Newsletter WISCONSIN COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATORS OF SPECIAL SERVICES, LTD.



WCASS, 4797 Hayes Rd., Ste. 101, Madison WI 53704 1-608-245-2511 philknobel@wcass.org

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Executive Director's Farewell by Phil Knobel



Thank you, Thank You, Thank you to the Executive Board, members of WCASS and a special thank you to Gary Myrah and Jeanne Deimund for the wonderful reception and gifts I received at the Spring Conference. In addition, I would like to thank Stephanie Petska for her kind words and the Certificate of Appreciation that was signed by her, Carolyn Stanford Taylor and Tony Evers.

During the WCASS Spring Conference in 1998, it was Don Zander and Chuck Hastert who approached me about becoming the first Executive Director of WCASS. The board had decided the time had come that WCASS needed to create the position to become a more active participant in the SAA and other educational activities in the state. So after some consideration, I decided to retire from my director's position with the 15 school districts in Walworth County and started with WCASS in January 1999. So, I have to thank Don and Chuck for having the confidence to hire me for the position that I have enjoyed so much.

As you all know, these are very interesting times for education in the state and even more so since Scott Walker has taken over. Having been active in legislative activities for almost 40 years, we are seeing actions by the governor and legislature that we never thought would happen. I ask that we all take the high road and keep working hard on behalf of all the students that we serve in our Wisconsin schools. Keep your local legislators and other community leaders informed about your student's needs and their successes. So keep telling our story and in the future our public schools will survive and become stronger. It may take time but it will happen.

Gary Myrah will be taking over as Executive Director on July 1 and will do a great job. I encourage current and future members to support him as you have supported me and WCASS will continue to grow and become a stronger member in the educational community. Thank you all for the great work you do on behalf of the students in your district and Wisconsin. We will keep in touch.

~ Phil

President's Message by David Kwiatkowski



Making Waves

Challenging times such as those we are currently facing often raise within me the irresistible urge to "just do something!" in the hopes of making things better or at least more predictable! Thankfully in more recent years, when this urge arises, I remember the lessons taught by another good friend and mentor, Dr. Tom Joynt, and I take the time to consider the "ripple effects" of my actions before rushing to "do something" that I may later come to regret!

I came to know Tom and benefit greatly from his wisdom and experience as an educational leader though my coursework through UW-Milwaukee in Administrative Leadership to obtain certification as a school superintendent. During much of that time, Tom served as superintendent of the Green Bay Area Public Schools, teaching for UW-M as an adjunct professor in evening courses to a cohort at UW-Green Bay. In those combined roles, Tom always provided me with a relevant balance of scholarly research tested knowledge and practical sage wisdom, borne of experience. He continues to impact my scholarly pursuits as he serves on my dissertation committee, keeping my research focused on practical issues impacting student learning in small rural high poverty elementary schools. Over the years, Tom has taught me many valuable lessons about being an effective educational leader, but one stands alone through the fact that I think about it and apply it most every day. That lesson in a nutshell is to be mindful of the "ripple effect"!

The "ripple effect" notes that every decision we make and every action taken as leaders approximates the dropping of a stone or a pebble in a pool, creating consequences that spread out around the action like the concentric ring of ripples that travels across the pool of water away from the immersion point of the flung stone. As leaders, we often plan and account for those consequences or ripples that we hope for in our action, but less frequently anticipate or pay attention to those flowing out in other directions. Also, many of us don't recognize the full range of our ripples and/or the synergism of ripples combining from multiple actions, mitigating circumstances or other contextual factors. Simply, we often don't think through the more long-term impacts of our leadership decisions or plan for how these may be complicated, magnified or negated by other ripples on the pond! The hopeful message to the new leader seeking to grow quickly and steadily in their effectiveness is, It pays to proactively consider the ripples of each of your decisions! But also, don't become afraid to make decisions at all, hoping to avoid ripples altogether, because a pond that is too still can quickly become stagnant and unproductive! You have to make some splash to make a difference!

The wise, thoughtful and experienced leader, on the other hand, cannot only learn to anticipate the less desirable ripples, but also can learn to manage the depths and better prepare the surface of their pond for maximum impact of big decisions or the smooth, calm, unobtrusive flow of the routine. Over time, these highly skilled leaders through patient, persistent and goal-oriented plops can synchronize their ripples into waves that wear down rock-like barriers and expand the surface of their pond and their influence far beyond their initial shores!

