

Taking Care of **Business**

Wisconsin's Professional Journal for School Business & Operations
February 2026

Bridging the pay gaps

WASBO's biannual compensation
study and solutions framework



Meet WASBO's 2026 Board of Directors Candidates

President-Elect Candidates



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Director Candidates



Ben Irwin



Jeff Johanning



Scott Johnson

Voting for eligible WASBO members will be conducted electronically from April 1-30. Find out more about the 2026 candidates running for a seat on WASBO's Board of Directors starting on P. 46.

About the cover

Wisconsin's school business managers have faced significant economic shifts over the last nine years, and WASBO remains committed to championing fair compensation for all. The latest study highlights the critical need to address the \$20,600 gender pay gap and provides a clear framework for bridging this divide. Turn to P. 32 to see the roadmap for progress!

A Look Ahead

Taking Care of Business
2026 Publication Themes*

May 2026: The Local and State
Impact of School Referenda

August 2026: Public school open
enrollment as a school finance issue
November 2026: School consolidation

**Themes may change given the evolving
nature of school operations.*

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Editor: Mike Barry

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Mike Koltes

WASBO President

Director of Business Services | CESA #5

Supporting the heart of school operations: You!

As we move through the heart of the 2025-2026 school year, I find myself reflecting on the incredible resilience and dedication within our school business offices. Whether you are navigating the complexities of an upcoming referendum or ensuring that every student has a safe ride to school, your work is the foundation of Wisconsin's educational success.

WASBO is dedicated to being your primary partner in this work, providing the support and resources your school business office needs to thrive.

We don't just provide resources; we provide a community where Taking Care of Business is a shared mission. With that in mind, I want to highlight several upcoming opportunities designed to sharpen your skills, broaden your network, and perhaps provide a little inspiration.

Upcoming Conferences

Our upcoming calendar is packed with "can't-miss" events tailored to the specific challenges we face today.

- [2026 Wisconsin Federal Funding Conference](#) (February 23-24 | Wisconsin Dells): In coordination with DPI and

WCASS, this conference is about moving beyond "checking the box." We will dive into the nuances of IDEA, ESEA, and Title I to ensure you are maximizing every federal dollar available to your students.

- [Accounting 2026: WASBO's Conference That Counts](#) (March 18-19 | La Crosse): From GASB updates to internal controls, this is the essential gathering for fiscal staff. This year, we are even featuring sessions on the use of AI in the business office—a tool that is quickly becoming a game-changer for efficiency.
- [2026 Spring Conference](#) (May 14-15 | Wisconsin Dells): Our biggest event of the year! This is our time to share, plan, reflect, improve, network, and grow. Beyond the 40+ educational sessions, it's a time to celebrate our profession and support our students through the Foundation scholarship fundraisers.

Focused learning with WASBO University (WASBO U)

I am particularly proud of [WASBO University's](#) growth. We know that your time is your most precious com-

modity. You don't always have days to spend away from the district, and that is where WASBO U can help.

WASBO U offers short, topic-based courses designed for targeted learning. These aren't just lectures; they are peer-led sessions built around [Wisconsin School Business Officials Standards](#).

Whether you are a veteran looking to brush up on a specific area, such as [School Business Ethics](#), or a new professional seeking certification in [Payroll](#) or [Accounts Payable](#), WASBO U provides a flexible, high-impact pathway to mastery.

It's "just-in-time" learning that you can take back to your desk and apply immediately. Learn more at [WASBO.com/U](#).

I encourage you to take a moment today to look at the WASBO calendar. Invest in yourself. Bring a team member. The expertise you gain today will enable your district to thrive tomorrow.

I look forward to seeing many of you in the Dells and La Crosse very soon, and thank you for everything you do for Wisconsin's children!

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Mike Barry
WASBO Executive Director

Lawsuit filed to "hold legislature responsible for adequately funding schools"

There's been a significant school finance development this month, with a lawsuit being filed on February 23 in Eau Claire County Circuit Court against the Wisconsin legislature on the basis that the school finance system that the legislature is charged with providing does not comply with the state constitution.

Learn more about the lawsuit in a [statement](#) released by WASBO's Research Director [Anne Chapman](#) below:

The goal of the lawsuit, as stated on the effort's [website](#), is to "... have the court hold the Legislature responsible for fulfilling its constitutional obligation to adequately fund Wisconsin public schools so that every Wisconsin student has an equal opportunity education."

The lawsuit is referred to as "Wisconsin PTA, et.al. V. Wisconsin Assembly." The plaintiffs include the Wisconsin PTA; five school districts (Adams Friendship, Beloit, Eau Claire, Green Bay, and Necedah); local education unions in four of those districts; parents, teachers, students, taxpayers, and other community members in those five communities; and

WPEN. The plaintiffs are being represented by Law Forward and WEAC.

The defendants include the Wisconsin State Assembly, the Wisconsin State Senate, legislative leadership (including the Assembly Speaker, Senate President, and Senate Majority Leader), the Joint Finance Committee, and each member of the Joint Finance Committee.

The lawsuit makes six claims about how Wisconsin's school finance system fails to meet constitutional requirements.

- The first four claims are based on violations of **Article X, Section 3** of the Wisconsin State Constitution, which guarantees every Wisconsin student an equal opportunity for a sound basic education in a tuition-free public school where the character of instruction is as uniform as practicable.
- The fifth claim states that the school finance system fails to provide students with high needs (i.e., students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students) with a sound basic education, violating Wisconsin's

equal protection guarantee, as appears in **Article I, Section 1**.

- The sixth claim is based on **Article I, Section 22**, which guarantees a system of free government based on frequent recurrence to first principles. It states that an essential component of free government is free public schools supported with state funding, a commitment the people of Wisconsin have maintained since before statehood.

The defendants have 45 days to respond in court. You can read the full complaint [here](#).

This litigation will unfold along a relatively long time horizon, but it is possible the court could make a ruling that could help inform the next state budget. Because the process and outcome of this litigation will be central to your work as district leaders and WASBO's research and advocacy efforts, we will be watching how this case develops and will provide more information over the next few weeks and months.

For more information, please contact Anne at Anne.Chapman@WASBO.com.

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Update on voucher decoupling & school consolidation legislation

With the Wisconsin State Assembly scheduled to adjourn at the end of February and the State Senate likely to follow shortly thereafter, the window for legislation to move across the finish line is extremely compressed. Here are two updates on school-related items lawmakers are focused on this session, including legislation on voucher “decoupling” and school consolidation.

Voucher decoupling legislation

“Voucher de-coupling” is proposed legislation that would shift the cost of voucher schools from a state-local shared funding mix to the state picking up 100% of voucher costs in the state budget. Proposed legislation and policies was raised this session, but ultimately failed to gain traction during or after the state budget process.

At the same time, concerns about the impact of vouchers intensified due to policymakers’ decision not to provide additional general aid to offset the increased revenue-limit authority created by the “400-year veto.”

WASBO recently released a report, [“The Price of Parallel Systems,”](#) which details how such a shift would not, by itself, mechanically translate into an expansion of the voucher program. However, it could allow policymakers to facilitate the ex-



Dee Pettack
Executive Director
School Administrator's Alliance

pansion of private vouchers without coming to terms with, and responsibly planning for, their enormous costs and trade-offs. The provisions of recent legislative “decoupling” proposals also would obscure the state and local fiscal impacts of the program and impede crucial public scrutiny of private voucher costs at the local level.

As pressure has grown on property taxpayers statewide to shoulder a larger share of public school funding, attention is also turning to the portion of property taxes supporting voucher schools.

Local school districts have no authority over voucher growth or increased voucher payments, and taxpayers have limited transparency or accountability regarding how those dollars are spent. As voucher costs continue to rise, so does the level of scrutiny; taxpayers are becoming more aware that they are absorbing those increases through their property tax bills.

School leaders across the state have focused on transparency and worked with county officials to clearly identify the portion attributable to voucher costs on property tax bills. These figures are documented and verifiable, and the effort is focused on transparency, ensuring voucher costs are accurately identified rather than incorrectly attributed to local public school district budgets.

This issue is particularly concerning in communities where the per-pupil voucher cost exceeds the district’s own per-pupil revenue limit authority.

While voucher decoupling did not materialize during this legislative session, it is likely to remain a top issue as property taxes and education funding emerge as key issues in the 2026 midterm elections.

Continuing to promote transparency about how property tax dollars are spent is critical, as many taxpayers still do not fully understand the role vouchers play in rising tax bills and instead place sole blame on their local public schools.

School consolidation legislation

Another major issue being examined by legislators was consolidation. Given the tight timeline, it is unclear whether the school consolidation package introduced late last year will be completed. This package largely reflected the work done by the Joint

Key takeaway

While voucher decoupling did not materialize during this legislative session, it is likely to remain a top issue as property taxes and education funding emerge as key issues in the 2026 midterm elections. Continuing to promote transparency about how property tax dollars are spent is critical, as many taxpayers still do not fully understand the role vouchers play in rising tax bills and instead place sole blame on their local public schools.

Legislative Council Study Committee on Shared Services. While the final policy pieces did not include the fiscal support identified by the legislative council study committee, they still moved in the right direction by supporting districts exploring consolidation or whole-grade sharing.

A key component of the policy package is AB 649; it serves as the incentive mechanism within the broader

package, which includes AB 645, AB 647, and AB 648.

Those bills outline processes and technical adjustments, but on their own, they do not create incentives or support for districts to explore consolidation or whole grade sharing.

The path forward for this package remains unclear, given the compressed timeline that remains in the 2025-27

legislative session.

Decoupling, consolidation, and broader school funding issues are likely to remain front and center as the 2026 midterm elections approach.

Stay tuned to the [SAA blog](#) and [WASBO's Advocacy Resources Page](#) for continued updates, context, and analysis.

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FROM YEAR-END TO YEAR-READY!

Prepare yourself for WASBO University's late spring and summer course offerings

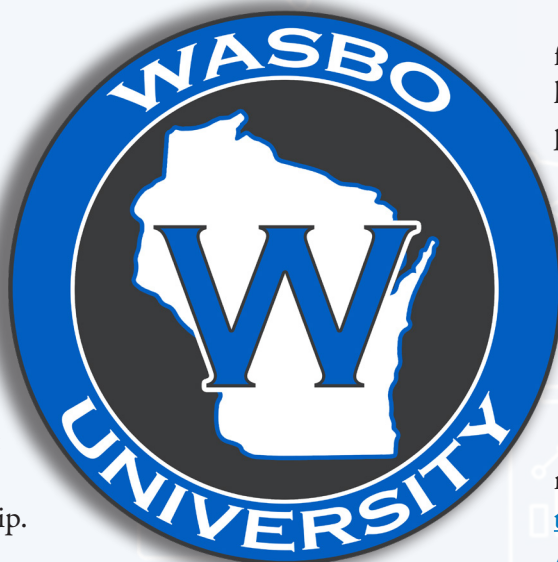
As school districts approach the end of another academic year, the demands on school business and operations professionals remain high.

WASBO University continues to provide members with timely, relevant learning opportunities that strengthen skills, build confidence, and foster effective district leadership.

WASBO U's late spring and summer course offerings provide flexible, high-impact professional development—allowing participants to finish the year strong and prepare strategically for the year ahead.

Late spring: Focused learning for critical duties

Late spring courses emphasize school finance and risk management—



two areas where strong preparation pays dividends year-round.

In April, [Elements of Revenue and the Revenue Limit Worksheet](#) offers a detailed look at Wisconsin's school funding system, helping participants better understand revenue sources, levy calculations, and aid formulas.

Participants can also explore the

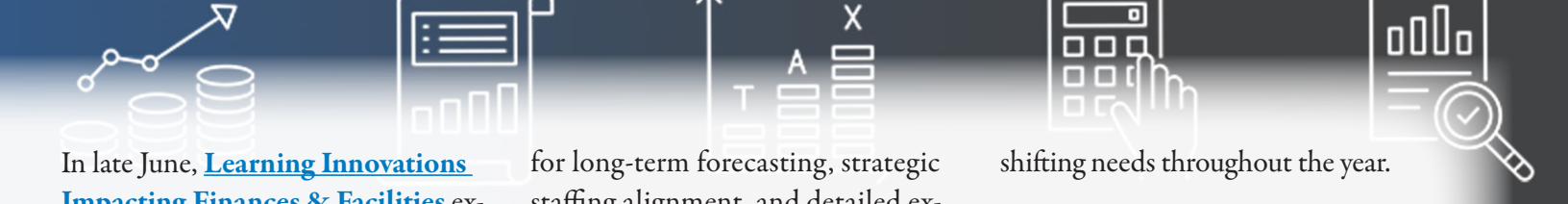
financial and legal considerations behind district borrowing and facilities planning through [Capital Referenda & Issuing Bonds](#), a course designed to support informed decision-making and effective long-range planning.

For professionals completing the [Wisconsin School Risk Management Certification](#), late spring marks the final stretch. [Risk Control: The Fourth Step](#) and [Risk Administration: The Fifth Step](#) provide practical tools for reducing loss, strengthening safety practices, and sustaining a comprehensive, district-wide risk management program.

Summer: Time to plan, prepare, and innovate

Summer provides an ideal opportunity to step back from daily demands and focus on strategic preparation.

WASBO.COM/U



In late June, [Learning Innovations Impacting Finances & Facilities](#) examines how changes in teaching and learning influence operational and facilities decisions—helping districts balance innovation, cost, and long-term sustainability.

As districts begin the critical process of preparing for the upcoming fiscal year, [Understanding and Forecasting School District Expenditures](#) supports thoughtful budget development by providing a framework

for long-term forecasting, strategic staffing alignment, and detailed expenditure planning to ensure financial stability.

Participants can then refine their year-round financial oversight skills through [Budget Monitoring & Communication](#). This course provides a deep dive into maintaining transparency and fostering clear board communication, while equipping school business officials with the tools to keep budgets flexible and responsive to

shifting needs throughout the year.

Learning designed for real-world impact

WASBO University courses are developed and delivered by practitioners and aligned to the real challenges facing Wisconsin school districts. With a convenient online format, expert instruction, and certification pathways, WASBO U is an excellent resource for professional growth. Learn more and register for upcoming courses at [WASBO.com/U](https://wasbo.com/U).



UPCOMING COURSES

Click on the course name below to learn more

Late Spring 2026

- **Elements of Revenue and the Revenue Limit Worksheet**

- Instructor: Dr. John Stellmacher - Chief Financial Officer - Kettle Moraine School District
- Time and Dates: 1:30-3:30 PM | April 6, 8, 13, 15, 20, & 22

- **Capital Referenda & Issuing Bonds**

- Instructor: Steve Summers - Executive Director of Operations - Waunakee Community School District
- Time and Dates: 1-3 PM | April 14, 16, 21, 23, 28 & 30

- **Risk Control: The Fourth Step in the Risk Management Process**

- Instructor: Jodi Traas - Assistant Vice President of Education & Risk Services - Community Insurance Corporation
- Time and Dates: 10:00 AM- 12:00 PM | April 14, 16 & 21

- **Risk Administration: The Fifth Step in the Risk Management Process**

- Instructor: Marty Malloy - Retired/Risk Management Consultant
- Time and Dates: 9-11 AM | May 5, 7 & 12

Summer 2026

- **Learning Innovations Impacting Finances & Facilities**

- Instructor: Dr. Stephanie Leonard - Asst. Superintendent for Teaching, Learning & Equity- Sun Prairie School District
- Time and Dates: 8 AM - 12 PM | June 23, & 25

- **Budget Monitoring & Communication**

- Instructor: Amy Holley - Director of Business Services - Hamilton School District
- Time and Dates: 8-10 AM | August 4 & 6

- **Understanding and Forecasting School District Expenditures**

- Instructor: TBD
 - Dates: TBD
- 

Navigating cybersecurity shifts and Act 57 compliance

Editor's Note: Attolles Law, s.c.

Attorneys Sarah Hanneman, Kylie Owens, and Dan Unertl also contributed to this article.

School business officials are required to wear many hats. As such, it is critically important for business officials to stay up to date on current legal issues in order to ensure compliance for their school districts.

This issue's legal update addresses two topics that have been at the forefront for many school districts recently. The first topic is cybersecurity and the shift in the “duty of care.” The second topic is the recently enacted 2025 Act 57 and the new legal obligations for schools that accompany this new state law.

Cybersecurity and the “Duty of Care” shift

As the threat of cybersecurity attacks looms large over public consciousness, school district business officials must recognize that cybersecurity is no longer merely something IT departments need to focus on; it is a concern that implicates a school district's legal duty of care.

Generally, Wisconsin negligence law applies a broad duty of care obligation because a duty exists where it is foreseeable that a person's “act or omission to act might cause harm to some other person.” *Gritzner v. Michael R.*, 2000 WI 68, ¶ 20. In the context of cybersecurity, because school districts



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maintain sensitive information in their systems, there is a foreseeable risk of harm that could lead to a breach. Moreover, given the proliferation of cybersecurity attacks, it cannot be said that cybersecurity failures are unforeseeable.

The shift from a reactive duty of care to a proactive duty of care in cybersecurity is driven by evolving technology and increasingly sophisticated attacks. Not to mention that school districts have been identified by hackers as a good target due to them being “target-rich and cyber poor.” Krystal Tena, “U.S. K-12 Schools Are a Playground for Cyber Criminals,” (S&P Global, January 24, 2024). As mentioned above, school districts are “target rich,” given their records are protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (“FERPA”) and other sensitive personnel records.

