



WELCOME

To WASDA's 59th Annual Educational Conference!

Welcome to the 2026 WASDA Annual Education Conference at the Osthoff Resort in beautiful Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin. As the educational landscape continues to evolve rapidly, this year's theme— *"Building What's Next: Designing the Future of Leading and Learning"*—reflects our shared commitment to growth and innovation. Thank you for being here; your engagement in these learning opportunities is vital as we continue to develop as leaders.

Our spring conference offers rich professional learning experiences, along with meaningful opportunities to celebrate our colleagues. In partnership with leaders from education, business, and law, participants will share insights on navigating systemic change, fostering a culture of innovation, designing spaces that prioritize student agency, and exploring tools that support technological fluency. Sessions will also highlight topics ranging from the effective integration of artificial intelligence in instruction to school finance. Together, these conversations will help ensure a transformative future of learning for every student.

Equally important, we take time throughout the conference to honor the work of our peers. We proudly recognize members for their years of service, celebrate retirements, and present special awards sponsored by WASDA.

Please join me in expressing appreciation to the WASDA Professional Development Committee for their thoughtful planning and coordination of this conference. We are also grateful for our business partners and conference sponsors, whose ongoing support strengthens our work throughout the year.

Thank you for joining us and for the leadership you bring to our organization.

Patrick Rau

WASDA President, 2025-2026

Superintendent – Peshtigo School District

WASDA 2026 ANNUAL EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

Building What's Next: Designing the Future of Leading and Learning

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22

12:00 p.m. Registration Open

1:00 – 2:00 p.m. Sectionals

1. Collective Bargaining in Interesting Times: Best Practices for School Districts Against the Backdrop of Act 10 Litigation – Palm Garden BC

Attorney Shana R. Lewis will review the historical impact of 2011 Wisconsin Acts 10 and 32 (Act 10) on Wisconsin public school districts' obligation to bargain with labor organizations representing the professional and support staff bargaining units; the concept of "meet and confer"; the status of collective bargaining in a post-Act 10 environment; the importance of Board Policies and Employee Handbooks; and the potential impact of Abbotsford Education Association v. Wis. Employment Relations Commission (WERC) if Act 10 is eliminated by the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

Presenter: Attorney Shana Lewis, Renning Lewis & Lacy, s.c.

**2. Meaningful and POSITIVE Community Engagement: Bringing Together the Whole System
Villa Gottfried A**

We know the importance of a meaningful relationship between a school district and the communities it serves—the vision and values of how students are educated need to be clear and aligned. What is your strategy for engaging the public in a meaningful and POSITIVE way? This session will introduce you to how three very different district's engaged their community in a thoughtful, creative and energizing process. Using a methodology called "Future Search," each of these districts brought their "whole system" together (over 100 people at one time!) to create a shared vision and specific priorities that helped to shape the district's direction for the next decade.

Presenters: Drew Howick, Howick Associates; Mike Slowinski, Supt, Kaukauna; Rebecca Toetz, Supt, DeForest; and Cale Bushman, Supt., Wausau

3. Boost Your General Fund Using Energy Data – Palm Garden D

Learn how 70+ WI School Districts have saved over \$20 Million in their General Funds using Energy Data. Strategies will be presented that include electricity bill reduction, re-allocation, and cost recovery, along with new utility program incentives.

Presenters: Steve Summers, Executive Director of Operations, Waunakee, and Jim Koeppe, President, DataWrangler by CLOCworks Inc.

4. Leading Where It Matters Most: Building a Culture of Mattering Through Instructional Supervision – Palm Garden A

In an era of increasing demands and educator burnout, the key to successful schools is a simple yet powerful truth: people need to feel that they matter. This session explores how superintendents can use instructional supervision and leadership development to create a culture of significance that boosts engagement, improves instruction, and enhances teacher retention. Participants will leave with practical strategies and ready-to-use tools to extend this work through their principals and leadership teams.

Presenters: Christine Scudella, PhD, Assistant Professor of Education, School of Education, Director of Graduate Educational Administration, Concordia University Wisconsin, and Dr. Nan Bunnaw, Asst. Superintendent for School Services, Appleton

5. Strategic, Data-Driven Facilities Planning – Palm Garden E

Learn how facility asset data can streamline building operations, enhance budget transparency for board and community members and support sustainability goals.

A panel including the DeForest Area School District, Edgerton School District and Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District will share three case studies of how these districts have applied a strategic and data-informed approach to their long-range facilities planning. Each case study will highlight how up-to-date and detailed data enables them to create prioritized long-range roadmaps that align with district strategic and financial goals. Proactive planning has helped them project capital and maintenance costs, assess real asset and system conditions and identify opportunities for operational and energy savings. Their approach to facilities planning supports good fiscal stewardship by making more informed decisions that align organizational goals and each district's unique financial constraints. These districts have also established a strategic partnership with McKinstry utilizing their engineering and sustainable facilities expertise to assist with the prioritization of needs and operationalizing their respective facility roadmaps.

Presenters: Roz Craney, Director of Safety & Operations, DeForest; Tad Wehner, Supt., Edgerton; and Chris Jones, Senior Account Executive, and Nick Laubusch, Director of Business, McKinstry

6. Communications Round Tables – Palm Garden F

WASDA and the Donovan Group are hosting open round table conversations for participants in the Communications Academy. However, all are welcome. Bring your communications-related questions or issues, and a member of the Donovan Group staff will be available to assist you.

Facilitated by Brian Nicol, Partner, Donovan Group

2:00 – 2:15 p.m. Break

1. ICE Immigration Enforcement: Best Practices From What We've Learned – Palm Garden BC

In an increasingly complex and rapidly shifting landscape of immigration enforcement, schools face difficult questions about how best to support students and families. This presentation will offer clear legal guidance on the lawful, practical steps districts can take to safeguard student rights while remaining compliant with federal and state requirements. Topics will include developing effective protocols, training staff, establishing centralized decision-making, applying FERPA protections, and understanding warrant requirements for campus access.

This presentation will also examine real-world scenarios and the ways in which enforcement actions—or even rumors of actions—can affect student attendance, safety, and mental health. The goal is to equip district leaders with the tools they need to maintain safe, welcoming learning environments, and to navigate periods of heightened fear and uncertainty with confidence, clarity, and compassion.

Presenter: Attorney Tess O'Brien-Heinzen, Renning Lewis & Lacy, s.c.

2. The Superintendent's Playbook to the Design of Learning Spaces - This is Your Time to Lead With Vision & Transformation – Villa Gottfried A

Superintendents today are balancing tight budgets, evolving instructional needs, facility pressures, and rising community expectations. You may only get one chance to oversee a building project that will create a legacy in your school community for decades. This session provides practical, evidence based-research strategies for improving the design of learning spaces that empower all learners, promotes well-being, and supports learning engagement. Attendees will explore approaches to the design of learning places that impact all learners as space becomes the third educator in the room.

Whether you're leading a large-scale referendum project or focusing on smaller, incremental upgrades that create meaningful impact within existing budgets, stretch district dollars, solutions for innovative learning spaces, and engage local partners to strengthen CTE and career pathways programs. We'll also examine how to navigate contingency funds in ways that promote equity across buildings, and how modest, visible improvements can build community trust and lay the groundwork for future initiatives. The session will be focused on sharing ideas, lessons learned, and practical tools to support both long-term facility planning and near-term space enhancements.

