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President's Message by David Kwiatowski



Sustaining our Environment of Advocacy for Kids: From the Grassroots to the Sky as the Limit!

As I write this article, I sit in awe of both the beauty and the power of nature that we are blessed to experience in our earthly existence. Currently contributing to this appreciation are:

- The pleasant memories of the exceptional autumn weather and the beautiful scenery that have graced Wisconsin in the recent weeks
- The gratitude for my narrow escape from the great "blow-out" in the Mid-West

this week to the equally remarkable fall climate

- The beauty of Hilton Head Island, SC for the National CASE Board of Directors Meeting
- And, at this instant, the sight, sounds, smells of the ocean waves caressing the white sand beaches that I am fortunate to be sitting upon as I write to you today.

On the other hand, the tremendous damage and disruption that the "big blow-out" has caused back home, as well as my wife's recent sudden and unanticipated heart surgery, each have me equally appreciating how things can go terribly wrong when we are not prepared for the "ill winds" that may blow outside of our control, and/or when we are not careful to take care of things that we can control, in a preventative manner. (Theresa is doing wonderfully now, so please don't worry for us!) For these reasons, I am inspired today to discuss our organization's mission from the natural perspective of creating and sustaining our "environment" of advocacy-from the grassroots level (our local districts and communities) to the sky as the limit (our national organization and its federal influence) that our current and future students may thrive within. As I have promised in previous writings, I hope to inspire you with this discussion to commit to the goals our Executive Board have developed for our organization and to give you at least one "do-able" suggestion for how you can contribute as an individual member, as we "Go All In for Kids!"

I would like to begin at the most essential grassroots level to address our goal of becoming a 100% membership organization by broadening and strengthening our WCASS Region participation. Toward that end, I hope that you all have been paying attention to your region's activity calendar for the year! I know that some of you have already participated in your first region meeting of the year and others are looking forward to gathering with WCASS colleagues at coming events. In these early year gatherings, I ask that you consider two groups:

- First, the members who attended with you
- And second, but most importantly, those special education leaders in your area who were not there.

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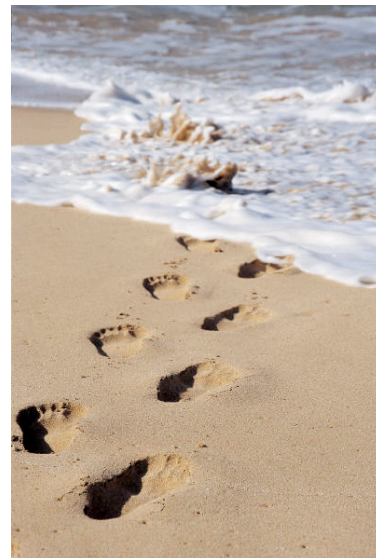
From the first group, I ask that you make note of what you gained from networking with them at your regional activities and how the relationships created and maintained there will benefit you and your students in the future. For group two—those special education leaders in your neighborhood that were not in attendance—please reach out to them with a phone call, a visit, or at least an email. Let them know that *they were missed*, as well as *what they missed* this time, especially the informal benefits that are fresh in your mind about the first group! Don't forget to let them know what they can look forward to at the next meeting or event, and offer to travel and attend with them if they would like. I ask that each one of us, as WCASS members, make a personal commitment to establish at least one new relationship with a special educational leader in your region and encourage them to join and/or increase their participation in WCASS.

I am sure you are all now thinking...“Well Dave that is just about everybody...isn't it!” AND YOU ARE RIGHT ON!! If we are going to meet our statewide goal to be a 100% membership organization, we need to consider everybody...one at a time! And it will be worth it, as a thick network of “grassroots” provides a firm foothold for that which grows and stretches to reach for the sky!

Okay, on to the hills and valleys of the terrain we regularly travail—strengthening our state level advocacy for adequate and responsive funding and progressive educational policy! By the time you are reading this message, the mid-term election will be over and we will have a new governor and likely a significantly reconfigured state legislature. The good news is the campaign advertising will be over and we won't need to screen evening phone calls quite so ferociously! The bad news is I couldn't convince Tony Evers, or any of the powers that be, to propose a tax on campaign advertising as a viable source of educational funding for the new school finance plan! If only...?! We could all be in tall clover after an election cycle like this just past!

