

# Leaders FORUM

Spring 2010

## Leading Community Dialogue and Decision-Making

*"The alternative to engaging with the public will not be an unengaged public, but a public with its own agenda and an understandable hostility to decision-making processes that ignore them."*

*Steve Coleman and John Gotze,  
Bowling Together*

**W**e can all think of times when we have faced a hostile public and have wondered what we did to engender this behavior. Or, we have thought, "What's wrong with these people? Don't they know this is the best decision for the district? I am trying to make decisions that are in the best interest of all of the children. Why can't they give me a break? They are so selfish; they only care about their own kids."

Well, the world has change dramatically. And one thing that has changed is that people are less willing than ever to sit back and accept decisions made by the experts. For good or bad, that's just the way it is.

In the old days, decision making was concentrated in the superintendent, based on the assumption that this person had the expertise to manage the school district. Furthermore, the superintendent had the ability to control information which meant they also had considerable influence to set the agenda. Today that is no longer the case. While there is still some information that the superintendent may be able to control, information technology has opened up school district records and



Deb Gurke  
Governance Consultant  
Wisconsin Association of School  
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information in ways that no one could have imagined even twenty years ago. State accountability systems allow parents, the media, and concerned citizens to research school districts and draw their own conclusions about student achievement. Communication technologies (think blogs, social networking) mean that citizens can organize an interest group before the superintendent even knows the issue is on the radar screen.

Complicating matters further, younger parents have different views from many of the baby

boomers who still occupy top management positions in school districts. Baby boomers generally believe that respect is something that is earned over time, and that given their length of service they deserve to be respected. Gen Xers tend to see respect as something that is given to people they see as competent, which means you have to prove yourself. While your years of experience are very nice, it's what you've done today that is going to matter to them. So, how do you respond to this ever changing, always challenging environment?

In his book, *Leading in a Culture of Change*, Michael Fullan writes, "Leaders must be consummate relationship builders with diverse people and groups—especially with people different than themselves." Margaret Wheatley has written extensively about relationships and the importance they play in

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# 2010 SPRING CONFERENCE

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This year's conference will feature leaders linking current research and best practices. Join us and learn from our speakers and one another as we explore how **leadership makes a world of difference!** Our presenters include...

**Tony Wagner** has worked for more than thirty-five years in the field of school improvement, and he is a frequent keynote speaker and widely published author on education and society. Prior to assuming his current position at Harvard, Tony was a high school teacher for twelve years; a school principal; a university professor in teacher education; co-founder and first executive director of Educators for Social Responsibility; project director for the Public Agenda Foundation in New York; and President and CEO of the Institute for Responsive Education. He earned his a Masters of Arts in Teaching and Doctorate in Education at Harvard University. Tony's latest book, *The Global Achievement Gap: Why Even Our Best Schools Don't Teach the New Survival Skills Our Children Need - and What We Can do About It* has just been published by Basic Books.

**William Damon** is Director of the Stanford Center on Adolescence and Professor of Education at Stanford University. Damon's current research explores how young people develop purpose in their work, family, and community relationships. He examines how people can learn to approach their careers with a focus on purpose, imagination, and high standards of excellence. Damon also has written widely about how to educate for moral and ethical understanding. Damon's work is being used in professional training programs in the fields of journalism, law, and business, as well as in character education programs at the pre-collegiate level. Damon's most recent book is *The Path to Purpose: Helping Our Children Find Their Calling in Life* (2008).

Reality check! How does what we are learning at this conference translate into "real life" back at he district?



How can we bridge research to practice given the climate in which we currently work? Join **Greg Vandal** as he sets the stage for our **afternoon discussion groups**.

How does Public Participation contribute to innovative practice in our schools? What is the difference between Public Participation and Community Relations? How are leaders using processes of Public Participation to bolster student success? Our Public

Participation Guide will be **Deb Gurke**, Governance Consultant for the Wisconsin Association of School Boards. Deb has had over 15 years of experience in public education in Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin including service on the Stillwater, MN board of education. She has a Ph.D. in Educational Policy Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison where she studied school organizations, specifically the role the community plays in policy decisions.

Each year, *Time Magazine* names the "50 Best Inventions" of the year. In 2009, for the first time, Time honored a public school initiative with this distinction. Join us and hear about how New York City's **School of One** is teaching in a way that no traditional classroom can, because it tailors each lesson to a student's strengths, challenges, interests, and progress, using technology and a unique and flexible learning environment.

**See you at Conference!**

## Leaders Forum

Spring 2010

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# ASSOCIATION NEWS

## "Reculturing" Our Schools

**A**s you read this article we continue to move toward spring. Almost three quarters of our school year is over and the challenges associated with working on behalf of children continue to be present on a daily basis. I want to sincerely thank you for all of your efforts towards improving academic achievement levels of **ALL** students in your district. While we may not always see the fruits of our efforts, please know that as a result of the work you do on a daily basis, the futures of our children are brighter.

