



WCASS Newsletter

WISCONSIN COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATORS OF SPECIAL SERVICES, LTD.



President's Message:

By John Peterson

On February 14th, our nation watched in horror of another gun shooting involving youth, this time at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland Florida. Unfortunately what ensued in the aftermath of this devastating event was a politicized debate on what went wrong and what is wrong with our nation's public schools. In Wisconsin, this tragedy gave rise to Assembly Bill 843. Within AB 843, the Wisconsin legislature took a stand against the argument of arming teachers and other school personnel. They also pumped \$100 million of one time monies into public school for school safety-related measures. I have no doubt that AB 843 is well intended by Wisconsin's Governor and legislature. In reality, AB 843 does not solve the problems of gun violence within our society, and it unfortunately adds to the untrue rhetoric that Wisconsin's public schools are unsafe.

As WCASS' president, I have had the opportunity to go visit Cooperative Educational Service Agencies throughout the state. I am always amazed at the discrepancy in resources between suburban/urban school districts and rural school districts when I go on these visits. I am very fortunate to serve in a school district where we have a full-time School Resource Officer. Talking recently to school administrators in rural districts, it is clear that they do not have such a resource. When asked if the districts had a School Resource Officer, only one out of the twenty or so districts represented said they had one. That district recently partnered with two other districts to split

the costs three ways so they could share a School Resource Officer (having a part time SRO was considered better option than not having one at all). Unfortunately AB 843 only provides one time monies to school districts; not monies on a reoccurring basis. A School Resource Officer is a wonderful resource but comes with a price tag and AB 843 does not help rural districts in our state achieve financing this position. AB 843 does fund a full time Director of the Office of School Safety on a reoccurring basis out of the Department of Justice. Although this position will do nothing for our rural Wisconsin districts, administrators from our rural districts now have a single person to express their concerns to about not having the necessary funding for a School Resource Officer.

AB 843 not only does not help provide rural school districts with the adequate resources for a School Resource Officer position, it also adds to the untrue rhetoric that public schools are unsafe and dangerous places to send your children. All gun shootings in our nation our tragic, including school gun shootings. That should never be understated. What people need to remember is the number of gun shootings that occur in our public schools across the nation is low. The Washington Post reported on March 25, 2018 that between 1999 and 2017, an average of ten gun shootings occurred in our nation's schools each year (with a low of five in 2002 and a high of fifteen in 2014).

[President's Message continued on page 2...](#)

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President's Message Continued...

This is still ten too many each year. The public needs to remember that in 2010 there were over 98,817 public schools in our nation (according to the US Department of Education). That means that 99.99% of all schools each year do NOT experience a gun shooting at school. The politicized argument that comes out of these gun shooting tragedies is that all public schools are failing at keeping our students safe. The counter-argument is this is why we need school vouchers and the public subsidization of our nation's private schools. In other words, our public schools are unsafe so send your children to private schools instead. In all of the political dialogue that lead up to the passing of AB 843, nowhere was the safety of our students in private schools mentioned – not once. That was no mistake. As our school districts move forward after the passing of AB 843, the best things that we can continue to do is to focus

on making sure that each of our students is connected to at least one adult in our schools that they can trust. We must also continue to work with our communities to develop, implement, and practice our school safety plans. Hopefully these schools' safety plans will someday involve a full-time School Resource Officer, especially for our rural districts. Our schools are NOT failing to protect our students and the safety, development, and wellbeing of our students will always be tantamount to their academic, social, and emotional growth.



Join or Renew Your Membership



Don't miss out on the opportunity to connect with professionals around the state and country!

By Tammy Nicholson

Thanks to everyone who has already renewed their WCASS membership for the 17-18 school year. Please reach out to new directors in your area and encourage them to join our WCASS organization.

Contact me at tnicholson@ashwaubenonk12.org for information or put them in contact with your WCASS region representative.

Let's all help support our new members!

