

Report on the State Education Convention January 19-21, 2022 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin respectfully submitted by Amy Riddle-Swanson

Keynotes:

Wednesday, January 19th

Ravi Hutheesing is a repeat keynote that was at the State Education Convention in 2018 so this was the second time I heard him speak. Ravi has done many things in his life from Rock Star to aviator and to cultural diplomat. He is the author of the book, "PIVOT: Empowering Students Today to Succeed in an Unpredictable Tomorrow." Ravi as a cultural diplomat for the U.S. department uses the power of music to help people see past their differences. He had a great slide show and videos showing students from all over the world engaging in making music and art. Since 2015 he has been instrumental in running cultural programs sponsored by the U.S. State Department in Russia, Indonesia, Iraq, and Lebanon. Students from different backgrounds come together and become friends. One heartwarming video he showed was three students who became friends and found common ground with music although one was a Christian, one a Muslim, and one a Buddhist which was so hopeful for the next generation. Ravi emailed the slides from his presentation which I have and if anyone is interested I would be happy to share them.

Thursday, January 20th

Brandon Fleming is the founder of the Harvard Diversity Project which brings underserved youth with no debate experience and coaches and trains them to compete against international elite debaters. For three consecutive years every cohort trained by Mr. Fleming has won the international competition. Brandon described and told his story from going from a college dropout to award winning Harvard educator. It was an inspirational story and he has written a book about it entitled, "Miseducated: A Memoir" released in June, 2021. Brandon's philosophy to career success is real-life evidence that educational access, not ability is the

main barrier to the success of underserved children. One comment he made that resonated with me was “All aspects of education are not for everyone, but there is something for everyone in education”

Friday, January 21st

Craig Counsell, the manager of the Milwaukee Brewers did not speak, but had more of a dialogue with a member of the WASB personnel. The WASB professional asked Manager Counsell many questions stemming from his playing career to his managing career. Craig Counsell is currently the longest running manager of a team at 7 years in the MLB. I enjoyed hearing about him and learning some inside things regarding baseball. Most of you know that I love baseball and a big fan of the Chicago Cubs so this was a real treat. The story that stood out most in my mind was his description of game 163 at Wrigley Field in 2019 where the Brewers beat the Cubs and knocked them out of the playoffs for the first time since 2015. Craig seemed personable and a good manager from my perspective. You could have your picture taken with Craig after the presentation, but I declined as that would be compromising my allegiance to the Cubs, but I did take some photos of him with my phone and sent to Joe as I figured he being a Brewers fan would appreciate them.

Delegate Assembly

All ten of the resolutions passed most of them by very wide margins. The assembly was hybrid with those being in person and others joining us remotely. This was a bit of a headache as the technology went in and out and we lost service several times with the remote delegates and we had to pause several times during the process before moving forward. It is complicated because the bylaws state that in order to conduct business and vote on the resolutions there has to be a quorum which is 50 percent of the school districts in the state of Wisconsin. Despite the technological difficulties we were still able to get through all ten of the resolutions. There were two resolutions that had quite a bit of discussion. One was Resolution 22-07 which had to do with Curriculum and Professional Training on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. This resolution was brought by the Milwaukee School District and one of the arguments was that Milwaukee should not dictate what needs to be taught in our schools, but the

rationale discussed census data on the growing population of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Wisconsin grew 36 percent in ten years. The rationale also spoke of the hate crimes and racism against Asian Americans having increased due to the pandemic starting in China. This resolution did pass, but not as wide a margin as all of the other resolutions. The other resolution, 22-08 regarding WASB National Presence and/or National Association Membership was brought to the table by WASB as the existing resolution 5.16 WASB is required to maintain membership in the NSBA, but in light of the issues involved with the NSBA calling parents terrorists and not aligning with the values of WASB this was a hot topic. This resolution leaves the decision up to the board of directors of WASB to make a decision about keeping affiliated with the NSBA or not. It seems that changes WASB is seeking is that WASB maintain “a national presence and/or membership in a national association(s), but that association would not necessarily have to be the NSBA. There was talk about another national organization forming that would be separate from the NSBA. I am honored to serve as a delegate to this assembly and represent the SDMA.