Recently I had the opportunity to attend the AASA National Conference on Education. One session that has had a lasting impact on me was by Dennis Sparks; it was entitled Leadership for "Reculturing" Schools. Sparks stated that a goal for each of us is to have every child experience quality learning with supporting relationships being present in every classroom. In order to do this, he felt that the leaders at the district and/or building level needed to practice a variety of behaviors. Following are some examples:

- We need to be able to provide clarity regarding the mission of our schools and how that mission is to be accomplished.
- We must be able to demonstrate and help others see how various initiatives fit together.
- We need to demonstrate the ability to identify a small number of things that are important in achieving our mission and we need to stress them relentlessly. A clear, concise, consistent message is needed in order for our staff and community to know what we want to accomplish and how we are going to get there.
- We must continually display integrity, authenticity, and candor in all interactions. Though we may not



Gary Amoroso  
Superintendent  
MASA President

always agree with others, it is important that people know that what we say is the truth.

- We must be a committed listener. We need to be able to offer our point of view and listen to others' point of view in the spirit of mutual influence.
- We must remember emotions are contagious. Our attitudes, positive or negative, influence others.
- We must be willing to stretch ourselves. As leaders we need to move from our comfort zone to a zone of vulnerability. This is excellent role modeling and demonstrates to others it is acceptable to take risks.
- We need to create a sense of genuine urgency about the need for change. President John F. Kennedy may have said it best, "Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."

Each of us carries an awesome responsibility to help prepare our children for their future. I am confident that through your efforts and the efforts of your staff that we will be successful in this endeavor.

Best wishes for a successful last quarter of our school year. As always, please feel free to contact me if I can be of service to you.

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



## Minnesota Government A House of Cards

It has been amazing to watch the slow crumbling of the finances of the State of Minnesota over the past decade. Beginning in 2001, with the decision by the Republicans, Democrats, and Independent Party Governor Jesse Ventura we have set ourselves up for a financial disaster. The 2001 decision ended up with the budget surplus being given back to the people through "Jesse Checks," the Democrats agreeing to take on a greater amount of the funding of schools, and the Republicans insisting on a cut in the tax rates. This set the stage for the disaster. Then followed the recession right after the terrorist attacks.

The state then elected a governor who refused to add new revenue (no new taxes) in almost any way. Over the years the only increase in state revenue has become a greater dependence on fees that individuals pay. Over that time, local governments slowly began increasing the only revenue source they had, local property taxes, which are now higher than when this debacle began.

This now brings us to the current biennium (2009-2011) and the current legislative session. At the beginning of the biennium, the Governor used his unallotment power to make changes. He cut aid to cities and counties, cut spending for health and human services, and borrowed nearly two billion dollars from the K12 schools through both state aid and property tax shifts.

Now that we are nearly half way through the biennium, the state is running into serious cash flow problems. Again, the solution is to turn to the schools with the help of a little-used law that requires that the state first delay aid payments to schools before doing short-term borrowing. At this point the borrowing is happening on state aid payments in March and April and the promise that schools will receive this money back at the end of May.

Looking forward, we can see that the state will be again short of cash as early as August of 2010. It is very likely that the borrowing next year will begin much earlier and be much more prolonged.

In addition, it looks like the state will be between 1 and 2 billion dollars short in their budget as the biennium comes to a close in June of 2011. It is very likely that the Legislators and Governor will have to produce additional cutbacks, or the Governor will once again do significant unallotment.

As we watch this maneuvering to hold the financial house of



Charlie Kyte  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Association of  
School Administrators

cards together, we cannot help but shake our heads. Many of us who have had years of experience running schools districts have continually had to make decisions about raising new revenue and making cutbacks in order to keep our budgets balanced. Most of the school districts in Minnesota have been responsible in doing that job - it's unconscionable that we have a Governor and a Legislature that cannot get the bigger problems at the state level fixed.

Unfortunately, this problem is now so deep that it is going to take Minnesota six to eight years to dig themselves out of the hole and get back to true financial stability. Financial stability means that they would have enough revenue to help the local units of government responsibly operate and also have enough fiscal discipline to balance a budget at the state level. We can only hope that at some point in the future there will be a group of leaders that will actually take on the job of running our state government in a responsible manner.

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# STRONG SCHOOL CULTURES

## School Culture: A Vital Sign of Learning Hopkins' Story

by John Schultz  
Superintendent  
Hopkins Schools

In schools, the term "culture" is used a lot in describing the many groups of people or constituents in a school. I often hear that the culture of one group will always get things done. I also hear that the culture of another group will not allow something to happen. When I was a teacher, I recognized that the culture of a classroom was paramount to instruction and achievement. Culture is the system of beliefs, attitudes, and values that shape behaviors and perception. It is safe to say that there are many cultures in our schools today. In addition, the cultures go beyond the beliefs and values that individuals from other countries, races, and ethnicities bring to a school community.

