

Leaders FORUM

Spring 2012

Individual Commitment to a Group Effort

Professional organizations are only as strong as the commitment of their members to the mission and core values of the organization. If this commitment is lacking, the sense of purpose of the organization is weakened and ultimately the organization begins to fail. This past November twenty-four MASA members participated over the course of two days to develop a new and revised mission, core values and strategies for the future. The results of the strategic planning process, approved by the MASA board in December, may be found on the MASA website and were previously emailed to all members.



Kelly Smith
MASA President and
Superintendent
Belle Plaine Schools

One of the strategies adopted is particularly critical to the long term viability of our organization, MASA. The strategy states that; “We will foster committed relationships with all members by reaching out to determine their needs, empower them with a common message, and earn their support in implementing the mission and vision of MASA.” While that may be an ambitious strategy for our organization, I do believe that it is attainable and absolutely vital to our continued success as an organization. So how do we accomplish this strategy? Here are some thoughts:

We must continue to reach out to all members of MASA through active region associations and active committees at the state level while striving to determine and meet the individual needs of our

members. This means continuing to better address the needs of the different component groups within MASA and working hard to ensure that all members feel that they are a valuable part of our organization.

We must continue to empower our members through the common message of our mission statement; “As advocates for children, MASA shapes and influences the State and Federal education

agenda, serves as the preeminent voice for public education, and empowers all members through high quality services, support and professional development.” All too often, the various education organizations in Minnesota do not speak with a united voice when advocating for public education in our state. Our mission statement provides us with a great, unifying message that resonates with members from small or large districts, outstate or metro districts, or from any other division that may be perceived within our organization.

As we continue to build commitment to our organization, I hope that many of you will be able to attend the MASA/ MASE Spring Conference as we seek to further our professional development, further strengthen our commitment to our organization, and further develop relationships with our peers across the state. Have a great finish to the 2011-2012 school year, everyone!

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LEADER'S NOTES

Strategic Action Plans Come Into Focus

As I write this article, we are preparing to present our four strategic action plans to our MASA Board of Directors on March 14th for adoption. I am so grateful that approximately 50 of our members participated in one of the four planning sessions. Each of the four action plans are presented below. In addition to the information provided, each action step identifies who is responsible for the action step, a start/end date and the resources needed to implement the step.



Gary Amoroso
Executive Director
Minnesota Association of
School Administrators

to deliver multi-tiered professional development.

- Conduct needs assessment/interest inventory for delivery models and content that is component group specific
- Review the professional development models of other states
- Develop an "information central" component of the Web site that would provide a portal with questions and exemplars practicing administrators would pose, including support provided directly by MASA and directs to information from other Web sites

MASA's Goals, Strategies and Action Steps

By 2014, MASA will deliver a multi-tiered system of professional development that meets the individualized learning goals of all members.

1. We will allocate sufficient resources to build internal and external capacity to meet the professional development needs of all members.
 - MASA Board of Directors to adopt the Standards for Professional Learning
 - Personnel needs assessment of MASA staff
 - Technology assessment of the MASA and regional infrastructure
 - Organizational structure/alignment of the MASA Board of Directors and committees
 - Identify external partnerships available to build internal and external capacity
 - Build the Knowledge Network
 - Research current exemplary state/region professional development models

2. We will research, develop and implement the components necessary

- Pilot strategies for electronically linking MASA members to conversations with colleagues and workshops at another location using interactive video and voice solutions
- Develop a mechanism for keeping all professional development resources current and timely
- Explore, enhance and expand the mentorship program for all component groups
- Explore the feasibility of a cohort experience and look at models other than the traditional model
- Develop a matrix reflecting stages of professional career, common needs at each stage, options for providing support and other factors influencing quality of professional development (i.e. locations for meetings or workshops)

By 2014, all members will affirm that MASA is the unifying force for Minnesota public education.

Leaders Forum

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Strategic Action Plans... Continued from Page 2

1. We will foster committed relationships with all members by reaching out to determine their needs, empower them with a common message, and earn their support in implementing the mission and vision of MASA.

- Conduct a needs assessment to determine the degree to which membership meets individual needs
- Create an initiative to orient/welcome new members or members in new positions (pilot project will precede this work in conjunction with 2012-13 Great Start workshop)
- Develop a vehicle/database for expertise sharing
- Develop a communications protocol that encourages stakeholder engagement and dissemination of key MASA messages

2. We will strengthen relationships with other Minnesota educational associations and policy makers to develop a common education agenda

- Identify organizations/individuals MASA can build relationships with through member surveying
- Promote the expansion of the agenda of The Alliance for Student Achievement to broaden the education conversation
- Develop a common communications protocol among the identified organizations
- Identify common initiatives among the identified organizations and respond with joint effort (beyond legislative)
- Schedule a forum for policymakers to present information and engage in dialogue regarding educational topics in addition to current legislative issues

I look forward to working with our members and staff as we begin to implement our plan. This is your roadmap to move MASA forward. As we progress, remember our mission is: As advocates for children, MASA shapes and influences the State and Federal education agenda, serves as the preeminent voice for public education, and empowers all members through high quality services, support and professional development.

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

School Breakfast: Closing the Missing Meals Gap

The University of Minnesota recently completed a research study that estimated Minnesota taxpayers are paying at least \$642 million every year in healthcare and education costs related to child hunger. When we talk about “hunger” we’re not just talking about skipping a meal here and there, we’re talking about the kind of hunger that hinders a child’s ability to learn and perform well in school as hunger destroys the body’s ability to function as it should.

