



Taking Care of Business

"By the end of the decade, the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials shall be the most influential organization on significant Wisconsin school business management issues."

WASBO Vision

A Bimonthly Publication of the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials - Volume 12, Number 6 - December 2008

Legislative Update

Doyle: State Faces Worst Budget Deficit in History

By John Forester, Director of Government Relations,
School Administrators Alliance

The state faces a \$346.2 million deficit in the current fiscal year. And, if estimated revenues, commitments from prior biennia, and

- DOR forecasts General Fund tax revenues to decline by 2.2% in FY2008-09; decline by 3.9% in FY2009-10; and increase by 4.1% in FY2010-11.

- New funding will only be possible for the highest priority programs and many areas of the budget will have to be severely curtailed or eliminated. Growing Wisconsin's economy and protecting education and health care will demand that the state maximize federal Medicaid revenues and ensure equitable revenue sources for transportation and other critical infrastructure needs.

- In total, agencies have requested annual spending increases from all fund sources of \$1.482 billion in FY2009-10 and another \$884.2 million in 2010-11. If approved, these requests would increase total state spending from the adjusted base of \$29.279 billion in the current fiscal year to \$30.761 billion in 2009-10 and \$31.645 billion in 2010-11.

- Agencies have requested annual spending increases from General Purpose Revenue (GPR) of



\$1.141 billion in FY2009-10 and another \$480.3 million in 2010-11. If approved, the requests would increase GPR spending from the adjusted base level of \$14.199 in the current fiscal year to \$15.40 billion in 2009-10 and \$15.820 billion in 2010-11.

- A large portion of the GPR increases reflect statutory changes made in the 2007-09 biennium, including a \$150 million increase in school property tax credits for the December 2008 property tax bills paid in FY2009-10; and one-time funding of \$338 million for Medicaid costs that is requested to be replaced with GPR in FY-2009-10. The two items account for \$488 million of the requested increase in GPR funding.

In response to the grim fiscal news, Governor Doyle said he has ordered state agencies to reduce current spending by 2.5% in the remaining months of the current fiscal year. He said that will generate about \$20 million in savings toward the \$346 million deficit now anticipated for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2009.

In addition, Doyle said he will "not move forward" with grants that are

John Forester
SAA Director of
Government Relations

agency budget requests for the 2009-11 biennium remain unchanged, the state faces a deficit of \$5.4 billion on June 30, 2011, the worst in the state's history.

Those are the conclusions drawn about the state's fiscal condition by Department of Administration (DOA) Secretary Michael Morgan in the statutorily-required biennial budget report delivered to Governor Doyle on November 20th.

In his report to Doyle, Morgan makes these additional points:

- For the first time in decades, revenue collections are expected to fall in two consecutive fiscal years. Department of Revenue (DOR) economists expect at least four quarters of economic decline, with revenues not expected to increase until FY2010-11.

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Taking Care of Business is issued bimonthly by the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials. Send address changes to: Taking Care of Business c/o WASBO, 4797 Hayes Rd, Suite 101 Madison, WI 53704
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Editor: Woody Wiedenhoeft



President's Message

Just When You Think You Know Everything...

WASBO
RISE to the Challenge



My office has never been located in a building where children were present. This might sound unusual to you if your office is located at the center of an elementary school, attached to a middle school, or in a wing of a high school. My district office staff and I have always worked in a building separated by some distance from the students we serve. Sometimes the trip simply required a walk across the parking lot but even that short distance is enough to prevent the kind of interaction on which I have grown to place more importance as time goes by.

To make matters worse, the business manager, facility manager, or accountant may not only be in a separate building, but their offices can be tucked away in a place that is less accessible to the outside world. That's fine if you like to count your beans in isolation, but it diminishes the likelihood that you will meet up with people for something other than structured time. You miss the new teachers stopping in with their babies, you miss the retiree who drops in with their little dog, you might even miss the octogenarian from Rotary who sells flowers and raffle tickets every year. Those encounters, while seemingly insignificant, allow you an outlet to make yourself known as a person rather than an administrator and may have more importance than you think.

What bothers me the most is the fact that I

feel I am too many steps from the classroom door. Day in and day out, year in and year out, I haven't taken the initiative to change that dynamic. It was during one of the first few days of school this year that I thought about what I could do.

Diane Pertzborn
WASBO President



I had my window open and I could hear the kids on the playground. Do you know how loud little girls can scream during recess? These kids were a half block away and I could hear them like they were just below the window. I thought about the excitement of the first few days of school and I have no doubt in my mind that this screaming involved a lot of boys chasing girls as they do after a long summer break. I didn't want that to be my only contact with students and I didn't want negotiations sessions to be my only contact with staff. So I decided on a plan. I will try to fit in a day of substitute teaching each quarter. I will get out to the buildings to shadow a principal for a few hours and meet staff. And I will volunteer to help in the classroom. It was on one of those visits that I learned something from a kindergarten student.

When I arrived in the classroom I was introduced to the students and was steered to a table where the students were working on a project. They had to cut out pictures outlined in black and glue them to the turkey feathers fanned out on the worksheet in front of them. Each little turkey feather had a letter on it and they had to match the beginning sounds of the picture to the letters. Still with me? (Not important if you can't follow kindergarten instructions, it's not like it's a tax levy.)

So I am working with my group and I realize
Continued on page 6

Exec's Reflections

All I Want for Christmas is...

After discussion with the WASBO staff, I decided to discuss my Christmas wishes for next year in this issue of **Taking Care of Business**.



It seemed like an easy task. However, my wish list always seemed to miss the reality we are living in today. This weekend, the leadership came from two very important children in my life, Patti, age five and Colten, age three.

Patti is asking Santa for drawing and artist supplies. Colten is telling Santa that he has enough toys. From the mouths of children comes a great deal of wisdom. They do not know the nuances of our economy in Wisconsin, but somehow they have discerned the reality of our challenges we face.

Thus, I now have my wish list. As we face the challenges ahead of us in each of our communities, I wish for wisdom and serenity with discernment. We commonly know the Serenity Prayer.

"Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to

change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference." (By Reinhold Niebuhr)

It is evident future legislation in Wisconsin will have much discussion about addressing the economy. Many of the decisions may leave our school districts with fewer state resources. It is possible that future legislation could provide additional local control beyond what we have had since 1993 under revenue limits. We could well receive what we have been asking for since 1993. Boards could receive the authority to fund schools at a level the local community wants without referendums. This responsibility will require a great deal of wisdom and serenity, considering the reality of each local school district economy.

In being granted wisdom to help lead in providing services for children, there will be a need two very important communication principles. In addition, there is a need to watch the events transpiring in our communities. There is a need to listen to all the dialogue about these events. Final decisions will be made from careful discernment of all this information. It is important to not overreact, nor ignore the events. Moreover, there are probably never as many "facts" as we would hope when final decisions are made.

Colten and Patti have made their wish list and they have been watching and listening carefully about the events that are affecting their lives. I

would like to have the same wisdom, serenity and discernment that they have received at their young age. That is my wish list.

Have a Happy Holiday with your families and friends!



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President's Message

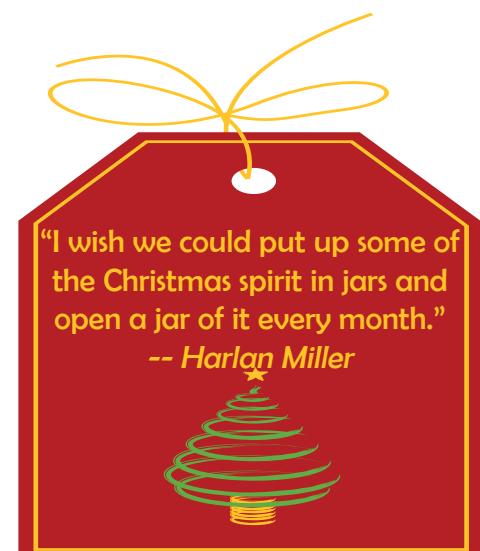
Continued from page 3

why the teacher assigned me to the table; these kids needed a little extra help. One student in particular would never get through the assignment before lunch if there wasn't someone helping him along the way. So I dusted off my rusty parenting skills (my girls are well past the age of cut and paste) and found that I could steer this little boy with the right words and the right motivation to keep him on track. It is both amazing and rewarding to see how much you can impact a child and their ability to learn by doing a few simple things. And he did the same for me. As the activity came to a close, my new friend, Kaiwan, wrote his name at the top of the paper. I asked him how he pronounced his name and he looked at me with his eyes wide open in surprise and he said "Huh? Don't you know how to read?" You'll have to add a little attitude when you read that because he sure gave me some.

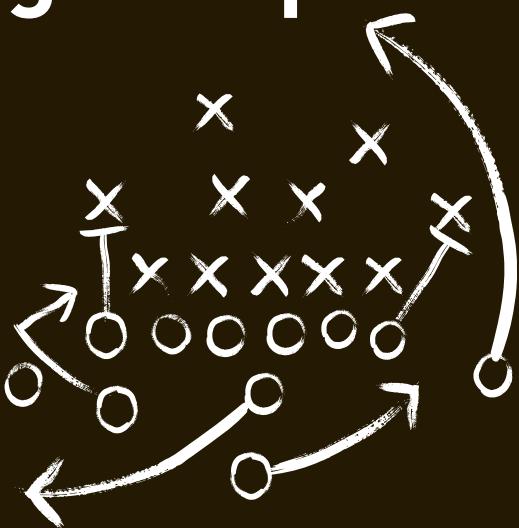
So here is the point; I do get there

eventually. In front of me was a child who has trouble using his scissors, who needed help naming the pictures, who needed help making word sounds asking me if I can read and inferring that my intelligence is, let's say, substandard for a classroom assistant. Before that I thought I was pretty smart, but suddenly I was hit with this revelation. I didn't know how to say his name. The letters were all there and I still didn't know how to say his name. And at that moment reading went beyond pronunciation. Reading was taking in and making sense of what was happening in the classroom. Reading was interpreting the significance of my interaction with this student. Reading was thinking further about the communication he expressed. That's when I faced the fact that I have been out of touch with the changing diversity and culture of the schools. I have been isolated and unaware of the things that our staff tackles as part of their every day jobs.

Folks, there is a whole big world out there full of kids who have needs. They may be emotional, physical, developmental, cultural, economic...they all need us to focus on doing everything we can to help them achieve. So if you aren't out in the classrooms, try to schedule it in somewhere. Take a read on what's going on so when a five year old asks you if you can read, you can look around and say you do.



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Referenda Results Update

November 5, 2008

Provided by Robert W. Baird & Co.

Thirty-four school districts requested a total of forty-three referendum questions on Tuesday. Eighteen requested their communities' vote on issuing debt for facilities. Fourteen school districts asked to increase their revenue limit authority for nonrecurring purposes and eleven school districts requested permission to increase their revenue limit on a recurring basis. Eight of the school districts asked multiple referendum questions: to issue debt plus increase their revenue limit for either recurring purposes (4) or nonrecurring purposes (4).

Results:

Overall, 53% of the referendum questions were approved.

