



"LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC SCHOOL GOVERNANCE"

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Legislative Council Study Committee on School Safety
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Wisconsin school board members are committed to providing safe learning environments because they know the climate of their schools – whether real or perceived – has a direct impact on student achievement. If children don't feel safe, they don't learn. It's as simple as that.

School boards take their responsibility to educate children and keep them safe very seriously. School boards are conducting student assessments and facility assessments, they are reviewing their crisis management plans, updating their policies and working with community partners to prepare for emergencies.

School boards are doing their job. Due to the combined efforts of school boards, administrators, teachers and others, violent incidents in schools have declined, but more work is needed. In addition to preventing violence, they must also address the myriad of issues that children bring to the schoolhouse door that directly and indirectly impact the safe learning environments in our schools.

So, today we are asking that the state partner with schools in identifying the central issues to improve school safety and developing solutions that provide local flexibility and recognize families and communities as partners in this endeavor.

Specifically, we recommend that the committee:

- Identify a flexible funding source to enable schools to meet their diverse school safety expenses, including, but not limited to staffing, professional development, curriculum materials, facility upgrades, and communication devices. When revenue limits were enacted 15 years ago, school security was not the major concern this it is today and it did not require similar investments. Times have changed. Today, school safety is a priority issue for the public. However, the investments deemed necessary by school officials and the public are adversely impacting other portions of school budgets.
- Review the related state and federal funding sources that are available to schools to eliminate any barriers to using these funds in as flexible of a manner as possible. Related funding sources include, among others: state and federal special education funding; state alternative education, ADOA prevention and intervention, and children at-risk grants; and Medicaid.

- Review state and county programs serving at-risk children and youths to identify funding gaps and program shortfalls. Schools cannot, in and of themselves, address every issue that children bring to the schoolhouse door. Community programs and resources are an integral component of ensuring safe schools.
- Review specific statutory provisions identified by schools as impeding school safety, including:
 - Section 120.13(1)(f) allows a Wisconsin public school board to refuse to enroll a student who is currently expelled from another school district. The Wisconsin Attorney General and Department of Public Instruction have determined that this law only applies to students expelled from Wisconsin school districts. School boards cannot refuse to enroll a student expelled from a school district in another state or a private school *regardless* of the circumstances.
 - Section 115.81(4)(c) requires a county department or state agency to pay all of the residential care center costs for children and youths placed in a residential care center if the child is placed in the center under court order or by the state agency. However, state and federal special education laws require school districts to provide special education services to eligible students until the age of 21. Thus, a court recently ruled that a school district where a residential care center is located is responsible for paying for educational services for eligible students aged 18 to 21 years regardless of the school district's role in the placement. This has the potential to cast a huge financial burden on school districts that happen to have specialized facilities within their borders.
 - Section 19.21 requires public records to be retained for seven years. Whether this law applies to video surveillance tapes, regardless of activity or inactivity captured on the tapes, is not clear. Requiring school districts to retain all of these tapes for seven years would serve as a disincentive to school districts to monitor activities on buses, hallways, etc. with video surveillance equipment to help ensure safety.