Join WCASS

<http://www.wcass.org/join-renew>

Join CEC/CASE

<http://www.cec.sped.org/Membership>

- make sure to select the WI CASE division*
- check out the CASE link to see all it has to offer <http://www.casecec.org/>

Social Emotional Learning or Education for Employment

By Gary Myrah

At a recent meeting of the State Superintendent's Council on Equity, we observed elements of social emotional learning in the Mequon-Thiensville School District. During this discussion, one perspective that I believe would receive more universal acceptance is to change the focus from social emotional learning to teaching successful employability skills.

Throughout my career I have had experiences of negative reactions by parents when we tried to implement elements that are now being referred to social emotional learning. I have witnessed large segments of the population that become uncomfortable with efforts to teach values/social emotional learning/character etc. to children in a public school. Yet I had an epiphany when we discussed using the same methods to effectively teach employability skills.

I believe there may be more parents accepting the concept of learning the soft skills required to maintain employment as an adult. There seems to be great concern that our public-school graduates are not leaving with the necessary soft skills needed to be effective in life.

Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates

High school status completion rates increased from 83.6 percent in 1974 to 92.4 percent in 2014 among 18- to 24-year-olds, according to a new report. In the same time period, the gap in completion rates between White youth and Black and Hispanic youth narrowed, although the gaps remain.

The National Center for Education Statistics released *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 2014* today (February 22), which draws on a wide array of surveys and administrative datasets to present statistics on high school dropout and completion rates at the state and national levels.

Other key findings from this year's report are:

- Between October 2013 and October 2014, approximately 567,000 youth (ages 15- to 24) left school without obtaining a high school credential. These "event dropouts" accounted for 5.2 percent of the 10.9 million 15- to 24-year-olds enrolled in grades 10 through 12;
- The status dropout rate—the percentage of 16- to 24-year-olds who are not enrolled in school and have not earned a high school credential—varied by racial/ethnic group. As measured by the American Community Survey, the 2014 status dropout rate was lower for youth who were Asian (2.5 percent), White (4.4 percent), and of Two or more races (5.0 percent) than it was for those who were Black (7.9 percent), Pacific Islander (10.6 percent), Hispanic (10.7 percent), and American Indian/Alaska Native (11.5 percent); and
- The gap in high school status completion rates between White and Black youth narrowed from 13.8 percentage points in 1974 to 6.5 percentage points in 1990, showed no measurable change from 1990 to 2000, and fell again from 8.1 percentage points in 2000 to 2.5 percentage points in 2014. The White-Hispanic gap in status completion rates showed no clear trend between 1974 and 2000, but fell from 27.7 percentage points in 2000 to 7.1 percentage points in 2014.



To browse this report's findings online, please visit <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/dropout/index.asp>

To download the full report as a PDF file, please

visit: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2018117>

WCASS Upcoming Training Dates & Events

May 2-4, 2018

WCASS 2018 Spring Conference: 3 days, Best Western Premier Hotel, Oshkosh, WI

October 8, 2018

Academy for New Special Education Leadership: Wilderness Resort, Wisconsin Dells, WI

October 9-10, 2018

State Superintendent's Conference: 2 days, Wilderness Resort, Wisconsin Dells, WI

Please visit our website at <http://www.wcass.org/wcass-events>

Resources for Safe Schools related to Individuals with Disabilities

By Gary Myrah

Again the nation is responding to the recent school shooting tragedy in a variety of ways. My hope is the incredible public response led by our younger generation may have greater impact than the grieving survivors of a localized incident. We have already seen federal and state legislation that has been passed focusing on solutions.

A concern that we must all have is the reality there is now 'quick fix' for the issues we are facing. For years directors through the state and nation have raised the concern of the increased volatility of individuals that are receiving a Free and Appropriate Public Education. As directors, we recognize that our staff are not sufficiently prepared and are schools are not designed for effectively working with the most volatile students.

As the Department of Justice (DoJ) is responsible for approving the School Safety Grants that were created in March with a total of \$100 million. The concern is the timeline that needs to be met for this money to be available as of July 1, 2018. Locally every director must be involved with the discussion of how any plan being submitted includes elements specifically for students with disabilities. Below are several resources that may assist you in designing an effective plan specifically for students that are the most vulnerable in our schools.