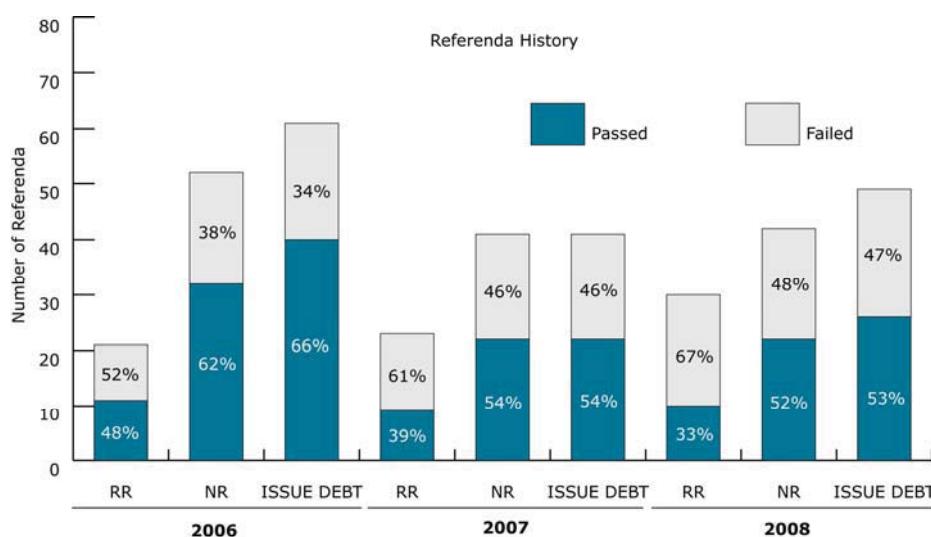
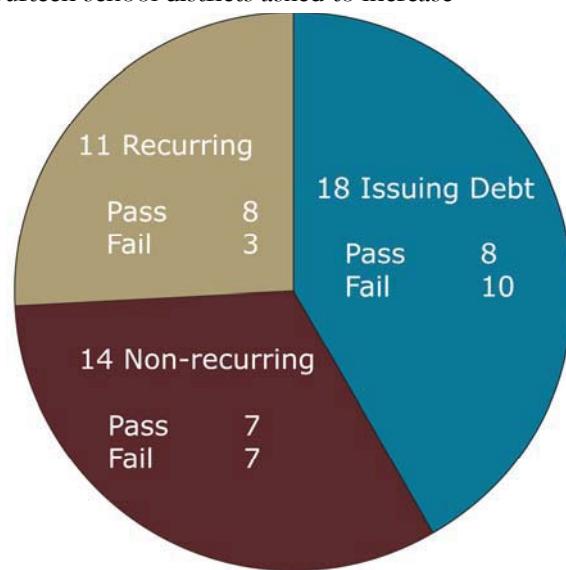
Eight out of the eighteen bond referendum questions received approval. The Watertown Unified School District was successful in obtaining voter approval for the largest request of the day at \$22.4 million.

Seven out of the fourteen nonrecurring revenue limit referendum questions received approval. The largest amount was secured by the School District of Gibraltar Area for a total of \$5.3 million over the next two years.

Eight out of the eleven recurring revenue limit referendum questions received approval. This is a higher success rate for recurring questions than has been demonstrated in the past. Madison Metropolitan School District received an overwhelming 68% voter support for its recurring question.

Two of the eight districts that asked multiple questions were successful. Only one district, Sun Prairie Area School District, passed multiple questions. Watertown Unified School District passed the debt question.

See below to compare year to date 2008 referendum results to prior years.





WASBO Member Spotlight

Chex Gorder



Cherna Gorder, alias "Chex", was hired by the Wausau School

District as Assistant Superintendent of Business in 1990. Originally, being a School Administrator was far from her mind.

Chex was born and raised on a farm near Waterloo, WI. After high school graduation, Chex went on to college at UW-Platteville taking a comprehensive science program with a major in biology. Her career started out at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Madison where she was a medical technician at the clinic lab with various roles. Although it was not the main part of her job, WASBO members may want to ask Chex about the autopsies she performed as an autopsy assistant at the VA in Madison. She then moved on to the Medical Research Lab at the VA. "I needed to get away from autopsies as quickly as possible." While working at the VA, Chex continued her studies at MATC, majoring in accounting. During tax season, you would find Chex at H & R Block, doing taxes.

In 1982, Chex became the accountant for Deerfield School District. At this time, she learned about the School Business Management Program at Whitewater and graduated in 1984. Kewaskum hired Chex to follow Bob Borch in 1983. In 1988 Chex became the comptroller for Sheboygan School District working with Gretchen Thomes and Dan Moberly. The Wausau School District hired Chex to be Assistant Superintendent of Business in 1990

where she has been "entertained" ever since. "Change is occurring everyday with a good School Board, good school district and nice community."

Chex's proudest accomplishment at Wausau was being involved in the passing of a \$65 million referendum, the largest passed referendum in Wisconsin at that time. The referendum passed to build a new East High School, new Stettin Elementary School, new South Mountain Elementary School, provide a major addition to Wausau West High School, plus smaller additions at a number of other school buildings. "Wausau believes the physical environment is important in the learning process," said Chex. "The community has pride in their facilities and also uses them for many community activities." Chex credits her success to "learning to listen well, learning the community history, and be accepting of community traditions until change avails itself." "A school administrator understands that credibility is about making a commitment to communicating with the community and understanding the community," Chex reflected.

Chex works hard to keep budget and operating processes easy for staff to follow and understand. She provides the community with a clear and easy budget format that details out each administrator's budget as well as school building budgets. Chex is attentive to the details, which helps the district act on unexpected situations and changing priorities, but still keep the budget balanced. She keeps the Superintendent, Board and community informed so there are no surprises. Chex is presently communicating

projections four years out that allow the Board, staff, and citizens to plan. "Considering the present economy and State budget news, we need better communication more than ever." The news media headlines must always read with credibility. In reflecting on her experiences, Chex points out that this work is as much an "art" as it is a "science".

During her time away from the office, you will find Chex following the children of friends in their school activities, including traveling to sport events such as their basketball and baseball games. With a little encouragement, Chex admitted to being good in sports herself. She recalled one basketball game her team won 52 to nothing. Chex scored all 52 points. Her forte was making hook shots. She also played a great deal of softball in her "younger years". Chex also has an insatiable appetite for new information, globally as well as locally. She enjoys doing research on the internet and continues to find new information "fascinating". She also relates her use of new information to being useful at work. "If I keep up on things, others around me will keep up on things. If I get my research done early, I will be able to get working on new ideas and needs before any deadlines become a problem."

I asked Chex what she would do if money were no object. Chex's loyalty showed with her answer. "I would be able to tell everybody in Wausau that we don't need to cut 2.5 million each year for the next four years. Everybody would be so happy, I would be happy."



WASBO Member Spotlight

Kathy Maedke



Meet Kathy Maedke, one of our newer members in WASBO. Kathy was born and raised in Waukesha, WI with her two brothers, Greg and Andy. After graduating from Waukesha, she attended UW-Whitewater and graduated with her Education Degree, majoring in Business Education.

In 1999, Kathy went on to teach at Janesville Parker for 6 years. She taught Computer Technology, Programming, Marketing, and software skills such as Excel, and keyboarding. She filled her spare time by serving as the Advisor for the Janesville Parker Yearbook, Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), Distribution Education Club of America (DECA), and Quill and Scroll (Honor Society for Journalism).

Kathy's Mentor Teacher encouraged her to be certified in additional areas and to start working on her Masters Degree. Kathy agreed to be on the Janesville teacher bargaining team and decided receiving a School Business Management Degree would be helpful. "I wondered why there was no additional money for the salary schedule." Kathy reflected. "I found out the answer was simple. There is no extra money. There simply is no hidden money."

After graduating from UW-Whitewater with her School Business Management Degree, Cambridge School District hired her as their Business Manager, where she now has three years of experience. Cambridge is a small bedroom community near Madison with a School District of approximately 900

children. Downtown Cambridge has great leisure activities, specialty shops and restaurants, along with Lake Ripley where many people have summer homes. Kathy notes "Cambridge is a great community with a great relationship with the School District." The Cambridge community, through its School District's fund 80, provides a wonderful Community Activities Program. "The Community Activities Program provides classes for people of all ages, babies to the elderly, in the schools. The Community Pool, built in 1998, is at the Cambridge Elementary School and is open for community use throughout the day as well as in the evenings. The Cambridge community passed a nine year nonrecurring operating referendum back in 2005. The community focus of this referendum was to keep small class sizes, provide community activities beyond the classroom, technology, building maintenance and replacement of textbooks. "Cambridge has been very supportive of their children and schools. It isn't just the referendum and the Community Activities Program," says Kathy. "Cambridge has a great family atmosphere, citizen involvement and parent volunteers."

Kathy's major accomplishment to date at Cambridge was to help lead the Facility Restructuring Research Project. It was her responsibility to lead the financial and operations discussions and facilitate final recommendations. Discussions involved everything from closing schools to the need for future referendums. A great deal of forecasting and "what ifs" were studied. We now have a report and recommendations

that describe "where we are, where we want to be, and what we need to do to get there." This report will be the basis for future community discussions as the District now moves forward in coming to final solutions.

As you can see, most of Kathy's life has revolved around work. However, she has taken the time to build a new house in Cambridge and has done much of the decorating work herself. She spent a great deal of time going through decorating designs in **Traditional Home Magazine** in making final decorating decisions. She is almost done painting with only two rooms left. "I have gotten very good at trimming by hand with out painters tape."

Her decorating skills are also seen at the Spring Conference. She has taken on the responsibility to work with the decorating committee to provide a positive atmosphere at our conference. Kathy notes "WASBO experienced members help new members to meet colleagues. WASBO colleagues have a lot of knowledge and everybody tries to be helpful. And, of course, it is fun."

Everyday is now a challenge according to Kathy. "Needed efficiencies must be used because of Revenue Limits and tight money."

If money were no object, Kathy would invest in going totally green. If she had her way, "there would be no more utility bills".

She does have one indulgence. "Chocolate cake—Yum."



Lynn Knight
WASBO Director

It absolutely amazes me that some people don't think it is important to reconcile their bank statements. As an accountant (or bean counter as my board would say), I don't understand these people. Then there are the people that know it's important, but don't know how to reconcile their bank statements. I can somewhat understand these people. Then there are the people that don't even know they have a bank account. Are you kidding me!!!

I'm a late night junkie and one of my favorite late night hosts is David Letterman. So, to the people that don't care, don't know how, and don't have a clue, I give you the Top Ten Reasons as to Why You Should Reconcile Your Bank Statement.

10. You have nothing better to do. Now I know as a business manager we try to make it appear that we are extremely busy and have absolutely no time for anything. We even balk at great ideas like GASB 34 or the new OPEB or 403(b) regulations. And we cringe when DPI comes out with something new and improved such as the membership reconciliation. But

Director's Corner

Top Ten Reasons as to Why You Should Reconcile Your Bank Statement

By Lynn Knight, Business Manager, School District of Nekoosa

really, there's always time for a good bank reconciliation. Just try it.

don't think it's important or don't know how to reconcile their bank accounts. I feel my head getting bigger already!

9. What do you mean your check didn't clear! For all the novices out there, when a check clears the bank, it means that the check was presented to the bank and the bank took the money out of your account and paid the amount written on the check. If a check didn't clear, it means it is drifting in no man's land or you didn't have enough money in your account to pay the amount on the check. Either way, it's a problem.

5. Have you read the newspapers lately? I'm the business manager in Nekoosa. Enough said.

8. If the auditors are happy, the school board is happy. For some reason, auditors love it when bank accounts are reconciled. Apparently it makes their job easier. And I've also noticed that the audit runs a little smoother when the bank accounts are reconciled. It seems that the less the school board hears from the auditors, the better.

4. Practice your debits and credits. Does a debit add to my account or subtract? Do debits and credits mean the same thing in the bank world as they do in the accounting world? If you reconciled a bank statement lately, you would know the answers to these questions. Remember, practice makes perfect.

3. My books should reconcile to what? YOUR BANK STATEMENT!

2. At least I've accomplished something today. As a business manager, it is very rare that we can say this. The feeling is almost euphoric. It's worth every number added and subtracted.

And the number 1 reason to reconcile your bank statement.....

1. It's my quiet time. I can shut the door to my office, lay out the many, many papers associated with a bank reconciliation, turn on some music, and really, really, look busy. Now, what do I have planned this weekend.....

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Director's Corner

Wisconsin Records Retention Schedule: Revised Version on the Way!

By Larry Dalton, Director of Finance, Onalaska School District

Larry Dalton
WASBO Director

For at least two years, work has been proceeding on replacing the January 1990, Bert Grover

era, Wisconsin Records Retention Schedule for School Districts. Two separate independent initiatives had begun, and have now flowed together in an effort to produce a 21st century guideline that covers all school records currently generated, as well as e-mail retention and electronic records archiving issues.

One of the initiatives started on the western side of the state. CESA #4 contracted with a school attorneys firm to produce a revised schedule that could be used by member school districts. Tom Shorter and Kim Gasser of Godfrey & Kahn, S.C. authored a comprehensive document that was then adopted by a number of CESA #4 districts as a replacement of the 1990 schedule.

The other initiative was started by Jim Bennett – Coordinator of Data, Forms and Records at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Jim is also a member of the Wisconsin Public Records Board, an organization whose directors are appointed by the Governor.

