



2017-18 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, 2018

The role of public schools in Wisconsin continues to evolve with the increasing needs facing our students and communities. As a result, the work of the Southeastern Wisconsin Schools Alliance also must transform to ensure we are providing resources and value to our members.

Over the course of the past few years, our mission statement has been revised. Naturally, there is a focus to advocate for sound education policies and practices. However, SWSA has broadened our scope and partnerships to advocate and educate on advancing policies to ensure economic vitality and community well-being. This transition has been the inspiration for new strategies and partnerships to meet the needs of our students, parents, and communities.

With a commitment to this direction, I am proud to share the accomplishments during our 2017-18 calendar year. These accomplishments are the result of hard work and dedication from our members as they continue to engage in building relationships with their legislators and community partners.

I would also like to thank the commitment from our Executive Committee and Co-Chairs who were actively engaged and a driving force behind the organization's significant successes this past year. Please take a moment to thank the following Executive Committee Members:

Members of the SWSA Executive Committee:

Patricia Greco, SWSA Co-Chair (Superintendent Menomonee Falls)

Sharon Muehlfeld, SWSA Co-Chair (School Board Member, Wauwatosa)

Mark Hansen, SWSA Co-Chair Elect (Superintendent, Elmbrook)

Region 1 Rep: Larry Smalley (Glendale-River Hills)

Region 2 Rep: TBD

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

Finally, I would like to recognize those in our organization who are transitioning to new opportunities:

Retirements and Transitions:

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. Pat Greco, Superintendent Menomonee Falls School District. Dr. Greco is retiring from her position as superintendent after working in education for the last 36 years. She will be serving the Menomonee Falls School District through the 2018 calendar year consulting on their continuous improvement process. Dr. Greco has served the SWSA in many capacities including Co-Chair, Executive Committee and long-time advocate. Best wishes Pat!*
- ❖ *Dr. Darienne Drive, Superintendent Milwaukee Public Schools. Dr. Driver is transitioning to become the President and CEO of the United Way for Southeastern Michigan. Dr. Driver has been an incredible advocate for students not only in Milwaukee, but across Wisconsin. Best wishes Dr. Driver... Michigan is lucky to have you!*

2017-18 Annual Report

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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 and communities.

Most Sincerely,

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

Terri Phillips
SWSA Executive Director



2017-18 Annual Report

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The SWSA’s mission is to advocate 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.

The SWSA supports our mission through the following tiered approach:

- Develop and implement key strategies to advocate for sound education policy
- Leverage research to drive educational practice and advocacy
- Raise the impact of SWSA by identifying and developing mutually beneficial partnerships
- Continue to strengthen the SWSA business model by supporting school districts and their communities

Accomplishments in the Key Strategic Areas include:

Strategy	Measurable Outcomes
Advocating for sound education policy	<p>1. <i>Increased financial support for public schools across Wisconsin.</i> By coordinating advocacy efforts with other advocacy organizations across the state, SWSA contributed significantly to increased revenue for public school districts.</p> <p>SWSA played a role in this outcome by providing timely and relevant testimony to the Joint Finance Committee, engaging in conversations with key legislators (including Senator Darling and Senator Olsen), and working with Governor Walker’s office to share the impact of the 2011-13 budget on students.</p> <p>As a result of advocacy efforts by the organization and coordinated efforts of the public school districts, the following outcomes have been achieved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. During the 2017-19 biennial budget, school districts will be receiving an additional \$200 (2018) and \$204 (2019) per resident student. (the 2017-19 budget was passed in late fall 2017) b. Funding support for mental health increased by \$6.25M. c. Initially, adjustments to the low revenue limit ceiling was not included in the 2017-19 budget. SWSA made significant calls and coordinated conversations with local school districts and their legislators to better understand the financial impact. Governor Walker later signed into law the gradual increase for districts with the low revenue ceiling and increase to sparsity aid for our rural school partners. d. Professor Charles Franklin and Alan Borsuk from the Marquette Law School, spoke to the SWSA membership and shared that our advocacy efforts have contributed to the increased support of communities for public education. <i>In late 2017, over 80% of voters support increased state funding to support public education.</i> <p>2. <i>Engaged in improving the future of public education funding.</i> SWSA was specifically asked by the Blue-Ribbon Commission on School Funding to provide testimony in early February, 2018. We coordinated testimony with three school district business managers along with support of superintendents and board members. SWSA continues to work with the Blue-Ribbon Commission and is providing additional invited testimony for the remaining hearings.</p> <p>3. <i>Provided feedback on education policy to legislators and the Governor’s office.</i> SWSA has become one of the key “go to” organizations when legislators or the Governor’s office is looking for feedback on education policy. We are frequently asked by policy makers and engage in conversation around how proposed policy may impact local public school districts.</p>



