

2025 SCHOOL BOARD SUMMIT

WAUKESHA,
WISCONSIN

MAY 9
2025

will-law.org

Professional Development Training
for Wisconsin School Board Members

WILL
WISCONSIN INSTITUTE
FOR LAW & LIBERTY



EVENT SPONSORS



SCHEDULE

- 8:00 to 8:30** Welcome and Registration
- 8:30 to 8:45** Opening Remarks from Cory Brewer and Rick Esenberg
- 8:45 to 9:45** Building Citizens:
The Role of Civic Education in a Free Society
- 9:45 to 9:55** Break
- 9:55 to 10:55** Break-Out Option One:
What You Need to Know About Wisconsin School Finance
- Break-Out Option Two:
WILL Legal Panel: Pressing Legal Issues in K-12 Education
- 10:55 to 11:05** Break
- 11:05 to 12:00** School Board Policies:
How to Set Up Your Board for Long-Term Success
- 12:00 to 12:30** Lunch Line & Break
- 12:30 to 1:45** Keynote: What to Do About Kids, Smartphones, and Social Media: The Risks and the Solutions with Catherine Price
- 1:45 to 2:15** Networking Break
- 2:15 to 3:10** Break-Out Option One: School Safety Fireside Chat
- Break-Out Option Two: Superintendent Search & Contract:
How to Attract, Hire, and Retain an Effective Superintendent
- 3:10 to 3:20** Break
- 3:20 to 4:15** How School Boards Can Support Teachers in Strengthening Classroom Management and Improving Student Achievement
- 4:15 to 4:30** Concluding Remarks
- 4:30** Networking

8:00 to 8:30

Welcome and Registration

8:30 to 8:45

**Welcome Remarks by Rick Esenberg
and Cory Brewer**



Rick Esenberg

Rick Esenberg is the founder and current President and General Counsel of the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL). As one of the leading experts on the Wisconsin Constitution, Rick is a frequent litigator in state and federal courts and nationally recognized scholar and commentator on constitutional law, particularly the First Amendment's guarantees of freedom of speech and religion. Rick's work seeks to advance the rule of law and individual liberty, formed by a robust civil society that forms individual and community character, preserving the wisdom of the past and an openness to the future.



Cory Brewer

Cory Brewer serves as Education Counsel at the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL). She focuses on legal and policy issues related to K-12 education. This includes efforts related to public school reform through the Restoring American Education project and expansion of school choice by empowering families with the freedom to choose the best education for their children. Cory holds a law degree from the University of Wisconsin Law School and a B.A. from Lawrence University. She lives in Oak Creek with her husband and four children.

8:45 to 9:45

Building Citizens: The Role of Civic Education in a Free Society

From declining civic literacy to debates over classroom bias, civic education faces tough hurdles. Join our scholars as they discuss restoring rigor and neutrality to civics teaching. Discover how school boards can champion curricula that equip students to engage thoughtfully with their nation's past and future



Robert Pondiscio

Robert Pondiscio is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), where he focuses on K-12 education, curriculum, teaching, school choice, and charter schooling. Before joining AEI, Mr. Pondiscio was at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, an education policy think tank. He previously worked for the Core Knowledge Foundation and as an adviser and civics teacher at Democracy Prep Public Schools. Before that, he worked in journalism for 20 years, including in senior positions at Time and BusinessWeek. Mr. Pondiscio is the author of many books and has been extensively published in the popular press, including in The Atlantic and The Wall Street Journal. He is a frequent speaker and is often interviewed on radio and television including CNN and Fox News Channel. Mr. Pondiscio has an MS in elementary education from Mercy College and a BA in English from SUNY Empire State College.



David Randall

David Randall is the Research Director of The National Association of Scholars. David earned a Ph.D. in history from Rutgers University, an M.F.A. in fiction writing from Columbia University, a master's degree in library science from the Palmer School at Long Island University, and a B.A. from Swarthmore College. Prior to working at NAS he was the sole librarian at the John McEnroe Library at New York Studio School.