Through the work of Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials Executive Director, Woody Wiedenhoeft, the two efforts came together, resulting in:

1. A draft document compiled by Jim Bennett combining the information he had developed plus the information in the Godfrey & Kahn document.

2. The convening of a task force on October 3, 2008 by Assistant State Superintendent Rick Grobschmidt for the purpose of bringing the project to completion.

The following organizations have been invited to submit input on the draft:

- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
- Wisconsin Association of CESA Administrators
- Wisconsin Council of Administrators of Special Services
- Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators
- Association of Wisconsin School Administrators
- Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials

Information from each of the submitting organizations will be given to DPI and incorporated into a final version that will be submitted to the Wisconsin Public Records Board for review.

In addition to contributing to the finalization of the records retention schedule, the task force will be providing input on the electronic file format and designing an ongoing process for updating the schedule. It is our hope that the new document will be unveiled in 2009.

At least twenty-three WASBO members took the time to wade through the 42-page draft document and supply input. Way-to-go WASBO! This amount of scrutiny will help give us a high-quality finished product.

Records Retention Task Force:

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction - Division for Libraries, Technology, and Community Learning

Rick Grobschmidt - Assistant State Superintendent,
Jim Bennett - Data, Forms and Records Coordinator

Wisconsin Association of CESA Administrators

Guy Leavitt - CESA #4 Administrator

Godfrey & Kahn, Attorneys at Law

Tom Shorter - Attorney
Kim Gasser - Paralegal

Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials

Woody Wiedenhoeft - Executive Director

*Larry Dalton - Director of Finance,
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WASBO Transportation and Bus Safety Workshop

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Orvin R. Clark, EdD, RSBA
EDAD Chair
University of Wisconsin-Superior

BOOK REVIEW

The Last Lecture

By Randy Pausch with Jeffrey Zaslow

Dr. Randy Pausch was a Professor of Computer Science, Human Computer Interaction, and Design at Carnegie Mellon University.

He was an award winning teacher and researcher, and had worked with Adobe, Google, Electronic Arts and Walt Disney Imagineering and pioneered the Alice project (Alice is an innovative 3-D environment that teaches programming to young people via story telling and interactive game-playing).

A lot of professors give talks titled the "The Last Lecture". When Randy Pausch was asked to give such a lecture, he knew that it would be his last as he had recently been diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer and had less than a year to live. But his last lecture on September 18, 2007 in front of an audience of 400 people at Carnegie Mellon University was about "Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams," not dying. Randy lost his battle to cancer on July 25, 2008. He was 47 years old. Jeffrey Zaslow, a columnist for the Wall Street Journal, attended "The Last Lecture", and wrote the story that helped fuel worldwide interest in it.

The Last Lecture is 206 pages in length and provides a combination of humor, inspiration and intelligence that made his last lecture such a phenomenon. Randy's last lecture title was a "head fake"! Randy stated "It was not how to achieve your dreams. It's about how to lead your life. If you lead your life the right way, the karma will take care of

itself. The dreams will come to you." Randy stated that the second "head fake" wasn't just for those in the room. "It was for my kids." The children are Chloe (1 ½), Logan (3) and Dylan (6).

The "head fake" was something Randy learned in youth football. There are two kinds of "head fakes". The first is literal. On a football field, a player will move his head one way so you'll think he's going in that direction. Then he goes the opposite way. It's called misdirection. The second kind of "head fake" is really an important one - the one that teaches people things they don't realize they're learning until well into the process. This kind of "head fake" learning is absolutely vital. Kids play organized sports not to learn the intricacies of the sports, but to learn the importance of teamwork, perseverance, sportsmanship, the value of hard work, and an ability to deal with adversity. That's indirect learning!

The Last Lecture is divided into six chapters and 61 episodes of his life. The chapter titles are:

- The Last Lecture
- Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams
- Adventures ...and Lessons Learned
- Enabling The Dreams of Others
- It's About How To Live Your Life
- Final Remarks

The 61 episodes cover his romance with Jai, family, parents, work, students, cancer tumors, leadership skill set, fairy tales, First Penguin, and dreams for his children.

A slide from Randy's lecture... My Childhood Dreams:

- Being in zero gravity

- Playing in the NFL
- Authoring an article in the World Book encyclopedia
- Being Captain Kirk
- Winning stuffed animals
- Being a Disney Imagineer

Captain Kirk was the distilled essence of the dynamic manager, knew how to delegate, and had the passion to inspire. He never professed to have greater skills than his subordinates. He acknowledged that they knew what they were doing in their domains, but he established the vision, the tone. He was in charge of morale. The answer was called leadership.

Randy Pausch was well aware that time is finite. He firmly believed that one of his most appropriate fixations had been to manage time well. He lectured his students about time management. Here's what he knew:

- Time must be explicitly managed, like money.
- You can always change your plan, but only if you have one.
- Ask yourself: Are you spending your time on the right things?
- Develop a good filing system. Try alphabetical order...
- Rethink the telephone: Use a speaker phone, so hands are free to do something else, etc.
- Delegate
- Take time out. It's not a real vacation if you're reading email or calling in for messages

Randy's perfect phone message: "Hi, this is Randy. I waited until I was thirty-nine to get married, so my wife and I are going away for a month. I hope you don't have a problem with that, but my boss does. Apparently I have to be reachable." He then gave the names *Continued on page 15*

When you need answers to your school district financing needs, call on Stifel Nicolaus.

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Member Resources Goal Action Team Update

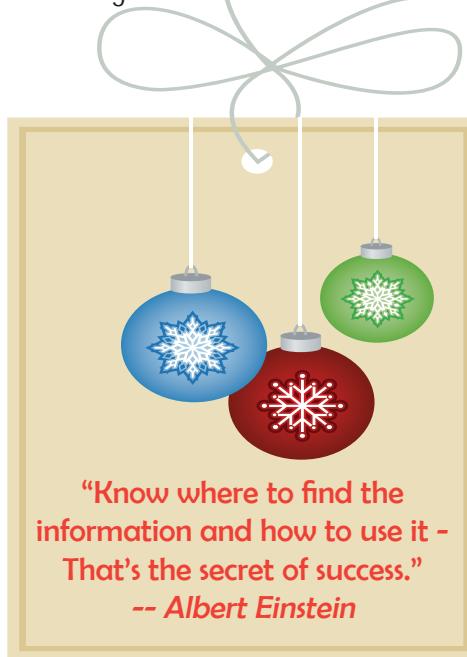
By Janice DeMeuse, Business Manager, Luxemburg-Casco School District

The committee would like to thank everyone who has submitted documents for the Electronic Resource Center. Great job and keep up the good work. Competition between the regionals is really tight.

Several WASBO members attended a panel discussion at the ASBO conference in Denver. One of the presenters was our own Executive Director. One of the things Woody spoke about was the competition we are using to get documents posted to the site. A PASBO representative was present and she informed us that at that point (early in November) there had been over 500 "hits" on the Wisconsin site. That kind of activity indicates there is a real need to provide documents for our peers to use.

The upcoming themes are listed below. However, do not feel you have to submit documents that relate to that topic only. If you have a document you are currently using and would like to share even if it does not pertain to the current theme, please submit it to your regional contact.

The committee will be meeting at the Joint Convention to brainstorm other ways we can provide resources to the membership. If you have an issue you would like the committee to address, please contact a committee member so we can discuss it at our next meeting. Members of the Member Resources Goal Action Team are: Gail Moesch, Janet Rosseter, Jeff Carew, Jenny Goldschmidt, Joyce Smalley, Kathy Maedke, Sandy Jacobson, Tom Owens, Tom Helgestad and Janice DeMeuse.



Upcoming ERC Themes

December 2008

Communications/Public Relations and Transportation
Related RFPs

January 2009

Insurance/Risk Management

February 2009

Human Resources

March 2009

Purchasing/Procurement

April 2009

Student Accounting

May 2009

Facilities/Buildings & Grounds

June 2009

Accounting

July 2009

Information Technology

August 2009

Nutrition Services

September 2009

Finance/Investments

Book Review - The Last Lecture

Continued from page 13

of Jai's parents and the city where they live. "If you call directory assistance, you can get their number. And then, if you can convince my new in-laws that your emergency merits interrupting their daughter's honeymoon, they have our number." They didn't get any calls! Some of his time management tips are dead-on serious and some are a bit tongue-in-cheek. I believe all of them are worth considering. Randy stated "Time is all you have. And you may find one day that you have less than you think."

Randy collected stuffed animals. When he taught the "Building Virtual Worlds" course, he encouraged students to attempt hard things and to not worry about failing. He wanted to award that way of thinking. So at the end of each semester, he would present one team of students with a stuffed animal-penguin. It was called the First Penguin Award and went to the team that took the biggest gamble in trying new ideas or new technology, while failing to achieve their stated goals. It celebrated out-of-the-box thinking and using imagination in a daring way. Other students came

to understand: "First Penguin" winners were losers who were definitely going somewhere.

The Last Lecture is full of leadership traits: Positive Attitude, Character, Charisma, Courage, Commitment, Competence, Focus, Passion, Responsibility and Vision to name a few. It is extremely worthwhile reading and also may be viewed on www.thelastlecture.com. Therefore, do the right thing... read it and view it.

WASBO Members Find Professional Development and Recognition at the ASBO Annual Meeting & Exhibits in Denver!



Just a few of the WASBO members at the ASBO Annual Meeting in Denver. (Left to right) Kathy Maedke (Cambridge), Mark Worthing (Edgerton), Diane Pertzborn (De- Forest), Wendy Brockert (Lake Mills), Erin Green (Greendale), Bill Barrow (CESA 2), Joel Green (Cooperative for Employment Education), Sue Schnorr (Fond du Lac), Tina Hafeman and Woody Wiedenhoeft (WASBO).

WASBO members Mary Blaha (Sheboygan Falls), Gail Haack (Algoma), Jim Froemming (Port Washington-Saukville) and Kathy Maedke (Cambridge) all attended the conference on a Bridges to the Future Scholarship. They will also be able to attend the 2009 Leadership Conference in February. For more information on how to apply for this scholarship, go to www.asbointl.org.



Bucky made a surprise appearance at the Opening Mixer!



not absolutely necessary, saving an additional \$30 million. Doyle also said he expects there will be up to 3500 state jobs left unfilled between now and the end of the biennium, but put no anticipated savings on that. He said the state will sell 500 fleet vehicles and stop all employee bonuses for the current year as part of the savings program.

Doyle said he "will try to avoid furloughs" of state employees.

The governor said he will work with legislative leaders in the new session

before deciding whether to call lawmakers into session in January to work out the deficit in the current fiscal year. He suggested both the current deficit and the next biennial budget could be worked together.

Also, Doyle said he will push early for passage of the hospital assessment, which is expected to net the state about \$75 million for general fund purposes. He also endorsed the oil company excess profits tax proposed previously.

Doyle said his first priority in the budget

process is education and he will work to avoid any cuts there, but said that may not be possible. He said he did not want to pass the "burden" on to local governments, which would increase property taxes.

"This is going to be a difficult time for all of us," Doyle said.

Hang on to your hats, SAA members. This will be a very bumpy ride, to say the least. I will keep you informed of any significant developments as we move forward.



ASBO Update

YAY, the campaign is over!! Now, we can focus on moving WASBO and ASBO forward!

WASBONIANS have returned from Denver a good deal smarter after attending the ASBO Annual Meeting and networking with colleagues from around the globe. As a side note, I chatted with two women from Australia, who came all the way to Denver. They were excited to meet us, and said they voted for Wisconsin! They liked our materials and what was conveyed. There were also many ASBO members from the UK in attendance. Sessions presented by international members enhanced our "cultural competence".

I wanted to share with all WASBO members what my emphasis for ASBO will be in the next three years.

ASBO is poised to unveil a national credential for school business officials in perhaps as little as two years. This credential would obviously be an "add on" for Wisconsin members, as SBO's in Wisconsin must already complete a Masters Level Program and DPI Certification. This credentialing

process will drive our goal to maintain and grow membership, as it's a "value-added" service. It will also provide the framework for continued high level, world class professional development, tied directly to ASBO's "Standards for the Profession". Credentialing will help the public understand what we do in school business management. Think of Registered Nurses, Attorneys and CPA's. The public knows what those professionals do. An ASBO credential will do the same for our profession and educate the public as to the importance and complexity of our jobs. Given the "extreme economy" we find ourselves in at the moment, it will be a good time for the public to know what we do.