The School Breakfast Program, funded through federal and state reimbursements for each meal served, has been proven as an effective tool to address child hunger in Minnesota. Research studies from the University of Minnesota and the Sodexo Foundation have shown that children who eat breakfast at school have reported:

- Improved academic performance, including higher test scores
- Improved interpersonal behaviors, resulting in fewer disciplinary problems
- Reduced absenteeism and tardiness rates, as a result of being sick less often

Despite the benefits of academic success, the School Breakfast Program is vastly underutilized in Minnesota. Based upon data from the Minnesota Department of Education, children who are eligible for free or significantly reduced-priced breakfasts are consuming only 33% of the breakfasts for which they are eligible, leaving a missing meals gap of 32 million meals annually.

Hunger-Free Minnesota is a three-year effort to close Minnesota’s gap of 100 million missing meals by 2015. We are a business and data-driven campaign, and utilize data to drive strategies toward completion of our goals, including our School Breakfast Program initiative to add 4 million meals by 2014. Through funding from the General Mills Foundation, we are seeking school district partners who are motivated toward increasing School Breakfast Program participation in a revenue-positive manner. To learn more, contact us at jreed@hungerfreemn.org.

*Written By Jason Reed,
Director of Strategy & Corporate Partnerships,
Hunger-Free Minnesota*



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2012 MASA/MASE Spring Conference!



**MASA/MASE 2012
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Leaders & Adaptive Capacity**

**Thursday - Friday, March 15-16
at the Doubletree by Hilton -
Minneapolis South**

Our theme this spring enhances the conversation we began in the fall ...

School leaders have long been talking about and working toward twenty-first century readiness for our students and our organizations. Now that we are twelve years into the twenty-first century, we understand that while we all want the very best education for our students, we do not all agree on how to define excellence. And while we are trying to get a handle on that, globalization and technology create dramatic, persistent change that will in turn require us to once again redefine our goals. Our complex world requires leaders who are able to build organizations that have capacity to respond to rapid change in flexible and adaptive ways. Last fall, we explored adaptive leadership from the perspective of the organization. This spring, join your colleagues and continue our conversation as it regards the individual, exploring leadership that establishes agile, responsive systems that provide the best for our twenty-first century students.

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PRELIMINARY PROGRAM

Thursday, March 15

7:00	Registration Open
7:30 – 8:30	Continental Breakfast in the Exhibit Hall
7:30 – 2:30	Exhibits and Silent Auction Open
8:30 – 10	General Session
	Awards: Superintendent of the Year Special Education Administrator of the Year Outstanding Central Office Leadership Awards
	Speaker: Ray Kelly, Assoc., Lennick Aberman Group
10 – 10:30	Break in the Exhibit Hall
10:30-11:30	Breakout Sessions
11:30-12:30	Lunch and Program
	Awards: MASA Administrators of Excellence Retiree Recognition
	Speaker: Gary Amoroso, MASA Executive Director
12:30 – 1	Dessert Reception in the Exhibit Hall
1 – 3:30	PR Counselors on Call
1 – 2	Breakout Sessions
2 – 2:30	Break in the Exhibit Hall and Prize Drawings
2:30 – 3:30	Breakout Sessions
3:30 – 5	Leaders' Reception
	Awards: Kay E. Jacobs Memorial Award New Special Education Leader Award
	Speakers: Meet the MASA and MASE Officer Candidates

Friday, March 16

7 – 9	Breakfast Buffet
8:30	Registration Open
9 – 10:30	General Session
	Awards: MASA Distinguished Service Award MASE Distinguished Service Award MinnSPRA Leadership in Communications MASA Richard Green Scholar Announcement
	Speaker: Annie McKee, Founder, Teleos Leadership Institute
10:30 – 10:45	Break
10:45 – 12	General Session
	Workshop: Ray Kelly, Assoc., Lennick Aberman Group, Facilitator

SAVE THE DATE!

2012 MASA Fall Conference

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LEGISLATIVE NEWS

And They're Off!

With predictions of a short session, a positive November economic forecast and an ambitious agenda, things began quickly at the start of the 2012 legislative session. The big issues facing legislators included passage of a bonding bill to fund capital infrastructure projects, release of the new legislative districts by the Supreme Court, proposals for constitutional amendments on right to work, voter ID, state spending and taxes, and what to do about a Vikings stadium.



Valerie Dosland
EWALD
MASA Lobbyist

On February 29, legislators received more good news with an updated economic forecast showing an additional \$323 million from what was forecasted in November. As you know, the November forecast showed the state budget was considerably better than anticipated with \$876 million in additional revenue. State law requires that if a surplus exists it must first go to replenish the cash flow account, then the budget reserve and then pay back borrowing from school districts to get the aid payment schedule back to 90/10. After today's forecast, the state will be able to replenish the cash flow account, budget reserve and a portion will go to begin paying back the aid payment shifts.

The House and Senate Education Committees tackled a big issue the first few weeks of session – seniority based lay-offs, also known as last-in/first-out (LIFO). Legislation introduced by Rep. Branden Petersen (R-Andover) and Sen. Pam Wolf (R-Spring Lake Park) sought to end seniority based lay-offs and proposed to replace that with a system first based on licensure, then performance and then seniority. The bill passed the House and Senate and is likely to go to conference committee to work out differences. It is unclear whether Governor Dayton will support the legislation, veto it or seek other alternatives.

