equity for students with disabilities within an MLSS invites a journey of discovery that begins with an authentic examination of our beliefs about ability, some of which are known to us with others lingering just below what we state consciously. Examining the disconnect between what we say we believe and what we do in service to students with disabilities is one way [Wisconsin's Model to Inform Culturally Responsive Practice](#) operationalizes this journey. The eight areas of action, when examined and leveraged through the lens of ability, guide the user through knowing oneself, learning about others, and then moving to action in ways that ensure students with disabilities are provided the high quality education available to their non-disabled peers. In essence, everything we need to effectively educate every student is at our disposal. When we deepen our understanding of what every student needs and leverage our resources accordingly equity will no longer be a goal, it will be a given.

**WI Dept of Public Instruction
Special Edu Team | Asst Director
Lynn Winn | lynn.winn@dpi.wi.gov**



How to improve Students with Disabilities' Reading Skills

Wisconsin's results of the 2018/19 state-wide English Language Arts (ELA) scores paint a very bleak picture of Students with Disabilities' (SwD) reading skills. For example, the Forward Exam shows that 84.4% of SwD perform at the Basic & Below Basic levels (Below Basic: 57.4%; Basic 27%). Similar data on the ACT Aspire: (No Test: 19.9%; Below Basic: 56.9%; Basic: 18.1%), and on the ACT Statewide (No Test: 13.9%; Below Basic: 63.1%; Basic: 16.4%).

Unfortunately, this poor performance is reflected in most of our 421 public school districts, if not all school districts.

Unfortunately, Wisconsin's low ELA scores for SwD are not unique. In its 2018 40th Annual Report To Congress on the Implementation of IDEA, OSEP noted that the median percentage of SwD who were found to be proficient in reading ranged from 11.1% to 20.7%. In other words, nationwide between 79.3% and 88.9% of SwD performed at Basic and below basic levels in reading.

What Does the Educational Research Suggest?

The National Center on Accessible Educational Materials has long established the value of using 'Text to Speech' (TTS) Digital software as well as Digital Audiobooks to improve reading fluency and comprehension in Students with Disabilities. To be clear, the use of such software will be most effective for SwD whose primary reading difficulties are at the word-level, i.e., oral reading fluency, rapid-word-naming, decoding, connecting, or deriving meaning from the printed word.

[Research | Audio Supported Reading](#)

In a 2015 publication on Audio-Supported Reading and Students with Learning Disabilities, Richard Jackson & Joanne Karger wrote in part:

...” For students whose difficulty rests with decoding or rapid naming of words, it is reasonable to assume that listening to pre-recorded or synthesized (computer-generated) speech can serve several vital functions. For example, pairing written text with speech helps to sustain engagement during the reading task. Listening while viewing text can connect students directly to the text itself while the meaning of the text can be captured through listening. Additionally, listening to text presented synchronously with speech may possibly serve a remedial function, particularly with regard to building speed or fluency. Moreover, early use of voice recorded text may limit the ever-widening gap in learning that is all too often observed in elementary grades with struggling readers (Cunningham & Chen, 2014; Stanovich, 1986). Typical learners who receive high-quality literacy instruction develop rapidly in their acquisition of reading skills. Their general knowledge and vocabulary expand as they read about life in general and the world beyond their direct experience. Without audio recordings of printed text, these students would be denied the opportunity to learn about and to discuss what their peers are benefiting from through text reading. Thus, for many who struggle with text reading, listening to text affords an opportunity to access and participate in the general education curriculum—i.e., the same curriculum offered to Students without disabilities. As a caveat, it is important to note that listening to audio recordings of printed text will not substitute for explicit, carefully targeted instruction in literacy skills for students who struggle early. However, providing the opportunity to listen to text while learning to read can prevent students from disengaging with or turning away from text altogether. Nevertheless, reading with audio supports must be recognized as an ancillary aid crucial for learning, especially where struggling readers are able to access the same content as their peers.”



