

Leaders FORUM

Spring 2008

Actions Which Speak Louder Than Words Public Schools Are the Very Core of Our Democratic Society

Almost 50 million students attend America's public schools each school day. As long as I can remember, I have believed that public schools are the very core of our democratic society. Public education has been described as being the great equalizer, giving all children access to high-quality educational opportunity via many, many avenues. Certainly in our smaller out-state communities, and even in many of Minnesota's larger urban/suburban communities, few things evoke the strong passions that public school issues do.

The founders of our nation, including great thinkers such as Jefferson, Hamilton, and Washington, knew and understood that the engagement of the public in maintaining a commitment to our youth is critical to the nation's democracy. The framers of Minnesota's Constitution also demonstrated such understanding and commitment when they included Article XIII, Section 1: "The stability of a republican form of government depending mainly upon the intelligence of the people, it is the duty of the legislature to establish a general and uniform system of public schools. The legislature shall make such provisions by taxation or otherwise as will secure a



Dan Brooks
Superintendent Sauk Centre
Schools/MASA President

thorough and efficient system of public schools throughout the state."

It is worth our reflection, as citizens of a state that has often been at the pinnacle of providing public education opportunities, whether our commitment to this tenet is as strong as it should be.

We simply must return to a less partisan way of ensuring that the needs of all of our

children for educational opportunity are met. We need a rededicated commitment by our Governor, legislators, and others to collaborate on putting the needs of our children first.

In thinking about the untimely death of our good friend John Franzoia, I am reminded of the leadership and unselfish commitment to kids that he demonstrated for so many years; all of us should strive to emulate him. In taking some time to think about the tragic circumstances of his death and also his commitment to a relatively small rural district for over a quarter of a century, I came across the following explanation (author unknown) of commitment: Commitment is what transforms a promise into reality. It is the words that speak boldly of your intentions. And the actions which speak even louder than words. It is making the time when there

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is none. Coming through time after time, year after year after year. Commitment is the stuff character is made of; the power to change the face of things. It is the daily triumph of integrity over skepticism.

Few would argue that these are difficult economic times. Even so, it is in such times that the efforts of our leaders to promote and adequately fund public education must remain steadfast. Sustaining the core fabric of our democracy, through educational opportunity for 50 million kids, needs no less commitment!

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This is a brand new award that will be presented to two of our central office members during the MASA Spring Conference.

Come and see this new award presentation on Thursday, March 19 during the morning general session!

FEDERAL ADVOCACY

Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education

By Charlie Kyte

Who is he?

Dr. Arne Duncan is the new U.S. Secretary of Education. He is a 44-year-old Chicago native who has served as superintendent of the Chicago schools. In tapping him for the position, President Obama said Duncan has the management skills and programmatic approach needed for handling the 4200-employee U.S. Department of Education.

As superintendent in Chicago, Duncan considered a variety of approaches for changing the city's educational structure. He experimented with teacher pay, opened new charter schools and called for a dramatic increase in funding for the No Child Left Behind Program (NCLB).

There is a wide divide nationally over how the federal government should approach and improve public education. Secretary Duncan will need to be politically adroit to straddle this divide. On one hand, there are strong advocates for changing the face of public schooling to include more charter schools and alternative forms of teacher pay; Secretary Duncan clearly has a background in these areas.

On the other hand, the National Education Association, which has 3.2 million members, has traditionally been very wary of the above-noted approaches. The National Education Association has been a strong critic of the underfunded No Child Left Behind Act, and its mandates for so much new testing. The NEA also opposes the punitive way in which NCLB evaluates public schools.

You can expect Secretary Duncan to be in agreement with NCLB's goals for improving student performance, especially in regard to closing the achievement gap between different racial groups. He is an advocate of rewarding successful schools rather than identifying unsuccessful ones.

It is a long leap from being the superintendent of Chicago schools to working in a vastly larger federal bureaucracy. Duncan will have to demonstrate political savvy, and he will have to be adept at interacting with state education agencies that have widely differing views about the proper role of government in public education.

We wish the new U.S. Secretary of Education well, and recognize that he has many significant challenges ahead.



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A Model for Small Schools

Innovation and change are being discussed by school superintendents all across Minnesota. The following article was written in 2001 by MASA Executive Director Charlie Kyte, who was thinking about a new model for small schools; the article is even more relevant today.

There is a wide range of enrollments in Minnesota's school districts, and this same dynamic is also present in many other areas of the United States. Different school sizes have different advantages. For example, the intimacy of small schools cannot be replicated in large settings, whereas the more sophisticated curriculum typical of larger schools is difficult to duplicate in schools that have small student populations.

There are changing dynamics in many rural areas that will result in many schools shrinking in size. Because of a declining birth rate and a shift of economic opportunities, the populations in rural areas continue to age, and the number of young people in rural areas continues to diminish. This trend has been underway for some time, and will accelerate profoundly over the next 10 to 15 years.

