

Our Part of the Story

by **Tom Westerhaus,**
2007-08 MASA President
and Superintendent, Prior Lake-Savage Schools

The older I get, the more I ponder life's big questions. This summer, personal health issues, sudden family deaths, the 35W bridge collapse, flooding in southeastern Minnesota, and local district politics prompted me to ask myself what was my small place in the long stretch of history.

I thought about how much has come before me in my own ancestry, in my school district, in the state, and in the larger world, and how much will follow after me when I'm gone. I will only get part of the story, never the whole, no matter what.

Governor Tim Pawlenty put it a little differently when he spoke at the MDE Superintendent's Conference in August and said that life is a relay race, not a 100-yard dash, that we do our small part in history, write our own story for only a little while, and then pass on the baton to the next generation to continue the race.

As educational leaders in Minnesota, this time, right now, is our story, our time, our part of creating history. Is it going to be easy?

A few years ago, Central Minnesota superintendents writing in the St. Cloud Times characterized the superintendency as trying to ride the backs of two dolphins at the same time, one representing the changing expectations of the larger society and the other representing the sensitive and difficult issues and performance of the school district. No, our part isn't easy, for there are discordant voices, varying interests, conflicting viewpoints.

So why do we do the work we do? I believe each of us is intentionally in the field of educational administration, as Dewitt Jones of the National Geographic would say, "for the love of it!" We are passionate about making a contribution to those around us, making a difference in the lives of students and families and our communities, celebrating what's right with the world, and writing our part of the story of life's relay race. And when you work for the

love of it, you can't help but serve as an inspiration to yourself and to those around you.

MASA Past President Kathy Leedom is certainly one of those who serves as an inspiration to many of us. She has capably led our organization this past year and has now handed me the baton to continue the outstanding work of our organization.



Tom Westerhaus

At this summer's MASA Board of Directors retreat, the board affirmed the following broad goals for 2007-08:

1. Project MASA unity and address any organizational divisions.
2. Continue leadership in the Minnesota's Promise world-class schools discussion.
3. Improve member services through stronger regional leadership initiatives.
4. Increase collaborative efforts with principal associations, college partnerships, other state educational organizations, and unified legislative advocacy.

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MASA's Positive Relationship with the Minnesota Department of Education



by **Charlie Kyte**
Executive Director, MASA

The relationship between the school district leaders of Minnesota, their association (MASA) and the Minnesota Department of Education has been rocky at times.

However, we are now in a good era and the working relationships between education leaders and the leadership of the Minnesota Department of Education is quite

Charlie Kyte

positive.

Commissioner Alice Seagren served as a school board member in Bloomington and served for many years on the Education Committee in the House of Representatives. She finished her time in the House as the chair of the House Education Finance Committee. During that time she had a reputation for balancing many needs and being a good listener. She brings those same qualities to the Department of Education.

Likewise, Deputy Commissioner Chas Anderson has a strong background in partisan politics and formally worked as a top staff member in the Minnesota House of Representatives. She brings an excellent financial mind, a great work ethic, and a willingness to listen to school administrators. While we still kid Deputy Commissioner Anderson about being partisan, she has on a number of occasions stepped up and cut through the bureaucracy to help individual school districts solve thorny problems. We appreciate her willingness to help school districts when they are in a time of crisis or need.

We have recently seen a number of new assistant commissioners hired at the Department of Education. They are learning about their positions in the management of the department. In addition, the department has a number of seasoned professionals who have been leading their departments for quite a number of years. Most known among them is Tom Melcher who heads the financial division and who has made an effort over the years to meet with school business managers and superintendents explaining the financial intricacies of education funding.

From an association standpoint, we appreciate the ability to pick up the phone and call the top individuals at the Department of Education and receive ready responses. We also appreciate working with the middle level managers

without them worrying about interaction with us. Overall, this demonstrates a healthier Department of Education and allows us to work together to resolve problems.

Finally, the Department of Education has begun to reestablish a regional network for providing services to schools. They have contracted with a number of the service coops across the state so each region can hire people to work with schools needing to address “adequate yearly progress” concerns. We hope they further this regional commitment by contracting to operate the math and science professional development academies that will come into place over the next year.

In the last ten years we have spent more time battling with the Minnesota Department of Education than we have cooperating with them. However, in the past three years the spirit of cooperation has increased. It is much more effective when we can work together for the common good of public education and for the children of the state. •



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MASA Foundation Distributing Grants & Raising An Endowment Fund

by **Charlie Kyte**
Executive Director, MASA

The Board of Directors of the MASA Foundation are pleased by the continuing growth of the Foundation's endowment and the fact that we now have enough money to annually make grants to our members for their professional growth.