Key Takeaways:

- Research on learning environment design impacts on student and staff success
- The learning space is the third educator in the room
- Cost-saving strategies and grant opportunities to maximize district resources
- Approaches for small, high-impact upgrades that demonstrate immediate value
- Tools for navigating politics and community expectations around contingency use
- A peer network functioning as a “think tank” for superintendents leading referendum planning and/or smaller-scale learning-space improvements

Moderator: Dr. Deb Kerr, Supt., St. Francis

Brett Stousland, Supt., Gibraltar; Mary Pfeiffer, Educational Consultant, Nexus Solutions/Former Supt., Neenah; and Joe Monroe, Supt., Monroe

3. Financial Clarity for Educators: A Smarter Path to Retirement and Beyond – Palm Garden A

Educators dedicate their lives to shaping futures—yet planning for their own financial future can feel overwhelming. This session brings clarity and confidence through WRC’s proven four-step process for retirement success, designed to guide individuals from their first years in education all the way to retirement.

In just one hour, you’ll explore practical strategies that meet you where you are—whether you’re early in your career, mid-journey, or preparing to retire.

 What you’ll walk away with:

- A clear understanding of your pension and retirement options
- Smart strategies for tax, income, and insurance planning
- Insights into estate planning and living trusts that protect your legacy
- Creative approaches to home equity and long-term financial security
- Access to ongoing Financial Wellness Workshops—virtual or in-person—for your staff

With over 20 years of partnership across 100+ Wisconsin school districts, WRC has helped educators turn uncertainty into confidence. This session is ideal for leaders and staff alike—walk away with peace of mind, actionable tools, and a plan that works.

Presenters: Tom Krause, Wisconsin Retirement Council (WRC) and Steve Salerno, Supt., Mt. Horeb

4. Referendum Run-Down: Key Concept in Managing Bond Proceeds and Capital Project Payments Palm Garden D

A successful referendum is just the beginning. This session walks through the critical steps that follow voter approval and how to manage bond proceeds effectively from day one. We’ll cover the typical timeline from issuance through closing, what to expect when funds are received, and how to establish a streamlined structure for managing proceeds across accounts, projects, and payment schedules.

Superintendents will gain a practical understanding of how to simplify bond proceeds management, safeguard and invest funds appropriately, ensure liquidity for construction payments, and maintain transparency and accountability throughout the life of a capital project. We’ll explore the range of investment options available for bond proceeds, from short-term, cash equivalents to longer-term investments that align with construction timelines to optimize yield.

We’ll also highlight common pitfalls, including compliance and arbitrage considerations, and share best practices to help keep your district on track, audit-ready, and out of trouble. The goal is to equip district leaders with clarity, control, and confidence to manage referendum dollars responsibly and efficiently.

Presenters: John Major, American Deposit Management, and John Gendron, Supt., Westosha UHS

5. Net Positive Energy in Wisconsin K-12 Schools – Palm Garden E

Wisconsin school districts are exploring new ways to reduce operating costs and improve learning environments. One option gaining attention is Net Positive Energy (NPE) schools. These buildings produce more energy than they use, turning energy expenses into potential revenue.

This session will examine the practicality of NPE schools in Wisconsin, focusing on costs, benefits, and community impacts. We will discuss the advantages, such as long-term savings, healthier learning spaces, and unique educational opportunities. At the same time, we will address challenges such as upfront costs, the need for technical expertise, and additional barriers.

Attendees will learn about current adoption trends and hear from two Wisconsin districts that have successfully created NPE schools. These case studies will provide useful guidance on the current landscape and the factors influencing district decisions around advanced energy systems.

Presenters: Heather Feigum, Program Manager, Focus on Energy; Andrew Weiland, Business Manager, Oregon; and Brian Adesso, Director of Business Services, Menasha

6. Leadership Round Tables – Palm Garden F

This session will provide an opportunity for participants to engage with each other around specific topics of interest. These topics may include areas of focus within the conference program as well as those areas that have not been addressed. Topics of interest could include school finance and referendum planning, navigating artificial intelligence, board/superintendent relations, and pressing legal and policy issues to name a few. Join your colleagues to brainstorm, problem-solve, and share ideas and perspectives. This session will be facilitated by fellow WASDA members.

Facilitated by WASDA Board Members

3:15 – 3:30 p.m. Break

3:30 - 4:30 p.m. Sectionals

1. CTE in the Age of AI and Manufacturing Innovation – Villa Gottfried A

As AI, machine learning and automation evolve, the skills needed to succeed across industries are shifting, creating a growing gap between manufacturing workforce needs and readiness. The Pewaukee School District and the School District of Reedsburg are reimagining ways to teach CTE in their high schools by transforming traditional “shop” classes into innovation hubs. These programs integrate emerging technologies and prioritize soft skills such as creativity, collaboration and entrepreneurship. This session traces the journey from early ideas to the design of innovative programs and learning spaces. District leaders and architects will share how they led the process, offering key insights and lessons learned.

The presentation is a collaborative effort between Pewaukee School District, the School District of Reedsburg and EUA. It will feature an interactive retelling of each district’s transformation, highlighting key moments and lessons learned. Throughout the session, selected technologies will be demonstrated to help attendees better understand how emerging tools are shaping the world—and the careers—students are preparing for. Demonstrations may include 3D photography, virtual reality, 3D printing, laser cutting and robotic embroidery.

Presenters: Mike Cady, Supt., Pewaukee; Katie Mathews, High School Principal, Reedsburg; and Bob Morris, Teresa Wadzinski and Katie LaCourt, EUA

2. The Latest Guidance on First Amendment Compliance Across Multiple School District Sectors **Palm Garden A**

Free speech has been cited more and more as the basis for positions taken by students, staff, board members, parents and citizens. Can the First Amendment justify the presence of politics, religion or gender ideology in our schools? In this session, Attorney Lori Lubinsky will address free speech issues that you need to be familiar with, including expression of political beliefs, religious expression and gender-related issues in our schools.

Presenter: Attorney Lori Lubinsky, Axley LLP

3. How Big Things Get Done: Lessons for Successful School Construction and Capital Planning **Palm Garden D**

Why do some projects finish on time and on budget, while others stall, overspend, or underperform? Building on the bestselling book *How Big Things Get Done* by Bent Flyvbjerg and Dan Gardner, this session explores research-backed insights from 16,000 major projects—revealing the key factors that determine why capital building projects succeed or fail.

Superintendent Patrick Rau will share lessons from Peshtigo’s active school construction project, highlighting how the district strategically prioritized needs to maximize long-term value. From early planning through procurement and execution, attendees will gain practical tools to avoid common pitfalls and deliver modern learning environments—on time, within budget, and built for the future.

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand how the principles from *How Big Things Get Done* apply to public school facility projects, including capital improvement and renovation work.
2. Compare key procurement and project delivery options—such as design-bid-build, design-build, and construction management at risk—and learn when each is most effective.
3. Identify common risk factors that drive cost overruns or schedule delays and how to mitigate them through planning and partnership.