Under FERPA, a district that receives federal funding has specific obligations regarding student education



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records. While FERPA does not prescribe specific cybersecurity controls, districts must take steps to protect records by: (1) safeguarding personal identifiable information (“PII”) from education records, (2) limiting access to school officials who have a “legitimate educational interest,” and (3) using reasonable methods to ensure only authorized individuals access records.

In practical terms, a district should: (1) regularly update policies as the security landscape continues to evolve, in order to provide clear and timely guidance to employees; (2) ensure vendor contracts align with District FERPA obligations; (3) provide staff training on disclosure rules; and (4) regularly update and refine incident response protocols (i.e., cyberattack response plans).

Cybersecurity events involving District responsibilities continue to make headlines in Wisconsin and nationwide. There is no reason to believe cyberattacks will not continue to

grow more sophisticated and more frequent. The most effective cybersecurity strategy combines technical safeguards with informed, engaged people.

Taking time now to walk through realistic scenarios with staff before an incident occurs builds resilience and confidence. Every district staff member should know how to report a suspected incident, how communication will proceed if traditional communication systems are disabled, and their roles and responsibilities during a cyber emergency.

2025 Wisconsin Act 57 **Parental notification of** **alleged sexual misconduct by** **school staff member**

On December 9, 2025, Governor Evers signed into law 2025 Wisconsin Act 57, referred to colloquially as the “Instant Notification” mandate, which requires a school district, charter school, or private school to notify a pupil’s parents or guardians if a pupil is alleged to be a victim, target, or recipient of certain types of alleged sexual misconduct.

All schools no doubt already have policies or practices in place to ensure parents are notified in the event of alleged sexual misconduct involving

their pupil, but Act 57 codifies these requirements into state law, found under Wis. Stat. § 118.07(6), for specific types of sexual misconduct and provides very specific reporting timelines that schools must follow in those instances.

The effective date of this new law was December 10, 2025, so schools must already be implementing these new requirements. Therefore, school business officials should familiarize themselves with the requirements of Act 57 to ensure their districts comply.

What type of conduct may **require reporting under Act 57?**

The duty to make a parental notification under this law is potentially triggered any time a school board (or governing body of a private school or a charter school operator) receives a report alleging any of the following three types of conduct:

- A school staff member^[1] engaged in “sexual misconduct.”^[2]
- An employee or volunteer has been convicted of a “serious child sex offense”^[3] and has worked or interacted primarily and directly with children in a manner that would be a felony under Wis. Stat. § 948.13.^[4]
- A registered sex offender has intentionally captured a representation^[5] of a minor pupil without

the written consent of the minor pupil’s parent or guardian.

When is a report of conduct **considered “received” by a school?**

For a school board or operator of a charter school, a report of the above types of conduct is considered “received” when the report is received by an employee who is required to hold a principal or district administrator license, or who is a designated Title IX Coordinator.

For a private school, a report is considered “received” when it is received by an assistant principal, principal, administrator^[6], or the private school’s Title IX Coordinator.

The date and time a report is deemed “received” matters for determining the deadline by which the notification to a parent or guardian must be made (as discussed further below).

When is a district’s duty to notify **parents triggered?**

If a report of one of the three types of specified conduct is received, the duty to make a report to a pupil’s parent or guardian only occurs if the individual who received the report (i.e. the licensed principal, district administrator, or Title IX Coordinator)

Continued on P. 14

[1] In the context of criminal law for sexual misconduct by a school staff person or volunteer, “school staff member” is defined as “any person who provides services to a school or a school board, including an employee of a school or a school board and a person who provides services to a school or a school board under a contract. “School staff member” includes a bus driver.” Wis. Stat. § 948.098(1)(c).

[2] “Sexual misconduct” is defined as “verbal conduct of a sexual nature or physical contact of a sexual nature. “Sexual misconduct” includes conduct directed by a person at another person of the same

or opposite gender.” Wis. Stat. § 948.098(1)(d).

[3] “Serious child sex offense” is defined under Wis. Stat. § 948.13(1). This definition includes a wide range of specific crimes, so districts are encouraged to consult with legal counsel to determine if a specific situation falls under this definition. For illustrative purposes, the definition includes, but is not limited to, various types of first and second-degree sexual assault, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, incest, child enticement, and use of a computer to facilitate a child sex crime.

[4] Wis. Stat. § 948.13 is the criminal statute for “child sex offender working with children.”

[5] “Captures a representation” is defined as, “takes a photograph, makes a motion picture, videotape, recording, or other visual or audio representation, or records or stores in any medium data that represents a visual image.” Wis. Stat. § 942.09(1)(a).

[6] Administrator” means the superintendent, supervising principal, executive director, or other person who acts as the administrative head of a private school participating in the parental choice program under Wis. Stat. § 118.60.

Navigating cybersecurity shifts and Act 57 compliance

Continued from P. 13

determines there is “reasonable cause” to suspect that the alleged conduct occurred. If it is determined that there is reasonable cause to suspect that the alleged conduct occurred, then the district must notify the parent or guardian of each pupil who is alleged to be a victim, target, or recipient of the alleged conduct. Act 57 does not elaborate on what constitutes reasonable cause, but the reasonable cause standard is commonly understood to mean what a reasonable person would believe based on an objective review of the totality of the facts known to the person.

What is unclear from Act 57 is whether a school district is able to have reasonable cause to suspect that the alleged conduct occurred any time a report is received where the allegations appear credible on their face, or whether reasonable cause only exists after the school is able to investigate and determine whether they reasonably believe the conduct occurred as alleged.

Schools should consult legal counsel for assistance when determining if reasonable cause exists.

What are the notification requirements?

Act 57 contains two different notification requirements for parents/guardians: 1) an individual notification for reports of one of the three types of alleged conduct and 2) an annual notification to all parents and guardians.

Notification of a Report of Alleged Sexual Conduct: Notice of an individual report of alleged sexual conduct, which fits the parameters described above, shall be provided to a pupil’s parent or guardian by no later than one of the following, whichever is applicable:

1. If the report is received on a school day before the end of regularly scheduled instruction, 5:00 p.m. on that day; or
2. If the report is received on a school day after the end of regularly scheduled instruction or on a day that is not a school day, by 12:00 p.m. of the next calendar day.

The notice must be provided either in person or by phone (including voicemail). Note that notification is not required if the report received by the school is of alleged conduct by the pupil’s parent or guardian.

Annual Notice: Each school board is required to provide an annual notice to parents and guardians of their right to access records of school employee discipline under Wisconsin’s Public Records Law.

What steps should school business officials take to implement Act 57?

Business officials should take a number of steps to ensure their school districts are properly implementing the new requirements under Act 57: Ensure school district stakeholders are aware of the new requirements for reporting alleged sexual misconduct to parents and guardians.

Communications and/or training for staff will be necessary to ensure all are aware of these specific requirements. Update your district’s annual notices to include an annual notice in compliance with Act 57’s requirements.

Watch for new guidance and/or updates from the Department of Public Instruction or others on implementation. Act 57 is a new law, so we may see additional guidance as schools begin making these new reports. Work with legal counsel on any questions regarding implementation.



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Rebuilding your school's workforce pipeline

I hear it all the time from administrators. “I used to get 40 applicants for this role, now I am lucky to get one or two”. Or, “I can’t retain any good people in this job”. This might be custodian staff, nutrition staff, paraprofessionals, or bus drivers. The role hasn’t significantly changed. The school hasn’t significantly changed. What is causing the decrease in interest in working in a school?

The workforce looks very different than 20 years ago, but schools haven’t adapted. We still expect qualified and excited applicants to line up at our door. We tell ourselves that school districts might pay a little less when starting out, but with tenure will catch up. We tell ourselves that candidates will value the amazing benefits. We tell ourselves that we have an amazing team culture. Some of this may be true, but if you are struggling to attract and retain quality people, you need to first look inwards at these core assumptions.

Workforce changes

Twenty years ago, about 66% of the population was considered “core working age.” Unemployment was 5.1%. Every year in the early 2000’s, approximately 2.5 million new workers entered the workforce. It was an employer’s market. These numbers have switched. Now 62% of the population is of core working age, 400 bps fewer than 20 years ago. Unemployment is 3.8%, 130 bps lower. Only 1



Adam Rosen

CEO

Radar Talent Solutions

million new workers enter the workforce each year, 50% lower than 20 years ago. It is an employee's market.

Technology has also improved transparency and job mobility. Workers can choose shorter-term gig work instead of committing to long-term employment. Applying to a job is effortless. Any negative experiences from former employees are amplified by social media and sites like Reddit and Glassdoor.

But there are ways to work with this system. Retention starts before day one. It actually starts the first time a candidate hears about your organization. We call this “Candidate Experience”, and this is the first place a school district should evaluate when troubleshooting workforce challenges.

Improving the candidate experience

- **Relook at your value proposition:** What are your wages com-

pared to similar roles outside of school districts? Do candidates value the benefits package you offer, or the pay raises for years of service? If not, consider renegotiating these contracts. Use data to express the lack of competitiveness in the marketplace. Shift some funds from tenure-based employees to newer employees (existing tenured employees might be grandfathered in). Create career paths that show how employees can grow internally, regardless of years of service.

- **Start recruitment marketing:** Don’t expect candidates to magically arrive on your career page. Put effort into explaining why someone should work for you. Reach out to your existing school community of caregivers. Create referral programs. Make sure you are on all the job boards.
- **Ditch the application process:** If you are like most schools, you have a convoluted and desktop-only application process. Candidates should be able to complete the first part of the application process on a mobile phone in under three minutes. There should be minimal friction before a candidate can speak with a human for an assessment.
- **Talk to candidates quickly:** Candidates are likely applying to multiple jobs. Sometimes the first to make real contact is the winner. Ensure there are processes for rapid communication, streamlined interview scheduling, and timely

feedback on outcomes.

- **Stop interviewing by gut feeling and start interviewing based on behaviors:** Many school districts use unproven methods to evaluate candidates, such as whether they fit with the school “culture” or the candidates’ answers to hypothetical questions. Make the move to behavioral-based interviewing, which is scientifically proven to be a better predictor of success. Behavioral interviewing uses open-ended questions to elicit a candidate’s past behaviors and

evaluates the responses against a predefined rubric.

- **Look at the post-offer process:** Many school districts make candidates pay for background checks. Others expect candidates to independently complete an array of confusing tasks. Ensure a structured process with alerts for incomplete tasks and human support to assist candidates.
- **Hyperfocus on the first week:** Much of a candidate’s impression of your organization will be formed in these early days as an

employee. A handwritten note, a buddy to meet in the parking lot, or a quick check-in at the end of the day goes a long way. And it is free.

It isn’t rocket science. Make people a compelling reason to work for you. Make sure they know you are hiring. Talk to them quickly. Assess them fairly. Make it easy to start and be vigilant during the first few days. Making these small changes can improve your workforce retention and development for years to come.



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School choice's fiscal impact on Wisconsin public schools

Wisconsin school business officials are likely aware of the growing impact of Wisconsin's Parental Choice Programs. These programs, in addition to competing with Wisconsin's public school system for student enrollment, play a key role in local property taxes across the state, which have been under increased scrutiny following a significant jump in property tax bills in December.

While the \$325 per pupil increase in revenue limits, a frozen state equalization aid pool, and a significant number of locally adopted capital and operating referendums had the largest impact on recent property tax increases, the continued expansion of parental choice in Wisconsin is a significant contributing factor to those new taxes and could be an even larger factor under funding structures in place within Wisconsin.

As part of completing a PhD in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, my dissertation examined the impact of school choice in Wisconsin. While school choice could be defined more broadly to include Independent and Instrumentality Charter Schools, as well as the public school-to-public school open enrollment process, the dissertation focuses more acutely on the four parental choice programs (Milwaukee, Racine, Statewide, and Special Needs Scholarship Program). This study examines who has access to, uses, and currently pays for choice. It further distinguishes among school



Dr. John Stellmacher
Chief Financial Officer
Kettle Moraine School District

districts across the state based on utilization levels and examines the correlation between school voucher use and student and community demographics.

While researchers may debate the question “is the theoretical academic gain worth the additional financial cost of school choice”, this dissertation establishes that school choice in Wisconsin does, in fact, increase costs for taxpayers and has a localized impact on the economies of scale for public school districts.

Although total parental choice participation increased over the past decade — from 28,666 students in 2014-15 to 57,068 in 2024-25 — total private school enrollment increased only modestly, from 123,104 in 2014-15 to 126,355 in 2024-25.

With the share of private school students receiving taxpayer support through vouchers increasing from 23.3% to 45.2% over this period, taxpayers may wonder who has gained

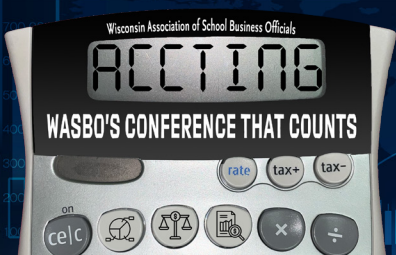
access to choice as a result of current public policy.

A number of States across the country now employ different versions of choice, with the most expansive being universal choice, in which every student, regardless of family income, school type, or age, has access to a voucher. Several states, including Arizona, Florida, Indiana, and Ohio, have adopted universal choice but now face escalating financial costs as these programs gain popularity, and fiscal projections indicate that their budgetary needs exceed the resources available to state leaders responsible for administering them.

Given that tens of thousands of Wisconsin students are currently educated in private schools funded by parental tuition or other private sources, a potential expansion of the state's needs-based parental choice programs into a universal system could have significant financial implications for both public education and taxpayers.

As of the 2024-25 school year, public schools collectively levied \$6.1 billion in property taxes to support over 800,000 public and private school students. A potential \$700 million increase in property taxes would have significant implications for local communities' ability to fund their public schools, as property taxes are already at their highest levels in decades.

My study calculated the potential cost of expansion under different scenarios, the indirect impact of these expanded



ACCOUNTING 2026 SESSION

March 18-19, 2026 **Attend John's session on school choice during Accounting 2026**
La Crosse

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enrollment costs on the statewide distribution of Equalization Aid, and projected the likely impact of such an expansion on each individual school district community. It further evaluates the potential for savings from any students “switching” from a public school to a private school that in the-

ory would generate savings (if a local school system’s marginal revenue per student was higher than the statewide voucher amount) to offset the new and additional cost from students entering the parental choice programs who currently receive no taxpayer support in a private school or homeschool setting.

I look forward to sharing lessons learned and discussing potential future policy implications for public education and the State of Wisconsin at [Accounting 2026: WASBO's Conference That Counts](https://www.wasbo.com/conference-that-counts) in La Crosse on March 18-19, 2026. See you next month!

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"Financial Fortress" or a series of checklists?

A look at school district internal controls

In school business management, internal controls are often viewed as a burdensome checklist—just another series of "hoops" to jump through. However, at the School Business Officials Professionals Conference in December, I challenged that narrative. A "check-the-box" mentality doesn't protect a district; a Financial Fortress does.

As I prepare for our upcoming session on March 19 at Accounting 2026: WASBO's Conference That Counts, I am excited to dive deeper into why robust oversight is actually your ultimate tool for unlocking operational efficiency. We won't just talk theory; you will walk away with some practical recommendations to harden your district's defenses against fraud and error.

The mindset: "Minding the mint"

Internal control isn't just a department or a task; it's an attitude. During my presentation, I will emphasize that this responsibility doesn't rest solely on the business office. It is a collective mission—from the Board of Education to our frontline staff—to "mind the mint." This starts with the "Tone at the Top". If leadership doesn't prioritize ethics and awareness, the fortress walls are already crumbling. To truly prevent vulnerabilities, we must foster a culture where reporting misconduct



Janelle Marotz
Director of Business Services
School District of Denmark

isn't just allowed—it's expected.

Why every district needs a fortress

Without a structural defense, the stakes are much higher than a simple audit finding. Our districts face real risks, including:

- **Theft and Shortages:** The direct loss of precious taxpayer funds.
- **Erosion of Public Trust:** A single scandal can take years of hard work to repair.
- **Resource Depletion:** Every dollar lost to fraud is a dollar taken away from a student's classroom experience.

Decoding the "Fraud Triangle"

To build a better defense, we have to understand the "enemy." We will dive into the Fraud Triangle:

- **Motivation:** The financial or per-

sonal pressure driving the act.

- **Opportunity:** The gap in the system that allows the act to happen.
- **Rationalization:** The internal justification for the misconduct.

From "ghost employees" to sophisticated "smishing" and phishing scams, today's threat landscape requires a "Trust No One" digital policy. In this era of cyber-deception, Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) is no longer optional—it is your primary gatekeeper.

The blueprint: The COSO Framework

Using the industry-standard COSO Internal Control-Integrated Framework, I'll outline the five pillars of a secure environment:

- **Control Environment:** Your ethical foundation.
- **Risk Assessment:** Hunting for vulnerabilities before others find them.
- **Control Activities:** Policies like Segregation of Duties that stop errors in their tracks.
- **Information & Communication:** Ensuring everyone knows their role in the defense.
- **Monitoring:** Constant surveillance to ensure the system is actually working.

