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President's Message

By: Greg Nyen



Election Season 2012

Greetings Fellow Educational Leaders,

I hope you have settled into the rhythm of yet another school year and this correspondence finds you doing well! Please let us know if there is a way WCASS can support you.

You may have noticed by the myriad of campaign ads and signage that we are in the middle of an election year. With several important elections in the upcoming weeks comes an opportunity for us as an organization as well as individuals. The elected officials who want our votes seem to be more interested in making themselves, or their staffers, more available for direct correspondence than seems to be the case post-election. To that point, there have been a number of "town hall" meetings in the central part of the state in the last couple of weeks and I would hazard a guess the same is true in your area(s) of the state as well.

Of surprise and concern to me upon attending a number of these events is the lack of knowledge or outright indifference many of our elected officials have in regard to some of the issues we hold near and dear to our hearts: namely Maintenance of Effort (MOE) and Sequestration. Both of these issues are Federal issues and, as such, our State level representatives sometimes are not as informed as we would like them to be. Herein lays our opportunity as individuals as well as an organization.

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Please take the time out of your busy schedule, if at all possible, to attend some of these local 'meet and greet' opportunities. Be intentional with your word choice and use the words "Maintenance of Effort" and "Sequestration" with these representatives or their staffers in an effort to raise the awareness at both the State and Federal level. Since both of these issues require action at the federal level we must make enough "noise" locally such that it resonates all the way to DC.

If you want more information on the impact of sequestration or the need to address/redefine MOE exemptions please refer to the information in Gary's recent emails. If you would prefer to talk with someone directly, please feel free to reach out to our School Administrators Alliance representatives: Gary Myrah, Kurt Eley, Matt Collins, Dave Kwiatkowski, Eric Hartwig, Jerry Nicholson, Drew Wellman, Randy Hughes or me, Greg Nyen.

Together our voices and message will be heard!

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Executive Director's Thoughts

By: Gary Myrah

Rather than a long narrative of issues that are developing in education, I have decided it is easier for you as the reader to have short articles that provide a synopsis of information with a hyperlink that you can click on for more information. The role of the director is one in which you are constantly on the fly and do not have time to sit down and digest long articles – you need an opportunity to scan everything and then drill down into topics that are of interest. This is an attempt at providing a new format, so please respond with your thoughts.

Also, we are coming along with our new website, unfortunately one of the assistants resigned from the WASBO/WCASS office and the result is many backed up projects. We have seen a glimpse of the layout and again I am hoping the layout will be an improved service to our members. I look forward to seeing you at the Leadership Conference in November.

Gary
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Administrative Salary Information

This [WDPI report](#) is generated from data collected annually as of the third Friday in September on the PI-1202 Fall Staff Report. Data are arranged in columns that include: hire district code, district name, work district, work district code, work county code, work county name, work CESA, work location, work school code, full name, last name, birth year, gender, race, local experience, total experience, high degree, position type, position code, position title, assignment code, assignment, prorated salary, prorated fringe, position FTE, total FTE, days employed. The Excel files may contain revised data from the previously published PDF or original paper documents. This is handy information as you look to negotiate your salary or consider relocating to another district.

WDPI Educator Effectiveness

WDPI has begun the pilot year of implementing the first phase of the Educator Effectiveness with 130 school districts participating throughout the state. The first phase will be focused on teachers in the “core subject areas” and building principals. In a few months they will be creating work study groups to begin looking at faculty positions outside of the core area (including pupil services and special education). The Educator Effectiveness Team will be seeking volunteers to participate on these teams. The anticipated length of appointment will be the second semester of the 2012-13 school year. If you or someone in your district would like to participate in the decisions for the next phase, send Gary Myrah the contact information and a brief bio to submit to the WDPI.

Past-President's Comments

By: David Kwiatkowski



With a Little More Help From My Friends!

Well, here I am writing my first newsletter article to you as Past President of WCASS! I have survived and more importantly, WCASS has survived, my two year term as President and I feel confident our organization will continue to thrive under the leadership of our new President, Greg Nyen and our President-Elect, Kurt Eley.

