



# Newsletter

WISCONSIN COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATORS OF SPECIAL SERVICES, LTD.

Fall 2011



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## President’s Message

by David Kwiatkowski



### From The Hip...Titanium, At That!

By the time you folks are reading this article, I will be enjoying my shiny new titanium hip joint! I am hoping it improves my golf game, since Golf Digest claims titanium should add 10-15 yards to your drives! Those of you who have played with me know it probably can't hurt! As I am writing this however, I am enroute to the hospital for the procedure so I need to be brief in this article. This is a relief to many, I am sure!

I would like to give you a quick update on some of the exciting developments within WCASS and in the field, through our influence. They are many, due to the hard work of our Executive Board and Gary, but I will focus on only a few here that I have been most intimately involved with. I trust that Gary and Greg will also be providing updates from their perspectives, as well. My current “shots from the hip” are:

- Our 2011 Executive Board Retreat this summer was very productive in providing more detailed action plans to the long range goals set for our organization last year. These will also prove helpful in measuring progress toward those goals in the years ahead! Gary and our Executive Board will be providing more detail to the membership in the months ahead. For now, I wish to announce that our Board has committed to explore and utilize more vibrant and contemporary communication platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to keep our membership and stakeholders better informed and involved in the important functions of WCASS. I am also very pleased to announce that Jennifer Zynda and Becky Collins have agreed to serve as Co-Chairs for Newsletter & Public Relations on the Executive Board. I thank Kelly Kapitz for her years of service on the Board as our Newsletter Editor and wish her well as she focuses her considerable talents on completing her dissertation rather than chasing all of us around for our newsletter articles!
- I believe we continue to make significant progress toward alternative certification options and new best practice guidelines to alleviate the impacts of the shortage of Speech / Language Pathologist on our students in need, particularly in more rural areas. The DPI Taskforce led by Sheryl Thormann completed their work of examining such options implemented in other states in August. That group, which included practicing SLP’s, parent advocates and WCASS representation by Greg Nyen and myself, has forwarded recommendation to Stephanie to consider a Speech / Pathology Assistant or Technician certification, similar to a program implemented in Utah with ASHA support. It is expected that those recommendations will next be considered by a stakeholders group including IHE’s and representatives from the teacher licensing division. We look forward to the completion of deliberations of the options within the current school year.
- In the meantime, some immediate relief has been found in the clarification by the DPI that paraprofessionals may be utilized for the repetition and practice of speech and language instructional activities established by a certified SLP for students. The SLP’s on the taskforce were especially encouraged by this source of immediate relief, recognizing the benefits for the increased quantity and especially, quality of time they may spend with their most needy students.

*Continues next page*

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- Our delegation on Capitol Hill this summer doubled in size (4 from 2) from last year! Unfortunately, the debate over the debt ceiling and the federal budget in general, detracted any serious congressional attention of educational issues at the time of our visit. However, we found that Wisconsin congressional members are concerned for potential remedies for the MOE dilemma faced in Wisconsin due to Act 10. Although the state has now been granted a waiver for SEA level funding, there is no waiver available for districts and no one believes that congress can act to amend IDEA to allow relief at the district level in any timely manner. However, Senator Kohl's office was willing (even encouraged) to work with Secretary Duncan and OSEP to amend the language for exceptions to address benefit reductions such as those implemented in Wisconsin and other states, currently. They requested draft language from us and I provided the following:

### *Current MOE Exception # 1:*

*The voluntary departure, by retirement or other means, or departure for just cause of special educational personnel.*

### *Expanded MOE Exception #1:*

*The voluntary departure, by retirement or other means, or the involuntary departure for just cause of special educational personnel; or the voluntary waiver of all or selected benefit programs or other forms of compensation by individual special educational personnel; or the negotiated or mandated reduction of special educational costs equal to and concurrent with such reductions for all other like educational personnel in the employing local educational agency or state educational agency. In all cases, the service level or full-time equivalency of personnel providing service to affected special education students must remain at least equal for an exception to be granted under this provision.*

We are waiting to hear from Senator Kohl's office on the progress of these efforts, as Congress has returned to session in September. We are greatly encouraged that this problem is recognized in Washington and remedies are being sought!

Finally, and also resulting from our delegation's visit to Washington DC, WCASS has been invited to participate in a Midwest Regional Special Educational Leadership Retreat to discuss the formation of a Midwest regional organization affiliated to CASE. The purpose of that group would be to strengthen our advocacy for children and improve professional development and the dissemination of best practices through regional, multi-state collaborations. We have committed to participate in the deliberations of forming such a group. Gary, Greg and I will be reporting back to WCASS on its progress and the potential formal affiliation of WCASS.