Practical solutions and peer wisdom

I know that for many of us, the big-

Figure 1: Internal controls guide to a strong defense



Created by Janelle Marotz with assistance from Google Gemini and Notebook LM.

gest challenge is staffing. How do you segregate duties in a small office? I'll share ideas for compensating controls—creative review processes that ensure no single person has “the keys to the kingdom.”

- **The 3-Point Match:** Never pay an invoice unless the Purchase Order, the Invoice, and the Receiving Report all align.
- **The "No-Exceptions" Payroll:** Standardize your procedures so any "exception" is a red flag requiring a second set of eyes.
- **The Golden Rule:** I have happily

adopted Mike Barry's famous mantra as my own guiding light: "If you're too busy to reconcile, then you're too busy". It's my favorite reminder that taking this time isn't just a task—it's the foundation of our peace of mind.

- **Looking ahead:** Building the kingdom

Building a financial fortress is an iterative process, not a "one-and-done" project. Much like a medieval castle, you can't rely on a single wall. You need a moat (segregation of duties), a

drawbridge (authorization levels), and sentries (continuous monitoring). If one defense is challenged, the heart of the kingdom remains secure.

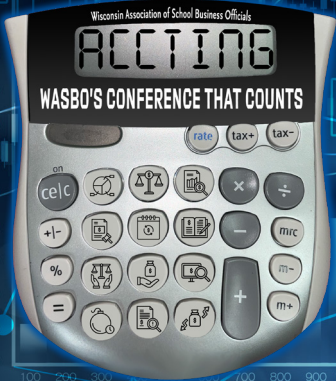
I am thrilled for the opportunity to work alongside my peers to strengthen our schools. Join me at [Accounting 2026](#) on March 19 to discuss our shared challenges, explore practical solutions, and ensure our resources remain where they matter most: with our students. I hope to see you there! Let's "mind the mint" together.

ACCOUNTING 2026 SESSION

Attend Janelle's internal controls session during Accounting 2026: WASBO's Conference That Counts!

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Build confidence, accuracy, and insight at Accounting 2026

Strong accounting practices are the backbone of every successful school district, and Accounting 2026: WASBO's Conference That Counts is designed to help financial professionals strengthen that foundation. Taking place March 18-19, 2026, at the La Crosse Center, this conference brings together school business officials and accounting staff from across Wisconsin for focused learning on the topics that matter most in day-to-day district operations.

Tailored specifically to the needs of school district financial professionals, the Accounting Conference offers two days of in-depth instruction that blends technical guidance with real-world application. Whether you are new to school finance or a seasoned professional, the sessions are



designed to meet you where you are—helping you sharpen skills, expand your knowledge base, and approach complex accounting challenges with greater confidence.

Conference sessions explore a wide range of timely accounting and finance topics, including GASB updates, fund balance management, short-term borrowing and debt planning, and strategies for navigating

increasingly complex financial reporting requirements. Attendees can also participate in hands-on learning sessions on tools such as Excel and Google Data Studio, providing practical techniques for analyzing, visualizing, and communicating financial data more effectively.

A key component of the Accounting Conference is the DPI Spring Finance Workshop, where School Financial



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Services staff share important updates, clarify reporting expectations, and provide insight into statewide finance processes that impact districts each year. This session provides attendees with direct access to DPI expertise and helps ensure districts remain aligned with current guidance. Additionally, DPI staff will be available to answer your questions throughout the conference at the DPI Help Desk!

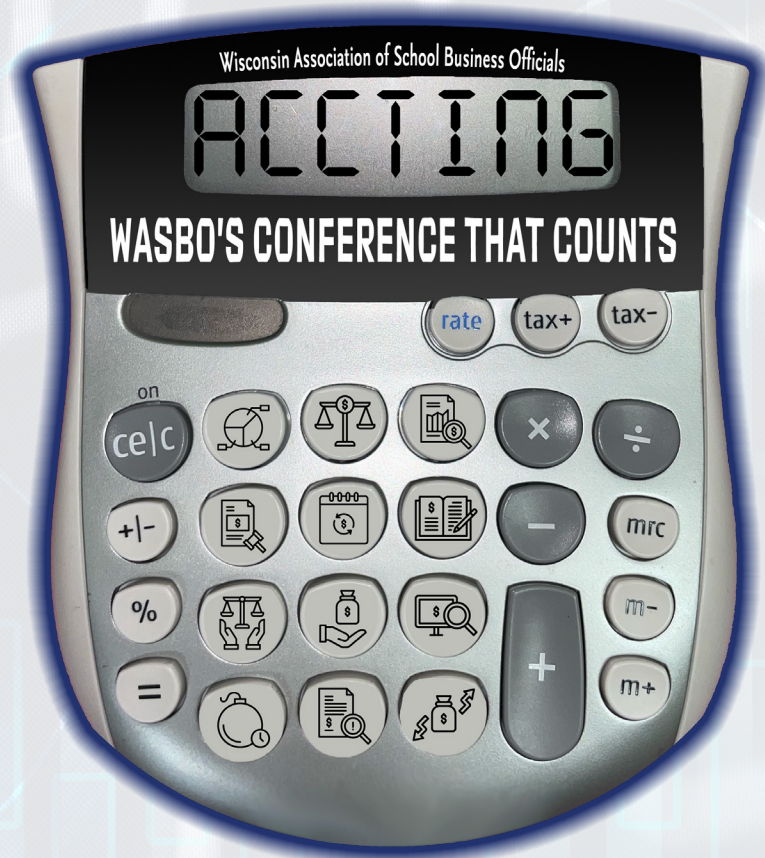
In addition to structured learning, the Accounting Conference provides opportunities for meaningful peer connections. Roundtable discussions and networking opportunities enable participants to share experiences, compare approaches, and learn from colleagues facing similar challenges—often leading to ideas and solutions that extend well beyond the conference.

Early-bird pricing is available for those who register by March 4, 2026, and discounted rates are offered to districts sending multiple attendees. Full conference details, including the

schedule, session descriptions, registration information, and hotel accommodations, are available at [WASBO.com/Accting](https://wasbo.com/accting).

If your goal is to strengthen account-

ing practices, stay current on financial standards, and bring back practical tools you can use immediately, the WASBO Accounting Conference delivers focused learning that truly adds up!



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Mud, ice, and cleats

Protecting playable fields this spring

Every spring, as snow melts and temperatures slowly rise across Wisconsin, high school athletes and coaches eagerly prepare to begin their seasons. Yet the excitement of early spring sports collides with a persistent reality: the climate of the Upper Midwest simply does not support reliable, safe, and playable natural grass fields in March and April.

This misalignment between athletic scheduling and environmental conditions creates not only logistical headaches for schools but also potential risks to student-athlete safety and long-term damage to athletic facilities.

Climate reality:

Wisconsin's late spring

The numbers tell the story. In Wisconsin, the **average March high is 42°F with overnight lows around 25°F**. By April, highs rise to about 56°F, but lows still dip into the 30s.

For healthy turfgrass growth, however, soil temperatures must reach 55–65°F, and nighttime air temperatures should consistently stay in the 60s. These conditions typically aren't present until **late April or May** in most parts of the state. Here is a [website to view the average soil temperature in your area](#).

In addition to temperature, **March and April are among the wettest months**, averaging 2.5–3 inches of precipitation. Fields are often satu-



John Stangler

Director of Buildings & Grounds
Pewaukee School District

rated or still thawing, making them highly vulnerable to damage from foot traffic or play.

Turf science: Why early use damages fields

Athletic fields in Wisconsin are typically established with cool-season grasses, such as Kentucky bluegrass or perennial ryegrass. Although durable under favorable conditions, these grasses are dormant in early spring. Dormant turf cannot recover from stress—every divot, rut, or cleat mark becomes a lasting scar.

The consequences include:

- **Soil compaction** that reduces drainage and root growth.
- **Crown and root damage** that kills large patches of turf.
- **Uneven surfaces** that create trip hazards and increase injury risk.
- **Costly repairs** requiring re-seeding, aeration, and topdressing at a time when grounds crews are already stretched thin.

Once damaged in March or April, a

natural grass field may never fully recover for the rest of the year, affecting not only soccer and lacrosse but also fall football and physical education programs.

Athlete safety: A hidden risk

Playing on compromised fields isn't just a facilities issue—it's a health issue. According to the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA), cold, wet conditions increase muscle stiffness and reduce reaction time, thereby increasing the risk of strains and sprains.

Uneven or muddy fields further increase the likelihood of falls, twisted ankles, and knee injuries.

In contrast, artificial turf surfaces—while not perfect—offer a consistent and reliable option for early spring play. Many Wisconsin districts report **160–200 hours of spring use** on turf over the past several seasons, underscoring the necessity of turf when natural fields are unplayable.

The scheduling problem

It is important to recognize that the problem is not a failure of field preparation, but of season timing. Wisconsin's high school sports calendar, set by the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA), places the start of spring seasons in late March.

This schedule consistently exceeds

the climate's capacity to support safe outdoor play on natural surfaces. The result is a cycle of frustration: coaches and athletes want their home fields, facilities staff know the fields aren't ready, and the grass itself simply cannot perform under the conditions.

Working together: Facilities and athletics

The solution requires **collaboration between school athletic departments and facilities teams**. Successful districts have adopted a proactive approach that includes:

- **Clear communication:** Facilities staff provide data-driven updates on soil temps, precipitation, and field readiness.
- **Alternative planning:** Athletic departments schedule early-season practices and games on arti-

cial turf or off-site facilities when necessary.

- **Long-term strategy:** District leadership advocates with WIAA for a reconsideration of spring start dates or builds scheduling flexibility into calendars.
- **Field protection policies:** Establishing clear thresholds for field use (e.g., soil temperature benchmarks or moisture limits) helps avoid premature play.

Ultimately, when athletics and facilities operate as partners rather than opponents, the student-athletes benefit from safer playing conditions and well-maintained facilities year-round.

Conclusion

The desire to play spring sports on home fields in March and April is

understandable—but in Wisconsin's climate, it is rarely realistic.

The science of turfgrass, coupled with athlete safety data, shows that early-season play on natural grass is both risky and damaging.

As K-12 districts balance student experience, athlete safety, and long-term facility sustainability, the key lies in **setting realistic expectations, using available alternatives such as turf, and advocating for calendar reforms that better reflect Wisconsin's climate**.

Until then, patience—and strong collaboration between athletic and facilities staff—remains the most valuable resource for schools navigating spring sports in the Upper Midwest.

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Besting the school drill evaluation paperwork trap

In Wisconsin, school safety is not just about how we respond during a crisis. It also includes how we document and review our preparation afterward. Under **Wis. Stat. § 118.07(4)(cp)**, school districts must conduct an annual drill to practice the proper response to a school violence event.

What often gets overlooked is that the requirement does not end once the drill is completed. The statute also requires a written evaluation and follow-up action.

This is where districts could run into trouble — not because drills are not happening, but because paperwork is not always completed, submitted, or formally accepted.

This is what many districts experience as the “**Drill Evaluation Paperwork Trap**.” The drill happens, everyone moves on, and months later, it becomes clear the documentation was never fully closed out.

The 30-day rule: What is actually required

The statute is clear. After the required drill is conducted, a written evaluation must be submitted to the School Board within 30 days of holding the drill.

This is not optional paperwork. It is part of the legal requirement.

A basic but complete evaluation



Andy Daniels

Director of Buildings and Grounds/Safety Coordinator, Franklin Public Schools.

should include:

- A brief summary of what occurred during the drill
- What went well and what needs improvement
- Who participated and what roles were used
- Timing and any deviations from the plan
- Recommended changes, follow-up, or training needs

The purpose of the evaluation is not to criticize staff. It is meant to document learning, improvement, and readiness, and to keep the board informed. Acceptance of the evaluation needs to be reflected in the board meeting minutes. Break down whether evaluations are meant to be district-wide summaries or broken down by school.

Why February is a key checkpoint

Most districts conduct major drills during the first semester. That makes February a good time to step back and

confirm the paperwork side is complete.

February is important because:

- **Board meetings** are typically back on a regular schedule
- **Compliance reviews and audits** often look back at first-semester activity
- **Planning for training and resources** later in the year is underway

If drills were conducted earlier in the school year but the evaluations were never formally accepted by the board, February is the right time to close that gap. Adding a review in May is also a great checkpoint so you can clean up paperwork before key Administrators leave for the summer.

How we track and manage drill compliance

At Franklin Public Schools, we use a central **tracking spreadsheet housed within our Safety Checklist Document** to monitor all drills across the district, including school violence drills and other required exercises.

This centralized approach allows us to see, at a glance:

- When each drill occurred
- When the evaluation is due
- When it was submitted to the board
- When it was formally accepted and recorded in the minutes

This single tracking tool has helped

reduce missed deadlines and ensure accountability across schools. We also conducted our **first school violence drill in September**, using a **Lock-down** drill for all schools that follow the Standard Response Protocol (SRP).

We believe this is the most important drill to start the year with, as it sets expectations early and reinforces consistent language and response.

Once that drill is completed, the evaluation is prepared and submitted to the School Board within the **required 30-day window**. Starting strong in September makes it easier to stay compliant for the rest of the year.

Practical steps to avoid the "Paperwork Trap"

Most documentation issues come down to process, not effort. A few simple habits can make a big difference:

- **Plan the evaluation before the drill happens:** When a drill is scheduled, the evaluation timeline should already be on the calendar.
- **Use a simple, standard template:** Consistency helps ensure nothing is missed and makes

future reviews easier.

- **Build board submission into the process:** Once the evaluation is complete, it should be forwarded to the person who prepares the board agenda.
- **Confirm acceptance in the board minutes:** The evaluation is not complete until it is formally accepted and recorded in the minutes.
- **Track deadlines visually:** Use a shared safety calendar or a tracking spreadsheet to prevent missed deadlines.

Common issues to watch for

Some problems show up repeatedly:

- The drill occurred, but no evaluation was written
- The evaluation was completed, but never submitted to the board
- The evaluation was submitted, but acceptance was not reflected in the minutes

Why this matters

Drill evaluations are more than paperwork. They:

- Improve procedures based on real observations

- Document readiness over time
- Provide transparency to the board and community
- Support alignment with the district's Comprehensive School Safety Plan

Conclusion

The Drill Evaluation Paperwork Trap is easy to fall into, but it is also easy to avoid with planning and follow-through. February is a good time to review first-semester drills, confirm evaluations were submitted, and verify board acceptance.

Taking the time now to close these loops helps ensure districts are prepared — not just for audits, but for future drills and real-world situations where preparation truly matters.

- For more information on drill requirements in Wisconsin, see the state statute here: [Wisconsin Statute § 118.07\(4\)\(cp\) — School Safety Drill Requirements](#). This section of state law outlines the requirement for annual drills and the associated evaluation and reporting expectations.

Figure 1: Franklin School Building Safety Checklist



FRANKLIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School Building Safety Checklist			
Category	Action Items	Who's Responsible	How often
School Building Safety Plans	☐ Review and update your building safety plan content ☐ Provide training information on your building safety plan content to staff ☐ Contact Safe Haven location (2025 supported by Safety Coordinators)	Principals	Annually in August
Drills	☐ Review FPS Safety Drill Schedule for specifics and drill requirements (schedule drills accordingly) ☐ Keep School Drill Report 2025-26 up to date after each monthly occurrence ☐ Notify families a week prior to drill using TEMPLATE: FAMILY PRE-DRILL(S) NOTIFICATION ☐ Notify families same day that drill has been completed using TEMPLATE: FAMILIES POST DRILL(S) COMMUNICATION	Principals	Monthly September - May

Created by Andy Daniels.

Securing the tap

Ensuring safe drinking water in schools

Wisconsin school districts are facing a new regulatory landscape

for water safety, driven by the **2025 Senate Bill 104** (and its companion AB 104). This legislation aims to close gaps in federal law by requiring rigorous management of lead and PFAS. Federal law does not currently mandate school-wide lead testing. This rule applies to public or private schools served by a municipal water system or a private on-site well.

1. Legislative mandate: SB 104 / AB 104

This proposed law requires all public and private schools in Wisconsin to transition from traditional "bubbler" fountains to high-filtration systems.

- **Mandatory filtration:** By August 1, 2027, schools must install filtered bottle-filling stations at a minimum of one per 100 occupants.
- **Drinking water management plan:** Within 15 months of the bill becoming law, schools must map all water outlets and categorize them as human consumption (filtered), non-human consumption (e.g., irrigation), or permanently shut off.
- **Testing and shutdown thresholds:**
 - **Lead (1–5 ppb):** Schools must check filter installation and retest.



Bill Freeman
President

Environmental Management Consulting, Inc.

- **Lead (>5 ppb) or PFAS (above state/federal standards):** Requires immediate shutdown of the outlet, posting warning signs, and filter replacement.

- **Reporting:** If retesting still shows high levels, schools must notify parents and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) within 30 days.

2. Regulatory compliance: SDWA and NR 809

Schools must also align with the Wisconsin Administrative Code Ch. NR 809, the state's primary regulation for the [Safe Drinking Water Act \(SDWA\)](#).

- **Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) updates:** New revisions to [NR 809](#) require community water systems to begin testing for lead at elementary schools and childcare facilities starting in November 2027.