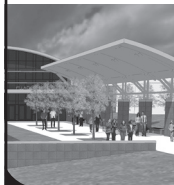
House and Senate education committees have considered a number of other issues as well, including: 1) having all referendum revenue follow a charter school student; 2) establishing an A-F grading system for schools and districts; 3) extending PSEO to 9th and 10th graders; 4) reforming the management of permanent school trust lands; 5) changing the Public Employees Insurance Program (PEIP) to require both employee and employer approval for participation; and 6) providing districts more flexibility to the Labor Day start limitations. In the end of March, committees will begin assembling their omnibus bills so expect more details later in the month.

MASA is working on moving forward with several of its platform items, including the establishment of an innovation zone pilot project. We continue to connect with key legislators and other education organizations on issues of concern to your districts. Your input is very valuable to us as it helps in our conversations with legislators and testimony during committee hearings. Lastly, your work in communicating and building relationships with your local legislators strengthens our work so thank you for that effort!

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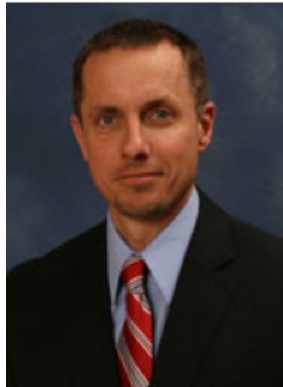
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Q&A: How Recent Amendments to the ASA Have Changed 504 Eligibility for Students

Trying to determine a student's eligibility for additional support under Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has always been a perplexing task. Now with recent changes to the ADA, the challenges have only grown. The test for whether a student is considered "disabled" under Section 504 is unchanged by the recent statutory amendments (i.e. a student is considered disabled if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity). Nevertheless, Congressional guidance and new regulations make it clear 504 eligibility determinations will look considerably different under the recent changes.



Tim Palmatier
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it must determine if other activities like reading, writing, thinking and speaking are substantially limited by the student's impairment. The school must also consider whether the impairment is substantially limiting a major bodily function (e.g. circulation, respiratory, neurological). For example, a straight "A" student with a legitimate diagnosis of diabetes is "disabled" under Section 504 and the ADA because their impairment is substantially impacting their endocrine system.

If a student takes medication that helps him completely control his condition (e.g. ADHD or seizure disorder) can he still be considered disabled?

The following Q & A addresses some of the more common questions that have arisen under the new standards:

If a student receives a diagnosis from his doctor of a medical condition like ADHD does that mean that the school must conclude that the student is disabled?

No. While Congress has indicated that the determination of whether an individual has a disability should not require extensive analysis, it is still the case that whether an impairment substantially limits a major life activity requires an individualized assessment. Therefore, if a school district has observed nothing to indicate that a student has a condition that is substantially impacting any major life activity it may properly determine that the student does not have a disability.

If a student has a medical diagnosis from her doctor but is achieving high grades in rigorous classes does that mean that the school team can conclude that the student is not disabled?

No. The U.S. Department of Education has stated that "grades alone are an insufficient basis upon which to determine whether a student has a disability." The Department has also further clarified that, "grades are just one consideration and do not provide information on how much effort or how many outside resources are required for the student to achieve those grades." The recent changes to the ADA take an expansive view of the life activities that may be substantially limited by an individual's condition. As a result, schools should not focus only on whether a student's condition is substantially limiting learning. Instead,

Yes. The recent changes to the ADA make it clear that a determination of disability must be made based upon the impact that the individual's impairment would have without the assistance of mitigating measures. Therefore, if a student is taking medication to address his ADHD, the school must consider how the student's impairment would impact a major life activity if the student was not taking the medication.

Is a school obligated to offer a 504 Plan to any student it determines is disabled?

No. The fact that a student has a disability does not mean that they are entitled to a 504 Plan or accommodations. For example, a student with a legitimate diagnosis of ADHD who nevertheless performs reasonably well in class, is not substantially limited in her reading, concentrating/thinking and has typical behavior and social relationships – may have no need for a 504 plan.



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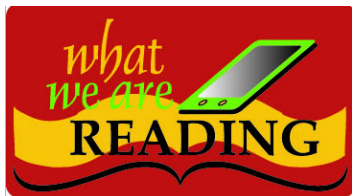
ACHIEVING OUR CLIENTS' GOALS SINCE 1947

How Do You Encourage a Positive, Collaborative Culture in Your District?

I encourage a positive, collaborative culture by placing an emphasis on the entire school district and inviting involvement and input. A challenge is often the “isolation” that may be felt by different buildings, different departments, and even different grade levels. We placed an emphasis on the SCHOOL DISTRICT (all staff, PreK-12), which resulted in comfort for staff members sharing and discussing challenges and ideas. It’s not perfect and we can and will improve, but we have moved in a positive direction.

Inviting staff to give input and get involved is also valuable for creating this type of culture, which can be done by ending communications with “please share your ideas, concerns, comments or questions with me” and utilizing advisory committees with staff representation. Another idea that has worked well is to meet two to three times each year with leadership in our teachers’ union. We meet during non-contractual times, meet off school grounds, and there is no formal agenda. I buy coffee, breakfast, or dinner with my own money and the conversations we have are open, informal, and proactive. This has helped establish a positive, collaborative relationship with the leaders of an important group in our district and has been beneficial.

*Written by Scott Monson
Superintendent, Morris Area Schools*



The Minnesota Association of School Administrators is pleased to introduce our newest member service...

