



President's Message

By Tim Gantz

At the writing of this, it is the week of spring break for my district; and despite the sun shining, it is cool and more snow is on the way. Hopefully as you are reading this, such thoughts of snow are long gone and the warmth and green of spring has happily taken its place. Like the snow, my term as president of WCASS has also come and gone, but hopefully not cheered for as loudly as the former.

I will not bore you with any philosophizing over the past two years other than to say THANK YOU for honoring me with the opportunity to serve the organization as president. My father taught me that when you borrow something, you return it in as good or better shape than when you got it. [That explains why I still haven't returned that shovel of his that I borrowed two summers ago and unearthed last summer!] As I return the position to the organization and pass it on to Gary, I hope I have at least done that much.

Last, I will again encourage all of you to consider becoming more active in the organization. There are lots of people working quite hard behind the scenes, with little or no perks. Why do they do it? While I think they would agree, for me it's about our collective passion for the kids we serve, and I'm just nose-y enough that I want to know what is going on. You also get to spend some professional time with some really bright people who are also passionate about what they do. I have enjoyed my involvement over the past ten years or so very much. Consider getting involved with either your region or with the executive board.

Enjoy your summer and take some time off; you've earned it!

—Tim



Executive Director's Comments . . .

By the time you are reading this we will have had our spring conference and the school year will be coming to a close. In addition to the school year ending, our WCASS two-year board term will end on June 30th. Tim Gantz's term as president will be over, and Gary Myrah will be taking over as president. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Tim for his excellent job as president the past two years. Under his leadership, the organization has continued to grow and work cooperatively with other stakeholders on issues that will benefit special education students for years to come.

Also leaving the board after 6 years is Susan Dannemiller as our treasurer. Under Susan's watchful eye, the WCASS budget has been in the black each year, and end-of-the-year balances have improved. The financial strength of the organization is in good shape as a result of her leadership. It has been a pleasure to work with Susan during her terms as treasurer, and she will be missed as a contributing member of the board.

The other elected official to be moving off the board is Nissan Bar-Lev, the past-president. Nissan

has been a tireless worker during his two-year elected terms as president-elect, president and past-president. During this period, Nissan has played a major role in many issues that WCASS, as an organization, has had to provide information or take positions on items affecting the educational programs for students in special education. I am sure that in the future WCASS will continue to call on Nissan's expertise and knowledge as issues come before us.

I would also like to thank the other elected and appointed board members for the work they have done and will continue to do in the future on behalf of WCASS. The organization has several major issues on our agenda for the next year. These items include several legislative proposals, additional member-only information and policies, information for visitors to



Phil Knobel

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our web site, and work with stakeholder groups. In addition, issues always arise that we never dream will occur.

Thank you to all of the members of WCASS for participating in the organization this past year. We will

be sending out membership renewals in June, and we hope you will consider joining for the 2008–2009 school year. Without you, we cannot be a successful organization benefiting special education students and our members.

Message from Gary Myrah, President-Elect

Kelly Kapitz, newsletter chair, has informed us that the next newsletter is due out in May, yet we need to write it in March. This is why there may be times that when something is being written it is a burning issue and it becomes old news by the time the reader reads it in the newsletter. The Executive Board is contemplating a change in the delivery of our newsletters so they are more current, with the fastest method via e-mail delivery.

We are developing a new survey to go out to the membership to gain your opinions on a variety of issues. At our last executive board meeting we decided we should survey the membership every two years, at the change of the presidency of the organization. We were impressed with the response from the last survey and have turned to the summary throughout the past two years to anticipate the attitude of our members on a variety of issues. Keeping that in mind, we are hoping for a solid response to the upcoming survey.

As of July 1st my role changes as I assume the responsibilities of the president of the organization. Based on information that we receive from all of you, as well as information from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, it appears we are experiencing some changes in our member demographics. A "new generation" of directors is replacing directors who are retiring. In some districts this change has resulted in the supervision of special education shifting to another administrator in the district, usually a building principal. This is one of the outcomes of continued fiscal restraints for public schools.

As an executive board, we are attempting to find ways to be of service to the directors who are entering the field of special education leadership. We will continue to provide ongoing legal updates via the great collection of attorneys from throughout the state of Wisconsin and the nation. We will continue to provide information related to budget and personnel as well as cutting edge developments in education. However, we are open to ideas that anyone may have to improve our resources to our members.

In closing, I would like to address the perpetual perception that the executive board is a "good old boy" group. We may be good and, in many cases, we may be old; however, we are not all boys. Actually, the executive board has been trying to reach out and not portray an image of a clique. We look forward to members' bringing ideas to us for consideration in improving our organization. We have become a strong, vibrant organization that is recognized as champions for children, and we want to maintain that image for years to come.

Since this article will reach you in May, I hope you have had a chance to attend the Spring WCASS conference. I wish you good fortune as you wrap up the 2007–2008 school year, and I hope all of you are blessed with a relaxing summer break.