- **PFAS standards:** NR 809 currently sets a combined limit of 70 parts per trillion (ppt) for PFOA and PFOS. However, Wisconsin is moving toward more stringent [federal PFAS standards](#), which set limits as low as 4 ppt for individual compounds.
- **Sampling protocol:** Proper testing requires an 8- to 18-hour stagnation period (no water use) before collecting a "first-draw" sample from a cold-water tap.

3. Preparation for schools

Districts should take immediate steps to prepare for these overlapping requirements:

- **Infrastructure audit:** Identify every water outlet and determine which can be converted to [filtered bottle-filling stations](#).
- **Grant Applications:** While SB 104 authorizes the [DPI to award grants](#) for filtration costs, funding is not yet fully allocated. Districts may need to work with the Joint Committee on Finance for supplemental funding.
- **Staff Training:** Utilize the EPA 3Ts guidance (Training, Testing, and Taking Action) to train facilities staff on sampling and remediation.

As of early 2026, the [2025 Senate Bill 104](#) remains active in the legislative session.

Savings in Action

CESA purchasing

PROBLEM:

After receiving a generous donation from a Community Business Partner, the Rosendale-Brandon School District had the opportunity to purchase a variety of critical learning resources and tools to support students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The wide range of purchasing needs across these grade levels presented a challenge in finding the right fit for a supplier who could provide a seamless, cost-effective purchasing solution.

SOLUTION:

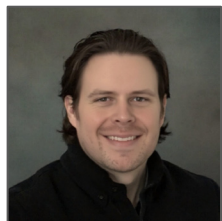
Selecting Quill as their partner allowed the Rosendale-Brandon team to utilize one trusted partner to source the entirety their entire list of needs, providing a streamlined purchasing and fulfillment experience, high-quality, durable products, all at industry-best pricing.

RESULTS:

By utilizing the available CESA Purchasing contract with Quill, the Rosendale-Brandon school community experienced significant savings on their overall purchasing costs, allowing them to secure their extensive list of needed items, while staying within budget. Partnering with CESA Purchasing and Quill demonstrates the Rosendale-Brandon School District's commitment to following best practices for purchasing, maximizing donated funds from their generous Community Partner, and positively impacting student learning and success across six grade levels!

Vendor	Quill	Big Box Online Retailer	Non-AEPA Vendor
Pricing	CESA Purchasing + Quill Contract = Preferred Discount Pricing Saving \$3,000 + over MSRP	22% Higher than CESA Purchasing + Quill Contract Pricing	16% Higher than CESA Purchasing + Quill Contract Pricing

**Pricing comparisons reflect this specific quote via CESA Purchasing pre-negotiated contract with Quill*



Quill

"Quill is proud to partner with CESA Purchasing to help schools across Wisconsin maximize their funding and deliver more for students. As a nationwide supplier with decades of experience, we understand the importance of compliance, competitive pricing, and time savings for educational institutions. Through CESA's cooperative program, schools gain access to Quill's pre-negotiated bid pricing and category discounts on essential classroom and office supplies—ensuring every dollar stretches further. This partnership has been instrumental in supporting districts that want to make the most of their resources while simplifying the purchasing process. Leveraging the buying power of AEPA and CESA members allows us to provide exceptional value and service that's hard to match. On this project, Quill delivered significant percentage savings compared to major online and non-AEPA vendors. This is proof that cooperative purchasing creates real value for districts." — Aaron Nielsen, Assistant Partnership Manager; Quill

"I work for an Elementary School in Rosendale, WI. We had a very generous local business offer to purchase all of our student's school supplies for grades 4K-5 for the 25-26 school year. While this was a huge blessing for our school and families, we were not sure how it would work to purchase all of the supplies for 409 students. Our business manager, Cindy Bailey suggested that I talk to Meghan Cropp at CESA Purchasing, who then connected me with the team at Quill. They were so helpful! I made a spreadsheet of all of the supplies we needed and Quill came up with a quote for all of it that saved us almost \$3,000! After we accepted the quote, they put the order through for us and we received all of our items within two weeks! The Quill team checked back with me post delivery to make sure we had gotten everything and were satisfied with the products as well! Highly recommend!" — Dawn Balsitis, Secretary; Rosendale-Brandon School District



Rosendale-Brandon
School District



"Rosendale-Brandon is a great example of how CESA Purchasing can provide support to Wisconsin Districts via our Vendor Contracts to receive not only industry-best pricing, but also to ensure they are selecting and partnering with the highest-quality, category-leading partners! We are proud to be partnered with the Quill team as they consistently provide outstanding customer service, an easy to use online 'one stop shop' for school's purchasing needs, as well as an easy to leverage pre-negotiated CESA Purchasing contract discount that is available to all Wisconsin schools. Rosendale-Brandon is a shining example of responsible purchasing put into action!" — Meghan Cropp, Partnerships Manager; CESA Purchasing

"Partnering with CESA Purchasing and Quill demonstrates the Rosendale-Brandon School District's commitment to following best practices for purchasing, maximizing the donated funds from their generous Community Partner"

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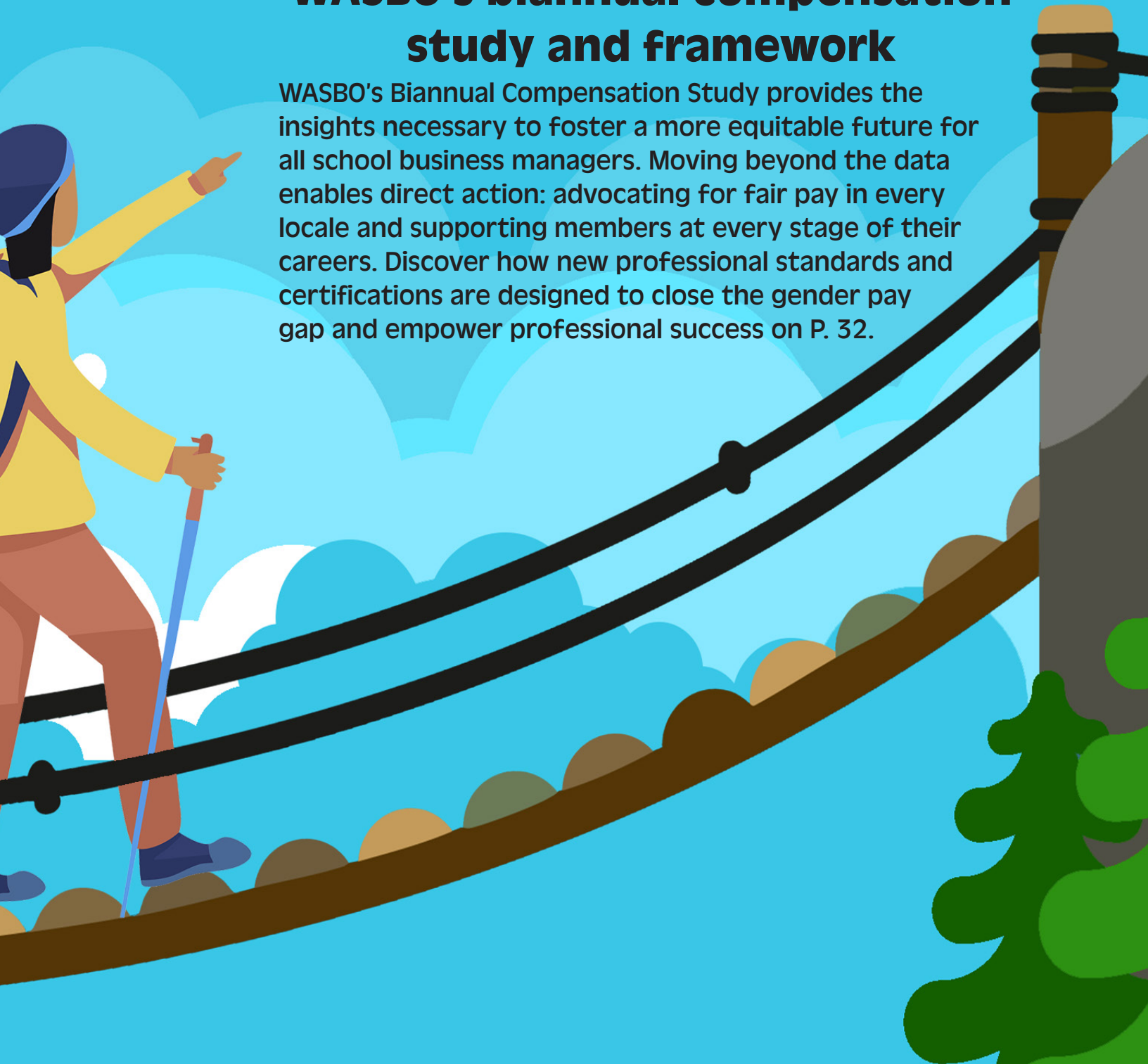
Bridging the



ne pay gap

WASBO's biannual compensation study and framework

WASBO's Biannual Compensation Study provides the insights necessary to foster a more equitable future for all school business managers. Moving beyond the data enables direct action: advocating for fair pay in every locale and supporting members at every stage of their careers. Discover how new professional standards and certifications are designed to close the gender pay gap and empower professional success on P. 32.



Bridging the pay gap

WASBO's biannual compensation study and framework

Wisconsin school business managers have taken an approximately \$7,000 pay cut over the last nine years, as salaries failed to keep pace with the Covid-era surge in inflation (see *Figure 1*).

Women in the role have borne the brunt of this pay cut, with the gender pay gap widening significantly to about \$20,600 in 2025 (see *Figure 2*).

Record inflationary spikes that [peaked in June 2022](#) exacerbated gender pay gaps for both superintendents and business managers, with superinten-

dents' gender pay gap rising to about \$8,800 in 2025 (see *Figure 4*). Since school district revenue limit increases have consistently failed to keep pace with inflation, this finding is not surprising.

This analysis uses data from the 2017-2025 [DPI All Staff Report](#), excluding prior years because the [DPI cautioned](#) against comparing to prior years due to a reporting system transition.

All compensation (the sum of salary and fringe benefits) figures have been adjusted for inflation to reflect purchasing power in June 2017 (based on the [Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers](#), or CPI-U). For the



Ryan Silvola
WASBO Marketing &
Communications Coordinator

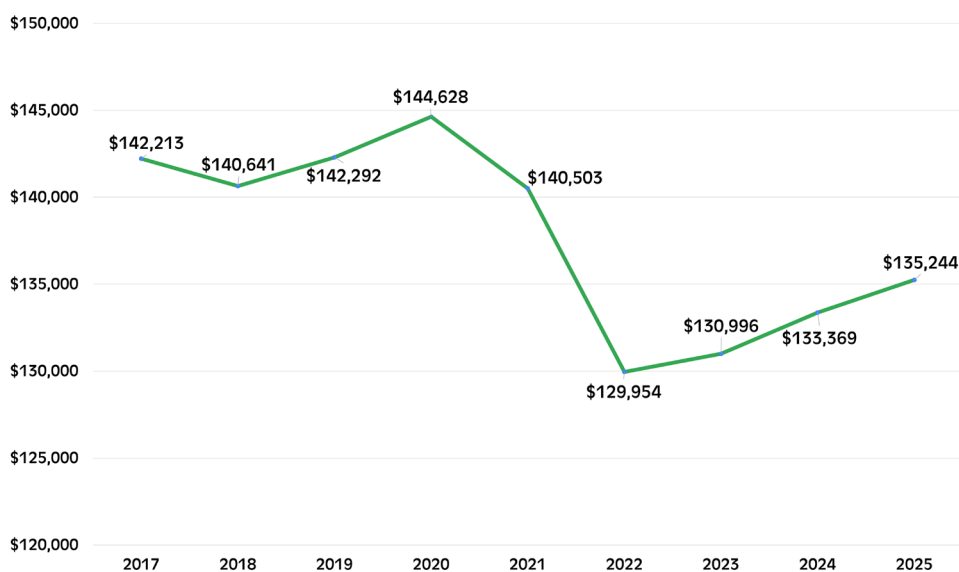
turnover analysis, we used a method similar to that used by the Wisconsin Policy Forum in its teacher turnover [research](#).

Men and women serving as business managers in Wisconsin begin their careers with nearly identical real compensation, with a gender pay gap of only \$368 in their first two years of service in 2025 (see *Figure 9*).

However, a significant gender pay gap emerges with seniority and has been further exacerbated by post-pandemic inflation, particularly as men receive raises while women's real compensation remains relatively stagnant (see *Figures 10 & 11*). One reason for this is that there are significantly fewer women in the state's top-earning business manager positions (see *Figure 5*).

Regarding recruitment and retention during this period, business manager turnover rates are surprisingly the most volatile, reaching the highest annual rate (20.8% in 2024) over the last eight years, compared with superintendents, principals, and teachers. Superintendents have reached the second-highest eight-year annual

Figure 1: Average Wis. business manager real compensation by year in 2017 dollars, 2017-2025



Source: DPI Public All Staff Report | See [Methodology](#).

turnover rate of 20.3% in 2023 (see Figure 8).

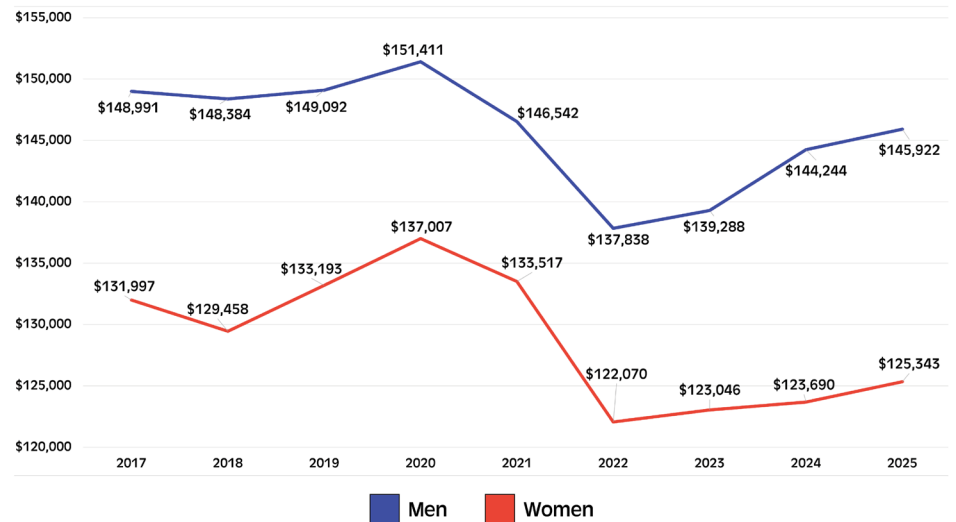
Additionally, a higher proportion of business managers have left the profession than have switched districts each year from 2017 to 2025, when comparing the percentage of employees who transfer to another position in a different district the following year (*moves*) and the percentage of employees who appear to leave the profession in Wisconsin (*leaves*; see Figure 7).

WASBO now offers multiple certifications through [WASBO University](#) to help our members learn, grow, and advocate for their compensation. These efforts may help to narrow the pay gap. WASBO has also developed the [Wisconsin School Business Officials Standards](#) in part to promote high standards and role compatibility across the state.

Barry said compensation in the public sector tends to be steadier than in the private sector, meaning public-sector salaries don't rise or fall as sharply as they can in the private sector. He said the lower compensation figures in this article likely reflect sharp COVID-era inflation, and that revenue limit increases haven't kept pace, making it difficult for compensation to keep up with inflation.

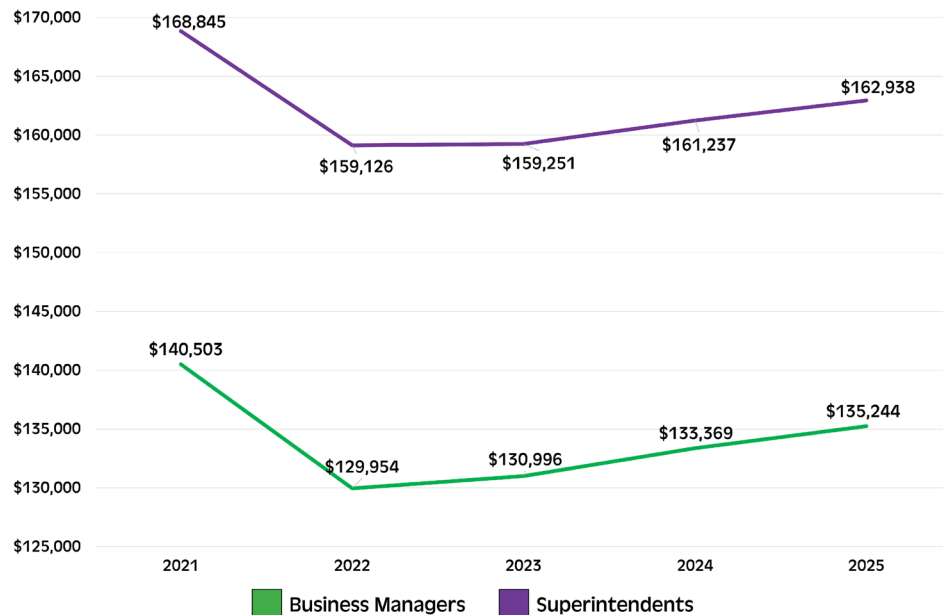
"In our world where the salaries are so public, and school boards have to vote on them, there's always concern

Figure 2: Average Wis. business manager real compensation by gender and year (in 2017 dollars), 2017-2025



Source: DPI Public All Staff Report | [See Methodology](#).