Small towns require a spiritual "center." In this context, the word "center" is not meant to be associated with a higher power, but rather describes a community coming together through the public schools to concentrate on the development of youth activities. Would it not be better to have an effective, small school in nearly every small town, rather than have students bused large distances to be assembled in larger numbers for group instruction?

For the most rural areas of our nation, the changing dynamics noted above present educational leaders and their communities with a set of difficult choices. Analyzing, discussing and acting on these choices will require significant courage on the part of leaders over the next several years.

Choice One: Consolidation

One choice for rural areas is to enter yet another round of school consolidation. As the number of students drops off, and funding remains tied to the number of students, small schools will have a difficult time surviving. There have already been two excruciating rounds of consolidation in Minnesota and in many other areas of the country. The first round occurred in the 1960s, as rural country schools were pulled into consolidated independent school districts. The second round came during the '70s and '80s, when many small towns consolidated with each other, combining the student populations into workable sizes. The result was that some communities permanently shuttered their schools.



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of School
Administrators

Choice Two: "Program Funding"

A second choice is to operate very small school districts that rely on "program" funding rather than a per-pupil funding formula. Schools in these districts would still be organized in grade level and class size configurations, but would have only a few students at each grade level. While this can be an attractive local option, it may be a relatively inefficient financial option from the state-level perspective, as well as from the perspective of competing educational interests in the urban areas.

Choice Three: Reconfigured Schools

A third choice involves reconfiguring existing schools, abandoning the grade level and classroom models of organization. If schools were centered on a combination of a project approach to learning and individualized instruction, it would no longer be necessary to assemble students together in sufficient numbers to make up a traditional, same-age classroom of students. Utilizing virtual learning through technology, teachers as facilitators and abandonment of a compartmentalized teaching force, this model could be effective in rural areas, and could also be effective financially.

This third model wouldn't quite bring us back to the one-room country school. However, very small rural schools with good internet connections, staffed by teachers who accept the role of working with children of multiple ages, may be a viable alternative to the other two choices noted above. This approach begs the need for reorganization of school administrative units, leaving much of the day-to-day educational leadership in smaller school settings to be handled by teacher/administrators. This model may work best for children being schooled from early ages through adolescence.

In some areas, larger regional secondary schools might be required to provide expertise in teaching advanced subjects. These regional centers also have the potential to enhance regional economic development.

As thought is given to this new model of presenting education, states should consider incentives for school districts and communities that encourage smaller school settings which provide for a more individual, technologically connected and project-based learning approach.

Reconfiguration may be a more palatable alternative to yet another round of excruciating consolidation of our small schools—and the resulting loss of our communities' spiritual centers.

What does a school district do to find great staff?



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The New Catch Word **Innovation**

Will innovation in K-12 education be the miracle cure for Minnesota's school funding woes? NO!

But will innovation lay the groundwork for the more efficient and successful operation of our schools in the future? PERHAPS.

We are at the Minnesota State Capitol nearly every day during the legislative session, and every day we hear another legislator declare that schools have to "innovate," and that doing so will save us the money necessary to fix our budget woes. I am at the point where I just roll my eyes whenever I hear the second part of that statement. There are very few actionable innovations that will save real dollars in the next school year. However, during these difficult budget times, people are more willing to take chances on changing the way we do business.

I have personally spoken to the governor and to many legislative leaders about the fact that innovation will work best if rules and mandates that limit our ability to innovate, reorganize and reform are removed. Our political leaders will be less successful on the innovation front if they continue to look at it as a top-down, state-mandated program.

So what are some of the innovation possibilities? If you listen close to parents in many of our larger school districts, they want smaller, safer places for their kids. They want schools where they know the teachers are committed for the long term. Yet, as we downsize, all of the seniority-based bumping that occurs takes these opportunities away. Thus, some progressive superintendents are thinking very seriously about using something akin to the Charter School Law to authorize groups of teachers and principals to contract within a school to provide educational services to the students.

The faculty at these group-run schools would become independent of the larger district, and would be able to stay in place over time. These groups could change the way they are compensated, working and functioning as they deem best, as long as they continue to deliver the educational achievement that their district contracts require.

In rural areas, we hear more talk about cooperation in the sharing and delivering of services. This sharing would go well beyond the cooperative purchasing of goods, and would look at pulling together multiple school districts to handle all of the back office functions, including payroll, paying invoices, managing budgets, providing food service



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and handling transportation. Would not some of these functions be better delivered on a larger scale, rather than by many small, standalone operations? Granted, it is not easy to break the bonds of very small school operations, but there are efficiencies to be had in such a pooling process.

Most large companies no longer have technology staff in each of their buildings; they control their IT systems and even individual computers from remote sites, utilizing a small group of highly skilled technicians. This may be another opportunity for schools. Most school districts developed their IT functions by finding a teacher with a bent for technology, and deemed that person their IT expert.

Later, that person probably became the technology coordinator, and maybe even the technology director for the school. In many cases, we have a person at each school site doing this work, much of which could instead be done from a single centralized location. This is surely another place where there is an opportunity for large-scale sharing.