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Strategy	Measurable Outcomes
<p>Leveraging research to drive educational practice and advocacy</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Partnership with the Wisconsin Policy Forum assisted SWSA in educating members and their communities. For many years, the SWSA has worked with the Public Policy Forum and Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance (these entities have now merged to form the Wisconsin Policy Forum). <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. SWSA plays an active role and serves on the Education Committee with the Public Policy Forum. In addition, a team from the SWSA partners annually meet with the Public Policy Forum research staff to review the Public Schooling Book and find ways to improve the value of the information in the document for legislators and all community members. The Public Schooling Book plays a key role in educating policymakers and community members. b. The Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance is a frequent guest of SWSA and also provided key historical district information to support SWSA’s strategic planning efforts. 2. Partnership with Hanover Research supported advocacy efforts in the areas of Mental Health legislation. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. During 2017, SWSA worked with Hanover Research and developed a research product entitled, “Prioritizing Social-Emotional Learning in School Districts”. This information was shared with legislators during our advocacy efforts to increase funding for Mental Health by \$6.25M in the 2017-19 budget. b. During 2018, SWSA worked with Hanover Research to develop a research product entitled “Authentic and Proven Family Engagement Strategies”. This literature research was requested by member school districts as a way to expand their community engagement opportunities and how to tailor their methods to meet the needs of diverse families. Member school districts have taken these key findings back to their districts and communities to best customize their community engagement strategies. 3. All SWSA member school districts have access to the Hanover Research Library. Access to the national database of research provides local school districts the opportunity to embed evidence-based research into their decision-making process when exploring new program opportunities for students.
<p>Raise the impact of SWSA by identifying and developing mutually beneficial partnerships</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School Safety Conversations and Engagement: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. School Safety has taken a new meaning in these past few months. SWSA is addressing this concern by continuing the conversation not only with educators, but also community stakeholders. SWSA hosted a School Safety Forum that was attended by our member school districts. Many brought their personnel responsible for school safety to hear from local leaders including: mental health experts, crisis response team leaders, school psychologists, fellow administrators, and local law enforcement. SWSA continues to play a role in this conversation at the policy level. b. Hosted Glenn Rehberg, Interim Director of the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of School Safety. Glenn presented at our May membership meeting and provided an audience of over 60 participants information on the School Safety Grants. SWSA has now been added to the distribution list for School Safety. In addition, Glenn has asked us to include him on our School Safety conversations so he can stay engaged at the school level to better understand the needs of the school districts. 2. Nurtured strong relationships and partnerships with stakeholders outside of education. SWSA realizes that influencing public policy requires bringing other stakeholder groups to the table along with education leaders. We have included business, healthcare, law enforcement, local elected officials and others in our advocacy efforts resulting in increased awareness of the importance of sound education policy and their involvement.



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Strategy	Measurable Outcomes
	<p>3. <i>Developed strong relationships and partnerships with other education organizations across the state.</i> There is great value to SWSA member districts and advocacy efforts by building relationships across the education continuum. These include the Department of Public Instruction, higher education, other education advocacy organizations such as the Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB), Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WIRSA), School Administrators Association (SAA), and others. These strong relationships have helped to develop a well-educated membership capable of strong advocacy to influence public policy.</p> <p>4. <i>The SWSA has met with (or invited) these guests over the course of the past year:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative Vos, Speaker of the Assembly • Tony Evers, State Superintendent • Jeff Pertl, Senior Policy Analyst, Department of Public Instruction • Brian Pahnke, Assistant State Superintendent, Department of Public Instruction • Alan Borsuk, Senior Fellow in Law and Public Policy, Marquette Law School • Charles Franklin, Professor of Law and Public Policy and Director of the Marquette Law School Poll • Geneva Scurek, with ICATT (Industry Consortium for Advanced Technical Training) • Brad Carl, Wisconsin Center for Education Research • Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding, Invited Testimony • Jeff Neubauer, Executive Director for the Higher Expectations (Collective Impact Initiative in Racine)
<p>Continue to strengthen the SWSA business model by supporting school districts and their communities</p>	<p>1. <i>School boards and District Administrators share strategies and best practice when working with their legislators and building strong relationships to influence sound education policy.</i> One of SWSA’s greatest assets is the collegiality among the members and their willingness to share what is working and perhaps more importantly what is not. SWSA often leverages the relationship a legislator has with their school district to build understanding on an issue and influence their position on education policy. This has been extremely evident over the course of the last two budget cycles where education funding has begun to take a priority.</p> <p>2. <i>School boards and District Administrators share strategies for working with their communities to educate them on the importance of sound education policies.</i> A more informed electorate on education policy will continue to build advocates outside of education and influence public policy in Madison.</p> <p>3. <i>SWSA has begun to educate members on the Collective Impact Framework of collaboration and the community impact a cross sector group of stakeholders can have.</i> Some of the member districts are working with community stakeholders to build stronger communities. SWSA is providing opportunities for members to learn more about the Collective Impact framework and how to engage with community leaders in an effort to jointly impact outcomes for students and communities. This is also an approach that SWSA has strongly advocated for at the state level and our organization will be at the table as this develops.</p>

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Alan Borsuk and Charles Franklin from the Marquette Law School participated in a panel conversation about the effectiveness of advocacy efforts. This was followed up by a meeting hosted by Charles and Alan featuring SWSA superintendents, board members, and business managers in an effort to share challenges school districts are facing.

Brad Carl from the WCER educates the SWSA membership on the importance of program evaluation. As a follow up, some of the SWSA member districts are working with the WCER on program evaluations.



Glenn Rehberg, Interim Director of the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of School Safety shared information about the School Safety Grant with a packed crowd at the May SWSA Membership meeting.

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Special thanks to this outstanding team of superintendents, board members, and business managers who represented SWSA at the Blue Ribbon Commission as invited testimony in February 2018.