

Leaders FORUM

Fall 2014



Lynne Kovash
MASA President and
Superintendent
Moorhead Area Public Schools

As our new school year begins, we are all excited about the possibilities and challenges the year may bring. I am excited to lead our organization as your president. MASA is a strong association with a great vision for moving education forward.

Minnevate! has allowed us the opportunity to dream and to talk with the broader community about our goals for our students and for education in Minnesota. We are committed to assisting our students to become the top in the nation as well as globally. This work isn't always easy, but is certainly rewarding.

It is rewarding to push the envelope to help our students gain a bright path to their future. Over the last few years, we've talked about innovation, how we need to be innovators, and we need to teach our students to be innovators in order to excel in the global society. It seems like we've had those conversations for years, but what has changed?

We need to make sure we take the information that we have gained from focus groups and Minnevate! world café conversations and weave those conversations into our daily work. In our district, I am often referred to as the pusher. I love to push the envelope and see just how far we can stretch ourselves. I don't believe we can just sit and wait for change to happen, we need to be a part of the change.

It is my hope that we do more than have conversations, that we put those conversations into action. We have an opportunity to do that with the update of MASA's strategic plan. It is important we all become involved and provide the direction and focus needed in our state to move forward. Please share your ideas and thoughts as we work to update the plan.

I know that we can reach higher and make a difference. Let this be the year we make a difference for every student in our district. Every child deserves the opportunity to reach for their dreams.

I am excited to work together with all of you to make Minnesota a strong education state, focused on providing a world class education for every student.

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Sharpen the Saw

... As a leader, you must protect and build the most important leadership asset you have - *yourself*.



Gary Amoroso
Executive Director
Minnesota Association of
School Administrators

The 2014-2015 school year is off and running! As your professional organization, we will strive to support you and continue to strongly advocate for the children of Minnesota.

I am excited that MASA has added

a new component group, the Technology Leaders of Minnesota. The addition of these professionals will be an asset to all of our members. The skills and talents that our new technology members possess will assist us as MASA advocates for educational experiences that will truly prepare our students for the 21st century.

In addition to our technology leaders, I want to welcome all of the other new members to our association. Please know that every member of MASA can be used as a resource for you. One of the strengths of our association is the willingness of our members to provide guidance and assist other members when the need arises. Programs such as our Mentor and Great Start Programs will provide you with opportunities to build your professional network

I'd like to invite all of you to have a truly Great Start to this school year. As you address all of those last-minute logistical issues, I'd like to respectfully remind you to nurture your leadership practice in preparation for the new year. Twenty-five years ago, Stephen Covey published the book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and popularized the phrase, "sharpen the saw." What he meant was that as a leader, you must protect and build the most important leadership asset you have – yourself.

So, as we start what will be a great new school year, make a commitment to yourself and your leadership practice to "sharpen the saw." I will take a page from Stephen Covey and ask you to reflect:

For your body...

Do you get enough sleep? What about exercise? Do you eat a healthy diet? Do you take time each day to relax and unwind?

For your heart...

Do you build and nurture relationships with your spouse, family, and friends? Are you giving service to your wider community? How much do you laugh? Do you tell those you love that you love them?

For your mind...

How much time do you take to read and write? What do you want to learn this year? What do you want to teach this year?

For your soul...

How rich is your spiritual life? What could you do to enhance it? Do you reflect each day and perhaps keep a journal?

What does your leadership practice mean to you? What could you do now to become a better leader during this school year?

I am truly proud to be your executive director, and I thank you for the privilege of serving in this role. I promise you that I will reflect on my own leadership practice so that I bring my best to MASA and our members.

All of us at MASA wish you an excellent school year. Contact us anytime if we can assist you in making that happen.

The *Leaders Forum* is your newsletter and we welcome your input. Please send your ideas or articles to Aimee Ranallo at aranallo@mnasa.org.

Leaders Forum

Fall 2014

Volume 49, Number 1

Leaders Forum is a publication of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators, © copyright, MASA. No endorsement of products or services is intended. Send materials to be considered for publication to:

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CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

We have all heard the saying, "It takes a village to raise a child," but do we know whether or to what extent we are engaging our "villages" on behalf of our students? The fragmentation of our communities is an issue, not only for our schools, but for other community entities, as well as for individuals themselves. As leaders, we must consider how to shape and shift the conversations with our communities to include and involve all segments of our society to come together and create a common future for our students and their families. We all aspire to being a part of a healthy, inclusive, whole community in which strong relationships form a powerful infrastructure that supports us all. Join your colleagues this fall and explore, "Pulling Together ~ Leading Strong School Communities."



Networking, Networking, Networking! There will be numerous opportunities to socialize with colleagues you already know, as well as grow your professional network with fellow administrators from around the state. Participate in the MASA Foundation Golf Tournament on Sunday afternoon (register online), gather in the Wilson Bay Dining Room for the Welcome Reception on Sunday evening, dine with new faces during meals, and learn together general sessions.

Inspiring Keynote Speakers! Monday will feature a keynote address from Joseph F. Murphy, discussing the role of leadership and community in strengthening school culture. Tuesday will feature MASA's 2014 Richard Green Scholar Heidi Hahn, presenting her research on key leadership practices in use by principals that have the greatest impact on teacher job satisfaction. We will conclude the conference with nationally recognized speaker Salome Thomas-EL, who will answer the question, "How do we ensure that every child achieves their greatest potential?"