People are also questioning the need to have separate school boards and separate administrations for each school. Why couldn't there be a larger administration and governance unit? Each community school could stand by itself with a local advisory body, made up of the citizens of that area, an independent teaching force, and a building administrator.

Would it be possible to merge the operations of our technical colleges and high schools, so that students wanting a technical vocational education could access both in a more seamless way? There are currently a number of attempts underway to make this work across the state.

There are many licensure groups for different occupational silos, but is this really the most efficient arrangement? For example, most counties, many of the larger cities, and most school districts employ nurses, librarians, counselors, social workers, and other professional support people, but they all do it under separate licensure. Wouldn't it be possible to have a single licensing structure, be it at the county or the school district level, that would enable both entities to share personnel to get the job done with our students?

The current era is ripe for meaningful innovation. As you percolate ideas among your colleagues, please share with us. If you need specific permission to do something that's really "out of the box," let us know and we will help you.

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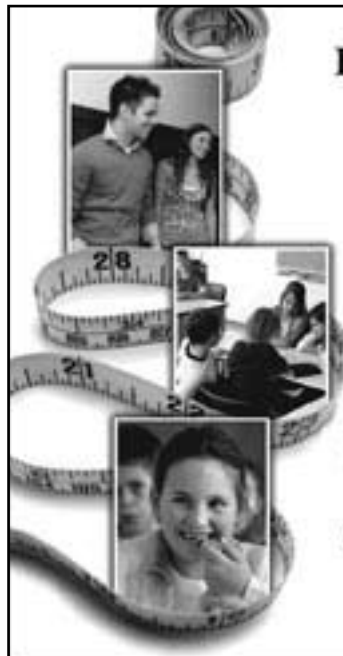
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New Rules Under the Family Medical Leave Act

On January 16, 2009, new regulations implementing the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) came into effect. The most notable changes relate to the expansion of FMLA rights to cover certain leaves for military families. However, the new regulations also contain changes relating to the application and implementation of all types of FMLA qualifying leave.

The most significant changes to FMLA include:

- Up to 26 weeks of unpaid leave annually to care for a covered service member who becomes ill or injured in the line of active duty.
- Up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave annually to help family members of the National Guard/Reserves manage their affairs (e.g., attending military events, arranging day care) while the service member is on active duty in support of a contingency operation.
- Employees must follow their employer's regular and customary call-in procedures for FMLA-qualified leave, unless unusual circumstances exist.
- Clearer timelines for employers to respond to employee leave requests.
- Clarification of the timing and content of the medical certification process. Among other changes, the new rule clarifies that the employer may contact the employee's health care provider, but the contact must be made by a human resource professional, a leave administrator, or a management official. The employee's direct supervisor may not contact the employee's health care provider.
- Limitations to Fitness-for-Duty Certifications, including limiting inquiries to essential job functions and job safety concerns.
- Clarification to the substitution of paid leave, including:
 - (1) applying the same procedural requirements to all paid leave, not just sick leave, and
 - (2) allowing employees, upon mutual agreement with their employer, to supplement their workers



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compensation benefits with pay from accrued sick leave, etc.

- Clarification that "light duty" assignments cannot be counted toward FMLA leave.

New notification requirements, including:

- general notice about the FMLA (through a poster, and either an employee handbook or upon hire)
- an eligibility notice
- a rights and responsibilities notice
- a designation notice

The new regulations extend the time for employers to provide various notices from two business days to five business days.

Steps to Ensure FMLA Compliance

The following steps should be taken to ensure compliance with the FMLA:

- Review and revise existing FMLA policies to reflect the new regulations.
- Train staff responsible for FMLA procedures.
- Update FMLA notice posters and employee handbooks.
- Update existing FMLA forms. The Department of Labor has model forms on its website, www.dol.gov. Remember, all forms should be tailored to the particular school district's policies and practices.
- Review collective bargaining agreements and individual employment contracts for compliance/compatibility with the new regulations.

NOTE: The entire text of the new regulations can be found in the Federal Register, Vol. 73, No. 222 (29 CFR Part 825).

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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Power Points for Educational Leaders: Operation Education

Key Message: Public understanding and engagement is foundational to achieving the best possible education outcomes.

Minnesota's public schools are good—very good—but global competition and a struggling economy require that they be even better; that they be great. In order to make that happen, a shared vision for kids and their futures needs to be cultivated and supported beyond the walls of school buildings—in communities, homes, places of worship, businesses and government; everywhere that people are impacted by the outcomes of public education.



Shari Prest
Ark Associates

Why is it so important for stakeholders to become engaged in public schooling?

Quality public schools are a collective responsibility

The quality of America's public schools has a direct impact on each and every one of us.

- Nine out of 10 U.S. students attend public schools.
- Public schools are the center of communities.
- Public schools are the foundation of our democracy.
- America depends on public schools for economic success.
- Family and community involvement in education is an essential element for achieving world-class schools and a world-class state.