Well, that is my update for now...and it doesn't seem much shorter than usual! Maybe just the anticipation of titanium!?

I look forward to seeing you all at the Leadership conference in November, without a limp!!

As always, thanks for listening!

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## Executive Director's Comments

by: Gary Myrah



### Where is Education Heading in Wisconsin?

Dr. Tony Evers shared the WDPI's focus in his annual State of Education address on September 15th, in the State Capitol in Madison. He acknowledged the turbulent times we have faced this year and remained steadfast in his views on funding for public education. Yet he also stated it is time to work together to rebuild our educational system.

Based on various meetings I have been in, it appears there are many initiatives that are being developed that will eventually be interconnected. This article will offer a glimpse of how many of the initiatives are beginning to shape the future of education in Wisconsin. As you will see, some of the pieces of the puzzle have been in place for some time. The actions described below are the result of actions by the WDPI, the state legislature and initiatives created at the federal level. (Note: Highlighted terms are hyperlinked to WDPI's web page describing the topic).

- Creation of a student identification system for tracking students throughout Wisconsin. The [Wisconsin Student Number Locator System](#) (WSLS) system has been established for several years. This is the umbrella term used for the "system" of processes related to student identification.
  - The [Individual Student Enrollment System](#) (ISES) includes student demographic and outcome data needed to meet the ESEA report card requirements at the state, district, and school levels.
  - The (Wisconsin Student Number) WSN and certain other WSLS data will be used as a starting point for Wisconsin School Performance Report, Fall Enrollment Report, Discipline, [Coursework Completion System](#) (CWCS), and ESEA Report Card purposes.
- The adoption of the [Common Core Standards](#) has led to the Coursework Completion System (CWCS) that is nearly complete.
- Establish an improved assessment system that will provide improved analysis of student performance and tracked using the Wisconsin Student Number Locator System (WSLS) system. [The Next Generation Assessment Task Force](#) was convened in Fall 2008 to examine balanced assessment systems and to make recommendations on the components of an assessment system essential to increasing student achievement. ([SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium](#))
- The development of a Student Information System that will be accessible to WDPI for analyzing student data and teacher performance. The current legislature appropriated \$15 million dollars (in an incredibly harsh budget bill) to move forward with this plan.
- The use of progress monitoring to keep focused on individual student needs, with some leading to the need for specialized instruction.

These elements seem to be coming together as the School Accountability Design Team discusses ways to improve the current requirements of the ESEA regulations known as No Child Left Behind. It appears for Wisconsin to be approved for a waiver to have all students achieving at a proficient or advanced level by 2014, we need to have a system that will ensure "success" for all students, leading them to be college or career ready.

Issues that are also being discussed include:

- ❖ Establishment of a growth-based accountability system.
- ❖ Develop fair and "robust" educator evaluation system that incorporates student achievement data.
- ❖ Requiring low performing districts to adopt comprehensive literacy and mathematics plans.
- ❖ Establish a system of early interventions.
- ❖ Develop data-driven student intervention systems.

Being involved in some of the meetings discussing these issues offers a glimpse of optimism. The focus of discussion is how we need to improve Wisconsin's public instructional system and the need to establish the necessary support to implement the systems. In the School Accountability Design Team discussions, the "quad chairs" (i.e. the State

## Executive Director's Comments continued from p. 3

Superintendent, the Governor, the Chair of the Senate and Assembly Education Committees) have all indicated a sincere desire to support public instruction in Wisconsin. Each individual has stated the need to find the resources to accomplish the goals that are being developed through these initiatives.

Where we need to remain vigilant in our pursuit of improving instruction, we need to be cautious of the individual beliefs of how this is to be accomplished. I believe in the 5% rule which is a broad statement that suggests that in life 95% of any system tends to be operating satisfactory. The remaining 5% of the system requires the majority of our attention. To apply this rule to Wisconsin education – approximately 95% of our schools are performing satisfactorily or better. We all can find room to improve, and many of the systems being designed will help all of us improve. Yet we still will need to concentrate our efforts to find ways to improve the 5% of the schools that are not succeeding.

Throughout the development of these systems our membership need to be assertive regarding how we can utilize these components to help students with special needs or are considered at risk. Our membership focuses on the success of ALL students and it is important to ask the question of how these changes will improve instruction for ALL children.

