

*Boardroom tips***Improving relationships with legislators**

By James Rickabaugh

If you want to know how you can best influence the views and actions of other policy setters and decision-makers, think about how your constituents are able to influence your thinking and actions. You will likely find that you respond best when those who approach you are well-informed and tactful, connect their arguments and data with ideas and issues that are important to you, and are respectful of the pressures and trade-offs you face in striving to provide the best leadership and governance you can. Employing these same elements in your attempts to influence legislators and other government leaders will maximize your effectiveness and results.

Strive for balance in your relationships with legislators and other government officials. Make certain that you provide helpful information, appreciation, and substantive support at least as often as—and to the same extent that—you ask for their support and action. As with any relationship, when one party is always asking and rarely giving, commitment and responsiveness are

likely to wane.

When legislators or other government officials disagree with your position, resist any temptation to threaten them with loss of office. You might assume that the prospect of your working against their re-election will influence their actions. However, opposition efforts to oust an incumbent from office are a reality of political life. Rather than exerting influence, such efforts on your part are likely to permanently damage the relationship. Remember, you will probably need their support on other issues and at other times in the future. With a damaged relationship and the shadow of a negative interaction in the past, access and influence are not likely to be available.

James R. Rickabaugh is superintendent of the Whitefish Bay school district in Wisconsin. He wrote this article for The Board newsletter published by the Master Teacher, Inc. (www.themasterteacher.com). Reprinted with permission.

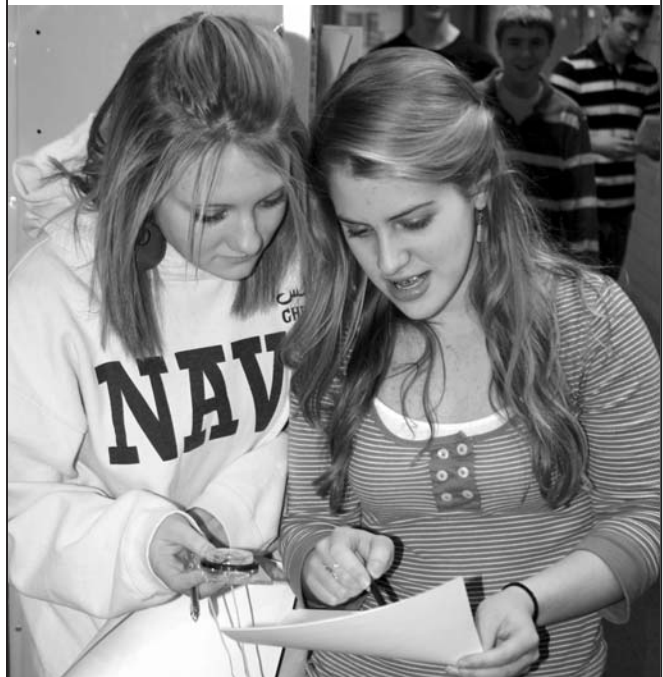
寻宝 (Treasure hunt)

Photo courtesy of Tech Valley High School

To test Tech Valley High School students' understanding of written Mandarin Chinese, teacher Diana Lim devised a scavenger hunt. Junior Chelsea Naylor, left, holds a compass while deciphering the first of a dozen clues with classmate Molly Ennist. Mandarin Chinese is the primary foreign language offered at the school, which is a joint venture between Capital Region BOCES and Questar III BOCES.

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