So...OK...what does this have to do with WCASS right now, and especially to you as a member? Well first and most importantly, it gives me the opportunity to recognize one such leader, Phil Knobel, who has given great rise to the tide and broadened the shores of influence of WCASS over the last several decades, and particularly in the last twelve years as our first Executive Director of WCASS! We would all do well to follow the excellent example of dedication and proactive leadership that Phil has provided us over these years! Although we will miss him greatly, we wish him all the best in his retirement! He has more than earned it!!

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Second, I would like to invite all of you to help WCASS make waves at the state and national level at a very crucial time. As public education faces huge fiscal and political challenges in our home state and the pending reauthorization of both ESEA and IDEA at the federal level, there has never been a more important time to make a splash and synchronize our ripples for the benefit of Wisconsin's public school children, especially children with disabilities. There are three important ways to do this:

- 1) Stay informed.
- 2) Stay on message.
- 3) Stay on the radar of your state and federal legislators.



We are fortunate to have the WCASS Communication Platform, the SAA Legislative Report and John Forester's Legislative Alerts, and the WDPI's webinars to help us stay informed, all at the convenience of our computer desktops. Please access these regularly and use the information and advice provided to benefit both your local districts and others across the state and nation through our coordinated efforts.

Staying on message is the central and a most powerful means to combine and coordinate our efforts to overcome the current attacks on public education. Much of the political rhetoric and what appears in the media seems intent to blame public education for our states budget problems and educators themselves for being unfairly compensated for the good work they do! It is little wonder that our staff and we, ourselves, feel personally offended by this discourse. However, it is most important that we not get baited into personal conflicts by these tactics, but rather choose to take the high road of focusing on the impacts on our schools and especially our students. Staying united in our message and going "All In For Kids" has never been so important! Be courageous and be encouraging to your staff about speaking with one voice and our combined ripples may better wear down the jagged rocks that our students' futures may depend upon!

Finally, staying on your state and federal legislators' radar can be accomplished as in the past at the state level, by paying attention to the SAA legislative alerts and writing your local representatives and member of legislative committees as requested by John Forester. Remember to combine your local information and impacts with the talking points provided by John Forester. It is very important that our legislators get the local perspective to understand the practical local impacts of their decisions at the Capitol. Only you can provide that very valuable information so please don't think your correspondence won't make a difference! It makes all the difference for your students and schools! Your local perspective can also be very valuable at legislative hearings, so watch for opportunities to attend and participate in these as well! Body counts at those events can send a message as well as written and spoken testimony!

This Spring and Summer we are also going to be asking for you to help with very important issues at the federal level! Most pressing is the issue of not having the opportunity to exempt special education cost reductions borne of employee contributions to retirement and health insurance premiums from the Maintenance of Effort requirements for federal project funding. Both the WDPI and OSEP have told us that it will take an act of Congress to change those requirements, so we plan to aggressively pursue just that!

We will soon be asking that you write to your representative in Congress and to our Senators to inform them on these issues, again providing your valuable local information and perspectives. We would also strongly encourage you to consider attending Natl. C.A.S.E. Legislative Leadership Seminar, July 17-20, 2011 in Washington D.C. to really make some waves on Capitol Hill. This event will help us to organize and conduct lobbying visit with our Congressional Delegation and other key members of Congress on the MOE issue. We will also be looking at important considerations benefiting students with disabilities in the reauthorization of ESEA and IDEA which are currently being considered. We are hoping that Wisconsin may have the largest representation from all member states and provinces at this year's event. Contact Gary Myrah garymyrah@wcass.org or visit the CASE website - http://www.casecec.org/, for details on how to attend.

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Well, Kelly has waited far too long for me to turn in this article for publication, so I will close for now! Please feel free to contact me or Gary for further information or clarification on how to create and coordinate our ripples! I can hear our waves crashing on the shore already!!

Thanks for listening!

Dave

920-855-2114 Office davek@cesa8.k12.wi.us

Message from Greg Nyen

Saying Thanks...

The events at the capital over the past several months have resulted in numerous retirements among our colleagues and friends. This loss of knowledge in our respective districts is truly difficult to quantify in terms of impact for students. The impact on the retiring individual can sometimes be more easily observed as so many of them lament, "I am just not ready to retire."