Presenters: Patrick Rau, Supt., Peshtigo, and Brian Ondyak, Vice President, Performance Services

4. From No to Yes: Rethinking Referendum Strategy After a Setback Panel – Palm Garden E

When a referendum fails, it can feel like the end of the road, but it doesn’t have to be. This panel brings together leaders from Mukwonago Area School District and Clinton Community School District to share how they turned a “no” into a “yes.” Learn practical strategies for rebuilding trust, refining messaging, and engaging stakeholders after a setback. Whether you’re planning your next referendum or recovering from a recent defeat, this session offers actionable insights to help you move forward with confidence.

Presenters: Joe Koch, Supt., Mukwonago; Jim Brewer, Ex. Dir., Wisconsin School Safety Coordinators Association/Former Supt., Clinton; and Shannon Metoxen, Vice President Milwaukee, JP Cullen

5. AI in Education: Leading With Ethics, Clarity, and Care – Palm Garden BC

Artificial intelligence has rapidly found its way into classrooms, offices, and district operations, often without clear expectations or shared understanding. In this session, Brooke Pisciotto from the Donovan Group will explore how school leaders can approach AI thoughtfully and ethically. Drawing on real district experiences, Brooke will share common pitfalls schools are encountering, particularly around privacy, overreliance, and misunderstanding how AI tools actually work. Participants will leave with practical tools to help guide staff and students, establish clear guardrails, and make sure student safety and data protection remain the top priority.

Presenter: Brooke Pisciotto, Director of Communication Strategy, and Brian Nicol, Partner, Donovan Group

6. Legislative Roundtable: *Under the Dome with Dee* – Palm Garden F

Join Dee Pettack, Executive Director of the School Administrators Alliance (SAA), for an interactive legislative roundtable focused on the issues shaping public education in Wisconsin.

This informal, open-forum session gives members the opportunity to ask questions about new state laws and regulations, gain practical advocacy tips, and hear insider insight on what the Legislature is likely to take up next session. Dee will share updates from the Capitol, highlight emerging policy trends, and discuss how school leaders can effectively engage with lawmakers and community stakeholders.

Whether you are looking for clarity on recent changes or guidance on how to elevate your district's voice, *Under the Dome with Dee* offers a chance to connect, learn, and prepare for what's ahead.

Facilitated by Dee Pettack, Executive Director, SAA

5:30 p.m. Reception – Grand Libelle Ballroom

Sponsored, in part, by Performance Services, Magma Math, PTMA Financial Solutions, Kraus-Anderson & Veregy

6:30 p.m. Recognition Banquet – Grand Libelle Ballroom

***Recognition of 15-, 20-, 25-, and 30-year Superintendents
Presentation of WASDA Outstanding Educator Award
Presentation of WASDA Distinguished Service Award
Presentation of WASDA Award of Special Recognition for Service to Wisconsin
Recognition of 2026 Retirees***

THURSDAY, APRIL 23

7:00 a.m. Networking Breakfast – **Grand Libelle Foyer**

Sponsored, in part, by Baird, Findorff, Vogel Bros. Building Co., Ampersand Public Advisors & Zimmerman Architectural Studios

8:00 a.m. General Session – **Grand Libelle ABC**

Welcome – Patrick Rau, WASDA President

Welcome to Elkhart Lake – Adam Englebreton, Supt., Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah

Conference Theme – Dr. Barb Sramek, Director of Professional Development & Member Services, WASDA

Presentation of WASDA Child Advocacy Awards

8:45 - 9:30 a.m. Building Adaptability: The New Leadership Imperative



Today's superintendents are leading in an era defined by constant, compounding change—declining enrollment, financial pressure, staffing instability, and increasing complexity from all directions. While traditional change management remains important, it is no longer sufficient on its own.

This keynote reframes the leadership challenge from managing change to building adaptability, including the capacity of individuals, teams, and organizations to function effectively in continuous change. Drawing on my practical experience as a superintendent and leadership developer, we will explore why the work feels harder than ever, how the environment itself has shifted, and what leaders can intentionally influence to strengthen adaptability.

Participants will leave with a clearer understanding of why adaptability has become a core leadership competency, increased confidence that they are not “broken,” and a renewed sense of agency about how to build the capacity their schools now require.

Presenter: Stephen Murley, Managing Partner, sfm consulting group, llc

9:30 – 9:45 a.m. Break - *Sponsored, in part, Kraemer Brothers, LLC*****

9:45 - 10:45 a.m. Sectionals

1. Designing With All Students in Mind: Create Learning Spaces Where Everyone Thrives ***Palm Garden E***

Designing K–12 environments that truly support all learners starts with clarity in district goals and philosophies, current and desired programming and services, and community needs. Equally important is the review and incorporation of burgeoning research that illustrates building/space features that impact student achievement and staff satisfaction in the workplace. By aligning these evidence-based features with the district's goals, philosophies, and identified needs, we can create spaces that enhance student learning, support staff professional development, and strengthen community offerings—often through small design adjustments that yield significant returns on investment.

During this session, join district leaders and Plunkett Raysich Architect's Education Studio Partner Nick Kent and Director of Education Strategy Dr. Melissa Thompson to learn more about how districts identify these foundational aspects of Designing with All Students in Mind, current research to inform design decisions, find ways to make a big impact on a low budget, and hear district case studies presented by those who have done the planning, and now implementation, to achieve learning spaces where everyone thrives in their districts.

Presenters: Joel Heesch, Supt., Mauston; Terry Slack, Supt., Wisconsin Dells; Dr. Nicole Marble, Chief Academic Officer, Wauwatosa; and Nick Kent, Partner + Education Studio Lead, and Dr. Melissa Thompson, Director of Education Strategy, Plunkett Raysich Architects (PRA)

2. Transforming Our Team Through Vulnerability, Transparency, and Authenticity **Villa Gottfried A**

This presentation will share valuable insights into the on-going leadership transformation of the Mukwonago School District as they partner with the Initiative One Team. They will discuss the importance of aligning their priorities and commitments with their purpose. They will further share how they needed to be bold in their decision making and not let things like pressure, personalities, politics, and pain take them off course and away from their purpose. They will share their experience in practicing vulnerability, transparency, and authenticity across all employee groups in order to be the best versions of themselves and realize their goals. Through this pragmatic transformation process, they are improving their communications, decision making, and accountability. If your organization is held back by unsaid things, if leaders are not practicing vulnerability, transparency, and authenticity, if lateral accountability is something you aspire to, we encourage you to attend our breakout session. We'll share how through this partnership we're maximizing strengths, staying true to our purpose, and making real life impact.

Presenters: Dr. Joe Koch, Supt., Mukwonago, and Dr. Phil Ertl and Dr. Dean Hess, InitiativeOne

3. A Practical Approach to School–Law Enforcement Partnerships in Wisconsin – Palm Garden D

Wisconsin school districts face a unique mix of challenges relative to school safety and their ability to provide a safe learning environment for students and the community in a cost-effective and impactful manner. Among other obstacles, Wisconsin schools must navigate increasingly strained budgets, declining enrollment numbers, and the increased prevalence of violent threats to school environments. Like other public schools, Wisconsin districts must also ensure protocols involving law enforcement comply with student rights and limit liability exposure. When public schools develop meaningful partnerships with local law enforcement agencies, many of these challenges can be minimized, if not reduced altogether. This presentation will provide attendees with a practical focus on how Muskego-Norway School District and the City of Muskego have created such a partnership for the betterment of both the district and greater community. Superintendent Irvine and Lieutenant Johannik will provide attendees with a case study of how the two entities have approached and fine-tuned their relationship over the years to extend well beyond a basic School Resource Officer program. Ryan Heiden will cap off the presentation by providing attendees with foundational legal principles school districts must be cognizant of when partnering with law enforcement, such as when an officer crosses the boundary from acting on behalf of the school to acting on behalf of their law enforcement agency.