[Saving Lives: Including People with Disabilities in Emergency Planning](#): This report provides an overview of steps that should be taken to build a solid and resilient infrastructure that will enable the government to include the diverse populations of people with disabilities in emergency preparedness, disaster relief, and homeland security programs.

[Effective Communications for People With Disabilities: Before, During, and After Emergencies, National Council on Disability](#): While this document is more community focused, it is comprehensive in nature and offers several outstanding resources for planning to assist people with disabilities during emergency situations.

[Office of Disability Integration and Coordination Fact Sheet \(2016\)](#): The Office of Disability Integration and Coordination (ODIC) increases FEMA's ability to support inclusive emergency management practices for individuals with disabilities.

[The Comprehensive School Safety Guide \(Minnesota\)](#): This is the most complete guide to planning for emergency situations in schools that we could find. Specifically, pages 61-63 identify clear practices for preparing students with disabilities for emergency situations.

[Evacuation of People with Disability & Emergent Limitations](#): Provides comprehensive guidance for people to assist in planning for people of all different backgrounds including checklists and guidance documents.

[Evacuating the Special Needs Population](#) - Provides a list of items to consider in plans for evacuating people with special needs of all ages.

[Information related to autism for First Responders](#): For individuals with autism, learning to interact with first responders is critical. On the other hand, it is just as essential for first responders to understand autism and be prepared to respond effectively and safely to situations that arise involving individuals on the spectrum.

[Information for Law Enforcement](#): Police are trained to respond to a crisis situation with a certain protocol, but this protocol may not always be the best way to interact with individuals with autism. Because police are usually the first to respond to an emergency, it is critical that these officers have a working knowledge of autism, and the wide variety of behaviors individuals with autism can exhibit in emergency situations.

[Information for Firefighters](#): The proper training and knowledge of autism spectrum disorders will help the fire fighters to deal with the emergency in the most successful way. With the correct information and preparation regarding autism spectrum disorders, these fire fighters will be more equipped to rescue these individuals and ensure their safety.



Evolution or Revolution

How will you design effective professional development?

By Gary Myrah

Effective professional development is designed to be continuous and sustainable as opposed to the Emeril Lagasse method of saying “Bam” before he reaches the culmination of his creation. School personnel are again under great scrutiny to demonstrate their ability to provide high quality education to develop graduates that will be successful in worldwide competition. As a wise administrator, you need to maintain your professional development with a critical view on successful methods of teaching that maximizes the student’s learning.

We must prepare for the continued attack on public education as legislation is passed to offer public subsidies to private education. This public scrutiny of educator effectiveness is causing us to design more effective professional development. We need to recognize sustainable professional development is evolutionary as opposed to revolutionary. As the educational leader you need to encourage creative methods for professional development that will be designed to perpetually improve instruction, especially during times of fiscal restraint.

Some methods to consider may include:

- Professional learning communities that utilize social media to focus on brain based learning. This may include exploring an expanded “community” by connecting with blogs such as offered by [Educutopia Brain Based Learning](#) or [How Can We Best Apply 'Brain-Based Learning' to the Classroom?](#) By [Larry Ferlazzo](#) on October 17, 2012, Education Week
- Within your district encourage cohort groups that can study a common approach and use action research to encourage using new methods and strategies in the classroom.

- Seek opportunities for offering graduate credit or other continuing education units needed for continued recertification/licensing.
- Insist on yearlong theme professional development that would support the professional learning communities.
- Encourage a triad approach to peer coaching. In this approach three teachers pair up and take turns with two teachers observing the third teacher, providing time for dialogue after the observation. In most cases this results in the observers learning new strategies and techniques, more than they offer ideas for improvement.
- Encourage your staff to access resources available through the US Department of Education such as the [Office of Educational Technology](#).

These are only a few examples of opportunities for school personnel to collaborate and learn new methods and strategies that are designed to improve our opportunities to offer achievable challenges for today’s learners. We need to encourage collaboration and provide a safe haven to try out new methods to engage students. You as a central office administrator are in a key position to provide a supportive environment for faculty to evolve from good to great.



*Only as high as I reach
can I grow,
only as far as I seek can
I go,
only as deep as I look
can I see,
only as much as I
dream can I be.*

Karen Ravn

Thank You and Keep Up the Great Work!