Although this time, for some, has come much more quickly than anticipated, the resounding message from those who understand the contribution they have made can be summed up in one meager and humble word, 'thanks'. Our gratitude is, as it should be, in the forefront of our conversations with our retiree friends whether we are talking to fellow directors, teachers, principals, paraprofessionals or special education staff members with whom we have worked side by side. As we communicate our appreciation to our departing friends in education, it strikes me that all too often we wait until a person is at the end of their career to celebrate their professional contribution to the greater good, the education of children. It seems as if the recognition for a job well done that we, as educators, provide for the students we serve on a daily basis may also be well received by those with whom we work closely every day. I believe we should not wait for our education counterparts to retire or "move on" before we celebrate all they have done for the profession and for children. I believe that we may all find solace in celebrating each other on a daily basis rather than waiting until the end of one's career to show gratitude.

And so, to all of you, I ask that you not only appreciate those that are retiring but that you also take time to celebrate those who continue to work with you side by side. Thanks.

~ Greg

715-345-5454 gnyen@wisp.k12.wi.us

Past-President Comments by Gary Myrah

This is my last message as the past president of WCASS. After 33 years as a director, I am finding I have varied reactions as I approach retirement. I am excited to be entering a new venture in my life as I transition into the executive director position. The turbulence we have experienced this year in education as well as the anticipated future of the "new era" has been unsettling. Many of my colleagues in the district have made the decision that the time is right to retire. As we have talked, a common reaction we have faced is the reality that we are old enough to retire. Many of us have not given much thought to when we would be retiring until the opportunity jumped in front of us.



There are many issues that we will need to address as an organization advocating for children. As many of you heard at the WCASS conference, the maintenance of effort (MOE) issue has developed into a dilemma. WDPI is estimating about 60% of the districts in the state will be able to take action to meet the MOE obligations without developing other dilemmas in their district. However, it appears the greatest cause for the MOE dilemma is due to the action taken by the governor and state legislature to reduce benefits, as well as salary throughout the state.

Since this action has been taken across the board, it is anticipated that we will not have a reduction of services. Yet the provisions for allowable exemptions were written in a different era without an anticipation of this type of scenario occurring. One may think it should be easily rectified since we can demonstrate the impact of these reductions is universal and is impacting all employees in public education. However, this is anchored in statutory language and requires an act of congress to provide a remedy.

We are actively attempting to muster support throughout the nation for congress to take action to provide a remedy. Interestingly, there are reports that our congressional representatives are receiving pressure NOT to provide a remedy. If a remedy is not created, Wisconsin may be in jeopardy of being in noncompliance. Even if a district is able to meet the MOE requirements, there can still be a loss of IDEA funds at the state level. A loss at the state level will be distributed across all districts. Also a reduction in IDEA funds due to noncompliance with MOE is a permanent loss.

I am encouraging each of you to become more actively involved in contacting our congressional representatives. It is best to make contact with the senator and representative from your area. The Council of Exceptional Children has a great website that provides all of the information you need to access your senators and representatives. You can go to the following website to find this information: http://capwiz.com/cek/home/. You do not need to be a CEC or CASE member to access this information.

Also, CASE is hosting the **9th Annual Leadership Seminar** in Washington, D.C. from July 17-20, 2011. This program is designed to offer participants the following:

- > Learn the most current information related to the federal design for education.
- ➤ Be guided on how to schedule a visit with your congressman (The day of planned visits will be Tuesday, July 19th).
- ➤ Learn the best methods to influence your congressional representatives.
- Learn how to have an impact in the reauthorization process (for IDEA & ESEA).
- ➤ Be provided guided practice on maneuvering through the federal maze.
- > Be provided maps and directions on how to find your way around the congressional office buildings.
- Establish a great network of colleagues from throughout the nation.
- Participate in a debriefing and planning experience on Wednesday, July 20th.

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We will even build in time for some optional fun after our busy day on Tuesday! Options may include:

- A twilight trolley tour of Washington, DC and historic monuments.
- > A play at the Lincoln Center.
- > Or, simply free time on your own.

The following are the details of the program:

Hotel: Hyatt Regency Crystal City (room rates will be \$129/night).

Dates: July 17-20, 2011

Cost*: Member- \$350 / Non Member- \$425 (Teams of three will receive the member cost for all.)