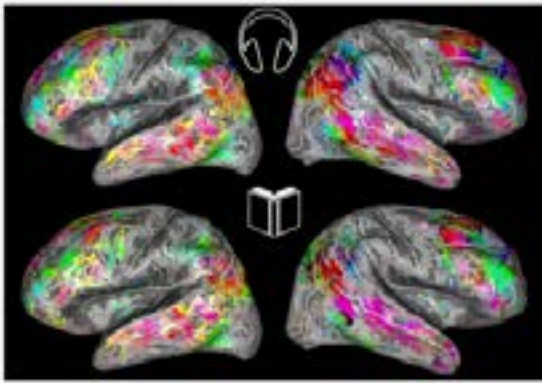
Research publications over the past 20 years suggest that when SwD are provided with accessibility to instruction through 'Text to Speech' (TTS), there is a significant increase in these students' reading fluency and comprehension. When the reader does not have to spend time decoding words, the mind is available to understand the text.

[Assisted Reading With Digital Audiobooks for Students with Reading Disabilities](#)

A 2019 research publication in reading and brain mapping demonstrates that reading words or listening to words activates the same brain regions, regardless how the words get in. The brain creates meaning from the words regardless if they were listen to or read.

Please reference the color coded map of the brain, enclosed within, that shows the semantic similarities during listening (top) and reading (bottom).

[Audiobooks or Reading? To Our Brains, It Doesn't Matter](#)



These color-coded maps of the brain show the semantic similarities during listening (top) and reading (bottom). (Credit: Fatma Deniz)

Educational Implications

Teachers need to identify SwD who struggle with reading, specifically at the word level, including oral reading fluency, rapid-word-naming, decoding, connecting, or deriving meaning from the printed word. These students are the best candidates to benefit from Audio Supported Reading approaches such as Text-to-Speech (TTS), Digital Audiobooks and the like.

Digital technology available in 2020, guarantees that most if not all educational printed materials are also available digitally in a Text-To-Speech format. Teachers need to use this format with these students on a daily basis.

Teachers are also encouraged to review the WCASS Guide on Print Disability (See link below) on such topics as: What are the Print Disability indicators? How the IEP team determines if a student has a print disability. What are Accessible Educational Materials (AEM)? What is Text-to-Speech? What is an Audio file? Etc.,

[Print Disability Guide | WCASS](#)

A common question/comment from teachers and administrators regarding TTS use is “what’s the point if the students are not allowed to use TTS during the Forward Exam?”

The answer is two-fold: (1) The Forward Exam does in fact allow the use of TTS in Math, Social Studies, Science and ELA (except section 4, reading) (more information on Forward Exam and TTS is presented below), and (2) research has shown that with the use of TTS over time, the student improves his/her reading fluency and comprehension. Consequently, the student will be expected to perform better on any subsequent reading test, including the Forward Exam, ELA section 4, reading.

Forward Exam and Text-to-Speech (TTS)

The Forward Exam includes 3 supports sections, two of which are available to all students including SwD. These are: (1) Universal Tools (contains 20 support items, embedded and non-embedded), and (2) Designated Supports (contains 17 support items, embedded and non-embedded). The 3rd support section is the Accommodation section, only available for SwD.

For some reason, many school districts’ staff didn’t incorporate the needed supports from the Designated Supports section’s 17 items in their students’ IEP I-7 form. The Designated Supports section allows the use of TTS, as well as includes a statement on who can recommend the use of the Text-To-Speech (TTS) option. The TTS use is allowed for any student for: *“...whom the need has been indicated by an educator or team of educators...and are part of the student’s classroom instruction...”* (Wisconsin Forward Exam, Accessibility Guide, Spring 2020).



This is the Guidance provided by the Forward Exam for the TTS use:

“...Text-to-speech (TTS) (computer voice) is allowed as a designated support for all grades in mathematics, science, social studies, and English language arts (ELA) as appropriate (not allowed for ELA Session 4 reading passages). With this feature, test content is read aloud by the computer in the English language.”