Robert Jackson

For 25 years, Dr. Jackson has promoted liberal education through teaching, scholarship, and administrative activities. He began as a professor of English and education, then worked as chief academic officer at Great Hearts, where he founded the GH Institute. He has received teaching awards from Florida State University and The King's College, and was the 2021 recipient of the Salvatori Prize for American Citizenship. Currently, Dr. Jackson serves as senior fellow for both Flagler College and the Chesterton Schools Network. He is also associate editor for Principia journal. Rob enjoys convivial conversations, his latest literary discovery, and cruising around town on the cycle.



Noah Tyler

As Chief Financial Officer at the Classic Learning Test (CLT), Noah Tyler leads through a multifaceted role encompassing business strategy, psychometric direction, policy initiatives, and essential HR functions. His comprehensive understanding of assessment fundamentals is matched by his dedication to educational restoration, exemplified by his instrumental role in bringing a more civics-oriented assessment to Florida's education system in 2023. Noah personally ensures the inclusion of foundational thinkers like Abraham Lincoln and Benjamin Franklin in CLT's assessments, reinforcing the connection between classical education and civic virtue.

Noah's academic foundation includes a BA from Grove City College and an MA in Economics from George Mason University. Following graduate studies, he immersed himself in assessment methodology, eventually earning recognition as a top instructor for SAT, ACT, GRE, GMAT, and LSAT preparation courses. Beyond his professional accomplishments, Noah embraces urban homeschool life in downtown Baltimore, where he lives with his wife and five children, modeling the educational principles he champions professionally.

9:45 to 9:55

Break

9:55 to 10:55

Break-Out Panels

Break-Out Option 1: What You Need to Know About Wisconsin School Finance

The world of school finances can appear daunting at first for school board members. This panel will serve feature experts with “on the ground” experience in school finance at the district and CESA-level. It will serve as an introduction to key factors in finance such as the various numbered funds, and the relationship between state funding and property taxes. We will also explore topics unique to districts in urban, rural, and suburban regions of the state. Panelists will explain how school board members can access key information about their districts, how that information can be incorporated into a comprehensive view of district financing and best practices.



Will Flanders

Will Flanders is the Research Director at the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL). Dr. Flanders conducts econometric research on the application of WILL’s principles of freedom and liberty to the educational system in Wisconsin. Since joining WILL, he has authored or co-authored reports on the return on investment from charter schools, the effects of Act 10 on the teaching workforce, and the economic benefits of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program. Dr. Flanders holds a Ph.D. in Political Science with a specialization in American Politics and Public Policy from Florida State University, as well as an M.S. in Political Science and an M.S. in Applied American Politics and Policy from the same school. He earned his B.A. from Valdosta State University in Georgia, his home state.



Jonathan Mitchell

Jonathan Mitchell has dedicated 18 years to the field of public school finance and is currently in his sixth year as the Director of Business Services for the Greendale School District. He finds great satisfaction in mentoring aspiring administrators and business managers, a commitment that was honored with the 2020 Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials (WASBO) School Business Manager of the Year Award. Jonathan shares his expertise as an adjunct professor at the Milwaukee School of Engineering (MSOE) and Wisconsin Lutheran College. His professional mission is rooted in aligning resources in way that will make a difference for kids.



Andy Chromy

Andy Chromy is an Assistant Superintendent with Franklin Public Schools. He has spent the past 12 years managing school finance at several districts from a small rural district to a large urban district. Prior to his role in the business office, he was a teacher with both MPS and South Milwaukee for 13+ years. These combined experiences have given him a deep understanding of how districts function and the differences in districts. In addition to his role with Franklin Public Schools, Andy is also an adjunct professor at MSOE in their MBA program and with their DPI 08-Business Manager licensure program.



Brian Kadlec

Bryan is currently a Business Manager at the Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) #8, which serves districts in the Northeastern region of the state. In this role, he provides business services for the Shawano and Beecher-Dunbar-Pembine school districts while also leading the development of the business services practice at CESA 8. Prior to that, he was the Director of Business and Operations at the Trevor-Wilmot Consolidated School District in western Kenosha County. Prior to his second career in education, Bryan was a technology executive with close to 30 years of experience utilizing technology to solve complex business problems for companies in the insurance and financial services industry. He earned his MS in School Business Management from University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and a BS in Mathematics / Computer Information Systems from University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point. Outside of work Bryan enjoys time with family, and is an endurance athlete with long distance accomplishments in running, cycling, and triathlon.

