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## President's Message

By: Kurt Eley

### End of Year Reflection and Appreciations

The end of the school year is always a great time to look back on all of the wonderful accomplishments of the year. The 2014-15 school year has been full of these moments. As you read on, please know that when I use the word "we," I am referencing every person who works in a public school district. School districts do not function because of one person. Schools function because every person employed by a school district carries out the mission of educating children.

In reflecting, we have completed the first year of a new teacher evaluation system. Whether you had to participate in this new system directly or not, I am sure it was part of many conversations you had with staff and fellow administrators. We gave numerous assessments to our students; some that mattered and some that did not. At least one of these assessments will go away and be replaced by a new assessment next year. In Waunakee we changed to a new email system and all the bells and whistles that come attached – Google. This transition was a

challenge for some of the not-so tech savvy people or the skeptics like me. Some of you have probably implemented new literacy and/or math programs, one-to-one technology initiatives, substitute finder systems, and more. We are facing a state budget and policy changes which will impact schools for many years. I ask to forget about all of these distractions for a moment.

While we were engaged in all of these activities, we still made time to do what attracted us to the field of education. We worked with students. We never lost the focus of providing an education to the children ages 3-21 who grace us every day by walking through the doors of our school buildings. We witnessed the boy who when given a scissors for the first time since cutting his sister's hair a year ago, cut the paper and nothing else. We watched a girl successfully tie her shoe for the first time and the huge smile on her face. We were there when a boy read a book on his own with a reading buddy without the support of an adult. We heard about the Special Olympic athletes who

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**President's Message continued from p. 1**

made it to state and met new friends. We were the first the person the principal called when a student did not get flustered when the fire alarm went off unexpectedly. Finally, we listened to the parents of a 20 year old student who applied and interviewed for a job and got it, tell us how appreciative they are for all we have done for the child the last 18 years.

Educators are a unique and dedicated group of individuals who sacrifice so much for the greater

good. We humbly go about our business each day. We do not care about the spot light or applause. We care about the children. For this I appreciate the work all educators do and as I plan for the 2015-16 school year, I plan to keep the positive memories of this school year in mind. As we all advocate for public education at the federal, state and local levels, share the stories you have about what made you say, "I am proud to be in public education!" I appreciate each of you and wish you a terrific summer!

**POSITIVE: (slight)**

The Joint Finance budget proposal provides **\$5 million in FY17 for High Cost Special Education Aid** (no additional funding for regular Special Education aid).

Provides **\$100,000** beginning in FY17 for Special Education Transition Incentive grants, payable to districts that demonstrate successful post-secondary outcomes for special education pupils. This is related to Governor Walker's "Better Bottom Line." (We were requesting more to provide a \$1,000/student incentive.)

The Joint Finance budget proposal provides an alternative that generally dilutes current law requirements to obtain a teaching license in the state and allows for issuance of a teaching permit based on the school board's, 2r charter school or private voucher school's determination that an individual is proficient and has relevant experience in the subjects he or she intends to teach. WDPI has interpreted this to suggest a person without a high school diploma could obtain a permit to teach. This includes special education teachers.

**Special Education Open Enrollment (public schools)**

Adopts the DPI request to: 1) **eliminate undue financial burden** as a basis for denying an open enrollment application by a special education pupil; and 2) sets a flat, full time open enrollment payment of **\$12,000 per pupil** (to be paid by the resident district, who would count the pupil, to the district of attendance). The district of attendance could claim state special education aid. (Note: this is a flat amount for a child with ANY disability).

**Civics Assessment**

Specifies that beginning FY17, a public school, 2r charter or a private voucher schools **may not grant a diploma** (nor could the State Superintendent grant a declaration of equivalency of high school graduation) to an individual unless they successfully completed a civics assessment in which the questions are identical to the 100 questions used by Citizenship and Immigration Services for purposes of granting U.S. citizenship. Individuals with an IEP would be required to take (but not successfully complete) the exam in order to receive a diploma. Students with limited English proficiency could take the exam in the language of their choosing. This requirement would not apply to a diploma granted to a veteran meeting specified requirements in current law.