School leaders are charged with establishing a culture of learning and student achievement. In the Hopkins Public Schools, the vision for our district culture is one of excellence for every school, every student, every day. It is necessary for leadership to engage all cultures in every school in the pursuit of student success. The expectation

is to operationalize the values, beliefs, and attitudes necessary for optimal student learning in all the cultures in a school setting which include ethnicity, race, family, professional learning communities, teaching teams, parent groups, clerical groups, cafeteria and custodial teams, and school administrators. School leaders are faced with the surmountable challenge to influence the beliefs, attitudes, and values around the axiom that all students can learn so the perception and behavior in a school becomes one of caring, learning and achievement.

The term "culture" also becomes a means of communicating the success of a school. I often hear from parents and other community members that they can sense the culture of a building when walking through the main doors. You often hear that a school is warm, reflects that school's staff, and represents the community. These words provide the vital sign of a school's culture, indicating its health for productive and child-centered learning. When hearing these words, it means that all the groups in that school have aligned their cultures where students can learn in a warm, vibrant, engaging, and caring environment.

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# STRONG SCHOOL CULTURES

## School Activities Develop Better Citizens Roseau's Story

by Larry Guggisberg  
Superintendent  
Roseau Schools

I'd guess students in your school(s) are like the students in the Roseau School District and take great pride in their tradition of academic excellence and extra-curricular achievements. Pick up just about any research on the benefits of student involvement in activities and the results will indicate students who participate in co-curricular activities learn lessons that lead to better citizenship. For example, in a 2008 MN State High School League Survey ( $n=5,000$ ):

- 95% of students indicated school activities and athletics instill a sense of school pride;
- 93% of students indicated school activities provide an opportunity to develop self-discipline not necessarily found in the classroom; and
- 87% of students surveyed indicated students who participate in school activities and athletics tend to be school leaders.

Source: <[www.mshsl.org](http://www.mshsl.org)>

The current budget crunch is resulting in many schools scrutinizing non-academic programming like never before. In addition to parent and teacher high expectations, the culture of the Roseau School District is largely created and driven by students who excel in the classroom and at the same time are involved in student activities. Can you think of a better, more cost effective and positive driving element for schools?

Many aspects within school finance will continue to be a challenge for school leaders. School administrators are certainly aware of the resources they are committing each day to educate children, but, we shouldn't forget we are preparing students to be model citizens in school and in the future communities where ever they live. To accomplish this, schools need to provide guidance and promote the development of skills and experiences for students beyond the playing field or theater stage to be excellent citizens.

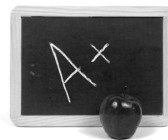
Thanks to the guidance of the National Honor Society (NHS) and Student Council advisors, Roseau School students are making a difference in their community. For example: This past Christmas season was the time for the School's annual Holiday Giving Tree service project. Roseau High School and Roseau Elementary School students donated just over 1,200 lbs of food to the local food shelf. In addition, a \$1,000 monetary donation was made

from the RHS Senior class itself. In a further display of holiday spirit, Elementary School choirs visited and enjoyed caroling at various community senior citizen centers. They were a big hit!

The RHS Student Council's Annual Fall Student Awareness week provided information and awareness about specific themes that are important in the world around us. This year's themes included: Alzheimer's Disease, Support the Military, Abuse, Cancer Awareness, and a School Spirit day just for the fun of it. The next community service project is the annual NHS Community Blood Drive where many students give blood for the first time with the hope they will continue this effort in the future.

In an attempt to promote the importance of environmental stewardship, tenth grade teachers make annual efforts to sponsor an all-day School Forest field trip in cooperation with staff from the MN Dept. of Natural Resources. In addition, RHS science students recently initiated and expanded the District's existing recycling program.

People like Secretary of Education Arnie Duncan, employers, and popular readings such as *The Global Achievement Gap* are encouraging schools to create a new generation of students with 21st century skills. I can subscribe to that, however, while creating this new generation of students, schools should provide the guidance and opportunities to set students into action to serve their community and see positive results for their efforts. If we continue and strive for this, the future is in good hands.



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# STRONG SCHOOL CULTURES

## Building Cultures of Collaboration and Innovation Moorhead's Story

by Lynne Kovash  
Superintendent  
Moorhead Schools

**T**he building of a culture of collaboration and innovation is vital to the continued sustainability of public education and to the success of our students. Our students deserve the best we can provide for them. I believe we can continue the good work of public education — even through times of financial difficulty — through collaboration and innovation.

In our school district, the administrative team meets regularly to plan together for the future. The principals meet with central office administration twice a month to have conversations regarding the challenges facing the school district. We often use protocols to guide our discussions. Together we research, discuss and strategize our next steps to meet our goals and move the school district forward. As superintendent, this provides me with a sounding board as well as a group of individuals working through the issues together.

