

WASSA Spring Conference

Continuing The Journey

SAA Evidence-Based Policy & Local Community Engagement

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Continuing The Journey

- Review – What have we done this past year-and-a-half?
- Why did we do it?
- What have been the results?
- How do we move forward from here?
- But first . . . A quick legislative update.



State Capitol Backdrop

- Senate held its final floor session March 15th.
- Highly unlikely that either house will come back.
- Focus is now on the 2016 elections.
- GOP recognizes vulnerability in rural Wisconsin; rural efforts late in session
- Senate Retirements – Gudex (R), Lazich (R), Harris Dodd (D)
- Assembly Retirements – Heaton (R), Knudson (R), T. Larson (R), Murtha (R), A. Ott (R), Jorgensen (D)
- 2016 should be a Democratic year, but . . .
- Three current/past SAA members running for Legislature
- SAA to develop tools for SAA members to engage candidates



Bills of Interest

- SB 589/AB 846 – Conceal Carry on School Grounds, **Dead!**
- SB 582/AB 469 – Transgender Changing Room Policy, **Dead!**
- SB 355/AB 481 – School Referendum Restrictions, **Dead!**
- SB 337/AB 449 – Discontinue Energy Efficiency Exemption, **Dead!**
- SB 228/AB 314 – Academic Excellence Scholarships, **Dead!**
- SB 470/AB 517 – School Crime Reporting, **Passed Assembly but Not Senate!**
- SB 704/AB 873 – Prohibits District Membership unless WIAA Governed by Open Records/Meetings Laws, **Passed Assembly but Not Senate!**
- **These issues will likely be in play in the 2017-19 State Budget battle.**



SB 615 As Amended (Voucher Funding)

- Reduces non-recurring exemption for incoming choice pupils to equal state aid deduction for voucher students beginning 2016-17.
- Collective reduction in cap authority across 142 districts - \$5.3 million.
- Previous proposals had reductions of \$22.7 million, then \$14.2 million.
- Senate/Assembly Compromise; SAA position remained current law throughout!
- Voucher funding shift from state tax dollars to local property taxes is complete!
- “Voucher expansion” and “property tax relief” on collision course . . . With public schools squarely in the middle!
- Message – “It’s ok to tax locally to pay for vouchers, but not for public school kids without going to referendum”!



Rehiring Retired Staff

- SAA members have been lamenting the impact of “double-dipping” law.
- I have been working on these issues heavily for the past few weeks.
- Clearly, ETF personnel have provided districts with inconsistent information.
- Interim and substitute teachers are not WRS eligible and may continue to receive annuity payments and collect wages.
- Not all retirees need a 75-day break in service to return to work.
- We are working to produce a video that definitively addresses all of these issues.



The Rationale For The Journey

The SAA fundamentally changed its approach to advocacy. Why?

- **Diminishing numbers/influence of pro-public education legislators**
- **In the current environment, voucher advocates are the 800lb. gorilla of education politics**
- **We cannot compete by playing defense against an anti-public education foe bankrolled by out of state billionaires**
- **Increasingly, education policy is developed based on ideology, not evidence**
- **We must change the conversation to focus on issues that matter for kids, and expand our influence to achieve the preferred outcomes for children**



Beginning The Journey: What We Did

- **Developed the Evidence-Based Policy Agenda**
- **Communicated the Importance of that Agenda**
- **Local Advocacy Model**



Evidence-Based Policy Agenda - Process

- **SAA Policy Research & Development Team**
- **Partnership with Wisconsin Center for Education Research**
- **Policy Framework – Michael Fullan: Right drivers for whole system education reform**
- **Sought Input from SAA membership**
- **SAA Legislative Committee adopts legislative agenda
October 2014**



Evidence-Based Policy Agenda

- **Students Ready to Learn**
- **Supporting Excellence in Teaching & Leading**
- **Innovation**
- **Finance & Stewardship**
- **Climate & Culture**
- **Standards, Assessment and Accountability**