This is not a time for ratcheting down your professional development; it is a time to ramp it up. I would urge each of you to consider adding membership in WASBO and ASBO and attendance at seminars and conferences to your employment contracts. This is not a time to be shy about your importance to your school district. ASBO 2009 will be in Chicago, making it more convenient than ever to attend the Annual Meeting & Exhibits. The ASBO Leadership Conference in Chicago February 5-7, 2009 is open to all ASBO International members. This is a wonderful time to network in a smaller group and begin

service on an ASBO committee. No money? See the application for the WASBO Foundation Professional Development Grant in this mailing. This provides up to \$1000 for those who serve on an ASBO committee. Wisconsin needs more representation on ASBO committees. Contact WASBO or me for the committee application.

NOTE: If you serve as a Chair or Vice Chair, ASBO funds your way to Leadership. There are creative ways to get professional development!

With the economy in a tailspin, look for leadership from ASBO, as an Economic Summit is convened December 11 with a panel of experts. Bob Borch, Elmbrook School District, will represent WASBO. A document for use by ASBO members will be prepared, with tips on surviving the rocky road ahead.

Once again, thank you WASBO for your tremendous support! ASBO looks forward to increasing contributions from our very competent (and fun) WASBO members into the future!



CREDENTIALING/CERTIFICATION FOR SBO'S

MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

Certification may be a key "value added" for sustaining and growing membership

PROFESSIONAL/ LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Certification provides the framework for PD based on the "Standards for the Profession" Perhaps look to add a "competency" needed around globalization/cultural competence knowledge

PUBLIC AWARENESS/ EDUCATION

Certification will clearly identify role of SBO's and aid in awareness campaign

Market Turmoil and Escalating U.S. Muni Debt Requirements

Provided by John McGowan, Senior Director, Chicago Office Head, Standard & Poor's, Corporate & Government Ratings

In the view of Standard & Poor's Ratings Services:

- Most states and municipalities have, or have access to, adequate sources of liquidity to weather the storm in the market but there may be a need to raise revenues or cut spending in the process, and borrowing costs will increase given current market conditions;
- The current market is pushing interest rates higher and costing states and municipalities that need access to short-term funds for cash flow or interim financing or are in variable rate obligations; and
- The effect on the large universe of unrated munis is hard to assess but is likely to be significantly greater than the effect on rated entities.

Despite our opinion of the generally strong creditworthiness of U.S. municipals, the turmoil in global financial markets has increasingly affected the functioning of this historically stable sector. The withdrawal of the major investment banks from market-making activities and remarketing support for adjustable rate municipal bonds this year has increased costs to municipal borrowers. Recently, however, we have seen generalized risk aversion on the part of investors which, we believe, has affected short-term debt markets generally. It appears that this risk aversion, in turn, has reduced investors' appetite for municipal securities resulting in higher interest rates. With the reliance of some states and local borrowers on short-term financing, we have increasing concerns that some entities may have difficulty meeting their ongoing commitments. While retail investors continue to be important

participants in the municipal market, particularly in states like California with its high income tax rates and New York with the triple tax exemption, it is our view that retail demand cannot carry the entirety of the market. The market needs institutional investors, who are heavily influenced by general credit market liquidity and conditions, to meet the needs of all entities with borrowing needs.

Standard & Poor's Ratings Services believes, however, that the risk of default by most U.S. states and municipalities is low. Nevertheless we do expect current market conditions to increase costs for a number of states and municipalities that borrow for cash flow purposes. In some instances, cash flows for those entities may become much stretched.

Markets

Current economic and market conditions pose questions about the overall health of state and local governments. Most governments have experienced what we consider to be a good track record of economic and financial performance in recent years. Standard & Poor's believes that the length of current market disruptions pose many uncertainties for governments across the country; however, we do not expect that current economic conditions will result in widespread defaults among the rated universe of credits. Rated credits tend to be of good credit quality and historically sell more bonds more often. The default history of unrated credits, however, is markedly higher than that of rated entities. We believe that market access for unrated, unfamiliar names is even more difficult in the current environment and may pose even more challenges for those entities.

With the turmoil in the global capital markets, we note that conditions in the U.S. tax-exempt market are also strained. Although the tax-exempt market has unique characteristics, in our view it is linked to the global markets by overall investor liquidity and bank, monoline, and other confidence-sensitive institutions' credit and performance.

For much of the year, market activity, we believe, has reflected concerns regarding bank and monoline creditworthiness and reduced liquidity, particularly for auction rate securities and more recently for variable rate issuances. Many investors have tendered their variable rate securities back to banks supporting the issue. In recent weeks, tax-exempt market conditions have appeared even more strained and many issuers appear to have found even the long-term market environment sufficiently stressful to reconsider financing strategies due to significantly higher interest rates. Many issuers appear to have chosen to either reduce or postpone issuance. To date, it appears that the reluctance to enter the market is related more to pricing than to the actual ability to find a buyer. However, we believe the length of the disruption in the tax-exempt market will play a large role in the magnitude of potential credit issues.

We expect that when liquidity is restored to the market there will likely be a significant burst of borrowing activity from both pent-up demand and ongoing capital needs. In our experience, governments typically borrow more at times of economic stress and uncertainty and, in our view; there is no reason to believe that the balance of 2008 and 2009 will be any different. Market data

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Market Turmoil and Escalating U.S. Muni Debt Requirements

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Show that in 2007 note issuance totaled approximately \$58.0 billion, up 33% over the prior year. Until the current market dislocation, Standard & Poor's had anticipated up to \$60 billion in 2008 and even more in 2009. In what we consider to be the last two periods of stress for governments, 2002 and 1991, note issuance increased to \$72 billion, up 28% from 2001 and \$44 billion up 27% from 1990, respectively. Ordinarily, we would anticipate an increase in note issuance in 2009; however, given market conditions, we think it is unclear whether this will materialize as historical patterns suggest. With higher costs of short-term borrowing or a need to finance long-term, debt service costs to governments will increase. Issuers with variable rate debt are also paying higher interest costs, as debt is remarketed or converted to bank bonds (securities held by a bank subsequent to a failed remarketing). In terms of cash flow borrowings, eight states have already addressed their requirements for the current fiscal year with combined note issuances totaling about \$11.8 billion. Massachusetts successfully issued \$750 million of cash flow notes last week. California is currently in the market with \$4 billion (although cash flow needs approximate \$7 billion). Rhode Island anticipates issuing at least \$200 million before the end of the year and Michigan is expected to issue over \$1 billion during the same period. Given budget pressures on the states, we believe it is likely that total cash flow borrowing by the states for fiscal 2009-2010 will increase.

Economy

In our view, overall economic deterioration has the potential for a significant effect on municipal credits in many ways, including but not limited to:

- Financial services industry

dependencies for some credits;

- Increased pension liabilities due to poor fund performance and low mark-to-market securities' evaluations;
- The weak real estate market in certain areas of the U.S.; and
- Slowing retail sales and ongoing pressures on revenue-raising capabilities in many areas.

It is important to note, however, that we routinely assess weaker economic conditions as part of our credit analysis of governments. Although we view the overall trend of economic and credit performance as having been positive over the last 25 years, we note that there were times of stress which governments successfully managed. After September 11, 2001, many entities faced extraordinary pressures both economically and financially; the real estate recession of the early 1990s and the oil problems in the 1980s created significant difficulties in certain areas of the country. In our view, most governments successfully managed through these economic conditions.

However, there are particular municipal entities that, given the nature of the current economic pressures, we view as especially strained. It is clear to us that different entities are handling current events in very different ways. Since states are typically reliant on more economically sensitive taxes such as income, sales, and business taxes, and bear the heaviest burden of social service costs, we believe that economic volatility typically has the most effect on their credit position. However, states also have sovereign powers and have historically been adept at "spreading the pain." New York State and New York City, the domestic center for financial services, are being hit hard by current events, but both the governor and the

mayor have already started discussions on how to continue to achieve financial balance. Florida has made several adjustments to its budget to reflect real estate and revenue pressures. California's legislature, on the other hand, adopted this year's budget later than any time in its history. Within weeks of the budget being adopted, it appears to be out of balance. Because the budget was so late, California now has to borrow—in the midst of market disruption—to maintain the state's annual cash flow. Although the state may have access to alternate liquidity sources, and payments can always be slowed, slowing payments has the potential for dramatic cash flow impact on local units and schools.

Bringing these various strands together, our basic analysis suggests that:

- Issuers that rely on short-term anticipation notes, either revenue or bond, will, in our view, pay higher costs. We believe that inability to access the short-term debt market played an important role in the 1970s fiscal crises experienced by New York City and Cleveland. In the early 1980s, interest rates were very high and bids frequently exceeded statutory interest rate caps, forcing many borrowers to restructure after failed sales. We would view failure to make payment on a bond anticipation note, even if related to market conditions, as default.
- Issuers with large proportions of their debt in variable rate instruments are paying higher rates, and bonds that have been tendered back to banks typically incur penalty interest rates and accelerated repayments schedules. Should the "bank bonds" remain outstanding for a prolonged time, we believe there could be both

Continued on page 22

A Practical Approach to Improving Communication & Leadership Skills



December 9, 2008
Radisson Hotel Madison

If you work
with others -
you need this
seminar!



Bring Your
Administrative
Team!

Communication

The day begins with a review of the communication cycle to establish a common understanding of the way in which communication occurs.

Listening

Learn the critical aspects of listening including both poor and good listening behaviors. Find out how well you listen through a self-assessment.

Work Relationships

Understand your own communication style and identify the best methods to communicate with others with the same and different styles. The importance of organizational values and norms will be emphasized to identify and practice communication skills that influence the culture of an organization. Discussion will include the various internal and external stakeholders in a school district and the roles administrators play in fostering a positive school and school district environment.

Don't miss this day of interactive activities to improve your understanding of communication and leadership! Leave with a plan on how to better communicate!

Leadership

A variety of leadership styles will be reviewed. Discover your own predominant style & strategies for communicating most effectively with people with the same or different styles.

Group Decision Making - Problem Solving

Group decision making and problem solving skills will be discussed with emphasis on destructive versus constructive conflict. Focus on strategies for fostering effective problem solving.

Conflict Resolution

Learn the common reasons for conflict at work and how to deal with a conflict situation. Apply these strategies to real life situations.

Dealing with Difficult People

Many conflict situations are due to personality, gender and age differences among workers. We will discuss tips for dealing with these situations as well as a variety of difficult people. Share real life experiences and consider optimal ways of dealing with them.

Ethics

Critical elements of ethical decision making and ethical communication will be reviewed along with suggestions for evaluating real life ethical decisions you will face on the job.

What am I Going to Do Differently?

Be ready to assess differences in communication, listening, and leadership styles and develop a plan to improve your communication skills.

Bambi L. Statz, Ph. D.

Bambi Statz has been a member of the faculty in the College of Business & Economics at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater for the past twelve years. There she oversees the School Business Management graduate program. This program prepares individuals to become licensed business managers in Wisconsin school districts. Ironically, she was the first woman to graduate from this program decades ago.

Before joining the university, Statz served as Assistant State Superintendent at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction under two different elected State Superintendents. At the local level, Statz has been a business manager or finance director for small, medium and large school districts in Wisconsin.

Statz also serves as an independent education consultant to school districts and CESAs and makes presentations to a wide variety of audiences on many management issues facing public education today. A specific service provided to Wisconsin school districts has been to assist them in instituting strategic budget planning to better cope with the state-imposed revenue limits. Designing curriculum and delivering workshops that employ hands-on learning opportunities for school administrators and school board members to apply concepts ranging from communication and leadership skills to in-depth school finance concepts have been popular. Dr. Statz is well respected as an expert in school finance and has a knack for explaining complicated concepts and formulas in a "down to earth" and interesting manner.

In addition to her professional activities in the area of education, Statz is in her fourth term on the school board in the Waunakee Community School District where she serves as President.