In the book, *The Wisdom of Crowds*, by *New Yorker* columnist James Surowieck, the author talks about groups of people being smarter than a few individuals. The larger group is better at solving problems, fostering innovation and coming to wise decisions. One example I have is from watching groups of students and community members work together as large sandbag barriers were built to protect our community from the rising Red River last spring. There was an air of

collaboration and innovation as teams worked together to protect our community.

This same collaborative and innovative spirit is needed as we work through this challenging time in education. I have come to appreciate the wisdom of crowds. Engaging the community, staff and students will lead to collaborative understanding and innovation. The open sharing and flow of ideas will help broaden our perspective and may lead to new ways of doing business and educating students.

An important part of collaboration is creating an environment where risk taking is allowed. This will lead to innovation. The environment needs to be supportive for sharing both the successes and the struggles. Continual learning — from the mistakes and the accomplishments — builds strong collaborative teams. By learning from our struggles and accomplishments, we will discover innovative ways to lead our school districts into the future.




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## Funding for the Future Talking Points for Your Community

**Key Message:** The potential of our people, our communities and our state depend heavily on our willingness to invest responsibly in the future.

### The Problems:

- **Funding** has not kept pace with growing costs and demands.
  - State early-childhood through grade 12 funding has gradually declined since fiscal year 2003, falling by \$1,296 per student. After local levy increases, total school district operating revenue has still fallen by \$374 per pupil over the last six years.
  - By 2006, Minnesota's effort toward funding education was 9% below the national average.
  - *Education Week: Quality Counts 2010 – State Report Card* gives Minnesota a “D” in school spending.
- **Children** come from increasingly diverse backgrounds requiring greater innovation, individualization, and instructional investment.
  - The number of three-year-olds being provided special education services through the school districts due to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) increased 225% from 2000 to 2007.
  - Minnesota educates over 63,000 limited-English proficiency (LEP) students.
  - 39,000 of our youngest children are being raised in poverty, and that number is climbing.
  - 43,000 (15% of children age three and younger) are at moderate or high risk for developmental, behavioral or social delay.
  - 16,800 children age two and younger have special health care needs.
- **School facilities** in Minnesota have aged, and many require renovation or replacement.
  - The average age of traditional public school buildings is 32 years old.
  - 113 public school buildings in Minnesota are over 50 years old.



Shari Prest  
Ark Associates

Concepts like “more for less” and “the black hole” of education funding have tried to excuse our failure to meet our constitutional obligation to adequately fund schools. While schools have been chided for failing to “live within their budgets,” the record actually shows that resources provided to schools have been both inadequate and unpredictable, making it impossible for school districts to plan with certainty. “No new tax” pledges, tax cuts for the wealthy, and stop-gap solutions like the current delay of state aid payments to schools have persisted throughout the last decade, making

matters worse. This school year alone, delayed payments to schools are expected to be nearly one-quarter of the total state education aid.

If we fail to make education a priority in these economically uncertain times, we threaten our ability to fully participate in economic recovery. According to a report to the Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress, “There is a strong consensus among economists that formal education is an important determinant of individual earnings as well as economic growth.”

### The Opportunities:

- **Invest** in our kids from early childhood through post secondary education. An effective and comprehensive system of public education has been projected to provide the greatest and most predictable return on our tax dollars.
- Begin to phase in the *New Minnesota Miracle* structure for more adequate and dependable funding of schools. The proposal begins a phased increase to school funding while reducing property taxes.
- Encourage **innovation** and provide **flexibility**.
  - Repeal costly and restrictive mandates that do not improve student development and/or achievement and may put public schools at a competitive disadvantage.
  - Provide a climate in Minnesota that supports and celebrates success regardless of partisan affiliations.

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## Leading Community Dialogue Continued from Page 1

organizational effectiveness. Developing more meaningful relationships with those in our communities requires that we create communication opportunities that are more expansive than the kinds of efforts we used in the past.

The International Association of Public Participations offers two tools that challenge our thinking about community engagement. *The Core Values of Public Participation*, developed over a two-year period with broad and varied input, challenges us to think deeply about our notions of community engagement. The Core Values can be used to help the district's leaders develop their philosophy of community engagement.