Greater life success for learners

- Broad community support increases the likelihood that kids will become healthy, happy, contributing adults.
- Positive life experiences at each level of development prepare kids for success at the next level.
- Academic achievement is a strong indicator of income throughout life.

Greater prosperity for everyone

- Increased public investment translates into increased state and local prosperity.
- Economic development is dependent upon the development of people.
- The highest return on our public investment in kids begins early in their lives.

How can we engage with one another to make our schools and our system of public education even more successful?

- Parents are children's earliest and most significant teachers. They need to be interested, informed, and prepared for child and school engagement.
- Businesses, nonprofit organizations, and volunteers have indispensable roles to play. Caring adults who do not work in schools must step in as mentors, motivators, and models of what is possible.

Next Step

We want your [stakeholder] ideas about what we can do, without diverting essential funds from teaching and learning, to get you and others more involved in communication, planning, support, and volunteer opportunities within our communities. Let's consider together how we can best accomplish the following:

- Collect and share a lot of different points of view
- Get people interested in how they can advocate for kids and schools
- Build meaningful new partnerships that will promote successful schools
- Provide accurate and timely information about schools
- Expand public understanding of the "big picture" within which our schools exist
- Explore the relationship between legislation and the capacity of our schools

The evidence abounds that when kids grow up within families and communities that are engaged and connected with schools, the likelihood of school—and life—success increases. We welcome your interest and we need your participation.

As writer/philosopher Sam Levenson once wrote, "Each newborn child arrives on earth with a message to deliver to mankind. Clenched in his little fist is some particle of yet unrevealed truth, some missing clue, which may solve the enigma of man's destiny. He has a limited amount of time to fulfill his mission and he will never get a second chance—nor will we. He may be our last hope. He must be treated as top sacred." – Sam Levenson, *Everything But Money*, 1966

An expanded version of this presentation, as well as source citations and tips for more effective public engagement and communications, can be found at [organizational website address with link instructions]. Please use these materials to share the INVESTMN message with stakeholders in your community and beyond.

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Our Kids, Not Those Kids... Leading the Conversation

“I’m worn out,” said the school leader. “I go out into the community again and again to ask for support and what I hear is that people are tired of hearing that message. They have raised their kids and they don’t want to pay higher taxes to raise someone else’s kids. They don’t think we are doing a good job with the resources we have. They don’t believe that our community’s welfare—or their own individual prosperity—depends on the success of our students.”

In some communities this is absolutely true; we have the survey data to prove it. Some people do feel that way, and that is the reality with which school leaders have to grapple. We have gotten away from schools being part of the warp and woof of family and community, and have moved towards schools as disassociated commodities that are “purchased” by discerning consumers. When you add to that the fact that for the first time, the vast majority of voters in Minnesota do not have children in school and thus are not a built-in constituency, and the general dissatisfaction with rising property taxes—along with the data indicating that survey responders do not see student success correlating with their own (the responders’) economic well-being—that’s a perfect storm for disengagement. We need a vehicle for reinvestment in our schools, for people to participate and care and know. That vehicle is conversation.

On January 14, MASA partnered with the Minnesota School Boards Association and Parents United to host a day of professional development regarding community conversations. Ken Dragseth began the day, setting the stage for our discussion by describing the current opinion climate throughout the state. Ken talked about the very concerns described above—a pervasive discrepancy between the realities of running a school district and public perception and “ownership.” We then heard from public engagement expert Deb Gurke, who helped us explore public process and dialogue.

Deb taught us about community conversation and the importance of identifying the right questions to support the dialogue. Then she led participants in a “World Café” conversation model. We ended the day with a discussion of tactical resources for community conversation from Karen George and Linda Rodgers from the Anoka-Hennepin Schools. Karen and Linda provided participants with the seeds for a toolbox to support process as leaders begin local conversations.

How will this make a difference? If you think about how many of our institutions (including businesses) have traditionally been led—by a small group of experts who make decisions and then tell people what to do—our schools are just another example of the legacy of that culture.

However, organizations, including schools, are coming to understand that relationships are at the core of success: People do better when they think together. Community conversations are a terrific opportunity for schools to benefit from engaged, involved communities, and it is critical for school leaders to build relationships to create capacity for public decision-making and problem solving.

There was a time when almost every house on the block sent a kid or two or five to the local schoolhouse, and so there was a built-in dialogue (though granted, not always supportive) happening within the community. That is far from true these days. Districts must be much more intentional to widen the conversation to those citizens who may not have kids in school, but who certainly have a critical stake in the success of the kids who do attend their local schools. School leaders must develop a vision and a plan for these conversations, and they must come to terms with any discomfort they might feel about the loss of control that naturally comes with this process.

Conversation is how people think together. Conversation is where ideas are born, where change is initiated, where relationships are forged. Conversation can reinforce mutual respect and the valuing of perspective. Great leaders don’t necessarily know the answers; they figure out what the questions are and then, as Margaret Wheatley says, “perpetuate the inquiry.” Conversation is what turns a group of people merely sharing geography into a community, and gives participants the opportunity to make an impact on the circumstances of that community. In other words, an engaged group of people will care about how things turn out.