The TTS designated support is intended only for students who are struggling readers who may need assistance accessing the assessment or for students with reading-related disabilities. Students should use a similar support on a regular basis in the classroom. Allowing TTS for all students is not a proper use of this support. Students who use this support will need headphones unless tested individually in a separate setting.”

Continued on next page...

Where to go From Here?

- Read the [Forward Exam Accessibility Guide](#) information on the 3 Support sections, especially The Universal Tools and the Designated Supports. Consider which items might be appropriate for use by your students, including the TTS item.

- When appropriate, consider review/revising your students' IEP form I-7 Forward to add the appropriate Designated Supports under section A for Designated Supports.

- Read [DPI Bulletin 18.3 on Legal Requirements on AEM](#)

- Read the [WCASS Guide on Print Disability](#):

- If teachers need to know a bit more about the technology, they can use in their schools to blend TTS with their existing platforms and infrastructure, review the resources Linked below...

[Audio Supported Reading](#)
[Text to Speech as a Support for Personalizing the Reading Experience](#)

- As was suggested earlier by Jackson v& Krager, when using TTS, do not stop your students' reading/literacy instruction altogether, but rather use both : *"...As a caveat, it is important to note that listening to audio recordings of printed text will not substitute for explicit, carefully targeted instruction in literacy skills for students who struggle early. However, providing the opportunity to listen to text while learning to read can prevent students from disengaging with or turning away from text altogether."*

- Consult with your Special Education Director on how to obtain additional guidance and support from the CESA 2 WI AEM Center (see link below)

[WI AEM Center](#)



Director of Special Education | CESA 7
Nissan B. Bar-Lev | nbarlev@wi.rr.com



[Link to a video](#) on students using TTS:

CYBERSECURITY: IT'S EVERYONE'S LIFT

The Wisconsin Education Technology Leaders CTO Clinic

Featuring Ryan Cloutier,
CISSP, Principal Security
Architect, CISSP®

CYBERSECURITY: NEW LIFE, SKILLS, AND PREPAREDNESS FOR THE FUTURE.

Protecting the digital lives of those in our care is a critical part of our daily work, to do this effectively we all need new life skills and ways to approach the problem. In this engaging session, you will become equipped with new skills and approaches you need to increase your ability to protect data and the humans who that data belongs to and how to effect immediate change in your schools, community's and cybersecurity programs. This day of learning will include two tabletop exercises. Participants are encouraged to bring leadership teams to this free event.

.....

Sunday, March 1, 2020
9:00am - 4:00pm
Kalahar Resort and Convention Center
Register at <https://bit.ly/2Yy6sSX>

Presented in partnership with



WCASS Regional News



REGION 1 | Amanda Mack amack@sfsd.k12.wi.us

A team of Special Education Directors from Elmbrook, Wauwatosa, New Berlin & West Allis-West Milwaukee, along with the CESA #1 RSN, presented at WCASS Winter Conference on School-Based Implementation of Collaborative & Proactive Solutions. They presented at the September RSN meeting and are sharing their work statewide. WCASS awards nominations are open for the CESA #1 region. We are encouraging directors to recognize the great work of their students and staff. The combined WCASS Awards Luncheon/RSN meeting will be held on April 24 at the Milwaukee County Zoo Peck Welcome Center.

REGION 2 | Todd Graco tgraco@email.parkview.k12.wi.us

WORKSHOPS OFFERED THRU CESA 2

MARCH 6, 2020 - FRIDAY

*Youth Mental Health First Aid

APRIL 2, 2020 - THURSDAY

*RSN New Directors Network Mtg

MAY 22, 2020 - FRIDAY

*RSN Network Mtg

For more information regarding Region 2 please contact Todd.

REGION 3 | Tammy Cooley cooleytp@potosisd.k12.wi.us

NEWS FROM REGION 3: Schools in [CESA 3](#) are embracing efforts to address social-emotional learning and mental health. Several CESA 3 schools have partnered with local mental health agencies to bring therapy into the schools. This has been a benefit to students and has provided greater access to Mental Health services in our small rural schools.