By Kurt Eley, Past President

When I received Jen Zynda's reminder email that newsletter articles are due in 3 days which she had to do every time for me and probably even extend the deadline a time or two, I realized this is my last WCASS newsletter article. I also realized on June 30th, I will no longer be on the WCASS Board which was my pledge when I became the President-Elect. For those of you who have been around for the last 6 years, my mission has been to get more of the membership involved in WCASS. I will let you determine if my mission has been accomplished. As I transition off the Board and back to being simply a proud member of WCASS, I want to use my last newsletter article to extend thanks to several people.

My first thank you goes to Phil Knobel who was the Executive Director before Gary. Phil called me shortly after I had taken the position in Waunakee and asked me to take a position on the SAA Legislative Committee representing WCASS. I said that I would accept the appointment not knowing what this would mean some 15-20 years later. I appreciate Phil for approaching me and having confidence in me.

Secondly I would like to thank Gary Myrah for encouraging and inspiring me to become more involved in the organization. Gary has been a mentor and is a close friend. He helped me grow as a professional, but most importantly as an advocate for public education.

Next I would like to thank Dave Kwiatkowski, Greg Nyen, John Peterson and Jerry Nicholson. These are the individuals who served as WCASS President either before or after me. Again they all helped me to understand the role of WCASS and helped guide the development of the organization to where it is today. Additionally, I would like to thank all of the individuals who served on the WCASS Board of Directors over the years. Your work supporting the organization is fantastic and has created the



best student services organization in the country!

Finally, thank you to the WCASS members for the opportunities you have given me to serve WCASS. Thank you for doing the work you do to make the lives of students better. We make a difference every day. Thank you for reaching out on behalf of public education and promoting the work we do for the students and families we serve. We have done great things and left a mark, yet our work has only just begun. Vincent Van Gogh said, "Great things are done by a series of small things brought together." This sound

What's
Happening



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Legislative Update

By Barb Buffington

School Safety



DeForest Times (March 21, 2018) photo by Hannah Rajnicek

This picture was taken on March 14th when approximately 250 DeForest Area High School (DAHS) students participated in the nationwide walkout. Just as you may have experienced this day in your district, this was an impressive show of student voice. We have something to learn from today's youth.

The student organized walkout released 17 orange balloons to represent those that were killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida as well as held a moment of silence. The group urged those students that gathered to contact their legislators and register to vote in the upcoming election if you are eligible. Students believe that their generation needs to be more politically active and educate themselves more on what is going on in the news and in our nation. The students are seeing how impactful their collective voices can be on days like March 14th. One piece I'd like to note is that one of the students said, "...You don't know what that person has going on at home, and then they go to school and they get bullied." Another student

said, "...There's so many things that go into this whole situation, like mental illness, broken homes, parenting and bullying" (Rajnicek, Hannah. "Approximately 450 local students participate in walkouts." *DeForest Times*. Web 21 March 2018). As Directors, we have many conversations with parents, staff and community members asking for empathy for our students. Our students get it! I am proud and hopeful of what our youth will accomplish in the years to come.

The message of today's youth about contacting your legislator and communicating what change we would like to see happen is for everyone. I have heard legislators talk about their conversations with their constituents. They do read our emails and listen to our phone calls, so let us use our collective voices to give input on changes in education. We are the collective voices of our students.

WCASS Legislative-TAKE ACTION-Click [here](#) for information on how to take action and be the voice for students.

Legislative Update Continued...



Bill to Increase in Federal Funding for Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Block Grants are funding sources that States use to provide services like trauma informed care for providers, peer run respite and other community based services for those in need. It was just announced that there is a bill for a large increase in federal funding. The Mental Health Block Grant is funded at \$701.5 million, an increase of \$160 million over FY 2017 and \$301.5 million more than requested in President Trump's FY 2018 budget. Substance Abuse and Prevention and Treatment Block Grant is funded at \$1.858 billion, which is \$3.4 million more than last year's funding. Both block grants are key to providing prevention, treatment, and recovery support to vulnerable populations and individuals who may be uninsured or underinsured. School districts are not part of these direct funding streams, but it is positive news that there may be increase funding nationwide for services in Mental Health and Substance Abuse for those in need. The bill still needs to pass the House and Senate and then be signed by President Trump by midnight, Friday, March 30th. For more information, click [here](#).