The MASA Foundation Board consists of both MASA retirees and active members. The newest members to join the MASA Board include: John Christiansen of Intermediate School District 917, Allen Ralston of Isle, Roger Graff of Adrian and Charles Rick of St. Louis County Schools.

The endowment of the Foundation is now nearly \$200,000 and the board has set a goal of \$500,000 in the endowment fund in five years. This will require the help of our business partners, retirees and active members.

The board is asking members to commit to a pledge of either \$100 or \$50 a year for the next four years. They have set a goal of having 200 MASA active members participate in this pledge effort. We are hoping that you as a MASA member will make a pledge this fall and be part of the network that helps to provide a professional development endowment for our members of the future.

In addition, retired members of the MASA Foundation Board will be contacting all of our 200 retirees and asking them to name the MASA Foundation as a beneficiary of their \$3,000 MASA life insurance policies. In this way, they can also make a relatively painless long-term commitment to the professional development of the active members of MASA.

The MASA Foundation has made distributions of several thousand dollars in the last two years to our individual members. We intend to continue to solicit applications from our members for their professional development and will award between \$5,000 and \$10,000 next year to members wanting to participate in an experience that would otherwise be unavailable to them. •

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The *Leaders Forum* is your newsletter and we welcome your input. Please send your ideas or articles to Mary Law at mrlaw@mnasa.org.

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I am proud to lead this organization and grateful for the work done on our behalf by MASA staff to situate us as a premier educational organization advocating for children across this state. The mentoring and professional growth opportunities, conferences and networking events, legal and member services, and legislative involvement all provide us a strong, supportive network as we ride the backs of two dolphins.

Robert Frost said, "My object in living is to unite my avocation and my vocation." My wish for you this year is that your part of the story, your work of the 2007-08 school year, will be united with your avocation, your love of what you do, exceeding your expectations and your place in history in ways you never imagined! •

Bop to the Top



Shari Prest

by Shari Prest,
Ark Associates

It's that time of year when you feel the familiar burst of energy and hope you felt while getting to know your first class of students—every child was a possibility and every challenge an opportunity. Now, however, fall means not only getting to know how to bring out the best in children, but also staff members, mandates,

expectations, and systems. The potential is greater and the risks more apparent. Public education and educational leaders in Minnesota are at the crossroads of soaring and survival. This is the start of something new. *

Last year, ©Disney Studios produced a small made-for-TV movie, *High School Musical*. That movie and the live production of the same name quickly became national phenomenons among a generation of our kids and beyond, surpassing the wildest expectations of creators and promoters.

What does this simple story about a group of high school students have to do with educational leadership? Everything! It is about discovering who we are and who we can become. The movie provides something people have been missing: the joy...the sheer energy of dreaming, exploring, risking, and discovering. At a time when our media is dominated by images of violence, our courts by lawsuits, our world by scarcity, and our politics by negativity, the human spirit needs a vision of something greater. We need leaders who can communicate the hope and joy and possibility of the future. In the words of one *High School Musical* song, "[we're] soarin', flyin', there's not a star in heaven that we can't reach if we're tryin', so we're breakin' free..." *

Soaring Leaders

- Clarify the vision in language that inspires loyalty. To be number one you've got to raise the bar. Get to the place to be all that we can be. Now's the time. *
- Focus on potential and possibilities to ignite hope within the school district and community. Our dreams have no limitations. That's what it's all about. *
- Capitalize on the value of diverse perspectives. Everyone is special in their own way. We make each other strong. *
- Develop a process through which challenges are transformed into opportunities. All things change when you don't expect them to. No one knows what the

future's gonna do. Anything can happen when you take a chance. *

- Identify and commit to strategic priorities to engage the community and staff in the important work of supporting and educating children. We're all here and speaking out in one voice...We've arrived because we stuck together. Champions one and all. *
- Personalize communications and build new relationships.
- Keep stakeholders informed and updated through various and creative means.
- Punctuate the vision with stories and data.
- Train all staff to be public relations representatives for the school/district.
- Utilize the Champions for Children™ public relations resources at the MASA, MASSP, or MESPA websites for your communications.
- Document, analyze, and evaluate your communication strategies.
- Remember to celebrate. Here and now its time for celebration—to finally figure it out—that all our dreams have no limitations. That's what it's all about. *

The beginning of the new academic year is a good time to recommit that. We'll keep stepping up and we just won't stop...bop to the top. *

* extracted from the lyrics of ©Disney Studios *High School Musical* songs. •

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Parental Access to Educational Records: A Data Practices Q & A



Charles E. Long

by Charles E. Long, Attorney Kennedy & Graven, Chartered

The rules governing access to and release of educational records are generally found in two statutes, the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (MGDPA). Although the two statutes are similar, it is important for school districts to consult both laws when analyzing data questions—particularly those

involving parental rights.

