

Report on Wisconsin 98th Education Convention
January 23-25, 2019 in Milwaukee, WI
By Kalene Engel, Don Baloun, Karen Knospe and Larry Cyrus

Summary of Sessions Attended by Kalene Engel:

- **Impact of Vouchers & Charters on WI Public Schools:** This presentation included a review of school funding and how the loss of venue per pupil (\$7,754 to \$8,400) is typically recouped by an increase in the property tax levy. Currently, C-FC has one student attending a private school on a voucher.
- **Wisconsin School Funding – The Conversation is Not Over:** Presenters reviewed the state of school funding in the context of the Wisconsin Constitution’s mandate that students have a right to an “equal opportunity to a sound basic education.” Research was presented showing that school finance reform has not yet achieved funding equity and inadequate funding has an adverse effect on School Report Cards.
- **How a Mental Health Coordinator Created Possibilities for Students, Staff and the Community:** Neenah Joint School District representatives discussed how they were able to leverage community resources to provide in-school screenings and mental health therapy after hiring a mental health coordinator.
- **Expanding Teacher Candidate Pools: Collaborations That Work:** Educators from the Oshkosh area discussed three programs which allow fast-tracked pathways to teacher licensure for people interested in teaching who have experience or education in a particular area.
- **School Board Annual Work Calendar – Ensuring the #1 Thing is the Number 1:** School leaders from Sun Prairie School District discussed a process and framework for the district which would hold district leaders accountable for goals and ensure that the board’s work was aligned to the strategic plan of the district.
- **Teacher Mental Health and Why It Matters:** The presenter discussed the increasing stressors in schools and the negative consequences of teacher stress on student mental health and achievement. Suggestions were presented for de-stressing the school environment.
- **Financial Roles & Responsibilities of School Board Members:** Presenters discussed the statutory duties and powers of school boards with respect to budgeting and other financial decisions.
- **The Blue Ribbon Commission: Where Do We Go From Here?:** Members of the Wisconsin Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding discussed the process followed and findings and recommendations generated as a result of the year-long work of the commission.

Summary of Sessions Attended by Don Baloun:

- **District Collaboration: Summer School.** The Unity and Luck School Districts have combined efforts to offer a cooperative summer school program. The session highlighted the benefits to both Districts and the improved participation/outcomes for the students.
- **Community Connected: Developing Career Ready Students Through Strategic Partnerships.** The Franklin School District collaborated with local businesses and industry to develop career

ready students. They researched the Eleva-Strum Cardinal Mfg. model and developed Saber Mfg.

- Meaningful Community Engagement: Bringing Together the Whole System. The session highlighted the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation model. The process has been implemented by 30-35 WI School Districts. It initiates a methodology to purposely bring together a wide diversity of stakeholders with the focus on the “current state” of your District and identifies how to move the District to it’s “desired state”.
- Breaking Tradition: How and Why to Establish a Year-Round (45-15) School. The session identified the process that the Tomah School District utilized to implement a 45-15 day school calendar at their Lemonweir Elementary School District.
- Leadership Coaching for Board Presidents. The session identified the benefits of having a “coach” for Board presidents.
- Teacher Compensation: A Model that Advances District Interests and Maintains Teacher Agency. The GET School District shared their compensation model that was developed with the core principals of Affordable, Teacher Agency, Retains Teachers, Predictable, Attracts Teachers, and Addresses District Priorities.

Summary of Sessions Attended by Karen Knospe:

- **Developing and Implementing Alternative Compensation Plans: Process, Practical Examples and tools:** Focus on student achievement. Schools need to recruit good talent, provide a safe and healthy work environment and be fiscally sustainable. Teamwork to establish goals, strategic plan, mission statement, and data to show continuous growth. Teachers want to be respected and valued. A professional growth plan is essential for powerful teaching. Some districts are looking at micro and macro credentials which are directly connected to increasing student learning. The credentials can be **Flexible**- Choice and professional pathways, **Rigorous** – micro customized with CESA2, Macro customized...rubric to evaluate learning aligns with rigor, **Relevant**- content aligns with district priorities and teacher self-identified needs, and **Retention and Recruitment**- align with identified needs and personalizing professional learning. In summary the micro-credentials provide a pathway that is created by the learner for the learner.
- **Compensation and Benefits No Longer Live in silos-** Historically salaries and benefits were viewed separately. Today these groups are focused on total reward packages. In this session we heard how 40 districts (Madison area) collaborated to develop a strategy to have access to timely and accurate data around regional compensation and rewards as one package. The decision making was totally data driven. Elmbrook district had an Employee Health and Wellness Center. This center was convenient, free annual physicals, free well child visits and free lab work. Data is also shared on compensation to make sure your district is competitive in salaries as well as benefits for professional and support staff.
- **Leveraging Learning-Centered Teacher Evaluation-** We heard from several schools large and small on how they do evaluations in their schools. There was a common theme or themes of continuous student growth, professional development, goals, strategic plans, on-going feedback, trust and collaboration within districts and sharing data with other districts.

- **Achieving Effective Board Meetings-** My favorite session. A school board should engage with the community and employees. The members of the board represent the shared values of the community for the education of their children. My table had 3 Superintendents at it and about 6 school board members and we actually did activities boards could use to be more efficient and focused. **Affinity Process** using post-it notes you had to think, write, and listen. The process resulted in finding common ground, gave everyone a voice, we found collective agreement, cohesiveness, and opens communication. We also tried **Mind Mapping** which helped to understand the “Big Picture” and identify the right actions to get to desired outcomes. I see this process helping with compensation in the future. WASDA: Jon Bales, executive director, Howick Associates: Drew Howick, engagement specialist
- **How to make your Workplace Wellness Program Successful:** I felt like I was attending one of my Weight Watcher meetings. We learned that fast food is bad. Sugar is evil and convenience is how we eat. We need to plan ahead, be mindful of what we eat and educate ourselves to avoid an intervention. Reedsburg school district shared activities they did monthly to promote wellness and good choices and exercise.

Summary of Sessions Attended by Larry Cyrus:

Much of my convention was spent dealing with potential legislative action. I served as the school board’s representative to the WASB Delegate Assembly, which determines WASB supported policies to guide its legislative agenda. The areas the delegate assembly want WASB legislative action to support include the following:

- * A technical resolution to revise or repeal outdated or obsolete resolutions.
- * A modified process to reduce the number of school board members in a district if a district decides they want to make a change.
- * Using student poverty as a factor in the state equalization aid formula, revenue limits and categorical aid.
- * State funding for inclusive "community schools"...
- * Funding for gifted and talented programming
- * A resolution dealing with competitive grants
- * Special education reimbursement rate and other special education provisions
- * Leaving the Common School Fund/Library Aid alone
- * Provide state funding for reading interventions
- * To oppose using taxpayer dollars to subsidize nonpublic education
- * Add Indigenous Peoples' Day to the list of public school observation days in Wisconsin
- * Support school learning environments free of tobacco, nicotine, and vaping products and devices
- * Allow districts to exceed revenue limits for mental health related services
- * Support the use of trauma-informed care in schools
- * Support stronger relationships between school districts and law enforcement agencies to improve school safety
- * Support early childhood development and education
- * Legislation authorizing DPI to issue an educator license to clinical counselors
- * Develop legislation to make it easier for high school staff to teach dual credit courses
- * Support adequate state funding to reimburse school districts for cost associated with post-secondary courses
- * Allow high school credit for post-secondary courses with the approval of the local district.

I was able to attend sessions involving a legislative update. We were provided with information that the newly elected governor sees as priorities and how they compare with the Blue Ribbon Commission on school funding.

Explanations on school financing and various approaches some schools are taking involving compensation and benefits for employees, as well as mental health first aid were other sessions I attended. The exhibit hall and the variety of exhibitors gave me an additional opportunity to see what else is available for school districts. We also had time to talk with board members and administrators from other districts.