



2016-17 Annual Report

SWSA advocates for the benefit of all students by driving education policies supporting strong public schools to ensure world class practices, economic vitality, and community well-being.

May, 2017

As we reflect upon this past year, SWSA continues to grow as an organization and significantly impact education and the well-being of all children.

We began our journey in July 2016 with an extensive visioning session and re-examined our mission, vision and purpose statements. These conversations with our membership were invigorating and challenged our members to consider the impact we have in a much broader sense. We renewed our commitment to advocacy and also expanded our purpose to positively impact community well-being.

The summary of this work evolved into the commitment statements described below. These statements and strategies have and will continue to provide focus for our work over the course of the next few years.

Statement	
Purpose	School districts lack the capacity and scale to advocate for policies and practices that will most benefit their communities. There is an opportunity to create greater impact by taking action on common interests that positively impact our students, teachers, and communities.
Mission	SWSA advocates for the benefit of all students by driving education policies supporting strong public schools to ensure world class practices, economic vitality, and community well-being.
Vision	By 2025, Wisconsin is a recognized leader in education for all students.
Key Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead the development of a policy agenda. • Raise the impact of SWSA with policymakers and advocates. • Strengthen business model of SWSA.

Accomplishments in the Key Strategic Areas include:

1. Lead the development of a policy agenda

During the 2016-17 calendar year, our dear friend and colleague Pete Christianson retired after serving many years as the lobbyist for SWSA. We welcomed Ramie Zelenkova, with Hubbard, Wilson, and Zelenkova to join our team and lead our lobbying efforts.

As a team, our accomplishments during this past year include:

- ❖ Developed a legislative agenda and identified specific legislative priorities for 2017-19. The membership developed an action plan to achieve these legislative priorities.

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- ❖ One of our key legislative goals focused on advocating for a \$200 increase / student in each year of the biennium.
 - Through meetings with Governor Walker's staff and developing a coordinated and unified message with key stakeholder groups, SWSA was pleased to see Governor Walker's budget include a \$200 and \$204 per pupil increase over the biennial budget.
 - SWSA has had many conversations with key legislators (including Senator Darling and Senator Olsen) to clearly explain why this increase is needed to support our public schools. We will continue to advocate for this increase until the 2017-19 biennial budget has been passed.

- ❖ Spearheaded the first Education Academy 101 to engage legislators around issues and opportunities prior to the beginning of the budget cycle.
 - The purpose of Education Academy 101 was to bring legislators and their staff together for a half day training session on critical issues facing education.
 - This education was delivered in Madison in a non-partisan manner and over 40 legislators and their aides participated in the programming. SWSA coordinated efforts with other advocacy organizations across the state including, SAA (School Administrators Alliance), WASB (Wisconsin State School Boards Association), and the WIRSA (Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance).
 - SWSA developed a website to store all of the information, content, and videotaped presentations delivered during Education Academy 101. Special thanks to Joe Donovan, with the Donovan Group for assisting us in this process.
 - Visit educationacademy101.com to view the videos and presentations including School Finance 101 and School Accountability. These were greatly valued by our legislators. We encourage you to share this link with your board, community, and legislators.

- ❖ SWSA continues to leverage our research base to better understand and refine our policy positions. Utilizing our Hanover Research membership, SWSA commissioned Hanover to conduct research on the following issue areas:
 - Mental Health Services and Public Education
 - Academic & Career Planning and Student Decision-Making.

- ❖ All SWSA members have access not only to the research mentioned above, but the full Hanover Research Library.

II. Raise the impact of SWSA with policymakers and advocates

SWSA continues to build relationships with policymakers and other education advocates. By developing strong relationships with policymakers, SWSA has been invited to and participated in multiple meaningful conversations regarding policy to positively impact educational outcomes for all children in Wisconsin.

- ❖ SWSA participated in dialogue with several legislators and elected officials over the course of the 2016-17 calendar year. These legislators are developing strong relationships with their local school districts as well as the SWSA. We are finding these relationships extremely valuable as they are seeking information from us as to the impact of policy on our students and communities. SWSA hosted the following legislative leaders during this past year:



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- Representative Jeremy Thiesfeldt, Chair of the Assembly Education Committee
 - Senator Luther Olsen, Chair of the Senate Education Committee
 - Senator Alberta Darling, Co-Chair of the Joint Finance Committee
 - Governor Scott Walker, (SWSA was asked to participate in a press conference to support the Governor's budget proposal to increase categorical aid for public school students)
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- ❖ These relationships provided the opportunity for SWSA to play a key role in advocating for the increase in per pupil funding in Governor Walker's budget.
 - ❖ In October, SWSA hosted Dr. Tony Evers, Wisconsin State Superintendent (DPI), Jeff Pertl, Senior Policy Advisor (DPI) and Laura Pinsonneault, Director of the Office of Accountability (DPI). These representatives from DPI provided information on the changes in the state report card prior to their public release.
 - ❖ In November, SWSA hosted Dale Knapp (Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance), Joe Yeado (Public Policy Forum), and Brian Pahnke (Assistant State Superintendent, DPI) to discuss the upcoming budget cycle and issues that SWSA should focus on during the budget process.
 - ❖ On April 5, 2017, SWSA coordinated with several school districts to provide testimony to the Joint Finance Committee at State Fair Park. These first few hearings were critical and the result of our engagement persuaded the legislators to begin with the Governor's budget recommendation to increase categorical aid for students.
 - ❖ SWSA stays connected with other education advocacy organizations to align legislative positions to make a stronger impact.
 - ❖ At our May 9th meeting, SWSA led a community conversation focused on supporting Mental Health services for children using a tiered system of support. Over 70 community stakeholders attended this event to hear our featured presenter, Dr. Andy Garbacz, Associate Professor in the School Psychology Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His presentation focused on creating sustainable systems of support across homes, schools, and community settings for children and adolescents affected by and suffering from mental health challenges.
 - This presentation was followed by an incredibly strong panel of community members working together to support the mental health needs of students. Panelists included:
 - Paul Farrow, Waukesha County Executive
 - Jeff Molter, Ph.D., Manager of Psychological Services and Allied Health, MPS
 - Kim Merath, Project Coordinator for Project Prevent; Resilient Kids, MPS
 - Tanya Fredrich, Ph.D., Director of Special Education and Student Services, Elmbrook School District
 - Laura Cherone, MSW, LCSW, LCSAC, Director of Program and Clinical Services, Family Service of Waukesha
 - Anna M. Ruzinski, Chief of Police/Director of Protective Services, Menomonee Falls Police Department
 - Laurie Kohler, LCSW, Supervisor at Waukesha County Health and Human Services
 - ❖ SWSA will continue to support and share best practices to support our districts as they promote community well-being.



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III. Strengthen the business model of SWSA

- ❖ SWSA continues to broaden our membership and invite new districts to attend our meetings.
- ❖ There has been a significant increase in board member attendance providing new perspectives in our discussions around legislative topics.
- ❖ 2017, SWSA will be undertaking an evaluation of our website to provide a more valuable information internally to our members as well as externally to those who are engaged in our work.

As we reflect on the progress we've made over the past 12 months, we are proud of the positive impact that the SWSA membership has had influencing public policy. We will continue to provide leadership opportunities to build organizational capacity and our ability to advocate effectively on behalf of our students.

Most Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Terri A. Phillips".

Terri Phillips
SWSA Executive Director

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We thank the following members of SWSA for volunteering their time to serve on the Executive Committee for a three-year term. Their guidance provides direction to the full membership.

Members of the SWSA Executive Committee:

Patricia Greco, SWSA Co-Chair (Superintendent Menomonee Falls)
John Haslam, SWSA Co-Chair (School Board member South Milwaukee)
Sharon Muehlfeld, SWSA Co-Chair Elect (School Board Member, Wauwatosa)
Region 1 Rep: Larry Smalley (Glendale-River Hills)
Region 2 Rep: Sharon Muehlfeld, (School Board member Wauwatosa)
Region 3 Rep: Larry Dux (Board Member, Pewaukee)
Region 4 Rep: Marty Lexmond (Superintendent West Allis-West Milwaukee)
Region 5 Rep: Chris Thiel (Legislative Policy Director Milwaukee Public Schools)
Blaise Paul, Business Manager for South Milwaukee School District, and SWSA's fiscal agent
Ramie Zelenkova, SWSA Legislative Liaison

SWSA recognizes the following members for their significant contributions to the SWSA, their dedication to their communities, and most importantly to the students in their districts.

- ❖ *Dr. JoAnn Sternke, Superintendent, Pewaukee School District. JoAnn is retiring from her position as superintendent after 17 years of service to her district. She has served the SWSA in many capacities including Co-Chair, Executive Committee and long-time advocate. Best wishes JoAnn!*
- ❖ *Dr. Steve Patz, Superintendent Franklin School District. Steve retired in April from his position as superintendent. He has been a wonderful advocate for students and we wish him well!*

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Dr. Michelle Langenfeld, Superintendent, Green Bay Public Schools presents to the legislators at Education Academy 101 in February 2017.

Dr. Evers, Jeff Pertl, and Laura Pinsonneault, discuss the new state report cards with the SWSA members.



Representative Jeremy Thiesfeldt meets with the membership in January 2017 prior to the release of the Governor's budget.

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Senator Luther Olsen discusses the Governor's budget with the membership in February 2017.



Senator Darling discusses elements of the Governor's budget with the membership in March 2017.



John Forester, Terri Phillips, and John Stellmacher are first in line awaiting entrance into State Fair Park to provide testimony to the Joint Finance Committee.

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In early April, Terri Phillips provided comments at a press conference alongside Governor Walker and John Ashley (WASB Executive Director) in support of the Governor's proposed increase in categorical aid for students. Several SWSA members joined the team for the morning event.



On May 9, 2017, SWSA hosted a conversation focused on supporting mental health services as a community. Dr. Andy Garbacz presented research and best practice on *Creating and Sustaining Systems to Improve Access to Mental Healthcare and Promote Outcomes for Children and Adolescents*.



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SWSA hosted several panelists who followed Dr. Garbacz with examples of community based approaches to support mental health needs in schools.