Q: Who are the “parents” for purposes of data practices?

A: FERPA defines the term “parent” as a parent of a student and includes the natural parent, guardian, or an individual acting as a parent in the absence of a parent or guardian. The MGDPA instead uses the term “individual” and defines it as the natural person or in the case of a minor, a parent or guardian or an individual acting as a parent or guardian in the absence of a parent or guardian.

Q: What rights do parents have to access educational data after a student reaches 18 years of age?

A: Under the MGDPA and FERPA, a student becomes the “parent” for data practices purposes upon reaching 18 years of age. This means the rights of access and control over educational records transfer from the parents to the student. The student acquires the authority to determine what data the school district may release and to whom.

This authority, however, does not allow the student to prevent the parents from continuing to receive educational data. Pursuant to FERPA, school districts may release educational data to parents as long as the parents are claiming the student as a dependant on their federal income tax. Thus, schools may continue to send parents copies of a dependant student’s report card or attendance record regardless of the student’s age and/or consent.

Q: Is there any educational data to which a student may prevent parental access?

A: Yes. The MGDPA permits a student to deny parents access to certain “student health data” which includes data concerning immunizations, notations of special physical or mental problems and records of school nurses. A school district must withhold student health data from parents

upon the student’s request if it determines that doing so would be in the student’s best interest. This provision applies to all students—even minors.

Q: Is there any educational data that a student may not access?

A: Yes. The MGDPA does not allow a student to access private data concerning the parents’ financial records and statements or any information contained therein.

Q: What are the rights of divorced or noncustodial parents?

A: Upon request, a noncustodial parent has the right of access to, and to receive copies of, school records and information, to attend conferences, and to be informed about the child’s welfare, educational progress and status unless a court orders otherwise. However, a school is not required to hold a separate conference for each parent.

In a divorce, separation, or custody proceeding, the court must grant each parent the right of access to and to receive copies of school records and other important records and information about the minor child. Each parent has the right to be informed by school officials about the child’s welfare, educational progress and status, and to attend school and parent/teacher conferences unless the court specifically finds that such access would not be in the child’s best interest.

Q: May one parent block another parent’s access to educational data?

A: No. Schools must presume that both parents have the authority to access data and must afford both parents their full rights. A school district may deny a parent access rights only if it has been provided with evidence that there is a state law or court order prohibiting a parent from obtaining educational data.

Q: What data rights do stepparents have?

A: Stepparents are usually not “parents” for purposes of data practices unless a formal adoption has occurred. Thus, stepparents will need to get a signed release from the student’s parent in order to access educational data. The same is generally true for other family members, including siblings and grandparents. •

This article is intended to provide general information with commentary. It should not be relied upon as legal advice. If required, legal advice regarding this topic should be obtained from district legal counsel.

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Infrastructure ... Critical for Bridges & Education



by **Charlie Kyte,**
Executive Director
MASA

The collapse of the I35W Bridge was truly a tragedy. Besides the loss of life and the difficulty of transportation within the metropolitan area, it also highlighted how we in Minnesota have been under-investing in our transportation infrastructure.

We are doing the same thing with

education.

education.

When you under-invest you normally don't see a huge crisis such as a bridge collapse. Instead, the roads rot, bolts fall out and the processes are slow and often not in clear sight of anyone but the engineers who have to inspect the roads.

For quite a number of years, we have had the same thing happening in K-12 education. We hear how important education is to produce the workforce of the future. Most people in Minnesota understand that a well-trained workforce is the key to our economic success as we compete in national and global markets.

We have under-invested and the decay has been hidden away. Education leaders have tried to put the best possible spin on operating their schools successfully as they see the decay around them.

Over the last fifteen years, we have watched school districts quietly cut back on their library staffs, nursing staffs, administrative staffs, and the specialists that are available to work with the children and families. We have also watched class size increase. At first it was by a student or two, but then it increased by a flood of students to the point where class sizes in certain areas of the state are unconscionable.

All of this has happened relatively slowly and we can use the analogy of a frog put into a pan of water and placed on a stove. You slowly heat up the water and the poor frog continues to acclimate itself until finally it succumbs to the heat. In K-12 education, we have been feeling the water heat up for quite a number of years. I am fearful that we are close to succumbing to the heat.