Presenters: Ryan Heiden, Shareholder, von Briesen & Roper, s.c.; Todd Irvine, Supt., Muskego-Norway; and Lieutenant Steve Johannik, City of Muskego Police Department

4. Planning with Purpose: North Lakeland's Success Story – Villa Gottfried B

What if your district could build a comprehensive five-year Strategic Plan in just four months—and turn that momentum into a successful referendum backed by broad community support? That's exactly what the North Lakeland School District accomplished, and this session shows you how. North Lakeland's strategic planning process became the foundation for a \$5.7 million referendum win in April 2024. This presentation goes beyond the story—it gives you a proven playbook. You'll learn how a focused, stakeholder-driven process can accelerate district progress, strengthen alignment, and build the trust essential for future initiatives. North Lakeland's leadership team and Nexus Educational Consultants will share the real-world steps, challenges, and strategies that shaped a clear, community-driven plan—from engagement methods to messaging tactics to setting expectations that stick.

Presenters: Brent Jelinski, Supt., North Lakeland, and Roger Rindo, Educational Consultant, Nexus Solutions

5. Coaching Principals and Nurturing Professional Learning: A Catalyst for Transformational Change – Palm Garden A

Leading complex, transformational change requires building principals to create, nurture, and sustain a multi-layered, high-quality system of professional learning in their school contexts. Becoming a true catalyst for change can be achieved through the purposeful use of a growth-mindset rubric focused on the key foundational elements of professional learning- rigorous desired outcomes, meaningful feedback, allocating aligned resources, and the collection and analysis of multiple sources of student and professional educator evidence. Additionally, the professional learning rubric concentrates on establishing organizational structures to support professional inquiry and learning throughout all settings and within the school day. The professional learning rubric is intended to be used as a self-reflection tool for principals to guide and inform their school improvement work, as well as a focal point for evaluators as they engage in coaching conversations with the principals they evaluate. This session will provide participants with the opportunity to become familiar with the leading professional learning rubric, engage in collaborative conversations about coaching principals in order to support their school improvement work, and discuss various leadership scenarios.

Presenter: Lisa Elliott, Supt., Greenfield

6. Legislative Round Table: *Under the Dome with Dee* – Palm Garden F

Join Dee Pettack, Executive Director of the School Administrators Alliance (SAA), for an interactive legislative roundtable focused on the issues shaping public education in Wisconsin.

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Whether you are looking for clarity on recent changes or guidance on how to elevate your district's voice, *Under the Dome with Dee* offers a chance to connect, learn, and prepare for what's ahead.

Facilitated by Dee Pettack, Executive Director, SAA

10:45 – 11:00 a.m.

Break – *Sponsored, in part, Kraemer Brothers, LLC*

1. Community Connections: Maximizing Taxpayer Return on Investment by Positioning Schools as the Heart of Community Engagement – Palm Garden A

School administrators are stewards of significant public investment, yet return on investment (ROI) is often measured by test scores, graduation rates, or short-term cost efficiency. This perspective overlooks how schools function as public assets. This session reframes ROI by positioning schools as the heart of community engagement—shared resources that drive trust, participation, and value for taxpayers, students, and communities.

Using the Necedah Area School District’s Community Connections Profile, this presentation demonstrates how intentional leadership in partnerships, outreach, communication, and service expands the impact of existing facilities, programs, and people—without increasing costs. Administrators will explore how strategic community engagement increases utilization of school resources, strengthens public trust, and reinforces schools as an essential element of the larger community.

Concrete examples include community-led initiatives such as the Necedah Outdoor Adventure Club (NOAC), where collaboration between schools and community members resulted in shared recreational assets including a disc golf course, beach area, skating rink, and additional outdoor spaces used by residents of all ages. Additional examples highlight adult outreach classes held in school buildings, open facility-use and fitness room access, senior citizen lunches hosted twice monthly, and community-wide events such as the Back to School Community Celebration, Career on Wheels, Reality Fair, and an Annual Necedah Craft and Vendor Show.

The session also examines how required student volunteerism and community service as a graduation requirement has strengthened civic responsibility while meeting local needs, and how visible connections—such as Legacy, Alumni, and Veteran Walls, along with veteran recognition events—build pride, ownership, and sustained community connection to schools.

Administrators will leave with a practical framework and concrete examples for maximizing public value, strengthening school–community relationships, and leveraging existing resources to increase return on investment for the communities they serve.

Presenter: Tanya Kotlowski, Supt., Necedah

2. The Positive Impact and Potential Pitfalls of AI in the Public Schools – Palm Garden E

AI is ubiquitous and its footprints are everywhere. This is almost a cultural universal, but it is unquestionably the case in our public schools. School administrators often find themselves challenged by the need to martial AI effectively while, at the same time, having to rein in its influence on academic integrity, and public school governance.

This course will survey the impact of artificial intelligence on education issues, school board policy and district management, public records requests, individual board member communications, employee and citizen complaints, and much more.

Join Attorney Kirk Strang as we step into the brave new world of AI from an education lawyer’s perspective.

Presenter: Attorney Kirk Strang, Strang Law LLC

3. From Insight to Action: Strengthening Personal and Team Adaptability – Palm Garden D

Building on the keynote, this interactive breakout moves from concept to application. Participants will examine their own patterns when navigating change, reflect on how their leadership teams typically experience change, and identify small, realistic experiments they can try to strengthen adaptability in their organizations.

Rather than focusing on programs or prescriptions, this session emphasizes practical reflection, dialogue, and intentional first steps. Participants will leave with increased self-awareness, a clearer picture of their team's adaptability strengths and constraints, and a personal commitment to one small action they can take in the next 30–60 days.

Presenter: Stephen Murley, Managing Partner, sfm consulting group, llc

4. Becoming Who We Say We Want to Become – Villa Gottfried B

Through our work with dozens of school districts across Wisconsin over the past decade, it has become clear that most districts are pursuing remarkably similar core priorities—curricular clarity, strong systems of assessment and intervention, and the effective use of data to inform practice. Yet, despite these shared initiatives, student outcomes vary dramatically from district to district.

This session will explore how the Oostburg School District has focused on building system-wide fidelity to who we say we want to become as an organization, and how that intentional approach has resulted in consistently high levels of student growth and achievement, exceptionally low staff turnover, and strong community support.

Presenter: Kevin Bruggink, Supt., Oostburg

5. Mastering the Art of School Finance Storytelling – Villa Gottfried A

Communicating the complexities of school finance and budgets to the public is crucial for building trust and securing support. This session will explore the importance of crafting and sharing your district's financial story in ways that resonate with diverse stakeholders. Learn practical tips and strategies for effective messaging, leveraging multiple communication channels and engaging your community consistently and authentically. Discover how to collaborate with key district staff to create a unified, impactful message. Empower your school district with communication tools that turn data into a compelling narrative, ensuring transparency and fostering stronger connections with your community.