## Executive Director's Report

By: Gary Myrah

Someday there will be a historical entry regarding the times we are living in. It has become quite clear that the legislative powers within Wisconsin, as well as other states, do not have the best interest of public schools in mind as they create new laws. Actions taken by Governor Walker as well as the Joint Finance Committee no longer can be justified as a means to reduce the influence of unions or to find financial solutions to educate our children. If they were truly concerned about this, they would not be creating a dual system that will be a greater burden to the Wisconsin taxpayer.

Jerry Nicholson offered a passionate review of legislative actions that were current as of May at the WCASS conference. He reflected on the realization that we have reached a point where each citizen, especially directors of special education/pupil services must become active in the political process. Even if it is writing your first letter to your state senator or assemblyman, or calling up one of their staffers to discuss your concern. Or it may involve organizing a group of local directors to attend town hall meetings when they are announced. Vocalizing your concerns in this arena, over and over, may have influence. Or you may be so bold as to support a local candidate that has the courage to place their name on the ballot for a local election.

Regardless of your comfort level, it is critical to take action. We may be facing incredible odds when you realize the money brokers that are influencing our elections, yet if we are able to sway the majority of the electorate, we have as much influence as a billionaire. However, we will not influence anybody if we remain silent.

Within this newsletter there are brief factoids related to the actions taken by Governor Walker or the Joint Finance Committee. This is a sampling of the 31 page document that was created by the Joint Finance Committee regarding a host of changes in public education. The 31 page document is overwhelming with the proposed changes with how we will be conducting business after July 1, 2015. A theme that we must hang onto is we are OPPOSED TO PUBLIC SUBSIDY FOR PRIVATE PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS. This is not to say we are against private/parochial schools, since this offers parents options for their child's education. However, creating a dual system of educational programs is not sustainable. We need to take a strong stance against PUBLIC SUBSIDY FOR PRIVATE/PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS.

I hope the information offered within this newsletter as well as the SAA website will convince you to take action in some form to stop this takeover. I believe in Margaret Mead's quote: *"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."*

I wish all of you a relaxing and peaceful summer. I look forward to seeing all of you next fall. By the way, the New Director's Academy has been scheduled for August 4 & 5 at the Crowne Plaza in Madison. Registration will soon be open on the WCASS website. Please connect with new directors in your area and let them know this is a great opportunity to be prepared for day one as a new director.

**WCASS Upcoming Training Dates & Events**

**August 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> 2015 Academy for New Special Education Leadership:** 2 days, Crowne Plaza Madison

**October 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> 2015 State Superintendent's Conference on Special Education & Pupil Services Leadership Issues:** 2 days, Wilderness Resort, Wisconsin Dells

**February 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Federal Funding Conference:** 2 days, Kalahari Resort & Conference Center, Wisconsin Dells

Please visit our website at [http://www.wcass.org/events/event\\_list.asp](http://www.wcass.org/events/event_list.asp)

**Membership Opportunities**

Join CASE, International and expand your resources. [Click Here to Join](#)

Have you renewed your WCASS Membership for 2015-2016? [Click Here to Renew](#)

## A Story of Making a Difference

Submitted by: Jerry Nicholson

In the last few days I had a conversation with a student services director that attended our WCASS spring conference. This director indicated that they had never spoken with their representatives and didn't really feel comfortable getting into political issues. Their senate representative is one of the five key Republican senators we have focused on in our SAA efforts. The director took the risk of sending an email from a template that we shared with them. Much to their surprise they received a direct phone call from that senator. He asked several questions and they had a 13-15 minute phone conversation. The director felt the senator truly listened. He asked additional questions and really wanted to understand how the decisions might impact their school district. It is this director's belief and mine that this conversation will impact the discussions this senator has in Madison and maybe even his vote. I applaud the bravery, professionalism, and advocacy of this director. We need to all learn from this experience and step out of our comfort zone to advocate for the kids, families, and communities we serve. If one director can have an impact, imagine what hundreds of us can do. Please strongly consider following the lead of one of your courageous peers!