7:45-8:30 am

Registration &
Continental Breakfast
Sessions

8:30 am-4:30 pm

WASBO/WASPA 4th Annual School Personnel Academy

Managing Risk in Human Resources

December 10, 2008
Radisson Hotel Madison



If you supervise
staff or manage HR
- this seminar is for
you!

7:45-8:30 am Registration & Continental Breakfast

8:30 am – 10:00 am
"Safety Is No Accident"
Reducing Worker's Compensation Exposure

Do you know your school district's "Mod Factor"? If not, plan on attending! Do you have a plan for reducing it? If not, plan on attending! If you do know your Mod Factor and have a plan for reducing it, then plan on attending so we can learn from you in a small group format.

Edward A. Steele, CSP

Mr. Steele is Senior Technical Consultant for the Loss Prevention Department at Wausau Insurance Companies, specializing in Temporary Staffing/Professional Employee Organizations. He also works with Wisconsin Schools, Wisconsin Municipalities, Harley-Davidson and RecycleGuard Programs. He was formerly a Managing Consultant in Wausau, WI.

10:00-10:15 am Break

10:15-11:45 am
"The Head Custodian Said What???"
Harassment Prevention and Internal Investigations

Even in these modern days, inappropriate comments and behaviors are still present in the workplace. Learn how to recognize and address them so they don't come back to haunt you or your organization. Be sure to bring your favorite "war story" for this session.

Jon E. Anderson, Attorney

Mr. Anderson is team leader of the HR and Employment Law Practice Group of Godfrey & Kahn, S.C. He represents management in all aspects of human resource, labor and employment law matters. A significant portion of his practice is also devoted to the representation of educational institutions.



Thomas N. Shorter, Attorney

Mr. Shorter is a shareholder in the Godfrey & Kahn, S.C. Madison office. Tom represents health care and educational institutions, as well as other businesses, providing counsel in labor and employment and regulatory matters such as Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) compliance, discrimination issues, discipline and discharge, services for children with disabilities, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA), Stark, and Anti-Kickback issues. His education clients include public and private K-12 educational issues.

11:45 am - 12:45 pm Lunch

1:00-2:30 pm

"I'm Calling in Sick Because I'm in Jail"
Criminal Acts by Employees

Although rare, when an active school district employee gets arrested and put in jail, the employment landscape becomes a bit more complicated (especially when the employee requests FMLA while incarcerated). Find out how to navigate this minefield while protecting the interests of your district.

Jon E. Anderson, Attorney

Godfrey & Kahn, S.C.

Thomas N. Shorter, Attorney

Godfrey & Kahn, S.C.

Save your district
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area of Human
Resources.

Overnight Accommodations

A block of rooms has been reserved until November 21, 2008 at the Radisson Hotel Madison, 517 Grand Canyon Drive, Madison, WI 53719, (608) 833-0100. A rate of \$70/single or double has been established. Call 1-608-833-0100 to make your reservation. Mention that you are with the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials (WASBO) and remember to bring your tax-exempt certificate when checking in. Reservations made after the cut off will be based on availability.



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www.WASBO.
com

October 23-24, 2008

Wyndham Milwaukee Airport Hotel & Convention Center

This first annual conference was a tremendous success with 150 attendees from throughout the Midwest. Wisconsin State attendees and 45 exhibitors. The joint efforts of WASBO and School Dude to host this event, in cooperation with Illinois ASBO and ASBO International

Certification Program. Over 60 educational session offerings were provided on topics ranging from Green to School Construction to Legal Concerns to Roofing and much, much more! Look for a repeat of this conference in Fall 2009!

School Facilities Management and our Facility Manager



Market Turmoil and Escalating U.S. Muni Debt Requirements

Continued from page 19

- near-term cash flow and ongoing budget concerns. It appears that issuers with variable rate debt are also finding that their hedges no longer function as planned.
- When issuers decide to postpone borrowing for capital expenditure, there are likely to be ripples throughout their operating performance. Frequently, issuers use current funds to meet initial capital costs and then reimburse themselves from bond proceeds. We believe that failure to issue bonds in these circumstances can have widespread operating consequences, requiring possibly raising revenues or reducing expenditures.
- Losses in local government investment pools from either credit events or securities valuation changes can also pressure these issuers.

Rating Implications

We believe that the financial positions of state and local governments are typically finely balanced and that any type of unanticipated pressures on the economy and revenues and expenses can cause discomfort for both the population and elected officials. In our view, current conditions are increasing those discomfort levels, but we believe it is important to stay focused on real fiscal strain. As mentioned, states are potentially the most vulnerable and therefore can also be the most vocal. If disruption to the municipal debt market were to extend for several months, we would expect that weaker credits and credits that are dependent on market access for liquidity and capital needs will react to cash flow pressures by delaying vendor payments, disbursements to discretionary programs and eventually salaries. Although full elimination of market liquidity could cause defaults

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at any time, particularly on short-term obligations, we believe it would take a generalized muni market disruption extending over a year to cause weaker and unrated credits to default.

Despite this "worst case" scenario, given the recent strength of many credits, particularly smaller property tax-dependent entities, Standard & Poor's does not anticipate that current economic conditions will result in rating deterioration for many credits assuming the current market stresses ease within the next year. We believe that stability and sound management characterize many governments and that most will successfully manage through current events. Upgrades during this time may occur if and when we believe that they are warranted and the entities are well-positioned to manage through current conditions.

We're all about supporting those who are supporting education!

SchoolDude's support services solutions are built specifically to help educational professionals in districts across the nation run their schools more efficiently. While declining operational budgets have you struggling to do more with less, SchoolDude can help you do more with what you have, enabling you to do more! Our affordable on-demand technology can help you:

- Save money
- Streamline operations
- Make a difference

73 schools in Wisconsin are already SchoolDude clients!



On-Demand Software for:



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operations

facility
operations

information
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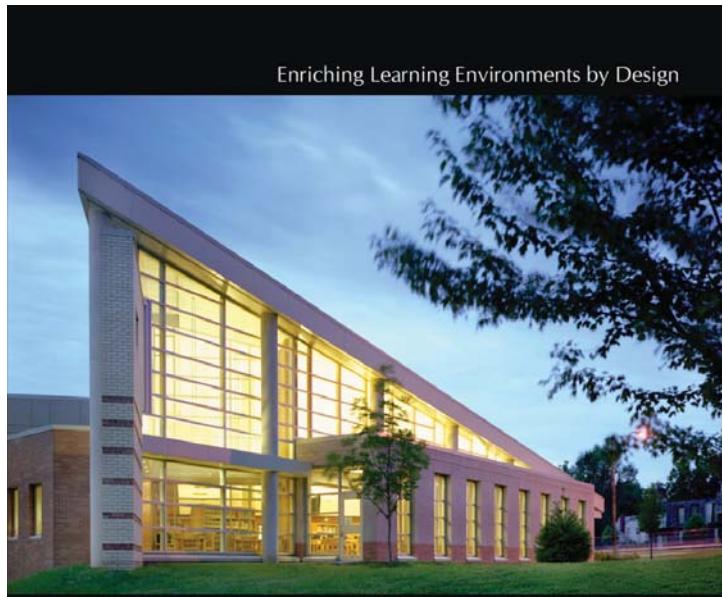
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Solar Power Game-Changer

Article submitted by Lisa Pederson, Focus on Energy

Source: Solar Daily http://www.solardaily.com/reports/Solar_Power_Game_Changer_999.html

By Staff Writers, Troy NY (SPX) November 6, 2008

Researchers at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute have discovered and demonstrated a new method for overcoming two major hurdles facing solar energy.

By developing a new antireflective coating that boosts the amount of sunlight captured by solar panels and allows those panels to absorb the entire solar spectrum from nearly any angle, the research team has moved academia and industry closer to realizing high-efficiency, cost-effective solar power.

"To get maximum efficiency when converting solar power into electricity, you want a solar panel that can absorb nearly every single photon of light, regardless of the sun's position in the sky," said Shawn-Yu Lin, professor of physics at Rensselaer and a member of the university's Future Chips Constellation, who led the research project.

"Our new antireflective coating makes this possible."

Results of the year-long project are explained in the paper "Realization of a Near Perfect Antireflection Coating for Silicon Solar Energy," published this week by the journal Optics Letters.

An untreated silicon solar cell only absorbs 67.4 percent of sunlight shone upon it - meaning that nearly one-third of that sunlight is reflected away and thus unharvestable. From an economic and efficiency perspective, this unharvested light is wasted potential and a major barrier hampering the proliferation and widespread adoption of solar power.

After a silicon surface was treated with Lin's new nanoengineered reflective

coating, however, the material absorbed 96.21 percent of sunlight shone upon it - meaning that only 3.79 percent of the sunlight was reflected and unharvested.

This huge gain in absorption was consistent across the entire spectrum of sunlight, from UV to visible light and infrared, and moves solar power a significant step forward toward economic viability.

Lin's new coating also successfully tackles the tricky challenge of angles.

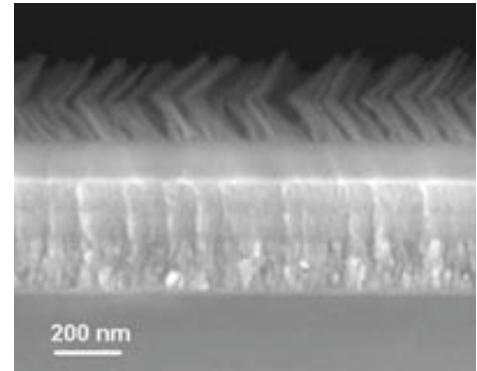
Most surfaces and coatings are designed to absorb light - i.e., be antireflective - and transmit light - i.e., allow the light to pass through it - from a specific range of angles.

Eyeglass lenses, for example, will absorb and transmit quite a bit of light from a light source directly in front of them, but those same lenses would absorb and transmit considerably less light if the light source were off to the side or on the wearer's periphery.

This same is true of conventional solar panels, which is why some industrial solar arrays are mechanized to slowly move throughout the day so their panels are perfectly aligned with the sun's position in the sky. Without this automated movement, the panels would not be optimally positioned and would therefore absorb less sunlight.

The tradeoff for this increased efficiency, however, is the energy needed to power the automation system, the cost of upkeep this system, and the possibility of errors or misalignment.

Lin's discovery could antiquate these automated solar arrays, as his



A new antireflective coating developed by researchers at Rensselaer could help to overcome two major hurdles blocking the progress and wider use of solar power. The nanoengineered coating, pictured here, boosts the amount of sunlight captured by solar panels and allows those panels to absorb the entire spectrum of sunlight from any angle, regardless of the sun's position in the sky. Credit: Rensselaer/Shawn Lin

antireflective coating absorbs sunlight evenly and equally from all angles. This means that a stationary solar panel treated with the coating would absorb 96.21 percent of sunlight no matter the position of the sun in the sky.

So along with significantly better absorption of sunlight, Lin's discovery could also enable a new generation of stationary, more cost-efficient solar arrays.

"At the beginning of the project, we asked 'would it be possible to create a single antireflective structure that can work from all angles?' Then we attacked the problem from a fundamental perspective, tested and fine-tuned our theory, and created a working device," Lin said. Rensselaer physics graduate student Mei-Ling Kuo played a key role in the investigations.

Typical antireflective coatings are engineered to transmit light of one particular wavelength. Lin's new coating stacks seven of these layers, one on top of the other, in such a way that

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Solar Power Game Changer

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each layer enhances the antireflective properties of the layer below it.

These additional layers also help to "bend" the flow of sunlight to an angle that augments the coating's antireflective properties. This means that each layer not only transmits sunlight, it also helps to capture any light that may have otherwise been reflected off of the layers below it.

The seven layers, each with a height of 50 nanometers to 100 nanometers, are made up of silicon dioxide and titanium dioxide nanorods positioned at an oblique angle - each layer looks and functions similar to a dense forest where sunlight is "captured" between the trees.

The nanorods were attached to a silicon substrate via chemical vapor disposition, and Lin said the new coating can be affixed to nearly any photovoltaic materials for use in solar

cells, including III-V multi-junction and cadmium telluride.

Along with Lin and Kuo, co-authors of the paper include E. Fred Schubert, Wellfleet Senior Constellation Professor of Future Chips at Rensselaer; Research Assistant Professor Jong Kyu Kim; physics graduate student David Poxson; and electrical engineering graduate student Frank Mont.

