



## President's Message

by Gary Myrah

The 2008-09 school year is under way and I am hoping all of you are able to catch your breath, grab a beverage and read our newsletter, now coming to you electronically. Thanks to Kelly Kapitz for volunteering to be the newsletter editor.

As many of you know, we are constantly facing new issues in education. Either we are informed there will be less money or more regulations. It is important for all of us to remain politically aware of issues that are surfacing and be prepared to take action. Rather than waiting passively for someone to impose new obligations, we need to be proactive and look to what needs to be accomplished and advocate for change. The WCASS Executive Board is scheduled to meet on October 30<sup>th</sup> to discuss a number of issues. If you have concerns or issues that you would like our organization to pursue, please contact Phil Knobel or me prior to this meeting.

In the role of president I have been appointed to various committees, each of which has issues that will impact education. The following is a compilation of some of the issues that I have been involved with while serving on these committees:

➤ State Superintendent's Advisory Committee on Special Education. Critical issues that have been reviewed include the current performance report regarding the State's reporting on the 20 indicators to the federal government. This report is based on how each of us is performing at a local district level. Two areas of greatest concern appear to be related to transitions, both at the Birth to 3 level as well as the high school graduation level. These will be topics discussed at the Leadership Conference in November.

The Response to Intervention (or Instruction – two versions of the title seem to be developing) has been a topic of concern at the cabinet level for State Superintendent Burmaster. The Wisconsin Promise Conference held in January will have George Batsche as a keynote speaker. This is encouraging since this is a primary conference attended by directors of instruction, regular ed teachers, principals, etc. There also seems to be wider acceptance that the precepts of Rtl is related to quality instruction and monitoring of that instruction.

➤ The use of personnel in the Rtl process is a controversy. On the one hand is the WDPI's position restricting the use of special education teachers in the pre-referral process. A letter that was written by Lynn Boreson and sent to Cynthia Kieck in South Milwaukee describes the implications of using special education teachers in the process. CESA 1 recently had a panel discussion regarding this issue and it appears to be an example of the conflict between what is recommended by some of the foremost leaders of the Rtl movement and the regulations that we are to follow.

➤ There is conflict that has arisen between the Wisconsin School Psychologist Association and the Wisconsin Reading Association. The divergence conflict has arisen due to actions of various districts as well as interpretations within the organizations of the role of various individuals has resulted in discussions of the leaders of WSPA, WSRA and WCASS with administrators at WDPI. Our hope is to help identify good practice related to all school personnel.

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- Restraint and seclusion continues to be an issue. As has been reported on the CESA 7 website, many of you have been conducting extensive training with your administrators and teachers related to the issues of restraint and seclusion. Some of us have been informed that the survey sent to parents from Disability Rights Wisconsin, Wisconsin FACETS, Wisconsin Family Ties asking for stories of restraint and seclusion. The apparent intent is to publish a paper/book that will portray stories of the misuse of restraint and seclusion. We are not clear of the details of how this will be printed, yet we believe the stories may identify school districts where misuse of restraint and seclusion is occurring. Nissan BarLev, Tim Gantz, Phil Knobel and I met with WI FACETS in June and discussed the problems of printing stories that provide only the perspective of the parent without details of the situation. It is our understanding the purpose of this effort is to persuade the Wisconsin legislature to create more restrictive regulations related to the use of seclusion and restraint.
  
- The Wisconsin Legislative Special Study Committee on School Violence is currently reviewing statutory issues related to improving a safe school environment. I am one of the SAA representatives on this committee. We have discussed topics from pesticide use to armed intruders. The Wisconsin Attorney General is seeking changes in statutes that will permit increased communication between police and schools regarding students. Our next meeting will review the anti-bullying legislation that had been previously introduced, but did not receive the necessary legislative support to become law. If you would like to read the handouts and testimony provided to this committee you can access them through the following link: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc/committees/study/2008/SAFE/index.htm>

This is just a sample of the many things that are happening in Wisconsin education. Mary Huebacher recently stated it is necessary for all of us to be knowledgeable of the laws and regulations that govern our administrative responsibilities. This knowledge will help an administrator to make decisions based on the risk factor involved with various decisions. Changes in practice, regulations and laws has sometimes been the result of someone taking a calculated risk to try something different, even if it is not supported by regulation (or may even violate regulations) because that person believes it is the right thing to do for a particular student or situation. Please understand that I am not advocating for anarchy, but I do believe there is always opportunities to improve our delivery of service, and sometimes it means taking a calculated risk because you believe it will result in improvement.

In closing, I encourage all members of WCASS to contact any of the Executive Board members (listed on our WCASS webpage) if you have a concern or issue you wish us to discuss and take action on at our upcoming board meeting. I wish all of you a manageable school year and look forward to seeing you at the State Superintendent's Special Education Leadership Conference in November.

