

## 2017-18 WEMTA Legislative Advocacy Agenda

The Wisconsin Educational Media & Technology Association (WEMTA) represents school library media and instructional technology professionals. Technology impacts every facet of modern schools from operations to instruction. School library programs provide access to a wide variety of essential educational materials such as books, magazines, digital resources, web resources, information databases, and the technology needed to utilize these resources. Research shows that school library programs led by certified professionals are linked to higher levels of student achievement and well-stocked school libraries correlate with higher reading scores.

To advance student achievement and prepare students for 21<sup>st</sup> century careers, WEMTA supports the following:

***Statutory Use of the Common School Fund:*** Established by the Wisconsin State Constitution in 1848, the Common School Fund is the only dedicated source of K-12 school library funding in Wisconsin. School libraries receive an annual distribution of earnings from the Common School Fund to purchase books and instructional materials. With school districts facing increased budget constraints, the vast majority of school libraries rely on Common School Fund distributions as their sole funding source for the purchase of informational resources. WEMTA supports the continued statutory use of the Common School Fund as envisioned by our founding fathers.

***Increased Access to Broadband:*** WEMTA supports efforts to increase capacity and access to broadband services for all Wisconsin's students, in schools, libraries and communities.

***Investments in Educational Technology:*** In addition to increased access to broadband in schools, WEMTA supports increased funding for educational technology programs in all K-12 schools. In alignment with Future Ready Schools, WEMTA supports the Wisconsin Digital Learning Plan and the development of WISEDash, WISELearn, and WISEData programs. Adequate funding for professional development, staffing, and technology infrastructure is critical for Wisconsin schools to compute and succeed.

***Expand BadgerLink:*** BadgerLink provides access to online information resources for all Wisconsin students, no matter where their school is located. WEMTA supports increased funding and support of BadgerLink to ensure continued access to electronic resources including newspapers, periodicals, encyclopedias, and other specialized information resources.

***The Board of Commissioners of Public Lands:*** It is very important for the school library community that the funding, staffing levels, investment authority, and composition of the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL), which oversees the Common School Fund, is maintained. As envisioned by our founding fathers, current BCPL Commissioners do not play a leading role in K-12 school funding or the state budget process—this makes them ideal custodians of the Common School Fund and helps to protect the integrity of the fund. The BCPL is currently comprised, as outlined by the State Constitution, of the Attorney General, Secretary of State and State Treasurer. WEMTA supports the current composition of the BCPL and opposes efforts to eliminate the positions of State Treasurer and Secretary of State.

***Address School Staffing Shortages:*** There is a statistically significant link between professional library media staffing and student achievement. However, reports from Wisconsin schools and the State Superintendent's Office reveal a chronic staffing shortage of full-time certified school library media specialists. Efforts to address the statewide school staffing shortages should include provisions specific to certified school library media specialists and library support staff.

***Wisconsin Media Lab Funding:*** WEMTA supports the Educational Communications Board's request to reinstate funding for the Wisconsin Media Lab. The Wisconsin Media Lab provides educational content specifically designed to meet the needs of Wisconsin's 874,000 K-12 students. Resources provided by the Wisconsin Media Lab include online content such as video programs and eBooks, as well as professional development and lesson plans for Wisconsin teachers.

***Library Service Contracts:*** WEMTA supports library service contracts that provide specialized library materials and information to a unique customer base that cannot be served through the public libraries or the Reference and Loan Library. WEMTA supports full and appropriate funding for the four statewide service contracts: Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library, Milwaukee Public Library/Interlibrary Loan, University of Wisconsin-Madison/Interlibrary Loan and the Cooperative Children's Book Center.

***Intellectual and Academic Freedom:*** Intellectual Freedom is an integral component of a democratic society, protecting an individual's right to access, explore, consider, express ideas and disseminate information. Academic Freedom is the belief that the freedom of inquiry by the educational community is essential to the mission of the academy, and that scholars have freedom to teach or communicate all idea, ideals, or facts. WEMTA supports Intellectual and Academic Freedom and opposes any infringements on personal privacy while recognizing the importance of safe digital habits and practices for students and families.

***Student Data and Privacy:*** WEMTA supports all efforts to protect student data from unauthorized use.

***ESSA:*** WEMTA supports full funding for Title IV, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).