I am very grateful for the help of all my WCASS friends in making my term as President such a joy and a success! I couldn't have done it without the advice, support, cooperation and hard work of our membership to meet the challenges that came our way over the last two years! Thanks again for all you do for children with disabilities and for our organization as we stand to advocate for their needs in this tough fiscal and political time! I know that Greg and Kurt will greatly benefit and appreciate your continued support in the coming years!

But now on to my new gig! As your past-president, my major duties are to: oversee the maintenance and necessary revisions of the WCASS Policy Manual; to advise the Secretary relevant to the Articles of Incorporation, the Constitution and By-Laws and the WCASS Policy Manual; to recognize deceased members of WCASS; and to coordinate with Regional Chairs for conducting nominations and elections. As always, I am going to continue to need your help to do these vital functions for our organization well. Related to the governance issues, let me know your ideas for improvements to our policies and any potential errors in following our Articles, Constitution and By-laws, so that I may

bring them before the Executive Board in a timely and proactive manner. In honor of deceased members, when you become aware of the passing of one of current or retired members, please email me as soon as possible with the news. This hopefully will allow our organization to pay timely respect to the family and plan appropriate recognition with our membership. And finally and most importantly consider your own service to our organization by becoming an officer or member of the Executive Board, or nominate someone you know for an office or a chair on the Board! This year we will be seeking nominations for the office WCASS Secretary! Dawn Western has served that position very well and we may hope that she would wish to continue! However, other interested individuals are encouraged to step forward to help carry on the good work that Dawn and her predecessors have shouldered over the years! If you are not successful in this election, perhaps in others to come! In my experience...the third time is the charm! Get your name out there! The future needs you!

I would suggest that you begin to consider service to WCASS by attending your Regional WCASS activities and speaking to your Regional Chair about ways to get involved or to offer yourself or a colleague for nomination to an office or a service role! We all do better with a little help from our friends, and I am counting on you for a little more!

Thanks for that... and as always, for listening!

Dave

Why Am I Doing This?

By: Kurt Eley, President-Elect

With all the changes in education coming at us from all directions and the politicians and groups out there telling us how poorly we are doing, I have asked myself, "Why am I doing this?" I am guessing some of you have asked yourself the same question. Certainly there must be a better way to spend the 9 to 10 plus hours of my life that I spend at work each day. After reflecting on this question and what I could possibly do instead, I realized that I am doing what I want to be doing and I enjoy it. So why did I come to this conclusion? Along with every one of you, I make a difference in the lives of children every day. Simply put, educators care.

We care about the child who has attended seven different schools in 3 different states and they are only in the fifth grade. We care about the child whose family was just evicted from their apartment and has nowhere to go. We care about the child who goes home every night to alcoholic or abusive parents. We care about the middle school child who has recently moved to town and speaks no English and few people speak his language. We care about the child who never gets a hug from his mom or dad. We care about the child whose parent passed away from cancer. The list goes on and on.

Because we care, we get involved in these challenging situations to determine a way to make the lives of these children better. We accept these challenges and try to shape the outcome so children are able to be in school and learn the skills they need to break the cycle that has held them back. We don't do this for fame or fortune. We do this to make a difference. We do this because we care.

What means the most is knowing and seeing that we have made a difference. Knowing that Johnny will be the first child in his family to graduate from high school and go on to further his training or education. Seeing the child with a physical disability take her first steps. Hearing the first words of a student who had been silent for 7 years. What is even more affirming is reading the note or email from the parent thanking you like the one I received this summer which I include below.

"Hi Kurt:

My family and I are out in Cape Cod at an autism conference, and we want to thank you for running such a wonderful, caring program in Waunakee. We're certain that your job is a very tough, and at times, thankless job. We know that some other communities really struggle with their special education programs. We have been so happy with the care we have received for "Jimmy" and for my patients who have autism. We wanted to thank you for creating and running such a wonderful program in Waunakee."

I shared this email with my staff who responded with great appreciation for passing it along to them. I share it with you because it is not written to me. It is written to all educators. We do not receive many thanks for what we do, so when we do receive it we need to hold on to it. So in closing, I want to express my appreciation and say, "Thank you," for choosing the profession you did. What else would we be doing?