But seriously, with the elections over and all our votes counted (you did vote, didn't you?), our work has just begun. John Forrester and Phil Knobel will be studying the new terrain carefully to determine where we need to dig in for the good of kids and schools! Watch your emails carefully for Legislative Alerts and Calls for Legislative Action from John and most importantly... act upon them in a timely manner! Together with the SAA, we make a huge difference for kids!! Also, if you haven't already done so or can afford to do it again...contribute to the SAA-PAC or Conduit Funds, as John will likely need to invest in more and different keys to open “the doors of influence” at the State Capitol.

And finally, reaching for the sky let me address our goal that WCASS may be an organization of significant influence on federal educational policy matters. Based on our organization's participation in the National CASE Board of Directors Meeting and Annual Conference, I am convinced we are already a much taller tree in the forest of special education leadership than most states and provinces in CASE. Our distinguished delegation of Barb Van Haren, Nissan Bar-Lev, Gary Myrah, even with newbie-me, turned some heads, as we participated in critical discussions about our lobbying positions on components of the proposed reauthorization of ESEA and other important matters on the national CASE agenda. I was pleasantly surprised how many directors from around the US and Canada approached WCASS participants for our perspective on issues they face in their states. I went through far more business cards than I expected and look forward to maintaining contact with many new friends around the country.



Barb and Nissan also did their usual, drawing one of the largest crowds for sectional attendance at the conference, sharing their combined wisdom and expertise on “Facilitating Parent-Friendly IEP Meetings based on Dispute Resolution Principles”. Barb's significant other, Greg, also proved to be a remarkable “conference concierge “for our delegation (mostly for me) and was a pleasant dinner companion most evenings, lending an air of practicality and common sense to our discourse! I hope that Greg may become a regular “Friend of WCASS” at future events! I don't know how I would have done without him in Hilton Head! Perhaps others of us have our own Greg at home, who could also contribute to our social events and fundraising activities at our future conferences? Just a thought...!

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But anyway, I digress! In November, we have the opportunity to become an even greater force for our students and schools through CASE and save some dollars doing so. If you are not a member of CEC-CASE, please take advantage of the dues and product discounts by joining before November 30. Phil will be sending out special membership materials for the November Membership campaign. Let's all help CASE reach higher in advocacy for children with disabilities at the federal level by providing more green for the foliage. We are less than one hundred members shy of those "Bear-lovers" in Illinois! Let's take advantage of the November campaign and "Pack" the roster from Wisconsin!

OK! I think I have had too much sun!! Can you tell?! And that is enough for you to do for now! Time to stop reading and start doing! Pick up the phone and give a neighboring director who doesn't know enough about WCASS a call...spread the seeds...let's watch them grow together! Remember the sky is the limit!

Thanks for listening!

~ Dave

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Executive Director's Comments by Phil Knobel



I am late getting this written and off to our newsletter editor, Kelly Kapitz, who does a great job of putting the newsletter together. Many thanks Kelly for all you do. It seems time has passed by very quickly this past month. Maybe it is because of the beautiful weather we have had this fall.

With the elections over and the results out, we are certainly heading down a new road in Wisconsin for the next two years. Not since 1938 has the state had a sweep of one party going out and another one coming in all branches of state government. The GOP won on their promises to cut taxes and increase jobs. If they are going to follow thru on those promises, education has to be included in the proposed funding cuts. About 44 percent of the state budget consists of reimbursements for the state's educational programs. If funds are cut for our schools in the next budget, it will certainly lead to job cuts in education. How will this balance out with the GOP claims for being able to increase jobs? So the upcoming 2011-13 budget discussions that will begin in late January 2011 will be very interesting to say the least. We have already started talking about how WCASS and SAA are going to work with the new legislature during the coming session. In early November I will be attending a meeting at DPI with other educational organizations to discuss the DPI proposed budget and funding changes.

With the many new faces in the legislature, I encourage WCASS members and other school leaders to make sure you get your legislative members into your school districts during the coming two months. Let them know how any cuts in state funding will impact the programs you are providing to students with disabilities and all students in the district. It will be important to educate the new and old members of the legislature on the working needs of your school district. They cannot make good educational votes in the legislature without educating them on how school districts work and the needs of the districts they serve.

With the GOP in power and the many new legislators, WCASS and the SAA will need to build new bridges at the Capital. In the last couple of months WCASS members have received information from John Forester on the SAA PAC/Conduit. Like it or not in this day and age we need to be supporting legislative members that are friends of education. Please consider supporting the SAA PAC/Conduit even if it is with a check for \$10.