Presenters: Debbie Brewster, Executive Director, WSPRA, and Emily DeBaker, Chief of Staff, Racine/WSPRA President

6. Communications Round Tables – Palm Garden F

WASDA and the Donovan Group are hosting open roundtable conversations for participants in the Communications Academy. However, all are welcome. Bring your communications-related questions or issues, and a member of the Donovan Group staff will be available to assist you.

Facilitated by Brian Nicol, Partner, Donovan Group

12:00 – 1:15 p.m. Lunch – **Grand Libelle ABC**

Sponsored, in part, by CG Schmidt, Inc. & SchoolAI

President's State of the Association Speech – Patrick Rau, Supt., Peshtigo

2026-27 WASDA President-elect – Heidi Eliopolous, Supt., Altoona

Lunch Chair – 2025-26 WASDA President-elect – Shelly Severson, Supt., Black River Falls



*Patrick Rau, Supt., Peshtigo
WASDA President
2025-2026*



*Heidi Eliopolous, Supt., Altoona
WASDA President-elect
2026-2027*

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NEXUS SOLUTIONS

For co-sponsoring the Thursday Reception/Dinner (Platinum Level)

PERFORMANCE SERVICES

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WEA MEMBER BENEFITS

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BAIRD

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For co-sponsoring the Thursday Breakfast (Gold Level)

MAGMA MATH

For co-sponsoring the Wednesday Reception (Gold Level)

2026 Bert Grover Child Advocacy Award Presentations

Thursday Morning General Session at 8 a.m.

2026 BERT GROVER CHILD ADVOCACY RECIPIENT - INDIVIDUAL

JILL KLUBERTANZ

The Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators has a priority interest in advocating for the welfare of Wisconsin youth. One effort is to recognize either individuals or organizations who do this in an exceptional way. The WASDA Child Advocacy Committee has selected Jill Klubertanz as the 2026 Bert Grover Child Advocacy Award – Individual recipient.

Jill came to Highland Schools in the Fall of 2013 looking for some volunteer opportunities. She had recently retired from law enforcement in Madison, WI and wanted to give back in a way that would be most beneficial for the community that she recently moved to and now called home. Jill didn't have any requests but thought she would enjoy working in the special education department. Highland Elementary had other plans for Jill and 12 years later, she is still such a blessing for their youngest learners.

Over the past 12 years, Ms. Jill has been an invaluable partner to the small, rural Highland School District, supporting students and staff in ways that have had a truly district-wide impact. Her work has touched every student currently enrolled in the Highland schools, making her reach both broad and deeply personal.

Ms. Jill has consistently supported teacher preparation by helping prepare instructional materials, organizing projects, and assisting with after-school organization—allowing teachers to focus more fully on instruction and student learning. Beyond this, she has worked directly with students across grade levels, providing one-on-one support to some of our most academically and emotionally vulnerable learners. She has also worked with small groups during classroom centers and work time, reinforcing skills, building confidence, and ensuring students received the individualized attention they needed to succeed.

The outcomes of her work are evident in improved student engagement, increased academic confidence, and stronger relationships between students and adults in the school. Teachers and staff have benefited from her reliability, flexibility, and willingness to step in wherever support was needed, creating a more responsive and supportive learning environment overall.

Most notably, she has never accepted compensation for her work. In fact, she has frequently used her own personal funds to cover classroom “odds and ends” to ensure students and teachers had what they needed—year after year—without recognition or expectation of reimbursement.

Her 12 years of service represent a sustained, selfless commitment to our district and its children. The impact she has made on students, staff, and the broader school community is immeasurable, and her dedication exemplifies the very best of community partnership in education.

Her regular and consistent gift of time over so many years, however, is what sets Ms. Jill's service apart. Teachers knew they could always count on Ms. Jill. Ms. Jill served in numerous roles within the classroom, wore more hats than could be reasonably expected, and faced issues openly and honestly. The Highland educational community has been lucky to have Ms. Jill as an exceptional volunteer.

As part of the award, Jill will receive a \$1000 check to donate to the Highland Elementary School Fund. She will also receive an original piece of artwork created by Natalie Breiwa. The student artist will receive a \$300 check from WASDA. Jill will present the checks later during a Highland School District event.

2026 Bert Grover Child Advocacy Award Presentations

Thursday Morning General Session at 8 a.m.

2026 BERT GROVER CHILD ADVOCACY RECIPIENT - BUSINESS

AFTON APPLE

The Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators has a priority interest in advocating for the welfare of Wisconsin youth. One effort is to recognize either individuals or organizations who do this in an exceptional way. The WASDA Child Advocacy Committee has selected Afton Apple as the 2026 Bert Grover Child Advocacy Award - Business recipient.

Afton Apple has been more than a local business; they have been a cornerstone of the Prescott School District, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to the well-being and academic success of our 1,200 students. Afton Apple's impact is visible in every corner of our district, from the physical safety of our facilities to the innovative nature of our curriculum. Their advocacy is best highlighted through several key pillars of support:

- **Enhancing Learning Environments:** Between 2018 and 2020, Afton Apple was instrumental in implementing flexible seating across all Malone Elementary classrooms. These allow our K-3 teachers to use multiple learning spaces at the same time to engage students in different learning tasks.
- **In 2025, they funded vertical whiteboards to support Building Thinking Classroom (BTC) initiatives,** directly fostering collaborative and active learning spaces for our students including donating funds for vertical whiteboards.
- **Physical Wellness and Play:** Their generosity revamped the Malone Elementary playground (2021-2023), including the purchase of a web structure and a slide-obstacle course. These contributions ensure a safe and engaging recreational space for both our students and the broader community.
- **Literacy and Community Building:** In Spring 2024, a \$10,500 donation supported the One School, One Book program at our elementary schools. They continued this in 2025 by providing books for every student and teacher at Malone. These programs do more than teach reading; they build community through shared experiences, guest speakers, and direct workshops with authors.
- **Holistic Support:** From providing fresh apples at back-to-school events to funding musical instruments, art supplies, outdoor sun shades, and "Kindness" speakers, Afton Apple ensures our students have a well-rounded, supported educational experience.
- **Volunteer Support:** Sarah Parkos (owner) and her family are at many school district events volunteering, cheering, and supporting all families.

Afton Apple's dedication is not a series of one-time gestures but a sustained partnership. They are already collaborating on future literacy programs and kindness events for the 2026-2027 school year.

Afton Apple donated \$15,000 to support the Prescott Cardinal students February of 2026, which brings the total to approximately \$92,000 over nine years. As their 250-acre orchard continues to grow, so does their support of the Prescott School District as well as districts through their educational agricultural tours.

Their decade-long legacy of giving has fundamentally improved the educational landscape in Prescott.

As recognition for the support to Afton Apple and the Prescott community, Sarah Parkos, Family Business Owner, will receive a plaque to display at Afton Apple.