Student Services Multicultural Competence Survey

A survey has been developed by Kathryn Bush, WDPI consultant for school psychology, designed to assist in self determination of your multicultural knowledge and perception among pupil service personnel in Wisconsin. The survey will be released this fall and will be accessed through a WDPI website. The purpose of the survey is to assist school districts to identify the level of need for professional development in specific areas. Information will be shared with WCASS members once the survey has been vetted and approved for distribution.

CASE Hybrid Winter Conference

The week following the WCASS Winter conference (February 13-15, 2013) CASE will be holding the second Winter Hybrid Conference in Orlando, Florida. Even if you are unable to travel to Florida you will be able to participate virtually for one, two or all three days. The price for the virtual experience is a site license so it is possible to have a group of colleagues participate with you for the same low price. Check the hyper link (by clicking on the title) for the pricing of this event.

Day one will be focusing on virtual education and the implications for special education. We will have experts speak on the legal aspects of providing a virtual experience as well as experts speaking on the successes of virtual schooling. Day two will speak to the move to a Multi-tier System of Support (MTSS) which expands the current parameters of the Rtl movement. This will be the term used in re-authorizations of ESEA and IDEA. Day three will speak to the re-invention of special education. We have invited Melody Musgrove with hopes to have her address the changes in the accountability system for federal programming.



The IDEA Partnership

By: Gary Myrah

The IDEA Partnership reflects the collaborative work of more than 50 national organizations, technical assistance providers, and organizations and agencies at state and local level. Together with the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), the **Partner Organizations** form a community with the potential to transform the way we work and improve outcomes for students and youth with disabilities.

The **Common Core State Standards Collection** is now available on our Partnership website. Each includes tools for presenting the information to parents and practitioners interested in learning about the Common Core State Standards. The IDEA Partnership will host two overview webinars twice a month. After attending the Overview webinar, participants will have an opportunity to request virtual mentoring to develop a customized plan for using the tools in their work. Other sessions are being planned.

WCASS Region News

Region 1 Chair: Mardi Freeman

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The WCASS Region 1 has gotten off to a great start for the 2012-13 school year. We have many new special education directors in the area who were all introduced at our first WCASS/RSN meeting held on September 27, 2012. All new directors were encouraged to join WCASS and to utilize all of the resources it can provide. We were very fortunate to have Marge Resan, and Patti Williams, DPI consultants, present on the timely topic of Seclusion & Restraint. Districts shared policies and forms and questions were asked and answered. It was a very beneficial session. After that we were all provided with a demonstration of the new Postsecondary Transition Plan (PTP). With these two areas being of great interest to all, we had a large crowd with over 100 directors in attendance!

Our next meeting is scheduled for October 23, 2012. We have scheduled Heidi Erstad from the Wisconsin RtI Center to present on "Selecting Intensive Interventions and Other RtI Updates". Also related to that topic, Kelly Schwegel will discuss the CESA #1 External Educational System Review process. This review provides an assessment that is completed by someone outside your district who evaluates how far along you are with your district's implementation of RtI. The procedure includes observations and interviews with staff and looks at whether or not the implementation is being done with fidelity. It also suggests next steps for staff development and implementation and provides reports for the district.

Our meetings scheduled for later this year include those on January 10, 2013, March 27, 2013 and April 19, 2013. On behalf of all of us in WCASS Region 1, I wish all of you a Happy Fall!

Region 2 Chair: John Peterson

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Earlier this year, Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction submitted the Wisconsin Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver to the US Department of Education in hopes of pulling away from the constraints of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind. This waiver highlights three areas where Wisconsin is proposing significant changes to our instruction and assessment systems in K-12 education:

1. Standards and Instruction
2. Assessment and Data Systems
3. School and Educator Effectiveness

The majority of educators in the state are excited about the first two changes, especially with the desire to move away from the WKCE to the Smarter Balanced Assessment. The third area – School and Educator Effectiveness – is getting a mixed reaction

from educators ranging from excitement to anxiety.

As part of the School and Educator Effectiveness portion of Wisconsin's ESEA Waiver, each school in the state will receive a school report card. These report cards will be released to schools on October 22nd and to the general public shortly thereafter. Schools are graded on student achievement, student growth, closing gaps, and for students being on track and postsecondary readiness. Schools can receive one of five "grades:" significantly exceeds expectations (scores ranging from 83-100), exceeds expectations (scores ranging from 73-82.9), meets expectations (scores ranging from 63-72.9), meets few expectations (scores ranging from 53-62.9), or fails to meet expectations (scores ranging from 0-52.9).