What We Are Reading is an online resource offering information, inspiration, and conversation about books. Each month, the blog will feature a book, including a review, complete with book notes and discussion questions. Are you looking for a book study resource for your leadership team? Teaching a class that may benefit from being part of this conversation? Simply love to read and reflect? Here is a blog site for you!

We are starting with books supporting our spring conference theme. Visit the blog, learn about our keynote speaker's book, and attend the conference prepared to learn at an enhanced level.

Be sure to subscribe to the blog -- that way you will receive an email whenever there is a new posting.

Decades ago Roland Barth; author, consultant, and school leader, wrote “the nature of the relationships among the adults who inhabit a school has more to do with the school’s quality and character and with the accomplishments of its pupils, than any other factor.” These words are so profound, I offer them to you again, “the nature of the relationships among the adults who inhabit a school has more to do with the school’s quality and character and with the accomplishments of its pupils, than any other factor.”

As a school leader, given the economic challenges facing me, I have to continually advocate for the necessary resources to educate our students. While that is an important aspect of my job, my belief is that it is even more critical that I work to build a positive, collaborative culture throughout my organization. This is a resource that I can provide as a leader.

All buildings, all districts have a culture; a set of shared values, goals, practices and attitudes that depict the work of the organization. It is our responsibility as leaders to create an environment that fosters professional dialogue with colleagues sharing knowledge in collaborative problem-solving opportunities. For me, this begins with setting the expectation that collaboration is at the core of what we do in our member districts. Barth’s words are taped to my computer so that all who come into my office can read them. The words; “remember to play nice in the sandbox” are stenciled on my office wall. Staff hear me come back to this belief time and time again. It’s critical that I model behaviors of collaboration. This belief shapes how I respond to hundreds of interactions daily.

Some leaders may view collaboration as a “nice to have” if there is time to do it. I view collaboration as a “must have” because the time invested in building collaborative cultures does lead to greater accomplishments for our students. As educational leaders, who doesn’t want that?!

*Written by Nan Records
Director of Special Education,
Sherburne - N. Wright Special Education Cooperative*

TECHNOLOGY & EDUCATION

Byron High School Receives Intel Technology Grant

Each year, Intel Corporation honors top performing and innovative schools from around the nation with the Intel Schools of Distinction award. Finalists are chosen for the elementary, middle, and high school levels in both mathematics and science; winners receive prize packages from technology and educational sponsors.

In September 2010, the Byron High School math department and administration traveled to Washington, D.C., as one of eighteen schools from around the nation being recognized by Intel. During the course of the visit, Byron was further honored with the distinction of being the top high school mathematics program, competing with high schools from California and Massachusetts to win this honor.

Byron's project included several components. In the spring of 2010, the Byron high school math team looked at their curriculum writing trifecta problem of no money, old books, and a desire to improve and took a leap of faith. The factors of ISD 531's innovative culture came together to support this leap, including the continuous improvement model, professional learning communities, professional growth academy (technology training), data-driven decision making, teacher laptops, SMART boards, Moodle training, Google Apps for Education, a progressive approach to technology, and an open-mindedness to new ideas.

By grounding their new text-book free curriculum firmly in the Minnesota standards and their own student data, the team was able to create a curriculum specifically for their own students' needs. With

SMART Boards in all math classrooms, the teachers had already dabbled with recorded lessons; and now, with YouTube, lesson videos could be uploaded and accessed from anywhere. Moodle provided the "warehouse" piece where all the materials the team was developing could be stored.

Once videos lessons were completed, the implementation of the flipped classroom became a reality. The flipped classroom technique has students watch the lesson video at home and use class time to work on the traditional "homework" problem where the teacher and peers are available for help. This technique addresses the common math scenario of students getting stuck on difficult problems at home and not having the help or resources to be able to move on.

The initial results of the curriculum and instructional changes have been overwhelmingly positive. Data analyses have the students performing well and liking the availability of the course materials. While technology made these changes possible, it still requires passionate, committed, reflective teachers to infuse the technology and ground it in solid educational standards and instruction.

*Written by Jennifer Green
Math and Language Arts Teacher, Byron High School*

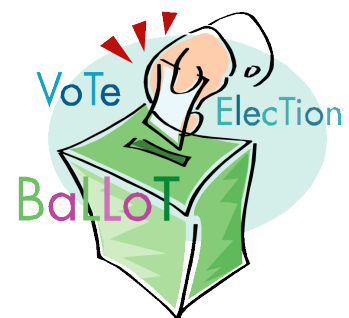
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New This Year!

As MASA continues to reduce our carbon footprint, this year's elections will be conducted online.



Electronic ballots will be emailed during the week of March 19th. Be sure to watch your email for your login information!

For our retired members who do not have email access, we will be using traditional ballots.

Ballots need to be completed by Friday, April 13th.

ELECTION NEWS

Meet Your President-Elect Candidate

This year, MASA is once again fortunate to have a strong slate of candidates for the various leadership positions' elections. Many thanks to everyone running for a leadership position. We offer special thanks to Jay Haugen, candidate 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 comments...

I am committed to being a strong voice for public education, and to continue the great work of MASA, its leaders, and those it serves. As an organization, MASA provides an unwavering strong voice for children, education, and those things that make us great as a state, a nation, and 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. Schools today serve children and families better than at any point in our history, but still, far too many children don't find even a minimum of success, and far too many children



Jay Haugen
Superintendent
Farmington Area Schools

are not challenged enough. 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 16-year superintendent, serving both rural and suburban school districts across Minnesota, 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.