*Cost includes: 3 Full Breakfasts, one Lunch, Snacks, and a Reception

You can register online at www.casecec.org

President Dave Kwiatkowski and I attended last year's seminar for the first time. This was an incredible experience for both of us. It was an interesting experience to take an active role in providing information to our senators and congressman that would shape legislation that also impacts the local level. This year we are hoping to have a larger contingency to share the message for a quick remedy to the MOE dilemma before we permanently lose IDEA money in the State of Wisconsin. If you have questions regarding this opportunity, please contact Dave or me at your convenience.

Also, as of July 1, I will be taking over the responsibility of being the executive director for WCASS. I have an active email account now if you wish to contact me. It is garymyrah@wcass.org. The other office contact information that you have on file for Phil remains the same. I will provide a cell phone number later in June after I have purchased a new phone.

I hope all of you will have the opportunity to catch your breath this summer. We have all had a bumpy ride this year.

~ Gary

262-268-6079 Office

garymyrah@wcass.org

"We want to congratulate all of the 2011 retirees for their dedication and years of service. Best wishes for a bright and wonderful future."

WCASS members honored with a plaque.

Phil Knobel – WCASS Cheri Collins – Crandon Marie Dorie – RSN at CESA #2 Jim Haessley – Waukesha Chuck Hastert- CESA #8 Diane Hatfield - CESA #5 Julie Holbrook – Kimberly Rick Johnson - Holmen

Jeffrey Joyce - Wausau Howard Kallio - Oconomowoc

Howard Kallio - Oconomowoc Jeff Koehn – Florence

Jen Koenn – Piorence

John Kucak – Kenosha

Gary Myrah - Port Washington/Saukville Dick Nitsche - Two Rivers

Carol Topinka - Saint Francis John vonTish - Fond du Lac Fred Wollenberg - CESA #5 Those retiring that were mentioned but are not WCASS members.

Pat Yahle - Milwaukee Lynett Fassbender - Verona Bev McCoun – Mt. Horeb Mark Flynn - Merton

And, John Eyerly will be leaving Ashland for a superintendent position in Westfield.

Director of Government Relations

2011-13 State Budget Priorities, April 2011



The SAA strongly opposes the governor's proposed state aid cuts to K-12 public education, as well as his proposed reductions in allowable revenues for public school districts. The SAA also opposes the governor's proposals to expand school vouchers and independent charter schools, and remove the family income limit and required assessments for students in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program.

Wisconsin school administrators understand the seriousness of the fiscal challenges facing Wisconsin lawmakers in this biennial budget process. However, the cuts proposed in school aid and allowable revenues are simply too big and come too fast for school leaders to prudently manage with an eye on maintaining quality instruction for children. Additionally, it is hard to see the combination of dramatic de-funding of public education plus the proposed expansion of private school vouchers and independent charter schools as anything other than an agenda to privatize public education in Wisconsin.

Reductions in Allowable School Revenues & State Aid Cuts

The SAA opposes the dramatic reductions in allowable school revenues proposed in the 2011-13 State Budget. Governor Walker proposes reducing allowable revenues by \$1.7 billion from current law over the biennium. This reduction in allowable revenues for Wisconsin public school children is unprecedented in Wisconsin history. Even under the worst of fiscal circumstances in the last 18 years under revenue caps, Wisconsin lawmakers have always increased allowable revenues for Wisconsin school children.

The SAA also opposes the huge cuts in state school aid proposed in the governor's budget plan. These school aid cuts are of a magnitude not seen since the Great Depression. Governor Walker proposes cutting general school aid by \$750 million, and total state school aid by \$840 million, over the biennium.

The SAA recognizes that Governor Walker has provided school districts with management tools (especially in the area of collective bargaining) that will help to offset the dramatic state aid cuts and revenue limit reductions in the governor's budget proposal. The reality is however, that the tools, when prudently utilized, will not fully offset the cuts in aid and allowable revenues in many school districts. We fear these cuts will hurt public school children and devastate many Wisconsin school districts.

Expansion of Vouchers and Independent Charter Schools

At the same time that the governor proposes dramatic cuts in resources for public school children, he also supports increasing resources for students attending voucher schools and independent charter schools. These increases total \$41 million statewide, representing an 11% biennial increase. This figure is just for existing voucher and independent charter schools and does not account for any students attending new voucher and charter schools. This proposed expansion is funded by siphoning public resources away from those students attending traditional public schools all over the state. The SAA strongly opposes this expansion of school privatization.