To try to survive, K-12 education has resorted to an improbable string of attempts to raise tax money locally. We are at the point of having nearly worn out our welcome with many of our citizens and constituencies. Once again, this fall there will be a significant number of referendums

and they are desperately needed for those school districts to survive. We know that while some referendums will pass, others will fail. The deterioration of the education infrastructure will continue.

At some point in the future, leaders and citizens of this state will look around and ask themselves why we don't have enough well trained young people coming into the workforce and why our economy is not keeping up with our competition. They will wail and complain, but there will be no easy fix at that time for the K-12 education bridge will have collapsed and it will take an enormous amount of money and time to repair it. •

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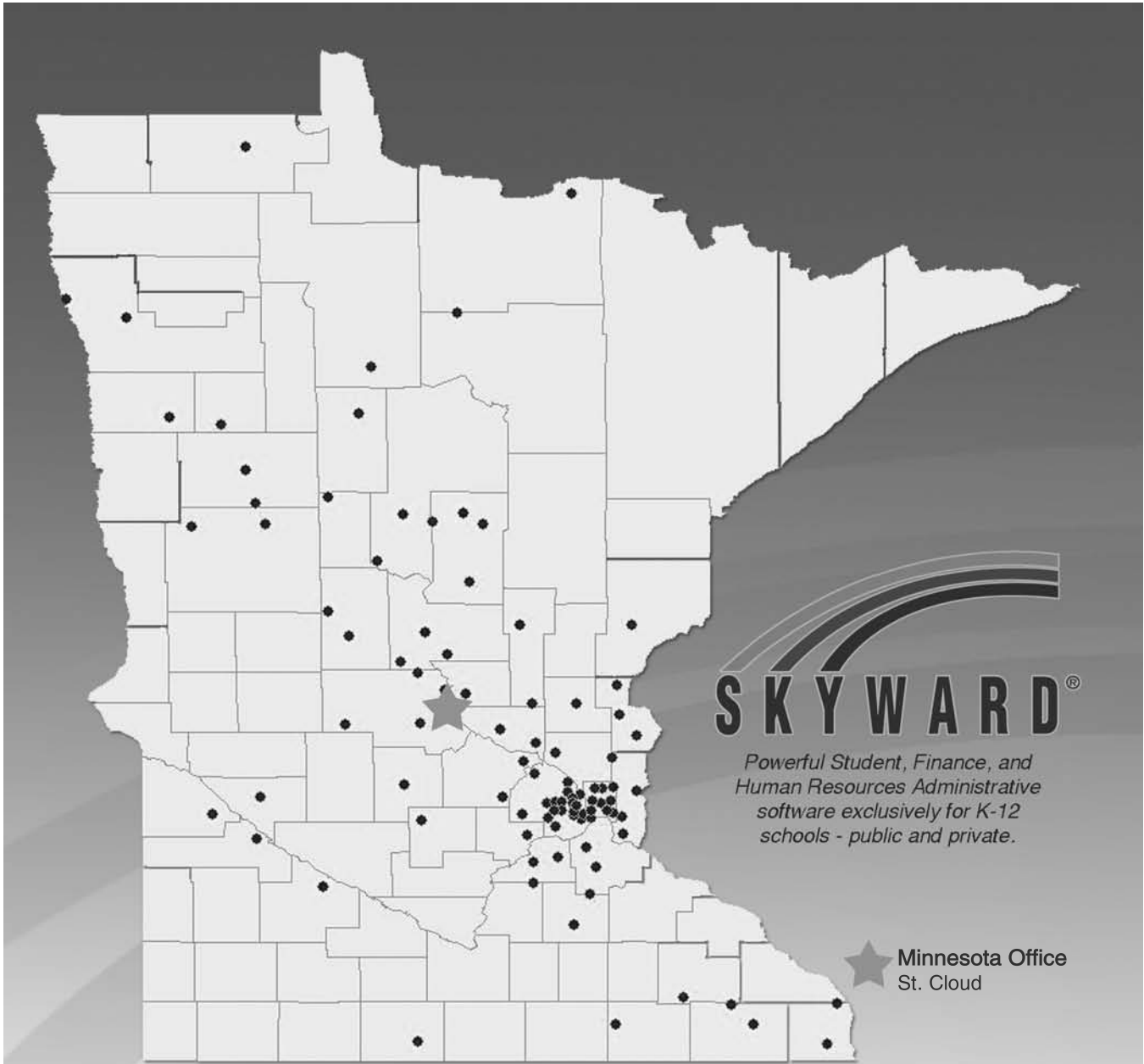


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A Tale of Two Headlines

Restoring Public Trust Through Communication, Transparency & Engagement

by Tony Taschner

Communications Specialist

Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Schools

It was the worst of times; it was the best of times.