In closing, I will say hang on, as the next two years will be an interesting ride. Thank you to all WCASS members and others for what you do for the students in Wisconsin Public Schools.

~ Phil

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Past-President Comments by Gary Myrah



As many of you are aware, I have become very active in our national organization of CASE, Inc. I wanted to provide early notification to consider attending the ninth annual educational leadership seminar to be held in Washington DC from July 17-20, 2011. This is a fascinating seminar to participate in during which you'll learn what the federal government is contemplating for educational regulations. It is also an opportunity to spend one full day visiting the capital with scheduled appointments to meet with our senators and congressmen regarding educational issues at the local level. As a result of this week's election, it is important that WCASS members become active in communicating with elected officials regarding concerns that we are facing in education. As we have many new players in the political arena, they may be unaware of the multitude of educational issues that need to be addressed. As members of WCASS, you can have a collective influence by going as a group to the Capitol in Washington to discuss our concerns.

Another announcement that I would like to make is regarding the CASE Winter Institute. However, since this is in direct conflict with the WCASS Winter Conference, I'm reluctant to say much about this Institute. You may obtain more information by going to this website <http://www.casecec.org/events/>.

I am also encouraging all members to take the opportunity of the 15% discount during the month of November to become members of CASE. With the recent congressional changes that occurred this week, it is important to have a strong professional membership at the national level. CASE membership is approaching 5000 people. Last summer when WCASS President Dave Kwiatkowski and I visited our congressional representatives it was helpful to note both our state and national affiliations when discussing issues of concern.

In closing, it is important to realize that this week's elections have created change in the political scene at the state and national level. We are uncertain of the time as to the extent this would impact education at the local level and many are predicting difficult times. The reality is that due to the financial situation within this nation we would be fighting facing difficult times regardless of who was elected. It is critically important that we each take responsibility for providing educational opportunities to share our concerns with our elected officials. I look forward to seeing all of you at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Leadership Conference. May you all have safe travels to Madison.

~ Gary

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President-Elect Comments by Greg Nyen

If you don't have your health...

"Someone call 9-1-1," I yelled, as I swung open the door to my colleague's office. As my colleague's secretary rushed to the phone I heard her say, "(he's) having a seizure!"

It was a typical Tuesday – disgruntled employees, misunderstood parents, conversations with legal counsel, requests for additional aide time, all within the required fourteen-hour workday. Did I mention there was no time for lunch or dinner, and that after my four-year tenure; I was now the senior administrator at central office? Okay, perhaps this is not the typical Tuesday or even a typical October as our Special Education Department was knee-deep in our self-assessment. It was, however, the day I woke up to that morning, and it was far from over for me.

As I walked in to just another Board committee meeting, only moments after it had begun, I was stunned to hear my name uttered in a context that took me quite by surprise. A question that I had posed earlier that day had been misrepresented and had been placed as fodder for public consumption at the committee meeting I had just joined as a required member of the audience. The issue was one of reimbursement for professional expenses, an issue that often draws negative attention if not handled in a completely transparent and ethical manner. Much to my dismay, the information that I had posed only as a question for clarification earlier in the day was now being misrepresented and misunderstood by Board and citizen committee members. It was the perfect exclamation point to a very stressful day, and as I sat quietly through the remainder of the 3-hour meeting, I began to formulate the "discussion" I would have with my colleague at the conclusion of the meeting.

As the meeting concluded and committee members were exiting, I asked my colleague to join me in his office. As I closed the door to his office I began with my long, premeditated, list of questions related to the information that had been shared just a few short hours ago. After a relatively short period of time my colleague conceded that he was, in fact, in error. He not only agreed that the information was not portrayed accurately, but that the proper protocol would have been to discuss the information with me prior to bringing it to the committee's attention.

To say that I was emphatic during our conversation would be somewhat of an understatement. Although there was never any yelling or loss of professionalism, I was passionate about the obvious misrepresentation that had transpired at the onset of the meeting. Perhaps I was a bit too unrelenting though as I began to notice that beads of sweat accumulating on my colleague's forehead as our conversation drew to an unexpected close. Suddenly, it became all-too-obvious to me that his pupils were dilated, and he began to slump in his chair! "Hey, are you okay?! Are you okay?!" The answer, although he could not provide it, was no. "Somebody call 9-1-1," I yelled.



