Welcome to WASDA’s December edition of our online Newsletter! Happy Holidays to all of our members!

Complete details about all of WASDA’s events for the remainder of the year can be found on our website at www.wasda.org. If you experience any difficulty with the website, please contact Jessica directly at jschwedrsky@wasda.org.

We are always looking for new ways to serve our members. If we can ever be of service to you, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are here to serve you!

From all of us at the WASDA office, we wish you all Happy Holidays!

Jon, Barb, Nancy & Jessica

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Gov. Tony Evers
(Invited)

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January 20-22, 2021 | Virtual

All sessions recorded and available thru 2021.
Registration open Nov. 1. Group rebates available.
Visit wasb.org/convention for details.
Dear WASDA Friends and Colleagues,

Welcome to December! While most years I'm disappointed that another year is coming to an end, this year I can't wait for it to be over! If only we could fast-forward time to take us beyond this pandemic and getting back to our usual routines. However, I have become proficient at being a contact tracer, and many of our students could probably pass a state test on COVID-19 isolation and quarantine guidelines!

While many of us have struggled through this year, please take some time to consider the impact it has had on our youth. We need to do as much as we can to give them as much normalcy as possible as their worlds are turned upside down. When I was filling in as a substitute teacher a couple weeks ago in the middle school and high school, I asked each group if they wanted me to shut down school. Most years this is a resounding YES for snow days, extended vacations, or just about any reason you can imagine to close school down. This year every group told me NO.

As we talked more, so many of the students explained how they rarely got to see their friends from March until August when we started school and how last spring they didn't learn as much or as easily working on-line. They wanted to remain in school so they could learn more and while socializing isn't the same, they are still able to do it at school, albeit it differently than before. I really took this to heart as I tried to envision my school days without my friends. These are friends I still have today and it was such a great experience to go through school together.

This year many districts aren't having Christmas programs or concerts. Some athletic teams are practicing, but many events have already been cancelled. Most aren't allowing gifts or homemade treats for the students or among the staff if school is even being held this month. It just doesn't feel like Christmas, which saddens me considerably.

It made me think of the song Christmas is for Kids sung by Kenny Rogers that I've heard so many times over the years. Kids are the ones that are really missing out. Kids are the ones that won't ever get the chance to create some of the same memories we have. Kids have nearly lost a year of "life" as most of us have known it in the past. I know every community is different, and the COVID-19 spread is different in every community as well. I think most of us want to have school in person, but some of us just don't have the staff available to keep the doors open. However, please try to do something meaningful and/or creative for the kids this year. Maybe it's something dropped off or delivered to their homes, or a video or message made special for them by their teacher. Whatever it is, I know every district can think of something that will help the kids, and likely us in the process, feel something special about this Christmas to make up for all the other things that just can't be the same.

As leaders of our districts, it's upon us to make our staff and students feel the warmth and excitement of Christmas this year. We need to build morale and positive feelings through this season as we won't be able to be celebrate it the same as usual. We can, and should, give/do something extra to make Christmas 2020 memorable in a positive way.

I wish you a month of positive memories and time with your families if possible. Let's make this month as special and memorable as we can to take peoples' minds off of the difficult year we have had.

Together in Education,
Dr. Paul M. Schley, Superintendent, Cornell School District, pmschley@cornell.k12.wi.us
“Stay Focused on Your Principles and the Path”

Please click on the link below to hear a message from Jon.

CLICK HERE.

Please send your comments and questions to Jon - jbales@wasda.org.

MOVING YOUR BOARD FROM GOOD TO GREAT OR "IF NOT NOW, WHEN?"

School boards are experiencing many new challenges this school year: Discussing and making decisions on situations they have never faced before, an increase in the number of community members who want to share their opinions, and dealing with the "pressure" from citizens that have different and often opposite perspectives. The 2020-21 school year will continue to be one of the more challenging years board members have had in a long time and it is imperative that your board be at the "top of their game" so as to effectively lead your district. In response to these situations, we would re-emphasize the importance of boards being ALIGNED (Focus, Align, Commit), including How they do their work. It is important that this alignment be in place before these situations arise, as being prepared increased the likelihood of an effective and proper response. WASDA partners with Drew Howick in providing guidance and direct service in support of your efforts to develop your boards effective and productive alignment in their operations. This brief video provides an overview. Feel free to contact the WASDA office or Drew directly if you would like to discuss in more detail.
The Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators has named Mark Gruen as the 2021 Wisconsin Superintendent of the Year.