When leaders invite participation, ask compelling questions, perpetuate the inquiry and listen to the outcomes, community members become a part of the fabric of support for successful students. So let’s talk ... what can each of us do to help our children be more successful?

The resources from the Community Conversations workshop—and a growing bibliography—are available online at <http://www.mnasa.org/vnews/display.v/ART/4970f42790464>.



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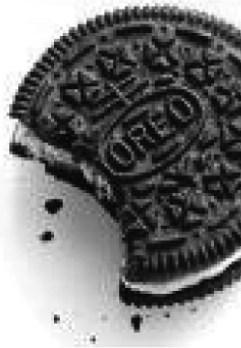
Session I- Wednesday, March 18, 2009

Session II- Wednesday, May 6, 2009

Session III- Wednesday, July 22, 2009

Session IV- Wednesday, October 28, 2009

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March

18

Great Start
Workshop V
Northland Inn,
Minneapolis

18

MASA Executive
Committee Meeting
9:30 - 11:30 a.m.
MASA Board of
Directors Meeting
1 - 4:30 p.m.
Northland Inn, Minneapolis

Fresh Start Workshop

18

2nd Year Cohort
Northland Inn, Minneapolis

19-20

MASA & MASE
Spring Conference
Northland Inn, Minneapolis

26

Emerging Leaders Conference
TIES, Roseville

April

10

Spring Holiday
MASA Offices Closed

22-24

AASA Legislative Advocacy
Conference
Crystal City Hyatt Regency
Hotel, Washington, DC

May

6

Fresh Start Workshop

15

Newsletter Submissions Due

25

Spring Holiday
MASA Offices Closed

June

11-12

MASA Board Retreat
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Superintendent of the Year My Experiences as 2009 SOY

It is a great honor to have been selected from among the finest superintendents in the nation as Minnesota's 2009 Superintendent of the Year. There are so many worthy superintendents in our state who could have been selected that I am truly humbled. I also put it in perspective with the previous superintendents who have been honored by knowing how excellent they were, and how much they contributed to Minnesota's students.

Charlie, Mia and Mary have been very supportive in getting all of the materials to AASA, in honoring me in Minnetonka and at the AASA convention and recognizing me in the Leaders Forum. AIG Valik has been most generous in their support of the Minnesota portion of the program.

My selection as SOY has been very well received in Minnetonka, as members of the community have joined in the celebration of what we have done to improve our district and serve our students. The numerous congratulatory notes, comments and e-mail messages of support from colleagues have been especially rewarding.



Dr. Dennis Peterson
Superintendent for the
Minnetonka Schools

The presentation of all 50 State Superintendents of the Year at the AASA convention in San Francisco was a great experience. Since seven of the other award recipients have been friends of mine for many years, it made the moment even more special. We attended a luncheon where we received award plaques and met the rest of the award recipients and past national award winners. As one past winner said, "The real honor is being recognized at the state level by one's own peers."

I then had an opportunity to speak to my fellow Minnesotans at the breakfast on Saturday.

The response from superintendents at the breakfast was reaffirming. I was, again, reminded of the many outstanding leaders in our state, including our President, Dan Brooks, and our Executive Director, Charlie Kyte.

We have collectively met so many challenges in keeping our schools strong despite a diminishing level of financial support. We have even more to do in the future with even fewer resources, but I know we will get the job done in every district in the state.

Thanks for considering me worthy of this recognition.



President-Elect Candidates Speak Out

This year, MASA is once again fortunate to have a strong slate of candidates for the various leadership positions' elections. We are using a number of different methods to deliver candidate campaign information to you. Many thanks to everyone running for a leadership position. Your commitment to your Association, your colleagues, and Minnesota's kids, is exemplary and the very thing that keeps MASA vital and progressive in our mission to be the voice for education administrators in Minnesota. We offer special thanks to Jeff Olson and Tamara Uselman, candidates for MASA President-Elect. The position of MASA President is a challenging and time-consuming one, and we are very fortunate to have continued interest by such quality leaders. Below are Jeff's and Tamara's comments:



Jeff Olson, St. Peter Schools

I am privileged to have been nominated for the position of MASA President-Elect. I welcome the opportunity to work with the MASA membership, the MASA board and officers, and the MASA staff in continuing to have MASA be the "go-to" education organization in Minnesota.

Jeff Olson
St. Peter Schools

In these times of economic uncertainty, I believe that our organization and members are uniquely positioned to provide leadership to each school community in Minnesota. In these times, it is important that we continue to advocate for each and every child, to challenge the status quo, and to set a direction for how to get from "here to there," even when we don't know where the road ahead will take us.

I have identified six priorities for MASA and the MASA membership if elected as president of MASA:

1. To advocate for fair and equitable funding for our students and our schools at the state and federal levels of government;
2. To provide leadership that will ensure that the 21st century education that we provide our students is flexible, creative, and challenging;
3. To promote the idea of an on-line MASA institute designed to strengthen membership skills and leadership capacity;
4. To provide direction in recruiting, attracting, and retaining quality school leaders as superintendents, directors of special education, and central office leaders;
5. To continue to strengthen collaboration and cooperation with other state educational organizations; and
6. To provide support and opportunity for retired MASA members and for those members considering retirement.