Funding for the project was provided by the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Basic Energy Sciences, as well as the U.S. Air Force Office of Scientific Research.

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MRSA Appearing at a School Near You

*By Bill Freeman, President, Environmental Management Consulting
Submitted by the WASBO Safety Committee*

Each day, there have been new reports of students being infected with MRSA. Schools nationwide have been forced to respond to the outbreak.

MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus (Staph) Aureus) has threatened patients in hospitals and nursing homes for decades and has recently become a problem in schools and other public buildings where large groups gather. MRSA commonly produces skin infections, but has also been known to cause potentially lethal blood infections.

Staph is Staphylococcus Aureus or a type of bacteria that can cause infections.

MSSA or Methicillin - Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus is a type of staph that is resistant to certain antibiotics. Staph and MRSA in the community usually cause skin infections that often first look like spider bites or bumps. Staph and MRSA infections are usually spread by having contact with the skin infection or personal items they have used such as towels, bandages, razors or athletic equipment. Even if surfaces have Staph and MRSA on them, this does not mean that you will get an infection if you touch these surfaces. The infection is more likely to cause problems when you have a cut or scrape that is not covered. Staph and MRSA can survive on some

surfaces for hours, days and even months, dependent on environmental conditions. When surfaces are not cleaned and conditions are good for bacterial amplification, Staph and MRSA is more likely to survive for sustained periods.

Now that we are familiar with Staph and MRSA, what steps can be taken to prevent an outbreak in your school district.

If there is a confirmed case of MRSA, it should be reported to the local Health Department who will work with you in developing a response plan. Most State and Federal Health Departments do not recommend school closures due to MRSA infections, provided the following recommendations are observed, there is minimal health risk to other students, faculty and staff.

- Promote good hygiene. Ensure access to sinks, soaps and clean towels for the cleaning of hands. If soap and water are not available, ensure the availability of 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- School attendance. Students and staff with a MRSA infection can attend school regularly as long as the wound is covered with a clean, dry dressing and they are receiving proper treatment. They do not need to be isolated or sent home in the middle of the day if

a suspected "staph" or MRSA infection is noticed. They should wash the area with soap and water and cover it lightly. They should also be encouraged to have the wound looked at by their healthcare provider. Those who touch the wound should wash their hands immediately.

- Follow routine procedures for cleaning the environment. In general, use a freshly prepared solution of commercially available products to clean and disinfect, such as a detergent (cleanser), chemical germicide (disinfectant) or disinfectant-detergent. A list of EPA approved disinfectants can be found at http://www.epa.gov/oppad001/list_h_mrса_vre.pdf. A cleaning schedule should be developed for athletic equipment and documented.

For further information, see Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) new web page about MRSA in schools, <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/MRSAinSchools/>. The CDC web page covers the topic in greater depth and includes many useful links to educational materials and school toolkits.

Much of the information and recommendations presented are adapted by those suggested by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

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Fulfilling Parents' Wishes: Property Taxes, School Choice, and Referendum Success

By A. F. Shober, Assistant Professor of Government, Lawrence University, Appleton, WI arnold.shober@lawrence.edu

ABSTRACT

Do charter schools improve the odds for school districts seeking increased funding at the polls? If school choice increases parental satisfaction, and those parents who choose schools are among the most attentive to school district policies, then increasing school choice should increase the likelihood that they turn out to support a district's request for more funds. (These voters would be more likely to turn out, too, given that few people vote in school referenda elections.) This paper uses a logit analysis of school finance ballot measures for Wisconsin from 1998 to 2005. The analysis suggests that the presence of charter schools in a district does improve a district's chances of gaining voter approval for finance issues.

The ability of parents to choose the school where their children attended without moving proved to be one of the innovations of the 1990s. The number of students using some form of school choice continues to grow (National Center for Education Statistics 2006, 187). The debates over whether allowing school choice improves student achievement, creams the best students, improves school morale, or simply competes with private schools continue (see Gill et al. 2007; Vergari 2007), but the focus of these studies has been on students and student interactions. Students are indeed a crucial part of the equation, but researchers have paid little attention to the educational environment they and their teachers operate in. What is the effect of school choice on school districts?

The influence of school choice on students and school demography is a central piece of the puzzle concerning the desirability of school choice as a public policy. Whether a school district participates in or courts school choice may help explain its financial success or failure. There is evidence that school districts have used school choice to increase in-district student enrollment, and that some districts have deliberately

used school choice to draw in home- or private-school students and the state-aid payments they draw (Witte, Scholmer, & Shober 2007). This paper argues that entertaining school choice might also carry direct tax benefits. It is well known that students who participate in school choice are those whose parents are attentive. These very parents are also the most likely to pay attention to school district politics (see Cox & Witko 2008). Thus, permitting or encouraging school choice in a district may be a way to curry favor with these potential voters in a school district bond or mill rate referendum.

Below, I test the hypothesis that school choice increases the likelihood that election measures in favor of school bonds and increased mill rates for school purposes pass. I use the number of charter schools as an indicator of school choice (including zero schools). Briefly, charter schools are publicly-funded schools that are subject to the same accountability requirements as traditional public schools but are free from some of the curricular, building, and personnel regulations that apply to traditional public schools. Which regulations are waived is state-specific (see, e.g., Shober, Manna & Witte 2006). Most notably, students' parents must choose to send their children to a charter school. I use data from Wisconsin for 1998 to 2005.

The paper first presents a theoretical overview of the connection between school choice and parent and voter satisfaction. Second, I present the paper's hypothesis, data and methods. A third section presents the results, and a fourth concludes.

THEORY AND BACKGROUND

The property tax is one of the United States' oldest forms of support and, as appropriate with an aged tax, each state has different uses and limitations on uses of property taxes (Fischer 1996). Some states require local approval to raise a property tax at all; others give local governments a set millage under which no election is

necessary. Others do not require elections at all. Further adding to the complexity for school finance is the multitude of financial instruments schools may use to increase their revenues. Some states allow elections on property tax mill increases for school purposes. Others restrict schools to asking for bonds, sometimes limiting them to simply construction or other clearly-defined purposes.

In this paper, because I am not testing the interaction of choice availability with various means of raising revenue, I collapse the various means of raising funds into school finance ballot measures. This loses detail and probably underestimates the effect of school choice on revenue because in those states with relatively high barriers for passing any finance measure, a charter school might be hypothesized (say) to increase the likelihood of passage by 2 percent, but when a measure requires two-thirds support, the actual observations of passing measures may be very low regardless of the availability of choice or any other perceived positive feature of the school district.

Support for property tax increases, especially for schools, appears to have taken a hit beginning in the late 1970s as states enacted legal or constitution limits on raising taxes. Many scholars mark California's Proposition 13 as a convenient way-post for this decline. Some have argued that this decline has helped spark the many school finance lawsuits of the following three decades: as local financial support became difficult to acquire, districts tried to force state governments to revise decades-old school finance laws and formulae and thereby circumvent the local voter. Their success has been mixed (Isaac 2006; Evans, Murray & Schwab 1997).

This paper argues that allowing school choice, particularly charter schools, may be one way to curry favor with local voters despite other difficulties in raising revenue. This section shows why school choice could improve parent satisfaction and how

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Limiting Your Resources

Relying on only a few job posting resources limits the amount and quality of opportunities that you have access to. Spread your efforts across multiple mediums and multiple sources to ensure a more thorough job search.

Under Utilizing Your Network

When searching for a job, remember to tap into your network of friends and professional contacts to get things

moving. It is quite possible that someone in your network has the connections necessary to help you land your dream job.

Not Doing Your Homework

Interviewers want to feel confident that you have researched both the position and the company prior to the interview. Be sure to know what the position entails, what the company does and feel secure in your industry knowledge.

Bad-mouthing Previous Employers

When asked what you liked least about your previous position, be careful not to sound too negative and definitely do not bad-mouth a past supervisor or coworker. Keep your answers as positive as possible.

Appearing Unprofessional

Dressing appropriately for an interview is just one small part of your professional

appearance. Make sure that your email address, outgoing voicemail message and personal web pages make a favorable impression as well.

Forgetting to Ask Questions

Ask intelligent and open ended questions during the interview that show you have done your research and that you are genuinely interested in learning more about the position and the company.

When it comes to the mistakes candidates make throughout the entire job search process, the list goes on and on. The key to avoiding most of them is using common sense. Now that you are aware of the most common of these errors, you can be sure to steer clear of them to ensure a successful job hunt.

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school finance can be used as measures of satisfaction.

Choice and Satisfaction

As Hoxby (2003) notes, the decision to introduce charter schools (and later inter-district choice) was the results of good politics as much or more as a desire for educational improvement. But if the introduction of charter school laws were the result of politics, they were the result of politicians seeking to please their constituents one of the hallmarks of representative government. Mintrom (1999) shows how political entrepreneurs successfully lobbied for school choice in their state legislatures. In other words, choice passed in order to improve the satisfaction of certain parents in certain school districts. (A history of charter schools in general may be found in Nathan 1996).

If school choice was enacted to increase parental satisfaction, it may have been part of an implicit political bargain to shore up tight school finances. In an officially unanticipated consequence of school finance reform in several states, states dramatically increased state-source school revenues, but local-source school revenues were virtually unchanged (Evans, Murray & Schwab 1997). The result has been that school financing is more equal across districts at the expense of tax cuts and perhaps even other state-funded programs. For example, increased state education revenue in Ohio's 2002-03 budget resulted in more than \$1.4 billion being cut from higher education, mental health, women's shelters, prisons, and other state programs. Even then, that state's supreme court held that the increase in state funding was not a sufficient remedy to Ohio's district funding disparities (O'Brien 2003, 412-414, nn. 127, 132). In Colorado, voters approved a constitutional amendment in 2000 to require a certain share of state K12 education funding; in the ensuing years, this amendment combined with Colorado's tax expenditure limitation has crimped the state's ability to fund discretionary programs (Bell Policy Center 2003).

Districts that have had difficulty raising funds in the past would gain little political

support for additional local increases when state taxes are increasing and other state programs are being cut. Permitting school choice might appear to be one way to increase funding, especially if it can retain higher-income families to which some charter schools cater (e.g. those themed around ancient languages, engineering, or the natural sciences rather than those for at-risk students). Fernandez and Rogerson (1996) argue that adopting policies to keep higher-income families in lower-income neighborhoods is beneficial district wide because they tend to be supporters of high-quality education and provide positive tax revenues for the local taxing authority. Reback (2005), for example, found that Minnesota's open-enrollment program where students may cross district lines to attend a public school of their choice and which has drawn significant numbers of students out of the Minneapolis public school district has increased the value of housing in the district's limits. These higher-prices homes also generate more property tax revenue, yielding some benefit for the district at the expense of lost students. Detroit, Michigan, faces a similar situation with in-district charter schools drawing about 27 thousand students out of traditional public schools in 2005-06, but people may be staying in the city rather than moving out because they can send their children to charter public schools that they perceive as somehow better (Maxwell 2006). Others have found that, from a financial point of view, districts may authorize charter schools to draw students in from outside the district and at least keeping students from leaving the home district (Witte, Schloemer & Shober 2007). Using charter schools this way is a financial advantage to receiving districts because many open-enrollment programs tie state school funding to the number of students enrolled. Note, however, that property taxes are not tied to this. This apparent behavior indicates that these districts are seeking to increase (some) parents' satisfaction.

Taxes and Satisfaction

If choice is indeed an attempt to induce parent satisfaction, do successful school finance ballot measures indicate satisfaction with

school district administration decisions? One of the property tax's enduring qualities is that many consider it the worst tax (Fisher 1996), so any voter self-imposed increases in the tax should be for extraordinary reasons. A link between a vote for a tax increase in the district and satisfaction with the district relies on the perception that increasing school funding improves school quality, not whether increases actually do (see Hanushek 2003). Further, it would not necessarily matter whether voters had children in school (with a possibility of direct benefit) or whether voters were simply concerned about the value of their property (an indirect benefit). Downes (1992) argues that some version of this occurred in California after the Serrano decision that required more equal spending in that state. Wealthier districts were able to raise funds for school projects even when they could not raise property taxes to do school projects. Spending inequality persists, but parents in wealthier districts were indicating satisfaction with the direction of local schooling.