WASDA also wishes to thank the Child Advocacy Committee for their dedication and work in selecting this year's recipients: Chair Greg Doverspike, Mosinee; Vice Chair Mark Gruen, Johnson Creek; David Bell, River Falls; Dan Grady, Marshall; Joe Koch, Mukwonago; Kurt Krizan, Shawano; Demond Means, Wauwatosa; Ryan Peterson, Manawa; Dani Scott, Pocatonia; Todd Timm, Hortonville; & Peter Wilson, Lake Geneva

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WEA Member Benefits (*Platinum Sponsor - Thursday Reception*)
Wisconsin eSchool Network Inc.
WI Reading Corps
Wisconsin Retirement Council
Zimmerman Architectural Studios (*Bronze Sponsor - Thursday Breakfast*)

1:15 – 1:30 p.m. Break - *Sponsored, in part, by Kraemer Brothers, LLC*

1:30 – 2:30 p.m. Sectionals

1. Understanding Parental Rights in the Wake of *Mahmoud v. Taylor*- *Villa Gottfried B*

Last summer, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a decision that granted parents the right to opt out of certain LGBTQ+ curriculum due to the parents' religious beliefs and their right to direct the upbringing of their children. This presentation will discuss the scope and applicability of the *Mahmoud* decision in Wisconsin school districts. Since that decision, parents have begun contacting schools to opt their children out of a variety of activities, including some that might not even be present in their schools. Schools have received opt-out requests for LGBTQ+ instruction and events, use of preferred pronouns, sex education, race instruction, religious practices including yoga, and more. This presentation will combine timely legal information with practical strategies to help District Administrators navigate these requests.

Presenter: Attorney Brian P. Goodman, Boardman Clark

**2. District Innovations in Online Learning: Expanding Access Through Local Program Design
*Palm Garden D***

Wisconsin eSchool Network, in partnership with three member districts Kiel, Appleton, and Kimberly, will showcase innovative instructional models that expand student access, improve program sustainability, and support superintendent-level decision-making in evolving educational environments. This session highlights the *Innovation* and *Instruction* strands through real examples of how districts are using shared online learning frameworks to serve students in flexible, efficient, and community-responsive ways. Participants will hear a brief, district-led spotlight from each member, and then will allow for back-and-forth Q&A with a panel discussion:

Kiel will share how its multi-district consortium structure enables smaller districts to leverage shared staffing, unified processes, and collective access to courses. This model demonstrates innovation in regional collaboration, addressing enrollment variability while maintaining high-quality instruction and personalized support.

Appleton will highlight its long-standing online summer school program, which has evolved into one of the most robust offerings in the state. They will share instructional strategies to ensure student success during short-term online learning windows, along with insights into program design, curriculum selection, and community engagement that sustain high participation and completion rates.

Kimberly will showcase how a district can intentionally grow an online program over time by adding targeted offerings that meet its community's needs. Their model features innovative instructional design, specialized course pathways, and strong alignment to district vision, demonstrating that innovation can be both scalable and contextualized.

Presenters: Jennifer Owen, BTLVA/eSchool Program Manager, Kiel eSchool & Between the Lakes Virtual Academy; Erik Hanson, eSchool Dean of Digital Learning, Appleton eSchool; and Eric Brinkmann, Online Program Coordinator; Steve Schuererell, Online Program Leader; and John Schultz, Director of Learning, Kimberly

Lead Facilitators: Sami Mantyla and Melissa Schiek, Wisconsin eSchool Network

3. Consistency & Confidence: How Early Planning Drives Referendum Success – Palm Garden E

Build your teams for a marathon, not a sprint. Two Wisconsin school districts share their distinct yet equally strategic paths to navigate complex referendum processes and deliver transformative facility improvements.

Stoughton Area School District serves 2,757 students in Dane County, and the School District of Jefferson serves 1,700 students in Jefferson County. While both districts faced similar challenges — declining enrollment, aging infrastructure, and leadership transitions — their unique tactics underscore a shared truth: early coordination and stakeholder alignment are critical to maximizing referendum dollars.

Hear from the districts' superintendents on how they leveraged internal teams and external partners, including Construction Manager, Findorff, to continue building momentum after referendum success, delivering projects on time and on budget. Lessons learned include how each district navigated community and staff engagement and feedback, prioritized honest and consistent communication, and celebrated key milestones throughout the years-long process.

Presenters: Aaron Zutz, Director of Project Management, Findorff; Teresa Wadzinski, Studio Director & Principal, EUA; Dr. Charles Urness, Supt., Jefferson; and Dr. Daniel Keyser, Supt., Stoughton

4. Leading Through the Noise: Vision, Trust, and Civic Leadership in Turbulent Times Palm Garden A

Today's superintendents are leading amid unprecedented levels of information, emotion, and public scrutiny, much of which can distract from the core work of teaching and learning. In this session, participants will explore how effective leaders move *through* the noise by anchoring their work in shared values, communicating a clear and compelling vision, and building trust before conflict arises.

Drawing from national research, real-world superintendent experiences, and civic leadership frameworks, this session offers practical strategies for filtering what matters most, responding to community contention, and keeping students at the center, especially when pressures are high.

Participants will leave with:

- Tools to clarify and communicate vision in complex, polarized environments;
- A trust-based framework for strengthening relationships with boards, staff, families, and community members;
- Strategies for discerning when to proactively engage and when to respond without amplifying unnecessary conflict;
- Practical approaches for navigating difficult conversations while maintaining credibility, integrity, and focus.

Presenter: Laurie Burgos, Supt., Shorewood

5. Building Financial Resilience: Strategies for Addressing a Deficit Budget – Villa Gottfried A

Facing tight budgets or the aftermath of a failed operational referendum can feel daunting—but it also presents an opportunity to strengthen your district’s financial foundation. In this interactive session, we’ll explore practical strategies to restore financial health through thoughtful cost management and creative revenue solutions. Leave with actionable ideas and renewed confidence in your ability to navigate fiscal challenges and plan for long-term sustainability.

Presenters: Tony Spence, Supt., Waterford, and Kevin Mullen and Mary Blaha, Baird

6. Navigating the Unplanned Exit and Restoring Your Reputation – Palm Garden F

The superintendency is a high-stakes role where political shifts can abruptly change a career trajectory. This confidential affinity space offers an opportunity for leaders who have or are currently navigating an exit from a district. Away from the public eye and local politics, this space provides an environment to process the complexities of an unplanned departure and garner support from colleagues who have found themselves in these circumstances.

2:30 – 2:45 p.m. Break – *Sponsored, in part, by Kraemer Brothers, LLC*

2:45 - 3:45 p.m. Sectionals

1. The Public Records Law: Modernizing Compliance with Statutory Obligations (Especially in the Case of Complex Records Requests) – Palm Garden A

Superintendents are often identified in board policy as the records custodian for purposes of school district compliance with the Public Records Law (“PRL”), and so are the first line of defense in ensuring district compliance with PRL obligations. In this session, Chrissy explores the obligations of records custodians in responding to PRL requests, providing a step-by-step process for response. Chrissy will take a deeper dive into how superintendents can maximize the tools provided by the PRL to streamline practices and importantly, minimize the impact to the business operations of the district in responding to the modern-day requests that tend to overwhelm records custodians and create the potential for litigation.

Presenter: Attorney Chrissy Hamiel, Attolles Law, s.c.

2. Building Leadership Capacity Within Your Organization: Establishing a Solid Policy Foundation Villa Gottfried B

Lack of policy awareness among leadership teams is rarely an issue—until it becomes one. This session emphasizes the superintendent’s role in strategically establishing and maintaining a strong district policy foundation. Discussion topics include fostering collaboration between the board and staff in policy development, rolling out new and revised policies, ensuring district-wide policy understanding, and promoting transparency and communication across the organization. When this is done well there is increased clarity in the organization and more time can be directed to enhancing outcomes and student learning experiences. In addition, a strong policy foundation not only creates clarity across the organization but also helps define and support the key roles of the board and the superintendent, ultimately building a strong and effective partnership between them.

