



# 2022-2023 SWSA Annual Report

June 13, 2023

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# Special thanks to our Executive Committee

Please take a moment to thank the following Executive Committee Members:

- Quin Brunette, SWSA Co-Chair (School Board, Whitnall)
- Paul Mielke, SWSA Co-Chair (Superintendent, Hamilton)
- Keri Duce, SWSA Co-Chair Elect (School Board, Menomonee Falls)
- Region 1 Rep: Monica Kelsey-Brown (Superintendent, Brown Deer)
- Region 2 Rep: Tina Owen-Moore (Superintendent, Cudahy)
- Region 3 Rep: Jim Romanowski (Board Member, Kettle Moraine)
- Region 4 Rep: Todd Price (School Board Member, Kenosha)
- Region 5 Rep: Chris Thiel (Legislative Policy Director Milwaukee Public Schools)
  - \* Lisa Elliott: Emeritus ( Superintendent, Greenfield)
  - \* Larry Dux: Emeritus ( School Board Member, Pewaukee)
- Dan Arnold, Business Manager for South Milwaukee School District, and SWSA's fiscal agent
- Ramie Zelenkova, SWSA Legislative Liaison
- Dan Romportl, SWSA Legislative Liaison



# Special thanks to our Executive Committee

- **Quin Brunette** has provided his leadership as the Co-Chair of the SWSA. He graciously stepped into the open Co-Chair position effective spring of 2022. Quinn has elected not to continue on the Exec. Comm. as he enjoys his recent retirement. Quin, thank you for your passion for education and for your businessman's perspective to Public Education! Thank you, Quin!
- **Jim Romanowski**- has provided leadership with SWSA since January 1, 2021. He stepped in to fill Paul Mielke's position. Jim is in his 9th year on the Kettle Moraine Schools Board. Thank you , Jim, for your passion and commitment to Wisconsin students!!



# Retirements & Transitions: Superintendents

- **Dr. JoAnn Sternke, Interim Superintendent of Shorewood.** JoAnn has been a relentless advocate for public education and continuous improvement! JoAnn has served as Interim Superintendent for the past two years. She previously served as Co-Chair of SWSA for two years as well. Thank you, JoAnn, for your commitment and dedication to Education. We have enjoyed working with you and will miss you!
- **Dr. Marty Lexmond, Superintendent West Allis West Milwaukee Schools.** Marty, Congratulations on your retirement. Thank you for your leadership and service to public education.
- **David Watkins, Superintendent Port Washington Saukville Schools.** Dave, Congratulations on your upcoming retirement! Thank you for your leadership and service to public education.
- **Dr. Jim Shaw, Interim Superintendent, South Milwaukee.** Thank you, Jim, for your continued leadership and dedication to public education.



# Transitions: Board Members

***Special thanks to our board members who are transitioning. Thank you for your community service and dedication to the children in your communities and across Wisconsin. (please accept our apologies if we are missing anyone!)***

- Gary Vose, - Kettle Moraine, Served KM 36 years. Also served SWSA
- Paru Shah- Pres. Shorewood School Bd



# SWSA Strategic Areas

*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:**

1. Develop and implement key strategies to advocate for sound education policy
2. Raise the impact of SWSA by identifying and developing mutually beneficial partnerships
3. Strengthen the SWSA business model by supporting school districts and their communities
4. Leverage research to drive educational practice and advocacy



*Our outcomes during the 2022-2023 calendar year are outlined on the subsequent pages.*

## **Strategic Area 1:** *Advocate for sound education policy*

- **Developed Legislative talking Points and District Templates with input from the SWSA Membership & guidance from the Executive Committee**
  - The [Legislative Talking Points](#) have become the foundation for our legislative advocacy work.
  - Resources were created to support advocacy efforts during the legislative session including talking points, and [District Templates](#).