The second tool is the *Spectrum of Participation*, which describes five levels of engagement that offer increasing opportunity for the public to participate in decision-making. The Spectrum asks you to consider two criteria when planning to engage with the community: your public participation goal and the promise you are willing to make to the public regarding the engagement invitation you are extending to them. At the Inform level, the goal is to simply provide the public with information so that they can understand the issue. In return, the meeting convener promises to simply keep them informed. Most school districts do this fairly well; providing information in back pack mail and on web sites, for example. Schools invite parents and community members to open houses. Where still available, districts write columns and issue press releases to the local media. However, this level of participation is not satisfactory for many of today's parents and community members. In fact, it is not until the Involve level that the concerns of the public become a more important component of the engagement process. The promise at this level requires engagement in ongoing conversation, ensuring that the public's concerns are understood and given genuine consideration. It is at the Collaborate level that the district really begins to tap into the dynamic that meets the needs of the most concerned citizens. At this level, the district begins working with the community as more of a partner, including citizens in the development of alternatives and preferred solutions. In order for districts to successfully engage at this higher level, district leaders must have an understanding of both the Core Values and the promise they are making to the public. This can be a threatening idea to many superintendents and school boards, given our past experiences.

If we expect to engage at the higher levels identified in the IAP2 chart, we have to look to new practices. Meg Wheatley says, "Every time I expand the conversation, more becomes possible." So, the big question is how to do that. First, we have to get over our notion that people do not really want to participate. It is true that many people are skeptical of standard forms of participation. Yet, people are willing to engage in deliberative activity. Providing opportunities for people to engage in community conversations is one way to address the skepticism toward public participation.

As you plan to attend the MASA Spring Conference, take a moment to review the IAP2 Core Values and Spectrum of Participation. Links to these resources can be found on my blog, <http://schoolboardsleadersinchange.blogspot.com/>. Think about how adoption of these core values challenges your notions of community engagement. How do these core values challenge your practice as an educational leader? What questions does the Spectrum of Participation raise for you? Post your responses and I will bring these postings to the conversation we have on March 19th.

Deb Gurke will be our Friday morning keynote speaker at the MASA/MASE Spring Conference. Join her and explore how you can lead a better process of public participation in your schools.

## Funding for the Future Continued from Page 8

- Share the successes and the challenges, and remediate the failures together.
- Engage families and communities from birth to adulthood in academic and social success. According to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, new evidence shows that early environmental relationships actually shape brain circuits and lay the foundation for later developmental outcomes, from academic performance and interpersonal skills to physical and mental health.

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*"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest."* – Benjamin Franklin



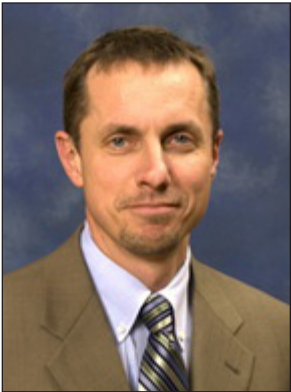
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# Boundary Issues and Grooming Behavior

## Recognizing and Responding to the Problem

It is perhaps an administrator’s worst nightmare – an allegation that a staff member has been engaging in a sexual relationship with a student. While many people may have had their concerns about this staff member, there was never a report or any direct evidence of an improper relationship. Could it have been stopped? You will probably never know. Nevertheless, in some circumstances the improper relationship is signaled by tell-tale boundary invasion behaviors and those behaviors alone may necessitate early corrective action or discipline of the staff member.



Tim Palmatier  
Attorney  
Kennedy & Graven

isolation may not represent misconduct on the part of a staff member, school districts would be well advised to develop policies or directives that identify staff member conduct with students that is discouraged or prohibited. By establishing clear directives in advance, the school may be able to rebuke early conduct that, at a minimum, appears to represent a boundary concern. Early intervention might be the best and only protection against more egregious future conduct.

**Proactive measures that school administration can take include:**

The term often times used to identify the precursors to an improper adult-student relationship is “grooming behavior.” One expert testifying in a criminal proceeding against an instructor convicted of attempted sexual abuse aptly described how such behavior typically proceeds:

Most offenders . . . groom with relationship; that is, they become a confidant, friend, close associate of the child, do many things with the child, buy them gifts. Many of them expose the child to varying degrees of touching that [are] non-sexual in nature, but eventually leads up to sexual touching; touching on the legs, the arms, back rub, applying suntan lotion, often using legitimate reasons like that for the touching. . . Also, in grooming there's this concept that the offender very subtly oftentimes leads the child into feeling somehow responsible. Some offenders might ask the child, 'Do you mind if I do this?'

*State v. Stafford*, 972 P.2d 47 (Or.App.1998).

Other examples of “grooming behavior” might include: taking an undue interest in a student; giving money/gifts for no legitimate educational reason; acting like a peer of the student; being overly touchy; overt favoritism toward a particular student; spending significant amounts of time with a student; keeping secrets with particular students; allowing a student to behave inappropriately; texting or emailing students regarding personal or non-educational reasons.

While these more subtle signs of grooming behavior in

- 1. Review and revise policies to address, limit and prohibit boundary invasions;
- 2. Fully investigate all allegations and consider broadening investigations (i.e. interview other students, teachers, etc.);
- 3. Train staff in recognizing and reporting boundary concerns;
- 4. Instruct students about sexual harassment and reporting processes; and
- 5. Don’t hesitate to take disciplinary or corrective action for repeated boundary invasions.