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The paramedics arrived and tended to my colleague as I sat with my head in my hands in the adjoining office. What had I done? I had contributed to the stress level of a peer such that it became more than he could tolerate, and his body shut down. I felt horrible. Unbeknownst to me, this had happened once before under similar circumstances but that was little consolation at this point. Thoughts of all kinds raced through my mind as I tried to put meaning to a turn of events I never expected. What would I say to his wife? Does he have any children? Will he be okay? Is it too late for me to become a farmer? What if that was me? All that mattered at that point in time was that he needed to be okay, so that I could make amends and learn from this incredible experience. I was fortunate that would be the case. My colleague is fine today as is our relationship.

This experience, albeit incredible as it was, taught me 4 things that I will never forget:

1. Everyone handles stress differently. Be sensitive to that.
2. More often than not, it is better to wait a day before responding when you are passionate or emphatic about a topic.
3. Our jobs and our positions, by their very nature and description, are stressful, misunderstood, and at times seem insurmountable; however, we must rely on our colleagues and peers as “comrades in arms” so to speak.
4. If you don’t have your health, the rest doesn’t matter!

~ Greg

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gnyen@wisp.k12.wi.us

I Need Your Help!!

Special Education has sometimes received unfair and unflattering attention in the media. We know positive things are occurring in the field that are not getting the proper spotlight. As mentioned at the last RSN meeting, WCASS would like help changing this by reporting the wonderful things occurring in your district. To help guide you, I will select a topic of interest. I would appreciate any positive or progressive stories about that topic or any other story you would like to share. I will gladly work to help get your story out to your local media as well as within our own Region. I can be reached at lschieffer@cesal.k12.wi.us

First topic: Transition

Email me, call me or forward me an example of how your district has impacted a student’s transition needs recently. Be creative, involve the kids and families and of course our educators! I look forward to hearing from you.

Laura Schieffer



School Administrator Alliance (SAA)

by John D. Forester
Director of Government Relations

SAA Legislative Committee Focused on Agenda

The SAA Legislative Committee held its first meeting of the 2010-11 school year on Monday, October 4th at the Holiday Inn in Stevens Point. Continued development of the SAA's 2011-12 Legislative Agenda dominated the committee's deliberations. With the state's abysmal fiscal condition and the extraordinary challenges facing Wisconsin school districts serving as the motivational backdrop, the committee's discussions were intense and very productive.

However, the committee members recognize the difficulty in crafting a legislative agenda in these challenging times that will be both representative of the SAA's diverse membership and effective in the 2011-13 State Budget battle. That is why the legislative committee is encouraging SAA members to contact their Legislative Committee representatives with suggestions regarding the structure and content of the Legislative Agenda. (WCASS Legislative Committee representatives and their contact information are listed below.) The Legislative Committee plans to submit the next draft of the legislative agenda to the SAA membership for feedback following the November election. Member comments and criticism will inform the discussion at the committee's next meeting on December 6th, at which time the committee will finalize its legislative agenda recommendations. The committee recommendations then must be approved by the AWSA, WASBO, WASDA and WCASS boards of directors.

SAA: What Is It? Why Does It Exist? How Does It Work?

The School Administrators Alliance (SAA) is a statewide organization established to provide four associations of public school administrators with government relations services and a unified political voice. The SAA is an alliance of:

- Association of Wisconsin School Administrators (AWSA)
- Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials (WASBO)
- Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators (WASDA)
- Wisconsin Council of Administrators of Special Services (WCASS)

As the combined government relations arm of these four associations, the SAA represents the interests of Wisconsin school children and Wisconsin public schools before the State Legislature, the Office of the Governor and the state agencies. The SAA supports legislation that improves Wisconsin public schools and the quality of education for Wisconsin school children. The SAA actively participates with other groups in addressing issues of mutual concern.

Why Does the SAA Exist?

Prior to 1991, each of the SAA member associations had its own lobbyist, its own legislative agenda and its own relatively weak and splintered political voice. State legislators grew weary of the lack of political unity among the administrator groups and openly suggested an alliance of the four groups to create a stronger more unified political voice for public school administrators.

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Why Does the SAA Exist? (continued)

The SAA was founded in 1991 when WASDA and AWSA joined their advocacy efforts. With the addition of WASBO in 1992 and WCASS in 1994, the SAA has grown to represent more than 3,000 members – virtually every licensed school administrator in the state of Wisconsin. This diverse membership provides a broad perspective, a deep understanding of educational issues and a powerful advocate for Wisconsin school children.

How Does the SAA Work?

