

Rural and Urban Representatives and School Leaders Come Together

Stevens Point...Area school administrators continue to work with state legislators on issues facing Wisconsin schools with a focus on the upcoming biennial state budget. The first of several planned meetings took place last week in Stevens Point.

Rural and urban representatives and school district administrators met to discuss common challenges and needs that face Wisconsin's public schools. The group of legislators in attendance has worked extensively on educational issues while in office. Both Representatives Rob Swearingen (R-Rhineland) and Jessie Rodriguez (R-Franklin) served as chair for legislative study committees for both rural and urban school districts respectively. Representative Mary Czaja (R-Irma) served on both legislative study committees and Representative Jeff Mursau (R-Crivitz) served with Rep. Swearingen to focus on the needs of our rural school districts.

“A theme that was loud and clear during our meeting is that we are all in this business for kids. Rural and urban districts actually do have a lot in common. It is vital that we all work together to make public education better,” said Mike Richie, District Administrator at Northland Pines School District.

In addition to meeting with local school administrators, Representative Czaja invited representatives from UW-Stevens Point (UWSP). In attendance from UW-Stevens Point was Lisa Theo, Director of Student Creative Activity and Research and UWSP students who have agreed to research specific questions and topics that arise from future collaborative conversations.

Initial topics of discussion focused on the similar challenges in teacher recruitment and retention, student transition from high school to post-secondary preparedness, limitations in mental health resources and the implications of the current school funding formula on both rural and urban schools. Future discussions will focus on finding long-term solutions to the challenges before all Wisconsin schools in preparing students for future success.

“Opportunities for the future success of all students are before us - our collective goal as educators, policymakers and citizens should be to promote initiatives that best educate students statewide. Today's students will be the leaders, caretakers and service providers of tomorrow,” said Ben Niehaus, District Administrator for the School District of Florence County.

Subsequent meetings will be hosted at both Northwood's schools and urban school districts.



Pictured Left to Right – Rep. Rob Swearingen, Dr. Darian Driver-Superintendent MPS, Dr. Michelle Langenfeld-Superintendent, Green Bay Public Schools, UWSP Director Lisa Theo, Rep. Jessie Rodriguez, Rep. Mary Czaja, UWSP Student Courtney Vanden Heuvel, Rep. Jeff Mursau, UWSP Student Cassandra Wentzel, Terry Reynolds-Superintendent Tomahawk. Seated Left to Right – Patrick Mans- Superintendent Crivitz, Ben Niehaus-Superintendent Florence County, Dr. Mike Richie, Superintendent Northland Pines.