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Editor: Wendy Wong, Pewaukee School District
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 Winneconne, 920-582-4541
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 Madison, 608-257-3220

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State Superintendent and WEAC President Celebrate Reading in Eau Claire

■ Anne Egan-Waukau, WEAC

Wisconsin Education Association Council President Stan Johnson and State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster joined students, educators and administrators across the state who participated in the National Education Association's annual Read Across American celebration on March 2.

Both read to the students at Meadowview Elementary School in Eau Claire, where a choir made up of 4th- and 5th-grade students, donned in the red and white pipe hats sang Dr. Seuss songs.

"Reading is not only fun, but it helps shape students' lives," Johnson said. "That's why educators want to make sure students become life-long readers." Johnson said reading should be celebrated every day of the year. "Research shows that kids who are motivated, and spend more time reading, do better in school," Johnson said. "Support children and reading in your community all year long, because every kid deserves a great education and a great school."

Burmaster said reading aloud to children encourages reading. "Reading aloud, like we do for special Read Across America events, introduces young children to the joy of reading and gives them a chance to have people other than their parents and teachers read to them," Burmaster said. "Additionally, reading aloud encourages all ages to read, perhaps exposing people to material they might not have considered before, and is a fun way to reinforce the importance of this lifetime skill."

Anne Egan-Waukau, assisted with the coordination of the RAA Birthday party at Meadowview Elementary School, in Eau Claire. WEAC produced and distributed about 1 million bookmarks and stickers as part of the statewide celebration. ❖



WISCONSIN SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION

Join the Campaign Toward Healthier

■ Mabel Schumacher, Ph.D., Fort tkinson

Getting Started

Community Involvement and Communication are keys as schools strive to meet School Wellness Policy requirements

At the beginning of the 2006-07 school year, all districts participating in federally subsidized school nutrition programs will be required to have a local school wellness policy in place. This is the first in a series of WSPRAgram articles that will examine the vital role that communication will play in the development and implementation of the policy.

A Recognized Need

Schools are perceived to be safe and healthful environments, yet districts need only look at the increasing obesity rates of children (and adults), the patterns of dysfunctional eating, the increasing incidents of Type 2 diabetes in children, and cardiovascular disease risk factors associated with poor health habits to realize that there is a critical need for action to address health and wellness of our children and our communities.

Added to the health risk factors is the educational implication that student health impacts academic performance. However, the response needed to these health issues is not just a school-based reaction; rather it requires a total community response. Within the community are the resources to prepare a broad-based action plan that will positively affect both the school environment and the community as a whole. The requirement for a local school wellness policy puts school districts in the position to provide leadership in a societal issue.

Policy Requirements

According to information provided by the Wisconsin Association of School Boards, at the very minimum, the wellness policy must include four factors:

1. Goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness.
2. Nutrition guidelines for all foods available at each school site during the school day.
3. Provision of guidelines for school meals.

4. A plan for measuring implementation of the local wellness policy, including the designation of a person who is responsible for implementing and monitoring the policy

Various Stages of Implementation

According to current reports, districts across the nation have made varying progress toward meeting the school wellness policy requirement:

5%	-	have a working draft in place
17%	-	are forming a working group
47%	-	are determining what is needed
31%	-	have not begun yet

Where ever a district finds itself in the process, it is never too late to tap the multitude of resources available within the community and from its staff.

Involvement of the Community

One requirement of the wellness policy is that it must be developed by a broad-based committee including community members. Districts should seize the opportunity to add a variety of community representatives to their volunteer rosters. This not only reaches their goal of broad-based input, but also creates a new avenue of community support for their district. The list of possible members is long—parents, physicians, dentists, hospital nutritionists, recreation department representatives, fitness center representatives, FFA alumni, food store representatives, food service workers, university personnel, a technology person (if a wellness web site is planned), etc. It is imperative that districts do NOT try to fulfill the membership requirements of the wellness policy committee by filling the positions from within the district. By doing so, they are losing the valuable insight of community experts. Yet, we know that implementation will be in the classrooms and buildings and ownership in this change initiative will be critical to its success. Staff involvement on the wellness committee is equally important.