# Strategic Area 1: *Advocate for sound education policy*

- **The SWSA Executive Director & legislative liaison, Ramie Zelenkova and her staff supported the membership by**
  - Submitting testimony on budget funding request bills: [Letter to membership Assembly and Senate Legislators](#)
  - Supporting SWSA members to provide their testimony to the Assembly and Senate Education Committees; both in-person and via email
  - Working behind the scenes to have conversations with key legislative offices on K-12 education issues.
    - Met with Rep. Wittke to promote the Rehired Annuitant Bill. Sen. Knodl is interested in authoring the Senate Bill. Bill Language is being refined.
    - Senator Knodl is interested in possibly authoring an Alternative Licensure Bill.
    - Exec. director, along with Ramie Zelenkova (HWZ Gov't relations) and Matt Joynt, Mequon Superintendent, met with the following legislators to personally present our Budgetary requests:
      - Speaker Robin Vos
      - Rep. Born
      - Rep. Dallman
      - Rep. Kurtz
      - Rep. Kitchens
      - Sen. Jagler
      - Rep. Rodriguez
      - Sen. Felzkowski, senior staff



## Strategic Area 1: *Advocate for sound education policy*



State Superintendent Dr. Underly shared her budget priorities for K12 education in Wisconsin and participated in an interactive conversation with the Executive Committee.



The Executive Committee Met with Rep. Kitchens to discuss his K-12 and budget priorities for 2023-2025.



## **Strategic Area 2:** *Raise the impact of SWSA by identifying and developing mutually beneficial partnerships*

### **Children's Hospital Partnership**

- Amanda Quesnell, Director, Mental Health Services & Children's Hospital MBH Urgent Care: shared with the membership information about the new Urgent Mental Health Clinics available for children in Southeastern Wisconsin.
- The Executive Director continues to meet with Bridget Clementi, Vice President Community Health.
- Looking to expand the partnership for 2023-2024.

### **The SWSA Executive Director and legislative liaison met weekly with key partners across the state to continue advocating and strategizing for our members**

Weekly strategy meetings with the following partners:

- School Administrators Alliance (SAA)
  - Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB)
  - Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WiRSA)
  - Wisconsin Association of Business Officials (WASBO)
- Weekly stakeholder meetings with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI)



## **Strategic Area 2:** *Raise the impact of SWSA by identifying and developing mutually beneficial partnerships*

**Worked with Anne, Chapman, WASBO,** to present “*School Finance in Wisconsin, Where we are Now, How we got Here, What is Next*”, slides to the Waukesha Business Alliance.

**Superintendent, Dr. Paul Mielke** shared the SWSA Budget Talking Points with John Mercure, Milwaukee radio host, TMJ4.



## **Strategic Area 3: *Strengthen the SWSA business model by supporting school districts and their communities***

**The SWSA continued to host virtual meetings to provide easy access to meetings and information to its members. An average of 40-50 SWSA members participated in these meetings.**

- **The membership will be hosting one in-person with a hybrid option meeting in June**

**The Executive Director provided one on one support to member districts when needed.**



## **Strategic Area 3: *Strengthen the SWSA business model by supporting school districts and their communities***

### **Communications:**

**The Executive Director worked with our various partners to promote one united Budget request to present to State Legislators:**

1. Increase current funding for public students by \$1,510 in the form of spendable revenue to address record inflation and looming fiscal cliffs.
2. Increase State Special Education reimbursement to 60% in FY 1 and 90% in FY 2
3. Provide funding for mental health services through a per pupil categorical aid to support school-based mental health to address emotional and behavioral needs of students.



## Strategic Area 4: *Leverage research to drive educational practice and advocacy*

Continued to cultivate our partnership with the Wisconsin Policy Forum to provide access to research and educational opportunities for SWSA members.

- SWSA serves on the Education Committee with the Wisconsin Policy Forum. This committee helps guide their research efforts and identify ways to improve the value of the information they are providing.
- The relationship between SWSA and the Wisconsin Policy Forum gives our team the opportunity to drive education policy for the region and the state.
- As members of the Wisconsin Policy Forum, all SWSA members are on their mailing lists and have access to their reports and webinars.



## **Strategic Area 4:** *Leverage research to drive educational practice and advocacy*

The Executive Director participated in a panel discussion , “What’s Next in K-12 Education”hosted by the Marquette Law Center and Journalist, Alan Borsuk. Other panelists included representatives from the Wisconsin Law and Liberty group, Wisconsin Public Education Network and a school board member from MPS.

The Executive Director shared current local and national articles on leading educational topics with the full membership.





# Reflections from Executive Director, Faith VanderHorst

Thank you all for prioritizing the difficult task of advocacy!

The primary goal of the SWSA is to support you and your team to advocate on behalf of kids. You are all amazing education leaders!

Thank you for asking me to step in as Interim Executive Director. I look forward to working with you through the end of this Legislative session (March 2024). I know there are exciting ideas and opportunities that will come to support our great work!

Please let us know what more we can do to support you and your team.

Warmly,

Faith VanderHorst  
SWSA Executive Director