Break-Out Option 2: WILL Legal Panel: Pressing Legal Issues in K-12 Education

The legal landscape in education is shifting fast—and keeping up can be a challenge. Join WILL's three Deputy Counsels for a timely and engaging session covering the legal developments that matter most to your district. From FERPA and Title IX, to changes ushered in by the new presidential administration, to Wisconsin-specific laws like Act 10, this session will give educators, administrators, and board members the legal clarity and practical tools they need to navigate today's evolving environment with confidence.



Luke Berg

Luke Berg is a Deputy Counsel with the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty, and he litigates cases involving parental rights, election law, the First Amendment, and separation of powers, among other topics. Before joining WILL, he served for nearly four years at the Wisconsin Department of Justice as a Deputy Solicitor General. Berg has argued eleven cases before the Wisconsin Supreme Court and six before the Seventh Circuit. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin – Madison (B.S.) and New York University (J.D.) and served as a law clerk for Judge Diane Sykes of the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. He resides in Madison with his wife and three boys.



Dan Lennington

Dan Lennington serves as Managing Vice President and Deputy Counsel, focusing on the Equality Under the Law Project. Dan previously served as the Assistant Deputy Attorney General and Deputy Solicitor General at the Wisconsin Department of Justice, where he argued constitutional law cases before the Wisconsin Supreme Court, the Seventh Circuit, and state and federal trial courts around the state. Before joining the Wisconsin Department of Justice, Dan was an award-winning federal prosecutor in Oklahoma. He is a graduate of Hillsdale College and Valparaiso University School of Law.



Lucas Vebber

Lucas Vebber is an attorney at the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL) where he focuses on separation of powers and regulatory issues. Prior to joining WILL, Lucas worked for the state in both the legislative and executive branches, and as General Counsel and Executive Director of the Litigation Center at Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce. Lucas has a bachelor's degree from Marquette University in Milwaukee and a law degree from the University of Saint Thomas in Minneapolis. He lives in Wauwatosa with his wife and children.

10:55 to 11:05

Break

11:05 to 12:00

**School Board Policies:
How to Set Up Your Board for Long-Term Success**

What does it mean to be a school board member in Wisconsin compared to other states? What makes Wisconsin school board powers unique and how can board members use that power to implement policies that will encourage academic success and the overall success of the district. Panelists will also discuss the resources available to school board members to achieve these goals.



Cory Brewer

Cory Brewer serves as Education Counsel at the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL). She focuses on legal and policy issues related to K-12 education. This includes efforts related to public school reform through the Restoring American Education project and expansion of school choice by empowering families with the freedom to choose the best education for their children. Cory holds a law degree from the University of Wisconsin Law School and a B.A. from Lawrence University. She lives in Oak Creek with her husband and four children.



Leslie Graves

Leslie Graves is the founder and Publisher of Ballotpedia. Graves's career in digital media and civic activism has spanned several decades, and she has contributed academic scholarship in various publications. Leslie earned her Bachelor of Arts from St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland, and performed her graduate studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in philosophy. She lives in Spring Green, Wisconsin, with her husband, Eric O'Keefe.



Lauren Greuel

Lauren is Associate Counsel at WILL where she focuses on legal and policy issues related to K-12 education in Wisconsin. She worked for WILL as a policy intern from 2018-2020 and returned after receiving her law degree from Regent University School of Law in Virginia Beach, VA. She also holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Economy from Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, MI.



David Hoyt

David Hoyt is the Executive Director of School Boards for Academic Excellence, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering school board members to reassert academic excellence in the American education system. He has served in management and fundraising positions with The Heartland Institute, Young Americans for Liberty, and other like-minded organizations. He cofounded Cornerstone Classical Academy in Jacksonville, Florida, an A-rated, high-performing classical charter school of more than 1,000 students. David's editorials have appeared in Fox News, American Thinker, RedState, and other outlets, and he has been interviewed on various national and international programs for television, radio, and podcasts. In 2023, Gov. Ron DeSantis appointed David to the Florida Historical Commission, and he is an active member and volunteer with his church. In his spare time, David is working on a book on political philosophy, currently on pace to be published in 2045.