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POINT OF VIEW

It's a Wonderful Life - Well at Least Pretty Darn Good

Since my selection as Minnesota Superintendent of the Year was announced last November, my Norwegian heritage has been sorely tested. Yet, like George Bailey (Jimmy Stewart) in Bedford Falls, this honor has reminded me how much each of us impacts those around them. First it was the emails and then the cards, letters and phone calls from across Minnesota, the Midwest and the country. From folks I see every day to those I had not connected with in almost three decades, came congratulations, well wishes and compliments on my work with students, colleagues and school districts in Minnesota, Nebraska and Iowa.

Then it was February and on to the National Conference on Education in Houston, Texas and the George Brown Convention Center filled with superintendents and central office colleagues and 50 Superintendents of the year from across the United States and two from Canada. We were recognized for our efforts for our students and our school districts with a bronze medallion and a beautiful plaque. On Saturday of the conference, I had an opportunity to share with my Minnesota colleagues and friends a bit about myself and a little bit more about my concerns and hopes for the future of public education in our state and nation. And even though it was shortly past 7:00 a.m. on a damp, gray morning, they laughed at most of my jokes and even participated in a "name that educational reform decade" contest – pretty exciting stuff.

The very next week, I was joined by my colleagues across Minnesota and the Northfield community for a very special community celebration planned by members of the Northfield Board of Education and graciously sponsored by ATS&R and MASA. State and local officials, colleagues and parents were on hand to reflect on my contributions to education and the world, and to extol my virtues far beyond what was due.

And so as my time as 2012 Superintendent of the Year unfolds, I continue to be humbled and a bit



Paul Erickson from ATS&R Planner/Architects/Engineers presents Dr. Chris Richardson the Superintendent of the Year award during his February 23rd celebration.

embarrassed by the attention. I have been honored and overwhelmed by the kindness and support of the MASA staff, MSBA, our administrative colleagues, legislators, MDE, local businesses and the students, staff, families and citizens of the Northfield Schools where I have been so proud to serve as superintendent for the last eight years, and the Osseo Area Schools where I served as superintendent for over seven years when I first came to Minnesota

in 1997. I have been in education 41 years - six years as a math/science/language arts/social studies and auto mechanics teacher, four years as a principal and curriculum director and 31 years as a superintendent in three states and six different districts with enrollments from 250 to 22,000 students. In the last few months, I have heard from or talked to well wishers in every one of those districts.

In the end, I am reminded that what each of us does is so important for our students and communities and that everything we accomplish, we accomplish with the support and help of others. When we are honored, those honors are shared with those colleagues and mentors who have shown us the way. Even when we are slowed down or pushed back in our efforts, we keep moving forward because of that support.

My hope for each of you is that you experience being appreciated and valued for the hard work that you do for your students and staff and the leadership that you provide every day in your school district and in our profession. We stand together on the shoulders of those who came before us. I am so proud to be your colleague and for this year, to represent the superintendents of the great State of Minnesota. And despite my Norwegian roots, it is a wonderful life – well at least pretty darn good!



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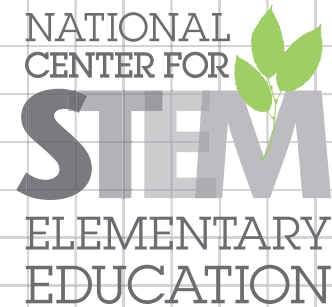






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Purpose:

To gather a diverse group of participants to broaden our reach, unify and magnify our collective voice towards change, and create meaningful learning experiences for ALL learners in a Global Knowledge Economy.

The world has changed radically. Necessary skill sets have expanded to include creativity, innovation, collaboration, curiosity, communication, and citizenship. Mass personalization is key to tapping into the energy and joy of learning and allows learners to progress at an individual pace. Leveraging technology is critical to creating meaningful experiences that instill a passion for lifelong learning. Research is pointing to the success of design thinking, a project-based, hands-on approach that allows learners to actively engage in the process, itself.

We need to rethink our approach if we hope to effect change. The very essence of the traditional conference should change. In other words, we need an “UnConference” that starts with the UnConventional approach of broadening participation. We have a unique opportunity to include representatives from all major stakeholder groups. We need a holistic approach that breaks down silos between K-12 and higher education. We need to include business community members as they will inherit the products of our educational system. We need to include higher education leaders who train our teachers, as the role of teacher has radically changed in this new landscape. We need to include parents for the pivotal role they play in the learning process. We need to include representatives from our design schools because positive results show a design approach to learning. We need to include our policy makers so they can more effectively craft the necessary legislation for change. Most importantly, we need to include learners, as they stand to gain the most.

In addition to the unusual diversity of participants, this UnConference will model collaboration and design thinking through an unconventional format. We believe that the most meaningful learning experiences include opportunities for inspiration, reflection and creation. Inspiring keynotes are social media theorist Clay Shirky, with his passion for creativity and



Judy Hoskens
Director, Education Studio
Cuningham Group Architecture, PA

intrinsic motivation in a connected age, and Emily Pilloton, author of *Design Revolution*. Additionally, the schedule includes reflection and relationship building activities to allow participants time to digest key messages and understand how they might apply. The event culminates in a “mash-up” session inviting the full range of attendees to respond to a specific design challenge that they help define.

One unique attribute of this UnConference is its ability to transcend space and time. Through blogging and tweeting, the conversation begins

now. We have a social responsibility to grow our youth and our communities. By coming together, we will be able to more effectively broaden our reach. We will unify and magnify our collective voice towards bringing about change in creating meaningful learning experiences for All Learners. Your voice is pivotal to the conversation. Please join us in Minneapolis/St. Paul April 25-27th for the CEFPI Midwest/Great Lakes Regional UnConference. It definitely promises to be Uncommon, Unbelievable and Unforgettable!