— Gary

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## Executive Director's Comments by Phil Knobel

On September 18, 2008, I was invited to attend State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster's State of Wisconsin Education address at the Capital. For the past few years, Libby has used this opportunity to address budget issues and give recognition to state community educational leaders. In addition, she provided the 2008 Teacher of the Year awards to 4 teachers from the state. These presentations always provide for a very uplifting setting in the State Capital.

This year's budget discussion included her 2009-2011 proposed biennial budget that was sent to the governor's office recently. In late January or February 2009, the legislature will begin the process of reviewing and discussing the governor's proposed 2009-2011 budget. Here are the DPI special education budget proposals.

- They have proposed that categorical aid be increased by \$27.5 million in 2009-2010 and \$53.2 million in 2010-2011 for a biennial increase of about \$81 million. These increases bring the total proposed categorical aid funding to almost \$450 million for the 2009-2011 budget.
- In addition, DPI has proposed an increase in funding for high cost special education categorical aid. It includes \$7.4 million in 2009-2010 and \$9.9 million in 2010-2011. With these additional amounts, the total for high cost students would be \$20.8 million which would fully fund the high cost students state reimbursement.

These proposed increases in special education funding by Superintendent Burmaster are the largest ever proposed by any State Superintendent and we thank her for that.

Please keep in mind that this is just the proposed DPI budget that was sent to the governor's office. The final 2009-2011 biennial budget will not be approved by the legislature until July 2009 or later. We know the upcoming budget is going to be a difficult one for the legislature to deal with given the current economic conditions. WCASS and SAA will keep you posted on the budget process during the next several months.

— Phil

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## SAA Summary of Major Provisions DPI 2009-11 Biennial Budget

September 22, 2008

*by John Forester*

- **Overall Proposed Funding Increase** – about a \$262.8 million (4.2%) increase in 2009-10 and about a \$500.1 million (3.6%) increase in 2010-11, for a biennial increase of about \$762.9 million.
- **General Equalization Aids** – provide about a \$187 million (3.9%) increase in 2009-10 and about a \$379 million (3.85%) increase in 2010-11, for a biennial increase of about \$566 million.
- **Revenue Limit Flexibility** – increase the revenue limit per pupil adjustment to \$335 in 2009-10 and \$350 in 2010-11. This would provide about \$35 million in additional revenue limit authority in 2009-10 and about \$67 million in 2010-11.
- **SPED Categorical Aid** – increase \$27.5 million in 2009-10 and \$53.2 million in 2010-11, for a biennial increase of about \$81 million.
- **High Cost SPED Aid** – provide an increase of more than \$17 million over the biennium to fully fund high-cost SPED claims. In 2007-08, DPI had to prorate payments at 39.6% of claims.
- **Bilingual/Bicultural Aid** – increase aid by more than \$5.7 million over the biennium for districts required to offer programming.
- **Bilingual/Bicultural Aid for Currently Ineligible Students** – create a new categorical aid program in the second year of the biennium to award up to \$416 per LEP student to districts that currently do not qualify for aid (\$8.9 million in 2010-11).
- **Transportation Aid** – there are three components to this request:
  1. Increase all per pupil reimbursement rates for both years of the biennium. Increase aid by \$7.5 million in each year of the biennium.
  2. Request statutory language to allow additional aid payments if funds remain after the rates are paid.
  3. Request statutory language similar to 2007 Assembly Bill 112 which allows schools to claim refunds of the motor fuel tax.
- **Sparsity Aid** – provide an increase of \$4.555 million in each year of the biennium to fully fund estimated eligible costs. Total sparsity aid under this request would equal \$8.2 million annually.
- **Low Revenue Ceiling** – increase the low revenue ceiling by \$400 annually, to \$9,400 in 2009-10 and to \$9,800 in 2010-11.
- **Elimination of the QEO.**
- **Four Year Old Kindergarten Grants** – provide an increase of \$7.725 million over the biennium to fully fund second year grants and to allow for \$3 million in new grants in both years of the biennium.

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- **School Safety Grants** – provide \$5 million in 2010-11 to create a new categorical grant program to reimburse schools for costs allowable, but not paid, under the federal Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act.
- **Alternative Education Grants** – increase of \$5 million in each year of the biennium, which would double the current appropriation. Also change the appropriation from “annual” to “continuing” so unused funds can be carried forward into the next fiscal year.
- **SAGE Re-estimate** – increase aid to fully fund projected costs (\$3.7 million increase in 2009-10 and \$5.4 million in 2010-11).
- **Milwaukee Parental Choice Program** – increase funding \$11.9 million in 2009-10 and \$24.4 million in 2010-11 (re-estimate as required by law).
- **Milwaukee/Racine Charter Schools Program** – increase funding \$9.3 million in 2009-10 and \$15.5 million in 2010-11 (estimate as required by law).
- **School Breakfast Program** – increase aid to fully fund the program at 15 cents per breakfast served (\$1.26 million increase in 2009-10; \$2.18 million in 2010-11).
- **School Milk Program** – increase aid to fully fund the program (\$447,400 increase in 2009-10 and \$541,300 increase in 2010-11).
- **School Lunch Program** – increase aid \$2.5 million in each year of the biennium to decrease by about 50% the amount school boards are transferring from educational funds to school nutrition funds.
- **Wisconsin Education for STEM** – there are four components to this request:
  1. STEM Stewardship -- \$5 million in state bonding for technological improvements to STEM classrooms. Includes \$400,000 in 2010-11 for annual debt service costs.
  2. Increase current STEM grants by \$938,000 in 2010-11.
  3. Provide \$1.4 million over the biennium to establish four regional STEM academies for training STEM educators.
  4. Continue providing \$250,000 annually for grants to Project Lead the Way.
- **World Languages** – provide \$812,500 in 2010-11 for the first year of a nine-year project to stimulate the development of world language education in elementary schools.