Figure 3: Average Wis. business manager and superintendent real compensation by year (in 2017 dollars), 2021-2025



Source: DPI Public All Staff Report | [See Methodology](#).

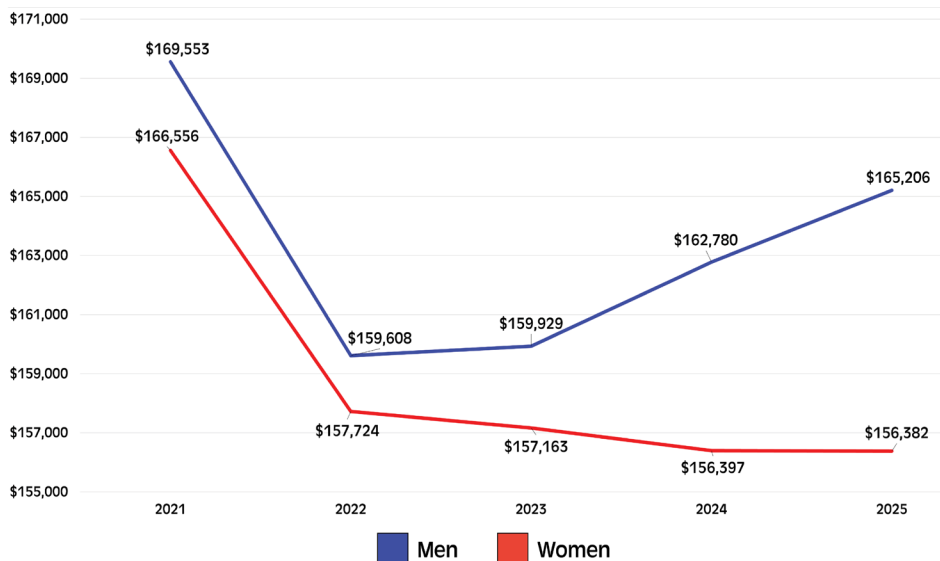
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Methodology & Definitions

For details on the definitions and methodology in this analysis, please click on this box or visit [WASBO.com/BridgeMethods](https://wasbo.com/BridgeMethods).

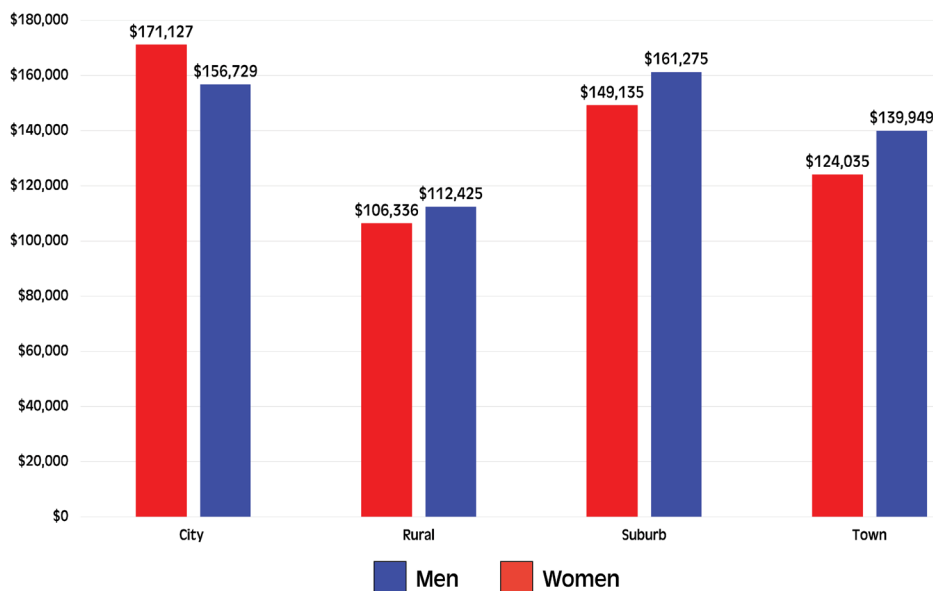
Bridging the pay gap

Figure 4: Average Wis. superintendent real compensation by gender & year (in 2017 dollars), 2021-2025



Source: DPI Public All Staff Report | See [Methodology](#).

Figure 5: Wis. business manager average real compensation by locale and gender (in 2017 dollars), 2025



Source: DPI Public All Staff Report | See [Methodology](#).

Continued from P. 33

about administrative pay,” Barry said. “Boards might think they’re being fair by offering 2-4% raises. When you stack that up against inflation, running as high as 9% a couple of years ago, this is the kind of result you get.”

A widening gender pay gap trend in the school business office

Women serving as business managers bear the brunt of the overall \$7,000 pay gap, with their wages decreasing by approximately \$6,700 in inflation-adjusted dollars from 2017 to 2025. Male business managers, on the other hand, lost only about \$3,000 to inflation over the same period. Overall, the gender pay gap among business managers has increased by approximately \$7,500 (58%) over the last five years, to about \$20,600 (*see Figure 2*).

After the gender pay gap among business managers narrowed overall between 2017 and 2021, it began to widen in June 2022, when the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U) increased [by 9.1%](#) over the previous 12 months, a [40-year high](#), and the absolute peak of the post-pandemic inflation surge.

From 2017 to 2021, the gender pay gap among business managers narrowed, reaching a nine-year historic low of \$13,025 in 2021. However, June 2022 inflation was a blow to paychecks for both men and women. Male business managers lost \$8,705

(5.9%) in real compensation from 2021 to 2022, while women business managers lost about \$11,447 (8.6%) over that year. Also, the pay gap rose to \$15,767, an increase of \$2,742 (21%) in 2022 (see Figure 2).

Similar gender pay gap for superintendents

The June 2022 inflation increase appears to have widened gender pay gaps not only among business managers but also among superintendents.

The inflationary spike from 2021 to 2022 had a similar impact on real compensation for both genders: men serving as superintendents saw a \$9,945 (5.9%) pay cut, while women in the role lost \$8,832 (5.3%). That brought the gender gap for superintendents to a five-year low of \$1,884 in 2022.

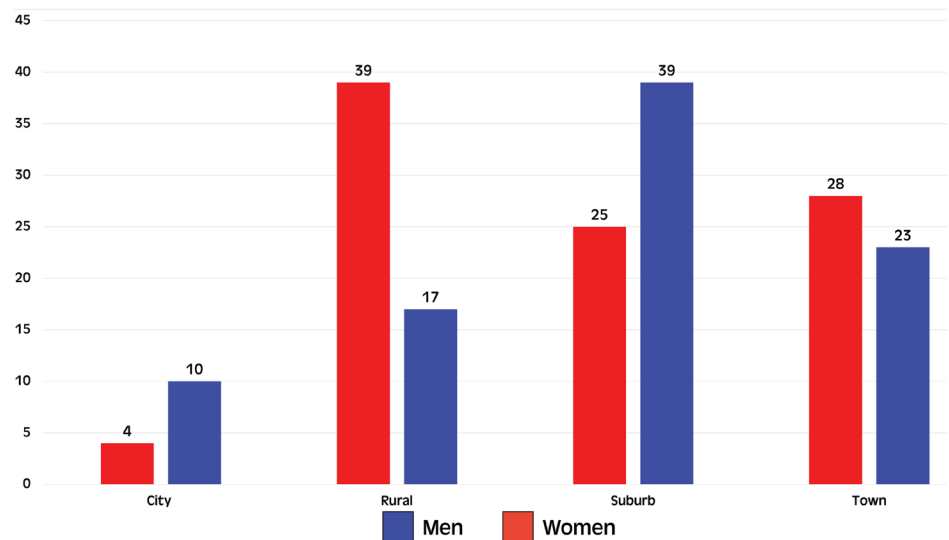
However, the gender pay gap among superintendents increased dramatically to \$8,824 in 2025 (see Figure 4).

Women are losing out on the top-paying jobs

For the women leading Wisconsin's school business offices, compensation disparities persist beyond the inflation-adjusted pay cut. Isolating 2025, an analysis of locales (cities, suburbs, towns, and rural areas) shows that women serving as business managers in city school districts earn \$14,398 (9.2%) more than their male counterparts (see Figure 5). When it comes to the other three school district locales, though, women earn less:

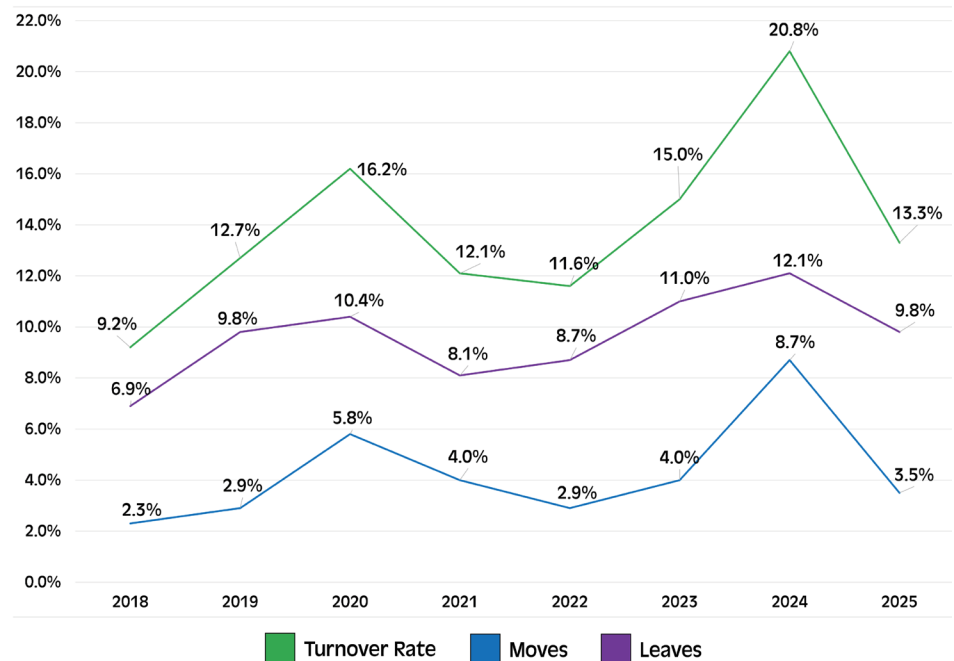
- In suburban districts, women earn \$12,140 (7.5%) less than men.
- In districts in towns, women earn \$15,914 (11.4%) less than men.
- In rural districts, women earn \$6,089 (5.4%) less than men.

Figure 6: Wis. business manager count by locale and gender, 2025



Source: DPI Public All Staff Report | See [Methodology](#).

Figure 7: Wis. business manager turnover rates, 2018-2025



Source: DPI Public All Staff Report | See [Methodology](#).

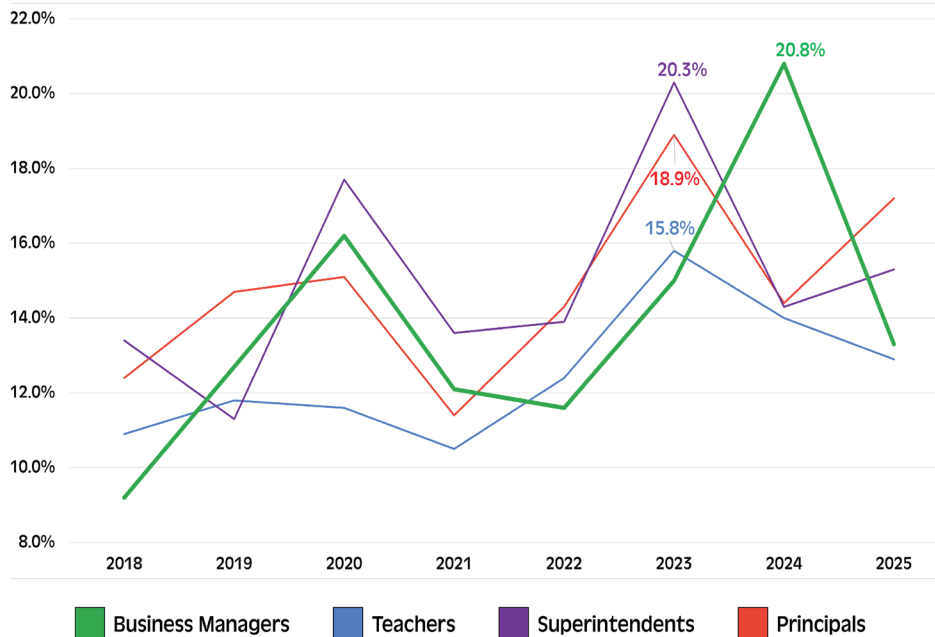
Additionally, men outnumbered women by 10 to 4 in city school districts and by 39 to 25 in suburban districts. In the smaller districts, women outnumbered men by 39 to 17 in rural districts and by 28 to 23 in town districts. Since the total average real

compensation for business managers in the following locales is \$160,842 for cities, \$156,533 for suburbs, \$131,211 for towns, and \$108,184 for rural districts, fewer women business

Continued on P. 36

Bridging the pay gap

Figure 8: Wis. superintendent, business manager, principal, and teacher turnover rates, 2018-2025



Source for Superintendent, Principal and Teacher Data: [Wisconsin Policy Forum](#).
Source for Business Manager Data: DPI Public All Staff Report | See [Methodology](#).

Figure 9: Gender pay gap for Wis. business managers (two-year average snapshots in 2017 dollars), 2025



Source: DPI Public All Staff Report | See [Methodology](#).

Continued from P. 35

managers serving in those “top earning” locales is part of the reason why they earn less than men. Additionally, women earn less than men in three of four locales, and only 30% of the city school district's business offices are run by women (*see Figure 6*).

Additionally, there are proportionally fewer people serving in top business manager roles in rural areas and towns, and women are [more represented](#) in lower-paying business manager positions than in higher-paying ones.

Gender pay gap widens with experience

Despite men and women business managers starting with nearly identical pay, a significant gap opens as they gain seniority.

In 2025, managers with 1-2 years of experience earned nearly identical amounts across genders, with a \$368 difference in real compensation (*see Figure 9*). That same year, however, there was a \$45,705 pay gap between men and women with 25-26 years of experience, and a \$18,193 pay gap between the two genders with 30-31 years of experience (*see Figures 10 & 11*).

This result is partly due to career path choices and opportunities identified above, with males occupying most of the highest-paid jobs across the state. Additionally, although the gender pay gap is similar among entry-level business managers, overall average

real compensation has declined by \$10,287 (9.1%) since 2017 (see *Figure 12*).

Overall, the gender pay gap varies with years of experience, with the following 2025 gender pay gaps (see *Figures 10 & 11*):

- \$7,373 (5.8%) for business managers at 4-5 years of service.
- \$22,645 (14.9%) for business managers at 10-11 years of service.
- \$6,367 (5.5%) for business managers at 15-16 years of service.

Business manager turnover rates are becoming more volatile

Business managers had the highest annual turnover rate (20.8%) among superintendents, principals, and teachers from 2018 to 2025, with 8.8% of them moving districts and 12.1% leaving the profession in 2024 (see *Figures 7 & 8*).

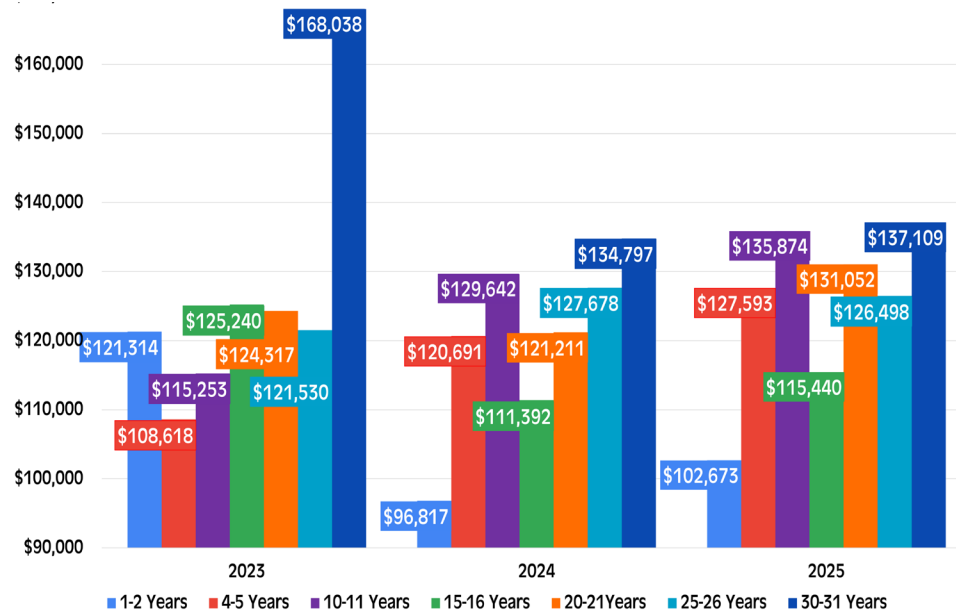
The business manager turnover spike occurred one year after Wisconsin's teachers, principals, and superintendents experienced their largest spike in 16 years, according to the [Wisconsin Policy Forum](#).