Since 2010, Gruen has led the Royall School District, a rural southwest Wisconsin district made up of the communities of Elroy and Kendall. At one time, there was a third community, Wilton, that also had children attending Royall.

Like most rural districts, Royall has experienced declining enrollment over the past several decades, culminating in the closure of an elementary school in Wilton and subsequent detachment of the Wilton community from the district. This put Royall into a financial freefall, leading to the closure of an elementary school in Kendall in 2011.

When Gruen became district administrator, Royall had approximately $200,000 in its fund balance. Gruen's team and the school board members at the time made the necessary cuts and tough decisions to get the district back on a strong financial path while maintaining and increasing academic programs. This work resulted in more than $8 million in improvements over the past seven years, while growing and maintaining a healthy fund balance of $1.4 million.

Gruen has led the district in applying for and receiving a number of grants totaling more than $3 million, including a $2.4 million Physical Education Program grant. He has also leveraged his relationship-building skills to secure approximately $1 million in donations, including $360,000 to upgrade Royall's outdoor athletic facilities and $50,000 to create the Royall Fitness Center. These community partnerships have also resulted in 12 new scholarships.

Over the past six years, Royall has doubled its Advanced Placement course offerings, added dual credit English for seniors through UW-Platteville and provided eight transcripted credit classes through Western Technical College. The district has also added a required servant leadership course and numerous opportunities through its membership in the Northern Wisconsin Educational Communication System of distance learning.

When Gruen started at Royall, the graduation rate was 78 percent; in the past six years, the district has graduated 100 percent of students who attend Royall for all four years of high school.

Gruen has also formed a committee composed of parents, community members, teachers and students to create a new Royall Mission Statement: "Achieving Excellence, whatever it Takes". The committee studied and implemented strategies to reach students of poverty, followed by a commitment to develop strategies for identifying and reaching homeless students. Currently, the district is focused on student mental health and identifying early signs of mental illness among youth.

"Gruen has led Royall on a total transformation academically, fiscally, and structurally over the past 10 years," said Ryan McKittrick, a nine-year member of the Royall School Board. "We would not be where we are today without his relentless work ethic and deep commitment to our students' success."

Gruen is known for taking on all tasks big or small. In his first year at Royall, he filled ice cube trays and ice bags for the athletes before and after school. During the outdoor athletic field upgrade, he personally met the cement truck and led the cement crew on more than 25 occasions. When the new football stadium bleachers arrived, he was able to get 52 volunteers to show up on a hot July weekend to help assemble them.

As a Royall alumnus, Gruen has a true commitment to the Royall community. He helped start the Royall Alumni Association, which spawned the Royall Hall of Recognition. Gruen is the chair of the committee that recognizes Royall Alumni on an annual basis.

"I am incredibly humbled and honored to accept this award from WASDA on behalf of the entire Royall School District community," Gruen said. "The success we have had at Royall has been a team effort. We have sensational teaching and support staff helping our administrative and supervisory teams. Our parents and community members are very supportive of our schools. Together, we have led the district from a low point to a spot where we all feel very good about the quality of the Royall experience."

Continued, next page....
Gruen holds a specialist degree in Educational Leadership from Winona State University, a master's degree in Education from Viterbo College and a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from UW-La Crosse. Prior to his work at Royall, he served as district administrator and high school/middle school principal in the Eleva-Strum School District. He was also a principal in the Onalaska School District and activities director in the La Crosse School District.

"We are very pleased to recognize Mark Gruen with the Superintendent of the Year Award," said Jon Bales, executive director of WASDA. "When he began serving as district administrator in Royall, the district was in a tough situation-just like so many rural districts have been. Through his exceptional leadership, the district is now in a much better financial position and the community has truly rallied around its local schools. Mr. Gruen exemplifies how strong leadership can have an enormous and positive impact on a school district like Royall."

Since its inception more than 30 years ago, WASDA's Superintendent of the Year program has become widely acknowledged as the most prestigious honor a Wisconsin school system leader can attain. Applicants are measured on criteria that include 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.

Gruen will represent Wisconsin in the National Superintendent of the Year program at AASA's National Conference on Education in February 2021. He lives in Elroy with his wife, Sarah, and children Emma (18 years old), Bryce (17), Marah (15) and Bria (12) .
Wisconsin public school districts face unprecedented challenges and opportunities. The attorneys at Strang, Patteson, Renning, Lewis & Lacy, s.c., are dedicated to helping you meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities.
DEAN E. SANDERS

Dean E. Sanders, 62, Lake Mills, went to be with our Lord and Savior on Wednesday, November 11, 2020, at UW Hospital in Madison following a lingering health condition.