## SAA Position on JFC K-12 Education Budget

The JFC is nearing completion of their work on the budget. The SAA continues to monitor the JFC deliberations. We posted earlier that a charter school expansion provision has found its way into the budget in the UW System motion. Of course, other “surprises” could show up in the final “wrap-up” motion next week.

Once JFC completes its work, the two houses of the legislature will likely take up the budget bill at the end of the week of June 8th at the earliest. Once it has passed both houses in identical language, it moves on to the Governor’s desk for partial vetoes and signature.

The SAA position on the JFC education package was made quite clear in our news release issued May 20th. But, we wanted to make it crystal clear that our position on the budget is unwavering.

### Here is the SAA Position:

1. The Joint Finance Committee’s (JFC) education budget underfunds Wisconsin

public schools, forcing school districts to reduce educational opportunities for the children they serve. We need an inflationary increase in revenues to meet the needs of students.

2. We oppose the private school voucher expansion proposals in the budget. Voucher expansion siphons resources away from public school children. The current underfunding of our public schools illustrates we simply can’t afford two systems of education in Wisconsin.
3. We oppose the special needs voucher proposal in the budget. This proposal threatens both the students with disabilities who would use the vouchers to attend private schools and the students who remain in public schools.

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## SAA Position on JFC K-12 Education Budget continued from p. 5

4. We oppose the independent charter school expansion proposals in the budget. Charter school expansion will siphon additional resources away from public school children.
5. We oppose dumping education policy provisions into the budget without a public hearing or adequate public scrutiny. Provisions related to teacher licensure, a required civics exam, contract renewal notices, and mandating private or home school student participation in public school activities/extracurricular activities have no place in the budget bill.

**I want to emphasize that it is not too late to make a difference in this budget process.**

The SAA encourages members to use this information in communicating your deep concerns about the budget with your legislators. Just as important, use it to empower your staff, parents and community.

Please visit the SAA website for additional links and information. <http://wsaa.org/saainfo/>

The Joint Finance budget proposal provides for **no increase** in public school district general spending capacity in **FY16** and limits growth to \$100 per pupil in FY17.

In contrast, per pupil payments for 2r Charter and private voucher schools will increase in each year, **by \$12/pupil in FY16** & an additional **\$108/pupil in FY17** (LFB estimates).

**WCASS members need to speak out against subsidizing private/parochial schools.**

The Joint Finance budget proposal creates several new requirements for WDPI, the public school and the private school attended by the pupil. **The provisions raise several issues/concerns. Among them, the rights of pupils who attend a private school under this program to a free and appropriate public education.**

**WCASS members need to speak out against subsidizing private/parochial schools.**

The Joint Finance budget proposal creates a special needs voucher program, under which a pupil with special needs, **who has had an application for open enrollment denied** by their resident district, could attend a private school with a \$12,000 voucher that is funded from the General Aid payment of the pupil's district of residence. *This includes students with only a speech/language disability. Also once a student is identified as having a disability, they will receive the voucher payment until they GRADUATE, EVEN IF THEY NO LONGER HAVE A NEED FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION.*

**WCASS members need to speak out against subsidizing private/parochial schools.**

# WCASS Region News

**Region 1 Chair: Tanya Fredrich, Ph.D.**

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For information from this region, please contact Tanya Fredrich

**Region 2 Chair: Bridget Kotarak**

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**Region 3 Chair: Katherine Strong**

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**Region 4 Chair: Marci Thiry**

[thiry@mjssd.k12.wi.us](mailto:thiry@mjssd.k12.wi.us)

Region IV had a wonderful Spring Meeting and Awards Celebration at the Bliss Center in Stevens Point. Participants enjoyed networking around the following topics: seclusion and restraint, transgender policies and transition. The group also heard a presentation from Josh Franzen from eTrac. The program is a vocational training program through Midwest Special Services, Inc. The best part of the day was celebrating the following 17 award winners from our region.