Legislative update from SAA



School Safety Legislation-Governor Walker signed the \$100 million school safety legislation on March 26, 2018 at Victor Haen Elementary School in Kaukauna. Check out the [news story](#) from the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. We are also linking for your information the Legislative Council's [Amendment Memo](#) for the bill, which provides you with a valuable summary.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS ALLIANCE

REPRESENTING THE INTERESTS OF WISCONSIN SCHOOL CHILDREN



For the latest legislative and political news, see the SAA Blog at <http://wsaa.org/saainfo/>.

Change

By Jerry Nicholson

At this time of the year, but especially this year I am immensely aware how as leaders we are constantly navigating changes that may or may not be beyond our control. Sometimes we may foresee the changes and other times they come unexpectedly. Either way, there is no doubt that change has a considerable psychological and emotional impact on each of us.

As I prepare for the change of stepping into the President role in WCASS this next year, I am also preparing to move into a new position as the Director of Pupil Services in De Pere. Some of you may have seen the Middleton director position posting on WECAN during the last month. I have the honor of continuing the work of Robert Lennon as he is retiring at the end of this year from De Pere. I offer congratulations to Robert on an amazing career of leadership and dedication to serving students, staff, families, and the community of De Pere. It is important for all of us to realize and acknowledge that we stand on the shoulders of those that have come before us. It is through their dedication and efforts that we have the privilege to see more and farther than the latter.

My wife, Tammy and I have just purchased a new house and I will be moving into the Green Bay area with her. At the same time, I am rapidly working to complete the major projects we have underway in Middleton. There are so many things we have in the works here in Middleton, that at times it seems overwhelming. I think I am noticing this more than usual as I feel the obligation and responsibility to complete these projects with the staff and teams before I leave. Like many of us, I struggle with leaving things uncompleted or finished, yet as I write this I realize that our work is never truly done.

We are in the hiring season (minus the April snow) of filling retirements, additions, or vacancies created by those that have moved onto other opportunities. Outside of our districts, we have seen significant changes and grant opportunities related to mental health and safety. Each of these changes have requirements, timelines, and affect our work within our districts. Social Emotional Learning Competencies are nearing completion and will have an impact on how we move forward within our school systems. Most importantly, we are constantly implementing changes in plans and supports for students as the school year progresses.

Change is a constant that we navigate within our positions as leaders in pupil services. I find that at times it may feel like the changes are coming to us and that we are merely responding, but I often turn to this quote to center myself and my approach both personally and professionally:

Change has a considerable psychological impact on the human mind. To the fearful it is threatening because it means that things may get worse. To the hopeful it is encouraging because things may get better. To the confident it is inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better.

King Whitney Jr.

LIKESUCCESS.com

The challenge is to be a humble leader yet at the same time remain confident enough to face all changes head on. I spend less time focusing on whether the immediate changes are “good” or “bad” and try to see the opportunity in each moment. I know we are making a difference in our communities and families that we serve. As we approach the end of the year, a fellow administrator reminded me that we need to make sure we take the time to serve our own families and ourselves as well. I hope that each of you has a quote, strategy, past –time and that you take some time to reflect on the “psychological impact” of all the changes you navigate personally and as pupil services leaders. Care for yourself so that you can care for others and continue to provide the meaningful leadership to those you serve.

WCASS Regional News

Region 1 Chair: Amanda Mack

amack@sfsd.k12.wi.us

The CESA #1 WCASS Awards Breakfast will be held on **Friday, April 20th** at the Summit Building in West Allis. We are excited to celebrate another group of outstanding staff and students. Join us and show your support for their contributions to the field of Special Education. After the awards ceremony Renea Aldana will be speaking on Conflict Prevention and Resolution.

Region 2 Chair: Gail Anderson

gail.anderson@cesa2.org

For information from this region, please contact Gail Anderson



Please consider being a chairperson for
Region 3 or 4.