Customize Your Experience! Individualize your professional learning with a variety of breakout sessions to choose from. Or walk Monday's Exhibit Fair. With over 70 exhibitors offering the innovative products and services, you'll discover the latest educational technology available for your students and communities.

Celebrate Your Colleagues! Throughout the conference we will be celebrating the service of our colleagues. In addition to celebrating our members' years of service with milestone pins, we will present the 2014 Richard Green Scholar scholarship to Heidi Hahn (special thank you to Cunningham Group Architecture, Inc.), and the 2014 Polaris Award to Jerald Nesland (special thank you to Ehlers).

Gain Association Insights! Make plans to attend Tuesday morning's Annual Meeting. In addition to our annual business meetings, we will recognize our colleagues achievement with service pins (special thank you to Karges-Faulconbridge, Inc.), learn about MASA strategic plan progress, and hear from Gary Amoroso about the vision for next year.

Practice 21st Century Skills! As 21st century education leaders, we encourage 21st century practices! All MASA conferences are digital, featuring program information, session handouts, contact lists and much more on our app (special thank you to Ratwik, Roszak & Maloney, PA). Please bring your computer, tablet or smartphone with you to stay connected!

2014 MASA Fall Conference
Pulling Together ~ Leading Strong Communities
September 28 - 30, 2014
Madden's on Gull Lake, Brainerd, MN
Register: regonline.com/masafallconference2014

Meet Your Keynote Speakers...



Heidi Hahn



Joseph F. Murphy



Salome Thomas-EL

Schedule At-a-Glance

Sunday, September 28

(Registration open 10 - 11:30 am & 3 - 5 pm at Madden Inn)

- 9 am - 3:30 pm • MASA Great Start Cohort II
- 11:30 am • Foundation Golf Tournament
- 7-10 pm • Welcome Reception

Monday, September 29

(Registration open 7 am)

- 8:30 - 10:30 am • Polaris Award: Jerald Nesland
Keynote Speaker: Joseph F. Murphy
- 10:30 am - 3:30 pm • Exhibits Open
- 11 am - 12 pm • Breakout Sessions I
- 12 - 1:30 pm • Lunch
- 1 - 2 pm • Dessert Reception in Exhibit Hall
- 2 - 3 pm • Breakout Sessions II
- 3 - 3:30 pm • Exhibit Hall Break & Prize Drawings
- 3:30 - 4:30 pm • Breakout Sessions III

Tuesday, September 30

(Registration open 8:30)

- 9 - 10:15 am • Keynote Speaker: Heidi Hahn
- 10:30 - 11 am • MASA & MCPE Business Meetings
Service Pin Recognition
- 11 am - 12 pm • Keynote Speaker: Salome Thomas-EL

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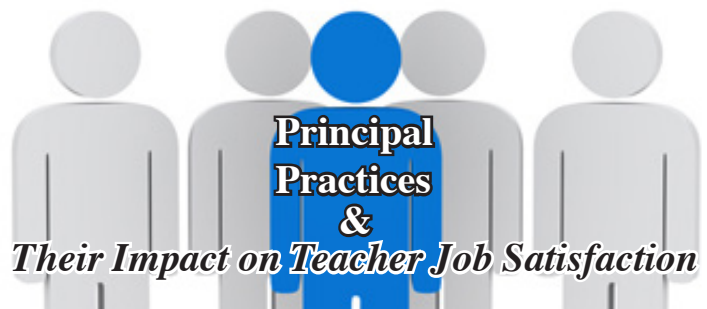
Heidi Hahn
2014 Richard Green Scholar &
Director of Special Education
Paul Bunyan Education Coop.

"The best morale exists when you never hear the word mentioned. When you hear a lot of talk about it, it's usually lousy."

- Dwight D. Eisenhower

Several years ago, one of the districts that I serviced failed to pass their referendum. Sixty-five teachers were cut, school of choice was eliminated, two elementary schools were closed and activity fees skyrocketed. Needless to say, there was a lot of talk about morale. This scenario was happening all around the state of Minnesota and I wondered, how do leaders motivate and encourage staff to invest during such challenging times?

Research leaves no doubt that the single greatest factor influencing student achievement and student outcomes is the teacher. A study conducted by Zigarelli (1996) concluded that the single, general measure of teacher satisfaction is a highly significant predictor of effective schools. Hattie's (2003) meta-analysis of studies on teacher efficacy found that teachers' responses about their job satisfaction made up 30% of the variance in determining what influenced learning the most (Hemric, Eury & Shellman, 2008). "Many studies indicate that social factors such as group interaction, supportive relationships, skills, high performance goals, and above all, morale (job satisfaction), are the most important determinants of productivity and success in human enterprises" (Bhella, 2001, p. 369). Multiple studies have found that teachers of scholastically high achieving students have higher levels of job satisfaction (Anderson, 1953; Bhella, 2001; Koura, 1963). In addition, a critical review of twenty-five years of morale/job satisfaction research conducted by Blocker and Richardson (2002) concluded that the keys to teacher morale and job satisfaction are the principal and the leadership that building principal provides. With these facts in mind, it would seem imperative that principals understand how to increase the level of job satisfaction and overall staff morale because these have a direct impact on



student achievement and school effectiveness (Bhella 2001; Blocker & Richardson, 2002; Whitaker, Whitaker & Lumpa, 2009; Zigarelli, 1996).