MSOPA NEWS FOR SUPERINTENDENTS

The MSOPA officers are very busy planning the MSOPA 2012 Retreat to be held during Administrative Professional’s week on Thursday & Friday, April 26-27, 2012 at the Oakwood Conference Center in Chaska. These retreats, held once a year, are specifically developed for all Executive Assistants to the Superintendents and School Boards of all Minnesota School Districts. Superintendents, please encourage your assistant to join MSOPA and attend this retreat. It will be a great treat to give your assistant this professional development opportunity during Administrative Professional’s Week and you don’t even have to go shopping!! You will be impressed with the valuable information they will return with. Networking with others in this unique position is invaluable to you both!

For more information please contact Colleen Erickson at 763-745-5502

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A copy of the Fund's Information Statement may be obtained by calling 1-888-4-MSDLAF or is available on the Fund's website at www.msdlaf.org. While the MSDLAF+ Liquid Class and MAX Class seek to maintain a stable net asset value of \$1.00 per share and the MSDLAF+ TERM series seeks to achieve a net asset value of \$1.00 per share at its stated maturity, it is possible to lose money investing in the Fund. An investment in the Fund is not insured or guaranteed by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or any other government agency. Shares of the Fund are distributed by **PFM Fund Distributors, Inc.**, member Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) (www.finra.org) and Securities Investor Protection Corporation (SIPC) (www.sipc.org). PFM Fund Distributors, Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary of PFM Asset Management LLC.

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Begin at the Beginning



Shari Prest
Ark Associates

“What happens – or doesn’t happen – to children in the earliest years of their lives is of critical importance, both to their immediate well-being and to their future.” – UNICEF.org

Most of a child’s brain cells are formed before birth, but the connections between those cells are made after birth. It is those connections that make the brain cells work. By the time a child is three years old, they have formed

about 1,000 trillion connections – two times as many as they are likely to form as an adult. It is up to all of us to ensure that the connections that contribute to academic and social success are developed and exercised during early childhood.

Sometimes when we hear the term “early childhood,” we think of a program or a class. While early childhood may include both, it is neither. Early childhood is the period in a person’s life when that person’s mind is developing and those critical connections are being made within the brain. Early childhood begins prenatally and extends to about five years old. Early childhood has been described as a window of opportunity in a person’s life when learning is most efficient and most likely to occur.

“We have a lot of research that says if a child is in a healthy environment, in a loving environment in which there’s bonding between the parents and the child, where there’s positive interaction, so the child starts ready for school, cognitively ready and socially ready, there’s a high probability that child will succeed in life. If not, there’s a high probability he or she will not.” – Art Rolnick, economist, Humphrey Institute fellow, and former research director at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

That’s where early childhood begins, but not where it ends. Research demonstrates that a child’s social, physical and academic development is enriched through high-quality early childhood programs. This is particularly true for at-risk children. Projections indicate that the real financial return on the investment in high-quality early childhood education, particularly for high risk kids, is \$10 to \$16 for each dollar spent. Studies also demonstrate early childhood education is the most likely way to close the achievement gap among diverse populations of students. The long-term savings to U.S. taxpayers if good early childhood programs are implemented would likely be in the billions of dollars.

“Studies show that high-quality early childhood programs aligned with K-3 standards can narrow the achievement gap by 25% or more before kids start kindergarten.” – P. Fred Storti, Executive Director, Minnesota Elementary School Principals’ Association

“The return on the investment in early childhood is significant, from an economic standpoint; from a moral standpoint, this investment has the potential for closing the achievement gap and equalizing the potential for future social and economic success for all children.” – Gary Amoroso, Executive Director, Minnesota Association of School Administrators

“Although education and the acquisition of skills is a lifelong process, starting early in life is crucial. Recent research – some sponsored by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis in collaboration with the University of Minnesota – has documented the high returns that early childhood programs can pay in terms of subsequent educational attainment and in lower rates of social problems, such as teenage pregnancy and welfare dependency.” – Ben S. Bernanke, Federal Reserve Board Chairman, speech to Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, 2007

“We know that children who are supported in their early learning are more successful as they progress to the secondary level and more likely to earn their high school diploma and be prepared for post secondary education and a career.” – Joann Knuth, Executive Director, Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals

“Why should taxpayers want to invest their dollars in quality early education for every child whose family wants it? The research is clear that it helps children succeed. That’s one reason. But there is another that is very important but less well known. That reason is this: it makes financial sense. Tax dollars invested create economic development in communities, and save money for years to come.” – “Early Childhood Education for All: A Wise Investment” by Leslie J. Calman, Senior Vice President, Legal Momentum and the director of the Family Initiative, Linda Tarr-Whelan, managing partner of Tarr-Whelan and Associates

The experts agree that early childhood education is one of the smartest investments we can make in the future. Too often, however, our public policies and resources are spent on short-term and politically popular issues before they can be invested in stabilizing and improving the long-term future. This can and must be changed for the welfare of our kids and the prosperity of our state. The data is clear. Our commitment is not.

Big Conversations...Big Solutions

Big Conversations...Big Solutions” was the focus as approximately 1,500 school leaders from across the nation gathered in Houston, Texas for AASA’s 144th National Conference on Education. Throughout the four day conference, a strong slate of general session speakers and thought leaders built upon the theme that the great conversation is a vital source for solutions.