More than

**50%**

of Minnesota superintendents report an "extreme teacher shortage" in physics and chemistry.

*Growing Gap, Minnesota 2020*



## 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 Jay Haugen and Kelly Smith, 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 Jay's and Kelly's comments:



Jay Haugen  
West St. Paul-  
Mendota Heights-  
Eagan

### Jay Haugen, West St. Paul- Mendota Heights-Eagan Schools

I am committed to being a strong voice for public education, to continue the great work of MASA, its leaders, and those it serves. As an organization, MASA provides an unwavering strong voice for children, for education, for those things that make us great as a state, as a nation, as a people.

These are turbulent and uncertain times. Decisions made by our elected and appointed officials, under the pressure of these times, can have long lasting effects. It is critical that rational and well-reasoned information and recommendations cut through the constant noise heard by our decision makers, and our public. While it is true that schools today serve children and families better than at any point in our history, it is also true that we need to guide our school systems toward new forms of organization and delivery matching the needs of our increasingly global and technical society.

As a 14-year superintendent, serving both rural and suburban school districts, I have used collaboration, the building of partnerships, and the latest technologies to communicate with and engage all levels of our community. I've worked with political leaders on both sides of the aisle, and have made it my mission to help the communities I serve understand the true impact of a strong educational system. I pledge to infuse sanity into the ongoing debate about schools, and to advocate for the important role of educational leaders at all levels of our school system.

*Jay*

**Ballots will be mailed during the week of  
March 22nd. Be sure to watch your mail!**



Kelly Smith  
Belle Plaine

### Kelly Smith, Belle Plaine Schools

It is an honor to have been nominated for the position of MASA President-Elect for the coming year. During my eighteen years as a superintendent and as a member of MASA, I have been privileged to receive so much from our great organization and our outstanding members. Now is the time for me to give back to MASA and I hope to

do that through my leadership as President-Elect. No one can argue that we are living in difficult times and public education will continue to receive increased scrutiny in the coming years. Our public schools must deal with limited financial resources, increased expectations by parents and business, and increased political activism. Now, more than ever, MASA needs to provide the leadership for our public education system and I hope to be part of that leadership as President-Elect.

If elected to this leadership position, I will help MASA focus on the following priorities:

1. Continue to be the pre-eminent voice advocating for public education in Minnesota;
2. Continue to expect the best effort and performance out of all school children;
3. Continue to provide mentorship and nurturance to new and veteran colleagues in administration positions;
4. Constantly seek support for adequate and equitable funding for all public school students across Minnesota; and
5. Constantly remind all MASA members to cherish the good days and embrace the difficult days!

Thank you for all that each one of you brings to our organization and thank you for allowing me to be part of this great organization. I welcome your support for the position of President-Elect.

*Kelly*

## Federal Role in Education Expands Innovation and Student Proficiency

by Charlie Kyte  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Association of School Administrators

Over the past 50 years, the federal government has had an increasing role in providing regulation and funding for the education of children in this country. Almost ten years ago, a major leap came as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was passed; now the federal government is preparing to reauthorize that ten-year-old law.

The Federal Education Act was originally called the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). It was at the beginning of George W. Bush's presidency that the name was changed to No Child Left Behind. One thing that is certain, is that the law when it is reauthorized within this next year or so will no longer be called NCLB and rather will either have its original name or a new catchy name.

The major emphasis of the federal law will still be on encouraging greater student proficiency. However, the law will change somewhat so that it will build on success rather than measure failure.

The new reauthorization of the law will still depend heavily on testing although we will see a value added approach rather than testing at a fixed point. We will also see less emphasis on punishing schools through the AYP process for having small subgroups failing to be proficient. Nevertheless, schools that are persistently not producing good results over time will still see significant sanctions.

In terms of differences in approaches, we believe that you will see the new law more dependent on competitive grant funding with districts and states competing for funding based on their willingness to take new approaches to increase the success of students.

We will also see the federal government trying to tie the success of students more directly to teachers and groups of teachers. With the old law the emphasis was on tying punishments to schools. Now the federal government would like to tie rewards more directly to teachers; as a result, you will see more conversation about merit pay and pay for performance systems.

There are also two areas in the new federal law that will be familiar territory for Minnesota. First of all, the federal government will try to provide more choices for students and parents in their education through expanding the charter school system. This is a system that is already well developed in Minnesota and we probably will not see many new changes because of that emphasis. For many states this is very new territory.

Secondly, there will be greater emphasis on coming up with a set of common standards and assessments. Again in Minnesota, where the standards are quite rigorous, we will not see much of a difference. However, in some states where standards have been significantly lower, they will feel stressed by this pressure from the federal government.