In closing, I would like to salute you, the MASA members, for your commitment and dedication to the students of Minnesota.

I would greatly appreciate your support of my candidacy for President-Elect.



Tamara Uselman, Perham-Dent Schools

Rationale for the race....

"Courage doesn't always roar. Sometime courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, "I will try again tomorrow."

The Finnish term "sisu" is similar to but not exactly the same as courage. My dad always defined sisu as "intestinal fortitude." "Kid," he'd say when I got a little wobbly, "you better find your sisu."

Tamara Uselman
Perham-Dent Schools

As one of nine children raised on small dairy farm by parents who spoke Finnish first, English second, public education offered me the personal empowerment to define my future. All Minnesota's youngsters deserve that kind of empowerment.

In our very turbulent world, public education is the only real long-term solution for fixing our economy and preserving our democracy. I offer to the MASA presidency the kind of "sisu" required build support for our public schools across the state as we face budget woes, systemic improvements, and increased accountability.

An avid reader and hands-on "applier" of best-practice research, I am seldom fearful, always inquisitive, more than willing to debate—and to listen and learn. As President-Elect of our organization, I would offer statewide a consistent, positive, upbeat message about the vital role public schools play in building our collective tomorrow.

Margaret Thatcher said, "I am extraordinarily patient, as long as I get my way in the end." "Our way" is stated in MASA's mission: to "establish a statewide agenda for children, serve as the preeminent voice for public education, and empower members through quality services and support." To that end, I would bring to the MASA office of President-Elect all the skills I have been educated to have—along with a healthy dose of "sisu."

I ask for your support for MASA President-Elect in the upcoming election.

Thank you.

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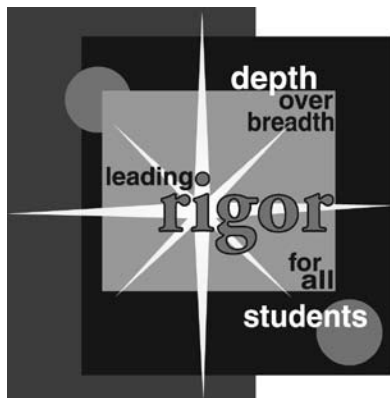
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2009 SPRING CONFERENCE

The Minnesota Association of School Administrators
and Minnesota Administrators for Special Education present

The MASA/MASE 2009 Spring Conference March 19-20 • The Northland Inn Hotel

Our demographics are challenging: the number of high school graduates and college-age state residents is falling while the boomers are retiring. Minnesota needs successful students to embrace the jobs of the future that will help our state prosper. The jobs of the future will require some type of post-secondary preparation—even jobs that don't call for a college diploma but provide a living wage will require college-ready preparation. How do we lead dramatic change in student achievement to prepare our kids for this reality? Gather with your colleagues this spring to explore Leading Rigor for All.



Sustaining Leaders of Learning.” Based on his widely acclaimed book of the same name, this presentation demonstrates a model of leadership that will develop and sustain individual leaders of “deep” learning for students – learning for understanding, learning for life, learning for a knowledge society.

Relax after a day of learning at Thursday afternoon's **Leaders' Reception**. Meet your candidates for MASA and MASE offices, enjoy refreshments, and visit with your colleagues.

Throughout the conference, we will celebrate the accomplishments of your colleagues with **Awards**.

Small group breakout sessions will narrow the thematic focus to examine cutting edge topics, such as Atmosphere for Learning, Superintendent and Administrators Dashboard, Personalized Learning, District Technology (Assessment for Learning), Interactive White Boards, Futures Curriculum, Dollars for Scholars (Financing Achievement in Tough Times), Talking About Achievement – and more!

Thursday's **Women Leaders' Reception** offers a casual social time for networking, conversation, and refreshments. Plan to stop for a drink and a chat on Thursday after the sessions.

In 1981, the Minnetonka school district was struggling. Classes were large; resources were scarce; a levy campaign didn't look promising. But Superintendent **Don Draayer** went to work every day with a smile on his face. “I told my wife not to throw away the moving boxes,” Don says. “I wasn't sure we would survive those days. But I knew that my job was to inspire hope and enthusiasm and I couldn't do that by focusing on the negative.” Don stayed many years in Minnetonka, and was recognized as the 1990 National Superintendent of the Year for his leadership. Join him Friday morning and explore Leading through Tough Times.

The Session, the Session ... where will we be in March? On Friday morning, **AMSD, MREA, SEE, MASE, and Lake Superior Schools** will meet with their members to update, debrief, and prognosticate. Don't miss your organization's session! After our association breakout meetings, we will come together for a panel discussion from the various organization perspectives.

Conference Highlights . . .