The worst in my 10 years as a school district communications specialist was in November 2000, in the wake of a second consecutive failed levy referendum and a third straight year of budget cuts looming on the horizon.

The best of times was in November 2005, following voter approval of three separate levy questions that promised to renew, increase and extend local funding for our district for the next 10 years on all three questions.

The biggest difference between the disappointment of 2000 and the delight of 2005 can best be summed up by two editorial headlines that appeared in local newspapers following each election.

“It’s a matter of trust: Voters demand standards from school boards before passing levy referendums” read the headline in the November 25, 2000 issue of *Thisweek Newspapers*.

Five years later the headline read: **“Board, levy votes send a message of trust to district.”** (*Rosemount Town Pages*, November 11, 2005)

The common denominator in both headlines, and both elections, was public trust – the single biggest difference between success and failure in almost every election.

In an era when school districts must regularly seek voter approval of local funding just to maintain the status quo, building trust with the public is more important than ever. Despite our best efforts to educate voters on the need for levy funding, the fact is many voters base their decision not so much on the specifics of the issues at hand, but rather on the gut-level feelings of trust and confidence (or lack thereof) that they have in the district and its schools.

Like any relationship, the keys to building and maintaining trust with the public are open, honest communication and a willingness to listen to and involve stakeholders in decisions that affect the district.

Communicate Regularly

Clear, concise and consistent communication is critical to the success of any organization, particularly in the public sector. Communication cannot be an afterthought or

something we will get to if we have time; communication should be timely, purposeful and strategic. Think about upcoming initiatives, issues or goals in your district and strategically plan out and provide information over time that speaks to those topics. Doing so can build understanding and support for your ideas, as well as flesh out any opposition leading up to a decision.

In the weeks and months following the levy defeat in 2000, our district developed and implemented a new, more aggressive communications plan aimed at increasing the amount of and access to information delivered electronically, in print and in person. We unveiled a new, expanded website that featured timely news and information, and launched an email list service which provided thousands of parents and district residents with regular updates on School Board actions, district finances, student achievements and more.

Be Open, Honest and Transparent

In addition to communicating regularly and with a purpose, school leaders must be open and honest, and provide the public with a transparent view of district operations. In order to truly earn the public’s trust, districts must be willing to share information about the issues and problems we face, not just the positive news we all like to see in the papers.

The goal is not to answer every possible question a citizen might have or share every piece of information about your district. Instead, the goal is to reach a point in your communication where every citizen believes that they could call the district, if they wanted, and could expect to get an honest answer to whatever question they might have.

In District 196, one of the simple things we did to increase transparency and trust with our public was to provide easy access to the current and previous years’ budgets and financial documents on the district website.

Involve and Engage the Public

The public was never more interested or engaged in the activities of our district than in the weeks following the 2000 levy defeat. One by one, parents marched to the podium at School Board meetings to say they didn’t get enough information about the levy or understand the seriousness of the vote. It was a typical response from concerned parents who did not like the prospect of more budget cuts in their children’s schools.

We took advantage of this heightened level of interest in the district and invited members of the public to a series of

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meetings to help identify the additional cuts that would need to be made. It was our first big step in what has become an ongoing effort to actively involve the public in decisions that affect the district. One of the obvious keys to successful public engagement is to provide ample opportunities for input – in person, in writing and/or online surveys. More importantly, district leaders must be willing to listen to that input and have it reflected in the decisions they make.

The two editorials mentioned at the beginning of this article are displayed on a shelf in my office. I keep them close at hand and glance at them often to remind me how important it is to foster a relationship of trust with the public, how easily that trust can be lost if neglected or betrayed, and how hard it is to earn it back once it's gone. •

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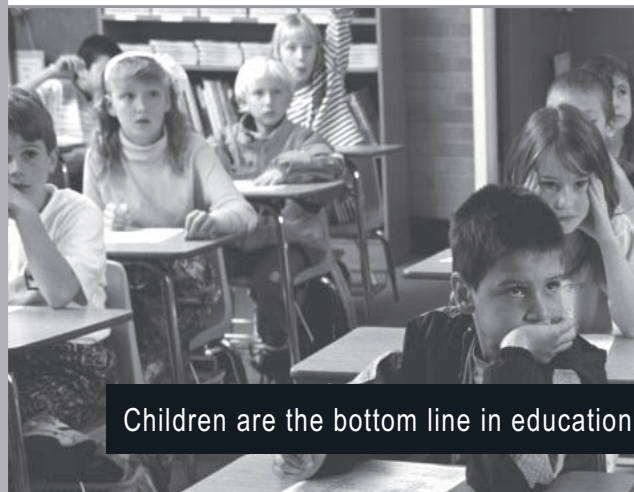
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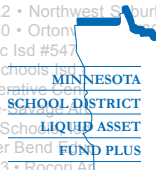
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How I Promote Parent Involvement in My District