12:00 to 12:30

Lunch Line & Break

12:30 to 1:45

Keynote:
What to Do About Kids, Smartphones, and Social Media

The Risks and the Solutions with Catherine Price

A presentation—which Jonathan Haidt has described as “focused, brilliant, and clear”—about the scientific and moral arguments for delaying the age at which children are given access to smartphones and social media (and banning them in schools from bell to bell).



Catherine Price

Award-winning science journalist, speaker, and author Catherine Price is a leading voice in the national conversation about digital devices and how to create healthy relationships with technology. Her books include her bestsellers, *How to Break Up With Your Phone* and *The Power of Fun: How to Feel Alive Again*, and Catherine and her work have been featured in outlets including, *The Best American Science Writing*, NPR, *The New York Times*, *Good Morning America*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Popular Science*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *TIME Magazine*, among many others. She is also a former middle school teacher, the parent of a young child, and a core member of the team behind Jonathan Haidt’s #1 NYT-bestselling book, *The Anxious Generation*. She writes the popular Substack newsletter, “How to Feel Alive,” and her TED talk on fun has been viewed more than 5M times.

In all of her work, Catherine’s ultimate goal is to help people of all ages scroll less, live more, and have fun.

1:45 to 2:15

Networking Break

2:15 to 3:10

Break Out Panels

Break-Out Option 1: School Safety Fireside Chat

School safety is often a difficult but important discussion for school leadership. Ryan will share his personal story from the Parkland High School shooting and his work as a school safety advocate. This discussion will include best practices for safety improvements and strategies for responding to acts of violence, including emergency response plans, staff and student training and effective communication.



Ryan Petty

Ryan Petty is a technologist, entrepreneur, and school safety advocate who turned tragedy into action after losing his daughter, Alaina, in the Parkland school shooting. With a background in technology, startups, and product innovation, he has led and built companies in telecom, software, and IoT, driving breakthrough solutions in emerging markets. He co-founded multiple startups, focusing on digital transformation and scalable technology. Now, as the founder of The Evio Group and a Florida State Board of Education member, he applies his problem-solving mindset to education, school safety, working with policymakers, educators, and law enforcement to protect students and prevent violence. His mission: harness innovation to create safer communities and ensure no family endures the same loss. Ryan lives with his wife Kelly on a ranch in Central Florida, where he raises Black Angus cattle and grows hay.



Cory Brewer

Cory Brewer serves as Education Counsel at the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL). She focuses on legal and policy issues related to K-12 education. This includes efforts related to public school reform through the Restoring American Education project and expansion of school choice by empowering families with the freedom to choose the best education for their children. Cory holds a law degree from the University of Wisconsin Law School and a B.A. from Lawrence University. She lives in Oak Creek with her husband and four children.

Break-Out Option 2: Superintendent Search & Contract: How to Attract, Hire, and Retain an Effective Superintendent

This presentation will explore practices and experiences to attract, hire, and retain an effective school district superintendent. An effective school board superintendent relationship starts with the hiring process and lasts until the hiring process has to begin again. This session will explore what can contribute to a successful superintendent search and contract process that has proven to create a focused board superintendent relationship that benefits the district—especially the students. The presenters will seek to provide an overview of the necessary steps for a successful search, employment contract, with agreed upon outcomes and checkups that improve student achievement and fiscal responsibility.



Bill Hughes

Bill Hughes is the founder of Hughes Strategic which supports leaders and improves organizations to accelerate student achievement, engagement, strategy, and targeted philanthropy. Dr. Hughes is a senior advisor to School Boards for Academic Excellence since the fall of 2024. Bill has formerly been the program director with the Kern Family Foundation, a co-founder and chief academic officer Seton Catholic Schools Milwaukee, the Superintendent of Greendale Schools, the Managing Director of Leadership with Schools That Can Milwaukee, and redesigned the principal training and master's program at Alverno College to prepare school leaders to serve in urban schools. Active in education policy since 2005, his current focus is on school board governance, educator pipeline, improving student literacy, work-based learning, and parent advocacy and voice for good schools' cross sector. He is a member or chair of governing or advisory boards with government, non-profits, and foundations.