Recently, Minnesota submitted an application for a Race to the Top (RTTT) grant. There is plenty of controversy surrounding that application, but we believe it is a precursor of what we will see in the federal law that directs both money and regulation towards school districts all across the nation. The push of RTTT is based largely on the growing concern in this country that our students need to become better educated to compete in a global economy.

MASA is in close weekly contact with the staff members of both our Senate's and Congresspersons. We will do our best to influence the development of the new federal education act in a way that is the best for our students and workable for our schools.



**At Ruth's Table**

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a partnership of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators and Minnesota State University Mankato, Department of Educational Leadership

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for our first annual "At Ruth's Table" conversation. This is an opportunity for education leaders who are women to gather for learning, networking, and idea sharing. Each practicing education leader is encouraged to bring a guest who is a woman considering a career in education leadership. Guests attend without cost.

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— M. Wheatley*

Ruth Randall was Minnesota's first female Commissioner of Education, appointed by Governor Rudy Perpich in 1983. This event is named in her honor.



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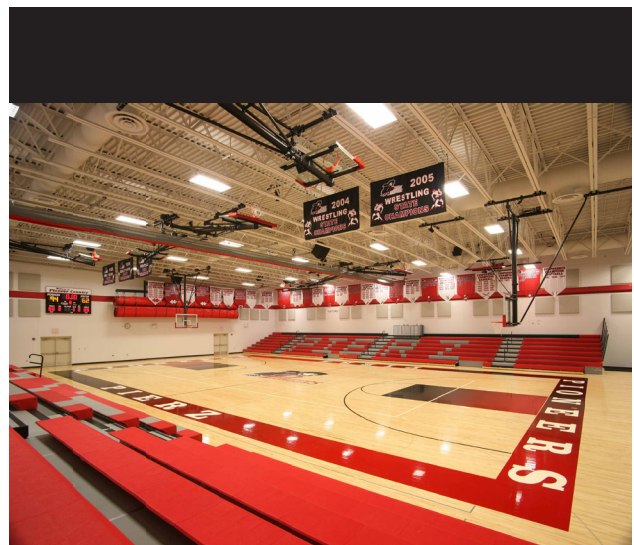


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# LEADER'S NOTES

## The Governance of MASA Balance and Representation

The Minnesota Association of Schools Administrators (MASA) has a long-term tradition of being governed by excellent officers and directors. There is every likelihood that that tradition will continue well into the future.

MASA has four officers, of which three proceed through the presidency of the organization. Each year a President-Elect is elected, then the following year becomes the President, and the third year becomes the Past President. Thus there is stability and a passing of leadership in an orderly manner from one leader to the next.

To ensure good balance of representation the President-Elects reside, in alternating years, in rural Minnesota and the metro area. They are elected from the full membership of MASA.

The fourth officer is the Treasurer and that role is also elected for a period of three years. The Treasurer has traditionally provided a stable hand on the finances of the association, which have been and remain strong.

The Board of Directors is elected from across the component groups of MASA as well as from the nine regions of the state. The component groups include: the Special Education Component Group, the Central Office Component Group, the Curriculum Component Group, and the Service Provider Component Group. The first three of these groups each have two representatives, one from greater Minnesota and one from the metro area. The Service Provider Component Group, which is smaller, has a single representative. Each of these Board of Director positions are elected by those members that identify themselves in



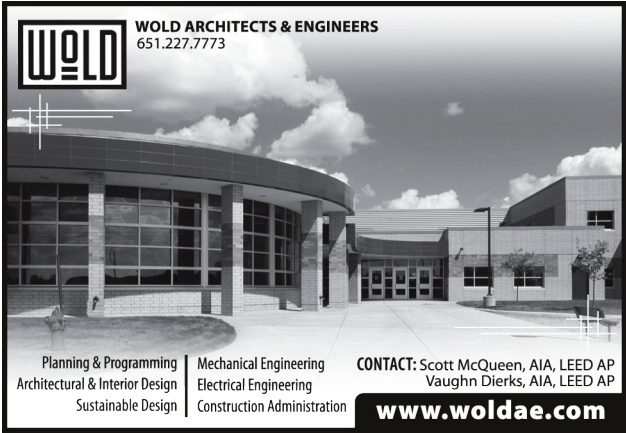
Charlie Kyte  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Association of School Administrators

those groups.

The rest of the members of MASA tend to be the Superintendents of schools and identify themselves as the Superintendent Component Group. They in turn elect a representative from each of the nine regions of the state. The ninth region being the metropolitan area, which is quite a bit larger, has three representatives elected. Finally, MASA allocates a position on the Board of Directors to a member from one of the two urban school districts, Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Our retired members are also represented on the MASA Board of Directors by one voting member.

With a good group of officers elected by the members from all over the state, combined with regional and component group representation on the board of directors, we find MASA to be fair and equitably governed.