Region 3 Chair: Open

Region 4 Chair: Open

Region 5 Chair: Rebecca Johnson

johnsonr@cesa5.org

For more information from this region, please contact Rebecca Johnson

Region 6 Chair: Marci Thiry

thiry@mjisd.k12.wi.us

Region VI held a wonderful spring awards celebration on March 15, 2018. Twenty-Three individuals from six districts received WCASS "Making a Difference" awards and two very special students were recognized for outstanding achievement. Laura Schieffer, Julie Kruesel (Hartford), Dani Brauer, Dana Bankowski, Jessie Ort, Renee Behnke and Coleen Phalen (Manawa) Karlee Bowers, Jacqueline Davis, Joshua Fitch, Linda Cupery, Janelle Hendricks, Sheena Brieske, Sandy Baures, (Waupun), Jenny Reese (Winneconne), Dana Zander, Ivy Jeske, Anne Scott, Stefanie Rebholz (Oshkosh), Karie Gerke, Megan Grisolono, and Holly King (Kewaskum) were the recipients. Ava Peapenburg, peer mentor in Winneconne also received a "Making a Difference" award for the care and compassion she gives to her classmates with disabilities every day. Daniela Chaparro a fourth grade student with disabilities from Hartford was recognized for her positive attitude and outstanding work ethic alongside Destiny Couey a student with disabilities from Waupun for her amazing commitment to school, FFA and Special Olympics. The Region VI directors thoroughly enjoyed the event and commend all of the recipients for their ongoing commitment to making a difference for students with disabilities.



Region 6 WCASS Award Winners

Region 7 Chair: Caroline Mihalski

mihalski@wrightstwon.k12.wi.us

For information from this region, please Caroline Mihalski

WCASS Regional News

Region 8 Chair: Brenda Jozwiak-Boldig

bjozwiak@wittbirn.k12.wi.us

Region 8 had a Directors Meeting on March 16, 2018 with the following agenda items.

- Updates from grants/ Rtl Center/Early Childhood/ Transition
- Legal Information from Mary Gerbig - presentation to Director & Principal groups
- Discussion regarding paraprofessional competencies and next steps to support consistent training and job duties for parapros in our region (brainstorm session on padlet - this will be ongoing conversation). Planning for next year - Region 8 meeting dates set, discussion about needs/focus



- April 27, 2018** Region 8 WCASS Banquet @ Waubee Lodge in Lakewood, WI
Speaker - Mitch LaBerge (Speaking About Autism, LLC) talking about The Positive Impact of Educators
Luncheon & Awards will follow speaker
- April 30, 2018** CESA 8 will be hosting ESSA joint planning session with principals, directors, Title staff to write the LEA plan for districts with support. They have created a guided inquiry document to support districts with creating plans
- June 8, 2018** Next meeting @ CESA 8
Focus - Emergency Health Services and ELL Requirements

Region 9 Chair: Karen Baker

karen.baker@maps.k12.wi.us

Region 9 awards were presented to five individuals! Thank you to those who submitted nominations and to each Award Winner! Everyone in CESA 9 is a Winner as well!



Category	Recipient
Special Education Teacher- Marathon City Middle School	Stephanie Miller Marathon County Special Education
Related/Support Services- Physical Therapist	Michelle Russ Marathon County Special Education
Pupil Services-School Psychologist	Jason Haluska Marathon County Special Education
Related/Support Services- Speech/Language	Glenda Yonke Merrill Area Public Schools
Pupil Services-School Psychologist	Joe Mertens Merrill Area Public Schools



Joe Mertens, Karen Baker, Glenda Yonke
More photos on next page...

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Michelle Russ and Kelly Kapitz



Danny Powers, Kelly Kapitz,
Jason Haluska, and Kristin Jacobson

Region 10 Chair: Lorna Margenau
lorna.margenau@bloomer.k12.wi.us

For more information from this region, please contact Lorna Margenau.

Region 11 Chair: Dawn Western
dawnw@cesa11.k12.wi.us

Along with all the great things that have been going on for kids in Region 11, this has been a busy season with award nominations and announcements!