Jim Macy

Jim Macy represents employers in all aspects of employment law including labor negotiations, discrimination defense, disability and ADA issues, wrongful discharge and other difficult personnel transactions. Jim is Chair of the von Briesen's School Law Section as well as the Firm's Labor & Employment Law Section. He represents numerous school districts providing advice on a wide variety of school law issues including student rights, records and discipline; policy issues; Board issues; and all contractual matters. He also serves as an independent hearing officer for student expulsion matters. Jim has been recognized by The Best Lawyers in America® every year since 2011 and was named "Lawyer of the Year" in Employment Law-Management in both 2013 and 2015.



Mark Kapocius

Mark Kapocius is a school attorney with more than twenty years of experience working in administrative leadership roles for school districts in Wisconsin. As a Shareholder in the Government Law Group and School Law Section, Mark focuses his practice on school law and advising other public-sector entities on labor and employment matters, governance issues, collective bargaining, public records and open meetings compliance. Mark has extensive experience assisting school districts with special education, pupil records, policy and curriculum, and educator and administrator employment-issues involving recruiting, retention, contracting, discipline and nonrenewal, and compensation and benefits issues. Since 2012, Mark has served as an impartial hearing officer for school districts, counties and municipalities on matters involving employee grievances. He is also an elected municipal judge for the Village of Greendale, where he presides over appearances and trials for civil ordinance violations.

3:10 to 3:20

Break

3:20 to 4:15

How School Boards Can Support Teachers in Strengthening Classroom Management and Improving Student Achievement

Effective classroom management is a key to successful student learning. This has been particularly important in a post-pandemic world as teachers struggle to regain control in disruptive classrooms while facing a concerning decline in student learning. The panel will focus on defining the barriers to classroom management and offering practical solutions for school boards members to ensure that schools in their districts have environments conducive to learning.



Will Flanders

Will Flanders is the Research Director at the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL). Dr. Flanders conducts econometric research on the application of WILL's principles of freedom and liberty to the educational system in Wisconsin. Since joining WILL, he has authored or co-authored reports on the return on investment from charter schools, the effects of Act

10 on the teaching workforce, and the economic benefits of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program. Dr. Flanders holds a Ph.D. in Political Science with a specialization in American Politics and Public Policy from Florida State University, as well as an M.S. in Political Science and an M.S. in Applied American Politics and Policy from the same school. He earned his B.A. from Valdosta State University in Georgia, his home state.



Robert Pondiscio

Robert Pondiscio is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), where he focuses on K-12 education, curriculum, teaching, school choice, and charter schooling. Before joining AEI, Mr. Pondiscio was at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, an education policy think tank. He previously worked for the Core Knowledge Foundation and as an adviser and civics teacher at Democracy Prep Public Schools. Before that, he worked in journalism for 20 years, including in senior positions at Time and BusinessWeek. Mr. Pondiscio is the author of many books and has been extensively published in the popular press, including in The Atlantic and The Wall Street Journal. He is a frequent speaker and is often interviewed on radio and television including CNN and Fox News Channel. Mr. Pondiscio has an MS in elementary education from Mercy College and a BA in English from SUNY Empire State College.



Daniel Buck

Daniel is an assistant principal at Lake Country Classical Academy in Oconomowoc, a senior visiting fellow at the Fordham Institute, a former English teacher, and the author of "What Is Wrong with Our Schools?" A prolific columnist, his work has appeared in various publications including the Wall Street Journal, National Affairs, National Review Magazine, First Things, the New York Post, and elsewhere. He is also a Senior Visiting Fellow with WILL, where he has written about alternative preparation materials for teachers.

4:15 to 4:30

Concluding Remarks

4:30

Networking