The Award Category	Name of Winner
Related/Support Services	LeAnn Knoeck
Administrator	Debbie Chisnell
Pupil Services	Amy Menchl and Jessica Rice
Special Education Teacher	Don Allen
Related/Support Services	Junko Jacobs
Special Education Paraprofessional	Marcey Lehman
Pupil Services	Jess Faust
Special Education Teacher	Jessica Koch
Special Education Teacher	Stephanie Henderson
Special Education Paraprofessional	Robyn Patterson

Related/Support Services	Lucas Kern
Pupil Services	Tina Scott and Molly Welhouse
Related/Support Services	Sherry Gundlach
Special Education Teacher	Diane Biesek
Personal Achievement Award	Thor Miller

**Region 5 Chair: Lisa Misco**

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**Region 6 Chair: Diane Knudsen**

[knudsend@esschools.k12.wi.us](mailto:knudsend@esschools.k12.wi.us)

For information from this region, please contact Diane Knudsen

**Region 7 Chair: Karen Baker**

[kbaker@antigo.k12.wi.us](mailto:kbaker@antigo.k12.wi.us)

Region 7 Awards were presented at three different sites this year! Deserving awards were presented to the following individuals:

**MaDonna Enkers** received the Region 7 Special Education Teacher Award. MaDonna teaches in an elementary cross-categorical classroom in the Marathon School District. Her enthusiasm about her job is contagious as she is passionate about continually searching for new ways to help her students achieve. She is a strong advocate for students with special needs and has had a positive impact on the lives of many students within the Marathon School District. Congratulations MaDonna!



WCASS Region News continued from p. 7

**Alex Vierzba** received the Region 7 Personal Achievement Award. Alex is a recent graduate of Wausau East High School in the Wausau School District. He was nominated for his personal achievement in discovering his *abilities* and not dwelling on his disability. Once Alex learned about his disability, he and his teachers focused on his *abilities*. Alex organized a school fundraiser – A Penny War – to raise money to buy trees for the school grounds. While in high school, Alex returned to the middle school (twice) and presented a PowerPoint to speak to sixth grade students to educate the students on how Autism impacted his life. Congratulations Alex!

**Matthew Collins**, Cesa 9 Special Education Director/RSN Director, received the Region 7 Administrator Award in recognition of his time spent, through CESA 9, as the Director of Special Education for the Minocqua J1 School District. This nomination was supported by the school psychologist, five special education teachers, speech/language pathologist, and occupational therapist. School Psychologist, Neal Eklund, shared that, “Though Mr. Collins has recently left our district to serve in another professional capacity, his exemplary performance continues to be influential on my practice and I have no doubt that his teachings will continue to be influential on my practice for the entirety of my career.” Further comments include, “He advocated for each child and diligently made sure all needs of children were met. As a true leader

and inspiration, he made others better as a result of being in his presence and insured that his impact lasts even in his absence.” In closing, “He loved the children and enjoyed watching their growth and success over the years. He left no stone unturned in order to make sure that every child had an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. Matt is an advocate for children, plain and simple.” Congratulations Matt!



**New Regions!**

Each CESA area will now be considered a WCASS region. Please see the updated table below.

Region	Representative	CESA	Area of State
1	Tanya Fredrich	1	Milwaukee (Pewaukee)
2	Bridget Kotarak	2	Madison (Whitewater)
3	Katherine Strong	3	Fennimore
4	<b>Brian Grill</b>	4	La Crosse (West Salem)
5	Greg Nyen	5	Portage
6	Marci Thiry	6	Oshkosh

Region	Representative	CESA	Area of State
7	Lisa Misco	7	Green Bay South (Chilton)
8	<b>Julie LaBarge</b>	8	Green Bay North (Gillett)
9	Karen Baker	9	Tomahawk
10	Lorna Margenau	10	Chippewa Falls
11	Dawn Western	11	Turtle Lake
12	<b>Vicki Lemke</b>	12	Ashland



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