The purpose of my dissertation study was to identify which leadership practices principals use to improve teacher job satisfaction, and to identify which of these leadership practices teachers believed had the most impact on their levels of job satisfaction. Using the theoretical framework of Whitaker et al., 2009, and Blasé and Kirby, 2009, survey instruments were created for both principals and teachers. The surveys focused on seven core leadership areas which included staff acknowledgment/recognition, shared leadership, professional autonomy, creating staff expectations, leading by standing behind, communication and professional role. Over 600 Minnesota teachers and administrators, representing twenty-one school districts, participated in the study.

The research study revealed a multitude of highly effective leadership practices that increase teacher job satisfaction. The leadership practice that influences a teachers level of job satisfaction the most is the acknowledgment and recognition they receive from their building administrator. The second most influential leadership practice is professional autonomy, but guess what? Principals and teachers have very different perspectives on this!

If you want to learn more about effective leadership practices that impact teacher job satisfaction, or find out the answers to questions like: Are metro teachers more satisfied than suburban or rural teachers? Are female teachers more satisfied than their male counterparts? Or do more experienced principals have teachers with higher levels of job satisfaction... you will have to attend the presentation on Principal Practices and Their Impact on Teacher Job Satisfaction at the MASA Fall Conference!

Don't miss Heidi Hahn's Tuesday Keynote Presentation: Principal Practices and Their Impact on Teacher Job Satisfaction

Research leaves no doubt that the single greatest factor influencing student achievement and student outcomes is the teacher. A number of studies have concluded that teacher satisfaction is a highly significant predictor of effective schools. Are there things that a principal can do to improve teacher job satisfaction? 2014 Richard Green Scholar Heidi Hahn chose to study key leadership practices in use by principals that have the greatest impact on teacher job satisfaction. Attend this session to learn what principal leadership practices contribute to teacher job satisfaction, and how do those practices fit within the leadership community of practice.

Special thank you to Cunningham Group Architecture for their sponsorship of the Richard Green Scholar program.

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Pulling Together~ **Leading Strong School Communities**



Gary Amoroso
Executive Director
Minnesota Association of
School Administrators

Each year, MASA's Executive Development Committee adopts a theme for the conferences for the following year. The intent is to identify a unifying idea, representative of topics of greatest relevance to our members. This year, our conference theme is: Pulling Together ~ Leading Strong School Communities, and so our Fall, 2014 and Spring, 2015 conferences will explore topics resonant of the "public" in public education.

Our conference key messaging reflects the saying, "It takes a village to raise a child," and we wonder whether we know if or to what extent we are engaging our "villages" on behalf of our students. We know that the fragmentation of our communities is at odds with our goals to convene and coalesce on behalf of kids, but we also know that schools are not alone in our struggle to "knock down the silos" of our stakeholders. In fact, it sometimes seems that when someone advocates for demolishing those sacred silos, they often mean, "You tear down *yours* and hop into *mine!*"

As leaders, we must consider how to shape and shift the conversations with our communities to include and involve all segments of our society to come together and create a common future for our students and their families. We all aspire to being a part of a healthy, inclusive, whole community in which strong relationships form a powerful infrastructure that supports us all.

It starts with the school itself. One of our staff members addressed an all-staff "back to school" event for one of our member districts. She asked the group: "How many of you have kids in school here in the district?" A large number of the audience raised their hands. "How many of your spouses work here in the district?" Another sizeable bunch raised their hands. And finally she asked, "How many of you have children who are students here in the district *and* a spouse who works here in the district?" A surprisingly large number of the audience raised their hands. The message, of course, is that engagement starts with our staff—we *are* where our community begins.

But not where it ends. Anyone who has run a levy campaign knows how crucial it is to identify and engage all community

members and groups. The engagement coaches among us will also remind us that it is important to focus on community engagement all the time, not just in conjunction with a referendum. One of our best coaches, Shari Prest, has written an article for this newsletter about identifying and reaching your district's opinion leaders. Another recommendation is Jamie Vollmer's book, *Schools Cannot Do It Alone* (Enlightenment Press, 2010). In it he includes a chapter on *Mapping the Community* that is both great advice and a recipe that is easily followed.

There is another crucial aspect to leading strong school communities that is reaching greater levels of significance as our society demographics change. The idea of exclusion is not something to which we have traditionally paid a lot of attention, but we know well its outcomes. Thought leaders like Peter Block and Margaret Wheatley remind us that our modern communities are severely challenged by isolation, fragmentation, and stratification. The resulting disconnection makes it very difficult to form a common vision and commitment to working together toward that vision.

As we at MASA continue our leadership conversations, we look toward our own initiatives that effectively convene the wider community on behalf of success for all of our students. Our Minnevat! initiative, for example, has begun to gather momentum by giving us a place to explore the future and all of our roles in it. Through Minnevat! we have an opportunity to solve community fragmentation and isolation and make whole our community through quality conversations supporting our common goals.

Minnevat!

A Minnevat! project update (July 28, 2014) is now available for download at: <http://minnevat.mnasa.org/inside/content/uploads/2014/07/Minnevat-28JUL14-interim-update.pdf>

The report contains a summary of the December 3, 2013 launch event as well as summary of the MASA regional Minnevat! meetings from last spring. A final report with an elaborated discussion and recommendations will be released later this year.