From the perspective of the school board, however, asking for money also means ensuring that the district does not ask for too much. That is, for a successful ballot measure, the district must be careful to pay attention to its perceived approval level. Fort and Bunn (1998) found that requesting the funds that the median voter would approve increased the chances of passage. Using unique data from Florida where voters could write in mill rates if they did not like the school board's proposal, Holcombe and Kenny (2007) found that districts that proposed the highest legal mill rate (10 mills) were more successful than when proposing other rates. They argue that in these cases, the school board believed that the median voter desired a greater mill rate but the law prevented any higher rate. Consistent with the findings of Dunne, Reed, and Wilbanks (1997), Holcombe and Kenny also find that larger turnout decreased the likelihood of passage because high-turnout school elections, they argue, were indicative of strongly negative feelings about the district. In sum, successful districts paid close

Continued on page 32

Fulfilling Parents' Wishes: Property Taxes, School Choice, and Referendum Success

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attention to the desires of the potential voter population.

HYPOTHESIS, DATA AND METHODS

The primary hypothesis for the paper is that school choice provides a financial benefit for school districts. In its strongest form, one would expect that districts that directly support charter schools would benefit the most. If, as argued in the previous section, sponsoring a charter school is a symbol of responsiveness to parents (or the community) then charter schools should induce voters to render thanks to the district when it asks for additional funding:

As school districts sponsor more charter schools, voters in those districts will have a greater likelihood of approving school financing ballot measures.

The data for this project are drawn from the school finance election results in Wisconsin for 1998 to 2005. This state was chosen because it has had charter school legislation for well over a decade and one of the highest per-student number of charter schools in the country (one school for every 3,788 students). The schools are widely distributed around the state. Thus, charter

schools are not the novelty they once might have been. Wisconsin has a moralistic political culture and strong local-school-control advocates, which means that the local property is seen as a key ingredient in school financing (Elazar 1994). The data for mill-levy overrides, school bond elections, or local-vote school measures were either requested from Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction or retrieved from its website (dpi.wisconsin.gov) depending on the year. Table 1 shows the 1,111 ballot measures that passed and failed in Wisconsin for the time period under consideration. It is important to recall that each observation is this analysis is a school finance ballot measure election in a school district; only school districts that held such measures are included.

The dependent variable for the analysis is a dichotomous variable for voter approval. Although an admittedly gross measure of district voter satisfaction, using a pass percentage would not yield much more information than this measure. The voting population is rarely representative of the true population of the school district

TABLE 1

Success and Failure of
School Finance Ballot Measures in Wisconsin
1998-2005

Year	Approved	Failed	Total
1998	98 (42.4)	133 (57.6)	231
1999	87 (56.1)	68 (43.9)	155
2000	102 (51.5)	96 (48.5)	198
2001	44 (37.0)	75 (63.0)	119
2002	33 (29.5)	79 (70.5)	112
2003	44 (51.8)	41 (48.2)	85
2004	53 (50.0)	53 (50.0)	106
2005	58 (55.2)	47 (44.8)	105
Total	519 (46.7)	592 (53.3)	1,111

Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, School Management Services, School Finance Referenda, various years. Numbers in parentheses are percentages.

many school finance ballot measures are decided on non-standard election days (see Dunne, Reed, & Wilbanks 1997). Those who vote, however, are those who care most about the issue, and are therefore the ones the district must be especially careful to satisfy. With a dichotomous variable such as this, a logistic regression is an appropriate method of analysis.

If voters perceive school choice as an attempt by the school district to be responsive to parent demands, then the

Continued on page 33

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Continued from page 32

number of charter schools available in the district is of interest as an independent variable. This variable should be positively related to passage rates. If in great demand, simply having a charter school (that is, one charter school) may be unpalatable. Charter authorizers have approved schools that cater to special-needs children, English language learners, arts-and-theater production, engineering, a Greek and Latin classics emphasis, and other varieties (see Henig et al. 2005). If the school approved by the charter authorizer does not suit the parents, then choice may not have an effect on passage rates of finance measures. I assume that an increase in the number of school correlates with the variety of charter schools offered.

School finance ballot measures are subject to what Ehrenberg et al. (2004) call a narcotic effect. That is, those districts which hold, say, a referendum for an increase in the mill rate and lose are about 8 percent more likely to lose the next referendum than comparable districts that win a referendum. They also find that a state-wide defeat rate does not

have an effect on individual measures; that is, districts do not need to fear state-wide anti-tax moods. These authors conclude that at least this politics is local. There may be an endogeneity problem with the variable (districts that lose referenda are probably more likely to try again; districts that win will not need to try one again, at least not for the same purpose), but for my purposes this is not a problem. Districts that lose and do not try again implicitly agree that parents are not satisfied enough with the district to increase funding. The variable is also potentially unobserved for districts in the initial year of the study because the data for elections prior to the start of the period are not available in most cases so one cannot know whether some districts have held a ballot measure in the prior year. Nevertheless, I expect this dichotomous variable to be negatively related to the likelihood of passage. Additionally, Alexander and Bass (1974) show that higher potential tax increases lead to more no votes, though perhaps not failure of the ballot measure. Although it is difficult to know what large is, the analysis includes a dichotomous variable indicating

whether the school district is requesting additional one-time funding or a permanent levy override under the assumption that voters would see permanent increases as larger than one-time requests.

Some voters are likely to support school finance ballot measures regardless the quality of school and availability of school choice (and indeed, might support measures in spite of them). This is a manifestation of the educational climate. Ehrenberg et al. (2004) show that higher educational attainment correlates with greater support for school ballot referenda generally. Part of the study of Weimer and Wolkoff (2001) also finds strong correlation between college-educated residents and higher home values (leading to higher property taxes). Schools are also used as a real estate proxy for good neighborhoods (Bogart & Cromwell 1997). If Fischel's (2001) home-voter argument is correct, that property owners vote to support property values, then college educated residents should support school finance ballot measures to support their property values. They may also support measures

Continued on page 34

OPEB Fatigue?

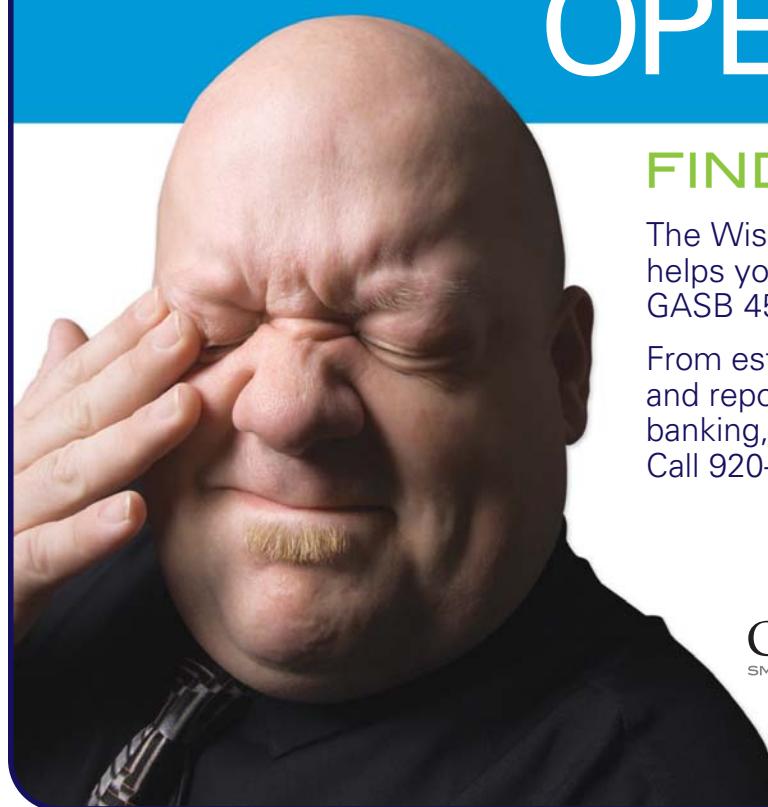
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Fulfilling Parents' Wishes: Property Taxes, School Choice, and Referendum Success

Continued from page 33

because they believe they benefited from education, public or otherwise, and so may have an interest in maintaining a quality school system for others. Thus, the percentage of residents in a school district with a college degree should be positively related with passage.

School districts may also need to be mindful of two other factors that are directly related to schooling: the age and the parental status of potential voters. For both variables, the argument is that those with direct experience with the schools are most likely to vote and most likely to have a favorable impression of the services the public school provides. That is, those who are younger and those who have children (who are probably enrolled in the school district) should be more supportive of the system. Here, a proxy is used to indicate this; greater numbers of children in the district should lead to more support for the school system. On the flip side, those who are older are often predicted to be less supportive of public school financing because they likely have little direct contact with the school system and are more likely to live on a fixed income and be price-sensitive to property taxes (Ladd & Murray 2001). Ladd and Murray (2001) found that the older voters do not necessarily oppose school finance measures, although they find a small effect if the dominant school population is not of the same race. Although Chew (1990, 1992) argues that parental status is a significant influence, the data in these papers only support the contention that parental status has an indirect effect of increasing the level of support. Therefore, I include the percentage of the school district population that is over 65 and one for the school-aged population.

The success of school finance ballot measures may also be influenced by the relative affluence of a school district. One might argue that parents in low-income communities have greater motivation to move from a poor school to a good one, while in a higher-income community, parents may see little long-term advantage from moving their children from a better school to the best school. This might increase the advantage of passing school

finance measures: motivated parents seeking a better school would be more likely to turn out for a referendum while motivated parents in low-income communities have a greater imperative to seek to move their children among schools. Indeed, Aaronson (1999) finds that Tiebout-style sorting appears primarily in low-income communities. It appears, then, that it is easier for low-income parents to exit the school district than to stay and hope for improvement. If voters seek to maintain their property values (for property owners who pay the taxes directly), then higher-income districts might be more inclined to support school finance ballot measures (see also Alexander & Bass 1974). Therefore, I expect that more affluent districts would be more likely to support measures. I include three measures to tap the effects of the wealth of the school district. First is the percentage of households under the federal poverty line; it should be negatively related to passage. Second I use an estimated property tax burden on the median household in the district (Plummer 2003). This variable should be negatively related to passage to the extent that home owners are price sensitive to property taxes; but it may interact with a third variable, the mean single-family home value in the district (Weimer & Wolkoff 2001). Because most ballot measures ask for funding that would be payable through property taxes or other property-based assessments, using home values are more productive than the relative affluence of individuals.

I include variables for the percentage of the population who identify themselves as non-white. A table of summary statistics appears in the appendix.

Other variables could, of course, be potentially relevant. Graves (1998) argues that the district must diligently mobilize its supporters and convince fence-sitters that increasing funding is important to them. These include door-to-door efforts, advertising campaigns, and media appearances. Given the large number of school districts under review here, I was unable to collect this data in a systematic fashion. Chew (1992) also persuasively argues that political liberals are more likely

to support school referenda than either political moderates or conservatives, an ideology that trumps even parental status. Unfortunately, there is no good measure of voter ideology by school district.

RESULTS

Table 2 (page 35) offers some support for the hypothesis that having more charter schools in a district increases the likelihood that voters will pass finance ballot measures ($\beta=0.165$, $p < 0.04$). Adding one charter school to the district that has none increases the likelihood of passage 4.1 percent; increasing the number of charter schools from 0 to 8 (the maximum for these data) increases the likelihood of passage 30.2 percent second only to the effect of a college-educated electorate (below). This suggests that charter schools do have some bearing on how votes perceive a school district's responsiveness to active-parent demands. Indeed, authorizing charter schools is the only variable in this analysis that a school district's administration could directly manipulate (save the actual ballot request).

The control variables in the analysis generally perform as expected. A high proportion of college educated residents significantly increases the likelihood of passage ($\beta=0.033$, $p < 0.02$). Approval rates increase by 32.4 percent from the minimum to the maximum in the data (6.5 percent to 48.1 percent). A curious facet of the particulars here that remains to be explored is that the highest percentages of college-educated residents who approve ballot measures appear to live in well-to-do parts of Wisconsin which are anecdotally Republican (and the median owner-occupied home values are correlated with percentage college degrees at 0.75). This appears to run counter to the untested expectation that more politically liberal school districts would approve more ballot measures. Thus, those supportive of their own education appear to support that of children.