Along with community mental health partnerships, some districts also have added positions specifically to address mental health and SEL needs with their schools. Potosi has a full-time Social-Emotional Learning Coach, Cuba City has a Self-Regulation Counselor, and Southwestern has hired a Student Needs Facilitator. Districts are also partnering with Challenge to Change, an organization from Dubuque, Iowa aimed at teaching mindfulness practices that promote improved focus and emotion management.

WORKSHOPS OFFERED THRU CESA 3 THIS SPRING

March 10 - Teach Like a Champion Series

RSN MTG DATES TO BE HELD AT CESA 3 FROM

9:00AM-3:00PM

MARCH, 20, 2020

MAY 15, 2020

REGION 4 | Tracy Hogden thogden@cesa4.org

Here's wishing you a wonderful 2020 and that your holiday break was enjoyable and refreshing. There are many statewide trainings offered to support our staff and students at CESA 4 and throughout the state that I would like to remind you of.

College and Career Ready IEPS Statewide [*Calendar](#)

[*Statewide Neurodiverse Trainings Workshops](#)

RSN meetings scheduled for the remainder of the year: 3/13, 5/15

[The Technical Assistance Team](#) is continuing their work on working with school and district teams who want to engage in the continuous improvement process.

CESA 4 will be hosting Rick Warmli on May 15, 2020.

Mark your calendar for next school year already:

*Shelley Moore will be at CESA 4 on October 29th, 2020

*Supporting Neurodiverse Learners Trainings will be held at CESA 4 on October 1, 2, 2020

There are more offerings and happenings throughout the year which I will share when I learn of them. Be on the look-out for an email from me as we will be taking nominations for Region 4 WCASS Awards soon!



REGION 5 | Barbara Gransee
gransee_b@afasd.net

CESA 5 will be offering a Bal-A-Vis-X training in June. Bal-A-Vis-X is a series of Balance/Auditory/Vision eXercises, varied in complexity and based on rhythm. It focuses on the following: Visual tracking, confidence and self discipline, student leadership skills, community building, decreased impulsivity, increased attention span, auditory skills, increased ability to hold rhythmic patterns, motor planning, hand eye coordination, bilateral and full body coordination, and balance.

In addition, CESA 5 will offer a co-teaching training in the spring. Co-teaching, generally speaking, refers to a regular education teacher and a special education teacher teaming together to provide instruction in an inclusive classroom of students with diverse needs. Participants will learn about the commitment required to ensure the effectiveness of this method and to enhance instructional outcomes. Best wishes in 2020!

REGION 6 | Marci Thiry
thiry@mjsd.k12.wi.us

WORKSHOPS | RNS MTGS OFFERED THRU CESA 6
March 19 - RSN Mtg
April 16 - RNS Mtg
May 21 - RSN Mtg / WCASS Awards
July 27 - RSN Mtg / Year End Planning
Sept 17 - RSN Mtg

For more information regarding Region 6 please contact Marci.

REGION 7 | Caroline Mihalski
mihalski@wrightstown.k12.wi.us

The remaining of this year's CESA 7 Director Breakfasts are at 8:30am on: April 3rd, and May 1st. Mrs. Spengler has been working to bring in key presenters and consultants when possible, such as school legal consultants to answer questions and give advice. These director breakfast meetings are a must.

For more information regarding Region 7 please contact Caroline

REGION 8 | Brenda Jozwiak-Boldig
bjboldig@cesa8.org

CESA 8 Directors and Special Education Leadership had a RSN meeting on January 10, 2020 addressing topics to include open enrollment, MOE, LEA IDEA Determination Reports, WCASS updates, etc. Teams processed DPI resources and federal reports to support our region in messaging out and applying the work back at their school level. Updates were also shared from WSPEI, EC Program Support, RTI Center and Regional Transition representative.