Other Budget Items

The SAA supports:

- Restoring the proposed cuts in categorical aid programs, most notably the alternative education grants, children-at-risk aid and the 10% cuts to pupil transportation, sparsity, school breakfast and school day milk aid.
- An increase in the low revenue ceiling from the governor's proposed \$8,900 to 9,200.
- Restoration of the revenue limit exemption for above average transportation costs.

The SAA opposes:

- The inclusion in the budget of clearly non-fiscal policy items related to Private School Choice, Charter and Open Enrollment.
- The removal of the family income limit and deletion of the required assessments for students in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program.

Sum-Sufficient vs. Sum-Certain

According to the Department of Public Instruction, there are only three sum-sufficient appropriations for K-12 education – national board certified teachers, private school choice and independent charter schools. We support making all three sum-certain appropriations. Given that the categorical aid appropriation for children with special needs is sum-certain, I fail to see the justification for maintaining a sum-sufficient appropriation for the three referenced above.

Thank you for your consideration. If you should have any questions or require additional information regarding our positions, please contact John Forester, SAA Director of Government Relations, at 608-242-1370.



WCASS Region News

Region 1 Chair: Mardi Freeman freema@hamilton.k12.wi.us

For information from this region, please contact Mardi Freeman.

On April 7, 2011, WCASS Region 1 held its Awards Banquet in conjunction with CESA #1 RSN meeting at the Comfort Suites in Pewaukee. WCASS retires Gary Myrah, Howard Kallio and Phil Knobel.







Gary Myrah, Port Washington-Saukville

Phil Knobel, WCASS

Howard Kallio, Oconomowoc



Pictured from left to right:

Patti Christoffel, Terri Smale for Special Education Para Team Award, Cedarburg School District
Sonia Peters, Pupil Services Team Award, South Milwaukee School District
Korrin Bunce, Pupil Services Team Award, School District of Greenfield
Cindy Sibley, Special Education Teacher Award, School District of Greenfield
Lori Przybyla, Related/Support Services Award, Cedarburg School District

Other Recipients not pictured:

Jill Thomas, Special Education Teacher Award, Pewaukee School District; Judi Uhan, Special Education Para Award, Mequon-Thiensville School District; Robert Haupt, Integration Team Award, Director of Ozaukee County Department of Health & Family Services

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

For information from this region, please contact Marci Thiry.

WCASS Region II, in conjunction with RSNs, held their spring meeting at the Bridgewood Convention Center in Neenah. Phil Knobel and Dave Kwiatkowski provided a legislative update and Mary Gerbig from Davis & Kuelthau provided a legal update. Mary focused our attention on the ADAAA regulations as they pertain to RTI and student bullying.

The highlight of the Region II Spring meeting was our awards luncheon. It was to honor and recognize Rod Francken, Mary Bittner and Julie Williams from the Marinette School District for their outstanding service to students with disabilities.

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

For information from this region, please contact John Peterson.

TEARING DOWN SILOS: SPECIAL EDUCATORS AND READING SPECIALISTS WORKING TOGETHER, May 11, 2011

Throughout the course of the current academic year, our elementary special education teachers have participated in a total of six full days of professional development on how to deliver a literacy intervention created out of Ohio State University by Fountas and Pinnell called Leveled Literacy Intervention or LLI. Our special education teachers have seen tremendous results using this intervention for students with literacy-based learning disabilities in the special education classroom and have shown great growth in their approach to teaching literacy.

As excited as I am about the buy in from our teaching staff based on the academic success of their students with LLI, I am most excited about the fact our elementary special educators have gone through this training with the district's reading specialists / interventionists and our elementary ELL teachers. Each one of these groups of educators have previously operated in their own respective silos, rarely working together (and at times in the past, feeling like they were working against one another). The conversations that have been generated out of the LLI training sessions have been rich and all educators have commented that they have learned new perspectives and gained so much from one another. In short, all of our educators who work with the students who have the highest academic needs are actually working together, learning the same intervention, and learning from one another. This sounds simple, but I have never seen this happen until this year.

For those of you who are not familiar with LLI, it is designed to be used with small groups of students (usually 3 to 4 students) who need intensive support to achieve grade-level competency. Participants include low-achieving students who are not receiving another supplementary literacy-based intervention. In other words, LLI works as an intervention and it works for students who are identified for special education and/or ELL services.