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WCASS Seclusion and Restraint Position Paper

To insure proper use of Seclusion & Restraint practices in Wisconsin's classrooms, WCASS joined forces with the state teachers union (WEAC), building principals (AWSA), superintendents (WASDA), Wisconsin DPI and the political umbrella of the School Administrative Alliance (SAA) in the development of a PowerPoint presentation titled "Guidelines for Proper Use of Seclusion & Restraint in Special Education Programs."

It is anticipated that this PowerPoint presentation, based on the WCASS position paper (see below) and DPI guidelines, will be shown annually in every school district in Wisconsin.

In the recent past, a few school districts have made headlines due to the use of seclusion or restraint for students with disabilities. This has highlighted isolated cases where these techniques have

been misused. Seclusion and restraint may be more controversial, but like any other behavioral technique they must be implemented by properly trained staff, in specifically prescribed situations, and with fidelity. The executive board of the Wisconsin Council of Administrators of Special Services (WCASS) recognizes its responsibility to provide leadership to school districts in the education, self-regulation, and appropriate use of seclusion and restraint as behavioral techniques for students with disabilities.

The following is a list of necessary critical elements to ensure the appropriate use of seclusion or restraint as a behavioral technique:

- The dignity and safety of our children and school staff are paramount.
- Seclusion and restraint are implemented as a last resort, when other, less invasive strategies have been tried and found ineffective and/or the behavior is likely to result in injury to the student or others.
- When used, seclusion and restraint should be part of an educational plan (e.g., IEP, behavioral intervention plan) that addresses how/when they will be faded out and replaced by other techniques.
- Whenever it can be reasonably anticipated that either seclusion or restraint may be necessary, it must be included in the student's IEP.
- As IEP participants, parents have a full understanding of how, when, and why these techniques may be used.
- Districts are strongly encouraged to develop, adopt, and annually review local policies on the use of seclusion and restraint or adopt the DPI document "Guidelines for the Appropriate Use of Seclusion and Physical Restraint in Special Education Programs" found at the DPI web site (<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/sped/doc/secrestrgd.doc>).
- Districts are strongly encouraged to have a plan in place for the training of all staff who are reasonably anticipated to use these techniques.
- Districts are strongly encouraged to develop a system for monitoring and documenting the use of these techniques.

The WCASS organization hopes to work collaboratively with DPI and other involved stakeholders through communication and education to ensure the appropriate use of seclusion and restraint. WCASS will continue to identify and disseminate to its members information on the appropriate use of seclusion and restraint, as well as related information on effective behavioral interventions.

WCEC News

WCEC is working collaboratively with WDLA to prepare for the second annual WCEC/SDLD Cross-Categorical Conference, which will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Madison on October 30, 2008.

Save the date! Current plans are to have Dr. George Batsche as the keynote speaker addressing the issue of RTI. More details to come!

—Mardi Freeman, WCEC Representative

WCASS Region News

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

After getting hit yet again with another winter snow storm, it is difficult to believe that by the time this article is published that we will be wrapping up another school year and starting to plan for summer activities.

I've enjoyed the opportunity to serve on the WCASS executive board as your Region 3 chairman over this

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past academic year. Along the way, I've had the opportunity to meet and work with several talented directors throughout the state on a variety of issues.

Part of my responsibility for serving on the WCASS executive board is to seek feedback from directors in the area regarding issues that they are encountering in the profession. Some of the big issues out there seem to be ongoing: response to intervention, seclusion and restraint, and taking on more responsibilities with a shrinking budget. One issue that came up at a recent Region 3 meeting was the ability to access the WCASS mentoring program. The concern from several directors is that several directors of special education are either new to the profession and/or have a combined position (e.g., elementary building principal/director of special education). Either way, the individual does not always know of the WCASS mentoring program (or even WCASS itself) and/or feels that he or she cannot afford to spend a day out of the school district to access mentoring opportunities.

It is very clear that there are several talented directors throughout the state. The issue is ensuring that directors new to the field have the ability to access one of these talented directors as a mentor to assist him/her through the first couple of years on the job. Speaking from experience, if I did not have access to several strong mentors as both a director of special education and school psychologist, I would not have been able to successfully complete the requirements of the job. It was also apparent—based on the comments I heard—that some new directors do not access

the WCASS mentoring program due to the fact that they believe they have to be a member of WCASS to do so.

At one of our recent executive board meetings, the mentoring program issue was discussed. It is encouraging to hear that the WCASS wants to do a better job of reaching out to new directors of special education and open up mentoring opportunities to all directors, including directors who are not currently members of WCASS. It is my goal for the next academic year to contact new directors of special education in Region 3 and hopefully connect them to the WCASS mentoring program and/or to a local mentor.

Outside of the mentoring issue, Region 3 had the opportunity to listen to both Tom Shorter, an attorney from Godfrey & Kahn, and Matt Collins, CESA 9 director of special education, speak on the legal and placement considerations surrounding extended school year (ESY) consideration. These presentations occurred on March 7th and generated good discussion. The information that both Tom and Matt shared assisted several attending educators on what issues they need to consider for ESY in their respective districts.

I'll continue to work with Marie Dorie out of CESA 2 to set the schedule for our WCASS Region 3 meetings around the RSN legal updates for the upcoming academic year. 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). Thank you again for making this an enjoyable year. I'll see you again in the fall of 2008.

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