Wisconsin's DPI put in a lot of time and effort into crafting these school report cards. The school report card provides readers with several different statistics, numbers, and variables to consider. Schools and districts will be able to closely analyze where they did well on their report card and where improvements are needed. They will also be able to review specific populations (e.g., students with disabilities and students with language barriers) and compare them to other populations within their school.

One of the unintended downfalls of the school report cards that I am worried about both locally and statewide is that many stakeholders will not examine, won't remember, or just won't care about all of the data points that the school report card offers. Rather, I'm worried they will focus only on one score – the overall score. I have to admit that when I previewed all of the schools' report cards from my district, I immediately zeroed in on the overall score for each building. From there, I pulled back and looked at the other data points. I'm not too certain that other stakeholders will dig deep into the report cards to examine the multiple data points that they possess.

To help ensure that our consumers of our school report cards do not fall into this trap, it is key for districts to communicate with both parents/guardians and community members **before** the school report cards are released so they can understand all of the data points they possess. It is also essential to educate stakeholders on potential variability in scores between schools in the same district (especially considering that schools in the same district most likely use the same curriculum, have the same professional development opportunities, and the same trainings).

Another opportunity to educate stakeholders and prevent them from just focusing in on the overall school score is to share information with your local press and/or through your local district newsletter **after** the school report cards are released. Districts can communicate the highlights of the data found on

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these school report cards (regardless of the scores and what “grade” they are given). Even if a school falls in the “exceeds expectations” category, there may be a data point or two on the school report card that they are not satisfied with. This data point and the implications that it has could be communicated to external stakeholders. The school or district could then share their plan as to how they want to improve on this data point. Conversely, if a school lands in the “meets few expectations” grade, they can also draw attention to areas where the school improved significantly (e.g., closing the gap in the area of mathematics) and how they plan to improve other areas in the upcoming year.

The last population that schools need to communicate with is their internal stakeholders, especially the teaching staff. Staff members need to be reminded of the data-rich components of their school report card and that there is much more to it than just one overall score. Furthermore, they need to be reminded (regardless of the school’s score) that teachers are much more than just one number. Teachers need to be armed with talking points about what each data point means, where the school did well, and where improvement is being sought. It is our job to help them in this process. It is very likely that parents will go directly to their child’s teacher and ask them to help interpret the school’s report card. School leaders can also use the school report card as the impetus that their learning community needs to take on an initiative and/or school change that they have been meaning to do for quite some time.

All in all, the school report card was well crafted by DPI and their partners (e.g., the Value Added Research Center). In the

end, I hope that all of the consumers of these school report cards look at all of the data points they possess, ask for clarifications when needed, and use the data as one element of the discussion regarding improving student achievement.

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Region 7 Chair: Karen Baker

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Becoming Politically Active

By: Gary Myrah

President Greg Nyen has shared his thoughts to reach out to all WCASS members and encourage you to become more politically active. Tammy Nyen, Greg and I have attended separate town meetings of our US Senator and Representatives. We each had similar experiences related to the limited knowledge our congressmen have regarding educational issues. There was a general lack of knowledge of issues that are important to us at the local level.

In the town meeting I attended the common response was to point to the current administration (led by President Obama) as the root cause for all of our woes. There was a lack of interest or ability to speak to the issues raised. We are hoping to begin encouraging groups of directors to begin attending these town meetings and begin to ask questions. We believe that a collective repetitive showing of our directors to discuss issues at a federal level may slowly have influence on how they are analyzing the issues. It may also provide them with a resource (you) for them to turn to when questions come up regarding educational policy.

National Deaf-Blind Census

Do you have students whom you suspect have both hearing and vision issues? The Wisconsin Deaf-Blind Technical Assistance Project (WDBTAP) has been established through OSEP funds by the Wisconsin Educational Services Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WESP-DHH) and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to support these students. WDBTAP provides **technical assistance and resources for students with combined vision and hearing loss, their families and the professionals that serve them.**

Each year, WDBTAP conducts an **annual census** of children and youth (birth through age 21) who have combined vision and hearing loss, or who are at risk for deaf-blindness, within the state of Wisconsin. An accurate census is critical as the student count generates funding to serve these students, specifically the services offered through WDBTAP. The information compiled in Wisconsin is reported to the National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness and must be updated annually.