Districts should seek a wide variety of staff members

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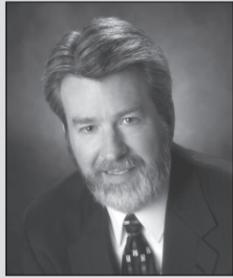
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From the President . . .



Mark
McLaughlin

WSPRA is becoming actively involved in helping school districts comply with the upcoming School Wellness Policy requirements. The word “comply” often implies meeting the basic requirements. Without a doubt, the requirements for this policy will provide excellent opportunities for school-community relations at a level well beyond the minimum.

The article in this issue provides the first in a two-part series on the topic *Join the Campaign Toward Healthier Youth*. Two articles were needed just to cover the basics; to get you started. WSPRA certainly wants to help you complete the minimum requirements of the wellness policy but encourages you to do more. As professionals, we shouldn't be satisfied with the minimum.

In March, I had the opportunity to meet with two WSPRA board representatives, Mabel Schumacher and Dorreen Dembski, and WASB Policy Services Coordinator Nancy Dorman on this topic. I learned a great deal about what needs to be done and, more importantly, what can be done by school districts across Wisconsin.

The wellness policy must be developed with the involvement of parents and the general public. Because the policy needs to cover more than nutrition, a broad range of experience and expertise will be required. This provides an excellent opportunity to establish and strengthen relationships with many people throughout the district.

It's also an opportunity to take a leadership role on behalf of children in an arena other than academics. You can help reinforce your district's position on a matter as important as health. And it is important to remember the vital link between student health and academic success!

Yes, you can look at this new policy requirement as one more project you have to schedule into your “to do” list. But also look at it as an opportunity for community engagement and effective communication. WSPRA is working to provide all members with resources. Don't hesitate to call on

Join the Campaign (continued from page 1)

to provide representation for each level, for each union group, and for all those interested in wellness and health—physical education teachers, agriculture department members, health teachers, family and consumer education teachers, food service personnel, elementary and middle school teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, and school board members.

Communication

As with any change, communication will be key to the successful implementation of a wellness policy. If districts fail to communicate appropriately, they may find themselves “hitting a brick wall” as they try to implement change. They will find parents and community wondering why schools are meddling in family matters; staff wondering why the district is mandating a change in behavior; and students rebelling against something that does not make sense to them. Instead, districts must commit the wellness team to ongoing, frequent and creative communication that targets specific messages that will meet each group's needs. This feat may seem daunting, but it is made easier by planning to communicate from the beginning of the policy development through its implementation.

The key to communication is identifying all audiences and developing key messages that provide appropriate information in a format that reaches that audience.

Use existing communication tools and look for new ways to communicate. Use blast emails to keep staff informed as the wellness policy develops. With each update, ask staff for their input because two-way communication is critical. Create a health and wellness column in parent and staff newsletters. Introduce new healthy recipes or provide a list of fun family physical activities that may inspire things to do when the kids say, “I'm bored!” Add a health and wellness button to the district web site and keep it current with the status of the wellness committee's work.

Communication continues when districts implement their plans. Be creative.

How about a taste-testing in cooperation with the school lunch program and FFA alumni to help introduce new menu items? Create posters for each classroom advertising the Do's and Don'ts of snacking. Sponsor a poster contest—ask nutritionists and health professionals to be the judges so that the content is accurate. Maybe ask marketing students to develop a health and wellness campaign slogan or help design “healthy stickers” to tag items on the lunch line. Whatever districts do, communication is a critical component throughout the entire process.

The Child Nutrition Act provides a platform for some very important action to be taken by districts. Districts are encouraged to embrace the issue of health and wellness and to take a leadership position in the community to foster change. Imagine the possibilities and have fun!

Watch for the second part of this series in your next *WSPRAgram*: “From Ideas to Actions—A Check-up on District Health and Wellness Activities.”