Students Ready to Learn – Children's Mental Health

➤ *Evidence Demonstrates:*

- Too many WI children have unmet mental health needs leading to negative consequences for those children, their families and their communities

➤ *SAA Recommendations:*

- Adopt a School-Linked Mental Health Grant Program modeled after Minnesota to provide grant funds for start-up, services for uninsured kids, agency coordination



Supporting Excellence in Teaching & Leading – Educator Preparation

➤ *Evidence Demonstrates:*

- There is a conflict between two key factors
- While more rigorous, selective educator prep = improved student outcomes
- Current incentives do not entice “best & brightest” to enter, remain in education

➤ *SAA Recommendations:*

- Commission to focus on recruitment/retention & educator training programs



Finance & Stewardship

➤ *Evidence Demonstrates:*

- High spending does not necessarily correlate to high achievement
- However, you can't pretend that adequate funding doesn't matter either
- WI ranking in per pupil spending – from 12th in 2003-04 to 21st in 2011-12
- Current state budget will drive Wisconsin below the national average in per pupil spending



Finance & Stewardship

➤ *SAA Recommendations:*

- Perfect School Finance System Is “Elusive” . . . No “Magic Bullet”
- Index School Revenue Limits to Inflation
- Support Fair Funding for Our Future
- Address Vincent vs. Voight – Funding for High Needs Students
- Increase Pupil Transportation Funding



Communicating The Agenda

- **The Launch of the SAA Agenda occurred on November 19, 2014**
- **This event served as the launching point for our efforts during the current legislative session**
 - **Editorial Board Visits, Briefings for Lawmakers & News Media**
 - **Wrap News Releases, Testimony, Letters in Evidence-Based Frame**



Local Advocacy Model

- **Advocating for the children we serve is an important part of our job**
- **SAA represents > 3,500 influential education/community leaders**
- **We need to engage SAA leaders in a systematic way – more efficient, effective use of resources**
- **Organize around the district administrative team and the leadership of the Superintendent**
- **Plan as a team to engage key constituents in your community**
- **Best Advocacy Strategy: Share, Learn Together, Encourage**



What Happened? Initial Results

- **Many indicators of our initial success**
 - We made a very bad state budget better for K12 education
 - More SAA members active in advocacy than ever before
 - Testimony at JFC budget hearings
 - Budget resolutions, letters, news media events
 - More support from major news media, chambers of commerce
 - Parent groups rising up around the state
 - Marquette Poll: 78% Oppose Cuts to Public Schools, 57% Schools Don't Get Enough Funding from State



A Changing Political Landscape?

- **GOP sustained significant damage on education budget, legislation**
- **Some GOP Lawmakers believe they went too far**
- **Marquette Poll: Walker, Legislature approval consistently around 40% or below in Wisconsin**
- **Many sense that the pendulum has begun to swing back**
- **When will that be reflected in the Capitol?**



Where Are We Now?

- **Continue Advocating for Evidence-Based Agenda**
 - “The objective is improving student achievement, closing achievement gaps”
 - “Where’s the evidence this will be good for kids?”
 - Democrats introduced bills from our agenda
 - Agenda is evolutionary . . . We just kicked off development of next agenda
- **Local Advocacy Model 2.0**
 - Skill building with Superintendents and team members
 - Developing tools for teams to use locally
 - All politics is local . . .
 - Engaging your Community = More Voices in Advocacy. Greater Influence on State Policy. More Support for Public Schools and Public School Children.



Imagine What's Possible

**Initial Results are Encouraging. We Have a Lot More Work to Do.
This is a Long-Term Strategy.**

- **Imagine What's Possible If We All . . .**
 - **Commit to influence the key constituencies in our communities.**
 - **Encourage our parent groups to engage in advocacy.**
 - **Build stronger relationships with our business community, news media and legislators.**

