

Southeastern Wisconsin Schools Alliance (SWSA)

2017-18 Legislative Advocacy Agenda – **DRAFT**

Present Dec. 6th/discussion (dated 12/4/2016)

Full SWSA membership affirmation in Jan. 2017

Legislative Priority 1	Develop a comprehensive predictable and sustainable funding system for public school district students.
Background	<p>Since 1993, public school districts faced mandated minimum salary increase (QEO) that effectively resulted in larger-than-inflation increases and an arbitration process that effectively neutralized any efforts to bring those costs down.</p> <p>Revenue limits were enacted in 1993 and tracked inflation for many years. This precedent was changed and increases were well below inflation for 2009-10 and 2010-11, prior to Act 10.</p> <p>Act 10 was enacted and eliminated both of these constraints and public school districts have aggressively utilized the tools provided.</p> <p>In the State of Wisconsin, revenues available to school districts have not kept pace with the rate of inflation for many years. Since Act 10, per pupil revenues available to districts continue to be significantly below the rate of inflation. Current law limits the increase in the total amount of revenue per pupil that a school district may receive from general school aids and local property taxes in any school year. During the 2015-17 budget, revenue limits remained flat with a 0% increase. Per pupil aid was added; however, the uncertainty of subsequent revenue makes it extremely difficult to budget and plan for future innovative opportunities for students.</p> <p>The result is that public school districts continue to face a structural deficit. This is not a sustainable business model for any organization.</p>
Long term Goal	Create a more sustainable K-12 funding system to improve learning opportunities for students while protecting the taxpayer.
2017-19 Session Advocacy Goals	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Increase funding available for public schools by the Consumer Price Index in order to begin building a sustainable model.Provide an adjustment to school district resources with the goal to provide an additional \$200.00 / student in each year of the biennium. Adjustments could be accomplished by an increase in revenue limit authority along with an increase in aid to reduce the tax burden and/or increases in per pupil aid.
Action Steps	Coordinate a unified message with stakeholders (WASB, WASDA, WIRSA)

Legislative Priority 2	Improve state support for the educational needs of students with disabilities.
Background	Over the past 20 years, funding for special education has continued to decrease forcing school districts to use funds from the general fund to support students with disabilities. Today, school districts are reimbursed at a rate of XX% for students with disabilities. (26%) (Special needs vouchers; categorical aid)
Long term Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increase state categorical aid funding for special education and make the categorical a sum sufficient appropriation. b. Ensure that high cost special education students are provided with the resources to fully reimburse districts for the costs of serving these pupils.
2017-19 Session Advocacy Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increase the state's reimbursement rate for special education costs to 30%. b. Increase high cost special education aid to fully reimburse districts for the costs of serving and student with disabilities that exceed \$30,000 for that pupil.
Action Steps	Coordinate a unified message with stakeholders (WASB, WASDA, WIRSA)
Legislative Priority 3	Provide taxpayers with a transparent and valid accountability system for all publicly funded schools.
Background	STATE CURRENT LAW- WORK IN PROGRESS
Long term Goal	<p>All publicly funded students should take the same assessments and results should be reported in the same manner. Transparency of information is critical for parents and taxpayers to make decisions about the quality of their schools and the use of taxpayer dollars.</p> <p>Ultimately, we believe meaningful measures that guide improvements and the sharing of best practices across public education should be instituted.</p>
2017-19 Session Advocacy Goals	Continue to build upon the existing system to improve state report cards and the inclusion of all publicly funded students in all facets of the system.
Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Understand current law (federal and state interactions) and sanctions. b. Ensure that SWSA is part of the conversation as changes in accountability systems (or new report cards) are discussed. c. Build understanding of using measures to guide improvement versus "snap shot in time" accountability measures; when and how to use both systems.

Legislative Priority 4	Develop framework for an Education Academy to serve as an educational tool for new and continuing legislators and staff.
Background	There is a need for a biannual learning opportunity for elected officials and staff so they better understand K-12 finance and programming. <i>School Finance accountability and college/career readiness.</i>
Long term Goal	50% of the legislative offices attend Education Academy at the beginning of each biennial budget cycle.
2017-19 Session Advocacy Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create a nonpartisan, fact-based "Education Academy" with stakeholders. b. 20 legislative offices are represented at Education Academy in February 2017.
Action Steps	Planning in process for a 2017 launch.
Legislative Priority 5	Improve school-based mental health.
Background	Unmet mental health needs negatively affect children and their ability to embrace educational opportunities.
Long term Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Invest in school-based mental health initiatives to improve long-term outcomes for children. b. Ensure that programming does not become an unfunded mandate down the road.
2017-19 Session Advocacy Goals	Increase funding to support school site-based mental health programs.
Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Monitor DPI and Governor Walker budget recommendations. b. Understand concern regarding some of the proposals for screening for mental health (SBIRT). c. Examine opportunities to coordinate with community grants. d. Review Hanover Research and discuss with other stakeholders. <p><i>* Community-Based, Not School Based *</i> <i>* Conduct Budget</i></p>

Legislative Priority 6	Preserve and maintain local control of public schools.
Background	<p>Decisions made by local school boards are made in the best interest of their communities. School boards engage in stakeholder conversations and gather input from local community members to ensure that local dollars are spent in the most efficient and effective manner.</p> <p>Attempts to remove control from local school boards takes decision-making out of the hands of elected officials who are closest to the taxpayers they represent.</p> <p>School start date; referendum; fund balance; transgender bathrooms; guns</p>
Long term Goal	Ensure that decisions impacting communities are made by local school boards.
2017-19 Session Advocacy Goals	<p>Maintain local control on issues including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ability to hold local school district referenda b. Allow for school start date to be determined by local school boards c. Other issues that might arise that threatens local community control d. No future unfunded mandates
Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Coordinate a unified message/letter with stakeholders (WASB, WASDA, WIRSA) in support of school start date changes. b. Consider engaging business community leaders to support school start date c. Could Hanover do a quick survey to identify if any other states mandate school start date?
Legislative Priority 7	Improve college and career readiness programming. (WORK IN PROGRESS)
Background	Youth options; dual enrollment; AP credits; <i>Academe/Career Planning</i>
Goal	
Action Steps	
Legislative Priority 8	SWSA is actively engaged throughout the legislative process and cycle.
Background	<p>The political landscape is a primary factor in determining the priority level of a legislative proposal for most organizations. Often a topic that may have been at one priority level suddenly becomes a higher priority and vice versa. SWSA must be poised to respond to policy proposals as they are introduced during the legislative session. Some of these issues could include: teacher recruitment and retention; teacher licensure, open enrollment timeline; AP credits; mandate relief; summer school; Assembly GOP Forward Agenda; early childhood learning; and school safety, among others.</p>
Long term Goal	SWSA is invited to participate in the development of significant education policy before it is introduced and provides a timely response to education policy proposals as they are introduced during the legislative cycle.

2017-19 Session Advocacy Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Be at the table before a proposal is introduced. b. Have a well-defined process in place for a timely response to proposals as they are introduced. c. Coordinate a unified message with stakeholders as often as possible.
Action Steps	Continue to develop legislative relationships so SWSA is viewed as a resource and partner in developing any proposals related to K-12.
Legislative Priority 9	Establish and maintain community and governmental partnerships in effort to address the needs of students in our communities outside of the school day. (WORK IN PROGRESS)
Background	
Long term Goal	Partner with community programs and local governments in our communities to strengthen student learning and communities.
2017-19 Session Advocacy Goals	
Action Steps	Assess existing partnerships among SWSA members. How can members learn from each other and replicate partnership across communities?