Resources

Districts may find additional information at the following sites:

Nutrition Education Consultant: Julie Allington (julie.allington@dpi.state.wi.us)

WASB Policy Service Coordinator: Nancy Dorman (ndorman@wasb.org)

Policy Consultant: Vicki Fondrk (vfondrk@wasb.org)

Team Nutrition: www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/changing.html

Team Nutrition: Resources: www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/index.html

School Health Councils, CDC: www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/CSHP/

School Nutrition Association: www.asfsa.org/childnutrition/wellnesspolicies/index.asp

WI Team Nutrition Program: What's Right for Kids—Improving the School

Nutrition Environment: www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/bbfcsp/tn.html

www.nsba.org/site/doc_cosa.asp?TRACKID=&VID=50&CID=454&DID=35141

K-12 Dominates JFC Hearings

■ Joe Quick, Madison Metropolitan School District

Students, parents, teachers, school administrators, school board officials and community members testifying at the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) biennial budget hearings made a distinct impression on committee members and dominated public testimony at the five statewide hearings. If ever there was a textbook illustration of the importance of coordinated advocacy, the budget hearings demonstrated how critical it is to let legislators know your concerns.

After weeks of heated rhetoric opposing Gov. Jim Doyle's budget, the committee's co-chair Dean Kaufert (R-Neenah) conceded to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* at the conclusion of the round of public hearings that, “We may have to buy into some of this stuff. There are programs in this state that need to be funded.” Republicans attacked Doyle for “raiding” funds that were dedicated for specific purposes, such as the Transportation Fund for school transportation aid, but Kaufert said his GOP colleagues might have to “choke down” some of Doyle's funding proposals.

Reinforcing the strong K-12 presence at the hearings, Dave Titus, Dodge County director of Human Services, urged his fellow

directors to make more of a presence at the hearings. “It seemed like every school superintendent from every district throughout this part of the state spoke. Imagine the public perception created by those budget hearings, the items (legislators) hear about time and again as important to our state. Sitting in (a legislator's) seat, where would you feel tax dollars should go? Partners, the school superintendents are well-organized and show up to offer testimony,” Titus told fellow directors.

Bolstering arguments in favor of developing ways to connect with your local legislators and let them know the issues in your school district were comments made by Kaufert to the *Journal Sentinel*. After over a decade of revenue limits and annual program cuts, Kaufert said he was surprised to hear how public schools desperately need more state aid.

The work on the budget is far from over. If you haven't communicated with your local legislators, there is still time. The JFC will work on the budget through May and the two houses of the Legislature will probably begin action on the budget in late-May to early-June. GOP leaders plan to finish work on the budget by the end of June and send the bill to the Governor. For more information on the Governor's budget and key K-12 issues, go to the WSPRA Web site, www.wspra.org. ❖

Celebrating End-of-Year School District Successes

■ Linda Wickstrom, Elmbrook School District

“Together we celebrate success.” That is the last sentence of the Vision Statement for Elmbrook School District and a testament to the district's focus on recognition of student, staff, and community accomplishments.

Three examples of how appreciating success is at the center for Elmbrook's Board of Education include:

1. The first agenda item at the Elmbrook school board meetings is called “Together We Celebrate Success.” The superintendent typically introduces the students, staff, and/or community members with an explanation of why they are deserving of recognition. Those being recognized then speak about their accomplishments, from winning coveted awards to raising funds to successful educational efforts. The Board president then presents each person with a commendation certificate suitable for framing.
2. The succeeding board agenda item is the high school student representatives report where the reps present to the board and district the current events at their high school. Each rep then nominates one or more teachers who made a personal connection and impact on that student's life by developing meaningful connections with students to

ensure success.

3. Continuing the tributes, the board then acts on the numerous written commendations as presented by the administration recognizing outstanding achievements by K-12 students and staff. The day after the board meeting, those recognized are mailed a board commendation certificate and the listing of commendations is sent to the local newspapers and posted for two weeks on the district website under the “awards” link. Community members learn of the accomplishments by watching the board meeting broadcast on the local educational cable channel six times after each board meeting.

An example of recognizing success outside the school board meeting includes the annual recognition of staff for their years of service and retirements, and the Outstanding Employee Award winners. Held off-site with hors d'oeuvres and punch, the event is for the staff being recognized, their family members, and interested district staff members. Each person's contributions to teaching and learning is individually shared by an administrator or colleague. Eruptions of spontaneous applause and cheering are common. It has been suggested that first-year-to-the-district employees be specifically invited to this end-of-year event to demonstrate the pride in which employees have in the district and how together, Elmbrook celebrates success. ❖

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