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The mission of Infinitec is to advance independence and promote inclusive opportunities for children and adults through technology. We are a member-based organization currently supporting school districts in Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, Georgia.

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Access to Expertise includes access to highly experienced technical assistance staff.

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ACHIEVING OUR CLIENTS' GOALS SINCE 1947

Fixing Detached Schools Via Tech



Terry Heick
Edutopia Blogger and
Director of Curriculum
TeachThought

It's possible that there is no time in the history of education when our systems of educating have been so out of touch with the communities. Growing populations, shifting communities, and increasingly inwardly-focused schools all play a role. In light of the access of modern technology, social media, and new learning models that reconfigure the time and place in which learning happens, it doesn't have to be that way. Schools can evolve while

simultaneously growing closer to the people they serve.

Technology

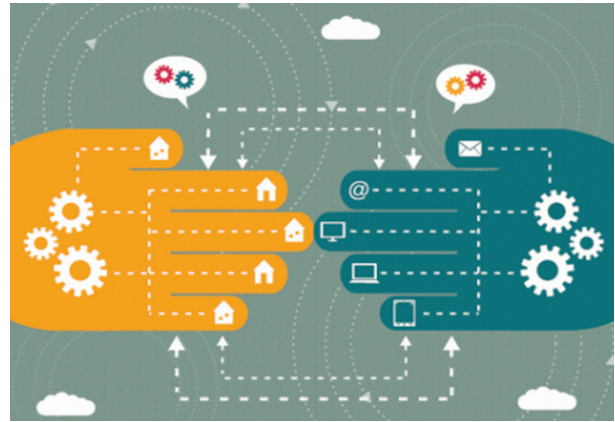
First, for the purpose of this post, let's think of technology and social media as distinct.

Technology has many forms, but it is most visible in education by way of computing hardware and software. The hardware is pretty obvious -- personal computers, Macs, tablets, Chromebooks, smartphones, graphing calculators, and the like.

The software is a bit more inconspicuous because it's embedded in the hardware. Here we have fundamental PC software like Microsoft Windows or Mac OS; we have productivity suites like Microsoft Office; we have Web browsers like Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox; and we have niche programs like reading assessment tools or educational games, which function like what we'd now consider computer-based apps.

There are also less visible forms of technology that make teaching and learning with technology possible, including electricity (you take it for granted until it doesn't work), WiFi (imagine your classroom looking like it does behind your television -- wires everywhere), the cloud (which enables mobile learning, hardware sharing, flipped classrooms, and other advances), and more. Each of these technology tools is critical in its own way, and they work together to make whatever we'd define as a "modern classroom" work.

But hidden within this list is one bit of seemingly dated software that can be concept-mapped on its own in a million other directions of possibility. No one finds it very exciting any more, but it still makes the Internet go. It's the Web browser.



Technology Gift #1: Social Media

Although itself just a program that translates HTML code into visual information, the modern Web browser has become a vessel that everything else attaches to. For schools looking to connect with communities, the browser also actuates social media channels like Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest, and allows for the blogging or site updates that keep parents informed.

None of this is new, really. The technology has been there for years. Parents have always been "informed" -- but informed of what? That's where there's potential: what we're communicating as educators, when, and why.

So what can social media do?

Solicit Mentoring Relationships

Whether organized by a district, school, teacher, family, or the students themselves, connecting with potential mentors through social media is compelling because:

It's public, transparent and safer than the phrase "social media" sounds. The fact that it's public can encourage companies to respond in ways that they might not respond in private. Connecting students to the artists, architects, engineers, makers, writers, farmers, cooks, and other "roles" for the purpose of mentoring and apprenticeship is one way to begin repairing the disconnect between schools and communities.

Connect with Community Leaders

This one is closely related to the idea of "mentoring" in the sense that it connects students with people from their community, outside of the classroom. But rather than mentoring, this type of connection could be less involved. It could be topical but authentic communication between

Detached Schools...
Continued on Page 11

Detached Schools... Continued from Page 10

those leading the community and those living in it. Social media is the perfect way to make that happen.

Anonymously (or Non-Anonymously) Share Schoolwork

Want student work to leave the classroom? Use social media to publish it for the world. Worried about privacy? Assign students anonymous codes or avatars to publish under. Use closed communities (Google+ communities, for example) that, while not fully open, are still school-wide. There are ways.

Curate Cultural Artifacts and "Local Memory"

Today, museums do the work of "curating," but that's a crude way to preserve the cultural artifacts that matter. Why can't schools do this? And why can't technology be used to streamline and crowdsource it?

Technology Gift #2: Learning Models

In addition to connecting with the worlds students live and breathe in, new learning models afforded by technology are also useful in reconnecting with families, neighborhoods, and native places that students love.

Flipped Classroom

The flipped classroom is one way to exchange the places where learning happens, or at least what kind of learning happens there. In this model, the roles are reversed -- students are exposed to content at home, and they practice it at school.

Mobile Learning

Mobile learning is a brilliant way to immerse students in native places and landscapes. The challenge here is that

education isn't quite ready for it, but if you can make this work, look out! This model promises deep integration of learning, place, and people.

Place-Based Education

As in mobile learning, this model of education is based on place and not an indexed set of nationalized curriculum. It's authentic, familiar, and personal.

Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning can incorporate all of the above -- flipped classrooms, place-based learning, mobile learning, and so on. The idea is that teaching and learning are anchored through the process of authentic projects constructed over time. The "reason" or "need to know" for these projects will ideally both start and finish in communities.

Experiential or Scenario-Based Learning

Treat the school like a think tank. Explore and address local community issues. Use social media to connect with families, neighborhoods, businesses, and organizations, and then use problem-based or scenario-based learning to go deeper.

Technology Connects

Technology, so far, hasn't healed the disconnect between schools and communities, but that could be because we're selling it short for what it can do -- which might start with not fully seeing its potential. Whether you're talking about hardware, software, social media, or something in between, more than anything else, technology connects. As educators, we just need to be intentional about what we're connecting, and why.

*(July 11, 2014) Retrieved from edutopia.org
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Business Models in Education Bootcamp, Organized with Startup Education **Tuesday, October 14, 2014, 6 - 8 pm** **MASA Offices (1884 Como Ave., St. Paul)**

Educelerate Twin Cities will sponsor this bootcamp for education entrepreneurs in collaboration with Startup Education to help you learn about proven business models in education, immediately apply your knowledge in a hands-on workshop and get feedback that will help you with your own startup.

Startup Education is piloting this bootcamp series, so we're lucky to be among the first cities to hold this event. The bootcamp will be facilitated by [Rajiv Tandon](#) (serial entrepreneur and educator) and [Tersa Marchek](#) (Yellow Burst Consulting and formerly at Capella Education Company).

During this session, we will provide an introduction to the Business Model Canvas and then allow teams to gain hand-on experience in working with this business development tool. The evening will close with [Matt Hardy](#), co-founder of Kidblog, demonstrating how the Business Model Canvas works for his company.

Register online at: <http://www.meetup.com/EducelerateTwin/events/202362662/>





How **Budget Boot Camp** can *transform* the budget process



Deb Henton
Superintendent
North Branch Area Public Schools

In 2009, with years of cuts under its belt and facing a foreseeable future of the same, a community frustrated by cuts to staff and programs and this complex process, North Branch Area Public Schools (NBAPS) administration and school board needed a different way to look at budgeting. This new way would bring administration together, allow for increased school board participation in the budgeting process, and provide easy-to-understand, digestible, rationale for the community regarding district budgeting decisions.

The system devised at NBAPS - Budget Boot Camp (BBC) - sought to address a number of concerns ranging from the isolation of “site budgeting” to a lack of meaningful participation in the process at the school board level.



Patrick Tepoorten
Community Relations Coordinator
North Branch Area Public Schools

When a school district is desperate to squeeze the utmost from every penny, it is imperative site leaders better understand the big picture. By involving the entire administrative team in Budget Boot Camp (which can involve multiple full-day meetings), principals and directors gain a better concept of others’ needs and priorities. As a result a great deal of collaboration takes place; administrators have a vehicle to voice concerns and forge creative solutions together.

Instituting a BBC process is rather simple. It starts with the solicitation of topics from staff, school board, and community. The superintendent maintains a file of topics suggested over the course of a year. In December, as the district prepares for budget season, those topics are compiled and a team of administrators designated - two to four individuals in most cases. A team leader to coordinate research duties and schedule meetings is also chosen at that time, and teams have a month to analyze the topic, research options, and provide a recommendation to the entire administrative team.

In the years since BBC began, NBAPS has faced budget deficits totaling over \$10 million dollars taken together. Through collaboration, however, each of those budgeting years saw opportunities added for students. Spanish curriculum K-12, Project Lead the Way, free all-day every day kindergarten, a 1:1 device initiative, instructional strategies coaches, and a JROTC program are just a few examples of opportunities added even while reducing budgets.

From a community perspective, school board input into the BBC process is key. Any school board member, at any time, can request a topic be included in BBC. In this way, both school board members, and the community they represent, can be confident the district takes its concerns seriously and will explore them to the greatest degree possible. Topics the school district has been asked to explore include energy savings, building closures, a four-day week schedule, efficiency of district services such as busing and maintenance, and many more. In each case, the school district conducted in-depth studies of the issues and made recommendations. It is not enough to simply make recommendations though, and therein lies perhaps the most important aspect of BBC: record keeping.

District administration documents all topics in its BBC “binder” and presents its findings publicly to the school board. This transparency is key to success. BBC binders contain not just decisions, but a record of a decision’s evolution. Making this information available allows school board members a more complete understanding of the process and challenges around a given decision. In turn, both school board members and district administration possess complete and easy-to-understand rationale that can be imparted to staff or community members with concerns about budget decisions.

When BBC was introduced in 2009, the school district faced significant angst annually around budgeting decisions. Five years later budgets are being approved with much greater confidence from community, staff, and school board members. NBAPS administration believes this is a direct result of the transparency and the sharing of the decision-making process inherent to Budget Boot Camp.

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Recent court decisions of interest to public schools



Charles E. Long
Education Law Attorney
Kennedy & Graven, Chartered

Court decisions interpreting legal requirements for public bodies are issued on a regular basis. Following are a few recent decisions from the Federal and State Supreme Courts that may be of particular interest to school administrators as the new school year begins. The cases contain information that might alter daily administrative decisions or prompt you to consult with legal counsel for clarification.