Jamie Vollmer, once one of the most distrustful critics and now one of the most outspoken advocates of public education, opened the first general session by stressing the importance of involving the community in conversation. Vollmer further emphasized that both educators and the greater community not be allowed to reminisce on how things were done in the past but rather to rethink what’s important to teach. However, this conversation will be destined to fail unless the educational system can garner the community’s understanding, trust, permission and support. Vollmer’s comments embodied a vision of schools and communities working together for the betterment of children and as he concluded his remarks by telling the audience that “I’ve reached a conclusion—the big solution is you!”

In the second general session, Rick DuFour expanded the “big conversation” when he addressed the need



Luther Heller
Superintendent
Montevideo Schools

for systemic change in the face of student achievement gaps between rich and poor that have been deepening over the past 25 years. DuFour emphasized that, based upon research, professional learning communities can serve as the catalyst to bring about the necessary systemic change and to improve student performance.

At Saturday morning’s thought leader session, Julie Mathiesen asked, “What if every day, every learner was met with customized learning activities at his or her precise developmental and achievement level, was learning in his or her most effective learning style with content of interest, was successful and left school eager to come back tomorrow?” She went on to stress that with today’s technology we have the capacity to transform education in such a way that this becomes a reality.

In addition to the large and small group sessions of the four day conference, one of the highlights of the conference came at the annual Minnesota Breakfast when Dr. Chris Richardson, Minnesota’s 2012 Superintendent of the Year, called upon the members of the Minnesota delegation to be champions for education and children in these challenging times.

Two MASA Leaders Honored During the AASA Conference

Superintendent Sandy Lewandowski, leader of Intermediate District 287, was recognized as a finalist for the American Association of School Administrators’ 2012 Women in School Leadership Award at the AASA National Conference on Education in Houston. The award recognizes exceptional leadership of active, front-line female administrators who are making a difference in the lives of students every day. The award pays tribute to the talent, creativity, and vision of outstanding women educational administrators in the nation’s public schools. This year, an award was given in two separate categories: superintendent and cabinet-level leader. The criteria included demonstration of strength in both personal and organizational communication, professionalism and community involvement.

Kathy Kelly, Superintendent of the Columbia Heights Schools, has been named the recipient of the seventh annual Administrator Award for Distinguished Support of Music Education. Kathy was chosen for her deep commitment to providing Columbia Heights students with music education as part of the core curriculum. The award was presented on February 18 at the AASA convention. The award is sponsored by the VH1 Save The Music Foundation and is presented each year at AASA’s national conference to one superintendent or school CEO who has exhibited outstanding commitment to restoring music education in his or her school district.

Congratulations to Kathy and Sandy!

FOUNDATION NEWS

Garbage Has Potential?

Amongst the number of services provided by the MASA Foundation, awarding grant opportunities to members is one that can impact your life directly and increase your vision to efforts far beyond your district. The School Administrators Charitable Foundation was formed by the Minnesota Association of School Administrators and its interested partners in response to the need for support for the professional development of Minnesota education leaders. The world is changing at a pace more rapid than ever before, and if our children are to be prepared for the new world of tomorrow, our education leaders must be prepared to mentor their success.

As Melissa Krull was able to experience her visit to China along with the Governor and other leaders in Minnesota, I had the opportunity to travel to Edmonton, Alberta, along with a dozen teachers, to attend a regional conference that focused on issues from Alaska to British Columbia to Ontario to Wisconsin.

The focus on our environment was memorable. Yes, I was excited over the potential of garbage! A tour of The Edmonton Waste Management Centre of Excellence (EWMCE) was an eye opener for those of us interested in green enterprises. EWMCE is a not-for-profit corporation established to meet solid waste and waste water challenges worldwide. The EWMCE is a collaborative hub for innovative research, technology development and training. The EWMCE operates at the core of a unique private-public network of environmental leaders. Members consist of the City of Edmonton, University of Alberta, Alberta Research Council, AMEC, NAIT, and EPCOR. A tour of a facility showed how Edmonton harvests millions of dollars of copper from trashed electronics, recycles tons of paper products and plastics daily, and resorts to conscientiously striving to achieve their goal of 99% recycling as they are committed to NOT expanding their landfill.

The Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) - pronounced "merf" - is an almost 6,000 square meter (64,000 square feet) recycling plant at the Edmonton Waste Management Centre. Capable of processing 40,000 tons per year, the MRF is one of the most advanced plants in North America for recycling mixed materials. It processes all types of recyclables accepted in the



Diane Rauschenfels
Associate Professor
University of Minnesota, Duluth

City's Blue Bag, Blue Bin and Recycling Depot collection programs. The facility is a public-private business partnership. The City retains ownership and Waste Management of Canada Inc. is responsible for operation of the facility for its first 10 years.

The facility operates in conjunction with the Edmonton Composting Facility as part of an integrated waste management system that is unique in the world. Together, the facilities enable Edmonton to divert up to 60% per cent of residential waste from the landfill.

Using cutting edge processes and equipment, the 45,000 square foot Global Electric and Electronic Processing Inc. (GEEP) facility processes more than 30,000 tons per year of old computers, televisions, and a wide range of electrical and electronic waste materials for recycling.

In 2005 Epcor built smaller generators next to the Landfill Gas Recovery Plant. The new generators are able to supply 4.8 megawatts of electricity into the electricity grid, again, enough to power over 4,600 homes annually.