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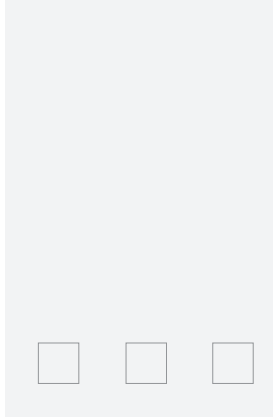


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# Commonalities, Spiders & Superintendents

## Reflections of Patty Phillips, 2010 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year

**W**hat do a surprise, milestone birthday party....your wedding.... your funeral.....and being named Minnesota's 2010 Superintendent of the Year have in common? Hundreds of people show up at a community gathering; fabulous floral arrangements sweeten your path; your mailbox gets stuffed with oodles of complimentary cards and notes with tear-inspiring messages; meaningful musical selections are written and performed in your honor; and prestigious folks summarize your contributions to the world in loftier terms than you deserve.

A very wise and now retired Activities and Community Education Director, Chuck Klinker, once advised me to "Hold a pep fest for yourself every once in awhile." After chuckling at and with Chuck, I understood his point but thought, "Who would actually show up to cheer for a school administrator?"

Since being named Minnesota's 2010 Superintendent of the Year, I know who is cheering for us. I have been honored and overwhelmed by the generosity, kindness and support of the MASA staff, Long Term Care Advocates program sponsors, MSBA, our administrative peers, legislators, the Commissioner of Education, friends, school board members, professional acquaintances, the business community, and the staff, residents, students, and families of both the North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School District where I have served as superintendent for the last five years, and the Virginia School District where I worked as a kindergarten teacher, curriculum director, principal and superintendent for twenty years.

This has all been very humbling, and reinforces to me that everything counts; and we accomplish nothing alone. Any



Patty Phillips  
Superintendent  
N. St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale

honors we receive belong to those peers and mentors who have taught and encouraged us and to the success we have experienced working collaboratively with our students, staff and communities.

As a former kindergarten teacher I equate school administration to the words of finger play I used to teach my students, the Eensie Weensie Spider. As school leaders we continually persevere. Like that spider we climb up the water spout.... attempting to raise student achievement, balance diminishing budgets and connect with stakeholders....only to face the rain of economic uncertainty, public scrutiny, and increased accountability that washes the spider out. And then out comes the sun and

dries out all the rain, and the Eensie Weensie Spider goes up the spout again.

A thank you note from a colleague, student or teacher; a successful levy campaign; improved student achievement or winning an award are all ways the sun shines in our professional lives. Our work is appreciated and valued, and our leadership does make a difference. Thank you for your work. I'm proud to be your colleague and for this year, to represent the strongest group of superintendents in our nation.



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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## March

**17**  
Great Start Workshop V  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park  
Fresh Start Workshop I  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park  
Executive Committee Meeting  
9- 10:45 am  
Board of Directors Meeting  
11 am – 4 pm  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park  
At Ruth's Table  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park  
Past President & Board of Directors Dinner  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park

**18-19**  
MASA & MASE Spring Conference  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park

**25**  
Emerging Leaders Conference  
TIES, St. Paul

## April

**2**  
Spring Holiday

**14**  
New Stages for Sages Workshop  
MASA Offices, St. Paul

**22**  
Foundation Meeting  
11 am-1 pm  
MASA Offices, St. Paul

## May

**6**  
Fresh Start Workshop II  
MASA Offices, St. Paul

**14**  
Newsletter Submissions Due

**31**  
Memorial Day Holiday  
MASA Offices Closed

## June

**17-18**  
Board of Directors Retreat  
Madden's Resort, Brainerd

## July

**29-August 1**  
AASA Summer Leadership Conference  
Hyatt Regency Hotel on Capitol Hill,  
Washington, DC

## August

**4**  
MDE Back-to-School Superintendents'  
Conference  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park

**5**  
Fresh Start Workshop III  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park

**5-6**  
MSBA Summer Seminar  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park

## September

**6**  
Labor Day Holiday  
MASA Offices Closed

**22-24**  
AASA Legislative Advocacy Conference  
Ritz Carlton Hotel, Arlington VA

## October

**2-3**  
MASA Board of Directors Meeting  
Madden's Resort, Brainerd

**3**  
MASA Foundation Golf Tournament  
Madden's Resort, Brainerd

**3-5**  
MASA Fall Conference  
Madden's Resort, Brainerd

**19**  
Fresh Start Workshop IV  
MASA Offices, St. Paul

## November

**11-13**  
AASA Women in School Leadership  
Conference  
Ritz Carlton Hotel, Arlington VA

**17-19**  
CLM Fall Conference  
Cragun's Resort, Brainerd

**25-26**  
Thanksgiving Day Holiday  
MASA Offices Closed

## December

**1**  
MASA Board of Directors Meeting  
MASA Offices, St. Paul



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