by **Steve Jordahl**
Superintendent
Barnesville Schools

The Barnesville Public Schools expects parents to get involved in our schools. We communicate often that parents are a child's first and most important teacher. We recognize that parent involvement is a predictor of a child's success with academic achievement and their future success. We know that children succeed when we expect them to do so, and therefore, we also set expectations for our parents. We tell them that they are the most important person in their child's life.

We really appreciate when they volunteer in the classroom, on the playground, in the Parent/Teacher organization, or on a field trip, and we appreciate how many miles parents put on their vehicles taxing their children to numerous activities. Even so, many parents can't afford the time to do these, and we understand. Barnesville teachers understand that there are other very important ways to get involved in the schools. We really do expect our parents will follow structured routines at home for homework, providing good discipline, and establish other responsibilities. We also want our parents to choose appealing reading materials and take turns reading aloud. Rewards and consequences at home should relate to the behaviors as much as possible, much like they do at school. Just spending time in a very loving relationship, communicating one-to-one, is a huge way to get involved in the education of their child. Finally, encouraging a child to do their very best with study skills and school attendance will motivate their child to achieve.

We really encourage parents to keep themselves updated with their child's education on a daily basis by logging in to their child's academic information on our web site. They are updated daily with lesson plans and grades. The internet has been a wonderful resource for all of us in the education field, but it can be an equally valuable tool for parents who need to discover the resources that will best help their child.

Keep this in mind: "A parent is the first and most important teacher in a child's life." Wouldn't it be wonderful if every child spoke on the day of their graduation and said, "My mom/dad was the best teacher I had, and she/he is the reason for my success." We would love to hear this, and the parents would melt knowing they were a legacy in their child's mind.

by **Stan Mack**
Superintendent
Robbinsdale Area Schools

I promote parent involvement by modeling personal and professional qualities so that parents feel respected and successful. Such qualities include:

- All educators need to be absolutely genuine human beings all the time.

- All educators need to be astute listeners all the time.
- All educators need to carefully select their words (oral or written) at all times. There is never room for casual or vulgar language. You will always be quoted by someone at some time in the future.
- All educators need to: "Tell the truth all the time, then you never need to remember what you said."
- All educators need to remember the words "not said" are many times, the very best words.
- All educators need to remember that their behavior is always on display. "Behave yourself all the time; you never know who is watching."
- All educators need to remember, "The best judge of human character is not how one behaves in the best of times, but how one behaves in the worst of times" (Remember all of the above in the worst of times.)
- All educators need to find balance in their daily lives, thus being able to deliver the best to those we serve on a daily basis.
- When you no longer find fulfillment, excitement, challenge, joy and some fun in your work on a daily basis, it is time to leave, because the learners we serve deserve better. •

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Understanding Minnesota's RTI Law

by Chris McHugh
Director
St. Croix Education District

Legislators and the Minnesota Department of Education working with school administrators and others in the last session passed changes to Minnesota laws that resulted in a framework to support the use of Response to Intervention (RTI) methods in Minnesota schools. The Legislature also appropriated a million dollars to provide support to schools in using this promising practice. Additionally, increased flexibility for schools in the use of state and federally funded staff in special education and Title I was also included.

What is Response to Intervention? At its core it is simply the scientific method applied to student learning problems: identifying a good intervention, applying it with a student and measuring the results. For example if Johnny can't read well a teacher develops a hypothesis of why, picks an appropriate intervention, starts to use it and then takes frequent short samples of Johnny's reading to see if his reading improves.

However, a full blown RTI system is really a quality control system that schools use to make sure all students in the building are making adequate yearly progress in reading and math and appropriate social behavior. There are also RTI practices specific to secondary schools. It is an ideal system to adopt to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind and can be very useful in a Q-Comp plan.

Like other reform measures RTI comes with related supportive practices. One important component is "early intervening" and not using the current discredited "wait to fail" system. In too many American schools students get inadequate literacy and numeracy instruction and when they are far enough behind the special education system comes to the rescue-too late, too expensive and despite valiant efforts too ineffective. In many RTI schools kindergartners are screened the second week and have an intervention if needed in place by the third week.