CESA 8 Directors engaged in a book study this fall connected to Shelley Moore's book (One Without the Other: Stories of Unity and Diversity) and have been processing the various videos, blogs, teaching strategies and handouts found on her website (fivemoorem-inutes.com). This has informed our learning around inclusive practices. Our spring book study will also focus on inclusive practices (Your Students, My Students & Our Students: Rethinking Equitable & Inclusive Practices). Next steps will be determining how to take the information back to school and district teams and work with all educators around this topic.

Our next RSN Leadership meeting will be a combined meeting with Directors & Principals on April 2, 2020. The focus of this session will be legal updates with Mary Gerbig in the morning and job-alike sessions in the afternoon.

REGION 9 | Trish Teichmiller
trish.teichmiller@ldfschool.org

WORKSHOPS | RNS MTGS OFFERED THRU CESA 9
March 12 - 1/2 Day Webcast CCR: IEP for Neurodiverse Learners
April 22- Supporting Neurodiverse Learners: Sensory and Self-Regulation Training Workshop

On December 18, 2019 CESA 9 hosted a Joint Leadership meeting (including Principals, C & I's, Directors of Special Ed/Pupil Services and Superintendents) to discuss updates from DPI regarding General and Special Education, Joint notifications and Social Emotional Learning assessment. With the assistance of CESA 9 Rockstars, school leaders took a deeper dive into School Report Cards, graphing 5-year trends, conducting a gap analysis and looking more closely at student groups. The afternoon breakout sessions included our Region 9 Special Education Directors under the tutelage of CESA 9 RSN Director, Matt Collins. We had further discussion and planning regarding the Joint Notification, making sense of the IDEA Identifications and making sense of the required actions.

From Merrill Area Public Schools:

We enjoyed a welcome back presentation by Tim Kight of Focus3. Tim focused on the critical factors that distinguish great organizations from average organizations and delivered a powerful message on the mindset and skills at the heart of individual and organizational performance. He also provided the tools necessary to sustain a positive culture and climate and stressed that how we respond will measure our success as respective organizations. Tim has worked closely with Urban Meyer and the Ohio State football team as the Buckeyes' leadership coach. His work with Ohio State has been featured in the Wall Street Journal, Sports Illustrated and ESPN (source www.focus3.com).

Continued on Next Pg.

REGION 9 | Trish Teichmiller
trish.teichmiller@ldfschool.org

From Marathon County:

MCSE and our consortium schools were a recipient of the State Mental Health Grant, receiving \$72,500 for each of two years. These dollars will help to support and extend our existing infrastructure, increase development in referral pathways and allow us to gather data on outcomes. We are very excited about this collaborative opportunity!

Lakeland Area Consortium of Schools:

We are excited to have been awarded the Project AWARE grant, a 5-year federal grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) and DPI Safe and Healthy Schools. Our goals for the grant will be to coordinate more immediate on-site response by mental health providers; provide coordinated referral, services and follow-up; and to provide more training for staff, students and community to increase mental health literacy, trauma responsive strategies, and improve Social-Emotional learning.

REGION 10 | Missy Lesik
lesikm@cadott.k12.wi.us

Greetings, I can't believe we are more than halfway through the school year. In Region 10 many districts have been engaged in preparations for the January Snapshot, connecting with Technical Assistance related to our Joint Federal Notification Packets, and engaging with Continuous Improvement processes. Throughout the remainder of the year, professional development opportunities in our region include: Wisconsin RtI Center's Universal Reading, Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training, Universal Design for Learning: Lesson Design Series, ACP, PLC Coaching Academy, John SanGiovanni: Math Formative Assessments, Leading for Learning, and Best Practice in Assessment and Grading. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions/concerns or would like more information regarding Region 10!

REGION 11 | Carol Kline
ckline@unity.k12.wi.us

WORKSHOPS | RNS MTGS OFFERED THRU CESA 11

- March 13 - Dir of Special Edu Mtg
- April 23 - Trauma Sensitive Schools Initiative
- May 11 - Resources to Support Inclusion

For more information regarding Region 11 please contact Carol.