Their Reuse & Recycling Directory has a list of charities, businesses and services that can take unwanted household items and find someone who will put them to good use. The Reuse Center Centre collects everyday items five days a week, year-round, and makes them available to groups and individuals who will reuse them.

This was only one day of a five day conference with the other days focused on math competencies, reading literacy, structures that will improve social emotional climates in schools for students and staff. However, the focus on something that impacts our world and our children as much as our environment was a wake up call that a grant from the MASA Foundation made possible to me. I am very appreciative.

If you are interested in a grant to pursue a creative and unique opportunity for professional development, simply write down your needs and specifics and send to Gary Amoroso for the Foundation Board's consideration.



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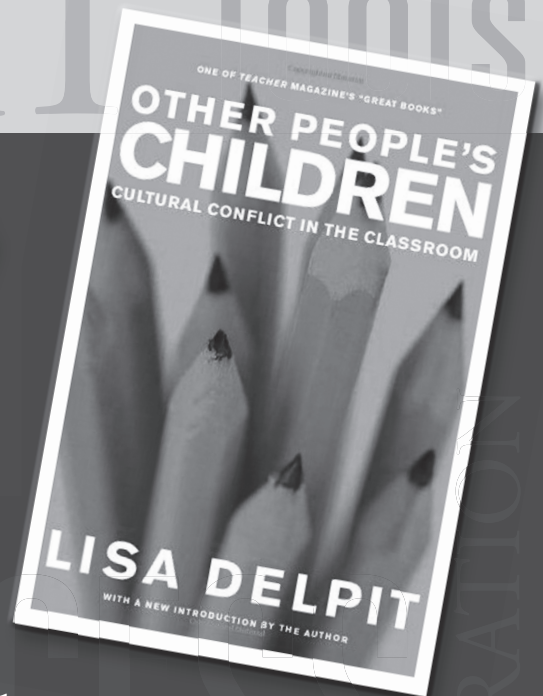
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CONGRATULATIONS!

Superintendent Jeff Ronneberg Elected to Presidency of Learning Forward



Jeff Ronneberg
Superintendent
Spring Lake Park

Jeff Ronneberg, superintendent of schools for Spring Lake Park District 16, was recently elected to serve as president of Learning Forward. Ronneberg will assume the Learning Forward presidency in December 2012. He will preside over the group in 2013 and then serve on the Board of Trustees as past-president in 2014.

Formerly known as the National Staff Development

Council, Learning Forward is a nonprofit, international membership association of educators with a focus on increasing student achievement through more effective professional learning, according to its website.

Ronneberg said being elected president is both an honor and a surprise. "I serve this organization with great pride as I believe it is the premier association of educators in advocating for the supports and professional learning necessary for educators to improve the learning of all students," Ronneberg said in a statement on the school district's website.

Learning Forward is involved with innovation internally and supports schools across the country. The organization also actively influences federal legislation, for instance, the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act, Ronneberg said in an interview.

The organization has an imprint on District 16's daily education practices, Ronneberg said.

"The opportunity to serve Learning Forward presents me the opportunity to learn and grow as a leader while also developing relationships with educational leaders around the country whose expertise we regularly tap as we identify ways to continuously improve how we meet the needs of our students," Ronneberg said.

Article from abcnewspapers.com

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

Congratulations!

**Mary Cecconi, 2012
MASA Distinguished
Service Award
Recipient**

**Ann Wendorff,
2012 MASA Kay E
Jacobs Memorial
Award Recipient**



**Nancy Allen-Mastro &
Wayne Kazmierczak,
2012 MASA Outstanding Central Office
Leader Award Recipient**

**2012 Regional Administrators of
Excellence Recipients:**
Region 1, **Barry Olson**
Region 2, **Leslie Norman**
Region 3, **Loy Woelber**
Region 4, **Deb Wanek**
Region 5, **Virginia Dahlstrom**
Region 6, **Dan Brooks**
Region 7, **Tim Caroline**
Region 8, **Laine Larson**
Region 9, **John Thein**

All of these individuals are a representative of the leadership excellence found in MASA members: the willingness to risk, strong communication skills, a progressive change agent and high expectations for self and others, and their strong advocacy for Minnesota's children.

All of the above recipients will be honored at the 2012 MASA/MASE Spring Conference.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2012...

March

14

Great Start Series Workshop
DoubleTree, Bloomington
At Ruth's Table Workshop
DoubleTree, Bloomington
MASA Board of Directors Meeting
DoubleTree, Bloomington

15-17

MASA/MASE Spring Conference
DoubleTree, Bloomington

April

6

MASA Offices Closed

19

Foundation Board of Directors Meeting
MASA Offices, St. Paul

20

3rd Friday @ MASA Workshop
MASA Offices, St. Paul

May

18

3rd Friday @ MASA Workshop
MASA Offices, St. Paul

28

MASA Offices Closed

June

15

3rd Friday @ MASA Workshop
MASA Offices, St. Paul

21-22

MASA Board of Directors Retreat
Maddens, Brainerd

July

25-27

Legends Conference
Ruttgers, Grand Rapids

August

7-8

MDE Superintendents Conference
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park

September

30

MASA Fall Conference
Madden's Resort, Brainerd

October

1-2

MASA Fall Conference
Madden's Resort, Brainerd

November

14-16

CLM Conference
Cragun's Resort, Brainerd

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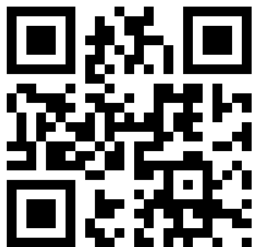
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