Presenters: Michael McMahon, Supt., Port Washington-Saukville, and Richard Zimman, Neola

3. Beyond Act 20: Using Data to Support Wisconsin's Framework for Multi-Level Systems of Supports – Palm Garden D

Wisconsin school districts use multi-level systems of support (MTSS) to ensure every student receives effective instruction and intervention. A strategic approach to data is essential for driving student success. Pearson will host a panel discussion on how districts are leveraging data to strengthen their MTSS initiatives.

The purpose of this session is to highlight both the successes and challenges Wisconsin districts have experienced in implementing MTSS frameworks and leveraging related data. Our goal is to foster collaboration and share insights, recognizing that each district approaches the process differently based on the unique needs of its population. Pearson is proud to host a panel discussion designed to equip superintendents with fresh, practical ideas they can take back to their districts.

Key topics panelists will discuss:

- What a successful MTSS framework look like in daily practice
- How to ensure MTSS is not seen as “one more initiative,” but the organizing framework for instruction and support
- Key data relied upon most to make MTSS decisions
- How to build buy-in among teachers

Moderators: Sarah Kruse, Pearson District Partnerships and Alissa Hutton, Pearson Early Literacy Specialist

Presenters: Jill McDonald, Intervention Coordinator, and Mekenna Ellis, Director of Elementary Teaching and Learning, Elmbrook; Robin Gardner, Ed.S. District Data and Assessment Coordinator, Sun Prairie; and Carrie Willer, Ph.D., Director of Elementary (5K-5) Education Appleton

4. Planning for Budget and Levy Challenges and Opportunities in 2026-27 - Villa Gottfried A

This session will examine data and trends that preceded the 2025-27 Biennial Budget and provide insight on the impact of the Biennial Budget on district budgets in 2025-26 & 2026-27. We will recap the Spring 2026 Referendum results and provide context for statewide operational needs in the Fall of 2026 and 2027. We will also discuss operational planning for Districts in the current environment; the goal is to have an interactive session that engages participants through discussion pertaining to budget practices.

Presenters: Jordan Masnica and Marquez Guzman, Baird; and Mike Weaver, Supt., Fox Point-Bayside

5. Leveraging Technology – Palm Garden E

Three professional leadership associations, WASDA, WASBO, and AWSA have collaborated to offer a Leveraging Technology for Educational Excellence Academy during this school year. The Academy is designed to equip teams of Wisconsin school and district leaders with the knowledge, skills, and strategies needed to effectively and responsibly integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) into education. In this session, you will hear from Academy participants across several cohorts who will share their experiences and lessons learned, as well as how their engagement in the Academy has assisted each district in advancing the use of AI and how you can participate in future cohorts.

Ryan Krohn, Supt., Palmyra-Eagle; Mike Cady, Supt., Pewaukee; and Jeff Nelson, Supt., Grafton

6. Women in the Superintendency Affinity – Palm Garden F

Navigate the complexities of the superintendency alongside a community of women who understand the weight of the chair. This affinity space provides a confidential forum to discuss the myriad issues associated with district-level leadership. The discussion will explore the unique challenges women face in executive roles while sharing stories and strategies.

4:00 – 5:00 p.m. Large District Caucus – Grand Libelle D

4:00 – 5:00 p.m. WASDA Committee Meetings

Aspiring Superintendents Affinity Group – Grand Libelle F

5:30 p.m. Reception & Dinner – Grand Libelle ABC

Sponsored, in part, by Nexus Solutions, WEA Member Benefits and Miron Construction Co., Inc.

6:15 p.m. Buffet Dinner featuring Sweet and Tangy Barbecued Chicken, Grilled Bratwurst with Buns, Drenched in Beer, Onions and Sauerkraut, Grilled Hamburgers with Sheboygan Hard Rolls, Fresh Corn on the Cob with Parsley Butter, Rosemary-Roasted Yukon Gold Potatoes and much more!

7:00 p.m. Recognition of retiring WASDA Executive Director Jon Bales

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FRIDAY, APRIL 24

7:00 a.m. Networking Breakfast – Grand Libelle Ballroom ABC

Sponsored, in part, by EUA

7:30 a.m. Annual Business Meeting – Grand Libelle ABC

8:00 – 8:50 a.m. General Session – Grand Libelle ABC

Past, Present, Possible: Shaping the Future of Wisconsin Education



As we enter a new era for WASDA—building on Jon Bales’ strong legacy—we face both significant challenges and real opportunities in public education. This keynote invites us to:

- Honor our Past: Recognize the achievements and values that guide Wisconsin’s educational leaders.
- Celebrate our Present: Acknowledge the resilience and creativity of our school leaders amid today’s fiscal and policy realities.
- Prepare for our Future: Chart a path of adaptive leadership and collective action to ensure every Wisconsin student thrives.

Join Damian LaCroix, incoming WASDA Executive Director, for an inspiring call to move forward together - grounded in our history, united in the present, and bold about the future.

Incoming WASDA Executive Director, Damian LaCroix

8:50 a.m. Break - *Sponsored, in part, by EF Educational Tours*

9:00 – 10 a.m. DPI's Ongoing Role in Administering Legal Standards Applicable to School Districts

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction is instrumental in many aspects of the governance and administration of school districts in the state. One such role is the administration of statutes, regulations, and judicial decisions to the matters that are within its jurisdiction, all of which directly affect either individual districts or have state-wide applicability. This presentation will set forth the Department's current substantive and procedural interpretations of several of the fundamental areas with which it deals on a regular basis, including: investigations of allegations of immoral conduct by licensed educators; how districts and DPI handle pupil discrimination complaints; procedural and substantive requirements related to pupil expulsion appeals; and the varied challenges presented by special education issues. Attorney Mike Julka will facilitate this very informative presentation by DPI General Counsel Kyle Olsen, who will speak directly to the interests of both experienced and relatively new district administrators.

Kyle Olsen, General Counsel, DPI

Facilitated by Mike Julka

10:00 - 10:10 a.m. Break - *Sponsored, in part, by EF Educational Tours*

10:10 a.m. Legislative Crossroads: What Just Happened—and What Comes Next



Join Dee Pettack, Executive Director of the School Administrators Alliance (SAA), for a fast-paced and timely recap of the 2025–27 Wisconsin Legislative Session. This closing session will break down what passed, what failed, and which issues are likely to resurface as lawmakers shift their focus to the 2026 midterm elections.

Dee will also provide a preview of the political landscape ahead, where the Governor’s race is wide open, control of the Legislature is in play, and education policy is once again at the center of campaign debates. School leaders will leave with a clearer understanding of what these political shifts could mean for public education, school funding, and local decision-making as we navigate an increasingly complex and rapidly changing policy environment. Join Dee as she helps you connect the dots between the Capitol and your community and prepare for what’s next.