Another component of RTI is the blending-just short of merging-of regular and special education around basic skills instruction and behavior systems. All staff in the building lead by the principal are engaged together in the new unified system. A primary feature called *benchmarking* screens all students' progress on basic skills three times per year to identify students falling behind. Teachers are organized, usually at the grade level, to pick interventions, measure more frequently those students receiving interventions (called *progress monitoring*) and reallocate resources as needed.

An RTI school uses a strong core curriculum so that about 85% of the student body is on track to pass the state tests while 15% of the school receives additional intervention with 5% receiving highly concentrated assistance such as special education. Classroom teachers learn new problem solving

skills. In an RTI school the same data that are used to make instructional decisions are the central feature of a broader special education evaluation if needed. Such practices based in regular education bring together all special programs into one unified delivery system often described as a three-tier model. The school has a common language around student achievement: curriculum based measurement also referred to as general outcome measures.

This core feature of RTI actually had its origins in Minnesota in the pioneering assessment methods developed by Dr. Stan Deno at the University of Minnesota. After many additional scientific studies his curriculum-based measurements are now considered the gold standard in assessment because of their strong scientific research basis, ease of use, and their usefulness in informing instruction. These are "tests" that teachers want and use. His methods were first used in Minneapolis and Pine County schools over 25 years ago and are now being widely adopted across the country.

So how did the Minnesota legislature organize policy and funds to support RTI? Components of RTI practice are found in three places in the 2007 Omnibus Education Bill.

MS 125A.56 reforms Minnesota's previous "pre-referral" law into an early intervention statute. It is important to note that the provisions are voluntary although the requirements to take action before special education assessment remain in place.

Legislators used the three-part RTI model developed at the St. Croix River Education District Schools (SCRED) in Chisago Lakes, East Central, Hinckley-Finlayson, Pine City and Rush City as the basis for Minnesota's law. SCRED data was compelling to legislators because it showed significant achievement gains for all students with a simultaneous decrease in Learning Disabilities placement. So in Minnesota law RTI now has three parts:

- General outcome measures aligned to state standards including benchmark and progress monitoring.
- Scientific research based instruction and intervention
- Flexible organization and problem solving

Flexibility in the use of staff is found in this third part. Now state law mirrors federal law in allowing an *incidental benefit* for regular education students who under certain conditions can be served by a special education teacher when the needs of the regular education student are highly similar to a special education student the teacher is serving.

A second change in statute allows schools to increase this flexibility and access increased state aid for basic skills instruction. This program, which has a long history, is called *Alternative Delivery of Services* and is found at MS 125A.50. The change **Minnesota's RTI Law ... Continued on Page 21**

Minnesota's RTI Law ... Continued from Page 8

in this year's legislation significantly reduces the annual application requirements after the first year of implementation.

The funding supporting RTI is found in the appropriations section of the law. Bill authors Senator Kathy Saltzman and Representative Tim Faust had hoped to flow 130 million dollars in funds directly to Minnesota schools. This proposal would have provided a \$10 per WADM for assessment, \$30 for instruction and \$20 for coaching and training. However, this funding did not materialize after targets were set.

Instead a million dollar appropriation over the biennium was given to SCRED to provide statewide support to schools. The SCRED superintendents and Board have established the Minnesota RTI Center to conduct large scale awareness training, coaching at targeted schools, technical assistance, development of staff development products, and consultation to colleges training new teachers. Dr. Ann Casey, an early researcher with a national reputation, has been hired by SCRED to lead this project. Targeted schools this year include those implementing RTI special education methods, schools with Americorps members and schools that have completed a RTI self-assessment such as was done at the recent Midwest RTI conference.

In addition, the Legislature funded the Minnesota Reading Corps to provide Americorps members to schools serving age 3-grade 3 students who provide reading interventions to

students just below the target set by districts for passing state tests. Former Commissioner Bob Wedl has been selected by Serve Minnesota to lead this project.

Both MASE and MASA can be proud of their important role in moving Minnesota back onto a national leadership role in RTI through the development of this session's laws. MASE for five years at its Summer Institute brought in nationally recognized speakers to develop administrators' understanding of RTI. MASE in their legislative work supported the development of RTI Laws. MASA brought in other nationally known speakers to this year's March conference. Former assistant secretary Robert Pasternack early in the morning before he spoke at the conference met with Minnesota legislative leaders to support their adoption of RTI.

Thanks are due also to Tom Melcher, Barb Troolien, Deputy Commissioner Chas Anderson and Commissioner Seagren for their support and work on the new laws.