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## WCASS Region News

**Region 1 Chair: Mary Cimbalnik** [Mary.Cimbalnik@pewaukee.k12.wi.us](mailto:Mary.Cimbalnik@pewaukee.k12.wi.us)

For information from this region, please contact Mary Cimbalnik.

**Region 2 Chair: Bob Geigle** [Robert.geigle@oshkosh.k12.wi.us](mailto:Robert.geigle@oshkosh.k12.wi.us)

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**Region 3 Chair: John Peterson** [jpeterson@waterforduhs.k12.wi.us](mailto:jpeterson@waterforduhs.k12.wi.us)

As we approach the calendar year of 2009, it is amazing to think that IDEA will soon be up for reauthorization. It just seems like yesterday that we trying to figure out how the changes in the regulations affected our day to day activities (that was almost five years ago!). Besides IDEA being up for reauthorization soon, it is well documented that NCLB is being debated in congress and a revised version of some sorts will be finalized down the road. It seems like our world is driven by these two major laws. One explains why students struggle; the other sets very high expectations for all students to do well regardless of having a disability or not.

As many of us are pushed to help all students achieve to their maximum potential, I was reminded this past month that strong test scores are not the only important aspect of education. Helping students connect to their school community and develop a sense of belonging seems just as important (if not more important) then a good score on a test. I was able to conduct an exit interview with a high school senior who completed his high school education through one of the district's alternative options. As we were going over this student's portfolio, we talked about the good, the bad, and the ugly about public education and about his life after high school. This student felt a great sense of gratitude for the amount of time and effort his teacher took to not only teach him but to also learn from him. In particular, he was thankful his teacher learned what his interests were and what drove him. This same student told me that he also appreciated my involvement in the classroom and that this was the first time he felt that others believed that he could be successful. As the exit interview concluded, I couldn't help but think that education is always a two-way street: educators should teach and also learn from (and about) their students. Hopefully, the relationship-building aspect of education does not get lost in our world of high demands that come with both IDEA and NCLB.

If there is a topic that you would like covered at one of our Region 3 meetings for the 2008-2009 school year, please feel free to contact me at your convenience ([petersonj@mail.fortschools.org](mailto:petersonj@mail.fortschools.org)). I hope you have had an enjoyable start to your school year, and I'll see you at the upcoming fall leadership conference.

**Region 4 Chair: Diane Knudsen**  
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For information from this region, please contact Diane Knudsen.

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## A Word about WCASS Membership

by Ann Wicklund  
Special Education Director  
Wausau School District

As Membership Chair, I encourage current members to actively recruit new members to our organization. As a veteran Administrator with many years of experience, I am challenged daily by the wide variety of demands put on Directors of Special Education and Pupil Services. Whether it is the appropriate personnel designated to be members of an IEP team, or how to conduct a manifestation determination, we need to have a network of professionals across the state to talk to and problem solve with.

It is imperative that we have a strong voice in the legislature and Membership in WCASS means membership in the School Administrators Alliance. We are fortunate to have John Forester working with us so that the needs of students with disabilities is heard by our political leaders.

Staying connected and informed is what membership in WCASS is all about. Try to bring someone new to our conference in February.

Hope you are all having a great year!

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## WCASS Representative to WCEC

by Mardi Freeman  
September 2008

The WCEC/WDL D executive boards met during the summer. The two organizations are planning a Cross-Categorical Conference entitled, "RTI: Collaboration is the Key". It is being held on Thursday, October 30, 2008 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Madison. An informative and applicable keynote seminar is being presented by Dr. George M. Batsche, Ed. D. He will be focusing on challenges to school-wide implementation, roles and responsibilities, critical components of the infrastructure and leadership responsibilities. He will also be conducting a break-out session in "Using data to make intervention and eligibility decisions and assuring intervention integrity." Please encourage your staff to attend!



**Check out the Web . . . for pictures of recent events.**  
**[www.wcass.org](http://www.wcass.org)**

Articles . . . News . . . Announcements

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