As found by Ladd and Murray (2001), higher percentages of senior citizens does not affect passage rates. Instead, it appears older Americans have a positive effect
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TABLE 2

Probability of Voter Approval of a School Finance Ballot Measure, by School District

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	p value, one-tailed
Number of charter schools	0.165	0.097	0.05
% non white students	0.004	0.009	0.31
% school-aged population	0.042	0.036	0.13
% population over 64	0.039	0.024	0.06
% population with college degree	0.033	0.016	0.02
Median value of an owner-occupied home	1.24 x 10 ⁻⁶	3.72 x 10 ⁻⁶	0.37
% of district revenues from property taxes	-0.003	0.007	0.31
Does the measure request indebtedness? (1=yes)	0.052	0.138	0.36
Does the measure request one-time funds (1=yes)	0.406	0.173	0.01
Was there a measure that passed last year? (1=yes)	-0.246	0.313	0.22
Constant	-2.564	1.117	0.01
N			1,111
Log likelihood			-756.589
Prob. >x ²			0.014

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Welcome New Members

- Julie Birschbach, Business Manager, Cedar Grove-Belgium Area School District
- Kelly Claflin, Construction Project Manager, Keller, Inc.
- Kevin Clougherty, Account Executive, Mortenson, Matzelle & Meldrum, Inc.
- Lowell Fromm, Head Custodian, Sparta Area School District
- Brock Geyen, Principal, LarsonAllen LLP
- Scott Katterhagen, Building and Grounds Supervisor, Union Grove Jt. District 1
- Andy Licata
- Michael Meier, Student
- Margaret Smith, Business Manager, Northland Pines School District
- Kurt Speich, Supervisor of Buildings, Grounds & Transportation, Watertown Unified School District
- Dawn Terpstra, Administrative Assistant, Pepin Area Schools
- Yvette Turner, Director, Business Development, ARAMARK
- Dennis Wollenzein, Assistant Director of Facilities, Waukesha School District

New ASBO International Members

- John F. King, Brodhead School District
- Julie Ann Lankey-Smallwood, Mauston School District
- Karen Moore, Winneconne Community School District
- Jerrud Rossing, Hudson School District
- Keith T. Rogers, Milwaukee Academy of Science

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11th Annual Facilities Management Conference

March 2-3, 2009

Kalahari Resort & Conference Center
Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

Watch www.WASBO.com for future information!

Fulfilling Parents' Wishes: Property Taxes, School Choice, and Referendum Success

Continued from page 34

(8.2 percent increase for a one standard deviation change), although the variable is of borderline traditional significance ($t=0.039$, $p < 0.06$). Changes in the percentages of school age population does not have a significant effect on passage rates.

The findings also confirm previous research regarding the characteristics of the ballot measures themselves. Wisconsin school districts were much more likely to receive the blessing of voters when they asked for non-recurring funds than not ($t=0.41$, $p < 0.01$). The prospect of a permanent increase in taxation (e.g. for new teachers or administration expenses; or a levy-limit override) appears less appealing to voters than a short-term request (e.g. funds to repair a school building or other capital project). Asking for increased indebtedness had no detectable effect.

Results of ballot measures in Wisconsin also appear to support a version of the narcotic effect of Ehrenberg et al. (2004): failures led to more ballot measures, but successes generally did not. Some 215 failed finance measures (and only 30 successes) led to another ballot issue in the immediately subsequent year. Incidentally, a ballot success in a previous year's election ($N=245$, analysis not shown) also greatly increased the chance of failing in a subsequent finance measure ($t=0.76$, $p < 0.02$).

There were some surprises in the data as well. Each school district's median owner-occupied home value had no discernible effect on the success of school finance measures. Neither did the proportion of school funding derived from the property tax. This variable was meant to measure how much a school district could claim it needed new funds. The logic was that, if a district's budget is primarily state- or federally-funded, voters might assume that those sources should be able to supplement a district's needs. This figure generally mirrors the financial well-being of the district; higher percentages appear in more well-to-do districts (it is positively correlated with the median owner-occupied home value at 0.61 in these data). Districts

with fewer special-needs or children in poverty, for example, receive fewer Title I funds and so the proportion of revenues from the property tax would be higher. As the results stand, the wealth of district residents had little to do with the willingness of voters to approve new school funds; the effect of wealth appears to be contained in the value of a college degree.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, paying attention to parent desires by permitting school choice in the form of charter schools appears to be a boon to school districts seeking additional funding. At least partly for this reason, some researchers have raised concerns about the tax equity of charter schools that are by nature limited enrollment (Moore 1998). Yet an underlying principle of democratic education is responsiveness to public desires, and school districts appear to be responsive with charter schools.

There are several extensions to this work that need to be done. Most notably, the positive effect in Wisconsin should be tested in other states with similar school budget elections such as Arizona, California, and Colorado. These particular state are important test beds because they have large numbers of charter schools and rely on voter approval of major school finance issues. Arizona and Colorado have multiple charter authorizers (including school boards) in order to circumvent local school board opposition, so these state could provide a comparison of district ballot success with non-district authorized charter schools. California and Colorado have stringent finance requirements (Proposition 13 and the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights, or TABOR, respectively) that might magnify the effect of charter schools, if any.

The partisan composition of school districts is an untapped variable largely because it is difficult to construct (no state of which the author is aware has data readily available by school district; though matching ward-level returns to school district is possible in this age of geographic information systems). Yet, the partisanship appears to play a distinct role in legislative support or opposition to charter schools (Minstrom

1999), so it is conceivable that finance measure success, conditioned on the presence of charter schools, might be mediated through partisanship as well.

Finally, there should be some distinction between types of charter schools. Charter schools may be at-risk, virtual, traditional, themed, or some combination of these. An at-risk charter school might attract a different level of parent involvement than a Greek-and-Latin charter school. Certainly on-line, virtual schools provide this paper's main hypothesis with a problem: these schools serve children primarily out of the district! Those parents have no say in district elections; and one might imagine that such schools would have a negative effect (because the district is using district resources for non-district children).

Whatever their educational quality, charter schools appear to have real financial implications for school districts. This paper suggests those effects are positive, but further work needs to be done to understand exactly when that effect is most prevalent and whether charter schools have undermined the base level of school district revenues as some critics have argued.

2009 WASBO Awards Application included in this month's mailing!



Short Shots



Where Are They Now?

Karen Dvornik - South Milwaukee to Cedarburg, Doug Malliet - Parkview to Hustisford

WASBO Scholarships Applications
are due **March 2, 2009** for the WASBO

Foundation Matching Scholarships (MetLife Resources - \$4,000, EMC Insurance Companies - \$3,000, Stalker Flooring/SchoolDude - \$2,000 and National Insurance Services/Miron Construction \$1,000) and the \$1,000 WASBO Foundation-Siemens Academic Scholarship. WASBO and the participating Service Affiliates are honored to help take the edge off today's high cost of college education and staff development. See the applications included in this month's mailing to apply. Call Woody or Tina if there are any questions.

WASBO Awards Nominations are due March 2, 2009. Please consider honoring one of your colleagues by making a nomination. See the Award Brochure included in this month's mailing to make a nomination. Call Woody or Tina if

there are any questions.

Mark your Calendars for Future

Seminars: There are a number of Seminars, Workshops and Conferences coming up this spring.

WASBO Facilities Management Conference, March 2-3, 2009.

WASBO Transportation and Bus Safety Workshop, March 2, 2009.

WASBO Accounting Seminar, March 25-26, 2009.

WASBO Foundation Spring
Conference and Exhibits, May
26-29, 2009.

These are educational opportunities for WASBO members, developed by WASBO members, where WASBO members learn and network. Your participation in these professional development opportunities is an important investment for you and your district. See the back cover of this issue for locations or go to www.WASBO.com to see program information, register and get directions.

Interim Assignments: The WASBO

office gets numerous requests from school districts in need of immediate interim assistance or project work and we would like to be of assistance. To be considered for such service, please send a one-page resume and any other pertinent details to the WASBO office.

School Safety Coordinator of the

Year Award - Nominations are now being accepted for the Annual School Safety Coordinator of the Year Award. Do you know a great school safety coordinator? Recognize that individual for their efforts today! Nomination forms and further details are available on the WSSCA website (wsscaweb.org), or by calling 800-236-3400. Nominations must be received by January 16, 2009. Winners will be announced at a special ceremony at WSSCA's 40th Annual Conference, to be held March 3-4, 2009 at the Kalahari Resort. Winners will receive a \$1,000 award to use towards their school district's safety program, which is underwritten by the Community Insurance Corporation.



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WASBO Calendar

Professional Development

December 9, 2008

WASBO Taking Care of Business Seminar, Madison, Radisson (Viterbo Credit Offered)

December 10, 2008

WASBO/WASPA School Personnel Academy, Madison, Radisson (Viterbo Credit Offered)

January 21-23, 2009

WASB-WASDA-WASBO State Education Convention, Milwaukee, Midwest Airlines Center (Viterbo Credit Offered)

March 2-3, 2009

WASBO Facilities Management Conference, Wisconsin Dells, Kalahari (Viterbo Credit Offered)

March 2, 2009

WASBO Transportation & Bus Safety Workshop, Wisconsin Dells, Kalahari (Viterbo Credit Offered)

March 25-26, 2009

WASBO Accounting Seminar, Wisconsin Dells, Chula Vista (Viterbo Credit Offered)

May 26-29, 2009

WASBO Foundation Spring Conference & Golf Outing, Green Bay, KI Convention Center & Hotel Sierra (Viterbo Credit Offered)

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Regionals

Each Regional Representative, meeting locations & directions are available at www.WASBO.com if predetermined.

Bay Area - Meetings start at 9:00 a.m.

Dec. 12, 2008 Machine Shed (Hosted by NEWASBO)

Feb. 13, 2009 DePere

May 22, 2009 Shawano

Madison Area

Meetings will be held the first Friday of the month for December, February, March and April. Locations TBD.

Northeast

Dec. 12, 2008 Machine Shed (W/ Bay Regional)

April 17, 2008 Fond du Lac

May 15, 2009 Manitowoc

Northwest - Meetings are usually held the 2nd Wednesday of month beginning at 10 a.m. except July, August and January at Lehman's Supper Club in Rice Lake. Dates may be subject to change.

Southeast - Meetings are from 9:45-11:30 am with lunch following.

Dec. 12, 2008 Franklin

Feb. 13, 2009 Oak Creek

April 17, 2009 Sussex Hamilton

Southwest - All meetings will be held at the CESA #3 office in Fennimore.

Check www.WASBO.com for future dates

West Central - Meetings are held the first

Thursday of the month except January, May & July from 10 am - 1 pm at the Sparta Area SD Administration & Education Center, 201 E. Franklin St., Sparta

Dec. 4, 2008, Feb. 5, 2009, March 5, 2009

April 2, 2009, June 4, 2009, Aug. 6, 2009

WI Valley - Coffee at 9:00, Meeting at 9:30.

Dec. 19, 2008 Marshfield

Feb. 6, 2009 D.C. Everest

March 13, 2009 Auburndale

April 17, 2009 Wausau

Aug. 14, 2009 Antigo



Go to www.wasbo.com and click on "Calendar" for updated meeting information, to register or get directions.

Committee Meetings

All of the following meetings will be held in Milwaukee at the State Education Convention. Specific locations TBA.

Accounting Committee

Wed. January 21, 2009 (8:30 a.m.)

Member Resources Goal Action Team

Thurs. January 22, 2009 (1:30 p.m.)

Membership Committee

Thurs. January 22, 2009 (9:15 a.m.)

Spring Conference Planning Committee

Thurs. January 22, 2009 (3:30 p.m.)

Service Affiliate Committee

Tues. January 20, 2009 (2:00 p.m.)

Technology Goal Action Team

Thurs. January 22, 2009 (8:00 a.m.)

Board of Directors Meetings

December 17, 2008 - Milwaukee

February 18, 2009 - Stevens Point

April 15, 2009 - Chippewa Falls

June 17, 2009 - Madison, WASBO Office

Business Meetings

January 22, 2009 - Milwaukee

May 28, 2009 - Green Bay

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