Each of the four SAA member associations appoints six primary and as many as six alternate members to represent the association on the SAA Legislative Committee, the primary policy-making body for the SAA. It is up to each association to decide how those members are appointed and the length of time they may serve as representatives of their association. The SAA chair, who serves a two-year term as presiding officer, is recommended by the steering committee and confirmed by each association's board of directors. The position of the chair rotates among the four associations. The executive directors of each association and the SAA director of government relations serve as ex officio members.

The Legislative Committee creates the SAA's formal legislative policy positions and monitors SAA government relations' efforts and political activities. Central to this mission is the creation of the SAA's written biennial legislative agenda for ultimate approval by the association boards of directors.

The SAA executive committee consists of the executive director of each association and the director of government relations. The executive committee manages the day-to-day operations of the SAA. The executive committee meets on a regular basis to allocate SAA resources, develop and execute political strategy and to determine how to best keep the membership informed of pressing political issues.

The following hierarchy exists for establishing positions on legislative matters: 1) The entire SAA Legislative Committee at regular or special meetings and approved by each member association's board of directors; 2) the steering committee and approved by each member association's board of directors; and 3) the executive directors instructing the director of government relations with the approval of each member association's board of directors. However, the executive directors and director of government relations have the authority to make decisions and take legislative positions independent of this hierarchy when necessary.

I hope you find this information useful in understanding the operation of the SAA. If you have any questions, please contact SAA Director of Government Relations John Forester at (608) 242-1370 or john.forester@wsaa.org. For up-to-date reports on legislative activities, please visit the SAA's website at www.wsaa.org.

The following are WCASS members on the SAA Legislative Committee:

Kurt Eley keley@waunakee.k12.wi.us

Matt Collins mhel1@verizon.net

Eric Hartwig ehartwig@dwave.net

Randy Hughes hughesr@kaukauna.k12.wi.us

John Peterson Peterson@fortschools.org

Jon von Tish vontishj@fonddulac.k12.wi.us

We also have 2 alternate members: Joe Koch and Greg Nyen.



WCASS Region News**Region 1 Chair: Mardi Freeman** freema@hamiltondist.k12.wi.us

For information from this region, please contact Mardi Freeman.

CESA #1/WCASS Region #1 have scheduled their meeting dates for the 2010-11 school year. Here are the dates for your calendars:

- January 12, 2011 – CESA #1; Indicator 13: Transition Programming, specifically for 18-21 year olds
- March 2, 2010 – CESA #1; TBD
- April 7, 2011 – WCASS Awards/Legal Briefing

Due to the recent announcement of Phil Knobel's upcoming retirement in June 2011, there will be a hiring/interview committee established. WCASS would like there to be a representative from each Region. If you are interested in participating in this committee as the representative from Region #1, please contact me at Hamilton School District, Special Services office, #262-246-1973, ext. 1184 or at freema@hamilton.k12.wi.us.

Respectfully submitted by Mardi Freeman, WCASS Region #1 Representative.

Region 2 Chair: Marci Thiry ThiryM@mjsd.k12.wi.us

For information from this region, please contact Marci Thiry.

Region 3 Chair: John Peterson petersonj@mail.fortschools.org

For information from this region, please contact John Peterson.

Region 4 Chair: Diane Knudsen knudsend@esschools.k12.wi.us

For information from this region, please contact Diane Knudsen.

WCASS Upcoming Training Dates**2010****November**

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 12
Friday | Certified Brain Injury Specialist Training & Exam
Steinhafels Community Room |
| 15
Monday | Academy For New Special Education Leadership-Session 2:
On the Horizon: Risk Based Fiscal Monitoring
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm, Marriott Madison West |
| 16
2 days | State Superintendent's Conference on Special Education & Pupil Services
Leadership Issues
Marriott Madison West |

2011**January**

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| 12
Wednesday | Region 1 Meeting
CESA #1 – New Address |
|-----------------|---|

February

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 2
3 days | WCASS Winter Conference
Radisson Paper Valley Hotel |
|-------------|--|

March

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 2
Wednesday | Region 1 Meeting
CESA #1 – New Address |
| 9 | 2011 Wisconsin Rti Summit |

April

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| 7
Thursday | Region 1 Meeting
TBD |
|---------------|-------------------------|

May

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 4
3 days | WCASS Spring Conference
Chula Vista Resort and Conference Center |
|-------------|---|

Please check the WCASS website for Registration and maps.

<https://m360.wcass.org/frontend/portal/viewcalendar.aspx>

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