Congratulations to WCASS Region 11 award winners !

Special Education Teachers of the year

Kristen Kraft serves as the ID/Autism teacher at the Osceola Middle School. She serves as the chair of the department and has been making a positive difference in lives of students in the northern part of the state for the past 9 years. She was instrumental in developing the Autism Mentoring Program (AMP). She teaches general education students how to interact with students with autism and then brings the students together, so the students in her program can learn those important social skills with the assistance of their peers.

Karin Javanovich is a special education teacher in the Elk Mound School District. Karin is known for thinking outside the box in serving all students - not just those in special education. She promotes the concept of 'our' students and the sense of community. She builds relationships with students and shows that she truly cares about them inside and outside the classroom. She never gives up on a student.

Special Education Paraprofessionals of the year

Carri Fox is a paraprofessional at the Osceola Elementary School assisting students in grades 4K-2 since 2000. She is a positive role model and routinely advocates for students and their right for an education within the schools. She has taken on a leadership role and trains other paraprofessionals in topics related to their positions. She also volunteers to work at community events such as Special Kids Day and taken on leadership roles in playing the regional Friendship Track and Field Games for special education students.

Carmen Benson is described as dynamic in the Elk Mound District. She is particularly skilled in working with the most challenging students. She is innovative and has a knack for making connections and developing trust with students. Carmen goes above and beyond her job requirements on a regular basis. She puts the students first. She has worked for the district for 15 years.

Special Education Support Person of the year

LaRae Zappa has been a dedicated professional serving the district of St. Croix Falls in the role of district special education administrative assistant. She has tirelessly kept everyone on track in terms of meeting timelines and processing paperwork. She has worked in the district since 2001. She has helped train in several school psychologists

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new to the profession. She has quietly put in endless over time through the years with no expectation of compensation.

Director of Special Education of the year

Dawn Western has served up to 8 school districts and was the administrator of a county school for more severely disabled students. She has been instrumental in establishing various programs in the districts and bringing students back into their resident districts. Dawn has developed several training manuals for rookie as well as veteran staff members. She is not afraid to roll up her sleeves and get in the trenches with the teachers. She has always provided us with strong guidance and advocated for students as well as staff. We are continuously humbled by her ability to serve so many districts along with serving on several state level committees. She has served in the position for 16 years.

Retirements

Cheryl Wesle - Amery
Dawn Western - Osceola and St. Croix Falls

thank you

Region 11 Changing of the Guard

My term as the Region 11 representative will be ending on June 30. Carol Kline from the Unity School District has graciously agreed to take my place. Carol is looking forward to taking the reins. Her duties will include attending meetings, serving on various committees, and having the opportunity to work with the awesome people on the WCASS board in order to make a positive impact on the education for the students in WI.

I would like to take this time to thank everyone for giving me the opportunity to serve on the WCASS board for the past 9 years (6 years as secretary and 3 years as Region 11 rep). I have truly been honored and blessed to have been a part of this great organization. The organization has grown and become a strong force at the state and federal levels. That has happened due to the hard work and dedication of not only those on the executive board, but those in the membership who have been involved as well. THANK YOU for letting me be a part of this journey! I will treasure the memories and the lasting friendships I have made through the years.

Region 12 Chair: Vicki Lemke

vlemke@phillips.k12.wi.us

For information from this region, please contact Vicki Lemke.



By Sara Totten

WCASS is now soliciting nominations for the **Outstanding Special Services Administrator Award**. Read more about the award [here](#). Please continue the 40+ year long tradition by nominating a member you feel has contributed strongly to the field of special education and/or student services.

Nominations can be made by completing the following [form](#). Please note nominations are due by **May 1, 2018** for the Board to review. The selected WCASS Outstanding Administrator will be recognized at the Fall DPI Leadership Conference and will also be forwarded as a nominee for the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) distinguished service awards.

For more information feel free to contact: Sara Totten at stotten@pointschools.net



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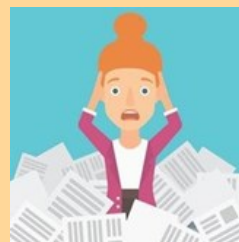
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