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## New Project Forums & Resources

### ❖ DPI's OT & PT Guide

The OT & PT Guide is published and available at: <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/pdf/ot-pt-guide-2nd-edition.pdf>

### ❖ State Performance Plan Process & Indicators

A Policy Forum: this policy proceedings document begins with an executive summary. The document provides a synopsis of the participants' input on the positives and concerns about the SPP/APR system and their suggestions for changes. No attempt was made to develop consensus recommendations and all input was accepted and documented. <http://projectforum.org/docs/StatePerformancePlanProcessandIndicators.pdf>

### ❖ Children Who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing: State of the Educational Practices

This brief policy analysis is based on surveys sent to two groups of state officials: directors of special education and IDEA Part C coordinators. Findings include information about screening, schools for the deaf, services provided, professional development, funding for local education agencies and Part C local programs, changes since cochlear implants became available, and challenges. Analysis indicates some significant variations between and within the school-age and Part C programs. Initial screening upon entry is required on only two-thirds of Part B programs and most of the Part C programs reported relying on newborn screening results. <http://projectforum.org/docs/ChildrenWhoareDeaf-HOH-StateoftheEducationalPractice.pdf>

### ❖ Neuroscience and Special Education

This brief policy analysis provides an overview of how findings from neuroscience are being applied to special education, describes outcomes from the research bridging the two fields and discusses how institutions of higher education and others are creating interdisciplinary links between the two. The second section of the document profiles three programs currently serving students with disabilities that base their curriculum in part on findings from the field of neuroscience. Brief concluding remarks include the need for successful collaborations between neuroscientists and special education researchers; the need for leaders in the field of special education to possess an understanding of brain development across the lifespan and of research in these bridged fields. <http://projectforum.org/docs/NeuroscienceandSPED.pdf>

## WCASS Region News

**Region 1 Chair: Mardi Freeman** [freema@hamilton.k12.wi.us](mailto:freema@hamilton.k12.wi.us)

For information from this region, please contact Mardi Freeman.

**Region 2 Chair: Marci Thiry** [ThiryM@mjsd.k12.wi.us](mailto:ThiryM@mjsd.k12.wi.us)

For information from this region, please contact Marci Thiry.

Region II held its spring meeting in Neenah. Mary Gerbig, from Davis & Kuelthau, provided legal updates covering a letter from OSEP on child find and RtI; new ADA regulations; bullying; and various questions from the WCASS members. We celebrated the end of another successful school year by presenting WCASS awards to the following staff members from Marinette: Mary Bittner, Rod Franken and Julie Williams.

**Region 3 Chair: John Peterson** [petersonj@mail.fortschools.org](mailto:petersonj@mail.fortschools.org)

For information from this region, please contact John Peterson.

**Region 4 Chair: Diane Knudsen** [knudsend@esschools.k12.wi.us](mailto:knudsend@esschools.k12.wi.us)

For information from this region, please contact Diane Knudsen.

## WCASS Upcoming Training Dates & Events

### 2011

**Nov. 1-2** *DPI/WASBO/WCASS Federal Funding Conference:* 2 days at Kalahari Resort & Conference Center

**Nov. 9-11** *CASE Fall Conference:* Williamsburg, VA

**Nov. 15-16** *State Superintendent's Conference on Special Education and Pupil Services Leadership Issues:* The 27th Annual State Superintendent's Conference on Special Education and Pupil Services Leadership Issues will be held November 15-16, 2011 at the Marriott Madison West in Middleton, Wisconsin. Please see [dpi.wi.gov/sped/pdf/falleader-flyer.pdf](http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/pdf/falleader-flyer.pdf) <<http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/pdf/falleader-flyer.pdf>> for more information. Watch for more conference information in future e-mails. Please contact Sherri Honaker at [sherri.honaker@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:sherri.honaker@dpi.wi.gov) <<mailto:sherri.honaker@dpi.wi.gov>> or (608) 267-7904 with other questions.

### 2012

**Feb. 1** *WCASS Winter Conference:* 3 days at Radisson Paper Valley Hotel

**Mar. 7-8** *Wisconsin SAA RtI Summit:* 2 days at KI Convention Center. REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP): This summit will be a continuation of the 2011 Wisconsin RtI Summit and collaborative efforts that have been underway since that event. We believe the theme "Sustainable Practices for Student Success" takes us the next step from implementation to sustainability. We are seeing individuals and teams from districts to share their experiences in the area of RtI and PBIS. Please consider presenting and sharing your information. Please download RFP Form and submit to WASDA by November 1, 2011  
<http://www.wasda.org/>

### *CASE Webinars*

Learn more about Leadership Webinars that CASE is sponsoring this year. For the first time CASE is packaging an option to sign up for all three webinars at the same time and receive a discounted fee.

Please visit our website at <https://m360.wcass.org/frontend/portal/viewcalendar.aspx>



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