RTI is a new way of conducting business in Minnesota schools to benefit learners at risk of not making adequate yearly progress. Senior school administrators now have a new tool, RTI, to make sure that students receive early identification and intervention. This new set of state policies supporting RTI provides the legal framework to move ahead in the gnawing problem of underachievement. •


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2007 Fall Conference Highlights

- Golfers will enjoy the MASA Foundation Golf Tournament Mixer on Sunday at 12 noon. The tournament offers fun, prizes and an afternoon on beautiful Enger Park Golf Course. All conference participants are invited to play. The tournament benefits the work of the MASA Foundation, enhancing the leadership development of educational administrators.
- Celebrate the service of our honored peers at the Sunday Awards Banquet.
- After the banquet, join our colleagues for conversation and relaxation at The Inn on Lake Superior, a short stroll across Canal Park from the DECC. Our reception begins at 8 pm.
- Our kick-off keynote speaker David Pearce Snyder has been in the forecasting business for over 30 years, during which he has built an impressive track record with his private and public sector clientele, while compiling a multi-million item data base of trends and projections. David uses this data base to create detailed scenarios — “instant pre-plays” — of the most probable combinations of economic, technologic and social realities that specific industries, institutions, or individual communities or nations are likely to encounter during the next 5 to 15 years.
- Members' partners are invited to the Partners' Breakfast on Monday morning at the DECC. All spouses and partners are encouraged to attend.
- The Exhibit Fair is a convenient way to visit with representatives of companies offering the latest products and services of value to school leaders.
- An outstanding array of Breakout Sessions offer cutting-edge information on a variety of topics. A large variety of different small group sessions offer something for everyone!
- After a busy Monday, relax at the DECC. Join your colleagues for the President's Reception.
- Tuesday morning, MASA's 2007 Richard Green Scholar Mark Wolak, Superintendent of the Mahtomedi Schools, will present his research on evidence-based practices for effective school leadership. In this thought-provoking presentation, Mark will discuss new leadership expectations, evidence-based decisions to improve student learning, research for improved professional practice, responding to adversity with courage, and more.
- Our Tuesday luncheon speaker Kent Pekel is the Executive Director of the University of Minnesota Consortium for Postsecondary Academic Success, whose collaboration with the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals brought us the white paper, "The Bridge to Higher Learning: A New Vision for Minnesota's High Schools In the Global Information Age." Kent will join us to share this initiative and how district leaders can build capacity for leadership to insure postsecondary success for all students.

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Calendar 2007-2008

September 29
MASA Executive Committee Meeting
 12-1:30 pm
MASA Board of Directors Meeting
 2 - 4:30 pm
 The Inn on Lake Superior, Duluth

September 30
Board Meeting Continues
 9 - 11:30 am

September 30
MASA Foundation Golf Tournament
 12:00 pm
 Enger Park Golf Course, Duluth

September 30 - October 2
MASA Fall Conference
 Duluth Entertainment & Convention Center (DECC), Duluth

October 10 - 12
MASE Fall Directors' Conference
 Cragun's Resort, Brainerd

October 24
Fresh Start Workshop
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

November 9
Great Start Workshop III & Year 2 Cohort I
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

November 14-16
Curriculum Leaders of Minnesota Conference
 Cragun's Resort, Brainerd

November 15
Newsletter Submissions Due

November 22 - 23
Thanksgiving Holiday
 MASA Offices Closed

December 5
MASA Executive Committee Meeting
 9 - 10:45 am
MASA Board of Directors Meeting
 11 am - 4 pm
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

December 24 - 25, and 31
Winter Holidays
 MASA Offices Closed

2008...

January 1
Winter Holiday
 MASA Offices Closed

January 16
Great Start Workshop IV & Year 2 Cohort II
 Hyatt, Minneapolis

January 17-18
MSBA Winter Convention
 Minneapolis Convention Center, Minneapolis

February 6
MASA Executive Committee Meeting
 9 - 10:45 am
MASA Board of Directors Meeting
 11 am - 4 pm
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

February 14 - 17
AASA National Convention
 Tampa, FL

February 15
Newsletter Submissions Due

February 16
MASA Foundation Board Meeting
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

March 21
Spring Holiday
 MASA Offices Closed

April 2
Great Start Workshop V & Year 2 Cohort III
 Sheraton Bloomington Hotel, Bloomington

April 2
MASA Executive Committee Meeting
 9:30 - 11:30 am
MASA Board of Directors Meeting
 1 - 5:30 pm
 Sheraton Bloomington Hotel, Bloomington

April 3- 4
MASA & MASE Spring Conference
 Sheraton Bloomington Hotel, Bloomington

May 15
Newsletter Submissions Due

May 27
Spring Holiday
 MASA Offices Closed

The Many Faces of Stahl Construction Company



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