If a student is making gains in LLI with the reading specialist, but the achievement gap is not closing at a rate we would expect for a non-disabled student and/or we are unable to maintain the resources for this gap to continue to the close, then the student would be able to continue on with this intervention in the special education classroom (once he or she qualifies for services). In other words, the student transitions from using LLI as an intervention with the reading specialist to using it as the curriculum with the special education teacher.

Region 3 Chair: John Peterson continued from pg. 7

Some benefits to this model are obvious. The transition from intervention to special education is seamless. The students do not have to learn a whole new set of rules or applications (especially ones that contradict what they were previously taught in the intervention), as both the reading specialist and the special education teacher are speaking the same language. Another benefit is that the student has previously made gains in this intervention in one setting and will continue to do so in another setting – with the ultimate goal of getting the student back into the general education classroom participating in the general education curriculum.

Instead of focusing on progress monitoring, we are focusing on the instruction that we are delivering in the special education classroom and creating opportunities to close the achievement gap where a student can eventually re-enter the general education curriculum / classroom. The most successful way that we can achieve this goal is to have all of our interventionists (including special educators) working together, speaking the same language. In short, we are most successful when we are learning the same skills, working together, and tearing down the silos.



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

For information from this region, please contact Diane Knudsen.



WCASS Upcoming Training Dates & Events

2011

June 20 Summer Legal Seminar: 2 days at Kalahari Resort & Conference Center

Oct. 11-12 *Great Lakes School-Based Behavior Solutions Summit* at the North Star Conference Center in DeForest, Wisconsin. The summit, co-founded by WCASS member David Perrodin, is a collaborative effort between Imagine a Child's Capacity, DeForest Area School District and CESA 2. Summit topics include:

- * Complete training in Behavior Support Plans
- * Complete training in Functional Behavioral Analysis
- * Behavioral Disorders and Efficacy of Different Treatments
- * Impulse Control, Sensation Seeking, Peer Influence & Teen Suicide
- * Solution Oriented Learning, Accountability, & Resolution the missing piece of PBIS!
- * Technology & Practices for Behavioral Success for Students with Autism or Sensory Needs

(All sessions address cultural / racial awareness & sensitivity relative to the presented topic.)

The summit cost is \$199.00 for both days with lunches included, 100+ page FBA manual, and much more! Attendees can also attend engaging evening sessions (October 10 & October 11) for just \$25. Participants have the option to take the summit for either 1 graduate credit or 3 graduate credits. The 3 credits option requires completion of additional coursework online via MOODLE. The 1 credit option is \$190 and the 3 credit option is \$485 (total).

There will be several onsite vendors, including Attainment Company, Adaptive Technology Resources and LIvescribe!

Registration is now open! For more information, please visit www.greatlakesbehaviorsummit.org

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

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 for more information. Watch for more conference information in future e-mails. Please contact Sherri Honaker at 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

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



DIRECTORY

WCASS

4797 Hayes Rd., Ste. 101 Madison WI 53704 608-245-2511 www.wcass.org

President

David Kwiatkowski 262-268-6079 262-268-6020 fax davek@cesa8.k12.wi.us

President Elect

Greg Nyen 715-345-5454 715-345-7302 fax gnyen@wisp.k12.wi.us

Executive Director

Phil Knobel 608-245-2511 608-249-3163 fax philknobel@wcass.org

Director of Government Relations

John D. Forester 608-242-1370 608-242-1290 fax www.wsaa.org

Research & Special Projects

Barbara Van Haren 262-787-9500 262-787-9501 fax

Nissan Bar-Lev 920-849-9384

Past President

Gary Myrah 262-268-6079 262-268-6020 fax gary.myrah@pwssd.k12.wi.us

Secretary

Dawn Western
CESA 11
715-294-4180 x329
dawnw@cesa11.k12.wi.us

Treasurer

Ken Kassees 414-766-5041 414-766-5005 fax

Legislation

Kurt Eley 608-849-2015 608-849-9746 fax

Constitution & Policies

Howard Kallio 262-560-2156 262-560-2103 fax

Membership

Steve Smith 715-422-6015 715-422-6070 fax

Programs

Tammy Fruik 715-261-0532 715-261-2580 fax

Social & Awards

Jan Chapman 262-376-6143 262-376-6110 fax

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Please contact