Riley v. California, 134 S.Ct. 2473 (2014)

This case, decided June 25, 2014 by the United States Supreme Court, answers the question of whether police may search digital information on a cell phone without a warrant. In this case, photographs and videos found by detectives on a cell phone during an arrest for drug possession were used to charge and convict the individual for a shooting that had occurred a few weeks earlier.

In reversing the conviction, the Court explained that the Fourth Amendment, which guarantees freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures, usually requires the police to obtain a warrant that describes the place to be searched and the person or thing to be seized. A warrantless search is reasonable only in a very narrow set of exceptions. The Court generally determines whether to exempt a given type of search from the warrant requirement “by assessing, on the one hand, the degree to which it intrudes upon an individual’s privacy and, on the other, the degree to which it is needed for the promotion of legitimate governmental interests.” In the case of digital data on a cell phone – and, by extension, data stored in the cloud – the Court found the data to be akin to a person’s private papers, which are not typically kept on one’s person. As the Court put it, “prior to the digital age, people did not typically carry a cache of sensitive personal information with them as they went about their day.” Instead, that information would be kept in a secure location, like a person’s home. Because a warrantless search of an arrestee’s home for his personal papers would not be allowed under the Fourth Amendment, by analogy the data on the cell phone is equally off limits unless and until the government obtains a warrant.

Practice Pointer: School districts should think twice before searching an employee’s or student’s cell phone. Such searches will be scrutinized more closely than other searches, requiring both sufficient justification at their inception and a reasonableness of their scope.

Lane v. Franks, 134 S.Ct. 2369 (2014)

In this United States Supreme Court case, the issue was whether public employees are entitled to First Amendment protection of speech when making statements pursuant to their official duties. Lane was the director of a community college program who was fired after testifying under subpoena against a former state legislator regarding financial improprieties in the program. He claimed that his subsequent discharge constituted illegal retaliation under the First Amendment.

The Supreme Court acknowledged that the First Amendment protection of a public employee’s speech depends on a careful balance “between the interests of the [employee], as a citizen, in commenting upon matters of public concern and the interest of the State, as an employer, in promoting the efficiency of the public services it performs through its employees.” The first issue is whether the employee spoke as a citizen on a matter of public concern. If the answer is no, then the analysis is over: the speech is not protected. If yes, however, then the question becomes whether the relevant government entity had an adequate justification for treating the employee differently than any other member of the general public.

The Court said sworn testimony in judicial proceedings is a quintessential example of citizen speech for the simple reason that anyone who testifies in court bears an obligation, to the court and society at large, to tell the truth. That the testimony concerned information obtained in the course of his public employment was immaterial. In fact, the Court said, speech by public employees on subject matter related to their employment holds special value precisely because those employees gain knowledge of matters of public concern through their employment. On the other hand, the government had no legitimate interest justifying suppression of the speech concerning the program’s finances.

Practice Pointer: The proliferation of social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter allow for much greater opportunities for employees to share information and

Recent Court ...
Continued on Page 15

Recent Court ... Continued from Page 14

express opinions. School districts should enact (or review) social media policies that establish guidelines for employee communications. Any consideration of discipline based upon such communications should involve the two-step analysis described above to determine whether the employee is speaking pursuant to his or her official job duties or as a private citizen.

Schwanke v. Minnesota Dept. of Administration, ___ N.W.2d __ (Minn. 2014)

This recently-issued opinion from the Minnesota Supreme Court addresses the rights of public employees to contest employment evaluations. Here, a police officer received a negative review and requested that the employer correct those items with which he disagreed. His request was denied upon a determination that the evaluation was accurate and complete.

On review, the Minnesota Supreme Court concluded that the Minnesota Data Practices Act gives a public employee the right to challenge a performance evaluation for “accuracy and completeness.” It noted that, as a general matter, “mere dissatisfaction with a subjective judgment or opinion cannot support a challenge under the Data Practices Act.” However, in many cases, subjective judgments or opinions are based upon statements of fact that are objectively verifiable or, put another way, “capable of being proved false.” In such cases, where an employee contests statements that could be proven false, the employee can pursue the issue under

the Data Practices Act. Interestingly, the Court added a footnote at the end of its decision, acknowledging the arguments made by the Department and others, including the Minnesota School Boards Association, that allowing the employee’s appeal would have “undesirable consequences.” The Court responded that it would “express no opinion on these policy concerns other than to say that nothing in our decision today precludes the Legislature from responding by amending the Data Practices Act.”

Practice Pointer: This decision is particularly concerning in that it could be interpreted to expand the rights of probationary employees. The law allows school districts to non-renew teachers as they “see fit” and only entitles the teacher to receive a statement from the school district regarding the reasons for its decision and a description of the supervision it furnished. This opinion may give these teachers an avenue to challenge a non-renewal by contesting the evaluations conducted during the year. Therefore, school districts are advised to take even more care in evaluating probationary staff and ensuring the accuracy and completeness of their data.

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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Reaching Your Opinion Leaders

Opinion Leaders: Influential members of a community, group, or society to whom others turn for advice, opinions, and views.



Shari Prest
Ark Associates

To spread the messages about what is – or isn't – going on in your schools, equip opinion leaders in your school district with relevant and timely information.

In order to engage opinion leaders in your communication initiatives, you need to (1) know who they are, (2) equip them with accurate and understandable information, and (3) listen to

what they know or feel or have heard.