REGION 12 | Cody Fechtelkotter
cfechtelkotter@nw-tigers.org

WORKSHOPS | RNS MTGS OFFERED THRU CESA 12

- March 5 - Supporting Students w/Autism & Beyond
- March 12 - CCR IEPs with a Focus on SEL
- March 13 - RSN Mtg
- April 2 - Youth Mental Health First Aid Training
- April 3 - 2020 Mental Health Summit
- April 20 Trauma Sensitive School Cohort Meeting
- April 24 - RSN Mtg

For more information regarding Region 12 please contact Cody.



We are WCASS! This is a strong organization that offers valuable resources to directors across the state. Our ties to DPI and other state organizations keep us up to speed on the ever changing world of education. We offer networking opportunities and valuable training opportunities throughout the year.

The links below allow you to quickly join/renew your WCASS membership and CEC/CASE membership. Contact me at TNICHOLSON@ASHWAUBENONK12.ORG for information about joining or feel free to contact your WCASS region representative.

Register for [WCASS](#)

Register for [CEC/CASE](#)

make sure to select the WI CASE division

Check out the [CASE link](#) to see all it has to offer

Membership Chair

Tammy Nicholson | tnicholson@ashwaubenonk12.org

*Be on the Lookout for your Membership Renewal Invoices this June!

Any questions, concerns, or changes should be forwarded to Diane.

DIANE@AWSA.ORG | 608.729.6663

Membership Corner



WCEC Update

The Wisconsin Council for Exceptional Children has announced an exciting professional development opportunity for paraprofessionals throughout our state. Next summer on August 12, 2020 the plan is to hold a half day conference for paraprofessionals around current topics and best practices in schools. Some of the topics include behavior supports, math support, social stories and adult SEL. WCEC is holding this conference at a location to be determined in the Green Bay area. WCEC is also looking and open to district presenters and more topics that would be beneficial to paraprofessionals in all settings.

This year the National CEC conference was in Portland, OR February 5, 2020 through February 8, 2020. If you have any presentation ideas or want to present at the WCEC conference for paraprofessionals in Green Bay this summer let me know. My email is shohohoneyj@cudahysd.org and my phone number is 414-294-7421.

WCEC Liason

Director of Student Services | Cudahy School District

Jennifer Shohonoey | shohoneyj@cudahysd.org



Get Social...
[@WCASS_WI](https://twitter.com/WCASS_WI)

2019-20 WCASS Board of Directors | Directory

www.wcass.org

Jerry Nicholson

President

920.983.2456

jnicholson@depere.k12.wi.us

Sara Totten

President Elect

608.842.6526

stotten@deforestschoools.org

John Peterson

Past President

262.246.1973 x1184

petejo@hamilton.k12.wi.us

Wendi Dawson

Secretary

920.324.9341 x2188

wdawson@waupun.k12.wi.us

Lisa Misco

Treasurer

920.855.2114 x233

lmisco@cesa8.org

Gary Myrah

WCASS | Executive Director

608.729.6652

garymyrah@wcass.org

John Forester

SAA | Executive Director

608.242.1370

john.forester@wsaa.org

Caleb Feidt

Legislation Chair

715.345.5456

cfeidt@pointschools.net

Tammy Nicholson

Membership

920.492.2905 x1010

tnicholson@ashwaubenonk12.org

Kurt Eley

Public Relations

608.849.2015

keley@waunakee.k12.wi.us

Kelly Kapitz

Professional Development

715.261.1980

kkapitz@mce.k12.wi.us

Maggie Peterson

Professional Development

715.365.9700

petermag@rhinelander.k12.wi.us

Matt Huettl

Research & Special Projects

608.676.0992

mahuettl@clintonwis.com

Erikke Nystrom-Grothaus

Awards & Social Chair

608.745.5440

nystrom-grothause@cesa5.org

Jennifer Shohoney

WCEC Liaison

414.294.7421

shohoneyj@cudahysd.org

Diane Brzezinski

Newsletter Editor

608.245.2511

wcass@wcass.org