Who Qualifies?

For the purposes of the annual census, WDBTAP uses a functional definition of deaf-blindness. A person is considered to be deaf-blind if they have **both** a documented vision and hearing impairment, ranging from mild to severe, or they function as if they have both a hearing and vision loss based on inconsistent responses to the environment or inconclusive responses during hearing and vision exams. Many children who are deaf-blind have some useable vision and/or hearing; only six percent of the total group of students that are considered to be “deaf-blind” are persons who are completely deaf and totally blind, like Helen Keller. A conclusion that a child is functionally deaf-blind may be based on an educational evaluation for purposes of initially reporting that child on the deaf-blind census. In addition, students with a mild hearing loss and mild vision loss should be included since a combined mild loss of both senses can create an adverse effect on educational success. Also, **regardless of the presence or absence of additional disabilities,**

children with combined hearing and vision problems should be included on the deaf-blind census. Students do not have to meet state special education eligibility guidelines for hearing impairment or vision impairment, since this census is separate from the state count.

What are the benefits?

Children on the federal deaf-blind census qualify for the many resources available through Wisconsin Deaf-Blind Technical Assistance Project (WDBTAP). Many children who are deaf-blind cannot rely on their auditory or visual systems to gather information or use that information to understand their world around them. They need to use strategies and supports that do not rely upon these systems. WDBTAP is available to provide that support free of charge to children who are on the census, including:

- Lending library with resources
- Equipment trials
- Workshops/trainings specific to the needs of this population
- Family workshops/trainings
- Free onsite evaluation and programming recommendations/strategies

How do I ensure that my students are on the census and receive the supports available through WDBTAP?

To ensure that you student/s with combined vision and hearing loss are included on this year’s census, please complete or update and return census paperwork, by October 31, 2012, by going to: http://www.wdbtap.wi.gov/cms_files/resources/Application%20for%20WDBTAP%20eligibility.pdf or contact Jolene Gruber, WDBTAP Project Coordinator at 608-356-0091. Don’t forget to visit our website (www.wdbtap.wi.gov) to learn more about WDBTAP and the resources available for students who have combined vision and hearing loss.

WCASS Upcoming Training Dates & Events

2012

November 12th Academy For New Special Education Leadership Follow Up Session 1: Marriott Madison West from 1:00-4:00pm (Salon H)

November 13th-14th State Superintendent's Conference on Special Education & Pupil Services Leadership Issues: 2 days at Marriott Madison West

November 13th Fundraiser for Tony Evers: At the conclusion of the WCASS membership meeting on November 13 (Leadership Conference) there will be a fundraiser social for Tony Evers. Tony has started his move toward re-election and is hoping to find supporters among all administrative groups. There is preliminary belief that the April election will have a stronger push for recruiting the electorate since one of the positions for State Supreme Court will be up for election as well. Since the ruling of the State Supreme Court is not likely to be completed by the election, this may become a contested seat. So it is important for WCASS members to become active and show their support for the State Superintendent race, including financially supporting the candidate of your choice. – *Submitted by Gary Myrah*

2013

February 6th WCASS Winter Conference: 3 days at Radisson Paper Valley

February 28th-March 1st Wisconsin Federal Funding Conference: 2 days at Kalahari Resort & Conference Center

March 6th Wisconsin Rtl Summit: 2 days at KI Convention Center

May 1st WCASS Spring Conference: 3 days at Chula Vista Resort & Conference Center

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

Concern for Potential Loss of ATOD Funds

By: Gary Myrah

The Department of Justice has distributed an Issue Paper regarding the use of revenues generated as a surcharge to fines imposed on individuals violating state law or local ordinances. A portion of these revenues have been transferred to WDPI to assist in funding ATOD grants throughout the state and to assist in funding a portion of pupil service consultants salary and fringe at WDPI. More information will be shared with WCASS members as the WDPI budget is revealed. We may be seeking support from you to maintain the current structure to have surcharge revenue continue to support ATOD prevention programs in public schools.

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