The Forum reported [2023 turnover rates](#) of 15.8% for teachers, 18.9% for principals, and 20.3% for superintendents, indicating similar turnover patterns across these positions (see *Figure 8*).

In each year calculated, more business managers left the profession than moved to another district. Moves in the 2024 spike were more substantial than in any other year, but they still didn't surpass the leaves (see *Figure 7*).

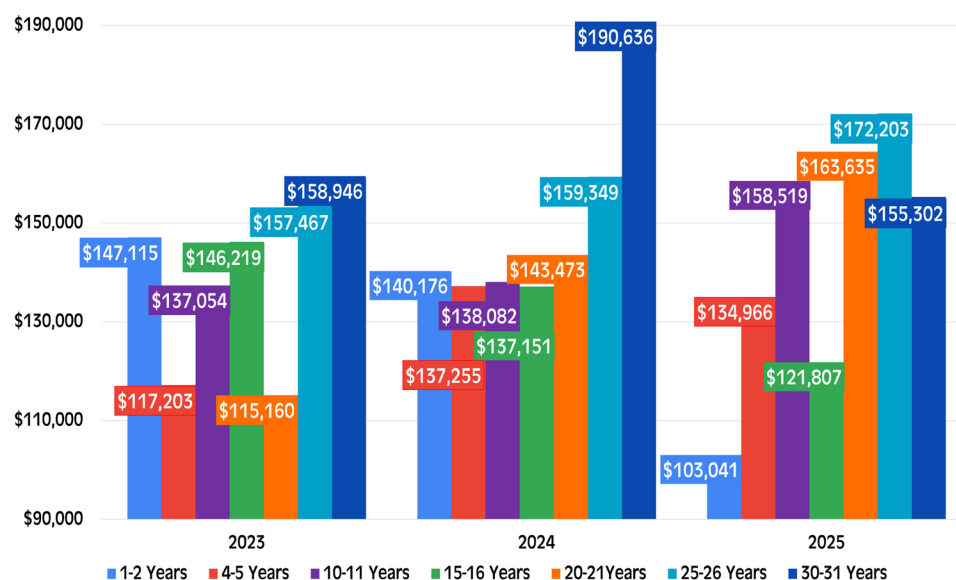
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Figure 10: Real compensation by years of experience for Wis. WOMEN business managers (two-year average snapshots in 2017 dollars), 2023-2025



Source: DPI Public All Staff Report | See [Methodology](#).

Figure 11: Real compensation by years of experience for Wis. MEN business managers (two-year average snapshots in 2017 dollars), 2023-2025



Source: DPI Public All Staff Report | See [Methodology](#).

Bridging the pay gap

Continued from P. 37

Historical data suggest that turnover among principals and superintendents is a leading indicator, typically preceding trends in business manager turnover by one year (*see Figure 8*). Based on this correlation, a potential increase in business manager turnover in 2026 may be on the horizon.

Closing the gaps in business manager compensation

For most of his career, Barry said there were fewer women business managers than there are today. However, that number has risen to the point where more women than men now serve in that role.

[In 2017](#), 60% of all business managers

were men. [By 2022](#), the gender ratio was essentially balanced.

Since then, there have always been a handful more women than men business managers. The next step for WASBO, Barry said, is to close (and eventually eliminate) this gender pay gap.

“We’re very fortunate to have the quality of business managers that we currently have,” Barry said. “I would say that the demands of the role, financial, technical, and political, are more challenging than they were just 10 years ago. Also, not all these business manager roles are defined the same way, especially when comparing districts of different sizes and locations.”

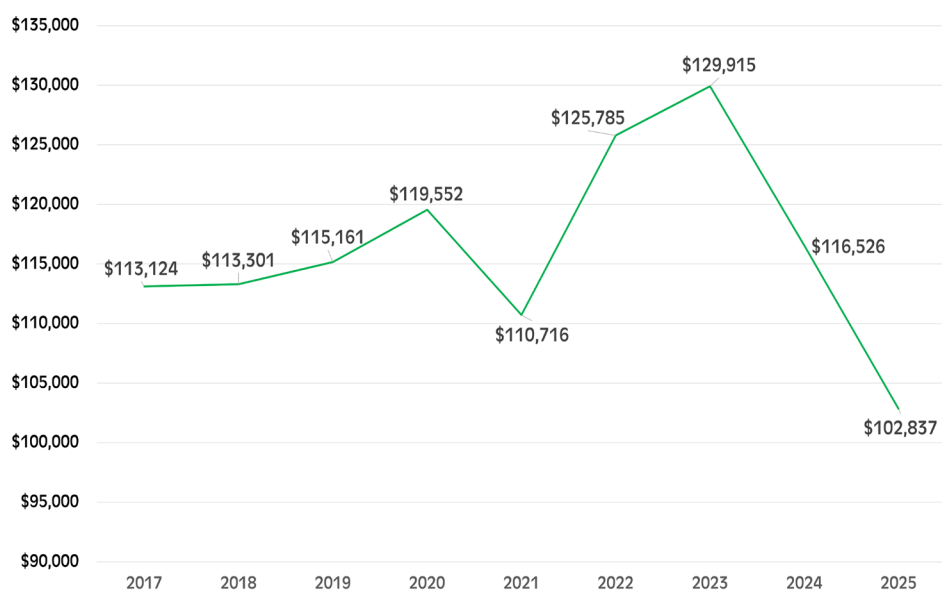
To close the gap, Barry said WASBO

recently developed the [Wisconsin School Business Officials Standards](#), which include:

- Providing an overview of the performance expectations for Wisconsin school business officials in financial management, improvement, sustainable operations, communication, and leadership.
- Establishing a benchmark for professional excellence, enhancing school business management, and supporting financial stewardship.

“These standards are vital to define what good business management work looks like, and that’s a necessary first step to ensuring high-quality business services in every school district, and that will help make the case for all business managers to be adequately paid,” Barry said.

Figure 12: Real compensation for Wis. business managers, 1-2 years of experience (two-year average in 2017 dollars), 2017-2025



Source: DPI Public All Staff Report | See [Methodology](#).

WASBO’s advocacy for the profession includes highlighting the substantial return on investment that business managers deliver, which Barry said entails ensuring that superintendents and board members understand that the operations component of schools complements instruction.

“Some leaders may think of the budget as a zero-sum game, meaning every dollar invested in the business office is one less dollar invested in instruction,” Barry said. “Our perspective is that business officials’ compensation and worth to the district should be viewed in terms of how the role can not only pay for itself but generate a significant return on that investment.”

The goal is to have a high-functioning

"Some leaders may think of the budget as a zero-sum game, meaning every dollar invested in the business office is one less dollar invested in instruction. Our perspective is that business officials' compensation and worth to the district should be viewed in terms of how the role can not only pay for itself but generate a significant return on that investment."



Mike Barry
WASBO Executive Director

business office in all 421 school districts. To do this, Barry said WASBO has created 10 new [WASBO University certification programs](#) to help districts develop their own business managers and advance existing business managers (and other operations officials) in their careers.

"The magic in WASBO's professional development is that it's very peer-to-peer oriented. All of us know so much more than any one of us could possibly know, and facilitating that transfer of knowledge, especially to the young folks, is a key part of our mission that we take seriously and are working toward," Barry said.

This year, numerous city-level business manager positions are opening, including in La Crosse and Oshkosh. Barry encourages seasoned professionals to help "bridge the professional gap" by taking the leap into these larger district leadership positions.

"When one of our members steps up to take a bigger school district job, that creates a new and different vacancy. It creates a promotion path with a positive ripple effect across the state. It gives our newer professionals appropriate opportunities. As they grow their skills and advance, it will help narrow the seniority pay gap," Barry said.



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AI and school safety

Harnessing innovation while managing risk

Across Wisconsin and the nation, K–12 school districts face increasing pressure to strengthen safety and security while managing limited budgets, staffing constraints, and rising expectations from families and communities.

At the same time, artificial intelligence is moving quickly from an abstract concept to a set of practical tools that can support safer, more efficient school environments. For school business officials, facilities leaders, and administrators, the challenge is no longer whether AI will influence school safety, but how to adopt it responsibly, strategically, and in alignment with district values.

AI is not a single technology. It exists on a spectrum, ranging from narrow, task-specific tools to advanced systems that analyze context, patterns, and trends. Understanding this spectrum is essential for making informed decisions. When deployed thoughtfully, AI can enhance situational awareness, reduce false alarms, and support early intervention. When implemented without clarity or oversight, it can introduce unnecessary risk and erode trust.

One of the most visible applications of AI in schools today is video and computer vision. Traditional video analytics relied on rigid, rule-based algorithms that detected pixel-level changes in a video feed. These systems



Max Maier
Public Sector Account
Executive, Convergent



Phillip Craig
Account Executive
Convergent



Mark Schweitzer
Manager
Convergent

required extensive configuration, were labor-intensive to maintain, and often produced high rates of false alerts. As a result, many districts found limited value in early deployments of video analytics.

Modern AI-based video systems represent a significant evolution. Instead of coding rules, these systems are trained by showing the AI examples of what it should detect. Whether identifying loitering near an entrance, an abandoned object, or unsafe activity in a restricted area, AI “learns” from images and improves with feedback over time. This approach increases accuracy, shortens deployment timelines, and allows systems to adapt to the unique characteristics of each campus.

These capabilities support a wide range of use cases. Higher-risk scenarios may include visible firearm detection, aggression or fight detection, and watchlist-based facial detection, where legally and ethically appropriate. More common security applications include intrusion detection, crowd monitoring, and after-hours

loitering alerts. Safety-focused use cases extend further to help identify medical emergencies, slip hazards, smoke or fire conditions, and traffic flow challenges during arrival and dismissal.

A major advancement in AI video is the shift from simple detection to contextual understanding. Vision Language Models combine computer vision with large language models, enabling systems to interpret what is happening in a scene and describe it in meaningful terms. This allows users to interact with video systems using natural language rather than pre-defined filters or rigid criteria.

For school staff, this translates into more intuitive alerts and searches. Instead of navigating complex menus, users can request alerts such as “notify me when an unsafe condition is detected near the loading dock,” or search for specific events using conversational language. The result is faster access to critical information, improved response times, and greater usability for non-technical staff.

Deployment options play a critical role in how AI video systems function. On-camera analytics offer limited processing power but are cost-effective for basic detection tasks. Edge devices or on-site servers provide greater computing capacity, enabling advanced analytics and correlating activity across multiple cameras.

Cloud-based processing offers virtually unlimited scalability and supports the most advanced models, including Vision Language Models.

Many districts are adopting hybrid architectures that balance performance, cost, and bandwidth. In a hybrid approach, basic detection occurs locally, triggering deeper analysis only when necessary. This reduces continuous video streaming to the cloud, limits data exposure, and ensures advanced processing is used where it provides the most value.

Beyond video, machine learning offers powerful opportunities to improve school safety through data analysis. Machine learning systems can examine information from student information systems, access control platforms, attendance records, and disciplinary logs to identify trends and anomalies. This capability supports early intervention by flagging

behavioral or attendance changes that may indicate a student needs support before issues escalate.

Machine learning can also improve resource allocation by analyzing historical incident data to predict where and when security presence is most needed. For example, if incidents consistently spike near a gym during Friday dismissal, staffing and supervision can be adjusted proactively. In access control environments, machine learning can detect unusual badge activity, such as credential sharing or access attempts that deviate from established patterns.

Another emerging application is using AI agents to automate and streamline alarm workflows. AI agents receive inputs, analyze context, make decisions, and act with appropriate oversight.

In school security, this often means filtering nuisance alarms from genuine threats. False alarms can be automatically cleared, while verified events are escalated to staff for response. This reduces alert fatigue and allows security teams to focus on situations that truly require human judgment.

As districts explore these technologies, legal, privacy, and trust considerations must remain central. Wis-

consin does not currently have laws specifically regulating AI, but existing regulations still apply. AI systems that collect or analyze personally identifiable information may generate records protected under FERPA. Facial recognition and biometric technologies must comply with Wisconsin's biometric data breach notification requirements. Districts should involve legal counsel early to validate anticipated AI use cases.

Equally important is transparency. Clear communication about how AI is used, what data is collected, and where human oversight exists helps build trust among staff, students, and families. AI should be positioned as a tool that assists professionals, not as a replacement for human decision-making.

Successful AI adoption begins with clear objectives. Districts should focus on solving defined problems rather than deploying technology for its own sake. Platforms that integrate with existing systems reduce complexity and cost. Human oversight should be mandatory, and privacy protections must be built into every deployment. When approached thoughtfully, AI can strengthen school safety while supporting the mission of education in a responsible and sustainable way.

Key takeaway

AI is becoming a vital tool for enhancing K–12 safety and operations, shifting districts from reactive to proactive risk management. While it offers significant value in areas like video analytics and automation, successful adoption in Wisconsin schools requires human oversight and careful attention to privacy and legal standards.

Gallop toward your professional goals and get off to the races!

They're off! Join us May 14-15, 2026, at the Kalahari Convention Center in Wisconsin Dells for the [79th Annual WASBO Foundation Spring Conference & Exhibits](#) — where we set the pace for an energizing, high-impact professional development experience.

At the Spring Conference, school business leaders from across Wisconsin gather at the starting gate of innovation, strategy, and leadership growth. This premier annual event is designed to help you stay ahead of the field in today's fast-moving educational environment. Whether your focus is finance, operations, HR, facilities, food service, transportation, or district leadership, you'll find practical, relevant learning opportunities to help you lead your district to the winner's circle.

Run toward excellence

The 2026 conference delivers a full slate of educational sessions led by



experienced practitioners and experts who understand the unique challenges facing school business officials.

Topics include leadership strategy, school finance, compliance updates, operational efficiency, risk management, emerging trends, and cost-saving best practices. Each session is crafted to provide actionable insights you can take back to your district immediately — helping you build momentum and maintain a strong pace throughout the year.

Whether you are new to the profession or a seasoned administrator, the



Spring Conference offers learning opportunities to sharpen your skills, strengthen your confidence, and position your district for long-term success. This is your chance to study the playbook, refine your strategy, and accelerate your professional growth.

New in 2026:

Pre-conference sessions that set the pace

Before the main event begins, take advantage of [expanded pre-conference sessions](#) on May 13. These focused learning opportunities allow participants to dive deeper into high-impact topics such as DPI Financial Reporting and Emergency Readiness.

Designed for those who want a head start, these sessions provide in-depth training that supports compliance, preparedness, and strategic leadership — ensuring you enter the main conference informed, prepared, and ready to run strong.

WASBO'S 2026 SPRING CONFERENCE

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May 14-15, 2026

**Fundraisers &
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May 13, 2026

Location:
Kalahari, Wis. Dells



WASBO.COM/SPRING

Networking that moves you forward

Success in the school business is never a solo race. The [Exhibit Hall](#) connects you with trusted service affiliates and solution providers who understand the needs of Wisconsin schools. Conversations with peers and partners throughout the conference often spark innovative ideas and collaborative solutions that help districts thrive long after the event concludes.

Also, put on your finest hats and boldest bowties and join us for the Derby Party. Celebrate in true Derby style with great food, festive drinks,

and lively entertainment as we come together to unwind after a full day of learning. From photo-worthy moments to plenty of chances to connect with colleagues, this signature event is your opportunity to enjoy the excitement, embrace the tradition, and toast to a conference that's truly in the Winner's Circle.

Golf & hike for a great cause

On May 13, lace up your shoes or grab your clubs for the [WASBO Foundation's Annual Scholarship fundraisers](#). Choose between the golf outing or the group hike — both offering meaningful networking in a relaxed setting while supporting scholarships

for Wisconsin students. These events reflect WASBO's commitment to investing in the next generation of leaders while strengthening the professional community that supports them.

[WASBO's 2026 Spring Conference](#)

is your opportunity to set your pace, clear the hurdles, and finish strong. Don't miss this chance to connect with colleagues, gain powerful professional development, and position yourself — and your district — at the front of the pack. We look forward to seeing you in Wisconsin Dells as we gallop to goals together!

Preventing crime with "the Environment"

How CPTED supports school safety during facility walkthroughs

As we speed through February and begin facility walkthroughs to plan summer maintenance projects, this is a good time to consider how the physical environment impacts school safety.

One approach that remains effective is **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)**.

CPTED is based on a simple idea: **how a space is designed and maintained can influence behavior.**

While safety planning often focuses on procedures, training, and drills, the layout and condition of our buildings and grounds also play an important role in reducing risk and supporting a safe school environment.

Facility walkthroughs do not need to be grueling, but a thorough walkthrough does take time. Slowing down, looking at spaces from different angles, and asking basic questions about visibility and access often reveal things that are easy to miss during the normal school day.

These walkthroughs allow teams to identify issues early and plan improvements rather than reacting to problems after they occur.

Natural surveillance: Seeing and being seen

One of the main principles of CPTED is natural surveillance. This means designing and maintaining spaces so people can easily see what is happening around them.