Dee Pettack, Executive Director, SAA

11:00 a.m. Conference Concludes

***A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING WASDA
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WASDA PRESIDENTS

1959-60	John Bjorge	Berlin
1960-61	Homer DeLong	Eau Claire
1961-62	Ken Rawson	Clintonville
1962-63	Charles Hub	Ripon
1963-64	Dale Davis	Kettle Moraine
1964-65	Charles Jones	Manitowoc
1965-66	Fred Holt	Janesville
1966-67	J. K. Hoyer	Whitehall
1967-68	R. G. Hein	Waukesha
1968-69	Elden Amundson	Plymouth
1969-70	Walter Ploetz	Cudahy
1970-71	Eric Becker	Beaver Dam
1971-72	Harvey Johnson	Ashland
1972-73	Ollie Berge	Sun Prairie
1973-74	William Paton	Oconomowoc
1974-75	Gerald Thompson	Waupun
1975-76	Robert J. Kreuser	Muskego
1976-77	James Munro	Monroe
1977-78	William Knapp	Greendale
1978-79	Orlyn Ziemann	Appleton
1979-80	Lyle Martens	Seymour
1980-81	Michael Malone	Port Edwards
1981-82	Elgie Noble	Poynette
1982-83	Fred Johnson	St. Croix Falls
1983-84	Wallace Lindholm	Glenwood City
1984-85	Mark Stone	Little Chute
1985-86	John Wigman	CESA #8
1986-87	Sam Castagna	West Allis
1987-88	Don Mrdjenovich	Janesville
1988-89	Robert Hubert	Mauston
1989-90	Robert Froehlich	Marinette
1990-91	James Coles	New Berlin
1991-92	Dennis Richards	Black River Falls
1992-93	Richard Swantz	La Crosse
1993-94	John Negley	Whitewater
1994-95	Terry Olson	Durand
1995-96	John Egan	Kohler
1996-97	Tim Gavigan	Columbus
1997-98	Dan Woll	St. Croix Central
1998-99	Linda Barrows	Oregon
1999-00	Thomas Joynt	Green Bay
2000-01	James Shaw	Menomonee Falls
2001-02	Jack Lewis	Brillion
2002-03	Gene Hamele	Waunakee
2003-04	Thomas Evert	Janesville
2004-05	Kathleen Martinsen	Rosholt

WASDA PRESIDENTS

2005-06	John Gaier	Neillsville
2006-07	Joseph Heinzelman	Oakfield
2007-08	Jon Bales	DeForest
2008-09	Kim Eparvier	Peshtigo
2009-10	Gregg Lundberg	Maple
2010-11	Mike Shimshak	Lodi
2010-11	Jamie Benson	River Valley
2011-12	Jamie Benson	River Valley
2012-13	Wayne Anderson	Mt. Horeb
2013-14	Dave Polashek	Oconto Falls
2014-15	Kristine Gilmore	D.C. Everest
2015-16	Deb Kerr	Brown Deer
2016-17	Todd Gray	Waukesha
2017-18	Barbara Sramek	Marshall
2018-19	Steven Bloom	Palmyra-Eagle
2019-20	Cindy Zahrte	Tomah
2020-21	Paul Schley	Cornell
2021-22	Larry Ouimette	Lac du Flambeau
2022-23	Nick Ouellette	Hudson
2023-24	John Thomsen	Whitefish Bay
2024-25	Michelle Jensen	Deerfield
2025-26	Patrick Rau	Peshtigo

UPCOMING WASDA EVENTS

WASDA Annual Legal Seminar

July 29-31

Stone Harbor Resort – Sturgeon Bay

WASDA Fall Superintendents Conference

September 23-25

Madison Concourse Hotel – Madison

2027 WASDA

Annual Educational Conference

April 21-23, 2027

Madison Concourse Hotel - Madison

Supporting Principal Excellence: Professional Growth Coaching for Leaders Academy

Presented By WASDA & AWSA

School administrators need skillful support from leaders of teaching and learning; leaders who believe in coaching as a vehicle for developing exemplary leadership. The Professional Growth Coaching for Leaders Academy, presented by WASDA and AWSA, will equip superintendents, central office leaders and others who directly support principals with the tools, strategies, and practices that enhance principal performance in leading schools that support student success. This highly interactive Academy will serve to increase participant capacity to support leader development and growth while expanding professional networks. As part of the experience, participants will explore several frameworks for principal leadership. The overarching goal of the Academy is to assist with the development of instructional leadership skills that deliver breakthrough results.

Knowledge Objectives:

1. Identify strategies to determine best practices in teaching and learning.
2. Understand how to use evidence of principal practice to identify next steps of leader improvement that foster a positive educational environment and support the diverse cultural and learning needs of students.
3. Learn a process for determining local academic priorities and problems of practice.
4. Understand how to identify a shared problem of practice and recognize strategies to impact change.

Practice Objectives:

1. Analyze coaching conversations and scenarios for effectiveness and intended impact.
2. Promote reflection on impact by engaging leaders in coaching simulations that use targeted questioning and conversation strategies.
3. Engage in a relationship with a principal for the purpose of practicing and analyzing coaching skill.
4. Facilitate coaching conversations that ensure equity and excellence in schools.

Academy Dates

Each workshop will be held at the [Wisconsin School Leadership Center](#) in Madison. Workshops will begin with registration and breakfast at 7:30 am and conclude by 3:00 pm.

- Thursday, October 15, 2026
- Monday, November 16, 2026
- Thursday, January 14, 2027
- Thursday, March 4, 2027

The sessions are intended to build upon each other and therefore you are to attend all four sessions.

REGISTER AT WWW.WASDA.ORG!

Wisconsin Superintendent of the Year Information

About the Superintendent of the Year Award

Since its inception thirty years ago, the Superintendent of the Year program has become widely acknowledged as the most prestigious honor a school system leader can attain. Applicants are measured against criteria such as successfully meeting the needs of students; personal and organizational communication; professionalism; participation in local community activities; and an understanding of regional, national, and international issues. This award pays tribute to the talent and vision of the men and women who lead our nation's public schools.

Eligibility

Any superintendent, chancellor or top leader of a school system in Wisconsin who plans to continue in the profession may be nominated. This program is designed to recognize the outstanding leadership of active, front-line superintendents. It is not recognition of service at retirement or a program to reward current state or national leaders.

Selection Criteria

Each candidate is judged on the following criteria:

- Leadership for Learning – creativity in successfully meeting the needs of students in his or her school system.
- Communication – strength in both personal and organizational communication.
- Professionalism – constant improvement of administrative knowledge and skills, while providing professional development opportunities and motivation to others on the education team.
- Community Involvement – active participation in local community activities and an understanding of regional, national, and international issues.

Nomination/Application Procedure

- The nominator must include a letter of nomination with the application submitted online at <https://www.aasa.org>.
- AASA notifies the candidate of the nomination and provides instructions for submitting the application.
- Completed nominations must be received online at AASA by **August 1**.
- Candidates submit the application online through the AASA website, <https://www.aasa.org>.
- The deadline for completed applications for the Wisconsin Superintendent of the Year is **September 1**.
- The Wisconsin Superintendent of the Year will be chosen by the WASDA Board of Directors based on [Board approved considerations](#) and submitted to AASA by **November 1**.

National Superintendent of the Year Selection Process

To be eligible for National Superintendent of the Year, an applicant must first be selected as a State Superintendent of the Year by the state association of school administrators.

Wisconsin Superintendent of the Year

The Wisconsin Superintendent of the Year will be honored at the AASA National Conference on Education along with the winners from all other states. The Wisconsin Superintendent of the Year is recognized and honored by WASDA at the State Education Convention in Milwaukee.