He was born on August 12, 1958, the son of the late Donald “Pinky” and Louise (Keck) Sanders. He was a 1976 graduate of Glenwood City High School and later earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Broad Field Social Studies from the UW–River Falls, a Master’s Degree in Guidance and Counseling from the UW–River Falls, a Master’s Degree in School Administration from the UW-Superior, and an Educational Specialist Degree as a Superintendent from the UW–Superior.

Dean married Lori Herbert on July 16, 1994. His greatest love, pride, and joy was his family, especially his children, Bret and Kara. His time spent with them fishing at his cabin, golfing, reading the Harry Potter series, cheering them on and supporting them at their sporting events and musical activities, and fiercely competing with them at card and board games were the highlights of his life. Dean also enjoyed John Wayne movies, knitting, his beloved Packer team, and rooting for the Badgers and Brewers. His friends were a treasured blessing in his life. Dean was a story teller and loved to tell stories about his family, friends and childhood growing up in Downing, WI. Dean “always tried to do the best for children.”

He enjoyed 34 years of Wisconsin public education service: Webb High School – Reedsburg (Social Studies Teacher), Juda Public Schools (Guidance Counselor), Spencer Public Schools (Guidance Counselor/Athletic Director/High School Principal), Osseo-Fairchild Schools (Athletic Director/High School Principal), Amery Public Schools (High School Principal), Glenwood City Schools (School District Administrator), and Lake Mills Public Schools (School District Administrator for the last 12 years of his career). After retirement, Dean enjoyed one year of service as School District Administrator at Auburndale School District. During home high school games, you could always find Dean standing by the gymnasium door the entire game so he could chat with people coming and going. Major accomplishments of Dean’s career were the new facilities he was instrumental in providing the children of Lake Mills: auditorium, tennis courts, and the world-class middle and elementary schools.

Dean has served on committees for the Department of Public Instruction and Wisconsin Association of District Administrators. He served as the chairperson for the Bert Grover Advocacy Committee for eight years for WASDA. He greatly enjoyed serving on the WIAA Advisory Counsel for 12 years, being elected President in 2000, and serving for eight years on the WIAA Board of Control, being elected President in 2014. Dean also was involved in the startup of JEDI Virtual School and the building of Rainbow Hospice Care. After retirement Dean served on the CCLS Board of Directors (Creative Community Living Services), was a commissioner on the Lake Mills Police and Fire Commission (PFC), and enjoyed running the WIAA State Golf, Tennis, and Diving tournaments.

The community of Lake Mills was beloved by Dean. He was a member of Trinity Lutheran Church and very active in Lake Mills Rotary Club. Saturday mornings when he was not at his own kids’ activities, you often found him at the Rotary Park concession stand along with one of his children tending to the donut making. Survivors include his wife, Lori; two children, Bret Sanders, Kara Sanders; one brother, Jeff (Diana) Sanders; one sister, Sandy (Troy) Sanders-Cress; nieces; nephews; other relatives and friends. Due to the current pandemic, a Private Family Memorial service will be held. If desired, memorials would be appreciated to the Lake Mills Rotary Club or to Trinity Lutheran Church – Lake Mills. www.claussenfuneralhome.com
AWSA and WASDA are happy to be hosting the Eleventh annual SLATE Convention VIRTUALLY December 7-9, 2020. SLATE is a comprehensive educational technology convention designed to meet the needs of all schools and districts. This convention is designed for a wide variety of educators including Teachers, Principals, Associate Principals, District Administrators, Library Media Specialists, IT Coordinators, Directors of Curriculum and Instruction and other school leaders. Educators of all backgrounds and expertise levels gather to learn about the newest in education technology, as well as practical tips and tricks to implement in their schools and districts. While we may not be able to hold a live convention this year, we are committed to bringing you an interactive, collaborative, and immersive online experience.

As part of this year’s registration, convention attendees will also be able to access all videos, handouts, and materials for an additional 30 days after the convention ends.

The cost of attendance is $169 per individual. The Pre-Convention Session, Wisconsin Future Ready Leadership Summit, is $39.

Visit the SLATE website for complete program and registration information.
ARE YOU RETIRING IN 2021?

The requirements to receive the Honorary Life Membership and be recognized at the retirement banquet held in conjunction with the WASDA Annual Educational Conference are as follows:

A. The recipient must have retired from school work.
B. The recipient must have total experience in educational work on any level of at least twenty-five (25) years.
C. The recipient must have been a member of the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators at the time of retirement and for the five (5) years immediately preceding retirement.
D. CESA administrators who were county superintendents are to receive credit for the years served as county superintendents.