Sessions I attended

Managing Public Participation During School Board Meetings:

This session discussed managing public comment time during school board meetings and how difficult of a balancing act this can be. The presenter was Ben Richter staff counsel for WASB. While providing regular opportunities for members of the public to offer input is important school boards also need to carefully manage meeting time, encourage constructive discourse, and maintain control if speakers get out of line or become aggressive. This session was affirmation that having the president read the statement about not attacking board members, administration, or bad mouthing teachers or students and liability issues and balancing freedom of speech is a good practice before allowing for our community communications to take place. It is up to the president to keep order, but if other board members believe the president is not doing his or her job other board members can call out Point of Order and ask for the behaviors to be stopped. A strong suggestion was made that board members have a conversation with their board president and let them know you would be

watching and calling out point of order in any given situation they feel could be getting out of hand.

Supporting Music Education in Wisconsin:

This session was provided by Laurie Fellenz, Executive Director of the Wisconsin School Music Association and Horicon Superintendent, Rich Appel. This session focused on how the federal Every Student Succeeds Act specifically includes access to music and the arts as part of a well-rounded education to ensure that all students have access to an enriched curriculum and educational experience. To help districts comply with the federal law the WSMA collaborated with PBS Wisconsin to develop a curriculum focused on the songs of Wisconsin. The presenters shared resources and scheduling examples to support access to connect the arts with social and emotional learning. I have some posters and a brochure that I will share with the board at the meeting.

Funny You Should Say That! A New Approach to Building Relationships:

The presenter for this session was Karyn Buxman a neurohumorist. This session dealt with learning how to relate better with one another despite differences in age, gender, cultures or work experiences. I really enjoyed this session as it was interactive. Karyn has a game she invented called "Funny You Should Say That." We actually broke up into groups of 8 and played this game which was a lot of fun and entertaining. This game combined story and humor to connect an audience through their common experiences and laughter. The game has cards with talking prompts on them and a timer. The first person chose a card with a prompt on it and could choose to answer it or choose another card. Once the first person has taken two minutes to answer the prompt then the next person can either stick with that prompt or pick a new prompt and so on. The group I was a part of were a lot of fun and we laughed a lot. The prompt I had was talk about your super power. According to the speaker this game will increase emotional intelligence, boost resilience and build communication skills. This might be a fun game to play with the board.

Cultivating Culture and an Enriching Environment:

The presenters were Andrea Rittgers, Director of Student Services; Dan Konopasek, Student Services Professional Learning Coordinator; Laura Vanderhyden, Student Assistant Coordinator; Lisa Lequia, Assistant Director of Student Services all of the Racine School District which has a population of 16,254 students. This session focused on helping students to reach high achievement levels by educators first recognizing their own needs and be mindful of prioritizing self-care and compassion resilience. According to the presenters once this is accomplished then the school staff can be prepared to develop and nurture and sustain a calm, predictable and consistent atmosphere to create a safe learning environment that allows students to take risks and maximize academic and psychological growth. The presenters shared how they have created an environment in their school system with mental health providers and best practices to make sure that the environment supports the whole child. Classrooms all start with morning meetings to talk about any issues or obstacles and how to take care of themselves. There also seemed to be some intense work among the student services personnel such as counselors and special education teachers to work with students and making sure they get what they need. The presenters showed how student achievement increased over time with after these processes were in place. It was amazing.

WASB Legislative Update:

This session is always available at every convention I have attended and the presenters were Chris Kulow, and Dan Rossmiller of WASB who both work with government relations. These updates discuss upcoming legislation that impacts education and is similar to the legislative reports we receive from WASB via email. The big discussion this time had to do with ESSER funds and how they are to be used and how it is getting closer to come out of committee to get these funds out to school districts across the state.