What is excellence? If we see rigor as part of the process and excellence as the outcome, how do we know it when we see it? Join our Thursday morning keynote speaker **Robert J. Sternberg** and explore how different models of excellence function in different school communities and how leadership focus affects student success. **If you would like a preview of Dr. Sternberg's work, be sure to read his article, “Wisdom, Intelligence & Creativity Synthesized,” in the February, 2009 issue of AASA's magazine, “The School Administrator.”**

A special thank you to our MASA business partner member and conference collaborator **TIES!** TIES is providing a number of educational sessions featuring the different ways technology supports rigorous curriculum and student achievement. Experience “the WOW factor,” but also the evidence—these sessions are built to help you to be a savvy technology leader.

The **Exhibit Fair** is a convenient way to visit with representatives of companies offering the latest products and services. Sign up for the prize drawings!

Don't forget to shop the **Silent Auction**. Profits support the programs of the MASA Foundation. There will be many bid-inspiring items up for auction, so be sure to check them all out. And it's not too late to make your own donation to the auction—simply indicate your contribution on your registration form.

On Thursday afternoon, international educational development consultant **Dr. Dean Fink** will bring us his wisdom on “Leadership for Mortals: Developing and

STAFF PROFILE

Debra Larson

Job Title:

Associate-Office & Data Management.

How long have you been with MASA:

January 1, 2009 was my official starting date with MASA.

Tell us about your loved ones (spouse, significant other, children):

My husband, Bob, and I have a son, (Bob , 26 and daughter-in-law, Heather), two daughters, (Alissa, 24, and Lindsey, 21) and a five year old granddaughter, Alaina.

What do you most like most about working for MASA:

I really like the people I get to work with; they are very welcoming, friendly and helpful. The variety of work is great and there is always something new to learn. I like to be busy and this is the perfect job for that!



Favorite Memory of Working at MASA:

I haven't been here that long so I'm still building those.

One thing you would like the members of MASA to know about you:

I am looking forward to learning many new things this year and meeting many of the members. If you come to the office for a meeting stop by the front desk so I can put a face with the voice on the phone.

2009 MASA Fall Conference

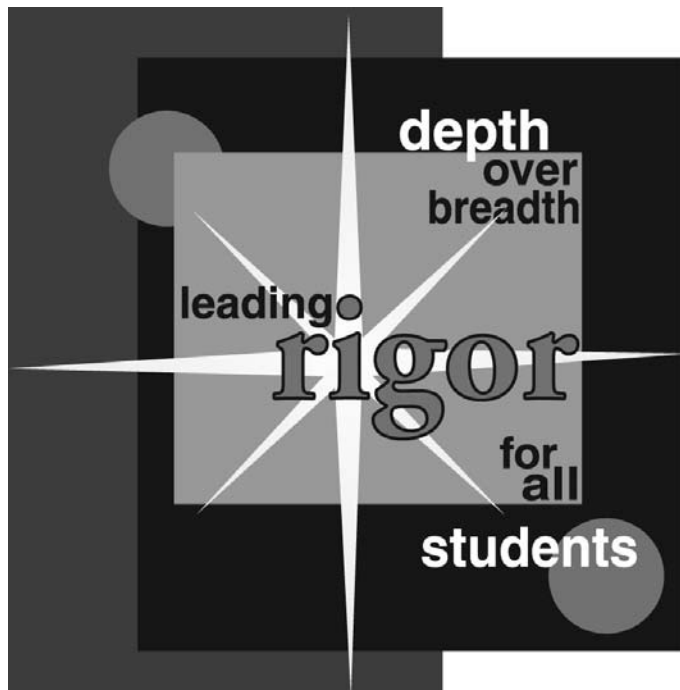


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2009 MASA/MASE Spring Conference

Growing Our Own Emerging Leaders Workshop Provides a Boost

Are you considering a career change to a different practice in educational administration? Do you know someone who would be an excellent leader who might just make the commitment, given a bit of encouragement?

Are you looking for an opportunity to explore leadership practice and recommit your career to excellent leadership?

Let us help you reflect on leadership practice, learn what it takes to lead well, and consider the implications of shifting gears to a different type of practice, whether you are thinking about licensure as a principal, superintendent, special education director, or other central office administrator.

The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA), Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association (MESPA), Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP), and Minnesota Administrators for Special Education (MASE) are collaborating to offer a day-long conference for those interested in exploring leadership and different areas of licensure.

This practical one-day conference is for motivated and talented emerging education leaders and current leaders seeking new directions: education students, teachers, principals, central office administrators, or anyone thinking of a change.

Presented by experts in education leadership, the conference includes general sessions with information and perspective vital to all educational administrators, as well as panels and breakout sessions focused on the specific job skills and expectations of practice in the licensure areas.

Join us on Thursday, March 26, 8:30 a.m. for registration/ coffee, and 9 a.m.-3:45 p.m. for the program, at TIES Education Center, 1667 N. Snelling Avenue in St. Paul.

Neal Nickerson, Professor of Education Policy and Administration at the University of Minnesota, will start our day by guiding us in a self-assessment so each participant can identify their motives for seeking a career change.