Areas that are easy to see are less attractive for unwanted behavior. During February walkthroughs, some key things to look for include:

- **Landscaping and sightlines:** Trees, shrubs, and landscaping can block views around entrances, sidewalks, parking lots, and playgrounds. A common guideline is to keep shrubs trimmed to about 3 feet or lower and to trim tree canopies to 7 or 8 feet. This helps reduce hiding spots and improves overall visibility.
- **Lighting during short winter days:** February's early darkness makes lighting especially important. Walking the grounds in the early morning or evening helps identify areas where entrances, walkways, bus zones, or parking lots may need better lighting. Good lighting helps people feel safer and makes it easier to notice suspicious activity.
- **Windows and building layout:** Pay attention to the placement of windows and doors. Offices or common areas that overlook



Andy Daniels

Director of Buildings and Grounds/Safety Coordinator, Franklin Public Schools.

high-traffic outdoor spaces naturally increase observation without adding staff or equipment.

Territorial reinforcement: Clearly defining space

Another CPTED concept is territorial reinforcement. This focuses on clearly showing which areas are public, which are private, and how spaces are meant to be used.

During walkthroughs, consider the following:

- **Signage and pavement markings:** Clear signs and painted markings help define visitor areas, staff areas, and restricted zones. When people understand where they should and should not be, confusion and unauthorized access are reduced.
- **Landscape and hardscape features:** Low fencing, planters, pavement changes, and clearly defined entrances help signal transitions between spaces.

These features signal that the property is well cared for and actively managed.

- **Overall appearance:** Well-maintained grounds and clear circulation patterns show pride and ownership. Spaces that look organized and intentional are less likely to attract vandalism or misuse.

For larger projects, working with landscapers and signage vendors who understand school environments and

safety considerations can help ensure improvements support both function and security.

Why February walkthroughs are vital

February is a good time for these walkthroughs because schools are fully in session and summer planning is beginning. This timing allows teams to:

- Identify blind spots and safety concerns while buildings are actively used

- Plan maintenance and improvements before summer work begins
- Coordinate across facilities, administration, safety teams, and outside partners

When CPTED is part of these walkthroughs, safety becomes part of routine planning rather than an afterthought.

Closing Thoughts

No single strategy can prevent every issue, but using the physical environment as part of a broader safety approach strengthens everything else we do. **Natural surveillance and territorial reinforcement are practical and affordable ways to improve safety through design and maintenance.**

Here at Franklin Public Schools, this is the direction we are continuing to move toward. These improvements require time, planning, and funding, and are not expected to occur all at once. If buildings or grounds are not fully aligned with these concepts today, that is okay. The goal is progress, not perfection. Facility walkthroughs are an opportunity to start the conversation, identify priorities, and build toward safer, more intentional school environments over time.

Resources

To learn more about CPTED concepts and how they connect to school safety planning, the following resources provide helpful guidance and best practices:

- [Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design \(CPTED\) Guidebook](#)
- [Wisconsin Department of Justice – Comprehensive School Safety Framework \(2nd Edition\)](#)

Figure 1: Crime prevention examples



Created by Andy Daniels with assistance from generative AI.

Jeremiah Johnson Chief Operations Officer Muskego-Norway Schools



President-Elect Candidate

Three-year term
Will move through the
office as President

Dear WASBO
Members:

With a career rooted in the Muskego-Norway School District since 2002, and a commitment to the betterment of school operations across the state, I am excited to continue my service to an organization that has played an important role in my personal and professional development.

I began my career with Muskego-Norway as a part-time, on-call custodian. From those early days, I was fortunate to attend several summer WASBO conferences, which

gave me a passion and a better understanding of school business operations.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to continue my involvement with WASBO in the following ways:

- **2016–Present:** Have taught dozens of Facilities Certification sessions at WASBO conferences
- **2016:** Facilities Certification Curriculum Review Team
- **2016–Present:** WASBO Facilities Committee
- **2022–2025:** WASBO Board of Directors
- **2021–Present:** Co-Chair, Midwest Facility Masters Conference
- **2025:** Co-Host, Beyond the Pail Webinar with Joe Ledvina (La Crosse)
- **2025:** WASBO Coach and WASBO University Instructor

These experiences have been helpful in shaping my leadership style, overcoming a fear of public speaking and helped me establish lifetime relationships with people across the State. My hope is that through all of these opportunities I have been able to add a lasting value to members and the organization.

In addition to my service with WASBO, I have also held leadership roles with the Wisconsin School Safety Coordinators Association (WSSCA), including serving as President.

During my term, I helped lead our marketing and branding efforts, led our first strategic planning process and hired a new executive director, all of which have strengthened the association's ability to serve its members and the State.

Currently, as the Chief Operations Officer for Muskego-Norway School District, my role encompasses



Human Resources, Facilities, Safety, and oversight of both our Technology Department and Performing Arts Center.

Over the last six years I have helped lead \$110M in construction projects across our system that have truly reinvented the experience our students will have for decades to come. I believe the variety of my responsibilities provide a unique perspective that I would bring to the WASBO Presidency.

Outside of work, I enjoy being bad at golf, leading a morning workout group and driving around singing along to 90's rap music. I also maintain an impressive collection of WASBO name tags.

I am grateful for your consideration and would be honored to serve as your next President Elect.

I look forward to the opportunity to continue working alongside all of you to support and advance the work of our schools and the success of our students!

Candidate Resume		
Work Experience		
2021 - Present	Muskego-Norway Schools	Chief Operations Officer
2018 - 2021	Muskego-Norway Schools	Director of Operations & HR
2013 - 2018	Muskego-Norway Schools	Buildings & Grounds Supervisor (All Schools)
2008 - 2013	Muskego-Norway Schools	Building Operations Supervisor
2004 - Present	Specialty Operations LLC	Owner & Operator
2002 - 2008	Muskego-Norway Schools	Custodian

Candidate Resume		
Educational Experience		
2015-2016	Society of Human Resource Managers	Certified Human Resources Professional
2013-2014	WASBO	Certified School Risk Manager (CSRM)
2010-2012	WSSCA	Safety Coordinator & Work Comp Specialist Certification
2008-2010	WASBO	Facility Manager Core Certification
2000-2001	Milwaukee Area Technical College	Business Management
Professional Activities		
WASBO: Facilities Committee, Presenter, Facility Masters Conference, Co-Chair, Board member Milwaukee Metro Buildings & Grounds Association: Secretary/President Marquette Safety Panel: Panel Member WSSCA: Board Member & President		
Community Activities		
Southbrook Church: Building Expansion Committee, Children's Ministry, Small Group Leader, Men's Basketball League Lead Whitnall Park Rotary Club: Member		
Interests & Hobbies		
Golf, leading a morning workout group for the district, listening to hours of podcasts every day, and occasionally writing music.		

Joe Marquardt
Director of Business
Services
School District of New
London



**President-Elect
Candidate**
Three-year term
Will move through the
office as President

Hello Friends of
WASBO,
My name is Joe Mar-
quardt, and I am running
for WASBO President-Elect.

So why am I running for President? That is a really good question. Like you, I am busy with work, family, and other commitments. I do know that WASBO is the most influential organization in our profession. I am continually amazed at how the organization evolves to support the school business profession and the many connected parts to the business office.

If you do not have time to review my resume, I am currently the Director of Business Services for the School District of New London. It is an amazing job, and I truly GET to do it! I love being part of our district’s mission of Success

for All Students and know that this role is a vital ingredient in the district’s success.

When I am not at work, I have an amazing wife and four incredible kids that I love spending time with. My family is so important to me because they give me a valuable perspective outside of work and help me appreciate all that is great in our lives.

Lastly, if you are reading this, please vote in the election. Many members do not take the time to vote because “it’s one more thing,” but I encourage you to take the extra step and vote this year for the slate of candidates.

Thank you for your consideration as a candidate for President of WASBO’s Board of Directors.

Candidate Resume					
Work Experience			Educational Experience		
2011 - Present	School District of New London	Director of Business Services	2015 - 2017	Edgewood College	Educational Leadership - Licensed as Superintendent 03 and Principal 51
2009 - 2011	Clinton Community School District	Business Manager	2006 - 2008	UW-Whitewater	Masters of Science in Education - School Business Management, Licensed as a Business Manager, 08
2004 -2009	Badger High School (Lake Geneva)	Business Education Teacher, senior project advisor, baseball and football coach at various levels	2001 - 2004	UW-Whitewater	Bachelors of Science in Education - Business Education Teacher, 250, 265 & 281 Licensures

Candidate Resume

Professional Activities

WASBO: Member 2009-present, WASBO 2012 Business Services Award Winner, WASBO 2013 New School Business Official of the Year, member of various committees through WASBO, presenter at conferences, WASBO Leadership Academy Graduate, WASBO Board Member 2021-2024. WASBO Mentor / Coach.

ASBO International: Member 2009-present, 2013 Pinnacle of Achievement Award Winner.

University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh:
Adjunct teacher - Finance, Funding and Economics of School Finance | 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2024.

Community Activities

United Way of New London: Board Chairman and CEO, 2011 - Present

Rotary Club of New London: Member, 2011 - Present, Club President 2018 - 2020, Club Secretary 2017 - 2018, Club Treasurer - 2023 - present

Youth Baseball & Softball Coach: 2017 - 2025

Youth Basketball Coach: 2018 - Present

Most Precious Blood Catholic Church:
Strategic planning committee member

Interests & Hobbies

Spending time with family (my wife Becky and our four kids) | Fishing | Golfing | Hunting.

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- ④ Medical Reimbursement Trust Plan

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- Reduced payroll tax liability
- Enhanced employee benefits
- Simplified plan administration



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Ben Irwin
Director of Business
Services | Whitefish Bay
Director Candidate
Three-Year Term



Hello, fellow WASBO Members! I'm Ben Irwin, and I am honored to submit my candidacy for the WASBO Board of Directors, as it is important for me to give back to an organization that has provided me so much support over my career.

My first position in school finance started when I became the Business Manager for the Parkview School District in 2012. During my time at Parkview, I filled many different roles, as many of us do in smaller districts where resources are limited. My time at Parkview was an invaluable experience, as I learned most day-to-day tasks in a school business office and undertook multiple large-scale projects. In 2016, I became the Director of Business Services for the Cedarburg School District, where I continued to learn and grow through new and exciting challenges. What I learned in Cedarburg has been a tremendous asset for me as I continue my career in the Whitefish Bay School District, where I became the Director of Business Services in 2024.

One of the main reasons I am running for the WASBO Board of Directors is that, throughout my 14 years as a business manager, WASBO has always been there to provide me with resources, learning opportunities, and opportunities to network with my colleagues when I needed them. What is unique about our positions is that we are often the only ones doing what we do in our districts and the ability to learn and discuss different ideas with other business managers through an amazing organization such as WASBO has always been valuable to me and I want to be sure that I am able to provide my support to the organization by running for the Board of Directors.

Another reason why I am running for the WASBO Board of Directors is to help grow the organization that has become so important to me over the years. I currently serve as a co-chair for both the WASBO Spring Conference

Committee and the State Education Convention Planning Committee, and I appreciate the chance to help plan and organize professional development opportunities for business managers across the state. Ongoing learning is essential for our jobs, as new policies and laws are introduced every year, and sharing creative ideas is crucial as resources remain limited. The unique challenges of our positions are also why I think it is so important to support new school business managers through mentorship and licensing programs. Beyond my work as a mentor in the past, I was also a part-time lecturer at MSOE in their school business management program, and I am currently a part-time lecturer at my alma mater, UW-Whitewater, in their school business management program.

In addition to my work with professional development and licensing programs, I have been fortunate to receive the WASBO New School Business Manager of the Year in 2017 and the Above and Beyond Award in 2015 from CESA 2. I also earned my Certified School Risk Manager (CSRM) designation in 2019, which has been incredibly valuable to me as we navigate the challenges of risk management, and my Certified Administrator of School Finance and Operations (SFO) designation through ASBO in 2015. On a personal note, I currently live in Milwaukee with my pup, Santos, and we enjoy long hikes and trips to the dog park. In addition, I like to stay active by traveling, going on camping/backpacking trips, and attending concerts and sporting events whenever I have the opportunity. I also enjoy the close relationships I have with my family and friends, and spending time with all of them.

Thank you for taking a moment to consider my candidacy and to learn a little bit more about me. Again, I am incredibly honored to be considered for a Director position, and I look forward to the opportunity to represent this wonderful organization that has supported all of us throughout the years.

Scott Johnson
Director of Buildings and
Grounds | West Salem
Director Candidate
Three-Year Term



Greetings, fellow WASBO colleagues! My name is Scott Johnson, and I would be honored to have my peers' support in becoming a member of the WASBO Board of Directors. I have been an active member of WASBO since 2013 and have gained so much more than I could have ever imagined, from Professional Development to the awesome relationships with many of you! I would love nothing more than to give back to our great organization.

A little bit about my background and how I got into the educational field supporting schools. I grew up in Westby, WI, and graduated from Westby High School in 1991. I then attended the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, majoring in Engineering, and was a member of the Track team at UWP for a year. Unfortunately, an illness cut my school year short, resulting in a lower GPA. It also cut into my very short track career, and I decided to go back home to regroup and focus on my future.

While back home for the summer, I gained an opportunity to become an apprentice at Ron Hammes Refrigeration in La Crosse, WI. Over the next 6 months, I gained the knowledge and training needed to become a service technician in a highly competitive industry, specializing in heating, air conditioning, and refrigeration. I spent the next 12 years working throughout the Tri-State area for Ron Hammes. Unfortunately, a back injury and subsequent surgery ended my career as a Service Technician.

Through this, however, I was afforded another opportunity to work for the West Salem School District, build a career I love, and see myself continuing until retirement and maybe even beyond.

My educational support career has taken me from Maintenance for the School District of West Salem to Director of Buildings and Grounds, to Buildings and Grounds Manager/ Safety Coordinator for the School District of La Crosse, and back to Director of Buildings and Grounds at West Salem. I have gotten to know so many great individuals in districts across Wisconsin and beyond.

Through my work as a support staff member and now Director, I have gained extensive experience and knowledge by working with numerous organizations, especially WASBO. As a member of WASBO, I have had the opportunity to earn my Facilities Management Certification and Certified School Risk Manager designation, participate in the third cohort of the Wally Zastrow Leadership Academy, and attend many other training sessions.

I have also had the opportunity to be a part of several conference planning committees, the School Facility Committee, the Safety and Risk Management Committee, and recently a part of a new Wisconsin School Risk Managers beta group preparing to roll out the WSRM program.

My greatest accomplishment was being a part of the 2024 WASBO Midwest Facility Masters Conference Facility Team of the Year. This team was built over the years to provide the best customer service to our district, and it shows in their work ethic and in carrying out the school district's mission statement: "To serve with passion to ignite Creativity, Innovation and Excellence."

The WASBO staff and members have given me the opportunity to become the best facilities leader I can be and, like I stated before, I would love nothing more than to give back to this great organization by sharing my servant leadership skills.

Jeff Johanning District Bookkeeper Lancaster Director Candidate Three-Year Term



Hello, WASBO colleagues! My name is Jeff Johanning. It is an honor to be asked to run for the WASBO Board of Directors. I am currently the District Bookkeeper for Lancaster Community Schools. We are a small district with around 1,000 students located in the Southwest corner of the state.

Our WASBO members are our organization's greatest asset. Members are always a phone call away and are always willing to help each other with any questions you may have. In my first year, I became a WASBO member and took part in the Year of Success Program. It was here that I started my journey, meeting fellow school business officials, making lifelong friends, and beginning my desire to be the best school business official I can be. I am committed to continuing to support WASBO's mission to "provide professional development, foster a network of support, and advocate for funding that ensures outstanding educational opportunities for all children in Wisconsin."

In my professional career, I have served Lancaster Community Schools for the past 11 years as their District Bookkeeper. Before working in public education, I worked for a regional CPA firm, conducting government audits. One of our school clients was Lancaster, which led me here. I have been married to my wife, Morgan, an attorney, for nearly two years. At home, we have 4 dogs, a three-legged cat, 3 pet cows, and 3 Belgian draft horses. In our free time, we love to travel and see new places, watch the Brewers, Packers, Bucks, and Badgers, and ride our UTV on the vast trails of Lafayette County. If elected to the WASBO Board, I look forward to giving back to an organization that has given so much to me. I want to continue bringing our members the best learning opportunities through in-person conferences and to expand WASBO U and other professional learning opportunities. I hope to give back to our wonderful organization. I would approach this role with an open mind and a commitment to supporting our mission alongside my fellow members.

Candidate Resume



Ben Irwin
Director of Business
Services
Whitefish Bay School
District

Director Candidate
Three-year term

Work Experience

2024 - Present	Whitefish Bay School District	Director of Business Services
2022 - Present	UW - Whitewater	Part-Time Lecturer
2019 - 2023	Milwaukee School of Engineering	Part-Time Lecturer
2016 - 2024	Cedarburg School District	Director of Business Services
2012 - 2016	Parkview School District	Business Manager

Educational Experience

2010 - 2012	UW - Whitewater	Master of Science in School Business Management
2005 - 2010	UW - Whitewater	Bachelor of Science - Education Degree

Professional Activities

WASBO: Spring Conference Co-Chair, State Education Convention Planning Committee Co-Chair, Certified School Risk Manager (CSRM), 2017 New School Business Manager of the Year, Mentor, Conference Presenter

ASBO International: Certified Administrator of School Finance and Operations (SFO)

CESA 2: 2015 Above and Beyond Award

Community Activities

Shoeworks Lofts Condominium Association, Inc: Former Board Treasurer

Interests & Hobbies

Traveling, hiking/backpacking, snowboarding, reading, photography, music, and sports.