If you are retiring this year, please email the WASDA office. ALL WASDA members retiring will be recognized at the banquet. This year’s convention is currently scheduled to be held April 21-23 at the Madison Concourse Hotel in Madison. A final decision will be made in early 2021 whether to conduct this event in person or virtually. (Conference begins with a reception at 5:30 p.m., April 21, followed by the Recognition Banquet & ends at 12 noon on April 23.)
**BVL DECEMBER Update**

*We picked a few videos you might find helpful this month*

*Baird is dedicated to your district and your school finance needs. Although the BVL library is full of useful videos to be accessed anytime, this month in the business office, you might be interested in the below videos:*

- Bond Proceeds and Arbitrage Requirements
- Cash Defeasance
- Cash Flow
- Debt Refinancing
- Enrollment/Pupil Count
- What is the Difference Between Fiscal Year and Calendar Year?

*If you have any questions on the above videos, or if you have any comments on how the BVL can better serve your district, let us know! Reach out to any member of our team below; we’d be happy to help.*

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DIGITAL EQUITY

The Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) and its Wisconsin state affiliate chapter, Wisconsin Educational Technology Leadership are honored to support the work of current and aspiring superintendents and district leadership teams in leading all aspects of digital learning transformations.

The COVID-19 crisis has brought to light many challenges within the nation’s K-12 education systems. Some are new and others may have existed for a while. One of the more confounding current problems is the matter of digital equity. As schools across the nation moved from their traditional in-school settings to both hybrid and fully remote teaching and learning, student access to appropriate digital devices and robust Internet access became even more critically urgent. Additionally, having the skills to leverage technology tools for learning is now essential for teachers and students – and to some degree, parents and families – in order for effective teaching and learning to continue.

The vision of anywhere, anytime learning depends on equitable access to devices and high-speed Internet for ALL students, as well as their families and guardians. In our current reality the issues around access go beyond the ability to continue learning. Today, everyone needs reliable broadband access in order to stay connected with family and friends, access health services, job opportunities and other critical resources. For all these reasons, the issues involved in leading digital transformation and assuring that all students have reliable digital access are now more relevant than ever. CoSN is pleased to provide multiple resources to assist school leaders in navigating the challenges of digital equity.

EmpowerED Superintendent Monthly Webinar:
“Achieving Digital Equity: Innovative Leadership Strategies for Today’s School Leaders”
The upcoming episode of the monthly EmpowerED Superintendent Webinar series, co-hosted by CoSN, AASA and edWeb.net, and sponsored by ClassLink, airs on Monday, December 14, 2020. The title and focus of this upcoming webinar, broadcast live at 4:00 pm CT, is Achieving Digital Equity: Innovative Leadership Strategies for Today’s School Leaders. Solving the problem of digital equity requires a focused vision and strategic implementation of multiple innovative strategies. In this engaging webinar Dr. A. Katrise Perera, Superintendent, Gresham-Barlow School District, OR, Glenn Robbins, Superintendent, Brigantine Public Schools, NJ and Dr. Aaron Spence, Superintendent, Virginia Beach City Public Schools, VA share effective strategies for bringing their communities together to implement solutions that successfully address digital equity. Free registration for this December 14, 2020 webinar is now available at https://home.edweb.net/webinar/supers20201214/. Webinars in this series are also freely available as recordings at https://home.edweb.net/supers/ and via podcast at https://home.edweb.net/podcasts/ a day or two after the initial live broadcast.

CoSN Critical Focus Areas: Issue One-Pager - Creating Equitable Opportunities for All Learners: Digital Equity Strategies for Learning Inside and Outside the Classroom

The CoSN EmpowerED Superintendents web page presents a series of “one-pagers” to guide and empower superintendents and their leadership teams in leading digital transformations. CoSN’s one-page document on Creating Equitable Opportunities for All Learners describes four impactful strategies for “thinking outside the box” to achieve digital equity within a school system.

CoSN Digital Equity Initiative
For an in-depth look at a variety of strategies to address digital equity check the resources provided through CoSN’s Digital Equity Initiative, including access to the Digital Equity Toolkit at https://www.cosn.org/digitalequity.

If your school or district would like more information about joining CoSN or getting more involved with CoSN, please contact Brian Calvary, CAE, CoSN Director of Membership and Chapters, at bcalvary@cosn.org.