Identify people and organizations that influence the opinions of others in your school district.

They are likely not only the usual suspects (mayor, executive director of the Chamber of Commerce, large business owner), but they may also be a vocal parent, volunteer, teacher, board member or food services worker. The possibilities are as many as the people who interact with your schools.

There are several methods to help you identify the opinion leaders of your school district.

- Ask people who communicate with school board members, principals, or you about education issues where and how they receive or share information about the schools.
- Have principals supply the names of people from their schools they believe influence others.
- Conduct a district survey asking stakeholders the source of the information they use to form their opinions about the school district, its challenges and accomplishments.
- Note local activist efforts, and engage the leaders of them in your school community.
- Compile a list of current community leadership and membership of local service clubs, places of worship and lawmakers.

Inform a network of key communicators made up of the identified opinion leaders in your school district.

- Invite community members who want detailed information to consider joining a school district key communicators' network. The only requirement is that they are willing to stay informed and share accurately about school issues.

- Utilize a detailed line of communication along with supporting materials to key communicators and other opinion leaders. Build a trusting and informed relationship with the press.
- Establish a system to quickly share timely information on urgent issues or quickly emerging issues.
- Utilize Facebook, Twitter, blogs, newsletters, etc. to make information easily accessible to all stakeholders.
- Position the school district as the first and most reliable place people go for information.
- Have and promote a pathway for all stakeholders to get and share information about the schools.

Listen to the ideas and opinions of all constituents when possible and be deliberate about gathering the thoughts of opinion leaders. By virtue of being opinion leaders, they likely represent the thoughts of at least one sector of your community, as well.

- Schedule face-to-face meetings with interested individuals when issues emerge.
- Schedule key communicator meetings to hear their assessment of goals, progress, and challenges quarterly.
- Maintain and promote an open invitation for all community members to share their thoughts through any and all of the following: key communicator network, superintendent listening hours, open door hours, technology channels or through your regular presence in the community and the schools.

Communications may divert you from day-to-day business, but it is clear that schools succeed best when there is community support and understanding of what they are accomplishing today and plan to accomplish in the future. Community members' ability to adapt to change, support innovation, vote in referenda, and have confidence in school leadership may well depend on your willingness to identify, inform and listen to opinion leaders.

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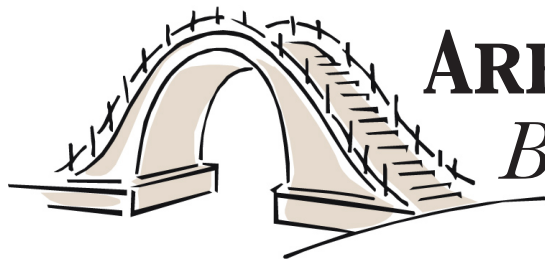
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ARRIVING AT A DECISION

Building a Bridge with Data



Scott Smith
Forecast5 Analytics, Inc.

If you are like me, driving across a bridge is one of those things you might take for granted as you are headed towards a particular destination. Whether driving across a river-spanning bridge or taking a nature walk across a narrow, wooden foot bridge, the ability to do so is really the result of much preparation, planning, and communication. Without that bridge, the ability to arrive at the destination would, at the very

least, be much more difficult and in some cases impossible.

As leaders of schools or other local governments look to make many important decisions, one of the most important aspects to arriving at a decision is dependent on the informational bridge that was built to reach that point. Almost all decisions, no matter how impactful to the overall organization, are better made with data as the footing. Each time your organization moves down a decision path, several questions should be addressed:

- What type of data will help us move forward on our decision path?
- Where can we get that data?
- What tools do we need to better understand the data?
- How can we best communicate the situation to all stakeholders?

Having a full understanding of these questions will help identify specific needs and put you in control of the situation as you build your data strategy. Whether you are building a budget, defining a staffing plan, identifying opportunities for efficiency or just responding to a question asked by a stakeholder, it is important to know where the necessary data resides and how it will be used. This is often referred to as having “command of your data”. Being in this position increases credibility and can often disarm a discussion around a decision that is less based on data and more anecdotal.

Data can come in many forms, but at a very high level the focus is often on historical and comparison data. For school districts, it might be data collected annually on a statewide basis, survey data, regional/affinity peer data or it could be your own in-house data. Regardless of where the data comes from, the opportunity to analyze is enhanced when disparate data sets can be combined into analytic or “business intelligence” tools. These tools allow leaders to

better understand trends, benchmark against relevant peers and shine the proverbial flashlight in certain areas to ensure the “right” questions are being addressed. In many cases, this will include incorporating data visualization into the process. By taking a visual approach to the analysis of data, it is much easier to build the informational bridge needed to communicate the “why” of a particular decision.

While quantitative analysis is essential to understanding how you compare or where your organization might need to make changes, another very important component includes bringing a qualitative view to the analysis. This is where leaders draw on their own experiences along with the needs and desires of the organization or community. By pairing quantitative with qualitative, the decision-making process has the footing necessary to gain buy-in from various stakeholders.

The data bridge you build is not only dependent on the type of data you collect and analyze but also how you communicate with both internal and external stakeholders. While using a visual approach assists in the analysis process to identify outliers and trends, it is also important to use this approach for communication purposes. This is often referred to as a “USA Today approach” (charts, graphs) making it easy for all stakeholders to understand how or why you are arriving at a given decision.

