

6 WAYS to Help Students Become Strong Leaders in the 21st Century – Michele Borba, page 12

# WISCONSIN SchoolNews

December 2018 | wasb.org

Official publication of the Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Inc.



Sarahí Monterrey  
Waukesha North High School

# TEACHERS of the Year

Wisconsin's 2018-19 Teachers of the Year share their perspective and advice.

# Reimagine Your Learning Spaces

## SERVICE ASSOCIATE Q & A

**Q.** *What does it mean to be sustainable?*

**A.** I look at sustainability as the long-term viability of a design, an outlook that is especially important as public schools are funded by taxpayers. It's our responsibility to create designs that maximize dollars to the fullest extent possible and create facilities that will endure. When we design through this lens, the need to prioritize life-cycle and operational costs over short-term benefits becomes clear. The beautiful thing about this is that most sustainable design practices are the right things to do for student success. Natural lighting reduces energy loads while improving student engagement. Materials that give off gas chemicals are avoided to not only protect our atmosphere, but also children's developing minds. Energy conservation reduces greenhouse gases and frees up resources for academic programming. Renewable energy conserves our natural resources and is supporting the industries that will employ the next generation.

**Q.** *What kinds of features are conducive to collaborative learning?*

**A.** Collaborative learning is a theme in our work as educators keep pace with the skills most in demand for today's growing industries. At the same time, educators have to provide differentiated learning customized to the specific needs of each student. We've found that a key to success is creating flexible spaces. Students need environments that allow focused individual work, but also support project-based learning opportunities, multi-media presentations, large group instruction and small group learning. Many districts are finding that this necessitates replacing the traditional classroom with interconnected spaces.

To do this successfully, transparency between spaces is key. Strategic use of glass and safety glazing can go a long way toward ensuring that students remain visible, on-task and safe. The good news is that our kids thrive in these new, dynamic spaces and when given the opportunity to direct their own learning, they respond in amazing ways.

**Q.** *What will be the next trend in school construction projects?*

**A.** While I can't predict the future, I'm pretty confident that education will never go back to the way it was. Technology will continue to mold our world in ways we can't imagine, and many of the design models we're using now will one day be archaic. We're thinking about our buildings differently. Look for school construction methods that allow buildings to become more adaptable. Let go of the indestructible concrete block walls and embrace light gauge construction techniques that can be more easily modified and reconfigured. Challenge your district to think about how it is preparing students for a different kind of world. A few potential trends to watch:

- **Skills-based learning.** Place less emphasis on what grade a student is in and focus more on the specific skills and competencies a student has learned. This could lead to multi-aged learning environments.
- **Soft-skills education.** As the capabilities of our technologies continue to evolve, more importance will be placed on the "robot-proof" skills that machines haven't mastered. For now, that may include skills like empathy, communication, consensus building and leadership.



**Bob Morris, RA** is a senior design architect for Eppstein Uhen Architects



eppstein uhen : architects

- **Life-long learning.** As education becomes more specialized, we will continue to see a rise in the need for education throughout our lives. We're already seeing our schools used for non-traditional learning and that has the potential to grow exponentially.

**Q.** *What is the most important piece of advice you can give to a district preparing for a major renovation or construction project?*

**A.** This may sound a bit strange coming from a school architect, but don't make the mistake of thinking that a new building will fundamentally change the way you educate. Architecture has a huge role in enabling you to do what you do more effectively, but the building will always be a supporting actor and not the lead. Our most transformative building designs happen in districts already reimagining their educational processes before the design is ever conceived. ■

*The WASB Service Associates Program includes businesses and organizations that have been recognized by the WASB Board of Directors as reputable businesses and partners of public education in Wisconsin. For more information, visit [wasb.org](http://wasb.org) and select "Service Associates."*