Patricia Harvey, Senior Fellow of State and District Initiatives for America's Choice and former St. Paul Schools Superintendent, will present our keynote address, "Future Focused Leadership."

Neal Nickerson will then present a general session exploring "Critical Leadership Skills."

Our concurrent breakout sessions will feature:

- "How to Work with Less, Produce More, and Still Get the Job Done in Under '50'" by Malachi Pancoast, President, Breakthrough Coach
- "Ethics in Leadership" by Jerry Robicheau, Chair, Department of Educational Leadership, Minnesota State University, Mankato
- "Technology-Savvy Leadership" by Ben Silberglitt, Manager, TIES Data Services
- "Evidence-Based Practice: Assessing Your Own Professional Development" by Mark Wolak, Superintendent, Mahtomedi Schools (Invited)
- "Making a Role Change within Your District" by Patty Phillips, Superintendent, North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale Schools

At lunch, executives from the education leadership organizations will offer remarks about the benefits of participating in professional associations, and higher education licensing institutions will have representatives on hand to provide information.

Our afternoon panel presentation will feature practitioners who will reflect on "a day in the life" of various school leaders, offering participants the perspective of the reality of practice in the different licensure areas.

At the end of the day, we will revisit the self-assessment that started the day and participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their learning and begin a planning process if they choose.

Registration materials are available online at <http://www.mespa.net/Emerging Leaders Conference.html>.

If you yourself are not interested in this conversation, please remember that one of the most important things we do as leaders is to grow the leaders of the future. Is there someone you might encourage to consider a new leadership role?



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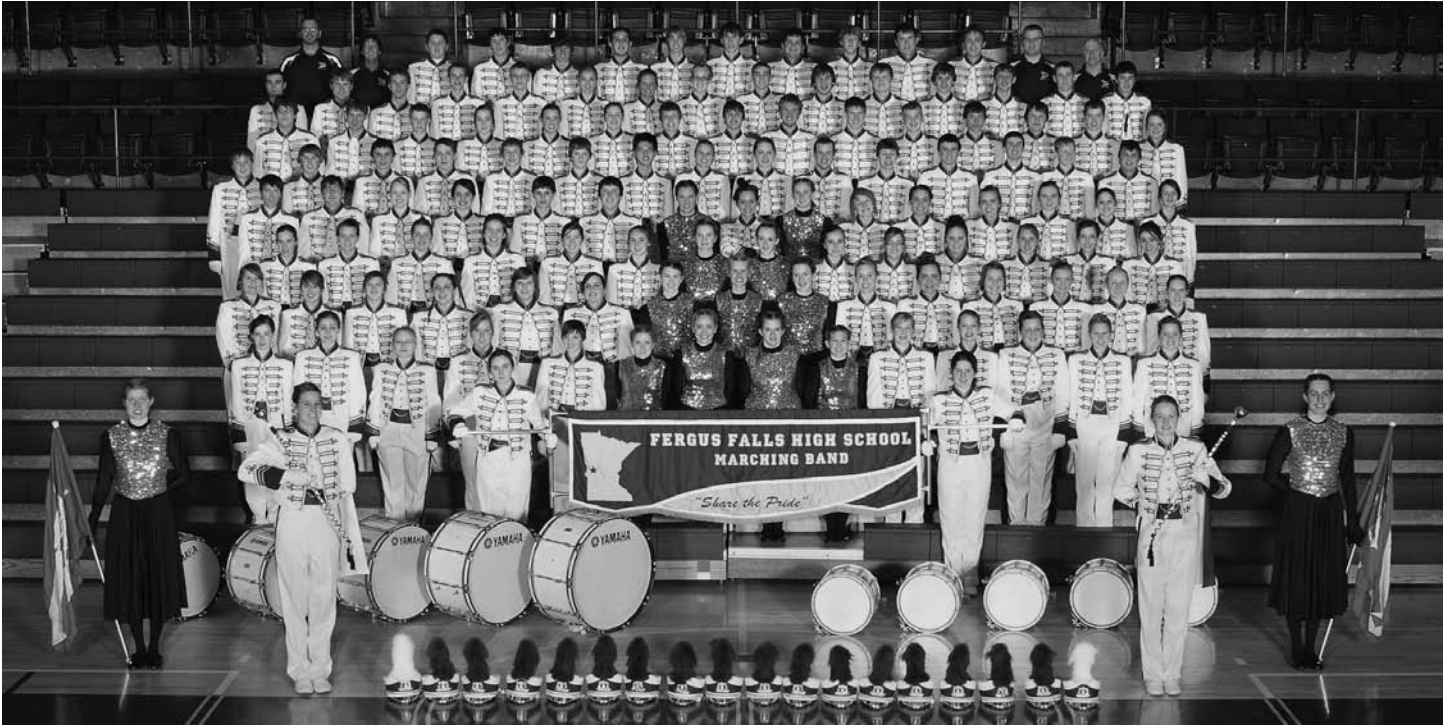
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