No matter how big or small the decision, it is important to understand the type of data needed, how/where you can gain access to the data, and what tools are needed for proper analysis and communication. As you look to arrive at a given decision, consider whether you are taking certain steps in the process for granted or if the bridge you build has the necessary data footing for that decision.



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Tune in This Election Season

Election season has begun, now is an important time to tune in to what is happening in elections – statewide and in your community.



Valerie Dosland
EWALD
MASA Lobbyist

Our work to influence the legislative outcomes for the best interest of public education changes over the course of the year. Summer is a time many think there is no legislative work to do. However, the opposite is true – especially in election years. Although MASA has had some good success over the last two legislative sessions our work is not done. While we do not know what is in store yet for the 2015 legislative session, we cannot wait for that work to start in January. It

begins now.

Election season has begun and instead of tuning out, now is an important time to tune in to what is happening in elections – statewide and in your community. Now is an excellent time to get your voice heard. Election years provide you an excellent opportunity to meet new candidates, strengthen your relationships with current elected officials and educate both about your school district. You have a captive audience.

There are number of ways to connect this election year:

- Discuss your issues when a candidate is campaigning in your community. They may reach out to you personally or connect with you on the phone. If you live in their district, you may see them at your door as they campaign in your neighborhood.
- Seek out the candidates. Call or email the candidate and tell them about your work in their school district and your concerns. Ask candidates to visit your district to see the great work you do.
- Educate candidates about your school district, the needs of the students and staff and the great outcomes you are achieving.
- Learn who your candidates are and what they support. Check out their websites, read their campaign literature and local media coverage. Know your issues so you are prepared to discuss and debate with candidate when you see them in your community.
- Attend candidate forums and town hall meetings. This is another great opportunity to meet the candidates.
- Vote on Election Day. Voting in Minnesota is easy. We now have no excuse absentee voting and polls are open from 7:00 am – 8:00 pm on Election Day.

Thanks for connecting with your legislators and candidates with your ideas and concerns. This work strengthens our efforts at the Capitol on a daily basis as we navigate the process and advocate on your behalf.



MASA Foundation Grants Available!

The MASA Foundation will provide up to 10 grants to members this year for

professional development experiences that you would not be able to access through your district or that are unique learning opportunities. Grants can range from \$500-\$750. To apply, simply submit a one page summary of your intended experience and either mail or fax it to the MASA offices (651-645-7518) or email Gary Amoroso (gamoroso@mnasa.org), and the Foundation Grant Committee will consider it in a timely manner.

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**The 2014 MASA Foundation Golf
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**Sunday, September 28
Pine Beach West Golf Course, Madden's
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Come kick off the MASA Fall Conference by participating in the annual MASA Foundation Golf Tournament. Registration materials are available on the MASA Website.

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A very important part of the work of MASA is to provide outstanding service to the members of the association. Besides a strong professional development component, MASA wants to stand ready to help members as they navigate the many complex situations that they face on a day-to-day basis.

The five member Professional Assistance Team (P.A.T.) is made up of highly experienced school leaders who will use their expertise to help their colleagues when they need consultation and/or advice. The members of the 2014-2015 P.A.T. are listed below...



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These individuals will take confidential calls and contacts from any MASA member. The only case in which information may be shared is in the event that a situation is complex enough that you may require legal assistance and will be directed to the Executive Director of MASA.



SEND US YOUR PHOTOS!

The MASA and MASE lower level boardroom construction may be finished, but the boardroom is not yet complete. MASA and MASE are excited to announce a Call for Photos to be displayed in our boardroom. Whether you are a professional or amateur photographer, we want to showcase you!

Theme: Our Minnesota Schools. All MASA members are invited to submit photographs representing the great schools in their regions. Photos may be of places, people or things, past or present!

Guidelines: All entries must be original work and suitable for all audiences. Any identifiable person in the photo must sign a release form. Entries must be submitted digitally, and at least 300 dpi. Photographs will be enlarged and displayed in the boardroom for at least two years.

To Submit: Email your photograph (300 dpi), entry form (available on the MASA website), and release form (if applicable), to aranallo@mnasa.org. The submission deadline is 4 p.m. on Wednesday, October 1.

Questions? Please contact Aimee Ranallo at (651) 789-4061, or aranallo@mnasa.org



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Calendar of Events...

2014

September

28

MASA Foundation Golf Tournament
Pine Beach West Golf Course, Brainerd

28

MASA Great Start Cohort II
Madden's, Brainerd

28-30

MASA Fall Conference
Madden's, Brainerd

November

12

MASA Great Start III
Cragun's, Brainerd

12-14

CLM Fall Conference
Cragun's, Brainerd

27-28

MASA Offices Closed

December

24-26

MASA Offices Closed

2015

January

14

MASA Great Start Cohort IV
MASA Offices, St. Paul

15-16

MSBA Leadership Conference
Minneapolis

February

26-28

AASA National Convention
San Diego, CA

March

11

MASA Great Start Cohort V
Minneapolis Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park

12-13

MASA/MASE Spring Conference
Minneapolis Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park

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Follow MASA your way! Whether you like traditional websites, blogs or social media, you can stay connected to the Minnesota Association of School Administrators!



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Gary's Typepad Blog: Voice of MN Education



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