Candidate Resume



Scott Johnson
 Director of Buildings & Grounds
 West Salem School District
Director Candidate: Three-year term

Work Experience

2023 - Present	West Salem School District	Director of Buildings and Grounds
2005 - 2024	West Salem School District	High School Football Coach
2017 - 2023	La Crosse School District	Buildings & Grounds Manager/Safety Coordinator
2013 - 2017	West Salem School District	Director of Buildings and Grounds
2004 - 2013	West Salem School District	Maintenance Tech

Educational Experience

2012 - 2014	Viterbo University	Associates of Science
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Professional Activities

WASBO: Wally Zastrow Leadership Academy graduate (2020-21), West Central Regional Chair, School Facilities Committee, Safety and Risk Management Committee, Midwest Facility Masters Conference Committee, Mentorship/Coach program, 2024 Midwest Facility Masters Facility Team of the Year, Module Presenter, Facilities Managers Core Certification Program committee, 2024 WASBO University Finance for the Facility Director graduate, WSRM Beta Group (2025), WSRM (2016-Present), Facilities Management Certification (2018), WASBO Member (2013-Present)

WSSCA: Board of Directors (2017-24) Director, 2nd VP, VP, President 2023-24, Annual Conference Committee Chair, Professional Development Committee chair, WSSCA Site Assessor, WSSCA member (2013-Present)

Wis. Sports Turf Managers Association: Board of Directors (2016-20)

Sons of the American Legion: WI District 7 Commander (2025-Present)

DOJ Office of School Safety Advisory Committee: Member (2024-Present)

Wis. Football Coaches Association: Member (2005-2024)

Community Activities

West Salem Volunteer Fire Department: (2004-present) Firefighter, Captain, Benevolent Association President (2021-present), Certified Firefighter II, Certified Fire Inspector I, Certified Fire Instructor I

West Salem Sons of the American Legion: Member (2019-present) Building Fundraising committee, Court of Honor Committee, American Legion Honor Guard member

Our Saviors Lutheran Church: Church Council (2003-2007)

News8000: Hometown Hero award November 2024

Interests & Hobbies

Spend time with family especially three grown daughters, watching the Packers, Brewers and Badgers, and coaching HS football.

Candidate Resume



Jeff Johanning
 District Bookkeeper
 Lancaster Community Schools
Director Candidate
 Three-year term

Work Experience

2014 - Present	Lancaster Community Schools	District Bookkeeper
2012 - 2014	Johnson Block	Governmental Auditor
2007- 2011	Vig & Associates	Governmental Auditor

Educational Experience

2002- 2007	UW-Platteville	Bachelor of Science - Business Finance
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Professional Activities

WASBO: Member, Past School Business Office Professionals Conference Planning Committee, Conference Presenter

ASBO International: Member, 2019 Emerging Leaders Scholarship Recipient, 2021 Emerging Leaders Mentor

Community Activities

Humane Society: Fostered pregnant dog and ten puppies until furever home

Future Farmers of America: Avid supporter of surrounding area FFA Chapters

Interests & Hobbies

Spending time with family and pets, traveling, watching the Brewers Packers, Bucks, and Badgers, gardening, and riding on the UTV trails.

WASBO Member Profile: STEPHANIE ZIEGLER



Stephanie Ziegler is the Grant & Financial Specialist for Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District. She recently received the 2024 School Business Office Professional (SBOP) of the Year Award.

Where did you grow up?

Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin.

What's your favorite part of your job?

Every day there is something new.

What WASBO regional are you in?

I'm proud to be part of the Madison Regional.

When you're not at work, what do you do for fun?

Spend time with my family!

Describe your involvement in and participation with WASBO.

I am on the Accounting Conference Committee.

What is your favorite television show?

My favorite TV show is "The Big Bang Theory."

Describe WASBO in one word.

Collaboration.

What has been your favorite part of the school year so far?

That we got Title II, III, and IV funds back!

What makes you proud to be a WASBO member?

There is so much knowledge in this group, and they are willing to share and help when others need it.

Any 2026 resolutions you've been keeping up with?

Be as positive as possible about all the changes that are coming!

What made you want to work in education?

My parents were both teachers.



Ziegler (second from left) poses with her Middleton colleagues after receiving the 2024 SBOP Award. Scan the QR Code above to watch her recognition video!

Shaping AI strategy in Wisconsin schools

Inside the Leveraging Technology Academy by WASBO, AWSA and WASDA

As artificial intelligence and emerging technologies continue to reshape education, district leaders are asking the same question: how do we move from experimentation to intentional, strategic implementation? The Leveraging Technology Academy was designed to answer that question—and to do it together.

A collaborative effort between the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators (AWSA), the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials (WASBO), and the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators (WASDA), the Leveraging Technology Academy brings cross-functional district teams together for a practical, future-focused learning experience. Participating districts attend as teams that often include superintendents, business managers, teaching and learning leaders, technology leaders, and principals—ensuring that technology planning is aligned across both instructional and operational perspectives.

In the 2026–27 school year, the Leveraging Technology Academy will be offered statewide to increase access for districts. Confirmed dates and details will be available this spring, but these sessions are on the schedule:

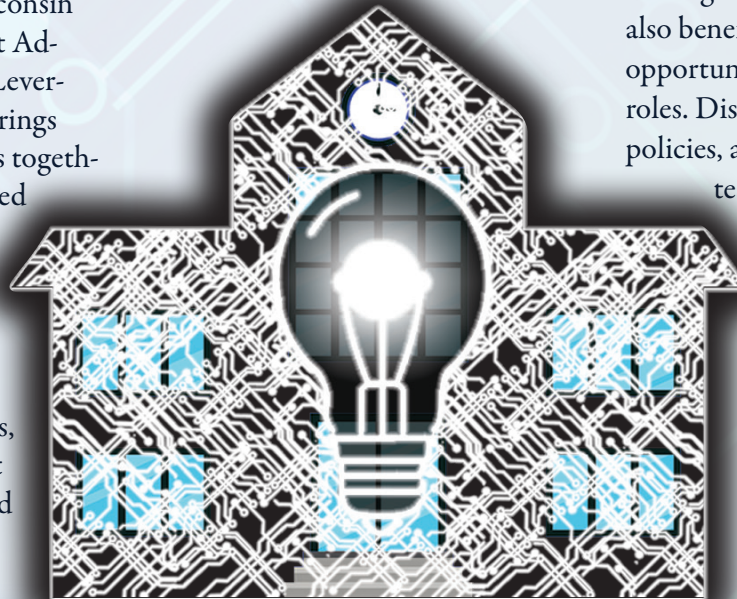
- **Sparta: Summer 2026**
- **Pewaukee & Altoona: Fall 2026**
- **Madison & Menasha: Spring 2027**

At the heart of the academy is the development of a district-specific AI blueprint. Rather than focusing solely on tools, the academy guides teams through strategic conversations

on AI readiness, governance, instructional impact, operational efficiency, and long-term sustainability. The result is a clearer, more confident approach to implementing artificial intelligence and technology to support student learning and district goals.

A defining feature of the Leveraging Technology Academy is its discovery and design labs. In these hands-on sessions, teams engage directly with a variety of technology resources, explore real-world use cases, and test ideas in a collaborative environment. Throughout the academy, participants also benefit from robust networking opportunities with peers in similar roles. Districts also share resources, policies, and lessons learned, helping teams avoid common pitfalls and accelerate their progress.

To learn more about the Leveraging Technology Academy, visit: WASBO.com/LTAcademy or contact Danielle Bosanec at Danielle.Bosanec@wasbo.com.



**SPARTA: SUMMER 2026 | PEWAUKEE & ALTOONA: FALL 2026
MADISON & MENASHA: SPRING 2027**

[WASBO.COM/LTACADEMY](https://WASBO.com/LTACADEMY)

Turn purchasing into savings with WASBO's p-Card program

What if your district's routine purchases could save time and generate mean-

ingful dollars back to support your work? That's exactly what districts across Wisconsin are doing through [WASBO's p-Card Program](#), offered in partnership with BMO. By streamlining purchasing processes and leveraging collective buying power, the program helps districts operate more efficiently and earn annual rebates that add up.

During the 2024-25 fiscal year (April–March), **210 participating organizations** — including school districts, CESAs, and other education associations — **earned a combined rebate of \$1,008,622.34** through the WASBO p-Card Program. For partic-



Kaitlyn Peters
Professional Development
& Member Services Coordinator

ipating districts, this translated to an average rebate of \$4,343.35 per district, which can be reinvested directly into classrooms, operations, or other local priorities.

These strong rebate results reflect more than just local participation — they are also driven by WASBO's participation in BMO's national

districts p-Card program. WASBO is one of 19 state affiliates partnering with BMO, representing 1,560 districts nationwide. This broader collaboration increases purchasing volume and strengthens negotiating power, enabling Wisconsin districts to benefit from rebate rates made possible by a much larger collective footprint.

Beyond the financial return, the program delivers meaningful operational efficiencies. Districts manage their cards through Spend Dynamics, BMO's secure web-based portal, which allows authorized staff to:

- Order new cards
- Shut down cards immediately when needed
- Adjust spending limits and transaction controls
- Review transactions

WASBO's p-Card by the numbers

- 210 participating organizations in Wisconsin
- 19 state affiliates participating nationwide
- 1,560 total districts in the BMO districts program
- \$1,008,622.34 total rebate returned (FY 2024–25)
- \$4,343.35 average rebate per district
- \$0 program fees or start-up costs
- Quarterly p-Card User Group meetings (free and virtual)

This level of flexibility helps districts maintain strong internal controls while significantly reducing administrative burden.

To further simplify reporting and reconciliation, districts can use the Skyward extract file to connect Spend Dynamics to the district's Skyward system. This integration streamlines coding, improves accuracy, and reduces the time staff spend on manual data entry and reconciliation.

Districts consistently report additional efficiencies such as:

- **Fewer purchase orders and paper checks**, saving staff time
- **Faster purchasing and vendor payment**, improving turnaround

To support districts at every stage of participation, WASBO also hosts [p-Card User Group \(PUG\) meetings](#) throughout the year. These free virtual sessions offer users opportunities to share best practices, learn about program updates, ask questions, and hear directly from WASBO and Holly Wallace, leader of our p-Card program. Whether a district is just getting started or refining an estab-

lished program, the User Groups offer practical, peer-driven insight.

With more than 210 participating organizations, participation in a nationwide network of 1,560 districts, and over \$1 million returned to Wisconsin education in a single fiscal year, the WASBO p-Card Program demonstrates the power of smart, collaborative purchasing.

To learn more about joining the program, visit WASBO.com/pCard. To explore upcoming p-Card User Group meetings, visit WASBO.com/PUG.



WASBO'S P-CARD USER GROUP

FREE QUARTERLY VIRTUAL MEETINGS

p-Card
Payment Card

No costs,
No fees,
No charges, &

...you get a rebate.



Kaitlyn Peters
Wisconsin ASBO

(608) 249-8588
Kaitlyn.peters@WASBO.com



BMO Financial Group
BMO Harris Bank

Celebrating our New Members!

Please congratulate our new members!

District Professionals

- **Wes Ahlansberg**, Maintenance Manager, Sun Prairie Area School District
- **Mark Alioto**, Custodial Ser. Night Manager, Sun Prairie Area School District
- **Ben Arts**, Lead Of Maintenance, Rice Lake Area School District
- **Christine Backes**, District Secretary, Bowler School District
- **Holly Berge**, Asst Bookkeeper, School District of Colfax
- **Rebecca Brekke**, Bookkeeper, Ripon Area School District
- **Emma Briedis**, School District of New Berlin
- **Tyler Galstad**, Executive Director of Business, Burlington Area School District
- **Jacqueline Glover**, Business Manager, Wilmot Union High School

- **Boyd Godding**, Head Facility Site Manager, Janesville School District
- **Todd Good**, Business Manager, School District of Shiocton
- **Ashley Hunt**, AP/Purchasing, Little Chute Area School District
- **Jill Iliff**, Accounts Payable, West Salem School District
- **Aaron King**, In-District Director of Business Service, CESA #5
- **Corey Napieralski**, CFO, Milwaukee College Preparatory School
- **Cathy Opperman**, Administrative Assistant, Gresham School District
- **Gabriel Storms**, Head Facility Site Manager, Janesville School District
- **Jeff Vandeberg**, Director of Buildings and Grounds, Baldwin-Woodville Area School District
- **Amy Wesemann**, Accounts Payable, Watertown Unified School District

- **Madelyn Williams**, Business Manager, Southwestern Wisconsin School District

Service Affiliates

- **Kelley Opiola Johnson**, CEO, SLP, SLP Odyssey, LLC
- **Stacey Potrzebowski**, Account Executive, Mohawk Industries
- **Adam Rosen**, CEO, Radar Talent Solutions
- **Karen Sabich**, Business Development Manager, Harwood Engineering Consultants
- **Troy Salchow**, VP of Sales, Engineered Security Solutions, Inc.
- **Kristin Schmidt**, Vice President - Western Wisconsin, Brown & Brown
- **Jillian Scholl**, Executive Vice President of Business Development, OrganicLife
- **Noel Weinatzl**, Service Support Specialist, Helm Service

Member Retirements

Thanks for all that you've done for students! Please stay in touch!

- **Ruth Schenning**, Executive Director of Business Services, Burlington Area School District

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WASBO's Learning Calendar

Here is a look at the professional learning opportunities that make WASBO's Learning Calendar. Visit WASBO.com/Learn to learn more! **Red items are WASBO's general professional development opportunities**, and **blue items display the first day of a WASBO University Course!**

FEBRUARY

February 27, 2026

Money Talks Free Webinar Series

8:30 AM | WASBO's School Finance Webinar Series | WASBO.com/Money

MARCH

March 4-5, 2026

Leadership Academy: The Leader as a Change Agent

Madison | WASBO.com/Leadership

March 5, 2026

Leveraging Technology Academy Session

Virtual | WASBO.com/LTAcademy

March 12, 2026

Beyond the Pail: Facility Use

8:30 AM | WASBO's School Facility Webinar Series | WASBO.com/Pail

March 18-19, 2026

Accounting 2026

Learn & Network with the Best Wis. Dells | WASBO.com/ACCTING

March 27, 2026

Money Talks Free Webinar Series

8:30 AM | WASBO's School Finance Webinar Series | WASBO.com/Money

APRIL

April 6, 2026

Elements of Revenue and the Revenue Limit Worksheet

1:30-3:30 PM | M/W | April 6-22
12 hours | \$400 | WASBO.com/U

April 9, 2026

Beyond the Pail: Landscaping

8:30 AM | WASBO's School Facility Webinar Series | WASBO.com/Pail

April 13, 2026

Special Education Budgeting Academy: Virtual Check-In

WASBO.com/SEBA

April 14, 2026

Capital Referenda & Issuing Bonds

1-3 PM | Tu/Th | April 14-30
12 hours | \$400 | WASBO.com/U

Risk Control (4/5)

10 AM-Noon | April 14, 16 & 18
6 hours | \$200 | WASBO.com/U

Referendum Academies: Resource Management

Madison | WASBO.com/Referendum

April 16-17, 2026

Leadership Academy: Focus on the Future

Madison | WASBO.com/Leadership

April 25, 2026

Money Talks Free Webinar Series

8:30 AM | WASBO's School Finance Webinar Series | WASBO.com/Money

MAY

May 5, 2026

Risk Administration (5/5)

10 AM-Noon | May 5, 7 & 12
6 hours | \$200 | WASBO.com/U

May 7, 2026

Beyond the Pail: Lead in Schools

8:30 AM | WASBO's School Facility Webinar Series | WASBO.com/Pail

Leveraging Technology

Academy: Sustainability Planning
Waukesha County Technical College | WASBO.com/LTAcademy

May 13, 2026

WASBO's 2026 Spring Golf & Hike Student Scholarship Fundraisers

WASBO annually awards >\$25K in scholarships | WASBO.com/SpringFund

May 14-15, 2026

WASBO's 2026 Spring Conference & Celebration

The conference for learning, networking and celebrating | WASBO.com/SPRING

May 29, 2026

Money Talks Free Webinar Series

8:30 AM | WASBO's School Finance Webinar Series | WASBO.com/Money

JUNE

June 11, 2026

Beyond the Pail: Climate Action Plans

8:30 AM | WASBO's School Facility Webinar Series | WASBO.com/Pail

June 25, 2026

Leveraging Technology Academy Session

Sparta | WASBO.com/LTAcademy

JULY

July 15, 2026

Winneconne Custodial & Maintenance Conference

Bring your entire custodial team | WASBO.com/Custodial

July 15, 2026

Leveraging Technology Academy Session

Sparta | WASBO.com/LTAcademy

July 15, 2026

Black River Falls: Custodial & Maintenance Conference

Bring your entire custodial team | WASBO.com/Custodial



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The November 2025 issue of Taking Care of Business achieved a remarkable 62% unique open rate, with WASBO members amplifying its reach by forwarding the announcement over 250 times to key education stakeholders. Each upcoming issue will feature a deep-dive thematic centerspread, including School Referenda (May 2026), Public School Open Enrollment (August 2026), and School Consolidation (November 2026). To maximize your impact, consider advertising across our full digital ecosystem (including the WASBO Focus monthly e-newsletter and our daily and weekly news blasts) to take advantage of multi-publication discounts.

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